

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **TARLETON HIGH SCHOOL**

Tarleton, Preston

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique reference number: 119752

Headteacher: Mr Anthony D Hardiker

Reporting inspector: Mrs Sylvia Richardson  
[RgI's OIN - 1038]

Dates of inspection: 29 April to 2 May 2002

Inspection number: 191479

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:	Hesketh Lane Tarleton Preston Lancashire
Postcode:	PR4 6AQ
Telephone number:	01772 812644
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Frank Sturzaker
Date of previous inspection:	8 November 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
1038	Mrs Sylvia Richardson	Registered inspector	Equality of opportunity English as an additional language	The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How good are curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils? How well is the school led and managed?
10329	Mr Brian Sampson	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
18950	Ms Carmen Rodney	Team inspector	English Drama Literacy	
28878	Mr Andrew Blow	Team inspector	Mathematics Numeracy	
10905	Dr Alan Brewerton	Team inspector	Science	
15465	Mr Terence Parrish	Team inspector	Design and Technology Information and communication technology	
3793	Mr John Ratcliffe	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages – French and German	
22849	Mr Ron Catlow	Team inspector	History	
10564	Mr John Tomlinson	Team inspector	Geography	
4454	Mr Iain Kerr	Team inspector	Physical education	
12179	Mr Laurence Moscrop	Team inspector	Religious education	
20165	Mr Alan Lemon	Team inspector	Art Special educational needs	
18670	Mr Peter Tidmarsh	Team inspector	Music	



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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Tarleton High School has grown significantly since the time of the last inspection, from 642 to 726 currently on roll. It remains, however, below the national average size for a secondary school. The biggest year group is Year 7. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is about half the national average. There are no speakers of English as an additional language and almost all pupils are white. The number of pupils with special educational needs is below the national average but the proportion with statements of special educational need is above the national average. The bulk of the school's pupils come from Tarleton itself, the villages of Hesketh with Beconsall and North Meols. Some pupils come from more affluent villages and 120 from as far afield as Southport. Pupils have average attainment on entry to the school at the age of 11. The school is an Investor in People and has been recognised as a leading school in the National Literacy Strategy and for its Health Promotion activities. It received a School Achievement award in 2001.

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

Tarleton High School is a good school with many very good features. It is an effective school with a civilised atmosphere promoting pupils' self-esteem. All pupils are valued. They achieve very well, and standards are above average when compared with similar schools. Teaching is very good. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good and help them to make good progress. Leadership is very good and management is very efficient. The school gives good value for money and successfully provides a high quality of education despite shortages in facilities.

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

- Standards are high. Results in public examinations and national tests are well above average.
- The school challenges all pupils to achieve as well as they can. It supports them very well, with the result that many achieve beyond what is predicted on the basis of their attainment at the age of 11.
- Very good teaching, with high expectations of what pupils can do, motivates them, resulting in steady improvement in achievement.
- The headteacher sets the tone of the school and gives it very clear educational direction. He is very well supported by his able and hardworking senior team and by governors. The school's subject and pastoral leaders provide very good leadership to their teams.

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

- Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is unsatisfactory and aspects of design and technology for 11 to 14 year olds do not meet the requirements of the National Curriculum.
- The accommodation is increasingly under pressure in meeting the needs of the numbers of pupils now seeking places in the school.
- Learning resources are inadequate in the library, in science, and in design and technology, and there is an insufficiently wide range of reading texts in English.
- Record keeping and progress chasing for pupils with statements of special educational needs could be improved by more frequent review.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school was last inspected in 1996. Since then, improvement has been good overall and, in some contexts, very good. Standards have risen significantly. Many pupils, the vast majority of whom have average attainment on entry, now exceed their predicted performance after five years at Tarleton. The school is very good at improving pupils' attainment overall. Religious education, which was criticised at the time of the last inspection, is now available for all throughout, as required by law, and has generated very high levels of success and interest. Despite heavy investment in the provision of computers in the last two years, there is still inadequate access to computers in many subjects and a number of subjects do not contribute sufficiently to the development of pupils' ICT skills. The school therefore continues to be in breach of the requirements for ICT. However, the introduction of a GNVQ programme in ICT in 2001



was an important improvement, giving pupils currently in Year 9 their full entitlement to an accredited ICT course for their next two years.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	B	A	A	B

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

Standards in Year 9 are above the national average in mathematics and science and well above in English. They are average in comparison with similar schools, except in English, which is well above average. The trend of improvement in the school's average National Curriculum test results as measured by pupils' average points score was broadly in line with the national average. Results in GCSE have steadily improved since the time of the last inspection and are now well above the national average, although on entry, pupils' performance was no better than average. The trend of improvement in the school's average GCSE and GNVQ point score per pupil was above the national trend. The scale of improvement is considerable – for example, there has been a 20 per cent increase in the percentage of pupils gaining above average results at the age of 14 since 1995 and a 17.5 per cent increase in the percentage gaining well above average results in English.

The school has set achievable but challenging targets for performance in recent years, and these have been exceeded in each of the last three years. Part of the reason for this lies in girls' improvement, which has been at a faster rate than that of the boys. There has also been very good improvement at the lower end of the attainment range with 100% of pupils in 2001 gaining at least one A\* to G pass. This places the school in the highest five per cent of performance in the country in relation to pupils who gain at least one or more A\* to G grade passes at GCSE. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve very well overall. Particular strengths in the standards of work seen include pupils' productivity and intellectual effort in their written work. Extended writing is good and pupils are articulate, read fluently and express their views coherently. They are good at number work and use their knowledge of mathematics in support of other subjects. Their standards in using ICT as an aid to learning and to present and extend their work vary from very good to weak because of the limited experience of ICT of some. Pupils' learning is well supported by very good teaching, well-planned homework and the care pupils take to complete it.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are very keen to come to school. They are enthusiastic and show interest and commitment to learning in their lessons and in all other activities that the school offers.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils are very well behaved. They are courteous and respect people and property. Bullying is very rare and there have been no permanent exclusions in the last two years.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils take an active part in the life of the school and community. They support and respect each other very well and form constructive relationships with adults. They plan their work very well and often without supervision.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Attendance is in line with national figures and compares well with the previous inspection. Punctuality to lessons is very good.

Very good opportunities for personal development, including taking significant responsibility in the daily

life of the school as prefects and pupil mentors, ensure that pupils have and sustain their interest in school.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

There is a high degree of consistency in teaching. Teaching in English is very good. It is a major strength of the school especially in its encouragement of high achievement by insisting on accuracy. The way the school has approached the National Literacy Strategy is effective. Pupils are becoming, as a result, self-critical in their use of language. The approach is supported by many subjects, which offer well thought out opportunities for research and the application of technical language and concepts to deepen pupils' understanding of the subjects. In mathematics, teachers consistently use teaching requiring active responses from pupils. Lessons have clear expectations of what will be learned which are shared with the pupils, and most involve a variety of activities with a focus upon using mental methods. Good questioning is a common feature in mathematics teaching where teachers frequently require pupils to justify their answers and develop their ideas. The beneficial impact of the National Numeracy Strategy can be seen throughout the school in mathematics lessons, and increasingly in Years 10 and 11. Science teaching, at its best, encourages creative thinking and pupils enter into discussion, which helps them to build on previous knowledge and make very good progress. Teachers challenge individual pupils to work beyond the expected levels for their ages. Teaching in other subjects is similarly of a high standard and overall helps all pupils to learn well. Learning and equality of opportunity are occasionally compromised by the requirement on teachers to teach their second or third subject specialism. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and many achieve very well by the time they leave the school, attaining five or more higher grade GCSE passes. There are several effective initiatives in place to extend the learning of the highest attaining pupils, although there is still room for further work to ensure that they reach their full potential.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Unsatisfactory overall, despite being broad and offering significant opportunities beyond the National Curriculum, because the school does not meet statutory requirements in the provision of ICT and DT. The school offers opportunities for enrichment for all pupils. Extra-curriculum provision is very good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The school's approach to inclusion is very effective. Teachers, working closely and effectively with learning support assistants, make very good provision to meet pupils' needs in lessons. Pupils' individual education plans are supportive but some targets are too broadly expressed to be helpful and those for pupils with statements of special educational need are not frequently enough reviewed and adapted in the light of progress made.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. The school creates a climate in which pupils have opportunities for reflection and development of their own frames of reference and values. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. Opportunities for moral and social development are very good. Cultural development is good overall but the opportunities for developing understanding of multicultural Britain are limited, despite very good events such as the anti-prejudice day and Holocaust Memorial day.
How well the school cares	Very well. Child protection procedures are very efficient and the school

for its pupils	supports all pupils with a high level of professional concern and kindness.
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The school works very well in partnership with parents, who support their children's learning very well. The curriculum is regularly reviewed and major changes for September 2002 will deal with most current deficiencies. The GNVQ course in ICT will be rolled forward, enabling the majority of pupils to experience a full ICT course in Years 10 and 11 and all by 2003. There is a very wide range of very good opportunities for pupils to develop interest and expertise for future work and leisure. Teachers provide an excellent range of 'clinics', extra learning to help pupils prepare for examinations and tests and to overcome any learning problems they may experience. The restructuring of the responsibilities of year heads to give them oversight of pupils' progress has been effective and enhances the school's already high levels of care for its pupils.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The school is very well led and managed. The head has put in place a clear educational vision, combining a rigorous approach to attainment and a compassionate approach to the support of individuals. He is ably supported at all levels by hardworking and talented senior managers, subject and pastoral leaders.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors fulfil their responsibilities well to support and help develop the vision, which imbues the life of the school. Their review of the work of the school is thoughtful, searching and thorough. They have a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school is good at evaluating the general trends of its performance across the school. Several departments use the information available about individual pupils' progress very well and adapt their lesson planning to make maximum impact on standards and progress. Others are less good at using statistical data to help them in this way.
The strategic use of resources	Computers and associated hardware are still in short supply, despite recent heavy investment. Accommodation overall is poor and other learning resources, such as the library, are unsatisfactory.

The school uses current best practice in obtaining good value from its resources. It is well staffed. There are shortages in learning resources, especially of computer hardware. The poor state of the fabric of the buildings is a continuing concern to the school, as is the shortage of classroom space to cope with the school's growth. Accommodation for physical education is inadequate. Indoor facilities are particularly unsatisfactory. This adversely affects the range and balance of the curriculum and inhibits further development, although standards are very good. There are too few science laboratories to meet sufficiently the needs of pupils for practical scientific investigations. Some classrooms are cramped or unsuited to their present purpose and in very poor condition, despite efforts by school staff and pupils to keep them attractive. Routine maintenance and care provided by site supervisory staff are very good.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are high expectations of what pupils can achieve</li> <li>• Their children make good progress</li> <li>• They feel comfortable raising questions or problems with the school</li> <li>• Teaching is good</li> <li>• The school helps their children to mature and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The amount of homework</li> <li>• The range of activities outside lessons</li> <li>• The close working with parents</li> </ul>

A very large number of parents (401) returned the questionnaires. Inspectors agree with the very favourable picture they paint of the school. Few parents identified areas for improvement. The inspectors judge that the amount of homework is about right. There is a very good range of activities. Parents are well involved with the school in the care and education of their children.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Pupils come into the school at the age of 11 with average attainment. This is judged by their results in National Curriculum tests taken in June before they leave primary school, and by other data from tests on arrival at Tarleton. There has been little variation in attainment on entry in the eleven years for which the school has maintained this information. Pupils end up, after five years in the school, with above average results in comparison with schools with similar intakes. In comparison with all schools nationally, results are well above average. In 2001, in the GCSE examination two thirds of all 16 year old pupils gained five or more good passes in the range of A\* to C, 18 per cent above the national average. This includes some pupils who entered the school with significant special educational needs, who were not predicted to achieve nearly as well as they did. It was often the case that these pupils, because of difficulties in learning, set out in Year 7 attaining at levels below or well below average. One pupil, for example, who arrived with poor literacy, had by Year 10 learned to read and write independently, reading text fluently, understanding its meaning and writing clear sentences using the correct spelling. Since pupils' attainment on entry goes from average at the age of 11, to above average at the age of 14 and then to well above average at the age of 16, the level of improvement (value added) is very good.
2. The school has exceeded its realistic but challenging targets for successes in examination and test results for the last three years. In 2001, GCSE targets were exceeded by a significant amount.
3. Standards have risen steadily in GCSE over the last five years and the trend of improvement has been better than the national trend. The main areas of improvement have been in the performance of girls, which has improved faster than that of the boys, and in the number of pupils attaining B and C grades. The results of girls are not, however, consistent, and in geography for example, are below average and boys are performing better than the girls, contrary to the national pattern.
4. An area of very good improvement has been at the lower end of the attainment range, as demonstrated by the fact that all pupils in 2001 attained at least 1 pass grade in GCSE. This places the school in the top 5 per cent of all schools for this category of attainment. Most subjects in GCSE examinations in 2001 performed above the national average for pupils achieving A\* to C grade passes.
5. The number of pupils attaining the highest GCSE grades (A\* and A) is below average in several subjects. It was average in English and science, but below it in mathematics. There were very good results in English literature where the percentage of pupils gaining A\* and A grade passes was above average. Results at these higher grades were notable in history where 31.7 per cent of candidates attained this level of success, three times the national average. Results in ICT were also well above average in the higher grades. However, although all pupils are supposed to study ICT in Years 10 and 11, under half did, with the remainder gaining no qualification in this important area.
6. There has been a 20 per cent increase in the percentage of pupils gaining level 5 or better at the age of 14 since 1995 and a 17.5 per cent increase in level 6 in English. In mathematics, there has been an 18 per cent increase at level 5 or better and a 21 per cent increase at level 6 or better. In science, there has been steady improvement, although it is not so notable, with an 11 per cent increase in the percentage of pupils gaining at least level 5. Results at the age of 14 in the science tests have stayed approximately the same at level 6. In comparison with similar schools, as judged on the basis of the numbers of pupils eligible for free school meals, attainment at the

age of 14 is average, and at the age of 16 it is better than that achieved in similar schools.

7. In 2001, results in English at the age of 14 had jumped from 66 per cent of pupils who attain the national standard to 78 per cent, 12 per cent above other similar schools. In all three core subjects – English, mathematics and science – performance over the last three years at the age of 14 has exceeded the national average, when assessed on the points accumulated, by 1.9, 1.8 and 1.7 respectively. Boys perform better than the girls in mathematics and science, but girls do better in English and in their other subjects, and this pattern continues to the age of 16. The trend in the school's average National Curriculum points for all three subjects was broadly in line with the national trend over the last three years.
8. At the time of the last inspection, religious education (RE) was singled out as a subject in which standards were unacceptably low. This is no longer the case. As a result of a change in staffing and in the approach to the curriculum, standards and pupils' achievement in RE have improved consistently, year on year. Over 80% of pupils successfully achieved a higher grade pass in the short GCSE course in 2001, and all received a pass grade.
9. Pupils have good standards of literacy across the curriculum. Planning in response to the National Literacy Strategy has been thorough and effective and this is a contributory factor to the evidently good literacy skills in all areas of the curriculum particularly in Years 7 to 9. Despite this major achievement, the school is without an adequate working library and has made insufficient progress in this area of its provision since the last inspection. The library is understaffed and poorly resourced: the ratio of books to pupils is low and the teacher librarian does not have the time to run the library effectively, even though every attempt is made to involve pupils in a range of interesting reading activities.
10. Across the curriculum, pupils' speaking and listening skills are very good. Teachers' planning provides for pupils to improve orally in music, modern foreign languages, geography and science when pupils are given many opportunities to reflect on their work and use technical vocabulary to extend their oral skills. For example, in these subjects, pupils raise issues with teachers, and work collaboratively in pairs, and skills in speaking are fully extended.
11. Most pupils read well and independent reading is encouraged. Pupils use technical vocabulary with understanding in all areas of the curriculum, but there is not a consistent approach to consolidating key words in all subjects. The higher attaining pupils use technical scientific terms competently and in modern foreign languages, they use dictionaries, glossaries and skim and scan texts, but there is less emphasis on these skills in other subjects. Pupils use more advanced reading skills in several subjects but they do not consistently collect technical vocabulary. They make very good use of the Internet in information and communication technology (ICT) for research, and use a range of computing skills to present their work. They use note-taking skills effectively in design and technology.
12. Pupils have a good standard of written work and vocabulary is good overall. Most spell correctly but the lower attaining pupils are less confident with their spelling, sentence construction and some tend to draw on their informal spoken language rather than adopting a more formal style. Standards in writing improve when they use scaffolding and there is good emphasis on correct grammatical terminology in subjects such as modern foreign languages and geography. For instance, in some subjects, pupils make good use of connectives when doing extended writing and in modern foreign languages, planning focuses sharply on the writing process, in particular, editing. Overall, students write for a range of purposes and audiences across the curriculum but there is insufficient writing in religious education.
13. Standards of numeracy are generally good, and pupils quickly and efficiently use their mental mathematics for checking their work, which helps them to feel more confident and make progress in a range of lessons. Calculators are used only where appropriate. There are opportunities to use and support numeracy in science, for example in genetics where pupils in lower attaining groups can extract numerical information from a table and apply this as fractions or percentages. Similarly, pupils use a variety of graphs in geography and, more unusually, use number in work on tempo in music and in timelines and metered beats in English. In information and communication technology (ICT) lessons, pupils make use of some aspects of mathematics, such as data retrieval, spread-sheets and graphs. Such support and use of numeracy practice is, however, not

yet widespread outside the mathematics lessons.

