

INSPECTION REPORT

FEATHERSTONE HIGH SCHOOL

Southall

Middlesex

UB2 5HF

LEA area: Ealing

Unique reference number: 101931

Headteacher: Ms T Cox

Reporting inspector: Mrs J Head
1604

Dates of inspection: 29 October – 2 November 2001

Inspection number: 191204

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:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 - 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	11, Montague Way Southall Middlesex
Postcode:	UB2 5HF
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Councillor R Pathak
Date of previous inspection:	13 January 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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1604	Jean Head	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? The school's results and achievements. How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9724	Brigid Quest-Ritson	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils?
19866	Peter Austin		Art	
1352	John Carnaghan		Geography	
23393	Brian Dower		English Drama	
4430	R Eaton		Music	
3643	D Jones		Mathematics Equal opportunities	
10385	K Hopkins		Design and technology Information and communications technology (ICT)	
1606	J Murray		Physical education Special educational needs	
1223	A Piggott		Science	
1963	S Raychaudhuri		English as an additional language	

30427	F Shuffle-Botham		Religious education	
27407	W Stoneham		History	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
17404	J Tolley		Modern foreign languages	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Featherstone High School is a community comprehensive school for boys and girls aged 11 to 16. The school has grown in size in recent years. With 1152 pupils now on roll, it is bigger than many other comprehensive schools nationally. In all year groups, there are roughly the same number of boys and girls. The school, which has Sports College status, is situated in the London Borough of Ealing and is involved in the Excellence in Cities initiative, which aims to raise standards and aspirations in city schools. The intake is multicultural; most pupils live in the local community and are of Indian, Pakistani, black African or white heritage. Currently, there are around 230 refugee pupils in the school, many of whom are from Somalia. Pupil mobility is high. Around 80 per cent of pupils speak English as an additional language. Pupils are from mixed socio-economic backgrounds, but many come from homes where there is a fair degree of deprivation. About 34 per cent are entitled to free school meals, which is above average for comprehensive schools nationally. Taken as a whole, pupils' attainment on entry is well below average. Although pupils of all levels of prior attainment join the school, the proportion of lower attaining pupils is considerably greater than that found in most schools nationally. Pupils' literacy skills are particularly weak. The school has identified around 27 per cent of its pupils as having special educational needs, which is above average. Of these, just over one per cent have statements of special educational needs, which is below average. Needs include moderate and specific learning difficulties and emotional and behavioural difficulties. Usually, around 90 per cent of 16 year olds move into further education. The school has experienced difficulty recently in recruiting permanent staff; currently, seven vacancies are filled by teachers on temporary contracts.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very effective school, with many strengths. Pupils achieve very well during their time at the school; GCSE results are much higher than might be expected given pupils' attainment on entry. Teaching is good. The school is led and managed very well; its facilities benefit both pupils and the local community alike. Very effective use is made of the school's financial resources. Thus, although funding is high when compared to that received by most schools nationally, the school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Teaching is good and often very good. Teachers plan their lessons carefully and use a variety of effective ways to teach their subject. As a result, pupils learn well.
- Leadership by the headteacher is excellent. She has established a common determination amongst staff to raise standards. Consequently, achievement is very good.
- Relationships within the school are very good. Pupils and adults of very different social and ethnic background work together well and show respect for each other's values and beliefs. As a result, there is a disciplined and positive working atmosphere in classrooms.
- The school monitors and evaluates its work very thoroughly and takes very effective action to secure improvements. In particular, provision for staff training and development is extremely effective in improving the quality of pupils' learning and in raising standards.
- Pupils receive a very good range of learning opportunities for both their

academic and their personal development. Provision for drama and physical education is excellent. Provision for pupils' moral, social and cultural development is very good. Pupils also benefit from very good careers education and guidance, and from a very good range of extra-curricular activities.

What could be improved

- The teaching of literacy and numeracy is often good, but there is no consistent whole school approach to ensure equally high standards across subjects. Practice varies across departments.
- Although, in some instances, assessment information is used well to track pupils' progress, practice is not as effective as it might be in raising standards, particularly in Years 7 to 9.
- In design and technology, pupils' achievement is poor, largely due to unsatisfactory teaching. In music, provision is unsatisfactory, largely due to recruitment difficulties.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made very good progress since its last inspection in 1997. The schools' average GCSE points score has shown an upward trend, in line with that found nationally. Teaching has improved significantly; the amount of unsatisfactory teaching has been reduced from just over 20 per cent to just under five per cent. In addition, the school has addressed almost all of the key issues in its last report successfully. It has restructured the school day, so that planned time allocations for subjects are appropriate. Pupils now have an appropriate choice of subjects in Years 10 and 11, including three vocational courses. The school's provision for personal, health and social education is already good; further developments are planned. All teachers are involved appropriately in the evaluation of the school's work and in subsequent planning for improvement. Monitoring of teaching and the sharing of good practice are now strengths. Provision for special educational needs is good, as is that for pupils at an early stage of language acquisition. Funding for various aspects of the school's work is now broadly in line with national spending patterns. Resources for food technology have been improved, but there remain some shortages in other areas of design and technology. There has been significant investment in resources for information and communications technology (ICT); the library has undergone a complete overhaul and is now a well-used learning resource.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
					highest 5% A
					well above *
					average A
					above average B
					average C

GCSE examinations	C	B	B	A*	below average well below average	D E
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Similar schools: those schools with a similar percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals.

Examination results show that pupils achieve very well during their time at Featherstone High School. This very good achievement is due to many factors, central to which are pupils' own positive attitudes to work. There is no significant difference in the achievements of boys and girls, or of different ethnic groups. Pupils enter the school with well below average overall attainment. Most make steady gains in learning during their first three years of schooling and, in general, achieve as well as might be expected in their end of Year 9 national tests, given their attainment on entry. When compared with all schools nationally, overall results in 2001 were below average in English and well below average in mathematics and science. However, overall results across all three core subjects were broadly in line with the national average for similar schools, representing satisfactory achievement. National test results have improved in recent years, broadly in line with the national trend.

Pupils do really well in Years 10 and 11; GCSE results are much higher than might be expected, given pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9. In 2000, results overall were above average. Pupils did better in drama, French, community languages and physical education than in their other GCSE subjects. Performance was relatively weak in English, art, design and technology, history and religious education. In 2001, results continued the upward trend of recent years. The percentage of pupils achieving five or more A* to C grades was in line with the national average for all schools. Results for five or more A* to G grades, and one or more A* to G grades, were both well above average. In both 2000 and 2001, GCSE results represent very good achievement. In both years, the school's average points score was very high (A*) in terms of pupils' earlier Year 9 test results. In general, the school sets, and meets, sensible targets for improvement for its GCSE pupils.

Standards of work seen during the inspection largely reflect the picture described above. However, standards in Year 9 were below, rather than well below average. This is because, at this stage, pupils' oral skills are stronger than their written skills. Thus standards seen in lessons are better than those achieved in written tests. By Year 11, the proportion of pupils reaching the level expected for their age is broadly average. Achievement is at least good in all subjects except for music and design and technology; it is good in English, mathematics and science.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils are interested in their work and are keen to do well.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Behaviour is predominantly good both in classrooms and around the school. Pupils mix together easily and

	harmoniously.
Personal development relationships and	Very good relationships are evident between pupils and staff and among pupils themselves. This helps pupils to achieve their best.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Pupils arrive on time and are punctual to lessons.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11
Quality of teaching	Good.	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.

Teaching is good overall; often it is very good. There is no significant difference in the quality of teaching across year groups. The good quality teaching promotes learning of an equally high calibre. Very good levels of interest and concentration, and a willingness to work, were features of pupils' learning across a range of subjects. Teachers plan their lessons very well. In general, they adapt tasks and methods skilfully to meet pupils' differing learning needs; thus, pupils are able to build on existing knowledge effectively to acquire new skills and understanding. Occasionally, higher attaining pupils are under challenged in Years 7 to 9. Teachers also manage pupils skilfully in lessons, establishing a purposeful and positive learning environment. Teaching is very good in drama, history and physical education. It is good overall in English, mathematics, science, and in most other subjects, including those not reported on. It is satisfactory overall in music, although good in Years 7 to 9, and unsatisfactory overall in design and technology. Teaching of the school's personal, health and social education programme is satisfactory overall, and sometimes good. Literacy skills are taught well by many departments; numeracy skills are taught well in mathematics. However, a whole-school approach for the teaching of both has yet to be developed.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The school provides a very good range of opportunities for all its pupils; its planned curriculum meets statutory requirements.
Provision for pupils with special	Good. Provision helps pupils to learn well; learning is best when pupils are supported by specialist teachers or by

educational needs	learning assistants.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Most pupils have English as an additional language (EAL), so the above comments apply. Provision is enhanced by specialist teachers and by a home-school link worker.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is good; that for their social, moral and cultural development is very good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good overall. The school provides very good monitoring and support for pupils' personal development. Academic monitoring is less well established.

The school has very effective procedures in place to ensure that it works in partnership with parents.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good overall. The headteacher provides excellent leadership. The senior leadership team, corporately, are very effective. The quality of middle management is good or very good.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. Governors are supportive of the school. They are instrumental in ensuring that the school is a centre for community life.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good, with particular strengths in the monitoring, evaluation and development of its teaching and learning.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The school makes skilful use of funding to extend its work. Staff development is excellent, in view of its impact on pupils' learning.

Overall, the school has just sufficient accommodation to teach its pupils, although much of the accommodation is spacious and of good quality. Resources for learning are good. At present, in spite of every effort, there are insufficient teachers to teach the school's planned curriculum. As a result, current provision for design and technology and music is unsatisfactory and does not meet statutory requirements. The school considers the benefits of its spending decisions effectively, influenced by the principles of best value. It receives a considerable amount of funding from the Excellence in Cities project; this is helping to raise standards of behaviour and attendance levels.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children are expected to work hard and to achieve well. • There are good links with parents. • The school is led and managed well • The school is helping their children to become mature and responsible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homework is inconsistent. • The progress their children make • Behaviour in the school. • The information they receive about their children's progress.

Too few parents returned the inspection questionnaire to make its analysis reliable. However, for the past two years, the school has invited parents to complete the Ofsted questionnaire in order to inform its work with them. There has been a good response to these consultations, the last of which took place just before the inspection. Comments, and those of parents attending the pre-inspection parents' meeting, are largely very positive. Inspection findings support parents' positive views. Relatively small numbers of parents expressed concerns as shown above. In response to these concerns, inspectors found that behaviour was good during the inspection week and the setting and use of homework was satisfactory. Inspectors found that pupils make very good progress during their time at the school. Inspectors agree that the quality of annual reports varies; often, reports contain too much information on behaviour and effort and too little information on pupils' progress.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Pupils achieve very well during their time at Featherstone High School. By the end of Year 11, examination results overall are above average and are much higher than might be expected given pupils' attainment on entry. This very good achievement can be attributed to a variety of factors but, in particular, to the good, and often very good, teaching that exists in the school, to pupils' own positive attitudes to work and to very effective leadership, which focuses on raising standards. Since around 80 per cent of pupils have English as an additional language (EAL), all comments in all sections of this report relate to this group of pupils, as well as to other ethnic groups within the school. Where appropriate, additional comments are made on any specific provision for pupils with EAL. At the time of the inspection, national information was available for the 2001 end of Year 9 national tests. Hence, comparisons (with all school nationally and with similar schools) are made for the school's end of Year 9 test results using its 2001 data. Similar national comparative information for the 2001 GCSE results was not available until well after the inspection. Thus, comparisons (with all schools, similar schools and schools whose pupils achieved similar results in their end of Year 9 tests) are made for the school's GCSE results largely using its 2000 data. Where possible, comparisons with national results are also given for the school's 2001 GCSE results.
2. Pupils enter the school with well below average overall attainment. Most make steady gains in learning during their first three years at the school and, in general, achieve as well as might be expected in their end of Year 9 national tests, given their attainment on entry. When compared with all schools nationally, the school's average points score in 2001 was below average in English and well below average in mathematics and science. However, overall results across all three core subjects were broadly in line with the national average for similar schools, representing satisfactory achievement. The percentage of pupils attaining at least the level expected for their age was well above results for similar schools nationally in English, above average in mathematics and average in science. Since 1997, national test results have improved; the rate of improvement has been in line with the national trend. There has been no consistent difference in the attainment of boys and girls.
3. Pupils do really well in Years 10 and 11; GCSE results show that the school 'adds considerable value' to pupils' attainments in these year groups. In 2000, the school's overall average points score was above the national average for all schools. Although the proportion of pupils gaining five or more A* to C

grades was below average, this was more than offset by very high performance at lower grades. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more A* to G grades, and the proportion gaining one or more A* to G grades, were both very high (that is, in the top five per cent) when compared with all schools nationally. Girls attained somewhat better results than boys, but the gap in performance was smaller than that found nationally. Pupils did better in drama, French, community languages and physical education than in their other GCSE subjects. Performance was relatively weak in English, art, design and technology, history and religious education.

4. GCSE results have also improved in recent years; the rate of improvement has been broadly in line with the national trend. National comparative information, published after the inspection, shows that, in 2001, results improved yet again. The percentage of pupils achieving five or more A* to C grades was in line with, rather than below, the national average. The proportions of pupils gaining five or more A* to G grades, and one or more A* to G grades, were well above results for all schools nationally. Consequently, overall results were again above average. National comparative data is still not yet available to make subject comparisons for 2001. However, the proportion of pupils gaining A* to C grades improved in all subjects, except for design and technology. Results improved by more than ten per cent in English, science, art, French, community languages and religious education.
5. In both 2000 and 2001, GCSE results were considerably higher than might be expected and represent very good achievement. In 2000, the school's average points score was well above average when compared to that for schools with similar intake. In 2001, it was very high (in the top five per cent of schools) in comparison with that for similar schools nationally. More importantly, results were very high in terms of pupils' earlier Year 9 test results. For example, in 2001, the school's average points score was in the top five per cent of schools with similar Year 9 test results in 1999. So, too, were the proportions of pupils gaining five or more A* to C grades, five or more A* to G grades and one or more A* to G grades.
6. The school uses results from Year 6 and Year 9 national tests, and results from other standardised tests, to predict likely future performance in GCSE examinations. Results have been much better than those predicted; all assessment data indicate that pupils achieve very well during their time at the school. An inspection analysis, comparing 2000 GCSE results for Year 11 pupils with their 1998 Year 9 national test results, indicates that achievement was good in English and very good in mathematics and science. The school also uses test results to set targets. This process is well established in Years 10 and 11 and results in realistic targets. The school analyses its results retrospectively. In 2001, all targets were met. Targets for 2002 are not particularly clear, but are somewhat lower than those for 2001, reflecting the particularly low attainment of current Year 11 pupils in their end of Year 9 national tests. The school is aware that its GCSE results are likely to fall somewhat in 2002. The school has not yet set targets for end of Year 9 performance.

7. Inspection evidence largely confirms and substantiates the picture painted by the school's test and examination results although, in Year 9, standards overall were somewhat higher than recent test results would suggest. Standards of work seen in Year 9 were below, rather than well below, average. This is largely because, at this stage of their schooling, pupils' oral work is stronger than their written work. Hence, performance seen in classrooms is higher than that in written tests. Standards are average in drama, history and religious education. They are below average in all other subjects, except for design and technology, where standards are well below average.
8. Standards of work seen in Year 11 were broadly average overall. The proportion of pupils reaching the level expected for their age was as found nationally, thus reflecting the school's 2001 examination results for the proportion of pupils attaining five or more A* to C grades. Again, standards were higher in some subjects, for example in English and history, than past examination results would suggest. These higher standards reflect continuing improvements and the good, and often very good, teaching that pupils receive. Standards are above average in drama. They are broadly average in English, science, art, geography, history, ICT and religious education and below average in mathematics, modern foreign languages, music and physical education. Standards remain well below average in design and technology. Inspection evidence indicates that the school will meet its 2002 targets, but teachers will need to ensure that standards of work observed in classrooms are translated into test and examination results.
9. Pupils enter the school with very weak literacy skills and they need substantial help to improve. Pupils make good gains in developing their literacy skills in Years 7 to 9 but, in many subjects, below average literacy skills still limit standards in the end of Year 9 national tests and teacher assessments. However, by the time they leave school, pupils have made significant gains in developing these skills and standards are broadly average. Pupils are confident and fluent when speaking. Most are able to read a range of subject texts, which challenge and extend their understanding. They are able to adapt their writing to the varied demands of the curriculum and standards of accuracy and presentation are satisfactory. Such standards of literacy contribute to pupils' very good levels of achievement in their GCSE examinations and enable over 90 per cent of pupils to continue with their education beyond school.
10. Standards of numeracy are below average. Most pupils are confident with basic number work; they use calculators accurately and appropriately. Pupils sometimes cope reasonably well with the numerical demands of other subjects. For example, pupils' effective use of percentages added to the quality of their learning in a history lesson. Pupils had the necessary statistical skills to cope with work in geography; many made good use of their numerical knowledge in an ICT lesson. However, low level skills limit achievement in other subjects; for example, in science and design and

technology. Standards of written and oral calculation are improving in Years 7 to 9, following the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy in mathematics lessons. The increased emphasis on mental and oral work is starting to pay dividends.

