

INSPECTION REPORT

HASSENBROOK SCHOOL

Stanford-le-Hope

LEA area: Thurrock

Unique reference number: 115365

Headteacher: Dr Geoffrey Casey

Reporting inspector: Ms Marjorie Glynne-Jones
2918

Dates of inspection: 21st – 24th May 2001

Inspection number: 192103

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Hassenbrook Road Stanford-le-Hope Essex
Postcode:	SS17 0NS
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Dr Ian Frood
Date of previous inspection:	25 th November 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Hassenbrook is a foundation school for boys and girls aged 11 to 16, situated not far from the oil refineries on the Thames Estuary. While currently smaller than most secondary schools, it is 40 per cent bigger than at the last inspection. The number on roll is rising, following a period of sharp decline between 1992 and 1996. For September 2001, there are twice as many applications as there are Year 7 places. In Years 7, 8 and 9, the number of boys is greater than that of girls, although in Years 10 and 11, the numbers are more evenly balanced. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority families is much the same as the national figure for unitary authorities, as is the proportion who speak English as an additional language. The latter includes a small number of refugees, welcomed by the school, who are at an early stage of learning to speak English. Compared with the picture nationally, the school has, overall, an average proportion of pupils with special educational needs. However, the proportion of those with the highest level of need is above average and includes five wheel-chair users. Pupils are now drawn from a wider area than at the last inspection, in which circumstances are more disadvantaged than is true nationally. This is not reflected in the figure for those entitled to free school meals which is much the same as the national figure. Some pupils travel long distances in order to attend the school. When they enter Year 7, pupils' attainment overall is below the expected standard for 11 year olds, and in English, it is well below the standard expected. This has been a constant pattern for pupils entering the school, including those taking GCSE in 2000.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school and a harmonious, supportive and happy community. Pupils' achievement is good because the teaching is good and their attitudes to work are good. GCSE results are at the national average, although pupils' attainment is below average when they join the school. There is sound leadership and management overall with a strong lead from the headteacher on school values. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Strong ethos and values
- Pupils are taught well and behave well
- Strength in drama
- English GCSE results are extremely high compared with results in similar schools
- Good progress by pupils with special needs
- Very good extra-curricular activities.

What could be improved

- Monitoring and evaluation by senior managers
- Pupils' achievement in science, in music in Years 7 to 9, in information and communication technology (ICT) in Years 10 and 11
- School strategies for literacy and numeracy.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in 1996. The improvement is satisfactory. Standards at GCSE are keeping pace with the national trend. They have improved in French and been maintained in design and technology. Good improvement has been made in the attendance rate and in the organisation of special needs support. There is satisfactory improvement in tracking pupils' results, in development planning in subjects and in the curriculum. Subject improvement is good in a number of subjects but unsatisfactory in science, music and religious education.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 year olds based on average point scores in GCSE examinations.

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

- The 2000 GCSE results are better than would be expected by pupils' attainment when they joined Year 7, and very much better than indicated by their Year 9 results in 1998.
- This improvement from Year 7 is not evident in Year 9 test results, which are below the national average for all schools and reflect pupils' attainment on entry. The 2000 results are well below the average for similar schools.
- Results at GCSE are keeping pace with the national improvement and the 2000 results were close to the school's targets.
- The Year 9 results are not keeping pace with the national improvement, so that the gap with the national results has widened; the 2000 Year 9 test targets were met in mathematics and science but the shortfall in English was considerable.
- In English and drama, results at GCSE and the above average standards in the work seen, are a school strength; so are the above average French results.
- In the work seen, attainment overall is at an average standard at each key stage; this shows good achievement from pupils' below average attainment when they join the school.
- An exception is pupils' attainment in modern languages over Years 7 to 9, which is above average and shows very good achievement from their general standard on entry.
- The good improvement is not achieved in science and music where standards remain below average; they remain below average in history and ICT in Years 10 to 11.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good: pupils often show enthusiasm for their work; they readily answer questions and participate in discussions.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good: this has a positive effect on pupils' learning; a small minority of pupils does not live up to the school's code for responsible behaviour.
Personal development and relationships	Very good: the school is a harmonious community; pupils carry out their responsibilities thoughtfully and efficiently.
Attendance	Good: the rate is well above average, but unauthorised absence is higher than the national figure for secondary schools.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good

