

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **SIR WILLIAM ROBERTSON HIGH SCHOOL**

Welbourn, Lincolnshire

LEA area: Lincolnshire

Unique reference number: 120716

Headteacher: Mr Ian Wright

Reporting inspector: Mr David Oakley  
3549

Dates of inspection: 15 - 19 October 2001

Inspection number: 191185

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Foundation

Age range of pupils: 11 - 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Main Road  
Welbourn  
Lincs.

Postcode: LN5 0PA

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Fax number: 01400 273780

Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr J Dixon

Date of previous inspection: January 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
3549	Mr David Oakley	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it?
				The school's results and pupils' achievements.
				How well are pupils taught?
				How well is the school led and managed?
				What should the school do to improve further?
11072	Shirley Elomari	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils?
				How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
2023	Ray Westwood	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
				How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
7818	Brian Wardle	Team inspector	Mathematics	
12268 30743	Neil Cowell and William Lockwood	Team inspectors	English	
31528	Trevor Riddiough	Team inspector	Science	
12595	Gareth Large	Team inspector	Design and technology	
11871	Ann Newton	Team inspector	Art and design	
22339	Val Taylor	Team inspector	Geography	

18572	Ronald Wallace	Team inspector	History	
31596	Steven Jones	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
31701	Graeme Rudland	Team inspector	Music	
15154	Ian Spode	Team inspector	Physical education	
19851	Roger Lister	Team inspector	Special educational needs	
			Equal opportunities	
1523	Trevor James	Team Inspector	Religious education	

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The school is a smaller than average foundation secondary school with 709 boys and girls aged 11 to 16 years on roll. It has grown significantly since the previous inspection when it was a grant maintained school with 450 pupils. The school is situated in rural south Lincolnshire and serves pupils from a very wide area. The intake reflects a mixture of social advantage and rural disadvantage. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The school is in an area where the 11+ examination selects most of the top 30% of the full ability range. The number of grammar school places available varies annually. There are more such places for girls than boys; and there is a modern school for girls but no equivalent school for boys. Sixty-four per cent of pupils are boys. The attainment of the intake varies from year to year but is below average overall, though improving. Boys' attainment is closer to the national average than girls' attainment. Twenty-four per cent of pupils have special educational needs; 4.4 per cent have a statement of special educational need, the majority for learning difficulties, others for physical difficulties. Both percentages are above the national average. There is a 14 place unit for pupils with general learning difficulties in the school. Pupils supported by the unit staff are fully integrated into classes and school life generally. Very few pupils are of minority ethnic origin and there are no pupils speaking English as an additional language.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

This is a good and improving school. Standards by age 14 are at the national average. By age 16, they are above average and have improved faster than nationally. This is a result of very good teaching and the excellent response of pupils. Their very positive attitudes to learning and their very good relationships with one another and their teachers contribute significantly to the good progress that they make. Teachers' knowledge of the pupils, enthusiasm, commitment, teaching skills and patience encourage pupils to give of their best. Very good leadership by the headteacher and governors unites staff and pupils in pursuit of high standards. Day-to-day management is very good. Financial management is good. The school continues to give good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Very effective leadership by the headteacher and governors unites staff and pupils in pursuit of high standards of attainment and conduct.
- Excellent leadership and management of the support for pupils with special educational needs helps them make very good progress.
- Pupils respond excellently to teachers' high expectations of conduct and academic success.
- Very good teaching has resulted in continuous improvement in pupils' attainment.
- Care, support and relationships are of very high quality and help individual pupils to do their best.
- Very good partnership with parents, carers and external agencies extends the capacity of the school to succeed.
- The school's aims and aspirations are reflected in its work at all levels.

#### **What could be improved**

The sharing of good practice used by teachers and departments in:

- marking pupils' work and assessing their progress;
- using information from assessment to track individual pupils' work and set targets for their improvement;
- planning lessons to provide a consistently high level of challenge for all pupils in the class.

*The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.*

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in January 1997. Since then standards of attainment have improved faster than nationally at GCSE. Results in 2001 were the best ever and 51% of pupils gained five or more GCSE grades A\*-C. The quality of teaching has improved through strong teamwork in departments and is now very good overall. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is now excellent. Good progress has been made on the key issues raised by the previous inspection. Personal, social and health education has improved. The assessment policy is being applied, though marking is still variable in the guidance it gives on how pupils can improve. The 'Thought for the Day' as a way of providing a collective act of worship has improved. All legal requirements in relation to the Key Stage 4 curriculum are now met. Health and safety issues have been dealt with. There is still scope for sharing best practice more widely.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 11 based on average point scores in GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	compared with				<b>Key</b>
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
GCSE examinations	D	C	C	C	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E

When results of pupils' performance at age 11 are compared with their results at age 14 they make progress from below average to in line with the national average overall in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. In 2001, comparison with the provisional national averages for points scores in the national tests shows that performance in English was below average, maths was average and science above average. Comparison of pupils' results at age 14 with their results at GCSE shows that they make good progress. Pupils of all abilities are achieving well as a result of the very high quality teaching and ethos in the school. When compared with all similar non-selective schools in selective local education authorities, the proportions of pupils in 2000 were above average for those gaining five or more A\*-C grades and well above average for five or more A\*-G grades. When free school meals comparisons are taken into account, the overall score was average. Comparisons for 2001, when results improved by 10% for five or more A\*-C grades, are not yet available. Progress made by pupils with special educational needs is very good. In 2001 with one exception



(through illness) all pupils gained at least five GCSE grades A\*-G. Current pupils' work in lessons show standards at least in line with their performance in national tests and often above. Improvement in results at age 14 is in line with the national trend. The trend in GCSE results in the core subjects is above the national trend. Pupils do particularly well in modern foreign languages, mathematics, history and GNVQ Leisure and Tourism. The school sets challenging targets based on pupils' prior attainment. In 2001 the target for five or more GCSE A\*-C grades was exceeded and average total points score was within one point of the target. Standards in work seen reflect the improvement in standards in national tests. Girls' attainment on entry is below that of boys but they narrow the gap by age 16.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent. Pupils like coming to school. They are keen to learn and work hard in lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Excellent. They respond to the high expectations of their teachers. This enhances their own and other pupils' learning and progress. They are polite and courteous.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. There is mutual respect between pupils and between pupils and teachers.
Attendance	Very good. Despite the long journeys many pupils have to make, attendance is well above the national average.

The positive attitudes developed by the school in its pupils are a product of the high expectations of teachers and high profile of the aims of the school. Pupils take responsibility for getting to lessons on time as there is a policy of no bells between lessons. Pupils develop into mature young people who demonstrate the school's aim to develop mutual respect.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very good

*Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.*

The teaching and learning are both very good. In eight out of ten of the 164 lessons teaching was good or better and in four out of ten it was very good or exceptional. In only 5 lessons was unsatisfactory teaching seen. Teaching in Years 10 - 11 was slightly better than in Years 7 - 9. Exceptional teaching was seen in many subjects. In these lessons teachers' enthusiasm and knowledge of their subject stimulated pupils' interest and motivated them very well. Lessons are consistently well structured and paced. More teaching could be raised to the standard of the best by sharing best practice more widely, particularly using information on pupils' prior attainment and ongoing assessment to consistently plan challenging work in lessons.

The quality of teaching in English and mathematics was very good. It was good in science. Standards of literacy are good and the development of literacy is well supported by a number of subjects. Numeracy skills are good. Pupils apply their mathematical knowledge in a range of subjects. Teaching meets the needs of pupils of all abilities and particularly those with special educational needs very well. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress and are able to take full advantage of the examination courses available.

### **OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum is broad, balanced and meets statutory requirements. It is enhanced by the wide range of extra curricular opportunities provided.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Excellent. Special educational needs are met through a strong partnership between parents, external agencies, subject teachers and the learning support department. Management of the provision is excellent. Pupils supported by the unit are fully integrated into all aspects of school life.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. There are many very good opportunities for pupils social and moral development. Cultural development is good, but there are few planned opportunities for spiritual development in lessons.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. The school cares for its pupils in a safe and secure working environment. All pupils are treated as individuals.

The curriculum includes vocational and academic courses which provide for the needs of current pupils. Systems for the care and support of pupils are well established and continue to develop well through the recently introduced house system. Existing very good practice in using assessment information to track pupils' progress and set targets could be used more widely to promote even better progress. Parents work very well in partnership with the school. They support the school in many ways, from providing transport to school fixtures to raising sponsorship for the school's successful language college bid. Several have chosen to send their children to this school rather than the local selective schools.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher gives clear educational direction and is well supported by governors and those with management responsibilities.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. Governors are intimately involved in the life of the school and play a key role in maintaining the high profile of the school in the community.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. A wide range of data is used to check pupils' performance. Teaching is monitored as part of performance management and within departments. Evaluation of findings could be used more consistently to improve all practice to the level of the best.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Resources are good and deployed very effectively.

Highly qualified teachers and learning support staff are well matched to the curriculum. There is a very good mixture of experience on the staff. Accommodation and the school site are very well maintained and provide a very attractive and stimulating place to learn. Leadership by the headteacher and governors has been very effective in taking the school from possible closure to doubling the number of pupils on roll, acquiring new buildings to accommodate the extra numbers and bringing about continuous improvement in GCSE results. The school is now oversubscribed. Financial challenges resulting from the school's change of status have been very well managed. Principles of best value have been used in continuing to provide high quality education. Governors are fully involved in the work of the school and understand its strengths and priorities.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That the school expects their children to work hard and achieve their best.</li> <li>• Their children like coming to the school.</li> <li>• The good behaviour.</li> <li>• The good teaching.</li> <li>• The good leadership and management of the school.</li> <li>• They feel comfortable about approaching the school.</li> <li>• Their children make good progress.</li> <li>• The school is helping their children to become mature and responsible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater consistency in amount of homework set.</li> <li>• Information on how their children are getting on.</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with parents' overwhelmingly positive views of the school. Very few parents

feel that there is need for any improvement in the way that the school works. School reports are being reviewed to produce more informative documents. Homework is usually used appropriately to complement class work. The school does its best on behalf of parents to ease the problems associated with the provision of school transport.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and pupils' achievements**

1. Standards of attainment by age 14 are in line with the national average and by age 16 are above the national average.

#### ***Key Stage 3***

2. Pupils' overall performance in national tests at age 14 in 2000, measured by points score, was average in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Performance in English was below average, in mathematics and science it was average. The pattern was similar for the percentages of pupils reaching Level 5 or higher and Level 6 or higher. If pupils' results in 2000 are compared with those in similar non-selective schools in areas where there is selection, results in English were average in all categories; mathematics results were well above average for Level 5+, above average for Level 6+ and for average points score; science results were above average for Level 5+ and 6+ and well above average for average points score.
3. Results improved in 2001. In English, average points score was closer to the provisional national average, the percentage of Level 5+ was average and Level 6+ was below average rather than well below average. Mathematics results were average for points score, well above average for Level 5+ and average for Level 6+. In science, average points score was above the provisional national average, percentage of pupils achieving Level 5+ was well above average and Level 6+ was average.
4. Results at Key Stage 3 have risen in line with the national trend. Information on pupils' performance at age 11 in the Key Stage 2 tests has proved difficult to obtain from the 42 primary schools that pupils come from, but data from the externally set and marked tests (CATs) used by the school shows that most individual pupils make good progress from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 during their first three years in the school. Overall, pupils improve from below to average attainment.
5. Standards in other subjects of the curriculum at the end of Year 9 at age 14 are assessed by teachers rather than tests. The standards obtained in 2001 were at or above the national average in all subjects except music.
6. Standards of literacy and numeracy are good overall by the end of Key Stage 3. There are good opportunities for literacy and numeracy skills to be developed across the curriculum and this has a positive impact on learning and standards.
7. The standards of attainment seen in lessons and pupils' work were above average overall, reflecting the improvement in pupils' attainment on entry over the last three years and the good progress that they make. Pupils of all abilities, both boys and girls, make good progress in response to the very good teaching that they receive. Pupils with special educational needs make particularly good progress, reflecting the excellent support that they receive. Boys have higher attainment than girls on entry. This persists

through Key Stage 3, girls are slightly further behind boys than nationally at age 14.

#### ***Key Stage 4***

8. In 2000, the average GCSE/GNVQ points score per pupil was in line with the national average, as was the percentage of pupils gaining five or more grades A\*-C. The percentage of pupils gaining five or more A\*-G and one or more A\*-G was, however, well above average. In 2000, when compared with similar non-selective schools (in areas where there is selection), points score at GCSE/GNVQ was above average, as was the percentage of pupils gaining five or more A\*-C grades. The percentage of pupils gaining five or more GCSE/GNVQ A\*-G and one or more GCSE/GNVQ grades A\*-G was well above average. These comparisons are a more accurate comparison than free school meals entitlement because more families are entitled to free school meals than actually take them up. When comparisons using free school meals are used, the average points score falls to average.
9. In 2001 GCSE/GNVQ results improved in all categories. The percentage of pupils gaining five or more grades A\*-C was 51.4% compared with the provisional national average of 49.8 %. Average points score was 40.1 compared with the provisional national average of 39.1. Standards, as measured by most measures of results, have been rising faster than nationally since the previous inspection. Lower attaining pupils do particularly well in GCSE/GNVQ. The highest standards achieved by pupils at GCSE grades A\*-C were in French and German. Pupils performed very well in GNVQ.
10. Pupils in 2000 achieved well in comparison with their performance in the Key Stage 3 tests in 1998. Improvement was above average in terms of points score, average for five or more grades A\*-C gained and well above average for five or more and one or more grades A\*-G. Girls and boys now perform in line with girls and boys nationally and girls have made up most of the difference in attainment on entry. Girls are not disadvantaged by being in a minority. This indicates the good progress that nearly all pupils make during their time in the school. They enter the school with below average attainment overall and leave it with at least average attainment. Attainment is well above average in two out of four of the measures used nationally.
11. The standard of attainment seen in lessons and current pupils' work is above average overall, in line with the school's performance in the 2001 GCSE/ GNVQ examinations.