14. By the end of Year 9, pupils with special educational needs are making good progress and by the end of Year 11, their progress is very good. This is the result of them being included effectively by grouping them carefully and planning appropriate learning opportunities. They benefit from very good teaching, particularly their teachers' high expectations and, when needed, the very good support of classroom assistants. In a Year 7 mathematics lesson, where a third of the pupils had special educational needs, the teacher used a good role-playing and problem solving approach that fully engaged pupils in learning to calculate with 10's and 100's. In 2001, most Year 11 pupils on the school's register of special educational needs achieved 5 or more A\* to G GCSE passes.

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

15. Pupils at Tarleton have very good attitudes towards their school. This is a significant strength of the school and has contributed to the continuing improvement upon the favourable judgement, reported at the time of the previous inspection. Most pupils like coming to school and show high levels of enthusiasm, both in the majority of their lessons and in their social lives. Pupils from all years were asked what they thought of the school's quite extensive personal, social and health education programme. Everyone agreed that the sessions were very interesting and extremely necessary. They also liked the way that they, as young adults, were encouraged to discuss various aspects with their tutors. In one Year 10 lesson on job qualifications, the interest was at fever pitch during a quiz game on relating trade expressions and qualifications to careers. This level of interest is also shown in most other subjects of the school's wide-ranging curriculum. A very high percentage of pupils also takes advantage of the school's varied extra-curricular activities. The Gardening Club, for example, is growing a range of very healthy plants for the forthcoming Gala Day and, as many as ninety pupils routinely attend the very popular drama class.
16. Behaviour at the school is of a very high standard and this has also improved since the last inspection and is another strength. Very good behaviour was most noticeable within those lessons where management of pupils' work is most skilled and the content stimulating. At changeover times, between sessions, the movement of the pupils around the school is very controlled and good-humoured. As the school has a small canteen, pupils always have to queue, sometimes for a considerable period of time. The behaviour and control that they display is commendable. At break times during the inspection, there were no instances of aggressive or oppressive behaviour. The latter backs up the school's comment that bullying is a very rare occurrence at the school. Individual pupils are very polite. They frequently open doors for adults and for each other and ask if they can direct visitors around the school. There is no evidence of graffiti or vandalism and the school is tidy. Most of the pupils are proud of their school and wish to keep it that way. The school has had no permanent exclusions in the two years prior to the inspection and lower than average instances of fixed term exclusions.
17. The personal development of the pupils and relationships between them and with their tutors and staff are very good and a strength of which the school is justifiably proud. The school's clear personal, social and health education policy contributes to ensuring that the majority of its pupils leave school as good and conscientious citizens. They understand the impact of their actions on others. They realise that any adverse action against another person will usually result in retaliation and that it is better for everyone to get on together. They are aware that not everyone starts life with the same advantages, be it within their school or from other countries. This is encapsulated in the number of charities that the pupils support, such as Children In Need or Shoe Boxes for Rumania.
18. The vast majority of pupils respects the feelings, values and beliefs of others and is encouraged to understand about cultural and religious diversity. There is very good planned provision to support this within religious education and PSHE – citizenship. The majority of pupils gets on extremely well together. They are not afraid of responsibility and this is another very good feature of the school. The prefects, for example, are very conscious of their responsibility. Similarly, pupils take on considerable responsibility through the drama club, to produce musical shows, such as the forthcoming production of Robin Hood. Pupils are encouraged to take such responsibility from as

early as Year 7, for example, in the friendly and efficient way that they are trained to greet visitors in the main entrance, as part of their reception duties.

19. Attendance at the school within the past year has been satisfactory and is in line with the national average for this type of school. However, this represents an improvement overall in attendance, as it was calculated on a different basis at the time of the last inspection. Unauthorised absences are below the national average. The majority of pupils come to school and into classes on time and most lessons commence promptly. Internal attendance at individual sessions is also satisfactory and the school has very little internal truancy. The school has no unexplained long term absentees.
20. The very good attitudes, behaviour and personal development of the pupils and their satisfactory attendance at the school contribute very significantly to the high achievement in their learning.

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

21. At the time of the last inspection, teaching was described as sound with very little which was unsatisfactory. It is still the case that there is very little which is unsatisfactory. The overall quality of teaching, however, is significantly better now than it was five years ago. Much more is very good and some is excellent. The improvements which have taken place are partly as a result of improved leadership by heads of department, who undertake a significant programme of monitoring to check on what is happening in their subjects.
22. More than four out of every five lessons are well taught. Almost half is very well taught. One of the most important features of this very good picture is the determination and drive to succeed shown by many teachers, for example in English and mathematics. Teaching is very good overall in some subjects, for example in music and art.
23. Teachers prepare their lessons very well and there is great consistency between teachers within the same subject. The result is that pupils know what is expected of them, and that they will be expected to concentrate and work hard to achieve success. Target-setting, for example, is an important tool by which teachers drive up standards, by making short term and medium term goals clear to pupils and relevant to current work.
24. Most teachers are very well informed and well qualified within the subjects that they are required to teach, and this benefits pupils considerably. They are able to draw on their subject knowledge to extend pupils' learning, for example in geography and history. Teachers also show good knowledge of National Curriculum requirements and they are generally very thoughtful about how to implement changes. They make good links for Year 7 pupils with the work they have done in their primary schools. In the small proportion of lessons where teachers are teaching subjects that are not their main responsibility, there is generally no deleterious effect on pupils' learning. However, occasionally, the deployment of non-specialist teachers reduces the overall effectiveness of the lesson and pupils who have high attainment in the subject or a special talent are insufficiently challenged and some of the lower achieving pupils are not as well supported as they could be.
25. In general, pupils with special educational needs are well taught and considerable effort goes into planning lessons which meet their needs well. There is some adaptation of lesson plans to extend the highest attaining pupils and this provision is satisfactory, but opportunities are sometimes missed to enable them to deepen their knowledge and understanding, whether in the classroom or through work at home.
26. The characteristics of the best teaching overall are:
  - planning which ensures that pupils with special educational needs are challenged but can work and learn effectively and develop and reinforce their knowledge and skills;
  - planning which recognises the progressive nature of most subjects and encourages pupils to build on previous learning productively by regular reference back and forwards;
  - the ability to include all pupils in discussion, enabling them to develop independent views



- about their work and evaluate their own success;
  - very good relationships between teachers and pupils, which result in a high level of trust and improved learning. Pupils are managed very well and unobtrusively in almost all lessons;
  - very challenging questioning which encourages pupils to think more deeply about information supplied and become more confident in putting together their replies;
  - a good range of activities which motivates and interests pupils to work hard throughout the lessons;
  - regular and careful marking with feedback to pupils which explains further what they have not understood and guides them as to how to improve;
  - very good pace and momentum to the lessons, so that pupils' learning moves onwards and there is no time wasted;
  - good use of book and paper resources to back up teachers' presentations;
  - demonstration is used well to explain and deepen understanding;
  - good use of homework to reinforce what has been done in class, and often to prepare for a further stage;
  - the creation of opportunities for pupils to set their own agenda and take some control of the course of their own learning, adding to their sense of achievement.
27. The use of assessment to help pupils learn is generally good. Work is frequently discussed in the context of National Curriculum levels, for example, in mathematics lessons, with the result that pupils are aware of their own current levels and what they have to do to improve a level or a grade in GCSE. This was noticeable in guidance as to how to revise in preparation for GCSE examinations, so that pupils could use revision time outside school as profitably as possible.
28. Teachers have introduced the National Literacy Strategy well, within and beyond the formal teaching of English, and have taken very good advantage of the opportunities for training and awareness raising to use the strategy to improve their teaching generally. The result is that pupils' accuracy in reading, writing and spelling is improving and there are some good opportunities for pupils to practise writing extended prose. There are some good pieces of extended writing, on earthquakes for example. Work in Year 8 on tourism encourages pupils to speak and discuss their ideas.
29. The teaching aspects of the National Numeracy Strategy are implemented well within mathematics, but this is not the case across the full curriculum. Opportunities to use and support numeracy are not as well developed as is literacy. The support and use of numeracy are not yet widespread outside the mathematics lessons. There is an increasing awareness, however, of the changes for Years 7 to 9 across the school as a whole and a literacy and numeracy group has been created, led by a co-ordinator and supported by assistants. The heads of English and mathematics provide guidance. Initial in-service training for the development of numeracy, for example, focused upon mental mathematics skills, speaking about mathematics and data handling, for each of which other subjects are planning significant contributions.
30. Inadequate resources hinder further development in the teaching and learning across the curriculum of ICT, although progress has been good in this regard in English and very good in music. In English, pupils use relevant software packages from Year 7 onwards and this helps them to develop their skills in word processing, illustration, tabloid-style news reports, research on the Internet and the use of email. In music, ICT is a regular feature of all lessons, and the quality of composition is as a result higher than average. Teachers are also enabled to track pupils' progress very well and adapt what they do through the use of relevant software. Teachers in most subjects have undertaken training in the use of ICT to further learning, but many have not yet written their detailed intentions into their routine schemes of work and lesson plans, because of a lack of appropriate software and access to computers.

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

31. There have been some improvements in curriculum since the time of the last inspection, in particular with regard to the provision for religious education, which now meets statutory requirements. The new courses in religious education are proving very popular. There has been some enrichment for the highest attaining pupils in mathematics in Years 10 and 11, for example,

where statistics, additional mathematics and calculus are available as required to challenge and extend pupils appropriately. All pupils also have the opportunity to study two foreign languages, French and German, from Year 9 onwards, although few take both languages through to GCSE. This represents a missed opportunity, since the amount of time available in Years 10 and 11 for the compulsory language course is sufficient to enable the highest attaining pupils to take two languages as a matter of course. The school is now reviewing this with a view to increasing the number of the highest attaining pupils who study two languages from September 2002.

32. The school successfully builds on pupils' experience in their primary schools, with which it has good curriculum links, especially in physical education. Parents praised transition arrangements. The arrangements for grouping pupils by attainment operate successfully and contribute to pupils' ability to work successfully in each subject, because their specific learning needs are well met. However, most other opportunities to extend the highest attaining pupils occur outside the classroom based curriculum, and there is scope for more enrichment and adaptation of tasks set in the usual lessons.
33. There has been good work on introducing the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies in Years 7 to 9. The provision of support succeeds in improving pupils' literacy and numeracy, for example, through pupils receiving regular help with reading during morning tutor times and by working on an intensive special programme of computer based learning to boost their basic skills. The methods of teaching developed within the National Strategy are now beginning to be used more widely, for example in mathematics teaching in Years 10 and 11.
34. However, whilst much of the curriculum planning which is evident in the timetable and organisation of pupils' work is good, and meets statutory requirements, there are still some notable areas of deficiency which make curriculum unsatisfactory overall. Some of these were highlighted at the time of the last inspection and have not sufficiently improved although they have in part been addressed. In particular, the lack of adequate provision for all pupils in ICT is serious, particularly in Years 10 and 11. This is being addressed by the introduction of a GNVQ course, intended eventually for all, into Year 9. This successful course leads to a recognised qualification at the end of Year 11. The school has decided it can only introduce it in a phased way, because of the implications for the cost of the number of computers needed. It will, therefore, still be two more years before all pupils receive their full statutory entitlement to a course in ICT from the ages of 11 to 16.
35. The curriculum for Years 7 to 9 contains a further breach of the statutory National Curriculum requirements, in design and technology. Although well supported and successful courses are provided from the ages of 11 to 16, as required, the range of these courses is relatively narrow, and the materials in which pupils can develop their design and technology skills are too limited. There is insufficient opportunity to use resistant materials in the design and make process, which in turn limits pupils' skills when they come to GCSE examinations.
36. The contribution the subjects make to pupils' skills in ICT is not adequate and not sufficiently co-ordinated across the school. Some subjects are beginning to write into their planning opportunities for pupils to apply their learning in ICT, but this is not consistent, and many do not do enough. There is good work underway in English and music but little in other subjects where the National Curriculum requires it to be developed.
37. Drama is taught only in Years 10 and 11 as a separate subject, where it is popular. However, there are fewer opportunities than would normally be the case for pupils to be introduced formally to drama between the ages of 11 and 14. A very active drama club makes good provision for some pupils' interest in drama, but cannot compensate to all for this lack of opportunity.
38. The timetable, available accommodation and recent staffing pressures result in some split classes, where two teachers have to share the teaching between them, with the associated risk of overlap or omission in the course programmes. Heads of departments cope with these eventualities very well, producing materials to bridge gaps and ensure that all teachers are familiar with course structures, even if they only teach a class for one period in a fortnight. However, when classes are not only split, but have teachers not qualified in the relevant subject, there is a further pressure to ensure that the curriculum is well covered. In general, subjects cope well with this additional pressure, but this is not uniformly the case. As the school grows further over the next

few years, as is anticipated, the problem of how to avoid split classes will become more difficult, if only because of the pressure on specialist accommodation.

39. In Years 10 and 11, a recently introduced course for a small number of pupils, who are finding the traditional GCSE based provision inappropriate to their needs, enables them to experience a range of vocationally orientated work to which they have adapted well. The course includes some work experience, which has improved their general attitude to learning, and courses at a college of further education where they are developing work related skills. The provision of a single award science course for these pupils is appropriate and enables them to acquire a science qualification whilst also concentrating on improving their basic skills. They attend school to obtain qualifications in English, mathematics, science and ICT, and their success rate so far indicates that this provision strikes the right balance to assist their development.
40. The recent curriculum review, to be implemented from September 2002 has addressed most of the issues highlighted above. Other issues which it has sought to resolve include the provision of more time in Year 8 for languages and art, and for English and religious education in Year 7. For English, mathematics and science in Year 7, there will be smaller classes in 2002; currently some classes are very large, and too large for practical work to take place in the accommodation available. Adjustments to the option system will also benefit students by improving the frequency of their lessons over the two-week cycle. Viable solutions to the timetabling problems that these issues present have been found. The review has also found solutions to the problems of deploying staff efficiently across the curriculum and avoiding split classes in the future.
41. The school creates many very good opportunities for enrichment of the curriculum outside lessons. In history, opportunities for fieldwork are good. When possible, theatre trips are organised. There is a regular programme of sporting and musical activity which provides pupils with the chance to relax and to understand how to compete, as well as offering them access to lifelong interests. The programme of music, including instrumental tuition, is very good and there is a high take-up. The wide range of extra-curricular activities motivates pupils and helps them improve their work. For example, most subjects provide extra classes, known as 'clinics', in the lunchtimes and after school and these focus on helping pupils to sort out learning difficulties at all levels of complexity. These sessions are open to all pupils and undoubtedly contribute to pupils' examination successes.
42. The provision for pupils' personal development is very good. A well-established programme of personal, social and health education, taught by a specialist team integrates the school's effective approach to careers education and citizenship. Links with local colleges are very good and visiting speakers explain well to pupils what is involved in the transition from secondary school to further education at the age of 16. It provides opportunities for an extended health education programme which parents praised. The way in which the programme is organised enables teachers to deal sensitively with what for some pupils may be difficult issues. The PSHE programme also pulls together effectively the school's approach to health, sex and drugs education, for which policies are well thought out.
43. The school makes very good provision for social and moral education, with many opportunities for pupils to develop and express creatively a sense of self and a sense of community. There are many opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for themselves and for others, and the prefect system, for example, shows pupils at their best, helping and supporting others. They also gain opportunities to develop skills in public speaking, dealing with adults in a variety of contexts and they raise funds for worthy causes. The contribution to organising this provision made by the heads of department and heads of year is very considerable. Parents praised their dedication.
44. There has been considerable improvement in the school's provision for pupils' spiritual development since the time of the last inspection. A well-written policy about spiritual development has led to good, and sometimes outstanding, thought-provoking assemblies, worthwhile sessions during form period, and creative lesson planning. There are many more visitors to school who bring their own perspective on spiritual and moral issues and air these with pupils, often provoking interested reactions and much discussion. These have all done much to improve pupils' opportunities for reflection on their own values and achievement and the position, beliefs and attitudes of others. One regular visitor to the school recounted his view that 'creativity in the performing arts partners spiritual support'.