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

- Teaching is satisfactory or better in 94 per cent of lessons, good or better in 73 per cent and very good or better in 24 per cent; in six per cent, teaching is less than satisfactory; excellent teaching was seen in one lesson; in two lessons, teaching was poor.
- Learning is satisfactory in a similar proportion of lessons but there is slightly less learning which is good or better, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
- English teaching is good; mathematics teaching is sound; in science, teaching has to be judged unsatisfactory overall because the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills is unsatisfactory.
- In most other subjects teaching and learning are good at each stage.
- The exceptions are in mathematics, science, music and, in Years 10 and 11, in history, where the quality is no better than satisfactory; and in modern languages, where teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, but unsatisfactory in Years 10 to 11.
- Pupils' needs are usually met well so that they make good gains in knowledge and skill, although in science and music, this is no better than satisfactory.
- Though satisfactory, the least developed feature of pupils' learning is their knowledge of how well they are doing, particularly in Years 7 to 9; in science, this is unsatisfactory because so is the quality of day-to-day assessment.
- Day-to-day assessment is also unsatisfactory in ICT and music; although satisfactory overall, this is one of the least developed features of teaching; the same is true of homework.
- Literacy and numeracy skills are generally well taught in all subjects, but in science this is unsatisfactory; in music, these skills are adequately taught.

- Some features of learning are very good in geography; in art and design, pupils show strong interest in their work and understand very clearly how well they are doing.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	This is appropriate at each stage, and good overall in geography, history and physical education. However, because National Curriculum requirements are not fully met for science, design and technology, ICT and music, the overall judgement has to be that provision is unsatisfactory. The range of extra-curricular activities is a strength and the lack of strategy for teaching literacy and numeracy skills is a weakness.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good overall and good in Years 7 to 9; pupils are well supported in lessons both by subject teachers and support staff; pupils with physical impairment, including wheelchair users, have full access to the same curriculum as everyone else.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory: pupils have the same opportunities as other pupils, with appropriate support provided by the special needs department.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good, with strength in provision for social development. Pupils have the opportunity to serve the school in many ways, for example through the school council; assemblies are worthwhile occasions. There are missed opportunities for experience of differing cultural traditions.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactory overall: strengths in the personal support for individual pupils and, particularly, in the work to achieve good behaviour. There is good working in partnership with parents.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Sound overall; strong lead from the headteacher in establishing school ethos and values; highly committed staff; weakness in lack of school systems to ensure that key staff managers can perform to their best.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good overall; governors' minutes are an impressive record of generally efficient and thorough governance; statutory responsibilities for the curriculum and worship are not fully met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory; suitable procedures are in place but are not rigorously enough focused on the effects of provision on pupils' learning.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory overall; well-targeted financing of improvements to the accommodation, to the benefit of ethos and teaching. Good care is taken to get the best value from spending.

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 children are expected to work hard• Children make good progress• Their children like school• Staff are approachable• Teaching is good.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Closer working with parents• Better control of the amount of work children are expected to do at home.

Inspectors agree with parents' views of school strengths. They find that, although homework is not managed well in science and music, generally provision is satisfactory. They judge the partnership with parents to be working well.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

Years 7 to 9: English, mathematics and science

1. In the 2000 Year 9 national tests, pupils' average points for the three subjects together were below the national average for all schools. This has been the pattern overall for the previous three years. The trend in these results is not keeping pace with the national trend, so that the gap between the school's results and the national results is widening. It is the girls' results that are causing this widening of the gap; the gap in boys' results shows no clear trend. When compared with the results in schools whose pupils come from similar backgrounds, these results are well below the national average.