#### ***Performance in subjects and skills***

12. Pupils' standard of attainment in ***English*** is improving in all aspects of the National Curriculum. Results in the tests by age 14 were closer to the national average than in 2000 and compare favourably with pupils' results in similar schools. They do less well at the higher levels of attainment. GCSE results at age 16 were closer to the national average for A\*-C in 2001. Girls have tended to do better than boys to a greater extent than nationally. Strategies to improve the performance of boys are in place and there is no significant difference in attainment of the boys and girls currently in the school. Results for GCSE ***English literature*** are well below the national average as a result of the school's policy of giving all pupils access to the exam, rather than selecting those entered. This is a positive strategy, as for some pupils grades below C reflect a real

achievement. Nationally the data reflects a selected entry.

13. Standards of attainment in *mathematics* are improving and pupils' results were well above the national and similar schools averages by age 14 and 16. Pupils are able to apply their mathematical knowledge well and are becoming increasingly confident at investigating problems. Some higher attaining pupils were entered for an additional GCSE in statistics and all were successful in obtaining a grade C. Pupils' use of information and communication technology (ICT) in mathematics falls short of national expectations as a result of insufficient ICT resources.
14. In *science*, pupils' attainment is improving and by age 14 is now well above the national and similar schools averages. Results in the national tests showed a marked improvement in 2001. At age 16, GCSE results for 2000 were below the national average for grades A\*-C but above average for similar schools. In 2001, results improved particularly at the higher levels and girls' attainment also improved. The percentage of pupils achieving five or more grades A\*-C was close to the provisional national average. Attainment is similar across the aspects of the science curriculum, with the exception of investigation and enquiry in which skills are developed better at Key Stage 3 than Key Stage 4.
15. Standards of literacy are above average. The development of *literacy* across the curriculum is well supported by a range of departments. In modern foreign languages and physical education (PE) schemes of work explicitly highlight literacy links and teachers are making good use of them in lessons. In GNVQ business, pupils demonstrated a high standard of communication skills, especially in relation to drafting, the use of subject-specific language and presentation. The learning support department makes significant provision to develop pupils' literacy, including a very successful Reading Club on four days each week. Literacy skills are, however, less developed in religious education where the department does not have a departmental statement on literacy and pupils produce much fragmented and incomplete writing.
16. Pupils' *numeracy* skills are above average. Pupils use their mathematics in a variety of contexts. In English, for example, they use the dates of events to calculate periods of time. In science they collect data and make tables and charts. They also estimate and check their methods. In geography, pupils accurately represented the results of a survey on Year 11 prefects. Pupils use numbers, counting and timetables well in French. In art and design they use proportion and scale. Pupils use angles well in PE, responding to instructions to perform 90 degree, 180 degree and 360 degree turns. In GNVQ business, pupils use their mathematical skills to a high level.
17. Standards of attainment in *information and communication technology* (ICT) are good and improving. At Key Stage 3, pupils make good progress in their ICT skills during Year 7 so that by Year 8, for example, they are capable of independent research on the internet and can select the most suitable software packages for producing publicity material for the school production. There are good curriculum links with a number of subjects notably English, geography and religious education where pupils exploit the potential of high speed internet connections and develop their speaking and listening skills as they communicate the outcomes of personal research. There are plans for developments in modern foreign languages and science among others. Currently, the

use of ICT in science and maths is limited by shortage of resources.

18. Standards of attainment in *religious education* are improving. Standards are below average at Key Stage 3 in pupils' written work, but their oral work shows that they have a good grasp of the subject that exceeds the national expectation. Their enthusiasm for religious stories and their consideration of personal feelings reveal above average levels of attainment. They know how to use religious information. They make good progress through Key Stage 3 and in the GCSE course in response to stimulating teaching. Response to the non-examination course at Key Stage 4 is not as good and affects progress in lessons. The percentage of pupils achieving grades A\*-C in the full GCSE course in 2001 was at the national average. Results in the short GCSE course at grades A\*-C were below the national average, but this provision enabled more pupils to have access to the subject. Standards in the general religious education and citizenship non-examination course which has replaced the short GCSE course are higher in oral than written work. Pupils are keen to pursue and debate controversial issues such as the use of nuclear weapons and the implications of recent terrorist events in the United States of America. Pupils show high standards in their use of ICT and they work hard to present their ideas and research in a variety of ways.
19. Pupils with *special educational needs* become confident communicators and their contribution to whole class and group work often sees them achieving standards on a par with their peers. Many of these pupils require support in developing literacy skills. Learning support assistants provide the majority of this support within and outside the full range of subjects; this enables pupils to achieve standards that allow them to follow the full curriculum alongside other pupils. Individual educational plans are clearly targeted and achievable; and pupils with special educational needs benefit as a result. Pupils' progress is closely monitored and regularly reviewed. It is significant that pupils with special educational needs can identify their own progress and that this is measurable not only against their individual educational plans but also in GCSE success, where all have recently achieved at least seven passes.

### ***Pupils' progress and achievement by age 16***

20. Pupils' make good progress. The 2000/2001 Year 11 pupils had below average attainment when they entered the school and above average attainment when they left school. Both boys and girls make good progress on their prior attainment and girls' attainment has been getting closer to boys' attainment over the last five years. Successful strategies are in place to support girls' attainment in science and boys' attainment in English. All pupils work hard and show good progress in their learning, irrespective of their ability or background. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress. Leadership by the headteacher and governors has created a climate of high expectations and high pupil self esteem. Very good teaching, pupils' keenness to learn, very good behaviour and the high quality of pastoral care in the school are together responsible for pupils doing better than in similar schools. As pupils' attainment on entry improves, the systems in place for managing pupils' performance data and target setting have the potential to ensure that pupils are appropriately challenged.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**



21. Pupils have excellent attitudes to school and to their work. They are well motivated and respond positively to their teachers. Relationships between pupils and teachers are of the highest quality. Lessons usually begin promptly with clear objectives. Wasted time is kept to a minimum. Pupils are eager to join in class discussion but respect, and listen to, the opinions of their peers. The absence of vandalism or graffiti is a sign that pupils value and respect what the school has to offer them. At lunchtime, pupils enjoy open access to the specialist computer facilities and their care for resources and their levels of industry, interest and productive collaboration are of the highest order.
22. Standards of behaviour are excellent both in lessons and when pupils move around the school. They are friendly, courteous and considerate, even in congested areas. Despite the fact that the distribution of single-sex schools in the area means that year groups have typically 70% boys, conduct on the hard play areas is never boisterous. Ball games do not intrude on the safety or peace of mind of those not participating. The girls do not feel that the excess and excesses of boys affects any aspect of their access to opportunities available in the school. This reflects the school's aim of respecting one another. There have only been two permanent exclusions in recent years; and permanent and fixed term exclusions are both very low for a school of this type.
23. Relations are excellent among all members of the school community. Pupils value their teachers' help and have confidence in their support. They feel that bullying, where it exists, is very effectively dealt with by the school. Prefects have a valuable role at breaks and lunchtimes in marshalling other pupils; they relate particularly well to younger pupils.
24. At the time of the previous inspection, attendance was well above the national average and the school has maintained this high level. Levels of unauthorised absence are consistently well below the national average with very few pupils having any unexplained absences on record. The consistently high levels of attendance have a positive effect on the pupils' learning. The school has good strategies in place to sustain its high attendance.
25. The majority of pupils travel to school by bus. Although many pupils arrive on time in the morning, there is lateness linked to buses being delayed. This has a detrimental effect on tutorials and assembly at the start of the day. Pupils have to walk some distance between classrooms and lessons. When lessons last a single period, though pupils do not waste time getting to lessons, movement time can cause a significant loss of teaching time.
26. The school has high expectations of pupils as exemplified in the school's commitment to its aims summed up by the acrostic *ASPIRE*. Staff and pupils are conversant with these aims and pupils are routinely encouraged to take up opportunities for personal development within and outside the school. There is a strong reward culture in the school and the new 'house' system is identified as a further vehicle for pupils' inclusion and reward. Pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated into the life of the school and benefit as much as others from the opportunities which it offers. They play a full part in the life of the school community and benefit from additional activities organised by the learning support department. The overwhelming majority of pupils with special educational needs respect staff and their fellow pupils, they are sensitive to

the needs of others and to the school environment. Their behaviour is very good and their relationships with pupils and staff display a degree of maturity that is well above average. It is indicative of the standards of behaviour of pupils with special educational needs that they seldom feature in incidents requiring disciplinary action.

## **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

27. The quality of teaching is very good at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. One hundred and sixty-four lessons were observed during the inspection, 98 at Key Stage 3 and 65 at Key Stage 4. Only five lessons were unsatisfactory; 62 were good, 52 were very good and 15 outstanding. Pupils are taught mainly in ability groups in bands or sets based on their attainment. All staff teach personal, social and health education.
28. The quality of teaching seen in English and mathematics was very good overall at both key stages. Teaching of science was good. All English teaching was either good or very good at Key Stage 4 and half of all lessons were very good at Key Stage 3. All lessons at Key Stage 4 and nine out of ten at Key Stage 3 were at least good. In science, teaching in half of all lessons at Key Stage 3 and three quarters at Key Stage 4 was at least good. The basis skills of literacy and numeracy are well taught.
29. Teachers' knowledge and understanding are very good. Combined with their enthusiasm for their subject, this enables them to give clear and stimulating explanations which capture pupils' interest and help their understanding. In a Year 7 German lesson, for example, hearing teachers speak the language very well helped pupils' listening and spelling skills and enabled them to make very good progress. In a Year 7 food technology lesson, the teacher's knowledge of nutrition stimulated pupils to keep asking questions about healthy eating which added considerably to their understanding. Teachers' expectations are very high and management of pupils is very good. Pupils respond by concentrating well, working hard and behaving very well. This enables lessons to proceed smoothly and with brisk pace. In a Year 8 lesson with lower attaining pupils, for example, the teacher provided two models of digestion, supported by worksheets which challenged pupils' understanding and gave them the confidence and knowledge to make predictions about how food is digested and moved around the body. Teachers use a variety of teaching methods, improving pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills at all levels of attainment. Questioning techniques are skilfully targeted to probe pupils' understanding effectively. Teachers give pupils time to answer, which enables them to explore their understanding and supports literacy effectively. Praise for good answers is a feature of lessons. All pupils' responses are valued. Their ability to think critically is developed well in several subjects. They are good at evaluating their own and others' performance and the subject matter that they are presented with. In a Year 8 personal, health and social education (PHSE) lesson, for example, pupils watched a video on drugs and then evaluated it from an educational point of view in a very perceptive and mature way. Lessons in many subjects are enhanced by use of ICT which pupils use very proficiently. Time, learning support staff and resources are used very effectively to support teaching methods and match work to pupils' attainment. Lessons are well structured and organised. Teachers' planning is generally good, clearly identifying learning objectives and methods to be used.
30. Assessment by a variety of assignments and tests gives teachers good information about

how well pupils are doing. However, more consistent use could be made of this information, and information from Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 tests, to check that individual pupils are working to their potential, particularly the higher attaining pupils who are now being attracted to the school. Teachers' lesson planning does not generally identify sufficiently well how this information can be used. Marking varies in the guidance that it gives pupils on what they need to do to improve the knowledge, skills and understanding of the subject they are learning about. Some teachers simply offer encouragement or comments about presentation. This results in pupils being unclear about how well they are learning and what they need to do to improve. Target setting is used sensitively to motivate and challenge pupils, but more effectively in some subjects than others. The very good practice that exists should be shared more widely. Use of homework is satisfactory. It complements and in some cases extends, work set in class. Gaps in pupils' planners used to record homework are not always followed up by form tutors.

31. Pupils of all abilities make good progress, and special educational needs pupils make very good progress, as a result of the skilful teaching that they receive. There are some strategies in place to stretch more able pupils. These include the Young Engineers' Club, entering high attaining pupils in mathematics for GCSE statistics, extra support in science for potential GCSE A\* pupils and those with potential for exceptional performance at Key Stage 3. The quality of this provision is good and it has a positive impact on standards of attainment, particularly of girls, at the higher grades.
32. Pupils with special educational needs follow the standard curriculum alongside their peers. They are supported by a strong partnership between subject teachers and learning support assistants which is characterised by high expectations. Work is sufficiently differentiated and support is closely focused, allowing pupils with special educational needs to participate in all lessons and activity. A Year 10 pupil with literacy difficulties, for example, was able to study GCSE in design and technology through the learning support assistant and subject teacher discussing the scheme of work and lesson plans, and working with the pupil on an individual basis prior to the lesson. The learning support assistant and pupil participated fully in practical and theoretical work during lessons, with the learning support assistant subsequently ensuring that the pupil had completed the required written component to GCSE standard. In both German and French, the teacher/learning support assistant partnership ensures that oral activity is both accessible and reinforced so that pupils with special educational needs play a full part in lessons - conducted wholly in the language. Pupils with special educational needs are routinely extended in their work. In English they are challenged through accessible but advanced texts and are guided through the process of identifying 'new words' and discovering 'meaning'. In science, teachers examine situations and phenomena at first hand, for example, using the car as a context to help pupils understand the concept of energy transfer and its application to more complex situations. Skilful and informed teaching, combined with experienced and sensitive support, results in pupils with special educational needs displaying positive attitudes to their work. They are predominantly enthusiastic and confident learners well able to identify and articulate their progress.