45. There has been good improvement in terms of what is done to broaden pupils' understandings of the nature of our society and how it is changing. Cultural events in school, visits and journeys are a well-planned and important addition to pupils' general activities. Recently, the school has organised activities on racism in football, disability, religious prejudice and prejudice in school and on the Holocaust, in order to broaden pupils' horizons and make them more self-aware. Pupils raise funds for worthy causes, when they have had the opportunity to link into work being done in the school by visitors. Hence in 2001, they raised a significant amount of money for street children in Rumania. There is still more room for pupils to experience other cultures, although good work is done in art, history, English literature and music to introduce pupils to other world-wide cultures and heritages.
46. The provision for pupils with special educational needs, statemented and otherwise, is good. Their lessons are planned and adjusted so as to provide effectively the learning opportunities that match pupils' needs. How pupils are grouped in key subjects is carefully considered, which leads to the best match of teaching. The team of classroom support assistants contributes their own expertise and knowledge of targeted pupils in lessons and adds considerably towards creating the good conditions for pupils to thrive.

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

47. The school has very good procedures for child protection and ensuring pupils' welfare. Both aspects have improved upon the high standards already existing at the previous inspection and are a strength of the school.
48. The head teacher leads the well trained, named, child protection team, which includes the deputy and assistant head teachers and all heads of year. They in turn have also ensured that all staff have been rigorously briefed. The school has a very good liaison with the local social services and police child protection team. All incidents are recorded in detail and any relevant documentation is securely locked away. There is a detailed written policy supporting the work of these teachers.
49. The school's well trained health and safety officer, ably supported by the relevant Governor, Project Manager and site supervisory staff, have ensured up-to-date risk assessments for the whole school. All fire fighting, physical educational and portable electrical equipment is date tested. The school holds regular, well documented, fire exercises and alarm bell tests and all escape routes are accessible and well marked. A detailed and clearly written policy backs up all these relevant procedures.
50. The school has caring procedures for dealing with and appropriately recording and reporting accidents. There is a specific policy on the administration of medicines and several, well trained first aid staff. However, currently, there is no specific medical room. The school makes very good use of outside professional help such as the educational psychologist and dentist. The local police come in regularly and contribute towards the personal, social and health education programme by discussing alcohol and drug abuse. Very good lunches are cooked, served and consumed, on the premises and in very hygienic conditions.
51. On transfer from primary school and to further education all pupils have substantial, caring support. Links with primary schools are good, and in some subject areas, such as physical education and swimming, they are very good.
52. There are good procedures for monitoring pupils' academic performance. Heads of year have a very good grasp of pupils' progress and needs. They are careful to convey to all teachers any special circumstances affecting individual pupils and to monitor how these may affect their work and progress. The detail of care and support for pupils' academic progress is very good overall, as are the very good links with pupils' homes. Some departments are using information provided by the school's senior managers about pupils' individual progress and academic background very well. These teachers adapt their programmes of study to make sure that they meet pupils' changing needs.

53. The school is very clear in its commitment to helping all of its pupils and has the supportive climate in which to achieve this for pupils with learning difficulties. The regular monitoring of their progress in each subject ensures the priority of their needs is kept to the fore in each department and at the level of senior managers. There are well-established and effective procedures linking to primary schools that smooth the way for new pupils and maintain whatever additional support is required to continue meeting their learning needs.
54. Teachers are well-informed about pupils with special educational needs and hold the individual education plans for those pupils who require them. The school has a very good provision for supporting Year 10 and 11 pupils, some of who have special educational needs and who are at risk of being excluded because of their behaviour in lessons. It is centred on a designated classroom and provides constant adult support throughout the school day. Its climate is extremely positive and one greatly valued by the few pupils authorised to use it. They have the option of withdrawing themselves from lessons to avoid conflict and use this option maturely. The atmosphere is one of high expectations and pupils carry on the lesson work they would otherwise miss with high levels of concentration and effort. Some of the pupils take a vocational education course provided here and based on independent learning styles, which leads towards several levels of accreditation.
55. Where an individual education plan is agreed for a pupil, this is often set out clearly, giving the context of the special educational needs and sound advice on how teachers might deal with these in lessons. In one plan, for example, teachers are recommended to produce written notes for a pupil who has difficulty copying and goes on to suggest another pupil read these notes to him. By doing so the pupil is kept involved and helped considerably to keep pace with the rest of the class. However, the targets for what pupils should achieve over a period of time are not written in sufficiently clear cut terms, stating broad aims such as 'improve spelling' rather than what precise improvement in spelling is being sought. In addition, the review of pupils' progress towards their targets is completed once annually, which is too infrequent and is less than the school's policy on special educational needs requires.
56. Attendance routines at the school and procedures for improving them are very good. The school has computerised attendance system for all classes, which is checked and returned morning and afternoon for the school office staff to record. All tutors also complete regular registration at individual lessons. The office staff makes very quick contact with home for any unusual absences and all parents are well aware of their relevant responsibilities. The school has a very secure lateness routine and very good relationships with the local educational welfare officer.
57. There are very good procedures at the school for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and eliminating any behaviour of an oppressive nature. The school's detailed written policy contains realistic rewards, awards and sanctions, which are well known by all pupils and staff. Pupils keenly seek rewards, such as specific trips out, special assembly certificates and the head teacher's award. The report procedure for bad behaviour and loss of privileges is very secure and works effectively. The school has a separate written policy for bullying. Although bullying is rarely a problem in the school, pupils during the inspection made it clear that they are encouraged through special assemblies and during personal, social and health education lessons to report any potential incidents to an adult. All teachers are also experts at recognising difficulties and dealing with them quickly. Any ongoing situations are soon reported to parents.
58. Procedures at the school for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are good. The school's extensive personal, social and health education curriculum tries to ensure that all pupils leave the school as well rounded and responsible citizens. Pupils are given considerable confidence about how to compete within an ever-increasingly complex world. They are continuously assessed and told how well they are coping and details are recorded in their individual files. By Year 10 and on into Year 11, pupils have managed to build up a considerable Record of Achievement file containing such items as certificates, gained both in and out of school, commendations and curriculum vitae.
59. Tarleton High School provides a very caring and secure atmosphere within which pupils can learn and achieve of their very best.

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

60. Parents at the pre-inspection meeting, discussion with parent-governors and returned questionnaires made it clear that the vast majority of them believe that they have chosen a very good school for their child. They indicate high levels of support and satisfaction for what the school is doing. In particular, many parents stated that the school has high expectations of their child, the teaching is good, their child is making good progress and is being helped to become mature and responsible. A small minority felt that the school did not provide enough homework or a sufficient range of activities outside of school. The inspection can concur with the positive views but not the negative ones. Homework and extra-curricular provision were both found to be very good.
61. The school provides good information for its parents. When their child starts school each parent receives a copy of the prospectus and the current version complies with all statutory requirements. However, the existing Governors' Report to parents has minor omissions of which the school is now well aware. Each term the school sends out an interim report on each child and a full one at the end of the summer. The latter, although appreciated by parents does not, consistently and clearly, say what pupils can do within each subject and also, what their targets are. There is a popular newsletter published at regular intervals and easy access to the headteacher and staff. Regular open evenings are put on for each year tutor team for parents. Each parent has received a copy of both the homework and behaviour policies and a home school agreement. All parents appreciate their child's home/school diaries which form an effective two-way contact with the school.
62. The contribution that the parents make to their children's learning at school and at home is very good and another strength. Considerable numbers of parents help with visits out of school, sporting events, school social events and plays or concerts, the latter by making costumes and scenery. Where pupils have extra-curricular events, in the evenings and at weekends, groups of parents have got together and arranged private transport home by sharing lifts. Most parents are very interested in their children's homework and help with projects, topics and also arrange visits out to enhance, for example, their child's history or geography studies. The impact of parents' involvement on the work of the school is very good and a strength. The school is indebted to its very energetic and enthusiastic Friends of Tarleton High School. Over the years the latter has raised considerable sums of money from arranging various social events and sponsors, which have gone towards, amongst many other resources and events, computer equipment and the school minibus.
63. The effectiveness of the school's links with its parents is welcomed by the school and such close and successful ties help extensively towards the success of the pupils' learning. These links also compare well with those seen at the previous inspection.

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

64. The school is very well led by a talented and dedicated headteacher. The school's governors, headteacher, senior managers, staff – teaching and non-teaching – share a common vision for the school, within which the maintenance of high standards, academic and social, behaviour and commitment to the school, prevail. There is a clear direction for the work and development of the school and this is instrumental in channelling the efforts of the pupils and staff towards success and achievement in learning. The school's values of academic rigour, combined with care for the individual, result in each pupil being valued, working hard and being encouraged to identify his or her strengths and build upon them. There is clearly the capacity and determination for the school to continue to improve. Improvement since the time of the last inspection has been good, and some aspects of improvement have been very good.
65. All of these qualities and values are evident in the daily life of the school. They are a feature of the very good leadership and management provided by the headteacher and key staff, which visitors quickly recognise in the school's general atmosphere and in its high standards. Despite the difficulties created by inappropriate and insufficient accommodation, the school is a cheerful and welcoming place in which there is effective teaching and learning, and the working relationships are very good. Systems for managing the school, such as tracking pupil progress, operate

effectively. The staff have successfully adopted the principles of 'best value' as laid out by the Audit Commission to compare how well the school is doing in achieving cost effective operations. Its performance compares well with similar schools and the school gives good value for money. The use of statistical information to assess how well the school is doing is good.

66. The governing body gives good support to the school and holds it firmly to account. There is a high level of trust between governors and senior managers. The committee structure works well: committees are business-like and no time is wasted. Governors' priorities are well thought out and they are well informed. The minutes and conduct of their meetings show a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, including of their own statutory responsibilities, and a considered concern about the pace of change which the school can successfully sustain. Their oversight of curriculum and financial matters is thorough.
67. Governors responded well to criticisms in the last inspection report, and in particular, ensured that the school provided as required for religious education. They have closely followed the introduction of citizenship and the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. They have debated at length how to meet statutory requirements for ICT provision. However, they have not yet, despite recent heavy investment in computer equipment, ensured the provision of adequate opportunities for all pupils in ICT. They are working closely with parents and their 'Friends of Tarleton' to rectify this situation.
68. The governing body is also active in promoting the school's interests with the LEA as regards improving the accommodation in some buildings in the school. Recent building, which provides high quality accommodation for music, for example, contrasts strongly with the remainder of the accommodation, which is in short supply, and is not coping with the school's growth, which is set to continue. Accommodation for physical education is particularly unsatisfactory as it inhibits pupils' opportunities and limits the range and balance of the curriculum. There are too few science laboratories to meet the needs of pupils for practical scientific investigations. Some classrooms are cramped or unsuited to their present purposes, and in very poor condition. Staff, teaching and non-teaching, make every effort to ensure that they remain attractive, but there is too little space in some to allow for use of audio-visual aids, and group work and role play is difficult. Despite the efforts of staff, this is a very poor aspect of provision for the school.
69. In terms of financial planning, standards of oversight are very good. Governors' support in dealing with the problems related to the delegated responsibility for the running of the swimming pool has resulted in a successful overhaul of the ways in which it operates. It no longer causes a drain on school resources and covers its own costs, as well as promoting further the very good links with local primary schools and community groups.
70. The school is very good at monitoring its own performance, in particular in relation to general trends in pupil performance. In consultation with the governors and its LEA, the school has set challenging but achievable targets. In each of the last three years, there has been steady improvement in academic results and targets have been exceeded. At various points through the year, governors have checked on the school's progress, using any of a number of well-designed systems to hold the school to account. Target-setting for pupils is well established. Parents are fully involved in this and many commented on its beneficial effects on their children. Subject teachers and heads of year regularly review targets. They contribute well to pupils' understanding of how to improve their work. Departmental targets are an important part of the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning. Senior staff effectively monitor progress.
71. There is a very effective cycle of planning in which all staff, teaching and non-teaching, are fully involved and this is one of the means by which the leadership team and the governors have been able to raise the school's sights. The priorities in the school's development plan are well chosen, as the recent curriculum review shows. This addresses for the forthcoming school year two major outstanding areas of development for the school – pupils' entitlement to a taught course in ICT and the implementation of National Curriculum requirements in design and technology.
72. In parallel, working closely with governors and parents, staff have responded to changing curriculum requirements and the criticisms in the last inspection report. The school is investing its limited resources into hardware to support courses and investigating many routes to accelerate the process of improving provision and accommodation. Specific grants are well used to support

curriculum developments such as the National Numeracy Strategy. However, in establishing its development priorities, maintaining staffing at its present level and coping with the growth in the school's population associated with its popularity, the school has an inadequate contingency left for emergencies or to improve its accommodation and resources. The costs of replacing dangerous windows and removing asbestos have eaten into the school's already limited reserves

73. In most subjects, resources are adequate and in music, they are very good. However, resources are unsatisfactory overall because the library is inadequate to meet the needs of the school's increased population, English lacks the range of text books and fiction which would encourage broad reading and challenge the reading choices of the highest attaining pupils. Design and technology has insufficient space and equipment to offer the required courses in resistant materials.
74. Overall, the management of special educational needs provision is good. The school has a clear commitment to supporting all of its pupils and this strongly affirmed in its policy for special educational needs. It is also manifest in the effective work of the special educational needs co-ordinator in terms of the identification and assessment of pupils with learning difficulties and managing provision. She has done well to maintain the good progress made by pupils seen at the time of the last inspection and to improve their progress in Year 10 and 11. Pupils with statements of special educational needs are well supported, but their records are reviewed only annually, and this is not sufficiently frequently to ensure that their progress is good overall.
75. Special educational needs provision is organised well, particularly by the regular communications regarding pupils with special educational needs in departments and at senior management level. The co-ordinator also meets regularly with classroom support assistants to discuss these pupils. The support assistants work very effectively as a team in planning their work with pupils and are closely involved with teachers in preparing lessons. Special educational needs provision is well-staffed. The co-ordinator has sufficient time for managing this complex and demanding aspect of the school's work. The considerable burden of maintaining records and producing reports is lifted significantly by the administrative assistant.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

76. Governors, headteacher and staff should improve this already good school by ensuring that all aspects of its provision meet statutory requirements and support continued improvement in learning. (NB Most of the issues identified below are already in the school's thorough development plan.)
- (1) Improve the provision for ICT, by:
- ◆ Making best use of the available hardware and software
  - ◆ Investing further as soon as funds allow
  - ◆ Ensuring that all subjects contribute to improving pupils' skills in ICT
  - ◆ Ensuring that all pupils have access to an ICT course throughout both key stages.
- (See paragraphs 5, 30, 34, 36, 67, 71, 86, 88, 109, 124, 143, 155, 157-159, 166-167, 174)
- (2) Ensure that all pupils have their full entitlement to the elements of the required National Curriculum design and technology programme in Key Stage 3, by making possible access to work in resistant materials, particularly to 'making' in metals.
- (See paragraphs 35, 71, 126, 127)
- (3) Continue to plan to improve on the quality of accommodation.
- (See paragraphs 65, 68, 72, 102, 114, 135, 156, 185, 191, 198)
- (4) Improve resources in support of learning, especially concentrating on the provision of reading books which cover the needs of pupils of all attainment, developing the library



stock and providing textbooks in science and design and technology.

(See paragraphs 9, 73, 88, 131)

- (5) Improve the frequency with which the records of pupils with statements of special educational needs are reviewed and their individual education plans adapted.

(See paragraphs 55, 74)

77. The school may also wish to reconsider its deployment of teaching staff outside their own specialist teaching areas, in order to ensure the further development of consistently high standards of teaching at all times (See paragraphs 24, 38, 40, 170).
78. A further area for the school's consideration is the provision in lessons for the highest attaining pupils, which, although satisfactory and often good, could still extend them further (See paragraphs 25, 31, 32).

