

ERRATUM

Dates of inspection should read:

1-2 October 2001

INSPECTION REPORT

GORDON'S SCHOOL

Woking

LEA area: Surrey

Unique reference number: 125303

Headteacher: Denis Mulkerrin

Reporting inspector: Gulshan Kayembe
2901

Dates of inspection: 1 –2 October

Inspection number: 191937

Short 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:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16 year
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Bagshot Road West End Woking Surrey
Postcode:	GU24 9PT
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Captain Peter Cobb OBE RN
Date of previous inspection:	February 1997

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The Gordon's School is a popular and oversubscribed comprehensive school situated near Woking. There are 579 girls and boys on roll, though boys outnumber girls. It is a very unusual school in that it is a secular voluntary aided school and makes boarding provision for about a quarter of its pupils. It was originally opened in 1885 as a boys' home to act as a national memorial to General Gordon of Khartoum. Though the school later became a boys' boarding school and then took in day pupils, referred to as day boarders, it continues to be a living memorial to its namesake, General Gordon.

The majority of pupils, over 95 per cent, are of white, UK heritage. The very few from minority ethnic backgrounds are mostly Indian, Pakistani or Chinese and all are fluent in English. About 15 per cent of pupils at the school are children of army personnel and tend to be full time boarders. The army provides allowances to cover the costs of boarding. Relatively few pupils are eligible for a free school meal in comparison with national averages. About 6 per cent of pupils receive bursaries for boarding provision. The overall social and economic circumstances of pupils are favourable in comparison to national norms. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is similar to the national average but the proportion with statements is below.

The school's roll has increased quite significantly since the last inspection in February 1997. Another significant change has been the improvement in the attainment of pupils on entry. Pupils currently in the school started with above average attainment. However, those who took examinations in 2000 and the previous four or five years demonstrated similar attainment on entry as found at the time of the last inspection: broadly average with few very high or very low attainers.

Gordon's officially caters only for pupils aged 11 to 16, but continues to provide post-16 education for its pupils under a franchise arrangement with another local school, Heathside School. This inspection did not include the sixth form, which was inspected as part of the inspection of Heathside School in 1999.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Gordon's School is an exceptional school with many excellent and outstanding features. It is very successful in enabling its pupils to reach high standards of work. The headteacher's outstanding leadership provides staff and pupils with a clarity of purpose, which unifies all in the pursuit of excellence. There is no compromise on standards and the very good quality of education provided, including teaching, promotes high achievement. Each pupil at the school is considered important and the development of well-rounded individuals is given the highest priority. The quality of the extra-curricular programme goes beyond excellence. Overall, the school provides very good value for money.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- Outstanding leadership by the headteacher inspires strong commitment to the school's key aims and enables staff with management responsibilities to make a very good contribution to the school's work.
- The very high expectations of teachers and the very good teaching methods they employ go a long way towards creating a very positive climate for learning.
- Pupils of all abilities reach high standards of work throughout the school and perform very well in national tests and examinations taken at the ages of 14 and 16.
- The exceptional programme for extra-curricular activities makes a considerable contribution to the pupils' personal development.
- The excellence of the ethos of the school results in a harmonious community where mutual respect and mature attitudes are very successfully fostered.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- Learning opportunities are very good overall but there is scope for improvement in some areas such as information and communication technology (ICT), religious education and awareness of the cultural diversity of British society.
- Raising the overall GCSE performance, based on average points score, from well above average to very high. This would bring it into line with the very high proportion of pupils who gain five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C and A*-G.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The improvement in the school's educational provision, and the resultant impact on the results of national tests and examinations, has been excellent. There has been a dramatic improvement in the proportions of pupils gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C. This proportion rose from 58 per cent in 1996 to a peak of 90 per cent in 2000. Though it fell slightly in 2001, the drop was not significant and was balanced by the significantly improved overall performance at GCSE, based on pupils' average points score. This rose by more than twice as much as the GCSE points score nationally between 1996 and 2000. In the national tests for 14-year-olds, the results were already high at the time of the last inspection and have been improved upon even more, especially in science and mathematics, over the last five years and in English in 2001. The quality of teaching has improved appreciably since the last inspection and the key issues arising from it have been very effectively tackled. Overall, given the very high standard of leadership and very good quality of teaching, there are excellent prospects for further improvement.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE examinations	B	A	A	A

Key	
<i>well above average</i>	A
<i>above average</i>	B
<i>average</i>	C
<i>below average</i>	D
<i>well below average</i>	E

The table above shows that pupils' overall performance in GCSE examinations, based on the average points score, was above average in 1998 and well above average in 1999 and 2000. Performance in relation to pupils' prior attainment is well above the average of similar schools. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more, and one or more, GCSEs at grades A* to G were very high in 2000 and comparable with the performance of the top five per cent of schools nationally. Pupils' performance based on the proportion who gained five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, five or more GCSEs at grades A* to G or one or more GCSEs at grades A* to G was in line with the performance of pupils in the top five per cent of similar schools. Overall, 2001 results were better than the 2000. Though slightly fewer pupils gained five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, the average points score was distinctly higher. The school met its targets well in both 2000 and 2001. GCSE results in English and mathematics are high. In science in 2000, the results were comparable to those of the top five per cent of schools nationally. Results in modern foreign languages and business education, though improving, are not as good as in other subjects, and results in German in 2001 were poor. However, in all other subjects, GCSE results for 2000 and 2001 have been significantly above national averages.