## **HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS**

33. The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements. The statutory requirement to hold a daily act of collective worship is met. Pupils are provided with a good range of learning opportunities at each key stage. Lessons are in either single units of 37.5 minutes length or double units of 75 minutes. The day runs successfully without bells to signal the end of lessons. This is indicative of a very well ordered and organised school community.
34. The National Curriculum is covered in a conventional way with appropriate allocation of time for each subject area. In Key Stage 3 pupils are placed in teaching groups in most subjects according to their attainment in the subject. This practice is continued where possible at Key Stage 4, though the composition of some groups is determined by pupils' option choices. Following the recent acquisition of specialist language college status, the school is currently considering how the Key Stage 3 curriculum might be reorganised to enable more pupils to study a second modern foreign language. Citizenship is part of the Key Stage 4 curriculum, anticipating the statutory requirement to teach citizenship that comes into force in September 2002. There is a high level of disapplication from National Curriculum design and technology, but pupils follow suitable alternative courses that meet their needs.
35. In addition to the normal range of GCSE courses in Year 10, the school also offers a GNVQ course in business at intermediate and foundation levels. This outstandingly well organised course has been very successful in meeting the learning needs of pupils of all abilities. Vocational courses have the potential for further expansion.
36. Provision to support the development of basic skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT is good with productive links forged between subjects. Literacy and numeracy skills are very effectively used in developing pupils' learning in ICT.
37. There is a very good range of extracurricular activities that broadens pupils' experience and contributes well to their personal development. It includes academic, musical and sports activities as well as inter-house competitions and recreational activities. Activities take place both at lunchtime and after school when willing parents provide the additional transport necessary. The Learning Support Team takes responsibility for a range of additional activities with pupils with special educational needs which are popular, oversubscribed and make learning fun. They contribute substantially to the development of literacy, confidence, self-esteem and other aspects of personal and social development.
38. There is good provision for pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE), building on the very high quality of relationships which exist in the school. PSHE fully meets the requirement to provide sex education and drugs education in the curriculum. Weekly PSHE lessons are effectively linked with assembly themes and the school's aims, which are embodied in the acrostic *ASPIRE*. Each pupil is expected to:
- *Achieve their full potential as individuals;*
  - *Support each other as members of a caring and creative community;*
  - *Pursue knowledge and understanding;*
  - *Involve themselves in the wide range of activities which the school offers;*
  - *Respect other people's values, beliefs and customs;*

- *Extend their horizons in the local community.*

These aims are conspicuous in all aspects of the work of the school.

39. The provision which is made to support careers and vocational education at Key Stage 4 is very good. Planning is good and is the product of substantial staff experience in this field. The school has achieved the 'Career Mark' and enjoys productive relationships with the new 'Connexions' service, including contribution at a national level. The school is pioneering the use of an internet site on which pupils can post their own CVs and Record of Achievement for consideration by prospective employers. All pupils benefit from well organised work experience placements. Examples of the use made of this were seen in pupils' work in English, modern foreign languages and ICT.
40. Personal, social and health education has improved since the previous inspection as a result of better guidance to teachers. There have been improvements in spiritual development in lessons and improvement in 'Thought for the Day' as a way of providing a daily collective act of worship. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well supported overall, though with some unevenness across the four aspects. Support for pupils' social and moral development is very good and stems from the school's ethos and the 'Respect' element of 'ASPIRE'. Good role models in respect of fairness, openness and consistency abound in school from adults and pupils alike. To support pupils' cultural development teachers take many opportunities to establish links between cultures, to explain the cultural significance of various events and to challenge pupils' cultural stereotypes. Provision to support pupils' spiritual development is more variable and less than satisfactory overall. There are too few planned opportunities for developing a sense of awe and wonder or reflecting on questions raised about human experience. The 'Thought for the Day' during tutor time has gone some way towards meeting the requirement for a daily act of collective worship but the quality of this experience varies between tutor groups. There were examples of good practice, however, such as when the teacher in a Year 9 English lesson linked discussion on bullying from a book by Malorie Blackman to the 'Thought for the Day' based on the Declaration of Human Rights.
41. Pupils with special educational needs play a full part in the life of the school community. An effective partnership between teachers and the highly qualified and experienced team of learning support assistants secures access to the full curriculum for pupils with special educational needs in all years.
42. The school works hard to forge links with primary schools, given the large number which pupils come from and good pastoral information is acquired as a result. Links with local schools and colleges providing post-16 education are strong and pupils are able to make informed choices about the next stage of their education.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

43. The quality of pastoral care throughout the school is very high and represents a significant strength of its work. Its success is grounded in the high quality of the individual care and support provided for all pupils. Teaching staff and non-teaching staff alike all contribute to the care and support of pupils. The school is united as a caring community which lives its aims. The school has built on the high standards reported in

the previous inspection.

44. Arrangements to ensure pupils' welfare, health and safety, including child protection and first aid, are very good. Procedures for child protection are clear and comply fully with requirements. Staff are regularly reminded of them. Procedures for first aid are very good and appropriate care is exercised when medication is brought into school. Accidents and injuries are recorded and parents informed promptly. The school has a comprehensive policy in place for health and safety. Regular, documented checks are carried out. The school has successfully addressed the health and safety issues raised in the previous inspection report. The site manager works hard to ensure that health and safety issues are addressed as soon as possible. In lessons such as science, design and technology, art and design and physical education, teachers pay good attention to health and safety. Pupils also show good levels of awareness, for example teachers rarely have to ask them to put on goggles during design and technology lessons. Pupils are well supervised outside lessons and prefects help staff to patrol the corridors.
45. The systems in place for monitoring pupils' personal development are very good. Pupils are very well known to their form tutors and heads of house. Teachers care about pupils' success. Form tutors have daily contact with their form at morning and afternoon registration. They are responsible for delivering the 'Thought for the Day', but in some instances this is made less effective by the late arrival of pupils; time for appropriate reflection is lost. Form tutors also teach the programme of personal and social education (PSHE). The quality of teaching overall in the lessons observed was good. Pupils generally value the PSHE lessons. Action planning sessions are incorporated into the PSHE programme in all years. This process enables pupils to evaluate their own strengths and to set themselves appropriate targets for improvement. Pupils value this opportunity to become more involved in their own learning. The amount of time form tutors spend with their form each week allows them to monitor the personal development of pupils very effectively.
46. The school has effective measures in place to promote the importance of regular attendance and has succeeded in sustaining the very good levels of attendance over time. The comprehensive attendance policy lays down clear guidelines for the promotion of good attendance as well as for following up any unexplained absence. Parents support the school by the routine reporting of absence. The education welfare service is involved appropriately in those cases where absence becomes a cause for concern. Lateness is monitored and lateness due to transport delays is recorded. This, however, has a limited impact on the levels of lateness as the delays that occur are beyond the control of the school.
47. The school has excellent measures in place to promote good behaviour and to address bullying and other forms of harassment. The behaviour management policy, linked to the policies for anti-bullying and for rewards and sanctions, provides an excellent framework for promoting good behaviour and monitoring behaviour. Pupils understand the very high expectations placed on them and almost always rise to them. A notable feature of the school's success in this area of its work is the reward system, which is linked to the well-publicised school aims (*ASPIRE*). Pupils are given recognition for achievement in all of the six areas of the aims and are very well motivated by this, wearing their badges with pride. The system of sanctions is clear and implemented with

good levels of consistency by staff. Appropriate procedures for exclusion of pupils are in place and followed when necessary. The school is so successful in early intervention that incidents of exclusion are rare. Individual plans to support behaviour are used effectively to help those pupils who find it difficult to sustain good behaviour. In fact, the procedures for dealing with persistent poor behaviour have not been invoked for some time and no pupils are currently being taken through them. The anti-bullying policy, backed up by work in assembly and PSHE lessons, is very effective in ensuring that bullying is reported to staff. Pupils are confident that reported incidents are dealt with firmly and quickly. They feel safe in school, aware that there is always an adult to turn to in time of need. The excellent relationships and high levels of mutual respect between staff and pupils make a significant contribution to the promotion of good behaviour.

48. The systems in place to identify and support pupils with special educational needs are very effective. The requirements of the Code of Practice for special educational needs are fully met. The requirements of the statements of special educational need are fully met. The monitoring and review of progress are very effective and involve parents appropriately. Individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs provide a firm basis for good progress. The setting and reviewing of individual education plans is a good example of the effective partnership present in the school. Typically represented at such reviews are the pupil, the pupil's principal carers, the special educational needs co-ordinator, head of house, the tutor, learning support assistant, the community medical officer and other key professionals. Parents appreciate the time, support and conduct applied to these formal occasions, approach the Learning Support Team with confidence and value the 'helpline' and 'open door' facility. The work of the Learning Support Team has recently been recognised by a Parent Partnership Award, which will provide a further impetus to the development of enhanced links with parents and carers. Pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated into every aspect of the life of the school. They are well supported by their peers as well as by staff.
49. Pupils' work is regularly and conscientiously marked and assessed. A range of assignments and tests are set and each pupil's attainment and progress are recorded in a variety of ways. The school's assessment policy sets out broad guidelines rather than specific practice so that pupils experience different ways of marking in different subjects. Combinations of grades, percentages and National Curriculum levels are used. Pupils understand the methods used in different subjects despite this lack of coherence. In some subjects, particularly design and technology, marking does not relate sufficiently to pupils' progress towards their examination targets. Targets are set using pupils' results in external tests, but the use of this information, and other information from marking and assessment, is not consistently used to guide teachers' lesson planning. Teachers in some subjects are not using the information from national tests to check if pupils are on target to make the progress predicted by this data, though very good practice does exist in the school in several subjects. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is rising. It is important that the systems in place are used more consistently in order to ensure that work of sufficient challenge is provided for each pupil. The assessment of progress made by pupils with special educational needs is very good and carefully referenced to pupils' individual education plans.

## HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

50. Forty per cent of parents and those with parental responsibility made their views known by completing the inspection questionnaire. Thirty-one parents attended the parents' meeting with inspectors. Those parents who made their views known were extremely supportive of the school and did not identify any significant concerns. In particular, they are confident that the school achieves high standards of good behaviour, is well led and managed and that the teaching is good. Parents state that the school expects their child to work hard to achieve his or her best and that the school is helping its pupils to become mature and responsible. There is general agreement that the school achieves good standards and their children make good progress. The school is considered to be approachable and staff respond promptly when parents report a problem. A small number of parents do not believe that they are kept well informed about their child's progress or have concerns that their child does not get the right amount of homework.
51. Inspectors' evidence fully supports the parents' positive views of the school. There is some evidence to support the view of those parents who feel they are not well informed about the progress their child is making. Though parents receive a full annual report for their child each year as well as the chance to attend consultation evenings, reports are not consistently good at providing details of specific progress within each subject, although there are examples of good practice. Inspection evidence does not support those parents who had concerns about homework. In general, homework is used effectively to support pupils' learning, but there are instances of pupils' journals having few entries.
52. The school provides a wide variety of useful information for parents. The prospectus is attractively presented and contains the full range of information required. The annual report of governors provides a good level of detail. Regular newsletters give advance notice of events and developments as well as celebrating pupils' achievements. Parents are provided with an outline of the curriculum. All pupils have a homework diary. This provides a wealth of detailed information, including the homework timetable and is, in some cases, well developed into an effective means of communication between parents and the form tutor. Effective systems are in place to ensure that parents are kept informed by telephone or letter of any concerns about attendance, attitude or behaviour. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are very well informed and involved at all stages. Plans to develop this partnership further by setting up a parents' support group are well advanced. The school is committed to working closely with parents and keeps them well informed of developments.
53. Parents have three formal opportunities a year to consult with their child's teachers. Consultation evenings are well attended. In Year 7 the autumn term consultation evening allows parents to discuss how well their child is settling into school. Parents of pupils in Year 9 are appropriately involved in the option choice process. One full progress report is provided each year. From the sample of reports seen, most provide a clear picture of the pupils' strengths and weaknesses in each subject although there is variation in the quality of reports between subjects. Most provide a clear indication of attainment in all subjects, although the National Curriculum level the pupil is working at, or towards, is not provided. The reporting of progress is inconsistent. Comments are



not always sufficiently related to specific progress made in skills, knowledge and understanding for each subject. Often comments relate to attitude, effort and enjoyment and do not focus sufficiently on specific ways pupils can improve their learning. Some form tutors comment on the pupil's achievements in personal and social education but this is not consistently done, which is a weakness.

54. The school has a comprehensive induction programme for new pupils. Parents are involved from the early stages, being invited into the primary school when the assistant head teacher visits. Year 7 pupils enjoyed their induction and state that it helped them to settle into school quickly. During the inspection, the school was holding its annual Open Week for prospective parents. Several parents shared their very positive first impressions with inspectors, stressing the valuable information provided by polite and confident pupil guides.
55. Parents actively and enthusiastically support the school association. This raises large sums of money annually to support the school's work. Parents helped to raise sponsorship for the school's successful bid for language college status. School concerts, productions and awards evenings are very well attended. A significant number of parents support extracurricular activities by providing transport. An appropriate home-school agreement is in place, emphasising the importance of school, parents and children working together. The school involves parents in an annual consultation using questionnaires. As a result of this, changes have been made; for instance, staff have tried hard to ensure that pupils enter all homework in their journals. A parents' forum is held to provide an opportunity for parents to be actively involved in discussion about issues and developments. Parents are encouraged to contact the school whenever they have any concerns about their child's work, progress or behaviour. Staff aim to respond during the same working day or within twenty-four hours to parental concerns. Form tutors and heads of house contact parents at an early stage when concerns arise.
56. Parents and external agencies vouch for the care, professionalism and commitment of the Learning Support Team. Parents typically comment upon the fact that the special educational needs co-ordinator and the learning support team "always have time for us" and "make us feel that our child is the most important child in the school". The Learning Support Unit is equally welcoming to parents as it is to pupils, teachers and external agencies. It is invariably a friendly and purposeful hive of activity exuding a real educational buzz.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

57. The headteacher has led the school very effectively since the previous inspection, continuing the drive to raise standards of attainment and to produce pupils who are mature and responsible young adults. By the efforts of the visionary headteacher and governors, the school has been taken from possible closure to become a school that is oversubscribed, attracts pupils from considerable distances, has additional accommodation and competes successfully with local selective schools for pupils from the full range of ability. The deputy headteachers and senior management team support the headteacher effectively. Individuals' roles sometimes overlap. This has advantages in that their overall awareness of issues is good. Very good staff have been attracted to the school and it has received many national accolades including Investor in People,

Career Mark, Sports Mark, and a school improvement award from the DfES. These have been used to raise the profile of the school in the community and move the school forward. Acquisition of language college status is a major coup for the school, reflecting the commitment of the headteacher, staff, governors and parents to continuous improvement in the opportunities it offers.