2. In English, the 2000 results are well below the average for all schools and for similar schools. Results have fluctuated year on year. Since the last inspection, the gap with national results has widened for both boys and girls. In relation to national averages, boys' results are closer to the national average than girls' results. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard is below the national averages for all schools and for similar schools, as it is for the proportion reaching the higher levels. In the work seen standards are better than shown by the 2000 results. Pupils are working at an average standard in Years 7 to 9. This is good achievement from their standards when they joined Year 7, which were below average. Pupils speak clearly and coherently; they have good listening skills. Pupils' reading skills are above the expected standard and they are confident writers.

3. The 2000 results in mathematics were average in comparison with national results for all schools and for similar schools. Results remained below average until 2000, when they rose. The gap with national results has remained much the same for girls but is closing for boys. As in English, in relation to national averages, boys' results were closer than girls' results. Pupils' performance matched the national average for the proportions reaching the expected level and the higher levels. These results are reflected in the standard of the work seen which is at an average standard overall. Achievement is good. Pupils do better than would be expected from their attainment on entry to Year 7. They solve simultaneous equations graphically, solve problems using Pythagoras' theorem and work with the formulae relating to circles.

4. Science results in 2000 were well below the national average for all schools and for similar schools. The gap with national results has widened more for girls than for boys since 1996. Boys' results are much closer to the national figure than girls' results. The proportion of pupils reaching at least the expected level is below the national average in 2000 but is well below the national average for similar schools. The proportion reaching the higher levels is below the national average. In

the work seen, standards are below average and better than would be expected by the 2000 results. None-the-less, pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory. The standard of their work does not improve sufficiently over Years 7 to 9. There is very little evidence of investigative work or of work that requires pupils to think scientifically.

Years 7 to 9: art and design, drama, design and technology, geography, history, ICT, modern languages, music, physical education and religious education

5. Attainment in the work seen is above average in geography. Pupils' achievement is good. They describe the benefits and problems resulting from human beings' action on the environment, but have difficulty in interpreting aspects of physical geography.

6. In the work seen, attainment is at an average standard in art and design, design and technology, history, modern languages and physical education. In each of these subjects, achievement is good. In art and design, pupils show good understanding and skills in painting techniques, although their skills of observational drawing are underdeveloped. In design and technology, pupils work safely with a number of materials; they design and make a number of products, such as healthy fast foods and mechanical toys, but their graphical skills are a weakness. In history, pupils understand some of the causes and results of major events in the last century. In modern languages, pupils can follow important points in the material they hear spoken by the teacher or on tape and give short oral responses; they can repeat accurately what the teacher has said. In physical education, pupils show control and accuracy in a range of catching, throwing and athletic skills; they have a good understanding of health-related fitness.

7. Attainment is at the standard expected in ICT and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Pupils show a range of sound skills in word-processing and working with spreadsheets and databases. They research using the Internet.

8. In music and religious education, pupils' attainment in the work seen is below average. However, in religious education, pupils achieve well. They have a sound understanding of Christianity but their knowledge of other religions is underdeveloped. They often confuse opinion, belief and fact. In music, achievement is unsatisfactory. Pupils listen to music perceptively, but their understanding of notations is confused by the printed materials provided. Their progress is limited by the lack of suitable resources and lack of opportunities for singing and composing.

Years 10 to 11: school results at GCSE

9. The 2000 results were close to the national average. This was true for pupils' average total points, for the proportion of pupils gaining the higher grades A* to C and for the proportion gaining at least five graded passes. Results were below average for the proportion gaining at least one graded pass. Unlike the results in Year 9, GCSE results are broadly keeping pace with the national trend, although the school's advantage over the national results has reduced a little.

10. Boys' results over the last three years were above the national figure for total average points; girls' results were close to the national figure. This suggests that the school is doing well by its boys. However, it has not analysed the attainment on entry of boys and girls to check whether these results reflect their entry profile or confirm that the school is successfully raising boys' attainment.

Years 10 to 11: English, mathematics and science

11. English results in 2000 were above the national average in English and English literature examinations. In English, the results were equally good for boys and girls. In English literature, boys' results were the higher of the two. The English results were extremely high compared to results in similar schools. There has been steady improvement over time in both subjects. Pupils do significantly better in these subjects than they do overall in their other subjects, and this compares favourably with the picture nationally. In the work seen, attainment is above average and pupils' achievement is good. Most pupils can write detailed and perceptive commentaries on the plays, novels and poems they have read.