Standards in National Curriculum tests taken in 2000 at the end of Year 9 were well above the average of schools nationally and similar schools. The 2001 results were similar to the 2000 results in mathematics and science and showed a significant improvement in English in the numbers of pupils attaining the higher levels.

The results indicate very good achievement and progress by pupils. Inspection evidence reflects the high standards seen in national examination and test results. In English, pupils are confident speakers and very good listeners. The quality of their writing is very good and in most subjects it is well sustained when pupils write at length. Pupils demonstrate very good numeracy in mathematics lessons and in other subjects, whilst in science pupils have very good knowledge and understanding of scientific facts and ideas. They handle practical work with skill and alacrity and conduct scientific investigations capably.

Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress. The few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as their peers and attain similarly high standards.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent. Pupils work hard and participate fully in all the school has to offer. Pupils are very keen to come to school and they participate in all activities with enthusiasm and enjoyment.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Excellent. Pupils are lively and enthusiastic but show very good levels of self-discipline and self-restraint when it is required of them. In lessons, their exemplary behaviour makes a marked contribution to their learning.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. Pupils emerge from the school as articulate, pleasant, well-rounded and confident youngsters. Relationships are outstanding.
Attendance	Excellent. Pupils are punctual to lessons.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching is very good overall. Very high expectations and very good planning are key characteristics of teaching which enable pupils to make rapid progress. Most teachers are imaginative and creative in the methods they use to teach pupils and this makes a considerable contribution to the high level of involvement of pupils in their own learning. Rigorous teaching challenges pupils to think and helps them to make significant progress. The teaching meets the needs of pupils very well. Literacy and numeracy are effectively taught. Teaching in English, mathematics and science is very good, though in mathematics there is scope for teachers to use a wider range of teaching methods.

Homework makes a very good contribution to pupils' learning. However, marking is somewhat variable. Some marking is thorough and provides good written feedback to pupils. At other times it is rather cursory and occasionally books are not marked as regularly as they should be. In contrast, oral feedback to pupils is usually of very good quality and pupils have a very good knowledge of their own learning i.e. their strengths and weaknesses.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The quality of the curriculum is very good and the range of curriculum enrichment activities is exceptional. However, the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education are not fully met for pupils in Years 10 to 11. Nor is enough use is made of computers in some subjects.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Pupils' needs are exceptionally well met and they receive high quality support. The special needs co-ordinator provides outstanding expertise.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for pupils' personal development is excellent, including for spiritual, moral and social development. Opportunities for pupils to learn about British traditions, in particular the historical origins of the school are also excellent. Awareness of the cultural diversity of Britain today is less well promoted.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Pupils receive excellent pastoral care. The boarding provision is very good and pupils are very well looked after. Pupils' academic progress and personal development are rigorously tracked and swift action is taken if necessary.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. A very clear direction is set for further development of the school, with an unstinting focus on the pursuit of excellence. A unified staff with a shared purpose and common goals work effectively together as a team.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Excellent. Governors are very effectively involved in the work of the school. They are very well informed and have very clear expectations of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. Marked by the swiftness of action where a weakness is perceived. The school's self-evaluation has played a significant role in its improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Excellent. The school's finances are very prudently managed and spending is rigorously checked. Money is very well targeted towards meeting pupils' needs and getting the best value from it for their benefit.

Displays in classrooms are excellent and create a lively and stimulating learning environment. The use of computers is growing and some subjects, such as geography and English, make very good use of ICT, however, not all subjects provide pupils with enough such opportunities. Some of this is due to lack of equipment. The school is fully aware of the issues and already has a working group examining the school's current and future needs in ICT.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• the school's high expectations of pupils;• the leadership and management of the school;• the range of activities outside lessons;• that the school helps pupils to mature and become responsible;• that the school is approachable if they have a problem or a query.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• a minority of parents would like to see the school develop closer working relationships with them.

Parents' positive views are well supported by the inspection evidence, which confirms without a doubt that this is an exceptionally good school. It is difficult to see what more the school could do to improve the working relationships with parents. There are very good formal and informal mechanisms for parents to speak to teachers and the quality of information for parents is very good. Information on pupils' progress is provided more frequently than many schools, though annual reports could be more precise on points for improvement.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Outstanding leadership by the headteacher inspires strong commitment to the school's key aims and enables staff with management responsibilities to make a very good contribution to the school's work.