58. The school's development plan is a comprehensive document combining departmental development plans with school priorities for raising standards. The plan incorporates the targets required by language college status and provides a challenging catalogue of objectives for the school to aim at. Financial allocations, though they exist, are not always shown in development plans and the in-service training recorded does not reflect the high standard of this aspect of performance management recorded in individual staff development portfolios.
59. Evaluation of the work of the school is largely through analysis of data on pupils' performance in national tests at age 11, 14 and 16 and through performance management. The school has implemented the requirements for performance management. It has successfully completed the first cycle of monitoring teachers' progress towards their objectives set early in the year by observation of teaching and consideration of pupils' results. Senior managers are team leaders for performance management. They have relatively large teams to oversee, a management decision taken to put them in a position to have a better overview and influence on practice. Senior managers have yet to share the very best practice they have identified as part of the process of school improvement and the second cycle of performance management. The school has a creative approach to in-service training that includes teachers visiting other schools and departments.
60. The use of pupil performance data is improving. The assessment co-ordinator provides detailed information through the school's ICT system about pupils' performance in national tests and how it predicts their future attainment. This information is not universally used to best effect. There is good practice in business studies and ICT, for example, where staff have excellent awareness of pupils' potential attainment as predicted by their performance in the national tests at 11 and 14. They gear the work set for pupils with this in mind, share it judiciously with pupils and use it to identify underperformance. National Curriculum test results show that the current Year 7 intake had a significantly higher level of attainment at age 11 than did the pupils who took GCSE exams in 2001. The school needs to make more consistent use of pupil performance data to ensure that appropriately high expectations and targets are set for pupils by teachers in all subjects.
61. Middle managers work well as a team. There is good delegation by the headteacher to heads of department and very good team spirit in departments. Some departments make excellent use of assessment and pupil performance data, marking, lesson planning and evaluation of teaching and learning. However, there are inconsistencies in these aspects across departments, together with insufficient sharing of existing best practice.
62. Management of special educational needs is excellent. The learning support department is a model of exceptional leadership, management and achievement. The special educational needs co-ordinator, who is a member of the senior management team, has

established a well resourced department which benefits from a comprehensive range of expertise. The high level of qualifications and expertise of learning support assistants and their effective deployment enable excellent access of pupils with special educational needs to the full curriculum. The excellent partnership between pupils with special educational needs, learning support assistants, teachers and parents is a strength of the school. Learning support assistants are valued, they appreciate their position as respected members of the educational community and they make a valuable contribution to school effectiveness. A good feature of a clearly articulated departmental development plan is the commitment to continuous improvement and professional development. Departmental resources are deployed efficiently and effectively.

63. The school aims, encapsulated in the acrostic *ASPIRE*, are very evident in the life of the school. 'R for respect' was the theme running through assembly and 'Thought for the Day' during the week of the inspection. Mutual respect is evident between all in the school. Good relationships contribute to pupils' progress, their enjoyment of school, the harmonious community and the rich extracurricular life of the school. The non-teaching staff share the school's aspirations and make a major contribution to its ethos. The school is very inclusive. There is equality of access for all. Pupils with special educational needs are totally integrated into every aspect of school life.
64. The governing body is very well informed and fully conversant with its roles and responsibilities. They are regular visitors to the school as part of the link governor scheme which also involves regular reports and presentations to the governing body from departments. This plays an important part in governors' understanding of the strengths and priorities of the school.
65. The committee structure and meetings schedule are effective in enabling the governing body to manage its responsibilities and day-to-day functions. Financial challenges resulting from the school's change of status have been very well managed. Budgeting has been particularly taxing during the change from the school managing its own budget as a grant maintained school to being a foundation school as part of the Local Education Authority. Transitional arrangements resulted in new ways of allocating funding during the last financial year, affecting financial planning adversely in ways which could not have been foreseen. The finance committee, aided by the school bursar, has managed the consequent shortfall in funds very effectively. Additional windfall funding and postponement of some maintenance work have ensured that resources for teaching and learning have not suffered. The budget shortfall is minimal in the current financial year. Spending is closely monitored by the governors' finance committee, bursar and senior staff. Effective use is made of ICT to support the systems for monitoring and management of the budget. Financial planning for Language College status is very thorough. The school's parents' association played a key role in obtaining the sponsorship necessary for the successful bid.
66. The school has been successful in recruiting well-qualified staff over the last five years. At a time when teacher supply causes concern nationally, successful recruitment reflects the effectiveness of the school's systems and the appeal of the school to high calibre applicants.
67. Accommodation is good and very well looked after. The site is very well maintained

and attractive. Resources are very good, with the exception of ICT facilities in mathematics, music and science. Improvements are planned. Accommodation and resources are well cared for, reflecting the ethos of respect in the school, and have a positive impact on standards.

68. The school applies the principles of best value (compare, challenge, consult and compete) in its work. It challenges itself about the provision that it makes, for example introducing vocational courses open to pupils of all abilities to provide a vocational element to the curriculum. It regularly consults parents, for example, about homework and the Key Stage 4 curriculum, and pupils through the school council. The principle of competition is applied when considering expenditure on equipment and maintenance. The ICT technician and site manager both bring skills to their posts which save the school money. Comparison with similar schools in terms of benchmarking spending and pupils' performance is difficult, given its unusual pattern of intake. Limited data exists for non-selective schools in selective areas and the take up of free school meals gives a false picture of pupils' circumstances as shown by local authority data for local wards which indicates significant rural deprivation. Foundation school finances are not benchmarked, which makes comparison very difficult. Nevertheless, the school is constantly seeking to improve on its previous best performance. It continues to provide good value for money and has the systems and strategies in place to continue to improve.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

69. In order to sustain improvement and further raise standards, the headteacher, governors and senior managers should:

- (i) improve the sharing of good practice used by teachers and departments in:
  - marking pupils' work and assessing their progress;  
*(see paragraphs 30, 49, 61, 78, 99, 118, 140, 167, 183)*
  - using information from assessment to track individual pupils' work and set targets for their improvement;  
*(see paragraphs 30, 49, 61, 78, 90, 103, 111, 118, 167, 175, 183)*
  - planning lessons to provide a consistently high level of challenge for all pupils in the class.  
*(see paragraphs 30, 61, 88, 99, 109, 121, 129, 141)*

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### *Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection*

Number of lessons observed

164

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

57

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	15	52	62	30	5	0	0
Percentage	9	32	38	18	3	0	0

*The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching*

### *Information about the school's pupils*

#### **Pupils on the school's roll**

Y7 – Y11

Number of pupils on the school's roll

709

Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals

35

#### **Special educational needs**

Y7 – Y11

Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs

31

Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register

170

#### **English as an additional language**

No of pupils

Number of pupils with English as an additional language

0

#### **Pupil mobility in the last school year**

No of pupils

Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission

12

Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving

17

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.9
National comparative data	7.6

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.002
National comparative data	1.0

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 (Year 9)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2000	72	47	119

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	38	52	51
	Girls	30	30	23
	Total	68	82	74
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	58 (69)	70 (75)	62 (57)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	14 (19)	34 (32)	22 (22)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	39	53	50
	Girls	35	33	28
	Total	74	86	78
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	63 (45)	73 (60)	66 (65)
	National	63 (63)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	12 (8)	36 (25)	34 (25)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

***Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 (Year 11)***

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	65	36	101

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	21	61	63
	Girls	21	36	36
	Total	97	96	98
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	42 (37)	96 (96)	98 (99)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

*Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.*

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	37
	National	38.4



**Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	707
Any other minority ethnic group	0

**Exclusions in the last school year**

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	15	2
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

*This table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.*

**Teachers and classes****Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	42
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17

**Education support staff: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	297

**Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75.8
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**Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	23.4
Key Stage 4	21.04

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Financial information**

Financial year	2000/1
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	£
Total income	1752569
Total expenditure	1833139
Expenditure per pupil	2748
Balance brought forward from previous year	13429
Balance carried forward to next year	-67141

***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	4
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	10.5
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## ***Results of the survey of parents and carers***

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	707
Number of questionnaires returned	268

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	44	50	4	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	42	49	3	0	6
Behaviour in the school is good.	37	59	0	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	27	57	12	2	2
The teaching is good.	43	51	0	0	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	30	49	13	1	7
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	66	31	2	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	72	26	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	42	44	9	0	5
The school is well led and managed.	63	34	1	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	45	48	4	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	32	55	6	0	8

### **Other issues raised by parents**

Some parents expressed concerns about the adequacy of school transport.

## PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

### ENGLISH

Overall, the quality of provision is **good**.

#### Strengths

- Standards in English at both Key Stages 3 and 4 are improving.
- Teachers have good relationships with pupils, manage behaviour effectively and create a very positive atmosphere for learning in lessons.
- Pupils are very well behaved, have good attitudes to the subject and respond well to work set.
- The head of department provides good leadership and management.

#### Areas for improvement.

- Marking of exercise books at Key Stage 3 needs to be used more consistently to tell pupils what they need to do to improve their work and to guide teaching.
- There is insufficient use of data on pupils' prior attainment to set targets and guide the expectations of individual pupils. Pupils' knowledge of their performance is not sufficiently well linked to the National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades that they are expected to achieve.

70. In the 2000 National Curriculum tests for 14 year olds (in Year 9), 58% of pupils attained Level 5 or above. This was slightly below the national average but slightly above average for similar schools. Girls on average did better than boys but the difference was smaller than nationally. Results in 2001 improved slightly overall with 62% of pupils attaining Level 5 or above. These results were similar to those achieved nationally, but girls did better than both boys in the school and girls nationally.
71. Overall standards by the end of Year 9 are consistent with recent national tests. They show an improvement since the last inspection. The impact of effective teaching on pupils' progress was shown in a Year 8 lesson when the teacher's use of clear objectives, high expectations and an active approach to reading enabled pupils to explore complexities within the language of *Twelfth Night* and understand the various layers of meaning. Overall, the progress made by pupils from Years 7 - 9 is sound.
72. In recent years, results in the GCSE examinations for **English language** have improved although they are still below the national average. In the 2000 examinations, 38% of pupils gained an A\*-C in English. This was well below the national figure, but average for schools of a similar kind. Girls performed significantly better than boys, to a greater extent than nationally. In 2001, pupils did better, with 44% gaining an A\*-C grade. Girls continued to do better than boys but to a lesser extent than in 2000. The difference remains greater than nationally, largely but not fully reflecting the differences in girls' and boys' attainments on entry to the school.
73. GCSE results in **English literature** have varied widely in recent years, mainly due to a change in examination entry policy between 2000 and 2001. In 2000 63% of pupils

were entered for the examination and 50% of them achieved an A\*-C grade. This was below the national average. In 2001 30% of them achieved an A\*-C grade on the basis of 93% entry. In 2000 and 2001 the results were below the national average and girls outperformed boys by a wide margin.

74. Work seen in lessons and in the representative sample of pupils' work from Year 9 (Key Stage 3) and Year 11 (Key Stage 4) showed no significant difference in overall attainment of boys and girls currently in the school. The department is addressing the difference between the examination performance of boys and girls in a variety of ways, including for 2002 an extension to the number of boys deemed eligible for higher tier entry GCSE English and GCSE English literature. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and do well in GCSE examinations.
75. By the end of Year 9 in *speaking and listening* most pupils listen attentively and value the contributions of others. They respond so as to clarify their thinking, explore ideas and they are fluent in their use of Standard English when appropriate. Pupils are often provided with motivating, challenging speaking and listening opportunities. In a Year 9 class, for example, pupils produced an extract from 'The Bogeyman' by David Calcutt as a radio play with confidence and a good command of the appropriate technical language. A weekly timetabled drama lesson makes a valuable contribution to the development of speaking and listening. During these periods, less confident speakers are particularly well supported by teachers and learning support staff. In some English lessons, however, pupils are expected to listen passively for lengthy periods of time. In these lessons there are insufficient strategies in place to monitor what pupils understand and they lack real engagement with the subject matter. By the end of Year 11 pupils are confident in matching their talk to a range of contexts and are able to discuss a range of topics in groups and in pairs. This is used particularly effectively to explore ideas and effects in poetry as when, for example, Year 11 pupils were relating their own experiences to those of characters in the poem *Our Love Now* by Martin Lowery.
76. Throughout Years 7 - 9, pupils are encouraged to read widely and discriminatingly with valuable use being made of a reading log to encourage pupils to focus on key aspects of texts. Most pupils are able to locate, retrieve and collate information effectively, as was seen during a Year 7 library skills unit where pupils were successfully researching information in response to questions they had devised. When there are opportunities to read aloud, most pupils do so with accuracy and some with good intonation and expression. By the end of Year 11, pupils at all levels of ability show an awareness of the thematic, structural and linguistic features of texts, with particularly good use being made of ICT to support this process. In a Year 10 lesson, a stimulating unit of work requiring pupils to produce a *PowerPoint* presentation enabled pupils across a wide ability range to illustrate the impact and effect of poetry by Simon Armitage.
77. Review of pupils' written work showed that, by the end of Year 9 pupils are attaining in line with national expectations. Many pupils produce a good range of writing, including stories, descriptive pieces and responses to literature. The majority of pupils at the start of Year 7 show care with presentation. High attaining pupils in Years 7 - 9 are able to write independently at greater length than low attaining pupils, but the latter clearly benefit from the support provided by learning support assistants, with good use made of strategies to help pupils structure their writing. In a Year 8 lesson, for example, writing

grids and writing frames were used effectively by learning support assistants to help lower ability pupils acquire the vocabulary needed to describe Scrooge's feelings and reactions in Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. By the end of Year 11, higher attaining pupils are able to write fluently and have developed an effective technical vocabulary which is used with understanding. The review of pupils' work showed that for some pupils of average attainment the quantity of work produced by the start of Year 11 is too low.