12. In mathematics, the results matched the national average for all schools and were above those of similar schools. Boys gained more of the higher grades than girls.

Since 1998, there has been steady improvement in the results at the higher grades. Pupils did less well in mathematics than they did in overall in their other subjects, but the difference reflects the picture nationally and is not significant. The work seen is at an average standard and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Pupils understand the difference between discrete and continuous data and know which charts should be used for each. Most construct frequency polygons successfully.

13. Results in double science and in the single sciences were below average in 2000. The pattern of entries in science differs from the national pattern: the proportion of the year group taking double science is about ten per cent lower than nationally, while it is seven times higher for chemistry, biology and physics. The school enters its higher attainers for the single sciences; these pupils do considerably less well in these subjects than they do overall in their others. The difference compares unfavourably with the national picture. The proportion gaining higher grades is also significantly lower than the national average in each science. The comparisons for double science reveal a similar picture: pupils do less well in double science than overall in their other subjects, this comparing unfavourably with national figures. The proportion gaining higher grades is significantly below the national average. Overall, the science results are well below the results in similar schools. The school's science results have declined since the last inspection and indicate that examination policy in the subject requires urgent review. The new head of department, five weeks in post, is fully aware of this. In the work seen, attainment is below average and pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory. Pupils can identify the products of photosynthesis and the differences between plant and animal cells. However, their skills in planning and evaluating their investigations are insufficiently developed.

Years 10 to 11: art and design, drama, design and technology subjects overall, geography, history, French and German, physical education and religious education

14. Drama results were well above the national average for all schools in 2000. About a quarter of pupils took the examination, somewhat higher than the national

figure. Almost all gained higher grades. Pupils do very much better in drama than they do in their other subjects overall, a better picture than nationally. Pupils' attainment in the work seen reflects these good standards, in which the quality of specialist teaching is the major factor. Pupils demonstrate convincing, sometimes powerful characterisations and show skills in analysing their own performance and making constructive criticism.

15. The results in art and design, design and technology subjects, French and physical education closely matched the national results in 2000. In all of these subjects except French, the proportion of pupils gaining higher grades was not significantly different to national figures although somewhat higher in design and technology subjects and physical education. In French, results at the higher grades were significantly above the national average. In the work seen, attainment is at an average standard in art and design, design and technology subjects and modern languages. In art and design, pupils have good drawing and painting skills and sound skills in researching. However, many show limited skills in analysing and interpreting ideas. In design and technology subjects, work in textiles is finished to a good standard. Pupils make a wide range of products in resistant materials, although there is too wide a variation in the standard of project folders. In modern languages, pupils show sound listening and speaking skills; when reading, they extract key words from the text. In written work they communicate ideas well, but often not accurately. In physical education, attainment improves from the previous key stage so that it is above average. Pupils apply advanced principles of games play effectively; they are tactically aware and can select appropriate skills for particular situations. Pupils' achievement is good in art and design, design and technology subjects and physical education. Achievement is satisfactory in modern languages.

16. Geography results were a little lower than the national results in 2000. Nearly three-fifths of pupils took the geography examination, a higher proportion than the national figure of a little over a third. The proportion of pupils gaining higher grades was significantly lower than the national figure. Pupils do much less well in geography than they do overall in their other subjects and this compares unfavourably with the national picture. In the work seen, however, attainment is above the expected standard. This standard is maintained from the previous key stage; it reflects the development of the department's guidance for pupils and the extra help pupils have received from their teachers. Achievement is satisfactory. Pupils show a good understanding of the physical and human constraints on settlement sites. Most have a sound knowledge of geographical terms.

17. Within the specialisms contributing to design and technology, pupils are not doing equally well. Results are much higher in textiles than in resistant materials and food technology. Although, nearly three-quarters of pupils gained higher grades in textiles, in resistant materials, six pupils in ten did so, and four in ten did so in food technology. The head of department has good strategies in place for making improvements.