11. Inspection findings also confirm to a large extent the evidence provided by the school's results and other assessment information; namely, that overall, achievement is very good. Pupils' achievements, in terms of public test and examination results, are much better at age 16 than at age 14. This is largely because of pupils' much improved literacy skills by Year 11, the better use of assessment information in Years 10 and 11 to identify and support underachievers and the very effective preparation for GCSE examinations provided by the school. Nevertheless, inspection evidence shows that pupils make good gains in subject learning during Years 7 to 9 and achieve well. Pupils achieve very well by Year 11 for a variety of reasons, central to which are pupils' own positive attitudes to learning. Other reasons include: good, and often very, good teaching; very effective leadership, with a clear focus on raising standards; and an excellent programme of staff development and training, which has focused teachers' attention on the ways in which pupils learn most effectively. By Year 11, pupils achieve at least well in almost all subjects. Overall, achievement is very good in drama, ICT and modern foreign languages. It is good in all but two other subjects. In music, achievement is unsatisfactory; this lower than usual level of achievement is largely due to current staffing difficulties and hence, to insufficient time for music in Years 7 to 9. In design and technology, achievement is poor. Pupils' do not achieve sufficiently well due to unsatisfactory teaching and provision.
12. Achievement is equally good for differing groups of pupils. Over 80 per cent of pupils have EAL. Most make good progress in their language development; they achieve well in all the literacy skills, but particularly so in speaking and listening. By the end of Year 9, most have acquired the necessary language skills to participate actively in lessons and to tackle work successfully. This allows for the very good overall achievement in subjects evident in Years 10 and 11. Pupils who are at an early stage of language acquisition, some having arrived recently from abroad, receive specialist support. These pupils too make good progress in language acquisition, often from a very low base. Analysis by the school shows that there is no difference in the achievement of different ethnic groups within the school. Again, in line with test and examination results, there is no discernible difference in classrooms in the achievement of boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated into all lessons and many achieve at least one or more GCSE grades. Their achievement is better than might be expected, given their very low attainment on entry. Gifted and talented pupils also benefit from good teaching and they too achieve well over time. Their achievements are being enhanced through the gifted and talented programme run by the school.
13. Since the last inspection, there has been an upward trend in the school's average GCSE points score, in line with that found nationally. The proportion

of pupils gaining five or more A* to C grades has risen from 39 per cent to 50 per cent; results for five or more A* to G grades and one or more A* to G grades are now in the top five per cent of all schools nationally. Achievement is very good overall, though better at the end of Year 11 than at the end of Year 9. Overall, there has been good improvement since the last inspection.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

14. Pupils have good attitudes to the school. They are interested in their studies, and are keen to work hard and to do well. This keenness and eagerness was a feature of many lessons in all year groups. In a Year 7 French lesson, for example, pupils learning how to greet each other were very eager to join in and to show their ability in a new language. In a Year 11 mathematics lesson, pupils arrived ready to work, and willing to discuss their findings. They knew exactly what they needed to do in order to improve and were prepared to take on extra work in order to achieve results. Pupils show particularly strong interest in drama and physical education lessons. In a Year 11 drama lesson, when the teacher praised one pupil for having performed well, the rest of the class burst into spontaneous applause. Most pupils feel sufficiently confident to ask for help and support if they need clarification, as in a GNVQ ICT lesson, when pupils were comparing advertising flyers produced by using ICT enhancing presentations.
15. Pupils with learning difficulties generally display good attitudes in lessons. Their work reflects a willingness to try hard and positive attitudes to learning. For example, in a Spanish lesson, these pupils concentrated and made very good efforts to label pictures and to write short sentences. Similarly, pupils who receive specialist teaching for language acquisition and development respond well to support given and participate effectively in group activities.
16. Standards of behaviour are good. Pupils almost always behave well in lessons, largely because they are keen to work hard and to succeed. Only a small minority misbehaves occasionally. Such instances can occur when the teaching lacks interest and does not involve pupils in the lesson. Standards of behaviour as pupils move around the school are also good. Pupils in the school come from many different backgrounds, but mix together easily and harmoniously. Boys and girls, and pupils from different social and ethnic groups, work together happily and well. There is little oppressive behaviour or bullying. There was one permanent exclusion last year - less than the average for a school of this size. The number of fixed-term exclusions though was slightly higher than average and many of these involved fighting. Exclusions are monitored carefully to identify and address any issues arising with different ethnic groups. Repeat exclusions are rare for all groups.
17. Pupils respond very well to the provision that the school makes for their personal development. Relationships are particularly good. They are very good both among pupils themselves, as well as between pupils and staff. These good relations are an important factor in helping pupils to do well and

achieve their best. In a Year 10 geography lesson, when the teacher was explaining world trade patterns, his determination to challenge pupils and to develop their learning resulted in enthusiastic collaboration. Pupils are sensitive to each other's values and beliefs: they listen to one another and give help readily. Good habits of study, and the necessary skills to research and work independently, develop as pupils progress through the school, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Pupils themselves acknowledge their increasing maturity. In all years of the school, pupils accept responsibility willingly in a variety of ways, serving on Year councils, organising social evenings, working in the library, as receptionists, producing magazines and newsletters.

18. Attendance is satisfactory. The rate of attendance for the academic year 2000/2001 was 91.6 per cent, close to the national average of 91.3 per cent. Authorised absence was 7.6 per cent, almost identical with the national average. Unauthorised absence was 0.8 per cent, slightly below the national average figure of 1.1 per cent. Most pupils arrive on time at the start of the school day and are punctual to lessons.
19. Pupils' attitudes have improved since the last inspection. The level of fixed term exclusions has fallen substantially.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

20. Pupils learn well and show an interest in their work. Most concentrate well and build on existing knowledge effectively to acquire new knowledge and skills. Very good levels of interest and concentration, and a willingness to work, were features of pupils' learning in lessons across a range of subjects. This good quality learning is promoted by good, and often very good teaching. Teaching was good or better in almost seven out of every ten lessons observed. Relatively little unsatisfactory teaching was observed; most, but not all, of this was in design and technology. There is no significant difference in the quality of teaching across the year groups.
21. The good quality teaching is due to a variety of factors; for example, most teachers have good subject knowledge; many use their on-going assessment of pupils' work effectively to help pupils learn. However, three major strengths underpin much of the teaching across all subjects: teachers plan their lessons very well; they use a good range of methods to help pupils to learn effectively; they manage pupils skilfully in lessons. There are no aspects of teaching which are unsatisfactory overall and no generic weaknesses across all subjects. Teaching is very good in drama, history and physical education. It is good overall in English, mathematics, science, and in most other subjects. It is satisfactory overall in music, although good in Years 7 to 9. It is unsatisfactory overall in design and technology. Teaching of the school's personal, social and health education programme is satisfactory overall, and sometimes good.
22. Teachers are confident and competent in the subjects they teach. Most have good knowledge and understanding of their subject. An excellent staff training programme has also focused teachers' attention on the ways in which pupils' learn most effectively. Teachers are very aware of the so-called 'accelerated

learning cycle' and of the ways in which this can improve teaching and learning in their subject. As a result, a real strength of teaching is the careful way in which lessons are planned and prepared, in response to a careful assessment of different learning needs, and according to an agreed approach which is common across subjects. Lessons are structured very well and have very clear learning outcomes. Pupils are given clear time targets and good guidance on the purpose of the lesson. For example in physical education, teachers always discuss with pupils what is going to be learned. This motivates pupils well and allows them to check for themselves what they are learning and how well they are progressing. In drama, a particular strength is pupils' ability to evaluate their own work and this is because the learning objectives for lessons have been articulated very clearly. In general, learning is summarised very effectively at the end of lessons. Teachers also plan carefully how to make maximum use of pupils' interests. For example, in religious education, religions to be studied are selected carefully, so that pupils can use their own knowledge and experiences to enrich the work of the class. Homework is planned carefully; it is set and used appropriately in most subjects to reinforce classwork.

23. Because of their awareness of different learning styles and, in many instances, because of their enthusiasm for their subject, teachers use a variety of effective ways to teach their subjects. Teachers have a wide range of techniques at their disposal, from skilful question and answer sessions and pair or group discussions to written models, frameworks for writing and 'brainstorming'. Teachers give clear explanations, they are able to explain new ideas confidently and correctly at a level that is matched well to pupils' previous learning. This helps pupils to build effectively on what they already know and to understand new ideas. Usually, pupils are able to find a way to approach a task and to complete it successfully. Teachers try to build into all lessons activities whereby pupils can learn using visual, auditory and kinaesthetic means. In mathematics, for example, visual learning is used effectively in the teaching of geometry, through the transformation of different shapes. In ICT, effective use of a 'network tutor' allows pupils to follow each step of the teachers' instructions visually on their own screens. Imaginative approaches are often used to very good effect. For example, in a Year 11 science lesson, on the periodic table, the teacher made very skilful use of a glove puppet to ensure that all pupils contributed verbally to the lesson, and hence achieved very good progress both in science learning and in language development. In a Year 9 history lesson on trench warfare, pupils were taught in a most vivid and imaginative way, which ensured not only the acquisition of knowledge but also understanding of the relevant issues. Overall, teaching methods meet pupils' learning needs well. A point for development is in the use of ICT to support pupils' learning. Although this is used effectively in many subjects, practice is not yet as comprehensive as it might be.
24. Most teachers manage pupils very skilfully in lessons; many establish a good working atmosphere seemingly effortlessly. Teachers have high expectations for standards of behaviour. Pupils know what is expected of them; most respond accordingly. Teachers use a range of strategies, underpinned by the

school's behaviour policy, to establish a disciplined and constructive learning environment; good humour is often a feature of lessons. Relationships between pupils and their teachers are very good and are central to pupils' very good achievements. For example, in English, teachers have the trust and confidence of their pupils; as a result, a positive working atmosphere prevails in lessons. Similarly in art, the effective management of pupils creates a purposeful working atmosphere and engenders very positive attitudes to work among pupils. Across almost all subjects, very good relationships and discipline result in a good work ethic in classrooms.

25. A relative weakness in teaching, although satisfactory overall, is teachers' use of their on-going assessment of pupils' work to enhance learning. Almost all teachers know their pupils well; most have good knowledge of pupils' differing levels of attainment. Most teachers use this knowledge effectively to pitch work accordingly to ensure appropriate challenge for all pupils. In most instances, teachers plan carefully how they can adapt work for pupils with differing levels of attainment, including those with learning difficulties and those with EAL, so that all can learn and achieve well. For example, in art, demonstrations to the whole class are supported by planned individual guidance for those needing extra help; in geography, work is planned so that appropriate challenge is provided for pupils of all levels of attainment. In Punjabi, key words, which increase in difficulty and challenge, are incorporated into activities to support learning for all. Most teachers are aware of the higher attaining and gifted and talented pupils in their classes. Whilst teachers expect more of these pupils, in terms of standards of work and extended writing, relatively few examples were seen during the inspection of teachers setting different tasks to extend and challenge the learning of such pupils. For example, in mathematics and science, work set does not always provide sufficient challenge for the higher attaining pupils in Years 7 to 9.
26. Most teachers mark pupils' work regularly; often, marking is consistent and helpful. In general, teachers use their on-going day-to-day assessment of pupils' work effectively to help pupils understand what they need to do to make progress. However, practice varies both within and across departments. In many subjects, including English, art, design and technology, geography, ICT, modern foreign languages, music, physical education and religious education, further developments in the use of assessment are needed, both to ensure appropriate challenge for all, and to help pupils know how to improve the standard of their work.
27. Overall, the teaching of literacy across the school is satisfactory. Since a large proportion of pupils has special educational needs or EAL, many strategies have been developed at departmental level to support the teaching of literacy. However, at present, there is no agreed whole school approach to the development of pupils' literacy skills; this is needed if the many instances of good practice which exist at departmental level are to be co-ordinated and shared. A more consistent approach to the teaching of literacy across the curriculum is required. The school is aware of this; consultations on a draft literacy policy are underway. Teachers take account of pupils' literacy needs in their planning and many examples were seen of good practice. In mathematics, teachers provide opportunities for pupils to talk about the subject and they are given advice and help with their speaking skills. Good displays of pupils' work were seen in many curriculum areas, together with key subject words and technical language. There are many opportunities for group discussions – for example, in English, science and geography - and pupils are encouraged to evaluate their own work. This was seen to good effect in drama and in art. Investigation work in science and geography

enables pupils to develop their extended writing skills and the latter subject has the development of language and literacy as a key priority in its improvement plan. There are extensive opportunities for pupils to extend their reading skills in English, history and geography. Pupils write well in history because of the teachers' insistence on accuracy and conciseness.

28. Similarly, the teaching of numeracy is broadly satisfactory. Pupils use and develop their skills across subjects. There are good opportunities for developing pupils' spatial awareness through the teaching of three-dimensional work in art. Teaching of perspective is good. The work of the mathematics department with solids and nets of solids is also helpful, as are projects in graphics. More general work on measuring and simple statistical data occurs in mathematics, science, design and technology, geography and information technology. The teaching of basic skills in mathematics is good. However, again, there is as yet no whole school approach to the teaching of numeracy. There is no numeracy audit from the schemes of work of the different departments. Again, the school is aware of this; it is a priority in the school's improvement plan.
29. The strengths of teaching described above help all pupils to learn well. Teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good and helps them to achieve well. Teachers work very effectively with their classes to ensure that work is suitable for pupils with learning difficulties. However, such pupils learn best and make most progress when they have additional support to help them from specialist teachers or from learning support assistants. There are a few instances where teachers share their planning with learning support assistants, but this is not as yet universal. Teaching for pupils who receive extra support for English language acquisition is also good. EAL teachers have a secure knowledge of the structure of the English language and are competent in teaching basic skills in English. They employ suitable methods and resources to enable pupils to acquire English successfully, in both specialist lessons, and when they give extra support in mainstream lessons. In the lessons observed, this meant that EAL pupils were fully engaged in their learning, were developing confidence in speaking and listening and were achieving well relative to their present levels of attainment and knowledge of English. A point for development is to develop further collaboration between subject and specialist EAL teachers, in order to enhance the teaching of subject specific English.
30. The quality of teaching and learning has improved very significantly since the last report, when just over 20 per cent of teaching was unsatisfactory (with a small minority of this being poor) and when one half of lessons were good or better. Now, almost 70 per cent of teaching seen was good or better; just less than five per cent of teaching was unsatisfactory. This improvement reflects the considerable work undertaken by the school on different learning styles. The school has supported teachers very successfully indeed in considering how they can best help pupils to learn. Most teachers now match their

teaching approaches and their materials to pupils' differing learning needs effectively. There has been very good improvement.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?

31. Overall, the quality and range of learning opportunities provided by the school are very good. The school's planned curriculum offers good breadth and balance and meets statutory requirements. The previous inspection report highlighted a number of deficiencies in the curriculum, particularly identifying problems of time allocation to subjects, a lack of vocational courses for pupils in Years 10 and 11, poor links with post-16 colleges and the absence of a personal, health and social education programme. These shortfalls have all been addressed and some of these issues now feature as strengths of the curriculum. The quality of extra-curricular enrichment, which the previous report praised, remains strong. Indeed, this provision has improved further. The school makes determined efforts to ensure that it caters for all pupils' needs and aspirations and all pupils are offered a good range of learning and enrichment opportunities. The curriculum is socially inclusive, offering good access and opportunity for all pupils to benefit from the wide range of activities available. The school's status as a Sports College helps in this respect, and the emphasis on sport has raised the self-esteem of many pupils, thus helping to improve their commitment to school in general.
32. There is good breadth to the school's academic curriculum and the range of opportunities in Years 10 and 11, in particular, are very good. All pupils have access to the full range of National Curriculum subjects, to religious education and to drama. The planned time allocation for subjects is broadly satisfactory. In modern foreign languages, considerable variety is offered. From Year 7, pupils choose to study French, Spanish or Punjabi; they can also learn Urdu in extra-curricular time. From Year 10 onwards, pupils can also study Urdu, Hindi or Arabic. In Years 10 and 11, the curriculum has been developed since the last inspection through the introduction of three vocational courses. There is also a small work-related learning project offered in conjunction with Uxbridge College. This course is designed to support a small group of pupils who are reluctant school attenders. A few issues exist, which are largely beyond the school's control, and which have a negative impact on the curriculum. Recent recruitment difficulties resulted in the school having to make pragmatic decisions about its provision at the start of this year. As a result, at the time of the inspection, statutory requirements are not met fully for design and technology or music. The school plans to revert to its intended curricular provision as soon as staffing shortages can be resolved.
33. The school's curriculum features many enhancements; the opportunities for enrichment are good and have improved significantly since the last inspection. The school's provision for careers education and guidance is very good. It is extremely well planned and documented and led by two committed and enthusiastic members of staff. A feature of the programme is that it starts

in Year 7 and there is a well-planned programme of events for each year. All Year 10 pupils participate in a work experience programme. This too is very well planned. The school works in close association with the Ealing Education and Business Partnership and the programme features appropriate preparatory work, as well exercises after pupils have completed their placements.