1. One of the main reasons for the success of the school and the remarkable improvement in the performance of pupils in examinations, particularly at GCSE Level, has been the outstanding leadership provided by the headteacher. He brings a very clear vision of the kind of school he wants Gordon's to be. Key to his vision is the high premium placed on each individual pupil and the very high expectations of the school and staff in meeting each individual's needs. Every pupil is personally known to the headteacher and his interest in each one is genuine and sincere.
2. The success of the school also owes much to the headteacher's ability to unify staff and bring them together in the pursuit of common aims to reach the highest standards and to expect only the best from themselves and their pupils. The very high expectations of the headteacher are shared by staff, who have a very strong commitment to commonly agreed goals and values. The impact is clear: a very strong level of teamwork and an atmosphere where staff share good practice and look critically at their own work in a genuine effort to improve learning and develop more effective ways of working. The work of the school is fully and thoroughly monitored, particularly by the headteacher and senior staff. There is a very good system of sharing information. If an issue arises or a weakness is identified through the monitoring procedures, swift action is taken to remedy the situation. Heads of department look informally at pupils' work and many carry out regular exercises with their staff to see how work is marked and grades or National Curriculum Levels are allocated. They do not, as a routine, collect in samples of work from different members of staff in their departments. As a result, some weaknesses in marking of work have not been picked up as rigorously as other issues in teaching which have been dealt with very effectively.
3. Under the inspirational leadership of the headteacher, others with responsibilities within the school, senior and middle managers, are empowered to provide clear and purposeful leadership in their own right. Delegation of responsibilities is very well organised and managed and there is effective follow-up to ensure that tasks have been completed. The deputy headteachers are very clear about their roles and interact with other members of staff in a focused manner, which supports the school aims and contributes to pupils' achievement. Time is not wasted on any activity which is not going to make a significant difference to pupils' learning or their welfare and personal development. Heads of department are very well focused on the quality of work in their areas and on developing the best strategies for raising attainment even further. They provide very good role models for teachers in their department and challenge them to do even better.
4. The school governors share the same aims and are clearly focused on what the school is doing for the pupils in its care. They have an active involvement in the work and life of the school and are prepared to ask challenging questions. They are very clear about their own roles and what they want from the headteacher. Thus they set clear targets, which are well focused on the school's needs. Governors meet their statutory duties very well and provide a clear sense of direction for the school. Overall, the combination of an astute governing body, a highly skilled staff and an outstanding headteacher is a very

powerful one. The net result is a school which has improved at a remarkable rate since its last inspection and one which provides a very high quality of education for its pupils. Pupils not only perform to their best but are happy doing so and enjoying the opportunities to broaden their horizons well beyond their immediate environment.

5. The very high expectations of teachers and the very good teaching methods they employ go a long way towards creating a very positive climate for learning

6. The quality of teaching is very good throughout the school. A particular feature of the teaching is the high expectations teachers have of their pupils. The work set for them is very challenging and pushes them to the limits of their capabilities. For example, in the majority of lessons observed, teachers ask probing questions, which make pupils, think for themselves. Pupils are also given considerable opportunities to work on their own. As a result, they make rapid progress and become more self-reliant.

7. As part of the challenge to pupils, teachers frequently draw from National Curriculum programmes of study for older pupils than the ones they are teaching. This is especially the case in groups of high ability pupils. In an excellent Year 8 science lesson, for example, pupils looked in considerable depth at enzymes and were asked difficult questions about them. Some of the work they completed would normally be covered by pupils in a GCSE class. However, they responded very well to the challenge of thinking about difficult scientific ideas and phenomena and as a result developed a significantly deeper understanding of the action of enzymes than required for their age.

8. Teachers use a very good range of methods for teaching and often these methods are interesting and creative. In an excellent Year 10 geography lesson on population pyramids, for example, the teacher used pupils to teach the rest of the class following group work where they drew out their ideas and developed deeper knowledge and understanding on population pyramids. The group work enabled pupils to seek out information for themselves and the opportunity to teach others in the class promoted their skills in presentation as well as their understanding. In an excellent Year 9 science lesson, the teacher used board games, which she had made, very effectively to help pupils understand the issues of survival for animals in their habitat, the factors which assisted their survival, such as the use of camouflage, and the factors which threatened it, such as local predators. The imaginative use of games motivated pupils and engaged their interest effectively.

9. Further challenge is provided to pupils in the very good pace set by teachers for teaching and learning. Pupils do manage to keep up, and sensitive support is always provided to ensure that no one in the lesson falls behind. There is a very strong work ethic in lessons and this is extended to work done outside lessons through the high quality of the homework set. This rarely involves finishing off work begun in class and often requires taking the classwork a step further forward. For example, in the Year 9 science lesson on environments, having established the issues of survival of the snail, pupils had to plot and then analyse data on the survival rates of different types of snails. Work is usually marked regularly and there are examples of very good quality marking especially in English. However, at times, marking is too cursory, and provides little information to pupils on how to improve their work. This was particularly noticeable in, but not exclusive to, a sample of mathematics books examined. The superb quality of displays in classrooms helps to create a highly stimulating learning environment, which in turn motivates and encourages pupils. It also promulgates the strong work ethic prevalent throughout the school.