18. In French, while the results were close to the national average in points, the results at the higher grades A*-C were significantly above the national average.

Moreover, all pupils took French, whereas nationally, schools enter about half the year group. Pupils do equally well in French as they do overall in their other subjects, which compares very favourably with the picture nationally. The school's achievement is good; a major factor in this is the firm foundation established during Years 7 to 9.

19. About three-quarters of pupils took the short GCSE course in religious studies, which was offered for the first time in 2000. Results were close to the national average, although the proportion gaining higher grades was below the national figure. The entries for history and German were not large enough to make valid statistical comparisons. In history, all 19 pupils gained a pass grade, ranging from A to G. The German results were good; all 12 pupils gained grades B or C. Music is not offered at GCSE. In the work seen, attainment is at an average standard in religious education and pupils' achievement continues to be good. Pupils know the main events in the life of Jesus and apply some of his teaching to moral and social issues. They can reflect on their own beliefs and compare them with those of others. In history, attainment in the work seen is below average, reflecting the previous attainment of the group. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Pupils generally base their ideas and judgements on a careful study of extracts and other source materials; they understand how evidence can be biased. However, some fail to give in their work on time and not all complete their coursework.

The school's targets

20. The school's GCSE performance in 2000 was close to meeting the targets for the total average GCSE points score and five or more grades A*-C. The results for one or more grades A*-G were slightly lower than the target figure. At A*-C, the results were higher than predicted by the pupils' previous results in the 1998 Year 9 tests. The school's targets for Year 9 tests were met in mathematics and science. The shortfall in English was considerable. There is no analysis to show what the reasons were for the shortfall or to confirm the school's view that staffing difficulties were a factor. There are suitably challenging targets for 2001.

Whole school: Years 7 to 11

21. When pupils join Year 7, their attainment is below the standard expected for 11 year olds, while well below the expected standard in English. This has been the consistent pattern over the last six years. The work seen during the inspection shows that over Years 7 to 9, pupils achieve well enough to raise their attainment to reach overall the average standard for 14 year olds. This is good achievement and the result of the generally good teaching and learning in a supportive community. Where there are exceptions to this, in science, music and religious education where standards remain below average, there are, or have been weaknesses in management and the curriculum. Generally, the improvement evident in the work seen was not reflected in the 2000 Year 9 overall test results in English, mathematics and science. However, when looked at by individual subject, the average mathematics results are reflected in the improvement in the work seen over Years 7 to 9 to an average standard. In science, one of the subjects where improvement over Years 7 to 9 is not evident in the work seen, the poor

performance in the 2000 science tests is partly accounted for by the staffing difficulties in the department. There is no evidence in the school's data to indicate the reasons for the marked difference between the well below average test results in English in 2000 and the average standard of the work seen.

22. The examination work seen shows this improvement over Years 7 to 9 being sustained over Years 10 and 11 where attainment overall is at an average standard. In English, additional improvement raises pupils' attainment to the above average standard that is reflected by the GCSE results in 2000. Additional improvement is evident in physical education. Overall, pupils' achievement at this stage continues to be good overall. Where there are exceptions to this, in science, history and ICT, there are different reasons. These relate to the school's management of staffing difficulties in science; to the previous attainment of the group taking history; and the lack of appropriate course provision in ICT for Year 11 pupils, now rectified by the introduction of a GCSE course in Year 10.

23. Standards of literacy are average overall. Most pupils make articulate contributions in class discussions; they respond clearly when they are questioned about their work, for example in art and design and physical education. They perform well in role-plays and debates in religious education. Listening skills are more variable, but generally they improve as pupils move up the school. Pupils' dictionary skills in modern languages are above average. Standards of presentation and accuracy in written work are variable in mathematics, with the girls tending to be neater. Overall, standards in reading and writing throughout the school are average.

24. Pupils have the knowledge and skills of numeracy required for work in their other subjects. For example, in history they make good use of number to explain aspects of the French Revolution and in ICT, they use estimation when working on spreadsheets and databases. In geography, pupils successfully interpret and display data and use their number skills when working on maps and on weather.