34. The previous report criticised the quality of relationships with further education colleges. This is now a strong feature of the careers education and advice that is offered to pupils, especially in Year 11. Around 90 per cent of Featherstone pupils continue with their education after the age of 16. Within the immediate area, there are many schools and colleges that pupils can choose to attend. The careers staff estimate that they have contact with some 15 or 16 different institutions and that they have detailed contacts with at least eight of these bodies. Through the careers education and guidance programme in Year 11, pupils are provided with relevant and detailed information about the choices open to them. Provision is also made for the school's gifted and talented pupils. For example, some science students will shortly be attending a special lecture on chemistry at the University of Westminster and a small group of pupils will be invited to visit an Oxbridge college. The school is aware that more work is needed to ensure that higher attaining pupils are challenged sufficiently well across all subjects.
35. Careers education and guidance is provided through the school's personal, health and social education (PHSE) programme. At the time of the last inspection, such a programme did not exist; now all pupils have a weekly lesson. The provision for PHSE is good, with the potential for further improvement. Following some recent reorganisations of staff responsibilities, a new leader for this subject has been appointed. There is an awareness that some improvements in the consistency of course content and delivery are required and a review of provision is being conducted. This has already identified citizenship as an area to be cultivated. It is clear, however, that the programme is planned well with common themes, such as study skills, being developed in each year. Suitable arrangements also exist for offering sex education and for providing information about the use and misuse of drugs.
36. Various other forms of enrichment to the curriculum exist; overall, extra-curricular provision is very good. Cross-curricular days are arranged to look at themes, such as 'One World', and residential visits are arranged for language pupils to France and Spain and cross-curricular residential visits are made annually to the Normandy beaches and the Wye Valley. Drama is strong and the school's sporting prowess has been enhanced by the excellent facilities and opportunities offered through its Sports College. Indeed, the school's Year 8 soccer team has been highly successful and is soon to participate in a cup final to be played at Old Trafford. The wide range of activities for extra-curricular music is severely limited at present due to staffing issues. The curriculum offers opportunities for pupils to accept responsibility, such as reception duty, and pupils on vocational courses in Years 10 and 11 do some work in association with local firms. The school has strong links with its local

community; for example, through its vocational work and through visits to various places of worship and to galleries and exhibitions. As yet, there are few examples of partnership working.

37. The school has introduced new grouping arrangements for teaching its curriculum this year. Currently, Years 7 to 9 are split into two bands; one band contains all higher and some middle attaining pupils, whilst the other contains some middle and all lower attaining pupils. Within the lower band, two classes are comprised of pupils with special educational needs; another class contains pupils who need extra support with their language acquisition and development. This is a pilot arrangement, which aims to reduce the range of attainment within classes and, thus, to reduce the amount of different work that teachers need to prepare in order to meet all pupils' needs effectively. It also aims to maximise use of the support available for pupils with special educational needs and those at an early stage of language acquisition. It is too early to judge if this arrangement will benefit pupils of all differing attainments. The school is monitoring the situation and is aware that some teachers find some classes difficult to control.
38. Until recently, pupils new to English spent a minimum of twelve weeks in an induction group before entering mainstream classes. This year, the induction group is subsumed into class groups as described above, taught by specialist teachers. In these groups, newly arrived bilingual learners and pupils in need of support for English language development receive focused support for language in particular and learning in general. Some of these pupils are refugees, who may have been traumatised by their recent experiences. EAL groups give them a sense of security and the potential to develop academic and social confidence within small groups. This new initiative seems effective to meet the needs of the significant number of refugee and low achieving bilingual pupils. However, it is too early for a definitive judgement to be made of its impact on pupils' achievements.
39. Overall, curricular provision is good for pupils with special educational needs. At present, pupils are supported and taught within class lessons as described above; careful thought has gone into the way pupils are placed in class groups and into the most effective deployment of learning support assistants and teachers. Withdrawal work to support individual needs takes place in the spring term. During this time, teachers work with a range of resources, including computer packages to boost pupils' skills of literacy and numeracy. Pupils with special educational needs have the same curricular provision as their peers in Years 7 to 9; in Years 10 and 11 they study one less subject than is usual, so that they can be given help to complete class and course work. This strategy is very successful in helping them to achieve success. Further opportunities to support pupils are provided through homework clubs. Gifted and talented pupils are benefiting from the Excellence in Cities initiative; they receive many opportunities to take part in enrichment activities that include workshops and visits. The school is aware that more consistency in approach is required across subjects in ensuring that higher attainers are challenged appropriately in lessons.

40. The curriculum has improved and developed significantly since the last inspection. It is underpinned by a clear philosophy based on offering opportunities to all pupils. The planning and evaluation that is undertaken match the strength of the provision. There are many very good enhancements to the curriculum and there is a commitment to continuous improvement. This is evidenced by the review of PHSE that is presently being conducted. Improvement in provision for pupils with special educational needs since the last inspection has been very good. There is now awareness across the school of pupils on the special needs register and of targets on pupils' individual education plans. All pupils on stage 2 and above have individual education plans and parents are involved in agreeing these through the school's target setting days. The intentions of the Code of Practice are well understood and requirements are met fully. There is also a named governor with responsibility for special educational needs. The school has also addressed effectively the key issue for EAL identified in the last inspection. It has introduced a clear programme of induction for late arrivals with EAL. This has made a good impact on GCSE results.
41. The provision for pupils' personal development is very good. At the beginning of this term the school conducted an audit, to chart where opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development arose in curriculum subjects and pastoral provision.
42. The quality of the spiritual provision is good overall, though there are variations in how well curriculum subjects contribute to this aspect. Religious education makes an excellent contribution to the quality of this provision, in both the specific and the broader sense. The place of God in daily life is accepted and valued. Pupils are taught to show sensitivity to the value of prayer in different faiths and to reflect on the creation of the world and the beauty of nature from sacred and secular viewpoints. Other subjects also contribute well to spiritual provision; English through the choice of texts to be studied and history, where in a lesson about the Hungarian uprising in 1956, the class reflected on the devastating consequences of using tanks against civilians. In art, however, greater emphasis could be given to discussion on ideas and feelings.
43. The provision for pupils' moral development is very good. Moral issues are an integral part of curriculum subjects. The programme of personal, health and social education and assemblies discusses a wide range of moral issues. Pupils learn about the problems posed by business ethics, racial intolerance, and contemporary moral issues, for example euthanasia, and topics of peace and conflict. Members of staff have high expectations of pupils and set very good examples for them to follow.
44. The provision that the school makes for pupils' social development, is also of very good quality. The personal, social and health education programme, assemblies and the tutorial programme, where topics are linked, cover many aspects of social development. Day and residential visits extend pupils'

horizons beyond their immediate community. Members of staff and pupils all spoke highly of how the trips to the Wye Valley had benefited them, learning to work together as a team in unfamiliar surroundings and increasing their self-esteem in the process. The many opportunities provided for co-operative work in lessons encourage pupils from all backgrounds to mix harmoniously and to learn together effectively. The very good relations and mutual respect which exist between pupils and members of staff are another significant factor in this very good social provision. Pupils do well as a result. The inclusion department is a recent addition to the provision that the school makes for pupils. As well as mentoring for individual pupils, the department has run group sessions on resolving conflict.

45. Cultural provision is very good. It is wide-ranging and draws extensively on the many cultural traditions of pupils who attend the school, as well as promoting an understanding of British and European culture through art, literature and music. Artists visit the school; there are outings to galleries, exhibitions and displays of pupils' work. In English, texts draw on many cultural sources. The modern foreign languages department has links with schools in Belgium, France, Norway and Spain. Pupils contribute to a magazine which describes the culture of these countries and Great Britain. Pupils share and celebrate their own heritages in performances and social evenings.
46. The quality of the provision for pupils' personal development has improved considerably since the last inspection report.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

47. There are good procedures for the care and welfare of pupils in the school. The school takes good care of its pupils. Heads of year and their tutor teams know pupils well. Informal knowledge is backed up by carefully kept records of personal development, attendance and behaviour. Small group tutorials are an effective method of checking on the personal progress that pupils make. Once a fortnight, groups of three or four pupils come in early for a discussion with their tutors. Pupils value these opportunities to talk and the guidance they receive. Procedures for child protection are good: there are two designated members of staff and clear written guidance is provided.
48. The procedures to promote good behaviour and discipline are also good. They are clear to both pupils and members of staff and they are consistently enforced. The behaviour policy was reviewed following the last inspection. The effects of the changes introduced then have been monitored and evaluated. The school consults members of staff in a very effective manner through the use of focus groups for ideas and suggestions on where and how to improve procedures. There are good procedures to monitor oppressive behaviour. The inclusion department set up earlier this year now helps pupils who have emotional difficulties, or problems controlling their behaviour, through counselling and mentoring. The school is conscious that some pupils

have come as refugees from troubled parts of the world and can have difficulty adjusting. For example, they work with the Somali community to explain school procedures and discipline, in order to reduce the proportion of fixed term exclusions among pupils with a Somali background.

49. There are good procedures to promote and monitor attendance. The school has recently begun to contact parents on the first day of absence. Although general procedures to ensure pupil's health and safety are good, both within the school – particularly important given the building work – and on visits outside, some minor safety hazards were drawn to the school's attention.
50. The school's procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress, whilst satisfactory overall, are not as well established as those for supporting pupils' personal progress. There are appropriate systems in place, at both departmental level and whole school level, for assessing and recording pupils' attainment at particular points in time. For example, all departments assess pupils' attainment against National Curriculum or other agreed criteria at least twice per year. As reported in the teaching section of this report, teachers make varying use of such assessments; some use results well to inform their planning and to track pupils' progress in acquiring subject knowledge and content. The school also has a long history of collecting assessment data. Appropriate use has been made of national and standardised test information to analyse the attainment of different year groups on entry to the school. Pupils' results in standardised tests taken on entry are collated and distributed to staff, together with results from national tests at the end of Year 6 and Year 9. However, in Years 7 to 9, while these pupil profiles summarise past attainment, they do not predict likely future performance. Whilst some teachers and departments are starting to make effective use of the data, overall, it has not been used consistently and effectively to ensure that all pupils are achieving as well as they should do, given their attainment on entry, across the first three years of their schooling. It has not been used effectively by departments to identify underachievers in a subject or to set targets for year groups and for individuals. Neither has it been used effectively by pastoral staff to monitor pupils' progress across subjects and to inform target setting.
51. Better use has been made of assessment information, and teachers' professional judgements, to predict likely performance at GCSE and to set targets for individual pupils. Appropriate use has been made of the information by senior managers to monitor and evaluate the performance of individual pupils, to identify underachievers and to provide mentoring as appropriate for some Year 11 pupils.
52. The school is aware that a point for development is to produce a clearer analysis of expectations and outcomes for classes, departments and whole year groups, particularly in Key Stage 3. To this end, it has very recently provided departments with assessment information in a form that allows managers and teachers to undertake their own analyses. This year, heads of year and tutors were provided with information that allowed them to analyse

pupils' progress across subjects and to identify any pupils causing concern or, indeed, any making very good progress. Tutors were able to use this information to inform their target setting days with pupils and parents. Recently, the school has used its data very well to analyse the performance and achievements of different groups of pupils at GCSE; for example, by gender and ethnicity. It has also developed the use of its data to highlight strengths in departmental performance; for example, by informing each department of the value it is adding to pupils' achievement in Years 10 and 11. The recently appointed deputy head has clear plans for further development.

53. All pupils are screened carefully on entry to school so that early identification of those to be entered onto the special needs register can be made. Assessment procedures are well established and the information produced is recorded well and used to determine the amount of support that is required. Teachers are provided with a clear analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of pupils on the special needs register, but most teachers do not show the link between this information, targets on individual education plans and their own knowledge of pupils' learning on their lesson plans. Individual education plans are securely in place, with targets agreed by parents at the school's target setting days. Special needs teachers, and learning support assistants, know their pupils well and monitor their learning through daily tracking sheets. Assessment data and reading and spelling tests are used to monitor progress, but not to predict improvement. Record keeping is very clear and provides a good overview of the support that has been given to pupils. All statutory requirements are met for pupils with statements of special educational need; reviews are held regularly and their needs are met.
54. Advice and support for learning given to pupils with particular EAL needs are good. However, such pupils are currently identified for support on the basis of their low National Curriculum levels in literacy. There is no specialist procedure for screening the specific language needs of these pupils. To improve further, the school needs to identify the specific language needs of EAL pupils and to set language targets for them.
55. On balance, the quality of the educational and personal support and guidance which the school gives pupils is good. Personal support and guidance for pupils is well established with careful monitoring of personal development. But the school has only recently begun to include the extensive information collected about their academic progress as part of the overall educational support and guidance. Monitoring of this aspect is not so well established in all curriculum subjects.
56. There has been considerable improvement in the support given to pupils since the last inspection.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

57. The school has very effective arrangements in place to ensure that it works in partnership with parents. Although the return response rate for the parents' questionnaire was low, this is not indicative of the support provided by parents towards the education of their children, which overall is very good. For the past two years, the school has invited parents to complete the Ofsted questionnaire in order to inform its work with them. There has been a good response to these consultations, the last of which took place just before the inspection. Comments, and those of parents attending the pre-inspection parents' meeting, are largely very positive. Parents think highly of what the school provides for their children. Inspection findings support parents' positive views. Relatively small numbers of parents expressed concerns. In response to these concerns, inspectors found that behaviour was good during the inspection week and the setting and use of homework was satisfactory. Inspectors found that pupils make very good progress during their time at the school. Inspectors agree that the amount of information about progress in reports varies.
58. The school analyses the information it receives from the results of surveys and makes very good use of this information in two ways. Firstly, it examines the practice that parents would like to see improved, such as behaviour and homework, and then it consults further with invited parents in small focus groups, to work towards improving the school's practice.
59. The focus groups are formed from selected parents who are representative of the local community. The groups are well attended and provide a very good forum for discussion of current issues. In addition, newly formed drop-in sessions are arranged for Somali parents to help them to understand the requirements of the school and the English education system. The school's social inclusion team provides very good support to both parents and pupils who maybe experiencing difficulties and form very good links between home and school.
60. A strong feature of the partnership arrangements are the bi-annual target setting days, where pupils and parents meet with tutors to set targets for the forthcoming six months. These provide very good opportunities for parents to discuss their children's progress, school reports and, as appropriate, special educational needs. The school ensures that all parents attend; appointments are set in advance and, for those parents who are unable to attend or do not do so, there is immediate follow up by the head of year to make another appointment.
61. The information sent to parents is satisfactory overall. However, it is variable in quality, ranging from a very attractive prospectus to a short and stark governors' annual report to parents that fulfils statutory requirements, but in the briefest way. Written reports to parents about their children's progress are satisfactory. However, again, they vary in quality; in most subjects, they describe effort and behaviour rather than pupils' progress and achievement. They give insufficient detail about progress in acquiring the knowledge and skills of a subject. This is an area for improvement, as is the use of school

diaries that act as a liaison between home and school. Overall, pupils do not complete these well and opportunities are missed to provide parents with clear information about the nature and extent of homework.

62. The school is pleased to be part of the community and welcomes the diversity of cultures. However, it does not make this apparent in the written information to parents, or in the signposting and displays about the school. All information is in English and insufficient use is made of other languages. The school offers to provide letters and other information in a range of languages, but this too is written in English and may not be understood by the recipients.
63. The school has very good links with parents; it has improved its partnership work since the last inspection. However, written reports still do not explain in sufficient detail the progress made by pupils.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

64. Overall, leadership and management of the school are very good. The headteacher provides excellent leadership; she has a very clear vision for the school, wherein pupils and their achievements are central. She seeks to create a truly inclusive school, where all pupils and staff get a 'fair deal' and where standards are high. This vision is underpinned by the school's aims, which are reflected in all aspects of its work, not least in the very good relationships that exist within the school and in extremely effective provision for staff development. The headteacher is a very visible person around the school. In her determination to raise standards, she demands a lot from staff but gives a great deal in return, both in terms of commitment and support.
65. The last Ofsted report stated that the quality of leadership provided by other managers was variable at all levels; roles and responsibilities needed to be reviewed, since not all managers played a full part in school development. A key issue was to encourage all staff to participate positively in the formulation, implementation and review of whole school developments. To address these issues, the headteacher has very skilfully created an extended leadership team, comprising seven other people. Corporately, this team is very effective in helping her to lead and manage the school. Collectively, this team has established a common commitment to high standards; there is an atmosphere of 'wanting to do well' amongst most pupils and staff. Expectations of pupils are high, promoting very good achievement and good standards of behaviour throughout the school.
66. Governors are very supportive of the school. They are informed of the school's work through regular reports from the headteacher, from the school manager and from heads of department and heads of year. They use this information appropriately to monitor the school's results and provision and to help shape the future direction of the school. The chair and vice-chair have a long involvement with the school; they have been instrumental in ensuring that the school is a centre for sport and other activities in the community.

Governors very much ensure that the school is 'at the heart of the local community'. Governors are largely successful in ensuring that all statutory requirements are met. However, although the school has a determination, excusing it from providing a daily act of worship with a Christian focus, not all tutorials provide appropriate time for reflection. In addition, at present, curricular requirements for design and technology and music are not met fully, although this is due to recruitment issues that are beyond the school's control. The school has done all it can to recruit appropriate staff in order to resolve these issues. It has taken sensible and pragmatic decisions about curricular provision in order to minimise any disruption to pupils' learning.