10. Very good attention is given to the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils make extensive use of speaking and listening in subjects other than English. They also write at length and frequently make detailed notes of their own in other subjects. Research skills

and the skills needed to extract information from a wide variety of sources are also encouraged and used widely across the curriculum. Data handling skills are very well used in a large number of subjects including history, science, business education, and geography. In science there are good opportunities for pupils to manipulate and use equations to solve numerical problems. As a result of the overall very good opportunities to apply their literacy and numeracy skills on a regular basis, pupils build very well on what they learn in English and mathematics lessons through their work in other subjects. Teaching of English and mathematics is very good. In English, the enthusiasm of the teachers and the very good methods used encourage a love of language and literature. In mathematics a systematic and rigorous approach to teaching and challenging work enables pupils to make very good progress. However, the teaching here, though very thorough and well structured, can at times be too didactic and the use of a wider range of methods could be developed further.

11. Overall, the quality of teaching meets very effectively the needs of all pupils. Higher attainers are challenged and stretched; lower attainers, including those with special educational needs, are effectively supported to reach high standards of work. Learning support staff work very well with pupils, though occasionally the time spent on working with pupils they have been assigned to and others who might also need support in a lesson is a little unbalanced. Teaching in withdrawal sessions, when pupils with special educational needs are given specialist tuition and support, is very good. Here pupils are provided with a wide range of activities, which help them to improve key areas of their work, especially language and literacy. Pupils with special educational needs are very successfully involved in assessing their work and in setting targets for themselves. Overall, the needs of pupils with special educational needs are exceptionally well met.

12. Teachers plan lessons thoroughly and make use of a wide range of resources. Again their very high expectations mean that they plan lessons which will provide the pupils with resources they can use on their own and which will help them to develop their thinking. The availability of research material is a common element in many lessons. The focus of lessons is often skilfully placed on helping pupils to draw out useful conclusions from the work they are doing or the information they have discovered. As a result pupils are developing very good skills of analysis and ask many questions of their own.

13. Pupils of all abilities reach high standards of work throughout the school and perform very well in national tests and examinations taken at the ages of 14 and 16.

14. Results of reading and other tests administered by the local authority indicate that attainment on entry to the school has been broadly average for pupils who were at the school at the time of the last inspection and for those who have been sitting GCSE examinations up until recently. For these groups the general pattern has been few pupils with very high attainment or very low attainment and a high proportion of broadly average attainment. There was, however, a change in the 1996 entry. Amongst pupils who entered the school then and took GCSE in 2001 there were none with very low attainment and an increased number with higher attainment. For year groups currently in the school, the attainment is distinctly above average, though still there are relatively few pupils who demonstrate very high attainment. In addition, the proportion of pupils with special educational needs remains broadly in line with the national average.

15. Overall performance in GCSE examinations in relation to pupils' prior attainment is well above the national average and the average in similar types of schools. This is based on the average points score. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to G and one or more GCSEs at grades A* to G were very high in 2000 and comparable with the performance of the top five per cent of schools nationally. The proportion gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C was well above the national average. The school did very

well in relation to similar types of schools. Pupils' performance based on the proportion who gained five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, five or more GCSEs at grades A* to G, or one or more GCSEs at grades A* to G was in line with the performance of pupils in the top five per cent of similar schools. On the whole results in 2001 were better than in 2000. Though slightly fewer pupils gained five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, the average points score was distinctly higher. The school set itself challenging targets based on an analysis of the attainment on entry but met its targets quite comfortably in both 2000 and 2001. This demonstrates both the high value added the school provides but also that it can perhaps afford to set even more challenging targets.

16. Overall, core subjects tend to have high results and usually 80 per cent or more of pupils gain grades A* to C. In 2000, the percentages of grades A* to C in English and mathematics were well above the national averages and very high in science. They were very high in all three subjects when compared to similar schools, in relation to both prior attainment and the proportion of pupils eligible for a free school meal. In 2001 about half the pupils took three sciences. Results were very good, but better in biology and chemistry than in physics. Results in physical education are strong with 100 per cent of pupils gaining grade A*-C over the last few years and a high proportion gaining A* or A, especially in 2001. Standards in history have improved quite considerably since the previous inspection, when they were fairly low. The department is appreciably stronger now and this is reflected in the good results it achieves. Overall, other than in modern foreign languages and in business education, GCSE results in individual subjects are significantly above the national average. Results in modern foreign languages and business education, though improving, are not as good as in other subjects, and results in German in 2001 were poor. However, in all other subjects, GCSE results for 2000 and 2001 have been significantly above national averages.

17. In 2000, standards in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were well above the average of schools nationally and schools and similar schools. The 2001 results were similar to the 2000 results in mathematics and science and showed a significant improvement in the numbers of pupils attaining the higher levels in English.

18. Boys do well at the school. The gap between boys and girls is narrower than the case nationally in GCSE examinations and National Curriculum tests for 14 year olds. In fact in the National Curriculum tests, boys performed better than girls in science and mathematics in 2000. In both these subjects, the higher performance of boys is a fairly established pattern between 1997 and 2000. At GCSE the gap between girls and boys has been narrowing, and in 2000 the average points score was exactly the same for boys and girls. The better performance of boys at Gordon's compared to boys nationally is a result of a well established culture of achievement within which boys are keen to do well and to be seen to do well. The boarding nature of the school provides a clear structure for the day, which includes a very well balanced set of academic, and leisure activities for day boarders and full boarders. This structure also contributes to the high achievement of boys.