25. The achievement of pupils with special needs is good. They join the school with poor reading and comprehension skills and make steady progress towards their individual targets. Those with higher levels of need make particularly good progress because they receive regular support in lessons from trained classroom assistants. This was evident, for example, in English, mathematics, art and design, drama, history and religious education. The good progress takes place because there are good opportunities for pupils to read in lessons, because teachers manage pupils well, and because they provide challenging work that enables lower attainers to understand what they are learning. Younger pupils make good progress when they are supported through activities to improve their confidence in applying and developing their speaking and listening skills. Those withdrawn for extra reading and literacy support make good progress for the same reasons. Pupils with physical, visual and hearing impairment are making good progress in subject lessons, using ICT to write up notes or complete homework. In drama, for example, they make very good progress because they are encouraged to work collaboratively with the rest of the group. Presentation in coursework folders for the majority of pupils is of a good standard. However, progress is slower for pupils in some science lessons because teaching strategies are weak and extension work for the more able and support for

those who are much slower are limited. Achievement of older pupils is good. Where teaching matches resources and pace to pupils' attainment levels, as seen in a Year 10 English lesson on the anxieties of work experience, pupils make good strides in learning through role-play which is a valuable way of building up their confidence. Pupils on the day-release vocational course achieve well because their self-esteem is raised through their contact with other adults.

26. Pupils from ethnic minorities make equally good progress as everyone else. The school has not analysed the results of these pupils in comparison to those of others to check that this is so. There is no evidence to indicate that pupils for whom English is an additional language learn any less well than other pupils. None of those who joined the school in Year 7 is at an early stage of English fluency. The school has recently welcomed a small number of refugees who are learning to speak English.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

27. Pupils' attitudes towards school are good overall and, on occasion, excellent. Parents say that their children like going to school. The importance the school attaches to celebrating success is significant in creating these positive attitudes. Pupils respond with enthusiasm to the often lively teaching that stimulates them to learn. For example, pupils in a Year 7 drama lesson were totally involved in recreating a scene portraying the emotions experienced by evacuees during World War II. They performed at a high standard in response to creative teaching that gave them the opportunity to offer their best; their attitudes throughout the lesson were excellent. The very good role models provided by the headteacher and all adults, administrative, teaching and support staff, are a major strength of the school, particularly the respect that teachers have for each pupil. This establishes a basis for the sensitive support that helps pupils' confidence and motivation to grow so that they achieve well. Pupils work well together in pairs and small groups, where they encourage and support each other. They are confident when speaking about their work; they readily answer questions and participate fully in discussions. Pupils are proud of their achievements and produce work that gives them personal satisfaction. Pupils with special needs and those who speak English as an additional language, are equally interested in their work and fully integrated into the school community. Older pupils speak proudly of the way the school involves different individuals and groups.

28. The standard of behaviour both in lessons and around the school is good. This is an improvement since the last inspection when behaviour was judged to be only sound. Parents' views that the standard of behaviour is good are confirmed by the inspection findings. The school has worked hard to ensure that the atmosphere in lessons helps all pupils to learn. There are high expectations of good behaviour to which the majority of pupils respond well. Their good behaviour has a positive effect on their progress. However, a minority of pupils present challenging behaviour and, on occasions, these pupils make it impossible for teachers to ensure that lesson targets are met. When this happens, there is a negative effect on the learning of the rest of the class. In the few lessons where this occurred, it was the teacher's poor class management skills that were the cause. Since the last inspection, there has

been little improvement in the standard of behaviour in modern language lessons. The number of fixed-term exclusions is high compared with national figures. This results from the repeated exclusion of a comparatively small group of pupils. The number of permanent exclusions is average.

29. Relationships and pupils' personal development are very good. The school is a harmonious community where relationships are caring and sensitive. Pupils show that they can be responsible and act under their own initiative. Through the house committees, they organise inter-house competitions, social events and fund-raising activities. Through the school council, they express their views about day-to-day life in the school to senior staff and the governing body. Prefects take their responsibilities seriously. They carry out a range of duties such as supervising younger pupils at break times and filling up the drinks vending machines at the start of the school day. Pupils take responsible action for the environment; they have started a 'Small Acorns' group that collects cans and waste paper for recycling, undertakes litter-clearing patrols and produces a newsletter for all pupils. These experiences contribute significantly to pupils' understanding of citizenship.