67. The management skills of middle managers have improved significantly since the last report, when they were found to be variable. Overall, the leadership provided by heads of department is good or very good in all subjects, with the exception of design and technology and music, where there are vacancies at present. All heads of department give a firm steer to their department's work and make a significant contribution to the better than expected results achieved by pupils. The head of the EAL team, and the head of the school's Excellence in Cities programme, both have clear ideas of the developments needed to enhance provision further. Both have been in post for only a short time; it is too early to judge their impact on pupils' learning. The head of the social inclusion department and heads of year are very effective in ensuring that support for pupils from pastoral, special educational needs and EAL staff is co-ordinated and that duplication is avoided.
68. The special educational needs co-ordinator works closely with her deputy to provide good leadership for special educational needs. Departmental representatives act as a link for communication between the special educational needs department and subjects, but they do not have further responsibilities, such as ensuring that individual education plans targets are subject specific or that worksheets and books are screened for readability.
69. Opportunities for pupils in the school are equal and good. Assessment data shows that achievement is the same for all the different groups of pupils in the school. The school sits boys and girls next to each other, and arranges some single-sex teaching in physical education, to try to ensure that boys and girls achieve equally well. There are no issues with the growing Muslim community over the school's dress code. Pupils are not denied access to educational trips, as most parents support these events financially. The school's decisions on discipline are monitored carefully, to ensure that there is no discrimination. Governors ensure the different minority groups are represented on the Governing Body. The curriculum is open to all. The school provides for pupils with specific disabilities, but wheelchair access to parts of the buildings is not possible.
70. The school is well down the road in terms of self-evaluation; its strategies for monitoring and evaluating its strengths and weaknesses are very good. The headteacher and most other senior managers have a very good understanding of the quality of the school's results, of its teaching and of other aspects of school provision. At departmental level, there is a similarly high level of understanding. Almost all heads of department monitor and evaluate their department's work effectively; practice is largely good or very good. Similarly, heads of year are instrumental in ensuring that pastoral

provision is of good quality overall. This thorough analysis is facilitated by very clear and effective line management systems, wherein roles and responsibilities are clear, and wherein practice is consistent across the school. For example, assistant headteachers meet very regularly with middle managers to monitor and evaluate provision in departments and across year groups.

71. Overall, the school monitors and evaluates its academic standards very well. Appropriate use is made of national and standardised test information, and teachers' professional judgements, to predict likely performance at GCSE and to set targets for individual pupils. Heads of department, in discussion with senior managers, have compared predicted outcomes with those actually achieved, analysed the reasons for any differences, and identified departmental actions to be taken to raise standards.
72. The school also monitors the quality of its teaching very effectively. A programme of classroom observations has been undertaken over the past few years by senior managers, together with some support from the local education authority. There is evidence of a well-established programme, which has developed over time, where good practice is identified and celebrated and where aspects of teaching needing improvement are addressed. As a result, the headteacher has a very clear idea of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching across the school. She has taken appropriate action to support individuals and departments and to raise the overall quality of teaching and learning within the school. Her actions have been extremely effective in securing improvements in the quality of teaching and learning that takes place in the school. An integral part of this process has been the training of middle managers in classroom observation and the establishment of a culture of continuing professional development. Consequently, heads of department monitor the quality of teaching within their departments effectively and share the good practice that exists. Heads of year monitor and evaluate the quality of tutor and personal, social and health education provision constructively.
73. Many other school procedures are monitored carefully. For example, attendance levels are monitored rigorously by the social inclusion team and action is taken to reduce the amount of absence. There is careful monitoring of the school's spending against budget allocations. The last audit report in 1997 identified the satisfactory management and control of resources. The governors' finance committee oversees financial matters and monitors spending.
74. Since her appointment, the headteacher has instigated many changes. Increasingly, she has ensured that the school uses the information gained from its monitoring and evaluation of provision to identify priorities for development and actions to be taken in order to raise standards. The cycle of 'how well are we doing, what actions are needed to improve, and how effective are these actions' is well established across the school. A very effective part of this cycle is the action the school takes, as a result of its

evaluations, to secure improvements. These are detailed clearly in a three year school development plan, underpinned by an annual school improvement plan, which in turn is underpinned by departmental and year plans. Priorities for improvement are entirely appropriate. Plans are sufficiently detailed to guide development; the school is aware that some need a clearer focus on intended outcomes rather than on actions to be taken, so that the impact on pupils' learning and achievements can be evaluated more rigorously. Good practice is shared and developed through so-called focus groups, where strengths identified through monitoring are discussed and developed. These involve all staff.

75. The programme of staff development that results from the school's monitoring and evaluation of its work is extremely effective. Training for staff is very well planned and often innovative in nature. It has made an excellent contribution to improving the quality of teaching and learning within the school and hence to raising standards. It has focused teachers' attention on how to improve the quality of pupils' learning. As a result, teachers are very aware of different learning styles; they plan their teaching effectively taking these into account. They realise the value of structured lessons; practice is consistent across the school.
76. The headteacher and other senior managers make skilful use of people, using their strengths to maximum effect. Teachers are deployed effectively; good use is made of their subject expertise, so that much of the teaching is good or very good. Learning support assistants are appropriately qualified and speak a range of community languages; they are deployed increasingly well. They take their role very seriously and complete monitoring forms for each lesson they support, as well as making resources to help pupils learn. Their contribution in lessons is significant in the gains in learning that pupils make. The deployment of the specialist EAL teachers is effective and draws appropriately on their strengths. The support given by them is focused sensibly on the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. They make effective contributions to teaching and learning. The school functions reasonably smoothly due to its very helpful administrative and premises staff. The school is aware that further administrative staff will be needed when extensions to its sports facilities are complete. The school's use of information technology to aid its administration is good; plans are in hand to extend its use for the processing of assessment information.
77. The school also makes effective and imaginative use of funding to consolidate and develop its work. Most action plans are costed and provide a good framework for ensuring that spending decisions are governed, as far as possible, by the school's educational priorities. The good quality learning seen in classrooms indicates that pupils are benefiting from well-targeted spending. In recent years, the school has benefited from a considerable amount of extra funding, received as a result of recent government policies and grants. The school is also proactive in raising considerable funding through its own efforts. For example, the use of the school's facilities, particularly the Sports Centre, by the community generates significant

income. The school's in-house catering service not only provides very good food, it also makes a profit. All such monies are used effectively, for the purposes intended. For example, money received from the Excellence in Cities Project has been used well, to develop provision for gifted and talented pupils and to consolidate and extend support for learning through mentoring. These interventions are already having a positive impact on attendance figures and exclusions.

78. The school evaluates the impact of its spending decisions sensibly, influenced by the principles of best value. The school regularly compares its results with those of other schools, both locally and nationally. It challenges itself consistently to ensure that provision best meets pupils' needs and uses many strategies to extend and support pupils' learning beyond its basic curriculum. Teachers are involved in consultation; for example, the school has already consulted staff about the new grouping arrangements for teaching its curriculum and has taken action as a result of staff concerns. So, too, are parents, through annual questionnaires and the work of focus groups. Pupils have their say through the year councils. The expected procedures are in place to ensure that improvements to buildings and services are undertaken at the optimum financial rate. A very good example of this is the excellent value for money obtained in the purchasing of new ICT equipment. The school genuinely seeks to analyse what actions make a difference to standards; it enables pupils to achieve very well by the end of Year 11. Thus, even though spending per pupil is high, the school provides good value for money.
79. At present, the school does not have sufficient staff to teach its planned curriculum. In spite of its efforts, there is no head of department and no suitably qualified teachers for music, and no head of department and too little teacher time available for design and technology. In music, teaching relies on a non specialist for pupils in Years 7 to 9 and on an unqualified teacher for GCSE preparation. However, teaching is strong for younger pupils and offers a good level of musical expertise for older pupils. Less good is the lack of time for class music that this situation has brought about for Year 7 to 9. In some other subjects, vacancies are filled at present by teachers on temporary contracts. However, inspection evidence indicates that this situation is not affecting standards adversely. Overall, support, administrative, clerical and premises staff match needs well. The school is already considering carefully what extra administrative staff will be needed when the extension to sports facilities, presently being built, is completed.
80. Staff development is very well organised and the school holds the Investors in People (IIP) award. The IIP assessment feedback report is very positive, praising especially the school's training and development programme. Inservice training is organised "in house"; planning is thoughtful and detailed. As described above, it has had an excellent impact on pupils' learning. The school has very good systems of performance management for all staff, linking targets for teachers and support staff to the identified long-term needs of the school. Every member of the teaching staff has a professional development portfolio. The allocation of money for staff professional development, criticised in the last report, has been increased sixfold. The school supports the professional development of its teachers very well indeed.

81. The school has put into place good arrangements to help new members of staff; newly qualified teachers are very well supported. The staff handbook is full, detailed and helpful. Responsibilities are very clearly defined.
82. Resources available within the school to support learning are good overall. The school has addressed most of the issues raised in the last report, and has been energetic in seeking additional funding to enhance resources further. As a Sports College, the school now has very good resources for the delivery of physical education, which it shares with the community. A wide range of sporting activities take place and pupils with special educational needs are well supported with specialist equipment. The new sports hall has excellent equipment, including cricket nets, trampoline and table tennis tables, and the work of pupils studying dance is supported by the use of camcorder and video. The school's hall and stage have very recently been refurbished and the new lighting system will benefit both school and community.
83. Provision for ICT within the school has been built up significantly since the last report; the quality and number of computers available for pupils' use is now better than the national average. Through very prudent purchasing, the school has benefited from the acquisition of 'state of the art' hardware and software, which is accessible from all parts of the school. All subjects benefit from greater accessibility to ICT resources than is usual in most schools.
84. The library, that was underused at the time of the last report, has undergone a complete overhaul and is now a valuable and well-used asset, open throughout the day and benefiting from a full time librarian and computer resource area. The stock of books is increasing and, while it is still in need of additional books to replace old stock, the library has become an attractive and inviting area for pupils.
85. Resources within departments are generally good and the newly refurbished kitchen for food technology provides a stimulating area for pupils. However the design technology department, which was highlighted as an area for improvement in the last report, is still in need of improvement. It has insufficient computers and control equipment, which means that the specific expectations of the National Curriculum cannot be delivered effectively. In science, there are insufficient text-books to enable pupils to work at home and, in religious education, the lack of video and recording equipment limits the accuracy of pupils' perceptions regarding the religions and concepts that they study.
86. Overall, the school's accommodation is good and has a positive impact on standards. The school is on a single site with a mixture of new and older buildings, which provide a secure and pleasant environment. Much of the accommodation is of good or very good quality. Classrooms are usually of a good size and rooms for each subject are generally grouped close together. Most departments have adequate storage and office space. The school buildings and grounds are well maintained and kept clean and tidy.

87. There is just sufficient accommodation to teach the school's curriculum and to house its pupils. In almost all subject areas, there is at least sufficient accommodation to meet the needs of the subject curriculum. However, the school is short of a science laboratory. Very little spare accommodation sometimes limits provision. For example, the school wanted to expand the number of teaching groups for pupils with special educational needs in Years 8 and 9. This proposal could not be implemented, partly because there were no rooms available. The library is rather small, but, this is not currently an issue. The hall has multiple uses; it is used for physical education lessons, assemblies and eating lunch. At certain times of the year, it used to accommodate pupils for examinations. This puts some strain on teaching and non-teaching staff. Although the shared teaching rooms in the language block are satisfactory, there is no base for EAL staff, where resources can be stored and which pupils new to English can use as necessary. Some corridors are very small for the large numbers of pupils who move through them at particular times of day, such as at the end of lunch break.
88. The current programme of new building to enlarge the already very good sports hall facilities will go some way towards reducing the overcrowding in some areas of the school, like the hall. The high premises costs, that were identified in the last inspection, have been reduced markedly.
89. Overall, the school has made very good progress since its last inspection in 1997. The schools' average GCSE points score has shown an upward trend, in line with that found nationally. Teaching has improved significantly; the amount of unsatisfactory teaching has been reduced from just over 20 per cent to just under five per cent. In addition, the school has addressed almost all of the key issues in its last report successfully. It has restructured the school day, and has achieved greater flexibility in its timetabling structure as a result. Planned time allocations for subjects are appropriate. Pupils now have an appropriate choice of subjects in Years 10 and 11, including three vocational courses introduced since the last inspection. The school's provision for personal, health and social education is already good; further developments are planned. There are effective structures in place to ensure that all staff are involved appropriately in the evaluation of the school's work and in subsequent planning for improvement. Monitoring of teaching and the sharing of good practice are now strengths. Provision for special educational needs is good, as is that for pupils are at an early stage of language acquisition. Funding for various aspects of the school's work is now broadly in line with national spending patterns. Resources for food technology have been improved, but there remain some shortages in other areas of design and technology. There has been significant investment in resources for ICT; the library has undergone a complete overhaul and is now a valuable and well-used learning resource.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

90. Within the context of a school that enables its pupils to achieve very well in their GCSE examinations, the governing body, senior managers and other staff should:

- (1) *Raise standards at the end of Year 9 by improving standards of literacy and numeracy. Plans to develop whole school approaches to the teaching of these skills need to be implemented as a priority.
(Paragraphs 9, 10, 27, 28)
- (2) *Make better use of assessment information, particularly in Years 7 to 9, to:
 - set realistic but challenging targets for year groups, for departments and for individual pupils;
 - monitor progress towards these targets at regular intervals;
 - identify pupils who are underachieving and provide appropriate support;
 - ensure that higher attainers are challenged appropriately in all subjects.*(Paragraphs 25, 26, 50, 51, 52, 155, 160, 171, 179, 188, 196, 206.)
- (3) Improve provision for design and technology and music by addressing the areas for improvement identified in the subject reports.
(Paragraphs 151 – 156, and 181 – 189.

* Identified in the school's annual improvement plan.

The following more minor weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the school's action plan; these can be found in paragraphs 23, 29, 42, 54, 61, 62, 74, 79, 169. Of these, priority should be given to achieving a comprehensive use of ICT across all subjects, to support pupils' learning.

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	66

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	9	34	68	45	7	1	0
Percentage	5.5	20.7	41.5	27.4	4.3	0.6	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: the following applies to the academic year 2000 to 2001.

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1130
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	390

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	24
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	282

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	901

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	56
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	55

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.6
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.8
National comparative data	1.1

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)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	120	122	242

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	69	71	63
	Girls	87	60	57
	Total	156	131	120
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	65 (32)	57 (45)	52 (36)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	20 (5)	34 (25)	22 (14)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	93	62	48
	Girls	96	68	59
	Total	189	130	107
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	40 (40)	50 (44)	47 (27)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	10 (10)	22 (19)	19 (8)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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
	2001	99	94	193

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	39	96	99
	Girls	57	93	93
	Total	96	189	192
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	50 (40)	97 (99)	99 (100)
	National	(49.8) (49.2)	(88.8) (90.6)	(94.5) (94.4)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	43.7 (42.0)
	National	39.3 (38.9)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

	No of pupils	
Black – Caribbean heritage	18	153
Black – African heritage	153	
Black – other	7	
Indian	708	
Pakistani	143	
Bangladeshi	0	
Chinese	2	
White	44	
Any other minority ethnic group	55	

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	3	0
Black – African heritage	20	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	22	1
Pakistani	5	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	5	0
Other minority ethnic groups	5	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)	69.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.2

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	14
Total aggregate hours worked per week	440

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	71.3
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	24.5
Key Stage 4	20.9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	16.6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	16.0

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	3
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	8
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	7

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000-2001
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	£
Total income	3690077
Total expenditure	3600727
Expenditure per pupil	3266
Balance brought forward from previous year	-29475
Balance carried forward to next year	59875

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1130
Number of questionnaires returned	22

Number of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	17	7	1	0	2
My child is making good progress in school.	12	7	1	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	15	5	2	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	12	8	2	0	0
The teaching is good.	12	10	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	11	10	1	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	11	5	2	0	4
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	15	6	0	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	12	5	3	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	11	8	1	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	15	3	2	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	15	3	1	0	3

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

Although the return response rate for the parents' questionnaire is low, this is not indicative of the support provided by parents towards the education of their children. For the past two years, the school has invited parents to complete the Ofsted questionnaire in order to inform its work with them. There has been a good response to these consultations, the last of which took place just before the inspection. Hence, relatively few parents also returned the questionnaire for the inspection. Replies are too few to make analysis reliable. The above is included for information only; the actual number of returns for each category is shown, as percentages would be meaningless.

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Teachers work effectively as a team to ensure that pupils achieve well in relation to their levels of prior attainment.
- Very good aspects of teaching enable pupils to learn well in lessons.

Areas for development

- Improve the quality of learning through sharing good teaching practice more effectively.
- Improve development planning, so that the department's priorities for improvement are realised in practice.

91. There was a marked improvement in results in the 2001 end of Year 9 national tests when compared with results for 2000. This was a reversal of the decline in results over the last three years. In 2001, the proportion of pupils achieving at or above the level expected for their age was in line with that for all schools nationally, it was well above the national average for similar schools. Results for higher levels, although below the national average, were in line with those for similar schools. The overall points score was also below average. Girls performed better than boys, particularly in terms of the proportion attaining higher levels. Results overall were somewhat better than those achieved in mathematics and science. Overall, the 2001 English test results mean that pupils are achieving well, when account is taken of their levels of prior attainment on entry to the school.
92. The proportion of pupils achieving a grade in the A* to C range in the 2000 GCSE English Language examinations was well below the national average for all schools. Girls did better than the boys, which mirrors the situation nationally. These results met the standards obtained by similar schools nationally and meant that pupils achieved well given their attainment at the end of Year 9. The proportion of boys gaining a GCSE grade in the A* to G range was slightly down on the national average while that for girls met the national figure. Pupils did less well in this subject than in many of the other GCSE subjects they took. The 2001 results show a significant improvement over those of 2000 for those achieving A* to C grades; the improvement was most marked for girls.
93. The 2000 GCSE English Literature results in terms of the proportion of pupils achieving a grade in the A* to C range was well below the national average, although the number obtaining an A* to G grade met national expectations. Girls achieved higher results than boys. When measured against their levels

of prior attainment, and given the fact that the school entered far more pupils for this subject than is the case nationally, levels of achievement are good. The 2001 results were better because there was a marked improvement in the proportion of girls achieving at grades A* to C.