19. At both key stages the results of public tests and examinations indicate very good achievement and progress by pupils. Inspection evidence reflects the high standards seen in national examination and test results. In English, pupils are confident speakers and very good listeners. By the time they are in Year 9, the standards of presentation are very good for most pupils and handwriting is clear and fluent. Good use is made of paragraphing and the overall standard of spelling is very good, though some lower attainers, understandably, are still coming to grips with this. Pupils are making very good advances in writing about literature. They are beginning to analyse plot and character in depth and to consider the social context in the books they are reading as well as key underlying themes. There are many examples of effective writing where pupils are looking through the eyes of others, characters in a book or from history. By the time pupils are in Year 11, they produce very

good analytical and critical writing on the literature they have read, including plays by Shakespeare. Such writing is well structured and fluent. Pupils also produce high quality imaginative writing making good use of a wide and interesting range of vocabulary.

20. Pupils demonstrate very good numeracy both in mathematics lessons and in other subjects. They demonstrate a good grasp of algebra, and by the time they reach Year 11 they handle complex algebraic expressions well. Able pupils are effectively extended and know, for example, how to produce graphical representations of algebraic expressions. At both key stages, pupils handle data very competently. They also work knowledgeably with geometric expressions, for example, to calculate areas and distances. In science, pupils demonstrate very good knowledge and understanding of scientific facts and ideas. They have very good practical skills and very well developed skills in scientific enquiry and investigation, as a result of the very good opportunities they have to conduct experiments and experimental research. For example, pupils in Year 9 developed detailed plans to investigate and find out which parts of a plant photosynthesise. They showed in-depth knowledge and understanding of the process of photosynthesis and demonstrated very good awareness of the method for testing if photosynthesis had taken place. Year 11 pupils produce detailed investigational reports. For example, high attaining pupils planned and conducted experiments into the speed of sound with masterly skill. They also calculated the margins for error in the experimental technique used, and this is quite unusual at GCSE Level. Lower attaining pupils produce very credible investigative reports, showing secure knowledge and understanding of the scientific ideas they are exploring, such as refraction for example, and the accuracy and suitability of the methods they are using. Overall, pupils successfully apply their scientific knowledge and understanding to investigative work.

21. Standards in most other subjects are high. In geography and history pupils demonstrate very good enquiry skills and their factual knowledge and understanding are of a high order. Pupils in a Year 10 geography lessons demonstrated very good knowledge and understanding of population pyramids and could differentiate between demographic transition graphs and population pyramids and how each could be used. Musical standards are high and pupils demonstrate very good skills of instrumental performance, playing with feeling and energy. The construction work in design and technology is exemplary and marked by the quality of the finish and the attention to detail.

22. Pupils' ICT skills are good on the whole despite the lack of sufficient opportunities to make use of computers in some subjects. The key reasons for their good progress and good attainment in ICT include the opportunities they do have in subjects such as English and geography and the fact that computers are available to them for use at lunch times and after school. Their own interest and enthusiasm for ICT helps to maintain high standards of work. However, the range of programs they use and the variety of ways they apply ICT to work in subjects of the curriculum is not as extensive as it should be, thus limiting their capacity to develop in-depth working knowledge of a much wider range of computer applications.

23. Written work in French indicates significant improvement over the last six months in the quality of pupils' work in both key stages. Whilst much work involves short, one-sentence exercises, this is increasingly supplemented by extended pieces of writing. In Year 9, for example, pupils are producing longer pieces of writing on topics such as their family. The expressions used in this work are generally accurate, with high attaining pupils demonstrating good command of vocabulary and spelling. In Year 11, a greater quantity of extended written work over the last six months is evident. It included many errors initially, such as 'J'ai prends' instead of 'J'ai pris', but considerable progress has been made so that accuracy, fluency and length of written work are now much better.

24. Examination of books and pupils' work in lessons and on display in classrooms shows that they use literacy and numeracy skills very well across the full range of subjects. In science, for example, pupils produce detailed notes on their own throughout the school. They also make frequent use of graphs and charts to display data they have collected, as well as using their skills in algebra to solve equations such as $v=u+at$ in Year 11. Data handling skills are frequently put to good use in subjects such as design and technology, geography and business studies. Pupils' writing in subjects such as history, geography and religious education is very good. For example, pupils in Key Stage 3 have written moving prayers in religious education for America following the attacks on the World Trade Centre. Extended projects in geography help pupils to develop very good report writing skills, such as a project on Japan for pupils in Year 8. The quality of written work overall is well above average, with high standards of spelling and evidence of writing at good length in most subjects.

25. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress. They develop literacy skills at a very good rate and are helped very effectively to overcome learning difficulties. Those with emotional and behavioural difficulties are making such good progress in managing their behaviour that it is impossible to identify, simply on the basis of observable behaviour, who they are.