78. The marking of pupils' exercise books at Key Stage 3 is inconsistent. Some examples were seen of thorough and constructive marking that supported learning. In many cases, marking of early drafts of work was either non-existent or did not tell pupils what they needed to do to improve their work prior to production of a finished piece. Most marking at Key Stage 4 is, however, developmental and showed teachers' high level of subject knowledge. At both key stages pupils are not set explicit targets for improvement and pupils do not know how to reach their next National Curriculum level.
79. Teaching at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 is very good overall. Staff have very good subject knowledge and understanding which is reinforced by good lesson planning. Teachers set clear learning objectives; at Key Stage 3 these are principally drawn from the national strategy framework for English teaching. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' work and conduct. Good use is made of questioning to extend pupils' thinking and accurate use of terminology. This was demonstrated in a Year 11 lesson exploring the nature and effect of accent and dialect in '*Educating Rita*' by Willy Russell. Lessons have good pace and variety, with effective use of time targets, but this is sometimes at the expense of the checking and consolidation of understanding. Classroom display is of a high standard. Homework use is sound.
80. The head of department leads and manages the department well and has a clear understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. The development plan for English provides a clear framework for further improvement in quality of provision and standards. This addresses in particular the issue of boys' relative underachievement and plans to raise standards. The department works collaboratively and makes good use of resources. The head of department has not been in post long enough to monitor the quality of teaching and learning in the department through lesson observation. Progress on all issues raised in the last inspection has been very good.

### ***Literacy***

81. The development of ***literacy*** across the curriculum is well supported by a range of departments. In modern foreign languages and physical education, schemes of work explicitly highlighted literacy links and were making good use of them in lessons. In GNVQ business, pupils demonstrated a high standard of communication skills, especially in relation to drafting, the use of subject-specific language and presentation. The learning support department makes significant provision to develop pupils' literacy, including a very successful Reading Club on four days each week. Literacy skills are, however, less developed in religious education where the department does not have a departmental statement on literacy and pupils produce much fragmented and incomplete writing.

## MATHEMATICS

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is **very good**.

### Strengths

- Pupils' attainment is improving and the school's results are well above the national averages at ages 14 and 16.
- The quality of teaching is very good.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning mathematics.
- The head of mathematics leads and manages the department very well. Good teamwork is a key element to success.

### Areas for improvement

- Increasing the ICT resources.
- Agreeing targets for improvement and achievement with pupils.

82. In 2000, results in the National Curriculum tests at the age of 14 were very close to the national average. In 2001, results had improved significantly to well above the national average and were better than those achieved by similar schools. In both years, a higher proportion of boys than girls achieved the nationally expected levels for their age, in line with boys' high attainment on intake; nationally girls slightly outperform boys.
83. The standard of current pupils' work at Key Stage 3 is better than expected for their age. The department places a strong emphasis on all pupils using and applying their mathematics and on pupils become increasingly confident and adept at investigating a problem, recognising and extending a pattern and generalising a solution. For example, the more able pupils use algebra to state the rule for number sequences; they understand how to predict results and test a hypothesis. Pupils of average attainment use a calculator efficiently and they interpret the display to give a sensible answer. Lower attaining pupils are able to calculate mentally simple fractions of whole numbers. Pupils with special educational needs know and use key mathematical words correctly but their knowledge and use of number is weak. The department has insufficient ICT resources and, consequently, all pupils' attainments using a computer falls short of expectations.
84. In the GCSE examinations in 2000, pupils' results were close to the national average. Pupils obtained significantly better grades overall in mathematics than in other subjects. Girls achieved slightly higher results on average than boys, which is in line with results nationally. In 2001 the GCSE results improved significantly to well above national results. Three pupils were entered additionally for GCSE statistics, providing effective challenge for higher attaining pupils, and they each achieved a higher grade.
85. In work seen during the inspection, Key Stage 4 pupils achieved standards better than those expected for their age and attainment on entry. For example, the more able pupils can calculate the mean and standard deviation of a distribution and explain their method and solution; they cannot, however, always interpret their results. They have very good mental calculation skills and use a calculator efficiently. Pupils of average attainment can use a graphical calculator to investigate parallel lines and their equations. Lower attaining pupils can calculate the mean of a grouped frequency distribution and

understand that it is only an estimate. Pupils with special educational needs can accurately draw the net of a square based pyramid on card, cut it out and make a good model.

86. Attitudes are very good in all years. Pupils work with interest. At Key Stage 3 they write their answers to the mental mathematics questions on a small white board and hold up for the teacher and class to see. They respect and listen to the teacher and to other pupils. In Key Stage 4 they discuss questions sensibly and productively. An indication of their interest and confidence is that they ask questions if unsure. All pupils settle well at the start of lessons and they are immediately attentive. Pupils take an active part in lessons. They volunteer to explain their own methods, sometimes demonstrating to the class using the overhead projector. Their positive attitude contributes significantly to their progress and achievement.
87. Teaching is very good. At both key stages, and with all abilities of pupils, teachers use methods which are very effective in promoting high standards, pupils' confidence and good understanding. Teachers have a very good subject knowledge. They have high expectations of pupils. Teachers encourage pupils to work both individually and in groups. An ethos is established in which pupils ask questions and volunteer their ideas quite naturally. Teachers and pupils show mutual respect and listen to each other. Pupils are managed well.
88. The strengths in teaching far outweigh the weaknesses. The overhead projector is used well by teachers to demonstrate and illustrate mathematics to the class. Teachers actively involve all pupils in lessons. Learning support assistants work collaboratively with teachers and, in addition to providing specialist help for pupils with statements of special educational need, they work flexibly to assist other pupils experiencing difficulty. Lessons start at a brisk pace with mental mathematics questions to draw pupils into mathematical thinking. However, teachers do not consistently share the learning objectives of the lesson with pupils and lessons tend to finish without a review. The higher attaining pupils in groups are not consistently challenged.
89. The quality and range of learning opportunities are very good. In Key Stage 3 the scheme of work covers all aspects of the National Curriculum. From this term, the department has also been implementing the National Numeracy Strategy for Key Stage 3. In Key Stage 4 the curriculum is well matched to GCSE requirements. There is a strong emphasis throughout the curriculum on developing pupils' skills in using and applying their mathematics through questioning and investigating. The department has insufficient computers which limits the opportunities to develop pupils' capabilities in using ICT. Mathematics makes an important contribution to pupils' moral, social and cultural development. Statistics have been used in 'Thought for the Day' and assemblies to address moral issues. Social skills are developed through group discussion. To widen cultural awareness the department organised a *Polish Mathematics* week; and *Hungarian Mathematics* is planned as part of the school's Language College status.
90. The department is very well led and managed. A collaborative style encourages teachers to work together. An open, non-critical, conjectural atmosphere pervades all the work of the department both as a staff team and in classrooms with pupils. Teachers meet weekly to discuss the current topic in the scheme of work and effective teaching



approaches for the topic. In this way, the curriculum is dynamic and under constant review and development. Good practice in the department is shared and those teaching a topic for the first time are well supported. A department development plan identifies the areas for further development, including ICT, and it is matched to the school's development plan. Pupils' performance data is analysed in detail but this information is not generally shared with pupils to agree targets with them for improvement. The head of department does not directly monitor and evaluate the work of teachers; some inconsistencies in marking were evident.

91. The department has made good progress since the last inspection.

### *Numeracy*

92. Pupils' numeracy is good. Pupils use their mathematics in a variety of contexts. In English lessons, they use the dates of events to calculate periods of time. In science, they collect data and make tables and charts. They also estimate and check their methods. In geography lessons, pupils accurately represented the results of a survey on Year 11 prefects. Pupils use numbers, counting and timetables well in French. In art and design, they use proportion and scale. Pupils use angles well in physical education, responding to instructions to perform 90 degree, 180 degree and 360 degree turns. In GNVQ business, pupils use their mathematical skills to a high level.

## **SCIENCE**

Overall, the quality of provision in science is **good, with some very good features.**

### Strengths

- The good quality of the teaching.
- The good relationships between pupils and staff.
- The maintenance of challenging standards for **all** pupils.
- Teachers manage classes well and have high expectations of behaviour and attitude of all pupils.
- The positive response and approach to science by pupils.
- Lessons are usually well prepared and delivered by teachers who are enthusiastic for science and care about the pupils.
- The provision of good specialist accommodation and a positive, secure ethos for learning.

### Areas for improvement

- Target setting and the tracking of progress for individual pupils in all years.
- Use of assessment to inform progress in pupils' National Curriculum levels and identify action required for improvement.
- Use of ICT in science.
- Building the work for pupils in Year 7 more securely on what they have already done and learned in primary school.
- The completion of schemes of work at Key Stage 3.

93. On entry, attainment at Key Stage 2 was below the national average for 2000 and is at the national average for 2001. The attainment of each cohort varies from year to year due to the County's admission arrangements. In any one cohort the number of highest attaining pupils is lower than expected, particularly for girls.
94. The attainment of pupils in science at the end of Key Stage 3 is well above the national average. Performance over the last four years shows the results to be close to or above national averages and improving in line with the national trend. In 2000, results were close to the national average but test results for 2001 show a marked improvement. A high number of pupils (82%) achieved the nationally expected level of Level 5 and above, compared with 66% nationally. Boys perform better than girls at Key Stage 3.
95. At the end of Key Stage 4, GCSE results in science have also improved, although with some variations. In 2000, results in science were close to the national averages with 42% of pupils obtaining A\*-C grades, whereas figures for 2001 show a considerable improvement as 50% of pupils obtained A\*-C in science. In 2000, few pupils obtained the higher grades at GCSE. This situation was redressed in 2001, with the higher grades being reached by girls as well as boys. There is now a reasonable spread of attainment across all grades. These results are close to the national average and are higher than those from similar schools. For the past two years, 100% of pupils obtained at least one A\* - G grade in science, which is well above the national average.
96. Standards of work seen during the inspection reflect these positive recent test and examination results. Pupils make good progress through the school in improving their scientific knowledge and skills. The improvement is greater at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3, and is greater in Years 8 and 9 than in Year 7 as a result of unnecessary repetition of work from Key Stage 2. Attainment and progress are especially good for pupils with special educational needs. The department is showing a healthy trend of improvement in results, in line with national trends.
97. In lessons, attainment at Key Stages 3 and 4 is generally at or above the nationally expected levels. The highest attaining groups of pupils in the year groups do not always reflect higher than average attainment. This is due to a number of factors, namely the loss of high attaining pupils at transfer, particularly the girls, and a lower teacher expectation of this group, particularly at Key Stage 3 and in Year 7.
98. Practical skills are better developed at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3. In Key Stage 4, most pupils improve their ability to conduct a scientific investigation because this is clearly defined in the GCSE course. Pupils enjoy practical work and enjoy it safely and with good emphasis on scientific accuracy.
99. Teaching is good and often very good in both key stages. It is better overall at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3. There are many strengths in the teaching of science. Teachers' subject knowledge and enthusiasm enable clear and accurate explanations, accurate use of scientific terms, effective demonstrations and clear instructions. In a Year 8 science lesson, for example, the teacher was able to explain the theory of molecular digestion through step-by-step modelling. This enabled pupils of all abilities to understand this scientific concept. Teachers confidently relate abstract scientific concepts and principles to everyday situations, bringing the subject to life and giving it

relevance. For example, in a Year 9 lesson, the teacher skilfully explained the scientific concepts of immunity drawing on pupils' own experiences of vaccination. All teachers demand high standards of scientific accuracy in responses to questions and answers, in written work, predictions and evaluations. For example, in a Year 10 physics lesson the teacher demanded high level, critical responses to structured questioning, raising expectations and engagement of the pupils. All teachers generally exercise good classroom management and have high expectations of good behaviour. They have good relationships with pupils and care about pupils' success. The positive attitude of pupils to science acts positively to lift the quality of teaching and learning further. Pupils with special educational needs attain well due to the teachers using a range of learning styles and to good quality, targeted support which is well matched to the learning needs of the pupils. Homework is used constructively to develop learning in the lesson. For example, in a Year 11 biology group, pupils were asked to develop a teaching aid to appraise fellow pupils of research topics on the environment; in a Year 11 physics lesson, pupils were given challenging calculations to reinforce their work on Pascal's law of hydraulics. In many lessons, however, teachers make insufficient use of learning objectives to help pupils recognise what is to be learned and to summarise at the end of lessons. This leads to a lack of focus. Written work is frequently and regularly marked but generally gives little guidance to pupils on how to improve. For a minority of pupils, the setting arrangements do not match pupils' attainment, particularly in Year 7.