94. On entry to the school the majority of pupils have very poor literacy skills and many need considerable support in developing their spoken English, their reading and their ability to write fluently and accurately. By Year 9, standards have improved but remain below average, reflecting overall test results. By Year 11, pupils have made significant gains in developing these skills, although a minority continues to have difficulties with written accuracy and syntax. Overall, standards are broadly average and are rather better than 2000 GCSE results suggest. This reflects improved results in 2001 and the good teaching which pupils receive. Pupils' levels of achievement are good in both Year 9 and Year 11.
95. In the written work seen during the inspection, standards overall were below average in Year 9, but represent good achievement. Although many pupils achieve average standards, there are few pupils whose writing is of the highest standard. The most significant problem that pupils face is in understanding and using grammatical forms, a difficulty which was identified at the time of the last inspection. Although a minority of older pupils in Year 11 still have problems with technical accuracy, most can write fluently and at length. Work was seen where pupils wrote perceptive analyses of the injustices portrayed in the novel 'Roll of Thunder, Hear my Cry' by Mildred Taylor. Pupils communicated their ideas clearly and were skilled in supporting them with textual references. The writing was detailed and fluent and it was well structured. Standards in Year 11 are average and represent good achievement. Pupils with special educational needs also achieve well in this skill. Work was seen where pupils used computers to improve the quality and presentation of their writing. These skills now need extending beyond word processing, to include a greater range of presentational devices.
96. On entry to the school, many pupils have very low reading ages. Significant improvements are made in developing pupils' reading; this is largely because of the effective procedures that are in place to help those pupils who need support. Although reading levels for many Year 9 pupils are still below average, by the time they leave school, standards are average. Pupils are reading with understanding from a wide range of demanding texts. Pupils understood and could explain the techniques used by Wilkie Collins to build suspense in their reading of 'A Terribly Strange Bed'. They were familiar with the vocabulary used and appreciated how action was delayed time and again to create a sense of foreboding. This represents good achievement in this skill.
97. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have good listening skills and this contributes significantly to their levels of achievement. Most younger pupils are attentive to their teachers and peers, but instances were observed where some interrupted when others were speaking and so slowed the pace of the lesson.

The concentration span of a minority of pupils is limited, but teachers are skilled in varying their teaching approaches to maintain interest.

98. The majority of pupils have poor English speaking skills on entry to the school. Although standards are still below average by the end of Year 9, pupils have achieved well given the difficulties they had at the start of Year 7. Pupils in a Year 9 lesson appreciated the power of such speakers as Martin Luther King and Winston Churchill and were able to use such insights to model and present their own short speeches. By the end of Year 11, standards of spoken English meet national expectations and pupils speak confidently and at length. In one Year 11 lesson, pupils discussed the techniques used in a media campaign by a pressure group; they were able to explain their views to the whole class with confidence and clarity. There still remain, however, some pupils who need more opportunities for speaking in front of others in order to develop that confidence and clarity. The department is aware of this and it is a priority for development.
99. Overall, standards of literacy are broadly average by Year 11, having improved steadily from a fairly low base; they make a significant contribution to pupils' very good levels of overall achievement in Years 10 and 11. Literacy skills are taught well in many subjects but, at present, there is no whole school approach; practice is inconsistent across departments and hence not as effective as it might be.
100. Overall, teaching is good. Pupils achieve well because many aspects of teaching are very good. Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of their subject and teaching techniques. Lesson planning is very good and is a strength of the teaching. Plans are written to meet the needs of all groups, including those with special educational needs and the high attainers. This is an improvement since the time of the last inspection, when there were some teachers who could not structure work to meet the needs of pupils of all attainment levels. Lesson plans now contain demanding learning objectives and these high expectations are communicated clearly. Teachers make good use of questioning at the start of each lesson to consolidate previous learning. Work is challenging and there is pace and rigour in lessons because of the judicious use of varied teaching techniques. Year 11 pupils were able to understand how imagery was used in the poetry of Simon Armitage, because their learning was stimulated by the challenging text and by the teacher's enthusiastic, flexible approach to his teaching. This lively lesson was enjoyed by all and the pace of the learning matched the effectiveness of the teaching.
101. Another strength of the teaching is the quality of the working relationships teachers have with each other and with the pupils. Teachers have the trust and confidence of the young people and, as a result, a positive working atmosphere prevails in lessons and pupils achieve well. This was not so at the last inspection, when learning was inhibited in a few lessons because teachers failed to insist on good behaviour. Effective systems are in place to monitor and assess pupils' work. Pupils are informed on a regular basis of

their performance in relation to National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades and so they understand the progress they are making. Marking, which was judged to be variable at the time of the last inspection, is now detailed and regular and advice is given on how pupils can improve the standard of their writing. Positive steps are taken to improve the working environment through the attractive display of pupils' work. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. The department now needs to take its work forward by ensuring that strategies are in place to disseminate that good teaching practice widely. Time management in a few of the lessons was not as effective as it could be, when insufficient time was allowed at the end to consolidate and evaluate the work covered. Although pupils make effective use of computers for word processing, the department is aware that it needs to make more use of ICT to support teaching and learning.

102. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The head of department provides clear educational direction by focusing on improving the quality of teaching and learning. Much good work has been done on reviewing and improving teaching styles to the benefit of pupils' levels of achievement. Teachers are committed and work well as a team and they seek to improve performance through effective, on-going professional development. The department is starting to use data to evaluate its own performance and to monitor how well pupils are achieving. However, there is room for further development, to ensure that standards achieved by higher attaining pupils are as high as they should be. Another area to address is development planning, which must be improved to ensure that priorities for improvement are realised in practice. Overall, there has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

DRAMA

The quality of provision in drama is excellent.

Strengths

- Pupils and teachers are enthusiastic about the subject because of the inspirational leadership provided by the head of department.
- Curricular provision extends well beyond the taught time and gives varied opportunities for pupils to develop their interest in the subject.
- The achievement of pupils is very good because of the commitment of the staff.

Areas for improvement

- There are no significant areas needing improvement. The challenge facing the department is to maintain the high standards of provision and attainment and to continue to explore ways to enrich the curriculum further.

103. All pupils who were entered for the 2000 and 2001 examinations gained a GCSE grade. The proportion of pupils obtaining a grade in the A* to C range met national expectations in 2000, with more boys achieving at this level than girls. There was an improvement in the 2001 results for this grade band, with

the girls making significant improvements and achieving better results than boys. Over recent years, examination results have been close to, or above, national averages. This represents very good achievement given the very low levels of pupils' communication skills on entry to the school.

104. The quality of teaching is very good overall and often excellent. The teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of the subject and teaching methods and they plan well to meet the needs of all pupils. The work is challenging but delivered in such a way that all pupils, including those whose command of English is still developing, make significant learning gains. A particular strength in the work seen is the ability of pupils to evaluate their own and each other's work and this is because the learning objectives have been so clearly communicated.
105. Curricular provision has been well thought through and the range of opportunities available to pupils outside of lessons is extensive. They are encouraged to take part in performance work with outside agencies and provide the stage management for social events and visiting groups. A wide range of theatre visits is organised and there are opportunities to work with primary school children and in community films and charity work. Links with the Royal National Theatre and major television networks have been established and school productions play a large part in after school cross-curricular events.
106. Pupils speak enthusiastically about the subject and enjoy their work. The numbers opting for the subject in Years 10 and 11 are very high; pupils' achievements have been consistently good or very good over recent years. It was noted at the time of the last inspection that the subject made a significant contribution to the cultural life of the school. That contribution continues and former pupils testify to the impact the subject has made on their personal development.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- The monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching are good, raising the quality of teaching since the last inspection.
- The use of assessment is good, a factor in the improved standards since the last inspection.
- Teachers' good knowledge and understanding of the subject, and good planning of lessons, provide a good framework for pupils' learning.

Area for improvement

- Some higher attainers in some classes in Year 7 and 8 underachieve because the work they are doing is too easy for them.

107. The proportion of pupils reaching the standard expected for their age in the 2001 national tests at the end of Year 9 was below the national average for all schools. However, it was above the national average for similar schools. Results at higher levels were again below the national average for all schools, but were well above those for similar schools. Results were better than expected given pupils' well below average attainment on entry to the school, showing good achievement. Boys and girls did equally well. There is no significant difference in the performance of different ethnic groups. Results overall were somewhat lower than those in English, but matched those in science. Standards have improved steadily over the last four years until 2000, when results dipped. The upward trend returned in 2001.
108. In 2000, the proportion of pupils gaining a GCSE A* to C grade was below the national average for all schools. However, this was offset by the above average proportion of pupils gaining an A* to G grade. Results for A* to C grades were above those for similar schools. This represents good achievement and performance compares well with other subjects in the school. Boys and girls achieved equally well. There is no significant difference in the performance of the different ethnic groups. 2001 GCSE results improved further.
109. The standard of work seen in the inspection in Year 9 is also below average, reflecting the results of 2001. Most pupils are achieving well in relation to their standards on entry to the school. There is some underachievement in Years 7 and 8 by some higher attaining pupils in those classes where pupils' range of attainment is wide. Teaching does not provide sufficiently challenging learning opportunities for these pupils who, as a result, do not do as well as they should. Arrangements for the teaching of lower attaining pupils, and those with special educational need, provide well for their learning. Learning support assistants are deployed efficiently and pupils achieve well as a result. Support for those pupils who need extra support in learning in English is also good. The co-operative work between mathematics and specialist EAL teachers is a factor in their good progress. Teaching arrangements in Year 9 are good and result in the good achievement noted earlier, by all pupils. High attaining pupils can calculate the mean from a set of grouped data. Average attaining pupils have a good grasp of fractions, basic geometry and rounding off numbers accurately to three significant figures. Lower attaining pupils are becoming more confident with basic number work, calculating four fifths of thirty-five, for example. They explain their method of calculation, showing understanding. Standards have improved since the last inspection.
110. The standard of work seen in the inspection in Year 11 is also below average. Most pupils achieve well in relation to their standard on entry to the school. Teaching focuses appropriately on the needs of all pupils. Higher attaining pupils produce neat accurate work in trigonometry, using the sine and cosine rules for solving problems. They solve problems involving inequalities efficiently. Course work is presented well. Some investigations are written very well, with the use of computers adding significantly to the quality of the presentation through word processing techniques and graph work. Average

attaining pupils' work, with large and small numbers expressed in standard form, is not yet secure. The removal of brackets in algebra is not yet fully understood, but it is made easier for pupils to learn by the good marking procedures of the teachers. Pupils on the foundation course have well below average standards of numeracy and have difficulty in appreciating the processes involved in an investigation. Standards have improved since the last inspection.

111. Standards of numeracy are below average overall. Although pupils cope reasonably well with the numerical demands of some other subjects, often, low level skills limit progress, as for example, in science. The teaching of basic skills in mathematics is good. Standards of written and mental calculation are improving in Years 7 to 9, following the introduction of mental and oral work at the start of lessons. There are good opportunities in some subjects for developing pupils' numerical skills; for example, pupils' spatial awareness is developed well through the teaching of three-dimensional work in art. However, opportunities often occur by chance. There is no numeracy audit from the schemes of work of the different departments and, as yet, no whole school approach to the teaching of numeracy.
112. The standard of teaching and learning is good overall. Approximately two-thirds of the teaching is good or better. There is a small minority of unsatisfactory teaching. The standard of teaching has improved since the last inspection. The planning of lessons is a strength of the department as it provides a good framework for pupils' learning. Mental work is a feature at the start of many lessons, showing the benefits of recent innovations from the National Numeracy Strategy. Preparation is thorough, as in a lesson on cumulative frequency, where data prepared in advance enabled a good focus for learning. Previous work was consolidated well and understanding assured through good subject knowledge evidenced in good quality questioning. Visual learning is effective in the teaching of geometry; for example, when shapes are moved to show that plane figures have the same properties when rotated. Computers are used appropriately in the teaching of geometry; their use in the teaching of graph work needs to be developed further. In the very good teaching seen, very good quality discussion formed the basis for learning through understanding. Good subject knowledge ensured that pupils' contributions were shared. In the unsatisfactory teaching, there was no mental work by way of preparation, no new learning and a lack of progress in problem solving. Teachers' marking is good, with helpful comments in exercise books that promote understanding. Day to day assessment is also good, enabling teachers to emphasise key points for learning and to set targets. Management of pupils is good. Pupils have good attitudes to their work, behave well and generally work well. Most pupils do their homework. It is set regularly and complements classwork well. The older, higher attaining pupils are developing good study habits.
113. Leadership and management are good, and have secured good improvement overall since the last inspection. Teachers work hard and well as a team, shown through their coherent approach to marking pupils' work and to the

planning of lessons. Monitoring of the subject is good, raising standards in teaching and in pupil's work. A numeracy policy is planned, with further whole school initiatives to come.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- GCSE results have improved significantly.
- Teaching is good and often very good; planning is informed well by knowledge of pupils' needs.
- The head of department provides very good leadership and gives a clear sense of direction for the subject.

Area for improvement

- The department needs a scheme of work for Years 7 to 9 to provide guidance for teaching.
- Physics, and the use of pupils' numeracy skills, are under emphasised both in schemes of work and in classwork.
- Pupils have insufficient opportunities to use ICT, particularly for datalogging.

114. The proportion of pupils reaching the standard expected for their age in the 2001 national tests at the end of Year 9 was well below the national average for all schools, but matched the national average for similar schools. Results at higher levels were below the national average for all schools, but were above those for similar schools. Results were better than expected given pupils' well below average attainment on entry to the school, showing good achievement. Over the last four years, results have been rising, broadly in line with national trends, and markedly over the last year. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls or of different ethnic groups. Science results overall in 2001 were not quite as good as those English, but matched those in mathematics. They represent good achievement across Years 7 to 9.

115. In 2000, the proportion of pupils gaining a GCSE A* to C grade was below the national average. However, results were above those for similar schools; they were well above those for schools whose pupils achieved similar results in their 1998 Year 9 national tests. Pupils attained better results in science than in most of their other GCSE subjects, including English and mathematics. There was no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls or of different ethnic groups. Over the last four years, GCSE results have risen broadly in line with national trends. They dipped in 2000, but improved markedly in 2001; results for grades A* to C in 2001 are likely to be broadly average. Standards in coursework are good, but fail to reach the highest possible standards for some pupils for whom this might be appropriate. Overall, GCSE results represent very good achievement across Years 10 and 11.

116. Standards of work seen in the inspection in Year 9 are below average overall, although a significant minority of pupils attains average or above standards. Most pupils achieve well in relation to their standards on entry. Those pupils with EAL, who receive extra support, do particularly well. However, across Years 7 to 9, standards of work could be higher, for higher attainers, in the areas of physical processes and numeracy. These aspects of the subject are under emphasised in teaching and lead to some underachievement for the higher attaining pupils.
117. Standards of work for current Year 11 pupils are solidly average; more pupils achieve as expected for their age than might be expected, representing very good achievement. Those pupils who receive extra support for English language acquisition achieve very well, improving both their science knowledge and their skills in English at the same time. Achievement in the areas of life and chemical processes is very good for higher attaining pupils but again, in physical processes allied to numeracy, this is not so. For example, graphical skills are not well developed and mathematical skills are practised only at lower levels.
118. The standard of teaching is good overall; sometimes it is very good and, occasionally, it is excellent. Relationships with pupils are good; teachers use professional knowledge of their pupils to inform the planning of lessons. Often, a range of activities is planned for pupils of different levels of attainment, which enable all groups within a class to learn. Some teachers have an excellent understanding of activities that promote the acquisition of written and verbal language, whilst at the same time promoting the learning of science. For example, in a Year 11 lesson on the periodic table, the teacher used glove puppets very effectively to enable all pupils to contribute verbally to the lesson. that enabling the learning of chemistry at a high level. Opportunities for pupils to use ICT consistently and well in science have yet to develop. There are some instances of appropriate use of ICT, such as in another Year 11 lesson on the environment, where pupils were researching via the Internet. However, data logging remains at an early stage. Science investigations are rather controlled and constructive feedback to pupils could be improved. General marking on the other hand is consistent and helpful. In a few cases, more attention needs to be paid to risk assessments for lessons and some lessons would be better if planned work for different pupils was put into practice more effectively.
119. Pupils work very well together in class. They sit and work together in mixed gender and mixed ethnicity groups. They respect each other's efforts, especially where difficulties are encountered with the use of English. In a very few instances, pupils indulge in minor misbehaviour; this is usually where they feel that teaching is not at the high standard that they know they can learn from.
120. The current head of science has been in post just two years and has succeeded in giving the department a strong, clear, educational lead. His

leadership is very good. Monitoring of pupils' work of all types is thorough and leads to appropriate action where needed. It informs the training programme that all teaching staff are involved in, a programme which is often innovative in nature. In these two years, schemes of work for Years 10 and 11 have been written; the support these provide for teaching is much better in biology and chemistry than it is in physics. A scheme of work is now needed Years 7 to 9, that is individual to the department, and which incorporates teachers' good ideas and concerns.