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed

127

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

62

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	4	52	53	17	1	0	0
Percentage	3.1	40.9	41.7	13.4	0.8	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

#### Pupils on the school's roll

Y7 – Y11

Number of pupils on the school's roll

726

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

46

#### Special educational needs

Y7 – Y11

Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs

22

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

77

#### English as an additional language

No of pupils

Number of pupils with English as an additional language

0

#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

No of pupils

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

12

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

15

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.6
National comparative data	8.1

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.5
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	72	58	130

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	49	57	55
	Girls	53	44	43
	Total	102	101	98
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	78 (66)	78 (78)	75 (72)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	52 (33)	47 (50)	39 (33)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	47	59	49
	Girls	49	47	41
	Total	96	106	90
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	74 (76)	82 (78)	69 (65)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	30 (43)	53 (49)	35 (36)
	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	74	75	149

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	44	62	74
	Girls	55	71	75
	Total	99	133	149
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	67 (67)	94 (97)	100 (99)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	45.4
	National	39

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

<b>Vocational qualifications</b>		<b>Number</b>	<b>% success rate</b>
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	0	N/a
	National		N/a

### **Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	5
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	716
Any other minority ethnic group	5

### **Teachers and classes**

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	39.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	278

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74.8
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	24.6
Key Stage 4	23.9

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	12.7
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	9

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Exclusions in the last school year**

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	44	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

### **Financial information**

Financial year	2001-2002
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	£
Total income	2,061,500
Total expenditure	2,051,514
Expenditure per pupil	2861
Balance brought forward from previous year	-1483
Balance carried forward to next year	8503

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	726
Number of questionnaires returned	401

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	27	60	9	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	43	51	3	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	38	52	5	1	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	23	57	14	4	1
The teaching is good.	35	57	2	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	45	45	7	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	52	41	4	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	66	33	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	35	50	10	1	4
The school is well led and managed.	43	46	4	1	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	39	53	5	1	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	33	49	10	1	6

## 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 **very good**.

#### Strengths

- Standards in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Years 9 and 11 are high and have improved, with sustained performance, since the last inspection.
- There is consistently very good teaching, which drives pupils to achieve a high standard.
- Exceptionally good leadership and management provide a clear direction for teamwork and the growth and development of the department.
- The department has made a good response to developing the literacy strategy and has been selected as a lead English department for the Local Education Authority (LEA).
- Procedures for using assessments are very good, so that pupils know and understand their targets for improvement.

#### Areas for improvement

- More rigorous use of assessment data to monitor and chart pupils' progress
- Increasing the focus throughout the school on the writing process, in particular, editing and proof-reading
- Improving the quantity and quality of resources, including literary and non-literary texts in all year groups, the use of ICT and assessing its use in English

79. Attainment in English is high at the end of Year 9. In 2001, standards in the National Curriculum tests for 14 years olds were well above the national average and the average for schools with a similar intake. Over 50 per cent of pupils reached the higher levels with a number reaching level 8. There was a slight dip in 2000, but the remarking of papers resulted in levels being raised. Overall, pupils' record has been one of sustained performance. Girls do slightly better than boys but overall, boys achieve above the national average for boys. English results in the national tests were better than those in mathematics and science. Their achievement in the subject is very good and pupils with special educational needs make good progress. For example, a boy who entered the school with level 3 in the National Curriculum test in Year 7, made rapid progress throughout Years 7 to 9 and achieved level 6 at the end of Year 9 in the National Curriculum test. Pupils achieve well as a result of the good use of the National Literacy Strategy and the very good teaching, which takes place in all year groups.
80. The 2001 GCSE results were above the national average in English and average in English literature. The proportion of pupils achieving A\*-G grades was not significantly different from the national average. Pupils performed better in English but a higher proportion of pupils, mostly girls, achieved the top grades A\*-A in English literature. There was a slight dip on previous years' results and inspection evidence indicates that aspects of pupils' writing affect results. Pupils' performance in English and English literature was below that of mathematics and science and some of the foundation subjects. The gap between boys and girls is narrowing; however, more girls achieve the higher grades. Achievement is good by the end of Year 11.
81. Speaking and listening skills are very good with some excellent features. Pupils articulate their views clearly and confidently and show alertness and willingness to take part in all oral work. By the end of Year 9, they are adept at taking part in question and answer sessions and using talk to explore their learning. The higher attaining pupils use Standard English efficiently and draw on a wide vocabulary. For instance, in their discussion on persuasive techniques, pupils gave sustained answers when promoting their views. Stated pupils and pupils with a special educational need do not shy away from taking part in discussion and use technical terms competently. They excel in discussion work, and demonstrate independent thinking as seen in the perceptive comments when making their pronouncements on the social messages in Russell's *Our Day Out*. In addition, pupils in all year groups show sensitivity and respect when listening to less fluent speakers. The high attaining Year 10 and 11 pupils demonstrate the good communication skills necessary to work effectively collaboratively and give feedback.

82. Standards in reading are above average for most pupils and well above for the higher attaining pupils. Lower attaining pupils including those on the special needs register reach satisfactory standards in reading and analysing literary texts. Pupils in all year groups are taught to read critically and respond appropriately to texts. The higher attaining pupils in Years 7 to 9 make extensive notes and give sustained responses with reference to aspects of language and themes as seen in the Year 8 pupils' work on '*Pigeons*' by Kell and '*Polar Bear*'. By the end of Year 9, the higher and most average attaining pupils begin to use textual evidence to support their personal response as seen in their work on *Twelfth Night* and *Macbeth*. These pupils have an increasing understanding of the use of language to bring out meanings. The lower attaining pupils taking part in the 'Catch-Up' Programme make good progress in their reading and begin to use key phrases and relevant information to support their view. The achievement of lower attaining Year 9 pupils is best illustrated by their work on *Macbeth*. For example, these pupils gave focused exploration of the themes in the set scenes for the test and used materials from a range of sources to make booklets and revision notes for a younger audience. By the end of Year 11, pupils read critically and discussion work shows a good grasp of themes, plot and events. In particular, they give alternative interpretations; the in depth oral response of lower attaining pupils is not conveyed in their written work and some middle attaining pupils retell rather than criticise. Similarly, the higher attaining pupils do not maintain a consistent approach to giving a sophisticated analytical voice and this prevents them from gaining the top grades of A\* and A in the English literature examination.
83. Attainment in writing is good for most pupils and satisfactory for most of the remainder, including some lower attaining pupils. Pupils write for a range of purposes and audiences. The higher attaining pupils are assured writers. They use a wide vocabulary and in most cases, their written response is detailed as seen in the Year 7 synopsis of a play script. By the end of Years 9 and 11, essays are well structured and organised and technical features are generally accurate. The lower attaining pupils, including those with a special educational need, make good use of their draft books to plan and draft their work and they use writing frames to organise their work. The standard of their written work improves when they use ICT as they make use of spelling and grammatical tools as well as dictionaries and thesauri in the drafting and editing process. However, there are weaknesses in spelling and the inconsistent use of basic technical features. Middle attaining pupils tend to make careless errors, which mar their work, notably punctuation, spelling and grammatical errors and this hinders their overall achievement. Pupils do not routinely use all steps in the writing process in particular, editing and proof-reading. They rely on their teachers to identify their mistakes.
84. Overall, the quality of teaching is consistently very good in all year groups and is a major strength of the department. It is rarely only good. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge and expertise to prepare pupils well for the public and national examinations and this is reflected in the high achievement of pupils in Year 9 and the good GCSE examination results in Year 11. They challenge and support pupils very well and an impressive feature is the high expectations of behaviour and work of all pupils. Intensive teaching and support is therefore tailored to the needs of pupils based on the teachers' understanding of how pupils of different abilities learn. They work hard to use methods and resources to match pupils' needs, thus enabling pupils with learning difficulties to have access to the curriculum.
85. Teachers drive pupils to achieve a high standard by insisting on accurate interpretation and commitment to succeed in the subject. This approach encourages pupils to work hard on both class and their homework. In lessons with very good and excellent features, the pace is extremely brisk, planning for progression dominates as teachers take pupils through a number of activities that heighten their knowledge of literary interpretation, vocabulary and language. For example, in a lesson with high attaining Year 10 pupils, the teacher's insistence on high quality reading as well as the very clear and direct exposition of the loaded language in *Romeo and Juliet*. This fully prepared the pupils well for the task of preparing and arguing their defence statement on the fight in the opening scene. Sequential planning underpins each lesson and objectives as well as learning outcomes are shared with pupils. The learning support staff work productively with statemented pupils and pupils with a special educational need. They help pupils to make very good gains through modelling answers, supervising and chivvying them along as an extension of the classroom teacher. Marking is very detailed and provides pupils with a wealth of guidance on how to improve their work. There is a tendency for teachers to rely on the setting



arrangement as the main means of meeting pupils' needs.

86. The curriculum is appropriate and relevant to the needs of all pupils and good provision is in place for statemented pupils to take the GCSE language examination and a further vocational English course. However, there is scope for identifying the gifted and talented pupils in all year groups and making explicit provision for them. The department, as a Leading Department on literacy in the LEA, is presently revising the schemes of work to reflect the changes in the curriculum. ICT as well as numeracy skills are built into schemes of work providing pupils with the opportunity to experience and extend their key technology skills. However, there are no arrangements for assessing ICT in English. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 study texts from other literary heritages but there are fewer opportunities for this in Years 7 to 9. The provision for extra-curricular extension is good and includes activities such as working with visiting poets, theatre trips and working with the local church.
87. The timetabling arrangements are the result of a shortage of specialist teachers and in consequence, some classes in Years 7 and 8 are split. Although the department has taken action to minimise this, there remain some issues of equality of opportunity and access in relation to teaching and learning.
88. The leadership and management of the department are exceptionally good. The head of department has a clear vision of what needs to be done to raise standards and is ably supported by a core team of experienced teachers. The vision for the department is outlined in the development plan and there are good arrangements for staff development. The arrangements for assessing pupils' academic progress are very good, as are the procedures for monitoring teaching and learning. However, the department is poorly equipped and resourced to deliver and assess information and communication technology in English. There is a severe shortage of computers and technical resources. There are also insufficient textbooks to ensure that pupils are given the right kind of resources to challenge them. The shortage of challenging texts has resulted in a strain on the budget, as special materials have to be prepared. The accommodation is barely adequate for some of the very large classes of thirty-four or more pupils. This limits the use of audio-visual aids such as the overhead projector and drama work in lessons.
89. The department has made very good progress since the last inspection. Standards are now well above the national average and above the national averages in Years 9 and 11, respectively. The gap between boys and girls has narrowed and boys achieve above the national average for boys. Each aspect of English is fully covered and there is emphasis on using talk to explore learning. Critical reading and interpretation are encouraged and pupils produce a range of writing. Attitudes and behaviour are very good and schemes of work reflect the statutory requirements. The department, overall, is a strength of the school.

## MATHEMATICS

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

### Strengths

- By Year 11, all pupils make good progress and some make very good progress.
- Examination and test results are above average.
- Long, medium and short term planning is very effective and takes good account of prior attainment. It has a tight focus on what pupils need to do to succeed.
- Checking on pupils' progress makes a significant contribution to raising standards.
- Teachers have high expectations and a collective drive to improve upon their previous best.
- The National Numeracy Strategy is well implemented and is having a beneficial impact on teaching and learning in mathematics.
- The leadership provided by the head of department is very good.

### Areas for improvement

- Ensuring that the highest attaining pupils do as well as they could.
- Increasing the use of ICT in teaching mathematics.
- Monitoring teaching and learning to spread the best practice within the department.
- Extending the Key Stage 3 National Strategy for teaching mathematics across the curriculum.

90. In mathematics, by the time they leave, all pupils do well or very well compared to their attainment on entry to the school. Results have improved over the last four years.
91. By the age of 14, pupils attain above the national average in comparison with all schools, and in line with similar schools. Pupils with special educational needs and below average attainment on entry make very good progress. Nearly half of the pupils who achieved at level 5 or better in Year 9 entered the school with less than average levels of attainment.
92. GCSE results at the end of Year 11 are above national averages in comparison to all schools and in line with similar schools. In 2001, nearly seven out of ten pupils obtained a grade C or better and for the last two years all pupils attained a grade of G or better. Despite this level of attainment very few pupils achieved the highest A\* grades, and this issue is now being addressed by the department. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress.
93. Attainment in lessons reflects that at the end of Years 9 and 11. The highest attaining pupils in Year 11 are able to use calculus to find areas under curves and the gradients of curves, while those in the lowest attaining sets in Year 11 are able to create tables and draw graphs of linear functions like  $y = 3x + 1$ . This represents above average attainment and is typical of the quality of algebra in all year groups. This is mainly because of the special bridging work done in algebra at the time when pupils enter the school, and the importance attached to algebra throughout the curriculum.
94. The attainment in number is consistent with that in algebra; lowest attaining sets in Year 8 are able to manipulate negative numbers with confidence and perform mental calculations using tables up to twelve times with ease, and similar sets in Year 7 understand place value. Data handling and work on shape and space is at a similar standard. In the lowest attaining sets in Year 9, pupils understand symmetry of two-dimensional figures and are able to give explanations of their thinking. The higher attaining Year 9 sets can use the sine and cosine rule. Being able to talk about their levels of attainment is a feature of all year groups, and pupils understand the key learning that they need to achieve their targets.
95. In mathematics, teaching is never less than satisfactory and is often good or very good. The teachers have good subject knowledge, high expectations and consistently use techniques that require active responses from pupils. Every lesson has clear learning outcomes which are shared with the pupils, and most lessons involve a variety of activities and have a focus upon using mental methods as a first resort, either to identify a final answer or to obtain an estimate to guide a written calculation. Good questioning is a common feature where teachers frequently require pupils to justify their answers and develop processes. These approaches stimulate pupils and actively involve them in their own learning.
96. Where teachers from other departments are required to teach mathematics outside their specialism, the head of mathematics provides extensive support in order to make sure the teaching is at least satisfactory. However, despite these efforts there remains the possibility that these groups may not receive the same high quality of teaching enjoyed by other pupils.
97. The impact of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy for teaching mathematics can be seen in all mathematics lessons where the three-stage lesson is consistently used. In addition, individual pupil white boards are being used as an effective support for oral and mental work, particularly during the starter phase of lessons. These techniques are stimulating quick pupil responses and provide the teachers with instant feedback on how well pupils are learning. Similarly teachers can give pupils quick feedback on their work. Where teachers combine this with skilful questioning the lessons become lively and pace of learning is accelerated. Teachers are beginning to use these methods in their teaching in Years 10 and 11. In addition, where teachers from other subjects are involved in Key Stage 3 mathematics teaching, they too are beginning to use these strategies in their own subjects.
98. The use of the plenary session in lessons is the least effective aspect of the strategy, and teachers are generally not using this time either to secure learning or to set up what needs to be done next time. The teachers are aware of this shortfall and are addressing it.

99. Planning is very good, takes account of prior learning and is making a good contribution to raising standards. The schemes of work contain detailed long, medium and short term planning. In Years 7 to 9, these highlight the learning priorities in the National Framework and provide a strong basis for teachers' individual preparation and lesson planning. There is a very good departmental assessment and pupil performance tracking system, which uses attainment on entry and results from internal standardised tests as well as National Curriculum Test scores. The system, which is operated by the second in the department, provides good information that teachers use to inform their individual planning and set pupil targets. This information is also used to review the reliability of the internal tests and to evaluate and develop the curriculum to meet the needs of pupils. For example, the introduction of statistics in Years 10 and 11 and offering additional mathematics as an optional extension subject.
100. The good teaching practices in the department need now to be monitored and evaluated and spread further through the mathematics team.
101. There is very good support for pupils provided at lunch times and after school to provide catch-up teaching and to extend learning, and the teachers give their time generously to the benefit of pupils. The school regularly enters pupils in the UK Mathematics Challenge Competition.
102. Accommodation is unsatisfactory in a number of ways and does not support the educational aims of the department. For example one room is isolated from the rest of the mathematics rooms, is large and has features which make it hard for the pupils to clearly hear the teacher. In addition it is used as a dining room. Other rooms are cramped and there is no departmental office.
103. Despite these constraints, under the energetic, enthusiastic and highly focused leadership provided by the head of mathematics the teachers work well as a team towards their shared goals, and have made very good progress in addressing the issues raised in the last inspection.