100. Pupils have positive attitudes to science and behave very well in lessons. The great majority are attentive to teachers' explanations and instructions. Pupils work carefully and with good pace. They concentrate well in lessons, with good intent to complete tasks accurately and are often quick to respond to questions. Almost all pupils enjoy practical work which they carry out carefully and with due regard for their health and safety. They work well in pairs and small groups, discussing the work and helping each other. In no lesson seen was pupils' behaviour or attitude in science less than satisfactory and in the majority of lessons it was very good or better.
101. The science curriculum meets National Curriculum and GCSE requirements. It provides effective support for teachers, with the exception of the incomplete scheme of work for Key Stage 3. The choice of a modular science course greatly assists many pupils to achieve. The use of ICT to support science is currently limited. Though the department knows pupils' attainment at key moments in the pupils' career in science, little use is made of assessment to support pupils' learning by diagnosing weaknesses, establishing remedial action or offering measurable targets for improvement.
102. The department's leadership and management are good and focus on the achievement of high standards. The department works well as a team of teachers and technician under the guidance of an effective and hard working head of department to promote enjoyment and achievement in science. The annual plan for development lacks details of the criteria by which success is to be judged, the identification of what steps need to be taken and an effective system for monitoring and evaluating its progress.
103. Pupils generally make good progress in attaining standards that are broadly in line with national averages. However, the good teaching leading to this progress is not adequately supported by a detailed picture of what each pupil is capable of achieving. Analysis of pupils' past performance is informal and under-developed and pupils are not set specific targets for improving their work. This was an issue arising from the

previous inspection. There is reference to the need for target setting in the department handbook but there is no development planning for the introduction of systematic methods for monitoring pupils' progress and setting them targets.

104. Progress since the last inspection overall has been satisfactory – most of the necessary changes have taken place quite recently or are planned for the immediate future. The department has successfully maintained the strengths identified in the previous inspection report and has moved forward in a number of other areas e.g. improving girls' attainment at Key Stage 3 and boys' at Key Stage 4 together with improving all health and safety aspects of the course. There are still some key areas that require attention, for example, development of assessment and target setting. Schemes of work also require further development.

## ART AND DESIGN

Overall, the quality of provision in art and design is **good**.

### Strengths

- Standards of attainment, especially those attained by pupils in Key Stage 4.
- The quality of teaching provided by the subject specialist, particularly at Key Stage 4.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning at both key stages.

### Areas for improvement

- The curriculum arrangements for the delivery of art and design at Key Stage 3.
- The use of non-specialist teaching in Key Stage 3.
- The use of assessment information and how it is shared with pupils.

105. Current curriculum arrangements for art and design meet statutory requirements. The decision to include art and design at Key Stage 3 in a rotational cycle with design and technology does not easily support the systematic development of pupils' knowledge and skills in the subject, as much time often lapses between art and design experiences for pupils. Despite these timetable arrangements, pupils achieve well at Key Stage 3 and make significant improvements over Years 10 and 11, where art and design is taught as a subject.
106. Standards over the two years of Key Stage 4 are high. In the 2001 GCSE examinations, 68% of pupils gained an A\*–C grade, of which 26% gained a grade A. These results are above the national average. Girls did better than boys. Pupils performed better in art and design relative to the majority of other subjects. GCSE results have continued to improve since the last inspection and reflect the hard work of both the art and design teacher and the pupils.
107. Work seen during the inspection was above average for the majority of pupils in Key Stage 4, although the standard of attainment of some of the current Year 11 pupils does not match that demonstrated in the 2001 examination results. Pupils of all abilities make significant progress between Years 10 and 11. Subject knowledge, skills and understanding build successfully on Key Stage 3 work, effectively developing personal imaginative approaches to drawing, painting and ceramic work. Pupils make very good progress in their exploration and investigation of ideas using a wide range of materials

including ICT. They are beginning to effectively draw upon the work of other artists and crafts people to influence their own art and design pieces. A good illustration of this was in a Year 10 lesson where pupils were exploring different ways of capturing images from unusual viewpoints. Some pupils are less secure in their abilities to integrate critical skills into their practical work. Pupils' drawing, painting and use of colour are particularly well developed.

108. The standard of work of pupils in Key Stage 3 is at least in line with and more often above that which might be expected for their age. By the time pupils are 14 a significant number attain high standards placing them in a strong position to succeed at GCSE. This level of pupil attainment is good, considering the rotational model of curriculum delivery which delivers only one block of art and design teaching in each year. The teaching of drawing, painting and ceramic skills over the three years enables pupils of all abilities, including those identified with special educational needs, to build an understanding of line, shape, colour, tone and texture. Portrait work and ceramic pieces show that pupils have a good understanding of proportion and perspective. In a Year 7 lesson where pupils were using clay to create pew groups, their attention to detail, decoration and developing skills with tools reflected standards above that expected for their age. Whilst the use of sketchbooks has improved since the last inspection they are insufficiently developed as a tool for independent learning.
109. The quality of teaching observed at Key Stage 3 was good or better in all but one lesson where it was judged to be unsatisfactory. The unsatisfactory lesson was taught by a non-specialist. At Key Stage 4 the quality of teaching was good or very good in all lessons except one where it was satisfactory. Where teaching was most effective the teacher shared clear lesson objectives, used subject knowledge to very good effect and maintained a good pace to the lesson. A consistent feature of these lessons was the very high quality of relationships which was achieved by the teacher through purposeful discussions, mutual respect and a shared love of the subject. Questioning was well targeted and sensitive, effectively acknowledging pupils' contributions. Unsatisfactory planning, behaviour management, classroom organisation, lesson structure and poor pace characterised the less than satisfactory teaching.
110. Pupils' attitudes to the subject were good to excellent in the majority of lessons seen in all key stages. Pupils clearly enjoy their art and design lessons and respect the unique stimulating environment that is created for them in the art and design room. There was no evidence of anything other than a total commitment to work hard and do well in all lessons. High levels of motivation and concentration characterised the majority of art and design lessons. Pupils respond very well to constructive comments from teachers as well as other pupils. They listen well and are able to talk with confidence about their work using art and design specific language. Pupils' positive attitudes to learning contribute significantly to their progress in both key stages. Another indication of pupils' commitment to art and design is the significant number who attend the twice weekly Art Club and give of their time in the summer holidays to create works of art for the community e.g. the mural in the village hall and sculptures at a local picnic site.
111. Assessment procedures have been improved since the last inspection. Pupils are, however, not clear as to how well they are doing and at what level they are working or aspiring to. Whilst some pupils talked about assessment discussions with the art and

design teacher at the end of units of work, others appeared confused. This is an area for further development, as is the general analysis of performance data, which is currently very narrow.

112. The teacher responsible for art and design is an exceptionally good advocate of the subject with clear vision and passion for art and design. The position of art and design within a larger department does not support the development of the subject; for example, organisational arrangements at Key Stage 3 are not helpful nor is the use of non-specialist teaching. Development planning is lacking in detail and needs to focus much more on strategies for improving standards and quality, rather than resource acquisition. Whilst lesson planning arises out of the scheme of work, there is insufficient detail in lesson plans to ensure consistency of teaching.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in design and technology is **good with some very good features**.

### Strengths

- The high quality of teaching and high expectations of pupils.
- Support for lower ability pupils and those with special educational needs.
- The level of practical skills and confidence developed in pupils in all years.

### Areas for improvement

- Setting clear assessment criteria for design and technology and sharing assessment procedures and their outcomes with pupils.
- Assisting pupils to see the overall purpose of their learning.

113. The curriculum offered by the department meets statutory requirements and is sufficiently broad and balanced. Pupils at an early stage develop a high standard of independent practical skills and procedures in a range of materials. For example, in one lesson Year 7 pupils were setting up and using a mortising machine and in another they were preparing to cook a variety of dishes without the need for teacher support.

114. At the end of Key Stage 3 in June 2001, teachers' assessment of attainment identified girls to be attaining at the national average for the subject whilst boys attain around one level below the national average. These standards were reflected in work and lessons seen during the inspection. Pupils' skills in making are higher than in designing, but the use of a design portfolio is building pupils' confidence in the process of designing.

115. At GCSE, school records for 2001 show that the proportion of pupils achieving A\* to C grades in the resistant materials course was above both school and national averages. Results in graphic products were below average as were those for home economics: food and nutrition. More than half of the year group are disapplied from design and technology so that they can follow courses more suited to their needs. Consequently numbers of GCSE entries are lower than for most schools and do not represent the full ability range.

116. In Years 10 and 11, standards in practical work are above average. Pupils can work

independently to manufacture their own designs for a holding device utilising both wood and metal. While the work of the higher attaining pupils shows a good grasp of the design process, many pupils are not yet fully confident in using it to develop their making skills. Some pupils, notably in graphic products, have had an insufficient grounding from their Key Stage 3 course; they develop basic skills in Year 10 and this limits both their progress and the standard they finally reach.

117. Pupils are very keen and willing to learn. Overall, they make good progress in lessons, and across the key stages. They concentrate throughout lessons and work at a lively pace. Their confidence, attitude and behaviour in workshops are exemplary. They co-operate fully in sharing tools and materials and in assisting each other. Health and safety aspects of using tools, machinery and equipment are embedded into pupils' awareness and work from the outset. All pupils adhere to these practices as a matter of course.
118. The quality of teaching at both key stages is good or better. Lessons are well organised and managed, with pupils being provided with clear instructions to enable them to work independently. Teachers have high expectations of standards of practical work. Working relationships with pupils are of a high standard with an evident mutual respect. The highest attaining pupils are not fully challenged to develop and stretch their capacity for independent problem solving in lessons, although this was seen clearly in the particularly successful Young Engineers' Club. Explicit links are made at Key Stage 3 between the material areas contributing to design and technology. Common criteria for the different aspects of the subject are not, however, sufficiently developed or shared with pupils to enable them to gain a complete understanding of the subject. This results in pupils generally trusting the teacher to guide their learning without a clear view of how that learning fits into the overall requirements of the subject. Marking is variable. The best is regular and provides a summative grade and clear comments that inform pupils of how to improve. Target setting to clear design and technology criteria is not yet sufficiently well developed.
119. During the last few years there has been a period of instability in staffing that has had a negative effect upon standards, particularly in graphics. The provision of art and design within the rotational course in Key Stage 3 is significantly limiting the time both for design and technology and art and design to cover the national programmes of work.
120. Pupils are not banded or set on their attainment in design and technology. This results in some groups where the matching of work to pupils' attainment is difficult, and teachers exercise significant experience and skill to ensure that all pupils are suitably challenged.
121. The head of department has good knowledge of both what the department does well and those areas in need of improvement. Monitoring of teaching and moderation of pupils' work at Key Stage 3 are embedded in the work of the department. Departmental documentation is satisfactory, but lesson planning does not identify the learning criteria common to all aspects of design and technology sufficiently well; consequently it does not assist pupils to see the purpose of their learning.
122. Accommodation is generous for resistant materials, less so for food, where it is well looked after but showing signs of heavy usage. The ICT suite within the department is used well with a suitable range of software to support pupils' learning. There is a

limited number and range of text books. The level of technical support is inadequate to fully cover the work of the department, resulting in staff having to utilise curriculum time to prepare, set up and maintain resources.

123. The department appears to have made only limited progress since the previous inspection. Significant staffing changes have meant that consolidation of the Key Stage 3 course has taken longer than planned. New GCSE courses have been adopted at Key Stage 4 and results are improving. Provision for the subject has shown a satisfactory improvement overall since the previous inspection.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is **good**.

### **Strengths**

- The good quality and variety of styles of teaching.
- The very good relationships in lessons and knowledge of pupils' ability levels which enable teachers to support pupils' learning effectively.
- Effective use of ICT.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Matching learning objectives to tasks in lessons.
- Planning work more closely to pupils' attainment.
- Developing new strategies to help pupils meet deadlines.

124. Standards of attainment have improved since the previous inspection report. At that time the proportion of pupils obtaining A\* - C grades at GCSE was well below the national average. Since then there has been a trend of improvement. GCSE results for 2001 are above the provisional national average. This is a significant improvement and geography now compares well with other subjects in the school.
125. There is some variation between the attainment of boys and girls. Boys and girls attain at a similar level in lessons, but boys outperform girls at GCSE. Nationally, girls do better than boys. Pupils with special educational needs and lower attaining pupils make particularly good progress and achieve good standards in relation to their prior attainment.
126. By age 14, pupils' attainments are in line with national expectations. By age 16, they are above average. At both key stages, pupils understand and use geographical vocabulary well. The majority of pupils understand and apply geographical skills and by age 16 many can apply their knowledge and skills to understand geographic development and change. They can also appreciate the consequences and implications of social and economic change. Pupils in a Year 11 lesson, for example, were able to compare and contrast the inner cities of Los Angeles and Manchester. In a Year 9 lesson, pupils showed empathy for the plight of rural migrant workers moving into economically rich urban environments. Pupils generally handle the concepts of urbanisation well. At GCSE level, pupils can follow a sequence of events, formulate logical arguments and draw plausible conclusions from information and data; evidence of this was seen in high quality project work and course work.



127. The majority of pupils make good progress and retain their prior learning. Year 9 pupils could recall and explain previous work on population distribution and population pyramids. Good progress was seen in a Year 8 lesson where, by the end of the session, the majority of pupils could identify weather symbols, wind speed, and direction.
128. Pupils usually listen well and are encouraged to use a variety of forms of writing. There is much evidence of their confidence in using ICT to research and present information. In lessons and course work additional information is found and data is presented in several different ways. These developments are an important feature of the steady rise in levels of attainment because they are skills that are crucial to success at GCSE.
129. The quality of teaching is good. There are good relationships between pupils and with their teachers. This leads to a good working atmosphere where pupils can feel confident in their work. Teachers have good, up-to-date knowledge of the subject. This has a positive effect on attainment. Lessons are generally well planned, using appropriate tasks and resources. There are a few occasions when the learning objectives are unclear and the completion of the tasks becomes more important than checking pupils' understanding. Several lessons were seen where good use was made of videotape, ICT, newspaper cuttings, internet materials and a range of textbooks. This motivates pupils well and contributes to effective learning. The use of fieldwork and investigative work adds further variety. Teachers try to involve all pupils by using effective questioning. They have a good knowledge of pupils and the National Curriculum levels at which they are working. Assessment is used effectively to target support. Learning support assistants are used well. Different types of work are set within a year group but there is little evidence of the matching of work to pupils' attainment in individual classes. This means that, at times, the less eager or higher attaining pupils are not stretched.
130. Class work and homework are marked regularly. Errors are corrected and comments are constructive and specific to the knowledge, understanding and skills of the subject. Many comments advise pupils on how to improve, as do the comments on reports to parents.
131. With very few exceptions, attitudes to learning are good. The majority of the pupils enjoy geography. They work well in pairs and in groups. There were very few occasions when pupils were distracted from their work. The one area of frustration for the department is the attitude displayed by a small number of Year 11 pupils who are late in giving in work. This persists even though sanctions are in place to deal with it.
132. The subject makes many valuable contributions towards pupils' personal development. In many lessons they have the opportunity to explore and reflect on moral and social issues. The department makes great efforts to ensure pupils are aware of world issues. An example of this was a discussion about asylum seekers, where pupils responded with sensitivity. Pupils are also able to appreciate the wonders of nature and the world in physical aspects of geography such as the effects of volcanic activity and tornadoes.
133. The department is accommodated in two rooms which are compact but adequate. Resources have improved and appropriate texts are now used for GCSE coursework. Library resources are adequate and well used by pupils. High quality displays, which include pupils' work, help to clearly define the department and enhance the environment

in which pupils study. Schemes of work identify cross-curricular links and show a readiness to promote citizenship.