121. Technician staff work hard to organise the resources for teaching. Equipment is well maintained and organised. *However, the shortfall of technician hours available restricts the potential of this source of curriculum support.* A good range of ICT hardware and software was installed in the year 2000; the science department now needs to integrate its use more into teaching. Textbooks are available for class use, but not for pupils to take home for further study. The laboratories are set up to provide good learning environments, but a proportion of lessons has to be time-tabled elsewhere, due to a shortfall of laboratory space. Risk assessments should be made for those laboratories that have bars across all the windows, to ensure alternative means of evacuation if needed. Maintenance, especially of flat roofs and the ceilings below them, needs attention.
122. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Examination results have improved markedly at both Year 9 and, more especially, at Year 11. Leadership of the department is now very good, after a long period of instability. Monitoring of pupils' standards and staff training are promoting even more improvement. A management structure is now possible, following the recent appointment of a 'second-in-charge' of science. ICT provision is now good.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Teaching leads to good learning and achievement.
- Very good leadership and management have contributed to higher standards overall.
- The rich cultural diversity of resources is very well matched to the needs of all pupils.

Areas for improvement

- Create more opportunities for pupils to use ICT in their lessons.
- Raise the standard of teaching still further by creating more opportunities for teachers to observe, and subsequently to employ, those features of good practice which lead to very good teaching.
- Ensure that the day to day marking of pupils' work is consistent and use attainment data in order to set targets for individual pupils.

123. Teachers' assessments in 2001 placed most pupils at the end of Year 9 at well below average attainment when compared to national results. Inspection evidence, however, indicates that standards are a little above this, with most pupils just below average. In 2000, GCSE examinations results were significantly below average, following the pattern of preceding years. At the time of the inspection, there were no national figures for comparison but, in 2001, all pupils received a grade and more pupils attained the higher grades of A* to C. This represents a significant improvement on previous years' results.
124. Pupils' achievement overall is good. Work seen in the inspection shows that, on entry in Year 7, pupils have well below average standards in their technical skills and in their understanding of how to use the formal elements of art and design, such as line, tone, colour and texture. They know little about art from different periods and cultures and their ability to express their ideas in written and spoken language is well below average. By the end of Year 9, although standards are below average, they have improved significantly. This is because of the effectiveness of teachers' lesson planning and their good, and sometimes very good, use of a range of teaching methods. These enable all pupils, including those with special educational needs, and those who are gifted and talented, to learn well in lessons. Teachers place a very good emphasis on the acquisition of basic skills and techniques. Thus, by the time pupils reach the end of Year 9, they have achieved well in their ability to investigate and develop ideas, to draw more accurately from observation and to use paint, print and three-dimensional techniques with greater understanding. Pupils also achieve well in their ability to write about, to discuss and to evaluate their own work and that of a wide variety of art, craft and designs from different periods and cultures. This is because the teachers require pupils to investigate art historical sources such as those from Japanese, African and Asian art, as well as those from European art, and because of the emphasis teachers place on learning of the subject vocabulary.
125. Pupils who take up GCSE and GNVQ courses build well on their prior attainment; standards in Year 11 are average. This is because those features of teaching which have contributed to the good achievement in Years 7, 8 and 9 are equally apparent in the teaching of Years 10 and 11. These features enable pupils to extend their previous learning, so that by Year 11, pupils achieve well in a range of work, which includes large scale and imaginative paintings, colourfully painted sculptures and exotic textile prints. They also develop a good understanding of how to use sketchbooks for first-hand visual research and of the investigation and development of ideas appropriate to the intended outcomes. The best of these sketchbooks contain exciting and purposeful experiments with different materials and processes, which are linked well to pupils' studies into the work of relevant artists. This was the case, for example, in the sketchbooks of one Year 11 girl who had explored the work of the artist, Kandinsky. Her interest in the artist's paintings, and her understanding of his work, were fully apparent in her own annotated sketches and experiments with colour, pattern and media. Another example of good achievement was in the work of a Year 11 pupil, who had

designed, printed and made richly coloured and decorated underwear for one of her GNVQ course assignments, based on the study of sources from African and Asian crafts. The Year 11 paintings, which are displayed in the corridors, also confirm that pupils achieve well in their ability to investigate and to develop ideas, based on personal experiences and on their responses to gallery and museum visits. Good examples are the works produced by one boy, which were based on his visit to an exhibition of the work of artist, Louise Bourgeois, at the Tate Modern, and the studies which the boy also made of the dinosaur skeletons at the Natural History Museum.

126. The quality of teaching overall is good; sometimes it is very good. Pupils learn well because teachers have appropriate expectations, which are matched well to individual needs. In those lessons where teaching is very good, there is a fast pace, but lessons are also planned very well to allow for opportunities for reflection and discussion. Demonstrations are used effectively by these teachers, in a way that engages the whole class. This was the case, for example, in a very good Year 9 lesson, where the teacher used very effective questioning techniques and paired discussions, so that pupils understood which brushes and methods of mixing paint were the most suitable for use at the various stages of their paintings. Pupils made very good progress in this lesson, because the teacher's planning contributed well to their learning and to their self-confidence when working on their own. Demonstrations to the whole class are also supported with individual guidance, which ensures that pupils fully understand the techniques involved. Pupils of all attainment levels therefore learn to use a range of two and three-dimensional processes, because they are taught how to select and how to achieve the best results from the materials and tools that they are using. Teachers' use of ICT in their lessons, however, is not as good. No evidence was seen, for example, of pupils' ability to use equipment such as a digital camera, or a scanner to design and manipulate imagery. There are no computers in the art rooms. This inhibits teachers' ability to demonstrate readily to pupils the applications of ICT in the subject and for pupils to freely experiment with computer designed images in their creative work. This is an aspect of the department's provision that it should seek to improve.
127. Other features of lessons, where teaching is very good, are that teachers' enthusiasm for the subject and their effective management of pupils, create a purposeful working atmosphere and engender very good, positive attitudes amongst the pupils. Relationships between pupils and teachers are very good, because teachers value the contributions pupils make to lessons and this creates a sense that teachers and pupils are part of the same team. Pupils respond in a mature manner, when given opportunities by teachers to work independently. Pupils are also able to co-operate well with each other. A good example of this was in a Year 10 GNVQ lesson, where pupils provided assistance to each other when learning new sculptural techniques. In this same lesson, the teacher made very good use of group-work in teaching her pupils to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses in the work they had each done so far. Pupils involved themselves well in this task; they not only demonstrated that they are able to make good critical judgements, but also that they respected each other's work and ideas. The department should seek to find ways of disseminating these features of good practice in order to raise the overall standard of teaching still further.
128. Although the department has good assessment procedures, the day to day marking of pupils' work is inconsistent. Pupils, particularly in Years 7,8 and 9, are not always told clearly enough what they need to do in order to improve. It is better in Years 10 and 11, where the teachers use the examination course assessment criteria. The department needs to develop ways of using its attainment data in order to set individual targets for pupils. This will help pupils to know what they must do in order to progress and will enable teachers to carry out more effective monitoring of pupils' performance.
129. Leadership and management of the department are very good. A new head of department has been appointed since the previous inspection; she quickly identified priorities for raising standards and these have already had a significant impact. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good; much of this has been due to the clear vision which the head of department has for her subject and to the way in which she has been supported by her team.

The department has recently been given the “Artsmark” Silver award.

130. As well as the department’s very good use of visits to exhibitions and galleries it also provides pupils with the opportunities to work for the local community, for example, in a Year 8 Banner project for Ealing Tourist Board, and with visiting artists and craft workers. A very good example of this is a screen displayed in the reception area which Year 10 pupils produced as a result of their work with the artist, Andria Rais. Beautifully presented displays of key words and subject terminology, pupils’ work, posters and artefacts enliven each of the art rooms and the school’s corridors. They are also used effectively by the teachers to inform and to inspire pupils, therefore making an important contribution to the pupils’ cultural awareness and to their overall learning and achievement.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in design and technology is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- The good teaching, very good behaviour and good attitude to learning in food technology assure good achievement both in lessons and over time.
- The very good accommodation and resources for food technology provide a very effective learning environment for the subject.
- Good relationships between teachers and pupils in food technology enable the planned work in lessons to be completed successfully by all pupils.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils achieve significantly less well in design and technology than in any other GCSE subject.
- With the exception of food technology, pupils’ achievement is affected adversely by unsatisfactory teaching. A lack of rigour in teaching the principles and processes of designing leads to too few opportunities for pupils to practice and develop their creative skills. There are inconsistencies across the material areas in the way pupils are required to research, record and present their design work.
- The development of pupils’ literacy skills, particularly the technical vocabulary of the subject, is unsatisfactory. Pupils do not readily use the expected technical terminology with any degree of confidence or conviction.
- Pupils’ use of ICT in support of their learning, and in the completion of some elements of their coursework, is very much underdeveloped in all design areas. Pupils’ knowledge understanding and skills in the use of the computer to design and manufacture a simple product is very much underdeveloped.
- There are weaknesses in marking and assessment in relation to National Curriculum levels of attainment in Years 7 to 9. Pupils do not know what they need to do to improve their work.
- Teachers who are not specialists in design and technology, but who are covering teacher shortages in the subject, are insufficiently supported and guided in their work by the school’s specialists and this inevitably results in poor standards.
- The problems faced by the school in recruiting specialist staff to cover staff shortages means that, at present, not all pupils study a technology curriculum in Years 10 and 11. This has resulted in a breach of statutory requirements in the subject. Staff shortages also mean that standards are affected adversely by the lack of sufficient curriculum time for the subject across the school. Overlarge

group sizes reduce opportunities for teachers to support pupils with their work at the individual level and raises issues of concern over safety in workshops

131. Overall standards in design and technology are significantly below the national average and represents poor achievement for the great majority of pupils at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. GCSE results were significantly below the national average in 2000. The results for the school in 2001 are similar and show little improvement. Results in food technology are close to the national average. Girls attain better than boys in the subject, but they do not achieve as well as girls nationally. Boys attain significantly below boys nationally. Pupils attain significantly below their potential in the subject at GCSE, given how well they achieve in their other subjects.
132. In the work seen in lessons, discussion with individuals and the scrutiny of pupils' folders, where they exist, attainment is significantly below average and reflects poor achievement over time; this is most notable in resistant materials. In the Year 7 'key fob' project, a very small minority of pupils shows a satisfactory understanding of the principles and processes of designing. In food technology, pupils are given greater opportunities to design and make products. As a result, most pupils are able to understand a design brief, carry out effective research and produce design outcomes, which reflect satisfactory solutions to the original brief. They can also evaluate their outcomes and reflect upon what they need to do to improve their work. However, there is a lack of continuity and progression in the work in food technology between Year 7 and Year 9. For example, pupils may have a brief module of work in food in Year 7 but no further experience of food until Year 9. In other areas of the subject, in Years 7 to 9, there is insufficient scope for pupils to be creative in their design work. Where it was possible to sample pupils' coursework, it is evident that higher attainers convey their design ideas satisfactorily with average graphical communication skills. Lower attainers, including those with special educational needs, have very much weaker skills of presentation and often spoil work through the over-use of felt tip colours. There is a significant inconsistency in the way pupils approach and carry out their design and make tasks across all the design areas.
133. In work seen in Year 11, standards are significantly below average overall. Pupils' design folders in resistant materials do not reflect the expected processes and principles of designing. In food technology, most pupils are achieving satisfactorily, and produce design folios that show average and often-good graphical communication skills. The graphical work produced by one gifted and talented girl is of an outstanding quality. However, in other design areas, the presentation and graphicacy skills of the higher, average and lower attainers are very weak, with little evidence of the concept of spatial awareness and of the expected conventions of design drawing. Too many pupils cannot use the correct technical terminology when describing their designs and in outlining the processes involved. The use of the computer by pupils to present work is very much underdeveloped, as is their knowledge and understanding of the use of the computer to design and manufacture a simple product. Most pupils have a good attitude to learning and their behaviour is good in most lessons, particularly in food technology, where they are well motivated by the tasks set and the teaching styles and strategies adopted.
134. The good achievement in food technology by a small majority of pupils at the end of Year 11 is attributable to teaching which is never less than satisfactory, and which is good in most lessons. The teaching methods and styles used here are successful in enabling pupils to

improve and develop their design and make skills. The significantly below average standards for the great majority of pupils, and their poor achievement in other design areas, are partly attributable to insufficient curriculum time and to over-large group sizes, which are a direct result of the school's difficulties in obtaining specialists to cover staff shortages. These difficulties have also resulted in a curriculum structure that does not enable all pupils in Years 10 and 11 to study the subject. This is a breach of statutory requirements.

135. However, the main contributory factor for pupils' poor achievement is the quality of teaching which, overall, is unsatisfactory. Pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to develop their creative and aesthetic skills, in line with the national expectations for the subject. Too many of the tasks studied in lessons are inappropriate. Teachers produce lesson worksheets that provide pupils with guidelines for their tasks, but the worksheets are not sufficiently modified to meet the needs of pupils of all levels of attainment. The development of pupils' literacy skills, particularly the technical language of the subject, is not universally implemented across all design areas. Marking does not give pupils sufficiently clear direction about how they can improve their work. Incomplete or unfinished work is not always challenged rigorously. In these circumstances, learning suffers, and pupils' achievements are significantly lower than they should be. In Years 7 to 9, assessment procedures and practice do not always inform pupils what level of the National Curriculum they are working towards. Because of this, their learning does not concentrate on the things they need to do to improve, hindering their progress. In all design areas, pupils' are not encouraged to use information technology to complete coursework. Homework is set; however, learning is reduced because homework is not always relevant to the design and make processes and isn't always conscientiously completed by pupils, with insufficient action taken by some teachers to insist on higher standards. Teachers promote safe working practices, with pupils' safety a principal factor in all lessons. The technician provides invaluable contributions to pupils' learning, by helping them whenever possible with their tasks. There is insufficient technical support time in food technology.
136. There are few positive features in the leadership and management of the subject, apart from in food technology, where leadership and management are good. Overall, the weaknesses mean that progress since the last inspection and the overall leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good overall and some teaching is very good, so that pupils learn well.
- Pupils' good behaviour and interest reflect the positive teaching and learning environment.
- Pupils achieve well in GCSE geography in comparison with most other subjects in the school.

Areas for improvement

- Further opportunities are needed for fieldwork, to develop pupils' skills of enquiry.
- Further development of assessment is required, so that it is better used to help pupils improve in Years 7 to 9.

137. GCSE results in 2000 at grades A* to C were below the national average for all schools. This was balanced by the higher than average proportion of pupils gaining A* to G grades. Pupils performed better in geography than in most of the other GCSE subjects they took; girls did marginally better than boys. 2001 results for the proportion of pupils gaining A* to C grades are very similar, except that boys achieved better results than girls. GCSE results have improved at broadly the same rate as national improvements in the last four years. These results reflect good achievement in Years 10 and 11; most pupils improved significantly on the standards that they reached at the end of Year 9. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 indicate that standards are below national expectations. In turn, these results indicate good achievement in Years 7, 8 and 9, as pupils enter school with standards that are broadly well below what is found nationally.
138. Pupils' work, and the lessons observed, show that standards in Year 11 are broadly average and that pupils are achieving well. There are no significant differences in the achievement of boys and girls. Standards are better than those reached in past examinations, due to teaching having developed recently a strong focus on meeting examination needs. Standards seen at the end of Year 9 are below average and are consistent with teachers' assessments. Boys and girls reach a similar standard. Evidence from lessons seen and work in students' books, shows improving achievement as pupils progress through the school. This can be attributed partly to the hard work being done by teachers to raise standards of literacy; this frees pupils to understand and explain geographical ideas better.
139. Teaching and learning are good overall, and at times very good. The quality of teaching for pupils studying for GCSE examinations has a number of strengths. Teachers have very good relationships with pupils and create a stimulating learning environment. A variety of challenging tasks is used with Years 10 and 11 when investigating topics like the developing world and the water cycle. Across the school, teachers use skilful questioning, a good range of resources and a thorough command of the subject to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding. There are almost universally high expectations of pupils' behaviour and effort. Pupils respond positively, show interest in their work and behave well. Teachers have continued their strong commitment to developing literacy noted in the last inspection. They are careful to encourage pupils to explain what they know. Teachers exemplify newly introduced words and often provide examples of an appropriate structure for written work. The department has a clear marking policy, with the aim to motivate each student to their full potential. Exercise books are marked regularly and develop dialogue with pupils. The praise and encouragement given to pupils by all teachers has also helped to create the positive working environment. Pupils exemplified some of these strengths in a very good lesson on world trade patterns in Year 10. The lesson was carefully planned to build knowledge sequentially, through a series of brief activities. These helped to maintain interest; the teacher's determination to challenge pupils at all stages ensured that they all learned very well. Pupils with special

educational needs make good progress and their achievement, like that of their peers, is good. All teachers in the department have a good understanding of their needs and use this in their planning. Overall, work is well matched to the needs of pupils of all levels of attainment. In lessons seen, teachers used too few visual stimuli to help develop learning. The department does not use ICT sufficiently to support pupil's learning or the development of their ICT skills.

140. Leadership and management of geography are good. There is a shared ethos and commitment within the department to raise standards. Currently, insufficient opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their fieldwork skills, but those on offer include GCSE work in the Wye valley and trips for Year 7-9 pupils to places of local interest. Teaching is monitored thoroughly and the results of these observations are used to set priorities for the development of the subject. There is a clear recognition of further improvements that are needed in the department development plan; for example, development and use of assessment tasks in Years 7 to 9, improving fieldwork opportunities and continued development of the use of ICT. Since the last inspection there has been good improvement in geography. The department has a strong commitment to raising pupils' attainment and it is well placed for further improvement.