26. The few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as their peers and attain similarly high standards. The detailed tracking of individual pupils' progress ensures that all of them achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. From lesson observations, it is clear that those from cultural backgrounds other than white European are making very good progress.

27. The exceptional programme for extra-curricular activities makes a considerable contribution to the pupils' personal development.

28. The school's aims make a strong commitment to the personal development of pupils and are very explicit and clear, particularly about the development of spiritual, moral and social values. A very unusual feature of how the school meets these high aims is in the daily programme of activities after school. This provides pupils with a structured programme of extra-curricular activities on a daily basis. The range of activities is very wide and all pupils and teachers are involved. Pupils have excellent opportunities through this programme to try out different activities and to widen their horizons well beyond their immediate environment. A wide variety of sporting activities are on offer. These include: rugby, basketball, hockey, netball, mountain biking, martial arts, horse riding, swimming, table tennis and golf, to name a few. Other activities after school include use of the Internet, art, music, jazz, steel drums, dance, drama, cooking and science activities. The school runs the Duke of Edinburgh scheme as part of the programme of after school activities. This involves a large number of pupils and produces exceptional results. Last year, for example, 81 pupils achieved a bronze, silver or gold award. The Combined Cadet Force provides regular activities as part of the after-school programme. The rich and varied programme is most unusual and rarely found in the state school sector.

29. All pupils also come to school on Saturday mornings when further activities are offered which seek to develop broader perspectives in pupils' thinking and views of the world around them.

30. One of the most remarkable features of the after school activities is the wholehearted enthusiasm and commitment to these of staff and pupils. Pupils gain considerably in terms of development of their confidence and self-assurance during these activities. In addition, through many of these activities they develop a better understanding of one another and of

their teachers. This goes a long way to promoting the excellent relationships within the school and the high degree of tolerance that pupils display towards one another.

31. Moral and social values are transmitted very effectively through the extra-curricular programme but also through the whole ethos of the school and the values it stands for. Part of the programme of activities also includes practice for the pipes and drums that accompany the pupils when they go on ceremonial parades to celebrate the life of General Gordon. This happens on three Sundays per term and at an annual parade down Whitehall in central London to General Gordon's statue on the Embankment to celebrate his birth. Through these specific activities, pupils learn a great deal about valuing traditions. The overall extra-curricular programme does much to develop pupils' ability to work in teams and to share ideas. For example, many of the activities in the combined cadet force encourage pupils to use their initiative and to solve problems in groups so that they do have to work as a team in order to be successful. Through taking a lead role in activities, pupils also have the opportunity to develop leadership skills and the skills to organise themselves and others.

32. There is much which encourages cultural development in the extra-curricular and curriculum enrichment activities. The very nature of the school itself, as a living memorial to General Gordon, enables much of the traditional English heritage to be promoted with a considerable degree of success. Many of the extra-curricular activities widen pupils' cultural horizons very successfully, for example, of art and music. There is a musical activity every lunchtime and a high proportion of pupils participate in the choir or the band. The standard of instrumental performance is very high.

33. Overall, the extra-curricular activities make a very important contribution to pupils' personal development.

34. The excellence of the ethos of the school results in a harmonious community where mutual respect and mature attitudes are very successfully fostered.

35. Overall, there is a very strong sense of community within the school. Pupils are at ease in their surroundings here and, particularly in the boarding houses, there is a 'family' atmosphere where pupils know one another well and are well known by the staff. The few from minority ethnic backgrounds are well integrated into the school and are equally at ease in this environment. Staff work hard to establish and maintain the best of relationships with pupils and are excellent role models for them.

36. The school very successfully establishes an ethos of mutual trust and respect. This is partly achieved by very clear communication of expectations of behaviour and academic study and partly through the care and consideration provided to each individual pupil. In other words, through a finely balanced mix of discipline and care. Pupils respond very well to this and appreciate the work the staff do for them and the opportunities the school provides. The extra-curricular activities provide excellent opportunities for pupils and staff to interact with one another in a different and more relaxed atmosphere than in lessons. They make a significant contribution to the excellent relationships that exist between them as well as amongst pupils themselves. Because all pupils are involved, all are fully included and integrated into the social life of the school. The variety and range of activities are such that there is something to suit all tastes and needs. The school has been exceptionally successful in including within its community a number of pupils who have come from other schools with particular needs, mainly emotional and behavioural. The programme of after school activities has played an instrumental role in enabling these pupils to become 'full citizens within the school society'.

37. The high expectations staff have of pupils contribute to their very positive attitudes in lessons. Pupils are prepared to work hard and to do their best. High academic achievement is seen as a desirable goal and pupils work hard in an atmosphere where they know their efforts will be valued not only by staff but by other pupils as well. Pupils celebrate one another's achievements and give spontaneous applause to their peers in appreciation of their efforts and success, academic or otherwise. The impact of this on boys' attainment is particularly good, as they are performing as well as girls. This is unlike the national picture, where boys' attainment is lagging behind that of girls.