134. The issues that were raised in the previous inspection have been addressed. Taking into account the rise in standards, improvement in resources and teaching, the good management of the subject and teamwork, good progress has been made.

## HISTORY

Overall, the quality of provision is **good**.

### Strengths

- Teaching is good overall, with some that is very good.
- Standards are a little above average by age 14 and 16. The pupils who take history at GCSE consistently achieve results that are higher than in their other subjects.
- A climate is created in lessons that unites pupils and teachers in the pursuit of high standards.
- The considerable strengths noted at the time of the last inspection have been maintained.

### Areas for improvement

- Whilst the marking of pupils' work is often well done at Key Stage 4, it is frequently superficial at Key Stage 3 and does not show pupils what they need to do to improve.
- Lesson planning is good, but the plans are not always implemented well. The current observation of teaching by staff with management responsibilities is not yet picking up the weaknesses.

135. History has for some years attracted large numbers to GCSE courses and the results have been good. In most years the proportion of pupils gaining A\*-C grades has been consistently above the national average. Pupils taking history have consistently done better in the subject than in their other subjects overall. The results of girls have been higher than those of boys overall for the last two years.
136. The standard of work seen during the inspection was a little above average overall. At Key Stage 3 the pupils are developing historical skills very well. From Year 7 they select material, assess it, classify it and can put information from different sources together. In a Year 8 lesson, for example, the pupils were able to analyse the advantages and disadvantages of Henry VIII's break with Rome, explaining their arguments and analysing the consequences of Henry's actions well. The teacher skilfully and with humour developed the pupils' power of analysis. They were working at a level above that normally found for this age group. All the departmental lesson planning documents emphasise the development of historical skills as well as an understanding of the topics being studied. However, all teachers do not deliver the lesson as planned and thus do not achieve the intended learning outcomes. Most pupils present their work neatly and standards of English are mostly good. Whilst some pupils speak quietly in class, the majority are orally confident and clear. The pupils identified as having special educational needs make good progress and participate well in lessons. The needs of the highest attaining pupils are often met by teachers suggesting that they might give consideration in their writing to an extra factor, but this is rarely planned or required. Nonetheless, these pupils are doing well. At both key stages, but particularly in some sets at Key Stage 3, girls are very much in a minority, but this does not affect their

learning. There is no evidence from the inspection that there is any difference between boys and girls in the good progress being made.

137. At Key Stage 4 the pupils are producing work of an above-average standard. Teaching continues to develop historical skills and understanding whilst giving a proper consideration to the requirements of the examination. The standard of notes and extended writing in the books of the majority of Year 11 pupils is high. A few pupils need more guidance on writing in a format that will make revision for examinations easier. The pupils currently at Key Stage 4 display standards of attainment which indicate that they will maintain the school's run of good results in history. As at Key Stage 3, the teachers effectively involve all pupils irrespective of their attainment levels in classes. This age group includes the entire attainment range. This is particularly evident in question and answer sessions and in oral work generally.
138. The most important factors in achievement of these standards of attainment are the quality of teaching and the attitudes of pupils. Teaching is good overall, with some that is very good and a little that is unsatisfactory. The teachers use a variety of methods appropriate to the learning outcomes desired, and at Key Stage 4 to the needs of the examinations. The development of key history skills is planned into most lessons. Where the plan is well implemented, as for example in a Year 7 lesson on castles, learning of high quality takes place. In one class on this topic, the pupils had to use a library collection of books and ICT sources to respond to five questions. They were well prepared with guidance on selecting data for its relevance to the particular question and putting together the information from several sources. The pupils, who like the majority seen in history lessons were interested and keen, set to the task with enthusiasm and intelligence. Good understanding was the result.
139. Another lesson on the same topic was ineffective because of poor organisation by the teacher, particularly a failure to offer any explanation to the pupils on how to proceed. As this topic was the basis of an assessment across the year group of the standards being achieved by each pupil, variation in the quality of teaching reduced the validity of the assessment.
140. There is a need to ensure that work being done on projects or topics is substantial and consistently covers the knowledge, understanding and skills required. The observation of lessons by teachers with managerial responsibilities has not recognised the weaknesses identified during the inspection. The helpfulness of marking to pupils varies greatly. It is mostly good at Key Stage 4, although the teachers' instructions to copy up work missed are often ignored. At Key Stage 3, the marking is sometimes very superficial, with little to guide the pupils on how to improve. The banding system creates for history classes at Key Stage 3 quite a wide range of attainment in the middle sets. History teachers acknowledge this and adjust their teaching accordingly.
141. The present head of history has been in post for only a few weeks, having taught in the department for several years. There is a good level of delegation from the headteacher, via the head of humanities to the head of history. The current observation of teaching by staff with management responsibilities is not yet picking up the gap between lessons as planned and as received by pupils.
142. The department has maintained well the strengths noted at the time of the previous

inspection. The need for more use of ICT, noted previously, has been met, with regular and confident use by pupils of ICT in the history room, the library and the ICT room.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **very good**.

### Strengths

- Examination results are consistently good.
- Pupils of all ages work enthusiastically with good, in some cases outstanding, results.
- The quality of teaching is very good.
- Schemes of work are imaginatively planned and encourage positive, creative responses from pupils.
- There are some excellent examples of joint planning, for example between the English and ICT departments.
- Resources are very well managed and cared for, benefiting from very good quality technician support.

### Areas for improvement

- Expansion of the already good ICT facilities following the school's successful bid for specialist language college status.
- More use of ICT in the teaching of science and music.

143. At Key Stage 4, standards of attainment in ICT are above average. GCSE examination results in ICT (Information Systems) have shown continuous improvement over the past four years. In 2001, 65% of pupils entered obtained grades at A\*-C level (above the national average) and no pupil achieved below grade E. Pupils studying for GCSE in Years 10 and 11 showed good understanding of examination requirements and of the way in which their course-work would be assessed. In addition to those who opt for a GCSE course, pupils in Years 10 and 11 study key skills in ICT. In these lessons pupils have produced some outstanding work; for example, Year 10 pupils developed animated presentations of their poetry anthologies and Year 11 used the internet to research the theme of positive black achievement. This research was then developed as a series of celebrative presentations delivered by pupils using an interactive whiteboard.
144. ICT plays an integral part in the particularly successful GNVQ Intermediate and Foundation level courses in business in Years 10 and 11. Pupils on this course develop high levels of competency in ICT skills in a business context; they also prepare an electronic CV on CD-ROM which includes digital video excerpts of presentations they have given. These CVs are made available to prospective employers on CD and through the school's web site.
145. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of ICT develops strongly throughout Key Stage 3. In Year 7, for example, pupils still need considerable support to produce a leaflet containing a digital photograph of themselves and their early experiences of secondary school using a desk top publishing package. By Year 8, they are capable of independent research on the internet and can select the most suitable software packages, for example for producing publicity material for the school production of *'The Little Shop of Horrors'*. By the end of Year 9, pupils' attainment is carefully assessed by teachers with the proportion working at Level 5, or beyond, above that expected nationally. The quality of teaching in ICT is very good with no significant weaknesses. Expectations of behaviour and standards of work are very high. Relationships between pupils and teachers are very good. Throughout the school, pupils respond positively to very good teaching and imaginatively planned lessons in ICT. They are especially proud of their work in ICT. Pupils work with interest and enjoyment and make very good progress. Behaviour is exceptionally good; pupils of all ages work independently with high levels of concentration. Very good use is made of facilities outside normal lessons. The computer room on a typical lunch-time has an atmosphere almost as industrious and focused as in a Year 11 examination class.
147. Leadership and management of the subject is very strong. The vision and creativity of the head of department has a positive impact on pupils' standards of attainment. The ICT curriculum is very well planned, offering pupils well structured opportunities to exploit the potential of high speed internet connections and also to develop their own speaking and listening skills as they communicate the outcomes of their personal research. There are good curricular links with a number of subject areas, most notably English and geography, with plans for development in modern foreign languages among others. The use of ICT in science and music is currently limited.

148. The school currently has 130 networked computers with 60 deployed in two specialist rooms and the remainder distributed throughout the school. There are plans to expand the network and increase the number of specialist rooms to accommodate the growing demand for computer resources across the curriculum. Resourcing at this high level is made possible by careful planning and by the ability of the ICT technician to upgrade and keep machines in service well beyond their normal useful life.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall, the quality of provision in modern foreign languages is **very good**.

### Strengths

- Standards at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4.
- The quality of teaching and learning.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- The deployment of foreign language assistants and learning support staff.

### Areas for improvement

- The use of information and communication technology.
- The speaking skills of some pupils.
- The proportion of pupils achieving grades A\*, A or B at GCSE.

149. All pupils study French or German in Years 7 to 9. Pupils in the upper sets begin a second modern language from Year 8. In Years 10 and 11, the great majority of pupils continue to study one language to GCSE, a small minority following an Entry Level (certificate of achievement) course in either French or German. The number of dual linguists in Years 10 and 11 is low at present.

150. At the end of Year 9, standards in French are above the national average; 61% of pupils were assessed by their teachers as achieving Level 5 or above in 2001. By the end of Year 11, the percentage of pupils gaining grade C or better at GCSE is above average in French (60% compared to 50% nationally in 2000) and well above national averages in German (82% compared to 55%). The results in 2001 were similarly above the provisional national averages. The number of pupils gaining grades A\*, A or B is however slightly below the national average. Whilst the girls outperform the boys at GCSE, the boys' level of attainment is still higher than national averages.

151. Standards of work seen during the inspection reflect the recent performance of pupils at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4. The teachers' initial emphasis on how to learn a new language helps pupils' listening skills to develop well. As a result they understand the classroom language used by their teacher and foreign language assistant and follow instructions with ease and confidence. Aspects of grammar taught in the foreign language are clearly understood. In a Year 9 German lesson, pupils were able to say why they preferred certain school subjects using correct word order. In speaking, the great majority of pupils use the foreign language to communicate with their teacher and often each other in lessons. They cope well with role playing and pair work. In a Year 9 class where French was the second foreign language, pupils were able to participate

fully in a role play based on buying souvenirs, recalling much of the language required from memory. A small minority of pupils however, are still somewhat hesitant to use phrases in front of their friends. Reading skills are well developed, all pupils being able to pick out key information from text. A well established reading for pleasure scheme in French further enhances pupils' skills in this area. Written work is good, pupils beginning to use idiomatic phrases and apply rules of grammar by the end of Year 9 in both French and German. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in Years 7 to 9 and are supported very well by both the learning support assistants and foreign language assistants.

152. The firm foundation laid down in Key Stage 3 is built upon in Years 10 and 11. Pupils are able to understand the sustained use of the foreign language by their teacher and foreign language assistant and many respond naturally in French or German. Some are still hesitant to say more than necessary in the language and need encouragement. The pupils cope well with a wide range of reading and listening materials and are able to recognise attitudes, draw inferences and pick out specific information. By Year 11, many pupils are writing French or German of a high quality, using a range of tenses and grammatical structures with accuracy. The provision of writing frames enables both those pupils with special educational needs and the more able to produce written work of quality. A writing task comparing the British and the French education systems by a Year 11 pupil showed a high level of linguistic sophistication. Once again, the effective deployment of the department's foreign language assistants supports and enhances pupils' understanding.
153. The quality of teaching in both Key Stage 3 and 4 is consistently good, often very good and sometimes excellent. Teachers' planning addresses the needs of all pupils and clear learning objectives are set for each lesson. The teachers speak in the foreign language for the great majority of the time and actively support their pupils' understanding of the spoken word by miming, rephrasing and asking pupils to briefly translate for the class. A Year 11 certificate of achievement group listened attentively and confidently throughout a lesson conducted in French, supporting each other with translations. All lessons contain a variety of activities, promoting pupils' listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. A rotation of activities in a Year 11 French class helped develop not only pupils' language skills but also their study skills, by providing opportunities to work in groups and do research. Similarly, the use of support materials in a Year 7 German lesson enabled pupils with special educational needs to complete a listening task with confidence and a sense of achievement. Clear assessment processes are now in place, continuous assessment being a strength. Pupils are aware of their targets and know how to improve the level of their work. Marking by teachers is up to date and the school's marking scheme is consistently applied. Feedback to pupils is generally designed to help them improve the quality of their work. Homework is set on a regular basis and complements the lesson's objectives, consolidating pupils' knowledge.
154. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 show positive attitudes to the subject. They listen attentively, are keen to participate, work well with others and help out their peers with things not understood. Relationships are very good and in many lessons there are gains in terms of pupils' self esteem. Pupils respond positively to their teacher's enthusiasm and commitment.