HISTORY

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

Strengths:

- In the majority of lessons very good teaching fosters very good learning.
- The emphasis placed on developing literacy and numeracy skills is helping to improve the standards achieved by many pupils.
- The management of the history department is very good.
- Very good assessment and monitoring procedures are used to support the learning of all pupils.

Areas for improvement:

- The use of ICT should be extended, especially to develop pupils' research skills.

141. Standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 9 in 2001, based on National Curriculum teacher assessments, were well below average when compared with national standards. Such an outcome, however, is not unexpected, given the difficulties that many pupils have writing in English. Results indicate that pupils are achieving well in their work. The results also show that girls are doing significantly better than boys in the acquisition of higher grades.
142. GCSE results in 2000 for grades A* to C were well below the national average; unusually, boys achieved significantly better results than girls. For grades A* to G, results overall were above the national average, with all girls gaining at least a pass grade. Boys achieved results that were similar to their

national average, but the proportion gaining a pass grade was below the level achieved by girls. Overall, pupils did less well in history than in many of their other GCSE subjects. Though no national comparative data are available for 2001, the overall proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C improved. This was because of a notable improvement in the results for girls, whose results were significantly better than those achieved by boys. For grades A* to G, overall results were slightly lower than those recorded in the previous year, with girls doing better than boys. The outcomes for both 2000 and 2001 indicate that achievement is good. GCSE results are frequently above those predicted when pupils commence their GCSE course in Year 10.

143. Standards seen in lessons were higher than those suggested by past examination results. This is largely due to the very good teaching that pupils receive and to the very good leadership of the department, which focuses on the quality of pupils' learning. For present pupils in Year 9, standards of work seen overall are average, but the attainment range is wide. Those pupils who cannot write fluently, or with confidence, in English, record standards that are below, and sometimes, well below average for their age. There are, however, a significant number of pupils whose work is at least in line with the standard expected for their age, with a significant minority whose standard of work is well above this level. Most pupils achieve well in relation to their attainment at the start of the course. Such good achievement owes much to the supportive and thoughtful teaching they receive. The standards of work of current GCSE pupils in Years 10 and 11 are similarly average but, again, there is considerable variation. A significant minority of pupils, who are almost all female, is working above, or even well above, the expected level. A major factor contributing to such good achievement is the strong emphasis that is placed on developing literacy skills. Sensible and sensitive measures are used to improve pupils' vocabularies, and the consistent emphasis that is placed on developing writing skills, helps all pupils to improve the standard of their work.
144. The quality of teaching is very good, especially in Years 10 and 11. The last inspection report commented on variations in the quality of teaching, commenting that in some lessons teaching was unsatisfactory. This is no longer the case. In all lessons seen, the quality of teaching was at least satisfactory and in most lessons it was good, or better. Indeed, in some lessons teaching was inspirational. Such very good standards of teaching, offered by a committed team of teachers, are having a marked impact on the quality of learning for all pupils. Numerous strengths of teaching can be identified. Teachers plan their lessons thoroughly to ensure that there is a logical and structured sequence to lessons. This enables the pace of the lessons to be varied; when pupils understand a particular idea, the lesson progresses swiftly; when pupils are less clear about a particular point, their teachers are adept at recapping and presenting ideas in different ways. These strategies have a profound impact on the quality of learning. Standards of work are further enhanced by the rigorous emphasis placed on developing the pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. A significant number of pupils find it difficult to write with confidence in English, but all staff design tasks that

successfully encourage pupils to develop their writing skills. As a consequence, the work of many pupils develops rapidly and, in each year, there are a group of pupils whose written work is of a high quality. These pupils, many of whom are girls, write fluently. Their work is interesting to read and is historically accurate.

145. A particular feature of teaching is the wide range of strategies used. In a Year 9 lesson on trench warfare in the First World War, pupils were taught in a most vivid and imaginative way. They were able to identify how a stalemate ensued, but successfully developed their knowledge and understanding about how this situation was overcome because of technical developments in the effectiveness of weaponry. The lesson progressed with the pupils applying their numerical skills to estimate just how effective these new weapons were. This was a most novel, imaginative and effective way of stimulating learning. Many other examples of fine teaching could be quoted, including some very thoughtful work with Year 10 pupils on the Hungarian Revolution. One consistent point to emerge is that most pupils respond enthusiastically to the high quality of teaching, taking every advantage of the opportunities offered to develop their own independent learning skills.
146. The management and leadership of the history department are very good. The head of department is extremely enthusiastic and dedicated and leads a strong team of committed and knowledgeable teachers. There are very good assessment and monitoring procedures. These inform planning and help to identify pupils who might be in need of extra help. The marking strategies used by the staff are sensitive and are understood by the pupils. The careful marking of work ensures that pupils are given clear guidance on how improvements in their work can be secured. The quality of the assessment and monitoring procedures is central to improving standards. The department is a lively one. Pupils are offered opportunities to participate in fieldwork; there are annual visits to the Normandy beaches and to the Wye Valley. The department is also involved in cross-curricular activities, including reflecting the school's Sports College status by organising a celebration of leisure activities enjoyed by past generations. One area where provision could be enhanced is the use of ICT in lessons, especially in developing the research skills of pupils. The department recognise this; indeed it is a key point in their present action plan.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Teaching is very good; work is matched well to pupils' needs and interests. As a result, achievement is very good, both in lessons and over time. Pupils behave well and work hard, because they are interested in their work.

- The computer to pupil ratio is better than the national average. ICT resources are modern and powerful; they provide good access to the Internet from any point in the school. They facilitate good use by all subjects in support of pupils' learning.
- All pupils in Years 10 and 11 study a GNVQ in ICT, enabling them to gain a nationally recognised vocational qualification in the subject.
- Very good leadership and management provide a clear educational direction for the subject and ensure that pupils' entitlements to ICT are met as fully as possible.
- Excellent technical support ensures that equipment works properly in all areas, providing an invaluable contribution to pupils' learning.

Areas for improvement.

- The department should ensure that plans for developing the use of ICT across all subjects are implemented effectively. Whilst many subjects provide good opportunities for pupils to use computers to help their learning, this is not yet as comprehensive as it could be.
- The assessment of pupils' ICT capability across all subjects of the curriculum is insufficiently rigorous and comprehensive and does not contribute effectively to judgements on the overall levels of attainment achieved by pupils at the end of Year 9.

147. Standards in ICT are below the national average at the end of Year 9 but reflect good achievement. Standards are average overall by the end of Year 11, but above the average for a significant minority. This represents very good achievement overall given pupils' well below average attainment on entry into the school. No externally accredited courses have been offered over the past three years; therefore it is not possible to make any national GCSE comparisons.

148. In work seen in Year 9, although standards are below average, work shows good improvement from that in Year 7. Most pupils are achieving well. Pupils are able to use computers with growing confidence and competence. Higher and average attainers show good word processing skills and can competently import graphics and images into their text to add impact to their presentations. Their projects illustrate that they can choose the most relevant programmes and that they know about commercial applications of ICT as, for example, when planning a birthday party. Pupils are taught to use the Internet as soon as basic skills have been grasped and, in a minority of subjects, pupils are increasingly using the Internet to research their projects. They show good skills in finding suitable sources of information to complete their tasks. Lower attainers, including those with special educational needs, have satisfactory skills and produce work of an appropriate standard. Almost all pupils have good practical skills, competently and confidently logging on to the powerful network system; effectively loading and executing the required software and using the keyboard and the mouse to successfully negotiate the required menus and functions.

149. Standards for the great majority of pupils studying the GNVQ examination course are broadly average; this represents very good achievement over time. Many boys and girls are achieving at the highest levels. Some of the most gifted and talented pupils produce work of a very good standard and are given every encouragement to do so. Most pupils are developing their skills in the use of a good range of computer programmes, and are competent in using word processing, spreadsheets, presentation and desktop publishing software. They readily logged on to the Internet in lessons seen to seek and retrieve information. They show good skills in posting information on the Internet or in setting up a web page to advertise a commercial product or event. Most pupils present their work well, using presentation software with good competence and confidence levels. Whilst many subjects provide good opportunities for pupils to use computers to help their learning, this is not yet as comprehensive as it could be. For example, pupils are not sufficiently skilled in using the computer to design and manufacture a simple product in design and technology. Pupils' experiences in using music technology and in data logging and measurement also need further development. In all lessons most pupils have a very good attitude to learning, and their behaviour is good or better enabling very good achievement and progress in lessons.
150. Teaching overall is good overall; often it is very good. The very good overall achievement is attributable to the quality of teaching, which is never less than satisfactory. Teachers' planning is thorough, and the tasks set are topical, interesting and well related to pupil's interests. Worksheets that are produced to guide pupils in their work support the higher and most of the average attainers well, but they are not always modified sufficiently well to meet the needs of lower attainers and those with special educational needs. However, teachers provide pupils with high levels of individual support, working with them at their computers, which, ensures that all pupils are clearly aware of what they need to do. Good oral assessment techniques provide pupils with a clear direction for their work and in identifying areas for improvement. Teachers make good use of the 'network tutor', which is used to demonstrate new functions effectively. Pupils are able to follow each step of the teacher's instructions visually on their own screens. Good humour prevails in most lessons and pupils' prior attainments are well known by teachers, who are sensitive to individual needs. As a result, learning is very good. In timetabled ICT lessons, the planned work covers the requirements of the National Curriculum; however, control technology is of a very basic nature and generally very much underdeveloped, adversely affecting learning in these areas. The network manager and his assistant provide an excellent and invaluable contribution to pupils' learning by supporting teaching through keeping computers working and ensuring the efficient operation of the equipment.
151. Outside of timetabled ICT lessons, the use of ICT is very much dependent upon the interest, expertise, experience and enthusiasm of subject teachers. The head of department provides a very clear educational direction for the subject and ensures that pupils' entitlements to ICT are met as fully as possible. He has recognised the shortfalls in the provision following a

thorough audit of provision and is effectively supporting the development of consistent and co-ordinated provision for all pupils across all subjects. The subject is therefore very well led and managed and ensures that the requirements of the National Curriculum are fully met. Assessment and recording of pupils' progress is thorough in ICT lessons and enables pupils to progress effectively, since they know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. The assessment of pupils' ICT capability across all subjects of the curriculum in Key Stage 3 is less rigorous and comprehensive, and does not yet contribute as effectively as it could to the overall judgement on levels of attainment achieved by pupils.

152. Improvement since the last inspection has been good; standards have improved significantly. The quality and range of ICT resources and the accommodation have been improved greatly, through the provision of state of the art equipment, linked to the Internet in four ICT suites and in the library. An accredited ICT course has been introduced at Key Stage 4 and greater use of information technology is evident in many subjects in the school.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- The good quality of teaching and learning, and pupils' very positive attitudes to learning, lead to very good achievement.
- Effective strategies are used to develop pupils' listening and speaking skills and their confidence as linguists
- The atmosphere in lessons is supportive and purposeful due to good relationships and control.
- Leadership is very good, promoting good team work and the sharing of ideas and good practice.
- Pupils, particularly girls, achieve better results in their GCSE language examinations than in almost all their other GCSE subjects.

Areas for development

- Raise standards achieved by boys in all languages.
- Increase opportunities for pupils to ask questions, in the language being learned, to find out new information.
- Develop the use of assessment information, to plan work for pupils with differing levels of attainment within lessons.

153. In GCSE examinations in 2000, the proportion of candidates gaining A* to C grades in French and Spanish was slightly below average, but not significantly so; A* to C results in other languages were broadly average. Girls attained significantly better results than boys. In lessons, no significant difference was observed between standards for boys and girls and this difference may be due to differences in examination preparation. All pupils achieved a grade at GCSE. This represents very good achievement in relation to prior attainment. All pupils achieve better in modern languages than in most other GCSE subjects. Results have continued to improve in 2001. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 are unduly pessimistic and need to be reviewed.
154. Inspection evidence shows that standards in Years 9 and 11 are below average overall and represent good achievement, given pupils' levels of attainment on entry. In Year 11, standards achieved by pupils in French and Spanish are below average; they are above average in Punjabi. Overall, achievement is very good. Listening skills are very well developed from Year 7 onwards in all languages. All pupils identify the main points and specific detail from short extracts of speech, higher attainers with little need for repetition, and lower attainers and pupils with special educational needs with some guidance. All respond appropriately to instructions and questions in the language being learned. Speaking skills are well developed in French and Spanish and very well developed in Punjabi. In French and Spanish, pupils respond appropriately to questions about their family, leisure activities and

their home life, using the past, present and future tenses and set phrases. Higher attaining pupils construct their own sentences from memory, whereas some lower attaining pupils refer to notes to help them to do this. Pupils express their opinions and justify their views. Those studying Punjabi speak at length, and in detail, about a variety of topics using a good range of vocabulary and structures; for example, to exchange information about homes and the way they celebrate festivals.

155. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall in French, Spanish and Punjabi. In all lessons, teaching was satisfactory or better. A small number of very good lessons were observed in French and Punjabi in Years 7 and 8. There are significant strengths in the teaching. Lessons are well planned, so that activities are well sequenced and well matched to pupils' needs. Thus, pupils are able to build effectively on previous learning. Presentations are clear; teachers make frequent use of the overhead projector, flashcards and the board to present new language; as a result, pupils rapidly understand and apply patterns for themselves. For example, in Punjabi, flashcards of different types of houses, with the key words written underneath, were effective support for the activities which followed. The target language is used very effectively for teaching, and this is very effective in developing pupils' speaking and listening skills. For example, teachers check that all pupils have understood instructions by asking higher attainers to interpret for the class. This provides good challenge for the higher attainers, and develops the listening skills of all. Pupils expect to use the language being learned when they are in the languages area and, in a Year 11 tutor group, pupils having difficulty with mathematics homework listened and contributed to an explanation about quadratic equations and plotting graphs in French. All pupils are encouraged to listen for key words so that they effectively develop coping strategies and their confidence in listening increases.
156. Teachers take opportunities to develop pupils' awareness of patterns in the languages. For example, in Punjabi, pupils in Year 10 were asked to work out from previously learned vocabulary the word for a terraced house; in French, pupils explored the use of 'le monde' in a variety of contexts. The emphasis in all lessons is on speaking and listening; teachers make good use of the time available, building on pupils' strengths. The result is confident and competent linguists. Good use is made of games to encourage participation and to increase pupils' confidence and sense of enjoyment; for example, in a Year 8 French lesson, pupils were very eager to participate in a 'Blockbusters' game and as a result were able to memorise the buildings in a town. Similarly, Year 11 pupils responded enthusiastically to a guessing game using flashcards about school subjects. Review and recap are very effective in ensuring that pupils have grasped key words and phrases.
157. Control and management is very good and this, together with very good relationships between pupils and teachers, creates a purposeful and supportive atmosphere, where pupils are not afraid of making mistakes. A variety of very effective strategies are used to allow pupils to practise pronunciation and to memorise language. Activities and resources are usually

well matched to pupils' needs, supporting lower attainers and pupils with special educational needs and challenging higher attainers. For example, in Punjabi lessons, writing and reading activities include key words to support learning which gradually increase in difficulty and challenge. Pupils are given frequent opportunities to practise informally, in pairs and small groups. In the more effective lessons, they use the language being learnt to gather and to give one another information; for example, in a Year 7 lesson, pupils quickly developed speaking and listening skills, when they had to find their partner by asking each others' assumed names. However in a minority of lessons these opportunities are missed, or lengthy teacher led activities decrease such opportunities and slow the pace.

158. Pupils' attitudes towards learning languages are very positive; they settle quickly, listen attentively and concentrate on tasks set. They often display enjoyment in activities and have very good relationships with their teachers. In a minority of instances, a small number of Year 10 pupils displayed negative attitudes and were unduly fussy when they encountered difficulties in achieving success but this was unusual. Pupils make the best progress when they are asked to participate themselves and only lose concentration and become chatty when they are asked to listen for lengthy periods, are not directly involved or are not given sufficient practice to become confident with new language before attempting tasks for themselves. However these instances are not usual.
159. Curriculum provision is good; Year 7 pupils can sample all three languages before deciding which one they are going to study. The department makes good provision for pupils who wish to study Urdu in Years 10 and 11, with extra classes before school. Pupils can study Arabic also in after school classes. The curriculum is enhanced by pupils being given the opportunity to practise conversational skills with native speakers in French and Spanish and by trips abroad. Procedures for assessment and monitoring progress are thorough and teachers know their pupils very well. Pupils are aware of their achievement and know how to improve, but there is scope for further development of the use of assessment in lesson planning, so that all pupils are challenged appropriately.
160. The department is very well led and managed, with a clear vision of the way forward and an emphasis on raising standards. Monitoring of teaching and learning is very well established and teachers work very well as a team, sharing ideas and good practice. The issues raised in the last report have been addressed very effectively; as a result standards have improved, particularly pupils' speaking and listening skills. There is now a marked consistency in the quality of teaching and learning across the department; assessment procedures have improved. The use of information communication technology has been developed; pupils now use a range of appropriate programs to support and extend their learning.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- There is good teaching for pupils in Years 7 to 9, with efficient use made of the limited time available. This helps pupils to concentrate and to learn effectively.
- There is very sound teaching for GCSE pupils, with good relationships established between pupils and a musician-teacher. This engages pupils' interest and ensures that the course is well covered musically.
- The considerable money that the school has put into instrumental music offers pupils the possibility of learning an instrument and enhances their class music making.