## SCIENCE

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is good with very good and excellent features.
- GCSE examination results are very good.
- Pupils work well with each other and with their teachers.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good.

### Areas for improvement

- Planning of the curriculum and for assessment.
- The use of information and communication technology as a support for learning.

104. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above the national average in science by the end of Year 9 and well above in Year 11. These standards have been achieved because teaching is good. Pupils' achievement in relation to standards on entry to the school in Year 7 is good and their progress throughout years 7 to 9 is also good. Achievement in Years 10 and 11, in relation to standards in Year 9 is very good. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good overall but there is evidence that the highest-attaining pupils in Year 9 could achieve even more.
105. In 2001, test results for pupils at the end of Year 9 were above average for both boys and girls, but boys' results were slightly better than those for girls. When compared with similar schools, results were below the national average for level 5 or above, and average for level 6 or above. The results in science were not as good as those in English and mathematics. Although results fell in 2000, since the last inspection they have improved at a rate which is similar to science results nationally. Given that the attainment of these pupils on entry to the school, in Year 7, was average, progress during Years 7 to 9, including that of pupils with special educational needs, has been good.

106. Pupils currently in the school, and in Years 7 and 8 in particular, are making good gains in their knowledge, skills and understanding in science. Inspection evidence indicates that test results in 2002 are likely to be better than those in 2001. Higher-attaining pupils, in Year 9, understand the conventions of flow of charge and current in electrical circuits, can write chemical symbols and formulae and have a good appreciation of dominant and recessive genes. There is, however, evidence that pupils who are gifted and talented in science could achieve even higher levels if provided with more appropriate learning materials and greater levels of challenge. Lower-attaining pupils, including pupils with special educational needs, are less secure in their knowledge and understanding of science. For example, they do not understand how electricity flows in a circuit. They can, however, describe how energy is transferred from a battery to a light bulb and they know that coloured substances can be separated by chromatography.
107. In 2001, the results of examinations for GCSE dual award were well above the national average for the numbers of pupils gaining grade C or better and for the number of pupils gaining a grade G or better. The results for boys and girls were similar. Whilst the number of pupils gaining the highest grades, A\* and A, was also well above average overall, boys' results were significantly better than girls; none of whom achieved A\* grades. Compared with similar schools, results for dual award were high and the percentage of pupils entered for the examination was above average. A small group of pupils, who follow an alternative curriculum within the school, were entered for the single award GCSE examination. Their results were well above average with all pupils gaining at least a G grade. Overall, GCSE examination results were well above the national average. They were also well above average when compared with similar schools. When compared with the results obtained in Year 9, the achievement of pupils through Years 10 and 11, including pupils who have special educational needs, was very good. Science results were similar to those for English and mathematics and have improved since the last inspection. Inspection evidence suggests that results in 2002 will be better than those in 2001.
108. The work of pupils currently in Years 10 and 11 is well above the national average. Higher-attaining pupils can interpret speed-time graphs, confidently write balanced chemical equations, and carry out quantitative calculations based upon them, and have a good understanding of the structure and function of enzymes. Lower-attaining pupils are less secure in their knowledge and understanding. For example, they are unable to write balanced equations but can write word equations with some degree of confidence.
109. All components of the science National Curriculum are well covered. However, curriculum planning, overall, is unsatisfactory. At present there are three schemes of work, one for each attainment target. There is no evidence of co-ordination between the subject areas. Planning for the use of ICT is unsatisfactory and it is not used fully as a teaching and learning tool. Consequently the science department does not meet the national requirements for the inclusion and use of ICT. Whilst investigative work is well covered overall, scientific investigations are less well integrated into the teaching programme. The standard of literacy is, overall, good. Higher-attaining pupils cope well with extended writing, use scientific terms with confidence, and spelling is good. Lower-attaining pupils are less confident and tend to be more restricted in the range and extent of their written work, often limiting their writing to short sentences in which spelling and the use of scientific terms are less secure. Higher-attaining pupils speak with confidence and understanding and are able to describe and discuss their work with a good degree of accuracy. Lower-attaining pupils, however, often have difficulty in speaking and tend to give very brief answers to questions. They also have difficulty in converting spoken language into written form. The standards of numeracy are good. Higher-attaining pupils use mental arithmetic well and can interpret information presented graphically. Lower-attainers, although less skilful in, for example, interpreting graphical information, use mental arithmetic well to calculate percentages. Reports issued to parents provide useful information on attainment, attitudes and progress in each component of science. They rarely indicate strengths and weaknesses, nor do they provide focused, subject specific, targets for improvement in each component.
110. The provision for pupils with special educational needs, including those who are gifted or talented, is unsatisfactory. Although there are good examples of work being provided by individual teachers which match the needs and aptitudes of pupils, departmental planning does not provide appropriate support materials for pupils with special educational needs nor the extension work required for the highest-attaining pupils. Individual education plans, whilst sometimes containing generic targets for improvement, do not provide specific targets for improvement in science as a

whole.

111. Throughout the school, teaching is good. It is better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. Often teaching is very good and sometimes excellent. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers make use of their good subject knowledge in providing very effective explanations and in asking questions that challenge or assess pupils' knowledge and understanding. They usually give clear objectives which pupils understand, but occasionally these take the form of indicating what pupils will do during the lesson rather than what they will learn. Classroom management and organisation are effective and the pace of lessons usually matches the needs and tasks of pupils. Lessons are, on the whole well planned. Teachers manage pupils very well and the relationships between teachers and pupils are very good. In a small minority of lessons there is over-direction by teachers. In these, there is insufficient opportunity for independent learning. In the best lessons, teachers provide challenge, which encourages pupils to formulate hypotheses, to think critically and to extend their level of achievement beyond the expected level for their age. Exercise books are well marked. However, even though encouraging remarks are often made, neither the level, or grade, which the pupil has achieved nor advice on how to improve are provided. As a result, pupils have little knowledge of how well they are progressing or of how to improve their work.
112. The identification of appropriate and challenging learning objectives coupled with good support for pupils' learning, enables pupils, throughout the school, to make good progress in improving their knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts. In all lessons, pupils work hard and at a good pace. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress particularly when supported by classroom assistants.
113. The behaviour of pupils and their attitude to science are both very good. Pupils listen well to their teachers, respond positively to the various activities and show interest and enjoyment. When given the opportunity to do so, pupils work well independently and in groups, think out problems for themselves and concentrate hard. Most pupils answer, and ask, questions well and have the confidence to discuss scientific concepts with their teachers and with other pupils. However, some girls are more reluctant to answer questions unless directed to do so by a teacher and are less confident in discussing scientific ideas. This has an adverse effect upon performance.
114. Leadership in the science department is satisfactory overall. The department is currently led by a hard-working acting head of department who is supported by a good team of teachers. Whilst day-to-day management has been very good, the overview of the department requires further development. Educational direction is not always clear. Strategic planning needs to be more effective and focused on improvement. Documentation as a whole, and schemes of work in particular, need further review, particularly in the light of Government initiatives such as the Key Stage 3 National Strategy. Development planning, which is in line with school development planning, is satisfactory, but planning for long-term development with longer-term targets, costing and focused success criteria has yet to be carried out. Procedures for assessment, whilst being satisfactory overall, have yet to be used effectively to track the progress of pupils throughout the school or to guide curriculum planning. Individual teachers keep satisfactory records of pupils' progress and these are used, effectively, to identify underachievement and to guide future teaching. Monitoring of the quality of teaching by lesson observations takes place, but this has yet to be used effectively to develop good practice within the department, to provide appropriate staff development or to provide targets for teachers. Although the qualifications and experience of the current teaching establishment is good, the number of teachers is insufficient to deliver the curriculum adequately. The use of non-specialist teachers has an adverse effect upon standards. However, this situation will improve in the near future as a result of the appointment of an additional member of staff who will also lead the science department. The number and quality of the laboratories is far from satisfactory. There are too few laboratories for a school of this size. Several are too small to accommodate large classes and are in urgent need of refurbishment. As a result, some lessons are taught in ordinary classrooms and practical lessons in laboratories present problems of safety. This situation is likely to deteriorate as the school increases in size. The provision of technical support is inadequate for a school of this size. This reduces the effectiveness of the department. Resources, in terms of books and equipment, including basic glassware, digital meters and computers, are inadequate. Consequently, it is difficult for teachers to provide appropriate laboratory work and to use ICT as a support for teaching and learning.

115. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. Test and examination results have improved, the quality of teaching is now good overall, with some very good and excellent features, and the challenge provided in most lessons has improved. With an improvement in curriculum planning, improved assessment procedures, an improvement in the use of ICT and the appointment of a new head of science the capacity for improvement in the science department is good.

## ART AND DESIGN

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

### Strengths

- Good leadership results in higher standards and promotes cultural development well.
- Results in GCSE examinations are well above average.
- Teaching is very good.

### Areas for improvement

- Maintaining the extent to which pupils studying for GCSE apply their knowledge of art and artists to develop their ideas and improve their skills.

116. By the end of Year 9, the large majority of pupils are attaining standards above the average. By doing so, most pupils have made very good progress, improving on what are generally average standards at the start of Year 7. In Year 9, higher attaining pupils understand well the thinking of artists who made surrealist paintings. For example, they explain and discuss the *'juxtaposition'* of disparate objects or their *'metamorphosis'*, relating this to the work of Magritte. Lower attaining pupils give an accurate definition of Surrealism but do not use its ideas and imagery as confidently or imaginatively. Most pupils have acquired good technical skills in handling a wide range of materials for making art. They know the relationships of colour and use these effectively. In drawing, they observe with accuracy and detail, for example, making good ellipses when drawing round objects in perspective.
117. By the end of Year 11, the standard of most pupils' work is well above average. Over the past three years there has been a marked and sustained improvement in GCSE results. The target for GCSE successes in 2002 aims very high and is realistic in relation to the quality of pupils' work. In 2001, the percentage of pupils gaining A\* to C grades in GCSE was very high compared to the results in all secondary schools and the percentage achieving A\* to G grades was above average. This is a clear indication that pupils of all abilities including those with special educational needs are achieving very well. There is not sufficient data on the extent to which girls are performing better than boys. However, the analysis of boys' work suggests the difference is not significant. The extent to which girls do better in art compared to their other subjects is as expected although the high percentage of top grades they achieve in GCSE suggests it should be greater. The proportion of pupils attaining A\*, the highest grade, is below average and this signals the need for the art department to continue refining ways of raising the standards of higher attaining pupils. Overall, however, in the course of Year 10 and 11, pupils make very good progress particularly in the development of ideas through stages of research and experiment. Their sketchbooks, homework and preparatory studies link closely with each other and contribute effectively to refining work of good quality.
118. Teaching is very good. Teachers have very high expectations of all pupils and, most effectively through their considerable expertise and interest, communicate to pupils the serious study of art. This leads to pupils developing a more than expected interest in art as well as committing themselves to making very good efforts with their work. As a consequence they learn very well. Much care is taken in the planning of pupils' work, particularly in sustaining a clear linkage between one lesson and the next and with the work pupils are given to do at home. Very good attention is paid to teaching basic skills, in particular, literacy and numeracy. In a Year 7 lesson, for example, pupils measured their paper into equal quadrants and between these drew designs using reflective symmetry. The assessment of pupils' attainments in art is conducted very well as lessons proceed and formally at the end of topics. Pupils gain a full picture of the direction of their learning and the standards they are achieving. This enables them, especially higher attaining pupils, to improve their work and progress independently. One Year 11 pupil used a computer at home to manipulate Roy Lichtenstein's *'Wham'* and discovered some successful outcomes. This might have been explored further to even better ends if computers in the art department functioned more prominently in teaching. Homework is a significant element contributing to pupils' learning. Largely, assignments are completed on time and executed assiduously. In doing this, pupils learn the habit of research and develop knowledge of art and artists. A Year 7 pupil, for example, described the Renaissance painter, Sandro Botticelli in good biographical detail. While pupils generate a considerable body of information on many artists they do not retain it although the extensive reading and writing involved improves literacy. By the

time pupils begin pursuing GCSE, the visual investigation of the work of artists and effective ways of taking that learning forward creatively in their own work is less emphasised in teaching.

119. The art department is a success. This is a result of enduring good leadership and management. The improvement since the last inspection is good. There has been a rise in the standards pupils achieve and the department has done well to maintain the very good quality of teaching. Pupils' performance in the subject and the effectiveness of teaching are closely monitored and evaluations from this work are used constructively for carrying on improvements. The department has a particularly positive atmosphere, which was pointed out by a group of Year 10 pupils when asked what they thought was good about their school. It meant a great deal to them that the displays of work were visually exciting and their relationships within the department were very good. The art teachers express their commitment to the subject by a very good contribution towards widening the artistic and cultural experiences of pupils by offering lunchtime and after school activities and leading the organisation of the school's annual Arts Festival Week.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is consistently good or better and pupils' achieve well.
- Results at GCSE are above average.
- A small but significant proportion of Year 11 pupils' work is well above average.
- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 get a good taste of modern technologies in a well-equipped room.
- Leadership and management are very good.

### Areas for improvement

- Work in Years 7 to 9 does not cover the range of materials and processes expected within the National Curriculum. Making, particularly with metal, is inadequate and restricts work in Years 10 and 11.
- There is no computer assisted design and manufacture equipment in any year, preventing requirements of the National Curriculum being met and standards being higher.
- Insufficient use is made of ICT to design products in all design technology areas.
- Tools, equipment, materials and ICT resources are very inadequate.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory and too small for some large classes; the workshop is of particular concern.

120. Results in GCSE in 2001 were above average. The proportion of A\* to C and A\* to G grades was above average. This consolidated a significant improvement that began in 2000. Boys did significantly better than girls; their results were well above average. Girls' results were average. This difference came about through the distribution of results amongst the four GCSEs offered; the resistant materials (workshop based) GCSE results were well above average, graphic products GCSE was broadly average, textiles a little above, food, above average.

121. Some grades in textiles were lower than expected and this has been addressed this year through ensuring portfolios of work are better. Work seen shows a range from D to A\*. Some portfolios are vibrant with colour and detail and major project work, a ball gown, is often of very high quality. Very good research and design by pupils has been followed by very good, sometimes excellent, cutting and sewing and design details, realised through fabrics, beads and gold thread. Unfortunately, pupils could not take advantage of modern methods of design and manufacture, as there is no computer linked sewing machine or textile design related software or a plotter, by which patterns could be printed after adaptation on screen. Use is made of a simple 2D design software package and this was seen in use in Year 9 to help pupils get round the problem of producing a logo for their hats without computer assisted embroidery machines.

122. Graphics Products results were weakest last year and, from limited work seen, this may be repeated this year. Work in folders and in finished projects, board games, does not generally show the same flair as that in textiles; work is more mechanistic and folders often follow a formula, which will enable criteria for the examination to be 'picked off'. This will enable pupils to pass and attain C grades but is unlikely to lead to higher grades. Some graphics work is more



adventurous, such as the board game related to conservation, and indicates the department has used assessment information from last year's results to move forward. Little graphics is done in Years 7-9 and many basic skills are taught in Year 10. A satisfactory Year 10 lesson demonstrated this mechanistic approach quite well; pupils of that age and ability should be showing more independence and creativity, founded on basic skills already acquired.