38. The school has its own chapel, which provides a sense of spirituality and heightens the sense of occasion when pupils have assemblies there. Though the school does not meet fully the requirement for a daily act of collective worship, the assemblies are of good quality and a worthwhile experience for pupils. The themes are well matched to pupils' needs and reinforce positive messages about attitudes and behaviour. As a result, the assemblies make a significant contribution to the positive ethos of the school and engender commonly agreed moral and social values.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

39. Learning opportunities are very good overall but there is scope for improvement in some areas such as information and communication technology, religious education and awareness of the diversity of British society.

40. The overall curricular provision of the school is very good. It provides a very good level of challenge to pupils and contributes to the high standards attained. However, a few areas of curricular provision offered by the school could be improved further to widen the learning opportunities for pupils.

The use of ICT

41. The school is developing its range of computer resources, including hardware and software. ICT skills are currently taught through the subjects of the curriculum and there are no specific courses in ICT. Some subjects are making very good use of ICT. English and geography are two subjects that make very regular use of computers as part of teaching and learning. In English, pupils wordprocess their work on a regular basis and combine text and graphics or use desk top publishing programs to present it appropriately for different audiences. In geography, pupils make regular use of the Internet to find relevant information. There is some very good quality display of ICT work in science using desk top publishing to do presentations on specific science topics and also regular use by pupils of spreadsheets to record data and display it graphically. In geography, there is a weather station to help pupils measure and record data on weather conditions. Business education courses in Year 10 to 11 also provide pupils with regular opportunities to use of computers. However, not all pupils take business studies as an option. The school used to run a GCSE course in ICT but this is no longer provided.

42. Although the school meets the requirements of the National Curriculum, there is limited work on using programs such as databases and control programs. The design and technology department has some equipment for control work but it is at a fairly basic level. This limits the contribution they can make to the development of pupils' ICT skills. In science the lack of sufficient resources for data logging mean that pupils use such equipment rarely and more frequently see demonstrations of its use.

43. Most staff are confident in the use of ICT, but some need training and many would benefit from subject specific training in terms of how ICT could be used in their subject area. Staff are about to undergo their nationally funded training on ICT. In addition, the school has not yet developed a whole school curriculum plan to develop pupils' skills through use of ICT in subjects. There is also no whole school system of assessment. The school is aware of the need for the training and the development of programmes of study and has clear development plans to address these issues. It has been well established as a whole school priority and all subject development plans include the development of ICT.

44. One of the key factors slowing down the progress in the development of the use of ICT is the current limitation of resources. In addition to the shortages in computer peripherals, such as dataloggers, the school also does not have enough computers around the school. The school's pupil: computer ratio is 9:1. This is not as good as the national average ratio of 7:1. However, computers are made easily accessible to pupils. They are able to go to the resource centre during lessons if another class is not using the computers there. They are also able to use the resource centre in the evenings for homework and at lunch times. This open access contributes to their overall good skills in ICT, but the lack of sustained challenging use of computers in lessons means that they are missing opportunities to explore programs to a much deeper level.

Religious Education

45. The school works towards the Surrey Agreed Syllabus for religious education. Requirements are fully met for pupils in Years 7 to 9. However, the time allocated to religious education in Years 10 to 11 is too low, lower than recommended in the syllabus, and not all the elements of the syllabus can be taught in the time. There is good coverage of Christianity and Christian beliefs and traditions. However, too little time is spent on developing an understanding of the beliefs and traditions found in other religions. Overall, the opportunities are not as wide as they should be for learning about the value of belief and its impact on everyday life or developing knowledge of the diversity of religious beliefs. Pupils do not have sufficient time to consider and formulate their own views about religion and religious belief or to develop empathy with the views of others.

The cultural diversity of British society today

46. The school promotes respect for others and wherever opportunities appear in lessons for discussion or examination of other cultures, especially those representative of Britain today, teachers respond to them positively and use them to promote pupils' knowledge and understanding. In some subjects there are good opportunities for examination of cultural values and beliefs of others or to appreciate the contribution of other cultures to the world. In music there are opportunities to learn about jazz; in art Aboriginal techniques are explored; and in English the contribution of the Eastern world to medicine is discussed during study of Chaucer, where primitive approaches to medicine in medieval times are apparent. However, the school and some subject departments are not doing as much as they could to promote knowledge and understanding of the multi-cultural society in which we now live. For example, there are no direct links with schools that have large proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, though these are being established in music with a school in Hounslow.

47. Overall, there is scope for the school to build on the current good practice and further improve this aspect of its provision.

48. Raising the overall GCSE performance, based on average points score, from well above average to very high. This would bring it into line with the very high proportion of pupils who gain five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C and A*-G.

49. The school has made remarkable progress in improving its GCSE results. The progress has been particularly significant in relation to the proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades at A* to C. Whilst the progress made in raising the average points score has also been very good, this is the area where the school has the greatest potential for further improvement. This is particularly the case given the improvement in the overall attainment of pupils on entry to the school. There are three specific ways in which the school can do this:

50. The school does very well to enable high attainers to obtain results, which more than reflect their abilities. However, overall the proportion of the highest grade obtainable, A*, could be higher. Again, given the improved attainment on entry the school should be looking to increase the proportion of A* grades obtained by pupils.