Areas for improvement

- Overall, provision for music is unsatisfactory. Currently, there is no head of department and, hence, no central direction and management of the department. The priority is to appoint a new head of department to organise class music, extra-curricular music and the teaching of instrumental music.
- Time for music in Years 7, 8 and 9 is inadequate at present.
- Work is not well marked; ongoing systems of assessment are used insufficiently well in the planning of future work.
- The scheme of work for Years 7 to 9 needs to be completed, while a scheme of work for pupils in Years 10 and 11 needs to be produced, in order to give sufficient guidance to teachers.
- The condition of the accommodation and the equipment in the department needs reviewing and upgrading.

161. In 2000, the proportion of pupils gaining a GCSE A* to C grade was significantly below the national average. Girls achieved better results than boys. 2001 results were similar and were lower than those in other subjects. The lack of a head of department, and the leadership and administrative stability and skill that this would bring, is partly responsible for these low results. Also, in 2001, numbers for GCSE were large and results need to be viewed in the light of the wide range of pupils' ability. Standards in the present Year 11 are a little higher, although still below average. Pupils in Years 10 and Year 11 achieve satisfactorily, given their attainment at the end of Year 9. Observations from Year 10 and Year 11 lessons and, to a lesser extent, information from a scrutiny of pupils' work, show that girls are still achieving better than boys, although not so markedly as in the GCSE examination.

162. Because the lessons seen were the first, introductory lessons of the year for the classes observed, it was difficult to judge standards of work of current Year 9 pupils. Work from last year showed standards to be well below average and teacher assessment was in line with this view. Much of the work in Years 7 and 8 last year, however, was well presented and showed these pupils to have a better grasp of the work attempted. This, in turn, reflects better teaching for most of the younger pupils. In lessons seen, there was no difference in standards between girls and boys, both taking a full part in the

lessons and understanding the work similarly well. Pupils with special educational needs also have a fair grasp of the work. In a Year 8 lesson with a lower attaining group, for example, the teacher adapted her teaching well, so that all pupils understood the work and enjoyed learning. Many pupils have a good background knowledge of Indian music, (the current topic), because it is their own music. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 are less familiar with keyboards and notation than the majority of pupils of their age, especially at Year 8. Overall, pupils achieve less well than they should in Years 7 to 9 because of the small amount of time they are able to spend on music.

163. Some pupils in Year 10 tackled a composition task well, but a significant minority had little idea of how to go about following one chord with another to make a four (and eight) bar pattern. Pupils' reading of rhythm notation is poor. Year 11 showed a fair understanding of what is needed in the listening test for GCSE but, again, there were several pupils clearly finding the task very hard.
164. Currently, teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Year 10 and 11. For the younger pupils strong class management and the good use of the limited time available mean that they can concentrate and learn. During the inspection, Year 9 pupils began a topic on Indian music in which the teacher has specific knowledge and skills. The teacher drew out pupils' own knowledge of this music well. Teaching for the Year 7 and 8 pupils at the beginning of a keyboard unit was not so confident, but the underlying skills of pupil management and good pacing of the lesson were very good. For pupils in Years 10 and 11, the teacher has a good knowledge of music, even though he is unqualified. This means that pupils have informed help for their work and a good level of skills to lead them in their music making. The teacher is not always able to get around the group as quickly as is needed to give help to those struggling with the work - in Year 10 for example - but is able to channel pupils' ideas well. In both year groups, there is a good sense of purpose in learning, which helps to keep pupils interested and keen to do their best. GCSE pupils have a good approach to their work helped by the positive atmosphere in lessons.
165. Some pupils in Year 10 were able to use their instrumental skills well in the composition session and this helped them to achieve at an appropriate level. In the rhythm notation lesson, their skills and prior learning were not used so well. The same ideas, appropriate for some but easy and obvious for others, were used for all pupils. In Years 7 to 9, again, work was the same for the whole class, but its introductory nature meant that this was appropriate. In a Year 8 class, where many pupils experience learning difficulties, the teachers judged her explanation well so that all could understand and enjoy the new knowledge.
166. Teaching in the instrumental lessons is very sound. Work in these lessons, however, is not well integrated into class music and there is, at the moment, no extra-curricular music in which pupils can use their instrumental and vocal skills. There are some difficulties with timetabling, so that not all pupils come to their instrumental lesson regularly. This interrupts their learning, as all

practical instrumental skills begin to slide very quickly when teaching and practice stop.

167. The school has been unable to appoint a head of department for this term. As a result, Year 7 to 9 pupils receive lessons only for half of the term. This means that the original allocation of time, barely sufficient at one 50 minute period per week, is now inadequate for teaching the National Curriculum. Pupils do not have access to a full and balanced curriculum in music. Work is not well marked; ongoing systems of assessment are used insufficiently well in the planning of future work. This means that, although teaching is good and time is well used, the below average standard at the end of last year will not improve. The school intends to appoint as soon as possible, advertising at a generous level for such a post.
168. The previous head of department left very good teaching notes for lessons with Years 7 to 9, but only for some topics. This detailed preparation needs completing for the other units of work. For GCSE pupils, a new head of department needs to create a scheme based on the syllabus. Teachers were confident of the material taught during the inspection and pupils gained in their music knowledge and skills. For each unit of work for Year 7 to 9 pupils, the teacher keeps a brief record of success for every pupil. GCSE work is marked and the teacher has a good knowledge of pupils' strengths and needs in relation to the course.
169. Since the time of the last inspection music has not developed satisfactorily because of the lack of a permanent head of department. Much of the teaching is now good and pupils are keen to make music. A new head of department needs to review and improve the condition of the accommodation and resources, complete the schemes of work and ensure that the school's generous help for instrumental tuition is well used in lessons and developed through extra curricular activities.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in physical education is **excellent**.

Strengths

- Teaching is consistently good and helps pupils to learn and achieve well.
- The curriculum is well balanced and provides a range of experiences to suit the needs and development of all pupils.
- Excellent opportunities for specialist clubs, coaching and competition for all pupils are provided by community links and by extra-curricular provision.
- The department is very well led and managed.

Areas for improvement

- To make better use of subject assessment data and recording procedures so that standards and pupils' achievements continue to improve.

170. Teachers' assessments in 2001 were not recorded accurately. However, through discussion and other records, there is evidence that standards of both boys and girls were below those found nationally. The GCSE results for 2000 were also below those nationally for pupils gaining A* to C grades, but not significantly so. In addition, nearly twice the usual proportion of the year group was entered for the examination. Compared to other subjects, pupils achieved well and girls were particularly successful. Results for 2001 continued the marked upward trend of recent years. Targets set for the future aim towards results becoming even closer to national figures.
171. Observations during the inspection confirmed that, overall, standards are below average in both Years 9 and 11. Many pupils have low stamina levels and appear to also have low levels of fitness. Throughout the school, many pupils have below average literacy skills and have EAL. Although these factors make it more difficult for them to grasp concepts and games strategies, pupils achieve well overall and endeavour to put the ideas gained in practices into games. Higher attaining pupils in all year groups are encouraged to attend after school clubs and community coaching, so that they can develop and use their skills against greater competition.
172. Pupils enter the school in Year 7 with very low skill levels and poor appreciation of timing and anticipation. From this low base, pupils' own hard work, their enjoyment of the subject and good teaching assists them in learning well and in achieving more than might be expected. Although, pupils' physical skills are weak, they have a good understanding of why they warm up and are competent in undertaking this activity. Standards in Year 9 represent very good achievement; pupils take part in practices, learning to use their knowledge in games play. For example, in both basketball and netball in Years 8 and 9, pupils knew the principles of the lay up shot and interception, but found it difficult to perform these because of their lack of physical skills. However, they achieved very well to perform as they did.
173. Through a good selection of activities that interest pupils, particularly in Years 10 and 11, pupils are motivated to learn. Consequently, standards seen in Year 11 represent good achievement overall. . Achievement in GCSE classes is very good. In a Year 10 theory lesson, standards of work were above those nationally and pupils' understanding and work rate showed the very good learning and achievement that was taking place. Pupils in the core physical education in Year 11 make good gains in knowledge and performance and overcome their lack of previous experience. Their achievement is good.
174. The overall quality of teaching is very good; it is consistently good, with several examples of excellence. Teachers have a shared approach to lesson planning and always discuss with pupils what is going to be learned and what they are going to be doing. This approach motivates pupils and enables them to check for themselves what they are learning and how well they are progressing. A very good example was seen in a Year 11 dance lesson, where the teacher had provided a good range of resources to act as stimuli and clearly specified aims, key words and ideas on the whiteboard in advance

of the lesson. Teachers also summarise at the end of each lesson what pupils have done and frequently ask specific questions to reinforce learning. For example, in a Year 7 trampoline lesson, the teacher spent the last five minutes ensuring that pupils understood the role of spotters, the meaning of body tension and what they had learned during the lesson.

175. The department has cultivated a strong ethos that physical education is for everybody and that it should be enjoyable. Pupils respond very well to this encouraging ethos and participation rates are very high in all lessons. Pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated into all lessons and succeed well. In almost all instances, pupils work hard and their behaviour is almost always very good. Teachers' classroom management skills are a real strength, as they organise pupils quickly and set a good pace to lessons. Pupils are very co-operative, but there are instances where teachers do not capitalise on this by setting different tasks to give greater challenge for pupils who are better performers. Teachers' planning is very good and they always indicate in their planning their knowledge of pupils. However, there are fewer opportunities for pupils to select and plan their own strategies in practices and games than there are for them to be told what they are to do by the teacher. Teachers pay very good attention to using key words and encouraging pupils to understand spelling and meaning of these words. They know the potential for the use of ICT but, at present, ICT is mainly used by GCSE groups.
176. Leadership of the subject is very good. There is a clear sense of purpose about the work of the department, with shared values. Policies and schemes of work are good and underpin the department's practice well. The curriculum is very well planned and balanced, to provide for pupils' interests and development. Monitoring of teaching and learning, and the progress that pupils make in GCSE classes, is good. However, the system for assessing pupils' progress across the school and collecting and using data is not secure. Records do not give accurate information about the progress made by pupils in Year 7 to 9.
177. The building work and plans will provide excellent facilities for the subject. Community links to outside specialist coaching, clubs and external competition are well established and indicative of the commitment to sport for all in its broadest sense. Over 25 sports are offered, and a dance festival has been introduced. The uptake by pupils to these activities is high; participation rates are monitored carefully by the department. The school is very successful in competitive team sports.
178. Very good progress has been made since the previous inspection. The department has been instrumental in the school gaining Sports College status and the Sportsmark Gold Award and has contributed, through dance, to the Artsmark Silver Award.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- The use of group presentations enables pupils to develop their language skills and to learn from each other.
- Good relationships and high expectations of behaviour result in a good working environment.
- Links with places of worship enable pupils to experience different cultures and to gain a clearer picture of the faiths they are learning about.

Areas of improvement.

- Visual material, books, videos and slides are used insufficiently well in order to provide clear images of rituals outside of pupils' own experiences.
- Methods of assessment and collection of data need improving, in order to monitor the progress of pupils in the attainment targets over time. In particular, support for classes taught by temporary teachers needs strengthening, to ensure that pupils' progress is monitored and that the lesson objectives are met.

179. Results for the GCSE full course in 2000 were significantly below the national average. However, the trend in results for both boys and girls is rising. In 2001, GCSE results were greatly improved and are likely to be above the national average. All pupils entered achieved at least a pass grade; results were higher than those in many other subjects. More girls than boys are completing the full course and a higher proportion of girls are achieving grades A* to C. These results represent very good achievement for the department. For the first time last year, a group of lower attaining pupils were entered for the short course in religious education. The proportion of pupils who achieved a grade A* to G was broadly average.

180. In work seen during the inspection, standards by the end of Year 9 are average. This represents good achievement, given pupils' levels of attainment on entry to the school. The positive attitude of pupils towards the study of religion is a significant factor in their progress. Most pupils are acquiring a good body of knowledge about the world faiths that are represented in the school. Visits to a range of places of worship support their understanding of the key features of different religions, and their significance in the lives of believers. Pupils recognise the range of religious and secular beliefs concerning the creation of the world. Higher attaining pupils can compare the accounts in structured essays, presenting their own opinions. Understanding of the Genesis creation account is limited to knowledge of its face value however. Pupils are considering the nature of belief and its effect upon the understanding of 'ultimate questions' such as 'What is the purpose of life?' Pupils of all attainment levels recognise that these questions may have a range of answers that deserve respect. Standards for some pupils are reduced by unfinished or missing work, which limits the development of

understanding. The limited use of homework and weekly lessons, results in the need to complete work within the lesson time, limiting the development of understanding of abstract concepts. The level of achievement is generally good because pupils work with interest. They are keen to respond to questions in class and take a pride in their class-work. Their responses are generally accurate, but they do not develop their answers further than strictly necessary and this reluctance to go further limits achievement. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress when the materials used are designed to meet their needs. They make the best progress when they are actively involved and tasks are clearly staged to develop understanding.

181. All pupils in Year 10 and 11 follow a course that can lead to entry into the full GCSE examination, the short course GCSE examination or the Certificate of Achievement. Decisions regarding the appropriate examination entry are not made until Year 11. In work seen during the inspection, the standards pupils attain by the end of Year 11 are average overall, with a significant number of pupils attaining levels above average. Pupils study the key elements of Christianity and another religion of their choice. Higher attaining pupils consider the beliefs that underpin rituals. Pupils generally have a weak understanding of the link between the Christian belief in crucifixion and redemption, although higher attaining pupils recognise the significance of sacrifice and its reflection through the use of the altar. Pupils make a study of a place of worship and recognise similarities between the purposes of rites of passage and rituals of the world faiths they study; for example, the ceremony of marriage. The absence of video material limits the opportunity for pupils to observe rituals and places outside their experiences and so their understanding is restricted. Higher attaining pupils reflect on religious teaching in the light of their own beliefs and identify where they can agree, or disagree, with the teaching. Lower attaining pupils identify rituals and prayer, but demonstrate little understanding of the reasons for their significance. Sensitive work on prayer demonstrates a secure understanding of the importance of prayer to believers. Pupils consider contemporary moral issues in the light of religious teaching and recognise the effect of belief upon moral decisions; for example, in the questions surrounding the issue of Euthanasia.
182. Pupils' attitudes towards their own beliefs, and their respect for the beliefs of others, enable them to achieve well. Their own experiences enrich their understanding and the knowledge of their fellow pupils. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well, supported by the use of group presentations, where pupils share their knowledge with their fellows.
183. The department makes a good contribution to the development of the pupils' literacy skills. Every opportunity is taken for pupils to read aloud; project work, and open-ended questions, encourage pupils to write without the support of text. Writing frames, though not used throughout the department, support the work of pupils' with weaker literacy skills. Higher attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 demonstrate that they can write fluently, supporting their judgements with reason. Poor handwriting and badly formed letters often mar the written work of lower attaining pupils, especially boys.

184. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, some very good teaching was also seen. Lessons are well planned and religions are selected that allow pupils to use their own knowledge and experiences to enrich the work of the class. In the best lessons, pupils are presented with clear tasks that they complete in groups, before presenting their findings to the class as a whole. This enables them to take responsibility for their learning and to benefit from the efforts of their classmates. Where time is well managed, the pace of lessons is good yet unrushed, with time for valuable reflection on what has been learnt. Where time is lost early in the lesson, the need to rush an activity reduces its effect. Teachers take care to involve all pupils in responses and the very good relationships between pupils and teachers support a busy learning environment. Teachers treat the opinions of their pupils with respect, which results in pupils gaining confidence, and showing similar respect to their colleagues. Pupils are well motivated and, as a result, are willing to simply record information. Teaching is best where pupils are stimulated to question information and to make judgements that they are then expected to explain. Teachers are concerned to use a range of teaching strategies in order to support pupils with different learning styles, however teaching is less successful where the strategy becomes more important than the key information to be learnt.
185. The leadership and management of the department are good. The opportunity for all pupils to achieve a qualification in religious education, designed to meet their needs, is a strength of the department. Assessment and monitoring in Years 10 and 11 is generally good, but practice across the department in Years 7 to 9 is less consistent. There is no central department record of assessment to enable the monitoring of pupils' progress across the years, or to monitor the progress of groups in the attainment targets. The department is not yet using levels of assessment, as recommended in the Agreed Syllabus. Day to day marking is generally regular and encouraging, but it often contains insufficient information regarding how work may be improved and pupils do not correct errors or catch up any work that they have missed. The department has developed methods of pupil self-evaluation; however these are not yet used consistently. For groups taught by temporary staff with other subject responsibilities, assessment has declined and there has been no monitoring of their progress in Years 7 to 11. Schemes of work are being redrafted and the department handbook is in the process of being updated. The use of ICT is being developed and pupils use it for research and presentation. At present the range of activities is limited however, and it is not included in schemes of work.
186. Progress since the last report is good. Attainment in Years 10 and 11 has risen and achievement is good at the end of both Year 9 and Year 11. Attitudes and behaviour are good and pupils are well motivated. Teaching is good and focuses on pupils' learning. There is now an established head of department and the department has a clear sense of direction. Assessment has been developed but is still not yet used to monitor progress. Marking is

still not generally informative. Resources have improved but the lack of a video and overhead projector still has a limiting effect on learning.