123. Results in resistant materials GCSE were very good and the quality of design and make of current Year 11 final projects, lamps, demonstrates why. Quality of making is sometimes very good and designs show originality of thought or at least good adaptation of designs of different products seen elsewhere, for example, the previous year's bathroom accessories products. Folder work shows much 'research' into products and materials with extensive notes, pictures and diagrams, and questionnaires to show pupils' preferences for a big lamp, a medium lamp and so on. All this addresses course requirements, for which pupils will be accredited, but there is only limited evidence of research, modelling and evaluation prior to making the final project. For example, one pupil, evaluating his work when finished, says "it is bigger than I thought" and "the translucent plastic is too dark to let the light pass through". Simple modelling in card, used by another pupil to ensure the correct profile of his acrylic, and some testing of different acrylics and the effect of drilling holes through them, would have enabled a better lamp to have been made and ongoing evaluation would earn more marks. Year 10 work in resistant materials reveals that they have little experience of making, due to the inadequate curriculum provision in Years 7-9, and also have not been taught well enough to model and experiment.
124. There is no provision for computer assisted design and manufacture so three dimensional graphics and initial shaping by computer controlled milling is not available. The design and modelling of a flat pack chair in Year 10, which shows skilled, if basic, technical drawing techniques have been well taught and understood, also lends itself to CAD/CAM. Little metal is used in Year 10 and 11 project work and processes used with plastic are mainly cutting and finishing, sometimes bending. This narrow range stems from the absence of metal forming, joining and modifying facilities in the department. There is no equipment to help accurate bending, no brazing hearth for soldering and brazing, no way of casting metal or hardening or tempering it. Pupils do not have access to a working modern vacuum former for plastics, though injection moulding can be done, and no CAD/CAM. Consequently, pupils' work is limited in scope and any pupils interested in pursuing a modern apprenticeship in engineering, mechanics, or many post 16 qualifications in technology are not well served. Hence also, National Curriculum requirements are not met between Years 7 and 11.
125. Work in food technology in Years 10 and 11 is above average. A good Year 10 lesson on sensory analysis, leading to the making of a novelty cake, illustrated this as pupils were well able to perform the range of tests and correctly identify and profile test criteria on star charts. Pupils were able to say why they liked and disliked a cake, using methods recognised by the food industry. Work in folders is variable and within a D to A grade range. It generally lacks use of ICT for research, presentation and analysis and this is partly related to a lack of resources within the food technology area. However, computer resources are available at lunchtimes and after school and pupils could make more use of them.
126. Standards of work seen in Years 7-9 are above average. A very good development since the last inspection is the equipping of a specialist room for 'modern technologies' such as pneumatics, control, digital photography and mechanisms. Pupils rotate through units of work and are able to explain what they have done and some of the more important features and concepts, for example, how triangular structures are strong and that compressed air can be used as an energy source. They are well supported by the teacher in charge, who intervenes to help, cajole and challenge them to do better. However, as recognised by the teacher, some of the questions, presented on a computer screen, to test pupils' knowledge and understanding, are more similar to Years 9 to 11 physics questions, than to the curriculum followed by Year 7 pupils in this country (the system is American). The technology system used would be much more useful if teachers could adapt, amend, or write questions and support material so that it is better linked to what pupils do know and moves them on from there. This 'modern technology' is not followed through in Years 10 and 11, so does not significantly support any GCSE the school offers. As both the resistant material and the graphics courses suffer from insufficient experiences in Years 7 to 9, then continuity and progression from non-examination years to examination years is not satisfactory. The department's development plan recognises this.

127. Resistant materials work in Years 7 – 9 is thoroughly planned and well supported by teachers who expect accurate work with a good finish that pupils are proud to display or take home. Standards of work seen are above average. However, the time available for resistant materials is relatively short and the time work takes, within it, is too long. For example, the Year 7 memo clip, effectively two pieces of wood joined by a wooden peg, takes eighteen one-hour lessons, and this is all the resistant material work for a year. The time is taken up with too much research and investigation and folder work. Younger pupils experience insufficient material and processes work, and do not make and experiment enough so that they can make informed choices when designing and have something to base design decisions on when older.
128. Year 9 pupils have good making skills in both food and textiles. In a lesson about preparing a meal to meet a particular specification, low fat or high fibre for example, pupils demonstrated they could work well to their plans and specifications and use utensils and cookers properly and safely. The pupil making the stir-fry sweet and sour chicken thoroughly enjoyed consuming it, proof of the quality of the product. The teacher, who was very knowledgeable, gave very good support, and homework that came in during the lesson showed that pupils are well challenged and are expected to do appropriate research. A boy, catching up due to absence, used a calculator and tables of food data to calculate the proportions of fat, carbohydrate, etc in his planned meal. This is illustrative of good work to support numeracy skills across all the areas of technology, which is also reflected in the accuracy of design and pattern making for such things as the very good quality hats made in Year 9. Literacy is very well supported through extensive folder work in all years and the correct use of a very large amount of technical language.
129. Teaching and learning are good overall. No lessons were unsatisfactory and a third were very good. Teaching and learning are most often constrained by poor resources; teachers are enthusiastic to use ICT and other equipment but have not got it to hand. Class sizes can also be large in Year 10 and 11 option groups. Twenty-seven pupils in the food room means practical work is difficult to manage and 'alternate week' strategies sometimes have to be used. Over twenty pupils in the workshop makes safety questionable, as bench ends are close to machinery and the 'safe' corridor is lost if pupils have to move around. Technical support is only provided one day each week and teachers' time is taken up with resource and equipment preparation and with some clearing away. Excellent behaviour and attitudes of pupils saves the day, as they work very sensibly in technology areas and can be relied on to help tidy up at the end. However, rather more lesson time is needed for clearing away than would be the case with average technical support, so less time is spent learning. Teachers assess work very well and mark sheets for projects inform pupils of how well they are doing and how they might improve. Tests are also used effectively to ensure pupils learn facts and names. This was seen in Year 7 when pupils were involved in the decision about what would mean a 'good' mark before they sat it; they appreciated afterwards whether they had done well enough. Pupils with special educational needs learn as well as their peers either through support provided by teachers, who are aware of pupils' individual education plans and what they should do to help, or through additional support. Learning support assistants know their charges well and one pupil in a Year 11 food technology lesson made very good progress, in work on sorting out the stages by which a new food product is made, because of the confidence he had in the assistant.
130. Leadership and management in the department are very good. Improvements have been made despite unsatisfactory accommodation and poor resourcing. Modern technologies have been introduced into Years 7-9, standards have risen overall and academic targets have been reached. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and ensuring they are helped to improve, using that information, are very good. Teaching is well monitored through observations and examination of books. Teachers have tried changing roles, so a resistant materials teacher teaches textiles for example. Staffing is unsatisfactory because of the small amount of non-specialist teaching, although there is no evidence this affects standards. Indeed, the art input might improve graphics. However, in addition to this, there is inadequate technical support and this does affect the efficiency of the department.
131. Both the head of department and teachers have a great commitment to improve the subject further and ensure pupils have every opportunity to develop in the subject and achieve as well as they can. Much work has been done since the last inspection to address some of the issues raised then; a very significant investment has been made by the school to ensure younger pupils

experience modern technologies. There is still room for further improvement within the scope of the resources available and the resources in the workshop area have not improved. Significant improvement, that will ensure National Curriculum requirements are met, requires much more investment. Improvement has been satisfactory overall since the last inspection report, but it has been hindered by insufficient funding.

## DRAMA

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

### Strengths

- GCSE results have improved significantly over the last three years.
- Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is consistently good with very good features.
- Pupils' attitudes to their work in drama are consistently very good.

### Areas for improvement

- Drama is not taught in Years 7 to 9 as a separate subject.
- The accommodation is inadequate for the growing demand for the subject as a GCSE option.
- There is no audio equipment to help pupils improve their performance.

132. Results in the 2001 GCSE examinations were below the national average but were a significant improvement on the previous years' results: over 13.6 per cent of pupils gained GCSE grade A. Over a period of three years, all pupils taking the drama examination gained a pass grade. Despite the upward trend in performance, pupils' overall performance in drama is lower than that of other subjects.
133. Pupils make good progress in drama, using good oral skills when taking part in role-play. They are aware of the importance of voice and tone to convey particular moods and make very good use of the assessment criteria to evaluate their performances critically. In the two lessons observed, pupils sustained roles based on their knowledge of the requirements of the examination, the good team effort and their commitment to their work. By the end of the GCSE course, Year 11 pupils skilfully devise imaginative and ambitious drama pieces and make very good use of drama conventions, props and lighting effects to enhance their performances. They learn to cooperate well, showing very good attitudes and enthusiasm. Pupils maintain a high level of focus and their mature approach to accepting critical comments contributes to the good progress they make in the subject.
134. In the two lessons seen, teaching and learning was good overall with some very good features. Expectations were clearly explained and the teacher made very good use of the examination assessment criteria to demonstrate what pupils should be concerned with in their performances. Planning is very good and the work set offers appropriate challenge. The support given encouraged groups and individuals to focus more sharply on improving their performance skills for instance, training their voice and delivering lines clearly. The critical comments enabled the most gifted as well as the more retiring pupils to give of their best.
135. Currently the subject is taught to Year 10 and 11 pupils only. The drama club enables other pupils to experience the subject. However, the limited experience of drama in Years 7 to 9 creates difficulties at the start of the GCSE course as valuable course time is used to equip pupils with basic drama skills. The subject is well led and the teacher in charge has used his experience to raise the status of the GCSE course and improve results over the last three years. Key targets for development are outlined in a strategic plan but actions for development are not clear. In addition, the provision of drama as a timetabled subject for Year 7 to 9 pupils and the extra resources this would require, such as an additional teacher are not explicitly stated. Line management is also unclear. The new drama studio is fully equipped but it is too small for the increasing number of pupils choosing to take the subject. The department does not have technical recording equipment such as a video camera, a television or videotape to enhance pupils' work. Drama makes a good contribution towards promoting pupils' development, though productions, links to the community, artistes and lessons. The deliberate choice of syllabus provides pupils with challenge and the opportunity to experience issues around living in a multi-racial society.

## GEOGRAPHY

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

### Strengths

- The standards of work in all years.
- GCSE results at the end of Year 11 are steadily improving.
- Teachers' knowledge, especially in Years 10 and 11, influences the development of pupils' factual knowledge and understanding.
- The management of pupils is good and provides a positive learning environment, ensuring good behaviour.

### Areas for improvement

- There is a need to raise the attainment of girls in Years 10 and 11.
- Curriculum planning should take more account of pupils' different learning needs.
- There is insufficient fieldwork in Years 7 to 9.
- There is insufficient planned and assessed work using computers (ICT) in all years.

136. The results of teacher assessments for 14 year olds were well above average in 2001. The girls performed slightly better than did the boys. These results were higher than other departments in the school. Standards in the work of 14-year-olds observed during the inspection were above average. The difference between these two evaluations (well above average in teacher assessments, but only above average in current work) lies in the quality of specifically assessed work for which pupils performed exceptionally well.
137. In Years 7 to 9 pupils produce consistently good standards of work. They are aware of places and can talk about the local area. The majority has a good sense of locations and describes the conditions in the rain forests with feeling and understanding. They relate the vegetation to the conditions of climate and many are able to explain the high temperatures in the equatorial regions. Pupils are also aware of the ideas of sustainability and can compare and reach sensible conclusions about native ways of life compared with commercial development. The majority of pupils have a clear understanding of physical processes, especially those involved in tectonic activity. This work also produces writing of a high standard. Most pupils can use photographs and maps to obtain information about places but the lower achieving pupils are not confident with basic map skills, such as grid references.
138. Achievement across Years 7 to 9 for pupils as a whole is good and pupils with special educational needs also make good progress. Pupils arrive in school with attainment around the national average but with very mixed geographical experiences. By the end of Year 9 they are above average. Girls make better progress than boys and the lower achieving sets have a greater number of boys than girls. The achievement of the highest attaining pupils is good with an unusually high proportion achieving National Curriculum Level 8 in 2001.
139. Results in GCSE examinations in 2001 were above average. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A\* to C was ten per cent above the national average. All pupils achieved a grade indicating that the department has considerable success with the lower achieving pupils and those with special educational needs. The results of girls were below average and boys performed better than the girls, contrary to the national pattern. The results of boys were 25 per cent above the national average whilst girls were almost 20 per cent below average. This is partly a reflection of the differences between the boys and girls who choose geography in Year 10 and may reflect the pattern of choices they are offered. The proportion of higher grades A\* and A was below the national average. Over recent years the trend in the GCSE results has been upwards and there has been an increase in the number of pupils choosing geography, although it is still dominated by boys.
140. Standards in the work of 16-year-olds observed during the inspection were above average. In Years 10 and 11 pupils have a good understanding of the subject. They also have a clear understanding of the needs of the GCSE examination. The Foundation pupils in a Year 11 group could explain the difference between site and situation and were able to use sketch maps and graphs to discuss changes in land use. Some pupils had a very good grasp of the principles of

- industrial location. The higher attaining pupils produce excellent field studies and much of the work on the River Wyre, from previous years, shows high-level skills of analysis and synthesis and is well presented.
141. Achievement across Years 10 and 11 for pupils as a whole is good. In Years 10 and 11, geography is an option and not taken by the whole cohort and the quality of pupils varies from year to year. The GCSE results are above average and clearly there is good progress. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good as all pupils entered for the examination achieved a pass grade. The school data shows that higher achieving pupils progress as expected but their achievement is not exceptional.
  142. Teaching is good in all years. The specialist geographers show good knowledge of their subject and this helps them to answer questions that pupils raise and they are able to extend their learning. One lesson referred to previous work done in primary schools, making an effective link for pupils to be able to build on previous learning. Teachers' understanding of the demands of the National Curriculum is good and this aids learning. Teachers are aware of their contribution to the teaching of basic skills, but at this stage the concentration has been on the development of vocabulary at the expense of sentence structure and oral work. There are some good pieces of extended writing, for example, the work on earthquakes. The work in Year 8 on tourism is a significant step forward in developing the literacy skills of pupils.
  143. The teaching of ICT skills relevant to learning geography is at an early stage with an emphasis on word processing and fairly low-level tasks. Where this is used it is often done well and improves the presentation of pupils' work. However, this work is too reliant on pupils' home background and there are insufficient opportunities to use spreadsheets, databases and graphing or data logging within the lessons.
  144. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and this results in good behaviour and a good attitude to their work. The methods used are effective although they often result in a slow pace to lessons. During the inspection only a limited range of methods was observed although an examination of other material and the Departmental Handbook shows that a greater variety of methods is used over a longer period. Some use is made of the new ideas from the 'Thinking Through Geography' group and this is commendable. Generally there is too much reliance on whole class teaching and this results in pupils who are reliant on the teacher for the pace and direction of their lesson. This was reported on in the last inspection. The management of pupils is very good. They are well organised and supported. As a result behaviour is good and pupils respect their teachers. Homework is set but is not always clearly identified in exercise books. The fact that textbooks cannot go home also has a limiting effect on the type of work that can be set.
  145. Assessment is good. There are clear procedures in place that set targets for pupils and show them where they can improve. The tracking system is able to highlight underachievement and helps teachers to support pupils well. There is a lot of data in the department but this is not yet used effectively to plan improvements to the schemes of work or as a benchmark to national standards. The quality of the marking is mixed. There are clear policy statements and teachers use a system of effort grading. Not all comments are as helpful as they could be and few actually relate to the standard of the work.
  146. Learning is consistently good in all years. This is because of the carefully planned lessons and the good relationships that are developed by teachers. Pupils acquire considerable subject knowledge and this is clear from their exercise books and their assignments. This is helped by the emphasis on vocabulary and definitions. The use of the Department Word Book is also useful to many pupils. From the beginning of Year 7 pupils learn and develop skills. They have a good introduction to map work and the use of atlases. Their understanding clearly develops throughout the years and by the end of Year 11 all pupils know what geography is about and the higher achieving pupils have well developed skills and can carry out fieldwork that is well structured, with detailed analyses and good conclusions. The lower achieving pupils can also carry out fieldwork with the help and support of teachers but are less able to relate lots of data and reach simple conclusions.
  147. Too many pupils move at the pace of the teacher and this tends to be linked to a middle level and whole class teaching. In many classes pupils demonstrate their interest by asking questions. The Year 7 bottom set was a good example of where this worked well and was sensitively

handled by the teacher. The concentration in most classes is very good and teachers expect pupils to work. There are too few opportunities for pupils to develop their own learning by taking responsibility for the planning and direction of their work. Pupils with special educational needs also learn well. Teachers who know them as individuals and who show concern for them provide appropriate support. Where there are classroom assistants this helps to give them extra confidence although teachers and assistants rarely have time for constructive planning.

148. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils are good. Pupils have good attitudes to their work and this is seen in their punctuality to lessons, their arrival with the appropriate equipment and the way they look after their books. They behave very well. They are respectful to staff and to each other. They listen well in class and carry out instructions well. There are good relationships between staff and pupils. There are too few opportunities for pupils to show initiative or to take more responsibility for their own learning. Pupils are happy to let teachers do the work.
149. The management of the department is good. There is clear educational direction, appropriate development plans are in place and curriculum planning is continuing. The curriculum is satisfactory overall but does not meet the requirements of the National Curriculum to provide fieldwork opportunities in Years 7 to 9. Resources are satisfactory but not lavish and the department lacks appropriate weather equipment and computer facilities.
150. The improvement since the last inspection has been good. Results at the end of Year 11 have been raised above the national average. The department has not yet raised the attainment of girls in Years 10 and 11 sufficiently. It has also yet to provide more challenging work for the more able pupils, develop a programme of a fieldwork throughout Years 7 to 9 and provide a planned programme of appropriate ICT work in all years. The department does not make full use of all the data that is available to ensure that national standards are applied.