155. The management and leadership of the department are very good. The department has clear direction. The policies and scheme of work provide good support for all teachers in their planning. This has an obvious impact on classrooms and learning, with pupils benefiting from the consistency of good practice. Monitoring and evaluation procedures are developing, allowing teachers to share best practice and develop it further.
156. Accommodation and resources are very good. Displays contain excellent reference points for pupils and include key words, grammatical tips and help on how to improve work. There is a real French and German atmosphere in all the rooms, raising pupils' cultural awareness of other peoples and life styles. The use of ICT is an area to develop, the department having limited access to the school's computer suites at present. Access in the department is limited to one or two machines. Pupils' ICT skills are thus not well developed in the context of the subject.
157. A range of extracurricular activities is offered by the department and these include language clubs and exam preparation classes as well as a programme of visits abroad; which help to enhance pupils' language skills and cultural development.
158. Progress since the previous inspection has been good. The success of the department has been recognised in the successful acquisition of Language College Status. The assessment policy is now in place and records are kept of pupils' progress. A portfolio of pupils' work is also in use. The development of the use of ICT has been highlighted as a focus of the first phase of Language College developments.

## MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision in music is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- The value placed by pupils on the subject.
- The positive approach of the teachers.
- The quality of teaching of GCSE.
- Provision of instrumental tuition.
- Progress in the development of musical knowledge.
- Structured opportunities for independent learning.

### Areas for improvement

- Provision for the use of ICT.
- Singing in Years 7 to 9.
- Standards in practical work in Years 7 to 9.
- The use of assessment to inform lesson planning.

159. The music department has made a significant improvement since the last inspection. Most of the issues raised have been resolved. Pupils enjoy music and have good attitudes to the subject. There are some issues that still need to be addressed. Provision for ICT is inadequate and singing remains underdeveloped.
160. Attainment of pupils in Years 7 to 9 is lower than expected nationally, and this is



recognised in the teacher-assessed levels for 14 year olds in 2001. Attainment is uneven across musical activities, with higher standards in listening and appraising than in performing and composing. The attainment of pupils taking the GCSE music course is broadly in line with their prior attainment. Examination results over the past few years have shown some fluctuation. In 2001, for instance, pupils achieved less well in music than they did in their other subjects. There has also been some fluctuation in the numbers of pupils choosing to take the subject in recent years. Relatively few pupils take the subject.

161. The teaching of pupils in Years 7 to 9 is consistently satisfactory or better and often it is good. Teachers have good command of the subject and communicate clearly within well-structured lessons. The positive approach of the teachers enables pupils to feel that their work is valued. This encourages the good attitudes seen. For example in a low attaining Year 7 group, a class performance of a very simple layered rhythmic piece was supported effectively by the teacher and two learning support assistants. Familiar routines are a good feature of classroom practice; and the strategy of listening to a piece at the beginning of each lesson provides good support for the development of musical understanding.
162. Pupils are encouraged to learn independently and in Year 9 had engaged in research on a selected Asian musical style. Where pupils had sifted their information and made the link with the music that they had heard and were composing, learning was good. Where pupils had downloaded information from the internet and were using it without understanding and without relating it to the music that they were performing and composing, learning was limited. Pupils keep a listening diary which they are expected to add to each week as a homework task. This is providing an effective support to the development of listening skills and is taken very seriously by the pupils.
163. A strong emphasis on the development of musical knowledge was seen in a Year 8 lesson where the class had learned the features of samba music and were performing a piece together. The well-rehearsed activity was accessible to all levels of attainment in the class and culminated in a performance. Pupils had remembered their parts from a previous lesson and they refined their performance with the guidance of the teacher by improving the accuracy and adding additional musical features such as dynamics, to produce music that was enjoyed by all. The whole project built effectively on rhythm work undertaken in Year 7.
164. Progress in the development of knowledge is stronger than in practical work. Whilst singing takes place within topics, this approach does not enable emphasis on vocal technique. Some compositions and performances observed in lessons lacked a sense of ensemble. There is no difference in the progress of boys and girls in the subject.
165. Teaching of pupils taking GCSE music ranges from satisfactory to very good. A large Year 10 group was observed undertaking individual activities relating to the instrument that they learned. In spite of limited space, the teacher had made sure that everyone had meaningful work to do and was able to set individual targets for their learning. Pupils of all abilities were developing confidence as performers. For example, one pupil was preparing to sing a pop song to a backing track in front of the rest of the group and with support and encouragement from the teacher he was developing confidence as a

performer. This confidence was seen to grow as his performance progressed. A strong feature of this and the work observed in Year 11, was the mutually supportive attitude of pupils and the respect that they showed for each other's efforts. Progress in the work was good.

166. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory although the role of the head of department as head of performing arts is not sufficiently clearly defined. The amount of time allocated to music in the curriculum is above the national average, but where classes have two short lessons per week, there is insufficient time in an individual lesson to develop some musical activities adequately. These lessons are made even shorter by the late arrival of pupils. In such lessons, which affect some classes and not others, the time taken by the listening activity leaves insufficient time for the development of practical skills.
167. Marking is in line with school policy but tends to focus more on presentational issues than content. The grades awarded do not provide a clear view of specific strengths and areas for development. Assessment in general is insufficiently linked to planning. Target setting in Years 7 - 9 is underdeveloped. Reports are clear but contain incorrect information about the National Curriculum requirements. Departmental policies are set out clearly in the departmental handbook although they are not always implemented consistently, marking for example.
168. The department is well resourced in most respects and, in particular, a wide range of interesting and unusual percussion instruments is available. Each music room has a reasonable provision of practice facilities nearby, although the arrangement of tables in the smaller music room makes effective group work difficult. The absence of computers in the department means that there are very few opportunities for pupils to use ICT to support their music making. Pupils use ICT to gather and present information, but not to create, manipulate and refine sounds as required by the National Curriculum in music.
169. The department is supported by a number of privately contracted instrumental tutors who provide opportunities for pupils to take lessons on a wide range of instruments and their voice. The work of these teachers is well supported by the department. The department is developing a range of extracurricular groups of varying sizes and standards. Some of this work is effectively linked to classroom work. An annual school show is a strength of the work of the department.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of physical education is **very good**.

### Strengths

- Standards of attainment, particularly in GCSE physical education.
- Leadership and management.
- The range of curricular and extracurricular opportunities.
- The high quality of teaching and learning.
- Relationships and care for pupils.
- Pupils' attitudes.

### Areas for Improvement

- Identification of and challenge for the more able within Years 7 – 9.
- External accreditation within core physical education, Years 10 – 11.
- Use of monitoring to identify and disseminate good practice.

170. Overall standards of attainment are above the national average. GCSE results have improved steadily from 32% A\*-C in 1996 to 64% in 2001. This compares favourably with the national average of 52%. Pupils do better in physical education than in most other subjects and in 2001 they achieved a significantly higher number of A\*-B grades than in past years. The number of pupils entering GCSE has increased in recent years and there is no significant difference in standards achieved between boys and girls.
171. Achievement in lessons is good throughout the age range for pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs. Pupils make good progress in the development of skills, tactical awareness and understanding. They have also developed good speaking and listening skills and the department highlights the development of literacy through the use of 'word walls' and technical language. Numeracy skills are reinforced through officiating and scoring opportunities and ICT has been integrated into the daily practice of the department with pupils using video, digital camera and computers for data capture.
172. Standards by the end of Year 9 are above the expectation for schools of this type. Pupils show real independence and have great strengths in planning warm ups, performing skills consistently in football and netball and evaluating their own and others' performances during partner sequence development in gymnastics. Tactical understanding is well developed as evidenced by Year 7 boys developing their own team strategies against changing opposition. By the end of Year 11, especially in GCSE groups, standards of performance and understanding are significantly better than the national expectation. For example, pupils make significant progress in the development of the lay up shot under pressure by using a video of their own performance and comparing it with that of a professional basketball player. Very effective teaching and the consistently high intellectual and physical effort, positive attitudes to learning and productivity of pupils, ensure that high standards are achieved and maintained.
173. The quality of teaching in Years 7 – 9 is good and in Years 10 – 11 very good to excellent. Detailed lesson planning, good organisation, varied methodology and the use

of a wide range of stimuli provide structure and progression for pupils' learning and this results in increased levels of motivation and understanding. Pupils' high levels of attainment are a direct result of structured, progressive teaching, regular reviews of learning, clear explanations and demonstrations. In the very best lessons, planned opportunities for observation and analysis using ICT and video lead to purposeful discussion and develop pupils' independence well.

174. Teachers' enthusiasm, motivation and excellent relationships with pupils create an exceptional learning environment. Pupils respond well to this consistently stimulating and motivational approach. The great majority are very positive, and feel well supported, valuing the school and the opportunities provided by the department. High levels of responsibility are shown in the way pupils support and help each other. Participation levels are high and punctuality is good. The only observed weakness was the immature behaviour and low levels of concentration in a Year 7 short tennis class.
175. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. Standards have improved in GCSE results and lessons. Unacceptable behaviour has almost totally been eradicated and concentration levels during independent work are now consistently high. Assessment is now used effectively in Years 10 – 11 with GCSE and core groups. However, whilst in place in Years 7 – 9, it is still not being used effectively to challenge the more able. Long, medium and short term planning are now detailed and helpful. The school has gained the prestigious 'Sportsmark' award in recognition of its provision for physical education.
176. The curriculum in Years 7 – 9 and in Years 10 – 11 meets the national requirement. GCSE and the Junior Sports Leaders Award are offered as an option in Years 10 and 11. Provision is enhanced by a very wide range of extracurricular open-access clubs, inter and intra-school fixtures, competitions, links with sports clubs and the local community, together with visits to other establishments and residential visits abroad. A significant number of pupils gain representative honours at county and national levels and school teams achieve considerable success. The wide range of extracurricular activities and team competitions, including links with external sporting bodies, extends opportunities and contributes to raising pupils' attainment.
177. The drive and determination of the recently appointed head of department provides clear educational direction for newly appointed staff. Roles and responsibilities are clearly understood. Staff training has been provided in line with the departmental priorities identified in the recently reviewed development plan. Documentation is comprehensive and schemes of work are in place. The new staffing structure contains a range of complementary strengths. Weaknesses exist in the targeting of more able pupils in Years 7–9 and the provision of extension work within lessons. The department is well placed to continue to move forward against the targets identified in the development plan.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is **sound**.

### Strengths

- The quality of teaching.
- Behaviour and enthusiasm of pupils throughout Key Stage 3.
- The use of ICT.
- The promotion of cultural and moral awareness.

### Areas for improvement

- Insufficient emphasis on literacy skills.
- Irregular marking.
- Insufficient adherence to the departmental policy of providing diagnostic advice through marking.
- Insufficient provision of subject-specific target-setting in reports to parents.

178. Standards in religious education are broadly in line with the national average. There is extensive evidence of pupils' good oral capability, but this has to be balanced against inadequate evidence of their attainment in writing.
179. The GCSE results for 2001 indicate that 42% of pupils achieved grades A\*-C in the short course in religious studies. This is below national average but represents a significant improvement for the school. Successful introduction of this course has raised the status of religious education within the school. The school has, however, decided to abandon the provision of the short course GCSE as part of its preparation for the introduction of citizenship into the curriculum.
180. At Key Stage 4, attainment in the full GCSE groups is generally in line with the national average at GCSE. In Year 11, the work observed is in line with the national profile for grades A\*-C and overall passes, In Year 10, the standard is less strong, being in line with overall pass statistics but below average at higher grades. Within these groups, pupils demonstrate good levels of awareness of the context and implications of important moral issues such as euthanasia and animal rights and they frequently present their work through the medium of ICT. In the general (non-examination) religious education lessons, oral standards are much higher than written, partly because of teachers' priorities but also because there is a lack of enthusiasm for written work in what is now a non-examination course. Pupils are keen to pursue and debate controversial issues such as the use of nuclear weapons and the implication of recent terrorist events in the United States of America. They do, however, have high standards in their application of ICT where they work hard to present their research and ideas in a variety of forms.
181. At Key Stage 3, written standards are below that expected nationally but most pupils reveal through their oral skills that their attainment meets or exceeds national levels of expectation. Their enthusiasm for religious stories and religious detail and their consideration of personal feelings reveal attainment levels which are high. They know how to use religious information and so are 'learning from' as much as 'learning about' religion.

182. Pupils make good progress in religious education at Key Stage 3 and on the GCSE course because they respond well to the very encouraging atmosphere promoted within lessons and they are stimulated by the cultural and religious perspectives of their work. Their behaviour is generally good. In the non-examination Key Stage 4 course, levels of enthusiasm are much more variable and, in a minority of cases, this is detrimental to the progress of the lesson.
183. The teaching is generally good, occasionally very good and consistently at least satisfactory. Positive features include the careful use of learning objectives to promote continuity and provide clear focus to the learning, an appropriate level of challenge supported by energetic individual support of pupils and the promotion of an encouraging atmosphere in the context of an imaginative curriculum. The regular visiting of Hindu temples and Islamic mosques in Leicester in Year 8 and the use of adult visitors, such as churchwardens in Year 9, help to give extra dimensions to the curriculum, stimulate the interest of pupils and raise levels of attainment. This is supported further by a very active encouragement of the use of ICT. The weaknesses of teaching are an inadequate commitment to the promotion of literacy levels by insufficient insistence on significant amounts of written response, irregular marking, lack of adherence to the humanities policy on diagnostic marking and the lack in reports of subject-specific targets to guide improvement.
184. The curriculum fulfils statutory requirements and has been developed into a very positive learning programme. This has contributed markedly to the improved response to this subject in Key Stage 3. Resources, including artefacts as well as visitors, have been well used and along with the high quality displays, add to the ambience which pupils are increasingly finding to be very stimulating.
185. Leadership of religious education has been very thoughtful since the last inspection and this has led to significant developments but some priorities, for example literacy and monitoring of marking, have not been given sufficient attention.