51. Though the school is doing very well for its able pupils, there is no specific programme for gifted or talented pupils. The school is looking to develop this aspect of its work and to introduce a programme similar to those found in schools taking part in the Excellence in Cities initiatives.

52. In most subjects pupils attain results, which are well above average. However, the results in modern foreign languages and business studies are not as good. These results are usually in line with national averages, though in 2001 the German results were poor. The school has appointed new staff and teaching in the modern foreign language department was very good. This should lead to improved performance at GCSE, though a significant minority of pupils in Year 11 are currently taking a certificate of achievement rather than a GCSE. Pupils lower down in the school show very good levels of enthusiasm for modern foreign languages and the department needs to ensure that this is sustained to motivate all to take a GCSE examination course rather than continue with a Certificate of Achievement. Improving performance in modern foreign language GCSE courses would enable them to make a more significant contribution to the overall average GCSE points score.

53. Results in business education have been improving slowly. It is a reasonably new subject in the school and to a certain extent it is still being established, as there have been some staffing changes recently. However, a business education lesson was one of the rare lessons seen where not all pupils were as well motivated as in other lessons and a small minority were working at too slow a pace. Improving pupils' motivation through higher expectations and more rigorous monitoring of their work could be useful strategies to lift standards further, thus enabling business education to make a stronger contribution to the overall GCSE points score.

54. Pupils are taking more GCSEs than they were a couple of years ago. In 2001 for example, each pupil took on average between eight and nine GCSEs. This was an increase on the number of GCSEs taken per pupil in the previous year. The school could possibly look to raise this figure, certainly for pupils with the aptitude to cope with a larger number. Examining the curricular opportunities available to pupils and increasing the subjects being offered, for example a GCSE in ICT or short GCSE courses in some subjects, might be a useful way forward for the school.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

55. In order to build on its remarkable success, the school should:

- Improve learning opportunities by:
(Paragraph numbers: 35 to 43)
 - * providing more ICT learning opportunities in subjects of the curriculum through implementation of the ICT training programme for staff, improvements to the ICT facilities and implementation of the ICT priorities in subject development plans;
 - * meeting the requirements of the Surrey Agreed Syllabus in religious education and ensuring that pupils are given sufficient opportunities to learn about a variety of religious traditions and to explore their own and others' views about religious belief;
 - * increasing the opportunities for learning about the cultural diversity of modern day British society.

- Improve the average points score at GCSE by:
(Paragraph numbers: 43 to 44)
 - * working towards increasing the number of A* grades;
 - * developing a programme for gifted and able pupils;
 - * improving the results in modern foreign languages and business education;
 - * examining the possibility of widening curricular opportunities for pupils.

56. In addition to the key issues identified above, the school should also consider the minor issues identified below:

- Improve the quality of marking, especially in mathematics (paragraph numbers: 8).
- Develop reports further to include sharper focus on what pupils could do better (Page 9).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	34
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	23

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	6	19	7	2	0	0	0
Percentage	18	56	21	6	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents 3 percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7-Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	579
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	17

Special educational needs	Y7-Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	7
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	104

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	7

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	7
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	8

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.3
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
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	88	37	125

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	77	85	82
	Girls	36	30	32
	Total	113	115	114
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	89 (86)	92 (91)	91 (91)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	65 (56)	71 (77)	70 (70)
	National	32 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	81	86	86
	Girls	37	30	37
	Total	118	116	123
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	96 (88)	93 (92)	98 (94)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	81 (60)	72 (78)	78 (77)
	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	65	36	101

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	55	65	65
	Girls	32	36	36
	Total	88	101	101
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	87 (90)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	47.2 (47.4)	88.9 (90.6)	94.6 (95.6)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	51.4 (49)
	National	38.1 (38.4)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	6
Pakistani	3
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	4
White	563
Any other minority ethnic group	4

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes:

Y7–Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	43.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	13.3

Education support staff:

Y7–Y11

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	111

Deployment of teachers:

Y7–Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76.3
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Average teaching group size:

Y7–Y11

Key Stage 3	14
Key Stage 4	12

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	4	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	2000-2001
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	£
Total income	1944203.00
Total expenditure	1849751.00
Expenditure per pupil	3195.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	107350.00
Balance carried forward to next year	*201802.00

**Money ear-marked for investment in ICT and building works*

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	6.9
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	9.6
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out
Number of questionnaires returned

579
412

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	63.0	33.1	2.4	1.2	0.2
My child is making good progress in school.	61.9	35.4	1.7	0.5	0.5
Behaviour in the school is good.	55.7	41.1	2.9	0.2	0.0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	45.2	43.7	6.3	0.8	0.4
The teaching is good.	61.3	37.2	1.0	0.0	0.5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	58.3	34.7	5.8	1.2	0.0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	70.9	26.5	2.2	0.5	0.0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	87.9	12.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
The school works closely with parents.	52.6	38.7	8.0	0.5	0.2
The school is well led and managed.	83.0	15.3	1.2	0.0	0.5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	74.5	22.8	1.0	0.2	1.5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	82.5	16.5	0.7	0.0	0.2