## HISTORY

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

### Strengths

- Good teaching is reflected in pupils' consistently good academic achievements, which are well above the national average.
- Specialist teachers have good knowledge of their subject.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about their work.

### Areas for improvement

- The use of computers is underdeveloped and does not as yet support learning and research adequately.
- Work does not always sufficiently match pupils' needs. Texts do not match all levels of prior knowledge in the subject.

151. GCSE results are well above national expectations, both at the higher grades (A\* to C) and across the full range of grades. In 2001, the girls performed better than the boys at the higher grades but fewer boys took the subject. The results showed a considerable improvement when compared with standards on entry.
152. In the work seen during the inspection, standards at the end of Year 9 are above national averages. Pupils of all abilities have a good understanding of historical knowledge and the period that they study and can access source material to extract information and to organise it to meet their needs. Good examples of the use of source material helped a Year 7 gain a greater understanding of the Black Death in a role-play and in Year 9 of the place of appeasement in the events leading to World War 2. However extended use of keywords and taking a more critical approach to source material was not much in evidence during the inspection. As pupils progress through Years 7, 8 and 9 they gain confidence in their writing, drawing and mapwork; this is greatly helped by the enquiries that they complete throughout those years. While the more able pupils are being fully challenged difficulties were being experienced by less able pupils when text did not always match their ability level. The girls for the most part were operating at a slightly

higher level than were the boys. Pupils with special educational needs were making great strides to accomplish their targets particularly when supported.

153. In the work seen during the inspection, pupils were working at above national averages at the end of Year 11. Pupils' achievement relative to standards at the end of Year 9 shows good improvement. Most pupils show confidence in the use of source material that helps their understanding of developments overtime. Some caution was in evidence when pupils were asked to be critical about the use of material with the possibility of bias. In Year 10, a lesson which used the results of fieldwork and other research led to some good presentations, attempting to replicate the thought processes of Samuel Greg when choosing a site for his new mill which eventually was at Styall. While pupils were able to write well helped by their enquiry work there was little in the way of numeracy work.
154. Pupil attitudes were mostly positive and where they were not this it did not interfere with the learning in lessons. Most pupils came not only prepared but also enthusiastic about their work and concentrated on the work they were given. The majority of pupils accepted the demands made on them by their teachers. During the inspection behaviour was very good with little in the way of minor incidents. Pupils worked well together particularly in presentations and role-play and took responsibility for their work.
155. The quality of teaching is good throughout with some that is very good. Lessons are well prepared and draw on an appropriate range of activities and resources. However the use of video and computers to add a new dimension to pupils' learning is rare. All lessons observed had clear objectives which were nearly always shared with pupils. In most lessons, teachers began with a review of previous work, to assist pupils to recall and build on their learning so that they could progress in their knowledge and understanding. Teachers have a good command of their subject and usually set high expectations and tasks mostly matched to the needs of pupils. Question and answer sessions are well used to check previous work and to ensure that new learning is clearly understood. When oral assessment is used it greatly enhances pupils' involvement and learning. Marking on the whole is regular but needs monitoring to make sure everyone keeps to the policy. Assessment is thorough but attention needs to be given to its use in all work. Homework is given and is completed by most pupils; however it was little used as part of lessons. While the subject makes a contribution to the spiritual, moral, cultural and social welfare of the pupils it could be emphasised more.
156. The department, in the absence of its head, is well led with a continued commitment to maintaining or improving standards. The curriculum has been planned to develop and reinforce skills throughout the age range. Historical visits to Clitheroe Castle, Quarry Bank Mill at Styall plus the Holocaust Day extend what is learnt in the classroom and provide a suitable resource for coursework. While the accommodation is satisfactory it would benefit the staff and pupils if the rooms formed a suite. The department has met most of the key issues mentioned in the last report. However, there is still insufficient use of computers.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

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

### **Strengths**

- Teaching in ICT lessons is very good and pupils learn very well.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- The work provided in ICT lessons in Years 7 to 9 is very good.
- The assessment of pupils' work is very good.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not receive their entitlement to ICT. Less than half currently follow an accredited course. None have sufficient experience of ICT across the curriculum.
- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 do not use ICT sufficiently across all subjects of the curriculum.
- There are insufficient ICT resources to enable pupils to receive their entitlement.



157. National requirements for ICT are not met, as at the time of the last inspection, and there has been unsatisfactory progress in meeting national requirements. The National Curriculum can be provided through dedicated ICT lessons or through all subjects of the curriculum or a combination of both. Even if met through dedicated lessons, all subjects of the National Curriculum also have requirements to use ICT to help pupils learn, and the teaching and application of ICT skills in subjects is inconsistent, therefore unsatisfactory.
158. Standards of work in ICT lessons in all years are, overall, above average and pupils learn very well in them, but only about forty per cent have ICT lessons in Years 10 and 11. However, it is planned for all pupils to follow an ICT course in Year 10 in September 2002. This provision should roll through, but sixty per cent of pupils in the current Year 10 will still not have ICT lessons in Year 11; it will be September 2003 before all pupils in Years 10 and 11 are likely to get ICT lessons. The amount of ICT taught through and used within work in other subjects is unsatisfactory in all years and this has greater significance to older pupils who have done less ICT when younger. Consequently, the ICT curriculum in Years 10 and 11 does not meet statutory requirements and the overall standards of attainment are below average. Overall, pupils achieve unsatisfactorily in ICT by the end of Year 11.
159. By the end of Year 9, standards of work are above average and pupils achieve well. This is due to the very well planned and taught ICT course and the good contributions made from some subjects, for example design and technology, music and physical education. There is also significant work in English, though much of this appears to be done at home. However, the contribution to, and use of, ICT, in most subjects is unsatisfactory. Science, for example, does not use ICT for data logging. Consequently, the curriculum provided in Years 7-9 is unsatisfactory and does not meet statutory requirements. The principal reason for subjects not meeting requirements is insufficient computers, other hardware, and software. Pupils' progress in their ICT lessons is accelerating as very good planning takes effect; the head of department has only been in post sixteen months and significant changes to the curriculum only began eight months ago. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress due to very good individual support from learning assistants or appropriate support from teachers. Different worksheets and guidance are to hand if they need them.
160. Standards in the 2001 GCSE in information technology were well above the national average overall and in the proportion of pupils attaining an A\* to C grade and an A\* to B grade. The proportion of pupils attaining an A\* was three times greater than national whilst A and B grade proportions were double the national proportion. Boys did better than girls. Four times as many attained an A\* than was the case nationally. Pupils did better in their information technology examination than in almost all of their other subjects.
161. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 experience a logical progression of increasing difficulty in their ICT work within ICT lessons. They rapidly progress in Year 7 from a diverse range of attainment on entry that results from different experiences in primary schools and expertise acquired at home. Very good teaching and very good planning of units of work cope with this wide range of demonstrable ability at all but the highest level; particularly talented pupils can easily cope with some of the work in hand and need even more challenge. This was illustrated in a good Year 7 lesson about desktop publishing where pupils were creating a school guide using text and photographic images; the images were provided for them. All pupils could do the work, some very quickly. They had all done something similar before and the teacher was correctly building on their skills. However, a few were very adept and had obviously taken work further themselves. A Year 7 unit of work about digital photography in design and technology also contributed to some pupils' knowledge. The ICT teacher did not sufficiently recognise the needs of the few who were most knowledgeable and opportunities were missed to allow them to go further or consolidate their knowledge, for example by taking photographs themselves or producing a digital slide presentation. Resources hindered the first possibility, as there are too few digital cameras.
162. Year 7 pupils have very good knowledge and understanding about words used to describe computer systems such as 'wide area network' and 'bus'. Their literacy skills are above average and they describe their work well in full, accurate sentences. Numeracy skills are well illustrated, as pupils get older, with very well produced spreadsheets in Year 8, including some modelling about temperature and good graphs. Year 8 pupils are becoming adept at computer slide presentations. Indeed, some benefit from the challenge of preparing presentations for others, for

example a twelve-slide presentation on rivers for geography. A class whose PSHE lesson is taught by an ICT teacher has produced slide presentations on smoking and other social issues, which may be used by other teachers. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are required and encouraged to annotate their work and create printed portfolios, which clearly explain to themselves, and others, what they have done. Together with very good teacher assessments and tests of their work, portfolios of work ensure pupils know how well they are doing and what they still need to do to improve. This contributes to the very good achievement they make overall.

163. Year 9 pupils are now working through on-line (work is received on the Internet) units of work, leading to a General National Vocational Qualification in ICT, due to be completed when they are in Year 11. This work is the same as current Year 10 pupils do, and is indicative of the rapid improvement in standards being brought about. This is an example of good long-term planning, as this course demands much time and resources and current Year 10 pupils, who started it at the beginning of Year 10, had to sign up for a compulsory extra lesson after school. Current Year 9 pupils will have three years to complete the course. However, some of these pupils are capable of completing the work by the end of their Year 10, given opportunities to work at their own pace with continuing good access to computers at lunch times and after school. Year 9 pupils know about relational databases and the different types of data that can be entered into them, for example 'data' and 'memos'. They can enter data accurately into database templates and talk well about what they are doing and why. Otherwise very good teaching about databases was hampered by the absence of a computer projector; the school has only got one and any teacher can book this. Frequent moving causes damage.
164. Year 10 pupils are very knowledgeable about spreadsheets and can understand shortcuts to creating formulae. They are adept at personalising presentation and average at manipulating formulae to do the job they want them to. Higher attaining pupils can work at their own pace and get ahead of others who need more teacher support. In one lesson a handful of pupils allowed their concentration to lapse and the teacher, already demonstrating very good subject knowledge, planning, and use of assessment, acted rapidly to remonstrate with them. The change in voice and firm encouragement was just right. This minor decline in attitudes was only noticeable because of the excellent behaviour and very good attitudes to learning which permeate all ICT lessons; they help ensure lessons of very good pace, plenty of learning and that a worthwhile amount of work is done. Pupils with statements of special educational need are well supported to ensure they progress at least satisfactorily but there is no alternative qualification offered, which they and any other pupils who find the work particularly difficult, could take. Year 11 GCSE pupils are the last group to have a GCSE option. Their portfolios of work are very substantial and standards, overall, are well above those of typical Year 11 pupils and at least above the average standard of GCSE. Their work covers spreadsheet modelling, control, web page design, hardware, and comparative studies of software.
165. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The co-ordinator knows exactly what the strengths and weaknesses of ICT provision in the school are. She has been instrumental in actions taken to begin to address them, like making changes to the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 and creating a very rigorous and supportive assessment system in all years. She works well with the other teacher of ICT who has taken steps to gain qualifications in ICT so she can do an even better job of underpinning current work. The systems manager is an essential member of the team, ensuring computers work and are managed, so teachers can get on with their job.
166. Inadequate resources hinder further development and improvement. There are insufficient computers to meet the needs of ICT lessons whilst also being available for reasonable use by all subjects. This is already causing an equal opportunities issue as the use of ICT by mathematics and science depends when the lessons are; some pupils get the opportunity whilst others do not. The position will get worse when all Year 10 begin an ICT course in September 2002 and will further worsen the following September. Neither is there sufficient other hardware such as digital cameras and computer projectors. New windows in computer rooms were not fitted with solar glass or tinted and there are no extractors or blinds. Rooms become uncomfortably hot and sun glare makes it difficult to see computer or projection screens. Appropriate software and specialist hardware is either not available or is in short supply across the school, consequently subjects cannot fulfil their ICT requirements. The school is not networked across the site and so work cannot easily be distributed or shared. The school is seeking technology college status as a key development in its strategy to improve this area.

167. At the time of the last inspection, standards in GCSE IT were well above national averages as they are now and teaching was good, sometimes very good. The statutory requirements for ICT in Years 10 and 11 were not met and this needed urgent attention. The use of ICT across the curriculum was underdeveloped. These weaknesses still remain and have little hope of being addressed for at least another eighteen months. Improvement since the last inspection is therefore very poor on these matters of provision and unsatisfactory overall.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES – FRENCH AND GERMAN

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is good.
- GCSE results in 2001 were above average in French and well above average in German.
- Course materials are good.
- Pupils' attitudes to language learning are very good.

### Areas for improvement

- There is insufficient access to new technology.
- Provision for gifted and talented pupils is not enabling them to achieve as well as they could.

168. All pupils learn French from Year 7 and add German in Years 8 and 9, but at present none take two languages after Year 9.
169. Standards seen on inspection in Year 9 are above average in French but below average in German in relation to national standards, because the time available for German has been much less than that given to French in the first three years. Standards are average in relation to expectations for a second foreign language. This is good achievement, because pupils' attainment in core subjects is broadly average when they enter the school. The achievement of some higher attaining pupils is very good, especially in German where they have had only a relatively short time to study the language. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in French, but their achievement is unsatisfactory in German because once a week lessons in Year 8 have not allowed sufficient consolidation and because it has not been possible in this year to provide specialist teaching for all their lessons. Teachers' assessments of the standards reached by Year 9 in 2001 match these findings.
170. Standards seen in Years 10 and 11 are above average overall in both languages. They are higher in French than in German in Year 10 because of the shorter time spent on German in earlier years. The school is planning to increase the time given to German in Year 8 in 2002-3. Throughout their course pupils develop a level of independence better than that seen in many schools because they all have copies of up-to-date course books and homework is used to extend what they have learned in their lessons. These high expectations lead to above average reading and writing skills. They also listen well to teachers, to recorded voices and to each other, which enables them to develop good listening skills. Speaking is satisfactory because they usually master the relevant words and phrases, but pronunciation is sometimes a weakness, especially in French.
171. GCSE results in 2001 were above average in French and well above average in German, albeit with a smaller number of candidates. Girls' results were better in French than those of boys, by a margin greater than that found nationally, but in German there was no great difference. All pupils gained a grade G or better in both languages, which is above the national average and represents good achievement by lower attaining pupils, including those with special needs. Gifted and talented pupils achieve satisfactorily. In French their results are in line with national figures for grades A\* and A though they are below those figures in German, where the time available has been less than in many schools. Comparison of pupils' results with those from their other subjects shows that they were slightly below the school average in French but in line with it in German. This could indicate some underachievement in French by boys. When candidates' results in the two languages are matched with similar comparisons nationally, Tarleton results are found to be broadly in line in both languages.
172. Teaching by specialist teachers is consistently good through the five years of the course, and it is sometimes very good. There is little difference in the quality of teaching in one language as compared with the other because most of it is by the same teachers. Unsatisfactory teaching is rare and occurs only when it has not been possible to timetable a specialist teacher for a particular class. When this occurs with special needs pupils it is regrettable, but otherwise these pupils are well taught and make the same sort of progress as others. Some make better progress because they are well supported by classroom assistants. There is sufficient challenge for high

attainers given that they do only one language, but some of these should be encouraged to take two languages for GCSE. The school's plans to enable the highest attaining pupils to study two languages in Years 10 and 11 from September 2002 are appropriate to provide the necessary stimulus for these pupils.

173. Teaching of basic skills is satisfactory overall. It is good in literacy where national planning has been dovetailed into schemes of work. Teachers use terms to describe the working of language which are also applicable to English. Number work is satisfactory, covering times, dates and prices as is usual in a modern languages course. Teaching of cross-curricular ICT is satisfactory, but cannot improve without better access to computers. All teachers have taught ICT lessons and some good work has been done, but not with all classes. New course materials include a multicultural element in pupils' learning, and contact with European culture is good, not least through school trips to France and Germany and through the German-language contact the school has developed with a school in Norway.
174. Pupils come to their lessons with positive attitudes which lead them to organise their work well, including their home work. To some extent they set their own expectations of high standards, conspicuously so in their own use of ICT. Learning is similar in French to what it is in German. Because pupils are well managed they relate well to teachers and to each other and work well in class in pairs or groups. They are well informed about their own learning, because assessment of their work provides them with clear information and objectives. However they do not learn to pronounce their languages as well as they might because they have no contact with a native speaker of the languages they are learning.
175. The department is very well led and managed. There is very good documentation which provides a clear basis for lesson planning. Monitoring of teaching and of written work is good and extends to the sharing of good practice. Data relevant to pupils' learning is very well analysed so that pupils' learning needs are kept under constant review. This is a strong department which has good capacity for further improvement. It is well supported by the head teacher, who acts as line manager.
176. The school has done well to maintain high standards since the previous inspection.

## MUSIC

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

### Strengths

- Very good standards of teaching create enthusiasm and promote music as an enjoyable way of life.
- There are well above average GCSE results.
- Very good relationships make music a very popular subject in the school.
- A large proportion of the school is involved in GCSE and in extra-curricular music.
- There are excellent resources, particularly for ICT (music technology) and very good accommodation.

### Areas for improvement

- More specialist music staff to keep pace with the expansion of the subject.
- Further consolidation of exciting recent developments in ICT.
- Further opportunities for those with higher performing skills to play together regularly.

177. Levels of attainment are above average at the end of Year 9 and well above average at the end of Year 11. Considering their starting points, which are average, pupils achieve well, particularly those taking GCSE. This is substantially due to the very good quality of teaching in music and to the nurturing of very good relationships in and beyond lessons that have helped to establish it as a very popular subject in the school. Almost 150 pupils, including more boys than girls, have extra instrumental lessons and there is an ongoing programme of concerts and musical activities each term. The new purpose-built music suite with its outstanding facilities, particularly for ICT, is a major factor in promoting the enjoyment of music-making as a way of life for a significant proportion of the school. Improvements since the previous inspection in both standards and

resources have been very good. One of the effects of these developments is that there are hardly enough staff or time to cope with the continuing pace of this expansion.

178. Standards in GCSE in 2001 were well above the national subject average. Almost all of the twenty-two pupils entered achieved A\* to C grades. Results in music are as good as the best of other subjects in the school. The popularity of music as a GCSE subject continues to increase. The current Year 10 has two groups for the first time and, at the time of the inspection, even greater numbers have elected to do GCSE music next year. Some pupils also take it as a one-year course out of school hours. A very wide range of performing skills on a variety of instruments is evident, with some pupils achieving the higher grades in Associated Board examinations. Composing skills are well above average and reflect a range of individually chosen styles. Pupils make very good use of computers to enliven their compositions. All those observed during the inspection had used ICT very effectively to add a degree of sophistication to both the performance and presentation of their work. This enhancement was heard at its best in one quite exceptionally mature and exciting composition for a large-scale concert band. Pupils' aural understanding is above average. A Year 11 class was observed enjoying a good level of technical discourse with their teacher while preparing for their GCSE listening tests.
179. Standards by the end of Year 9 are above average compared with those found in similar schools and are in line with those expected nationally. In relation to their starting points pupils by this stage achieve well. The difference in the achievements of boys and girls is not significantly different from the national pattern. All pupils learn to play keyboards, and some manage to use both hands to add harmonic and rhythmic textures to their melodies. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress – most develop musical skills commensurate with those of others. The progress made by musically talented pupils is good. Examples were heard of younger pupils in the choir singing spirituals and other popular songs in parts with clear diction and well-controlled vocal quality. More experienced players in the school band were heard playing numbers from their extensive collection of pieces with both exuberance and musical sensitivity. All pupils learn to use keyboards linked to computers confidently to create and perform short pieces of music. Pupils in Year 9, for example, were heard creating musical sound effects as an accompaniment for a short video-film clip. Several of them showed extra musical skill by synchronising melodic ideas effectively with their chosen sound effects. Although other examples were heard of pupils using computers to combine short musical phrases in layered textures, high standards of composing generally are yet to be fully developed.
180. The quality of teaching is very good. Most of it is undertaken by the head of department and supplemented by a team of seven experienced and dedicated visiting instrumental teachers. The main emphasis in class teaching is on practical work that is enhanced, and at times generated, by music technology. The combination of this up to date approach and traditional instrumental teaching is most effective in making the subject comprehensively popular with so many pupils. Lessons are well planned, exhilarating, and proceed at a lively pace that inspires pupils to concentrate their creative efforts and to be musically productive. Teachers' expectations match pupils' musical needs and encourage them to work independently. Pupils for their part are keen to work on their own and to subsequently share what they have practised with each other. In one Year 9 lesson, the teacher ingeniously got pupils to move systematically from computer to computer around the class to hear and evaluate each other's work before saving and storing it for further refinement later. All pupils have their own disk or tape on which they record their work. This is but one of the many efficient classroom routines that make lessons so orderly and help to establish the excellent relationships that exist amongst pupils and with their teacher. Pupils behave very well and care for the instruments and technical equipment they use. They appreciate the outstanding quality of the attractive environment in which they work.
181. Leadership is visionary and the work of the department is efficiently managed. Since the previous inspection, a new head of music has been appointed and important decisions were made for the future of an already successful department. The new accommodation is equipped to combine traditional music making with the best of what music technology offers. These exciting developments are now flourishing and attracting so much enthusiasm that another specialist teacher is needed to cope with the current expansion of interest. In particular, time and staff are needed to provide more opportunities for the significant numbers of pupils having extra instrumental lessons to perform as groups.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- GCSE results in 2001 were well above the national average.
- Pupils make good progress.
- Leadership and management of the department are very good. Curriculum and assessment policies enhance learning.
- Teaching is consistently good.
- There is very good extra-curricular provision.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good.
- There is a very good swimming programme, run in partnership with primary schools.

### Areas for improvement

- Accommodation to improve the range of the indoor facilities and the quality of some of the outdoor facilities.
- Development of the range of teaching and learning strategies in relation to attainment target 3 of the National Curriculum.

182. Standards reached by pupils aged 14 are in line with the national average. The levels of attainment reported in 2001 are slightly below average. However, in the work seen during the inspection, pupils' attainment at the age of 14 is in line with the level expected, with a significant minority achieving better levels. Pupils make good progress from Years 7 to 9 due to effective teaching and the commitment, attitudes and behaviour of the pupils. In lessons, pupils with special educational needs and gifted and talented pupils also make good progress to achieve the standards expected. Gifted and talented pupils achieve good levels of performance through a very good enrichment programme.

183. Overall, the results of the 2001 GCSE examinations are above the national average. In the higher A\* to C category they are well above the national average. All pupils achieved at least a pass in the range A\* to G. Standards achieved by pupils aged 16 in the core physical education programme are at least in line with the national expectation, with a significant minority above the standards expected. Attainment by pupils taking GCSE examinations in the current Years 10 and 11 is well above national expectations. Pupils in this course are making very good progress in all components, due to the very good teaching, effective target setting and strategies to support achievement and learning in the examination course.

184. In relation to prior attainment, achievement is good for most pupils by the end of Year 9. Attainment on entry is slightly below the level expected nationally. It is due to good consistent teaching, the pupils' motivation to learn and very good attitudes and behaviour that they make good progress. In Years 7 to 9, in striking fielding games lessons, pupils developed their understanding of the tactics of rounders, as well as recognising the importance of improving techniques, in order to implement the tactics they wish to use. Due to inclement weather, the physical education team adapted lessons very well to achieve satisfactory levels of performance. In athletics, pupils use refined techniques in a wide range of running, jumping and throwing events and activities. In difficult indoor conditions for athletics, the teaching led to a good understanding of the principles of athletic performance. Pupils' knowledge of health, fitness and preparation for specific events is good. The impact of the accommodation on standards is significant. Facilities at times restrict the teaching and opportunity to extend all pupils fully.

185. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in physical education are very good. The manner in which the pupils conduct themselves is a feature of the work and is to be commended. The quality of relationships is the key to the very good ethos for learning in every lesson. In all years, pupils work hard, concentrate and take an obvious pride in their performance.

186. The quality of teaching and learning in all years is at least good and there are a significant number

of lessons where teaching is very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and have high expectations of the pupils in terms of work and behaviour. In all lessons, class management, organisation and discipline are very good. It is the key to the good learning observed. Where teaching was at its best, teachers provided pupils with clear objectives for the lesson. Progress is best in lessons where teaching focussed on learning points across the three strands of the attainment target. In most lessons teachers explained the purpose of the learning activity, gave feedback as to where pupils were in their learning and what they need to do to improve. The teachers work hard to provide a supportive environment for learning. They are enthusiastic, plan well and work hard to inspire pupils. Demonstration is used well in most lessons to support the learning. Teachers use their knowledge to engage and enthuse students. The quality of relationships in physical education is very good. The teachers have built a culture of mutual trust and respect. Pupils receive good help and support from teachers. More consistent teaching of self-evaluation in all lessons will improve learning and standards. There is good work in relation to learning targets. The department has not yet focused enough, however, on achieving consistency and ensuring that all pupils understand how well they are progressing in more than performance. The current schemes of work and assessment procedures are a good foundation to improve standards further. Consistent use of the criteria in relation to the pupils' ability to plan and evaluate is raising attainment and there is scope for it to do so further. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to practise, refine and adapt the range of skills in activities. There is evidence of task modification and different approaches to meet the needs of all abilities to ensure progression for all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs.

187. The leadership and management of the department are both very good. The Head of Department is a dedicated teacher who leads with distinction. She is an excellent role model and ensures there is effective support for colleagues to develop good standards, organisation and consistently good teaching. The team has a shared vision and understanding of the areas for improvement. There is a very good team spirit and a real commitment to provide a range, breadth and balance within the curriculum. Developments are well targeted and are planned to address the needs of pupils and staff at this time. Inspection evidence shows that the department has good plans to target improvements in timetabling, curriculum design, assessment and schemes of work to raise standards further. For example there is inadequate curriculum time in Year 9: the department has obtained support from senior managers to improve this next year. The physical education team has been invited by the LEA to lead colleagues from other schools in the implementation of literacy and assessment in physical education. They have worked in partnership with the school business manager and the local primary schools to deliver a very effective swimming programme.
188. The physical education department contributes positively to the personal development of pupils. There is a clear moral code and the teachers are a committed group, endeavouring to promote principles, which clearly distinguish right from wrong. Pupils are provided with a range of opportunities in lessons, as well as very good extra-curricular provision, to develop and express moral values. The programmes extend their personal and social understanding of physical education and sport. Their spiritual development is enhanced by the work. It helps them to gain a sense of achievement, develop a positive attitude towards themselves and others. There is a supportive culture of success and teachers also work sensitively to help the pupils when they have to cope with limitations in their performance. Cultural awareness is developed through sport and dance.
189. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. There have been improvements in staffing, curriculum, assessment, GCSE results and teaching. GCSE results are well above average. There is a drive to achieve the highest standards through a focus on learning. Standards have improved and there is consistency in the quality of teaching throughout the programmes. There is a commitment to further improvement ably led by the head of department and fully supported by the Headteacher and senior leadership team.
190. This is achieved against a backdrop of accommodation for physical education which is inadequate. The indoor facilities are unsatisfactory. The quality of some of the outdoor areas is of concern. The hard play area is good but the all-weather area is unavailable during inclement weather. The lack of facilities restricts the range, balance and depth of the curriculum. Although the department plans very effectively to address the constraints placed upon them, it is evident that they are unable to deliver the curriculum as planned. Almost 40 % of curriculum time is lost due to a significant percentage of lessons having to be changed and adapted. The



unsatisfactory accommodation is a barrier to this very effective team raising standards further. There have been improvements to the changing rooms and staff facilities. Since the last inspection the department has continued to provide a very good programme of extra-curricular activities. Pupils are achieving excellence through their involvement in local, regional and national competitions beyond the statutory curriculum in physical education.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- There are very good public examination results.
- Some of the teaching is very good.
- The department has very good documentation.

### Areas for improvement

- More specialist teaching.
- The amount of written work produced.
- Planning work which provides a better match to pupils' learning needs and extends the highest and the lowest attaining pupils.

191. At the end of Year 11, the standards of attainment in the GCSE examination short course are well above the national average. Of the large number of pupils entered for the examination in 2001, eighty two per cent gained the higher grades of A\* to C. One hundred per cent gained grades A\* to G. There is a significant upward trend in the results. In 1998, for example, the percentages were forty per cent (A\* to C) and ninety per cent (A\* to G). The results have risen consistently since 1998. The standards of the work seen during the inspection, in the lessons and in pupils' books are broadly above the standards expected at this stage. Pupils have a good knowledge of the two religions that they are studying, Christianity and Judaism, and they can talk meaningfully about the beliefs values and traditions that are central to these religious systems. The pupils can relate this knowledge to a good number of human experiences and topics, such as relationships, world concerns, issues surrounding the complexity of existence and issues of justice and equality. Their skills of discussion are particularly good, although they need to be stronger on giving responses from more than one point of view. Their written skills are not strong, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
192. Attainment at the end of Year 9 is in line with the standards indicated in the Agreed Syllabus. The pupils have a sound knowledge and understand of Christianity and several other world religions including Islam, Judaism and Hinduism. Their knowledge and understanding of the practical workings of these religions is stronger than their knowledge and understanding of the belief systems and intellectual structures that underpin these forms. The pupils are familiar with a significant number of religious concepts that are common to world religions and they can often use specialist religious language in a meaningful way. The pupils are particularly good at giving verbal responses and in this respect they are articulate in expressing their own opinions on a range of subjects. This ability could be extended further so that the insights that they have gained from the study of religions are used to develop their own beliefs, values and attitudes in a more pronounced way. Their skills of writing, and extended writing in particular, could be much stronger.
193. Overall, the achievement of pupils is good, as they progress very well from their entry level in Year 7 to the very good public examination results at the end of Year 11. Pupils who have special educational needs are progressing as well as the other pupils, as teachers are sensitive to their needs and support them accordingly. A more consistent policy on providing differentiated work however would strengthen this provision as well as providing for the more able pupils and the pupils who are gifted and talented. The policy on the provision of extension work is not sufficiently consistent to ensure benefit to pupils who complete their work before the others. There is a lack of more difficult work, such as in research tasks, rather than simply giving the pupils more work to do of the same level of difficulty. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls or of any other group.

194. Overall the response of the pupils is good with some very good and some satisfactory elements. In the main, the pupils are well behaved and concentrate on their work and are able to sustain this concentration. At times though, some concentration is lost when the teacher's own verbal presentation takes up too much time or when the lesson has insufficient structure and direction. Pupils show an interest in their work and they are willing to respond to and think through many of the issues brought up by the lessons. In this respect their responses are often lively as well as being thoughtful and serious. The pupils show respect for each other and for the teachers and they also respect the viewpoints of others. The pupils also cooperate well with each other during group work and collaborative tasks.
195. Overall, the teaching in all years is good, with some very good and some satisfactory aspects. All lessons are well prepared and the teachers use a good range of activities to engage the pupils and to put across the subject matter. The teachers generally have good control of the pupils. There is a positive pleasant working atmosphere in most lessons. Where the teaching is very good, the lessons have a brisk pace and the teachers are certain of the subject matter and consequently they are able to put across the content of the lessons with confidence and in a clear way. In these lessons the learning is clear and purposeful. Satisfactory lessons are where the teaching is generally sound but where the lack of subject expertise means that the learning is more limited and where tasks have a tendency to become mundane and lacking in intellectual rigour. At times in these lessons the subject content being taught becomes confused. There is also a tendency to be more reliant on text books and photocopied materials. Generally, across most lessons, there is insufficient emphasis on teaching about the intellectual structures and belief systems that lie beyond the things that are being studied. Teachers do not sufficiently restrict some of their own verbal input to the lessons to allow the pupils to do more structured work, such as written tasks. More provision for the range of abilities within the lessons, in the form of differentiated work and extension tasks, would widen the learning benefit of most lessons. Homework is set and there is a regular programme of assessment.
196. The department is well managed by a specialist head of department. The proportion of specialist teaching is insufficient, as seven non-specialists currently contribute to the teaching of the subject. About one third of all lessons are taught by these non-specialist teachers and the work involved in monitoring and providing for them is very significant. As such the staffing is unsatisfactory.
197. Progress since the last inspection has been good. The statutory requirements of the Agreed Syllabus are now being implemented in all years and all pupils now do a Short Course GCSE in Years 10 and 11. The department has excellent documentation and this includes schemes of work, lesson plans and a whole range of policies on issues like assessment, record keeping and staff development. The documents carefully reflect the content requirements of the Agreed Syllabus. There is a specialist teaching room for the head of department but the rest of the teaching is done in a large number of rooms in various places. This presents difficulties in the use and sharing of the limited resources, particularly text books. The accommodation is unsatisfactory. The department makes a good contribution to the standards of literacy in the school with the introduction, explanation and use of new words and phrases, as well as in its emphasis on discussion and reading. The department also makes a significant contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision in the school in its consideration and reflection on many human issues and in its study of world religions. The use of information technology is in the early stages of development. The department has a very good capacity to develop further with more specialist subject teaching.