30. Attendance is good; the rate is well above the national average. This represents an improvement since the last inspection where it was judged to be satisfactory. However, unauthorised absence is higher than it is nationally. Although the overall attendance rate is good, about a quarter of pupils have an attendance level below 90 per cent. This has an adverse effect on their attainment and progress and ultimately affects their performance in GCSE examinations.

31. Pupils with special needs have positive attitudes to work and generally behave well. They enjoy the calm atmosphere of the special needs base when they are withdrawn for individual or group support. They show positive attitudes to learning in art and design, geography, ICT and religious education that contribute to their good progress. Where attitudes are less good, as in modern languages, a small number of pupils are reluctant to contribute ideas and at times disrupt others by calling out.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

32. Teaching and learning are good. In 94 per cent of lessons the quality of teaching was satisfactory or better; in 73 per cent it was good or better and in 24 per cent, very good or better. Six per cent of lessons were less than satisfactory, including two which were poor. This shows some improvement from the 90 per cent of lessons judged to be satisfactory or better at the last inspection. Other figures, for the good or better teaching, for example, were not reported in 1996. In the majority of subjects, the quality is good at each key stage.

33. In English, teaching is good and better than in mathematics and science. However, in mathematics, the quality of lessons taught by permanent, specialist staff is good. In nearly all other subjects, teaching is good, with very good teaching in geography in Years 10 and 11. In music, taught only in Years 7 to 9, there is satisfactory teaching. The

teaching in modern languages is unsatisfactory. Science teaching has to be judged unsatisfactory overall because there is unsatisfactory teaching of basic skills.

34. With few exceptions, the quality of pupils' learning is nearly always a direct reflection of the quality of teaching. There is good learning, overall, by pupils who speak English as an additional language in those subjects where there is sufficient evidence to judge the quality. Pupils from ethnic minority families learn equally well as other pupils. Learning in history in Years 10 and 11, while satisfactory, is not as good as it is in Years 7 to 9, because some pupils are taught by two different teachers at this stage. This 'split' teaching is not managed well enough to prevent some negative effects on the continuity in pupils' work. In geography, pupils' learning is good in Years 7 to 9, rather than very good as the teaching is, because a significant minority is content to make sound effort, but no more. In modern languages, learning is better than the teaching in Years 7 to 9 because pupils' good attitudes to their work make a difference.

35. There are strengths in some aspects of the teaching. The management of pupils is very good in science, design and technology, geography and physical education. Teachers have very high expectations for pupils' progress in art and design, geography and physical education and set challenging work. As a result, pupils' learning in art and design shows strengths: pupils in Years 10 and 11 have very good skills in working independently and a very good idea of how well they are doing. At both key stages, pupils in geography work productively, at a very good pace. There is very good attention to incorporating literacy and numeracy skills in lessons in geography and, in Years 7 to 9, in physical education.

36. Weaknesses in the teaching have some negative effects on pupils' learning. In science, ICT and music, pupils do not receive sufficiently clear, evaluative comments about their work, either in lessons or in marked work, so that they are not always clear about how to make improvements. In science, and in Years 10 and 11 in modern languages, pupils' understanding of how well they are doing is unsatisfactory. Teachers' expectations for the standard of pupils' work are not high enough in music or in modern languages where the methods used do not give equal help to all pupils. As a consequence, pupils' learning in modern languages is unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11; they show a lack of interest, their skills of working independently are underdeveloped and they do not set themselves a good pace for work. Homework is not managed well by teachers in science and music so that it does not extend or consolidate work in class. There are weaknesses in class management in mathematics, where lessons are not always taken by specialist permanent staff; in modern languages, there is some failure to abide by school codes.

37. Some very good teaching was seen in English, mathematics, science, art and design, design and technology, geography, history, physical education, religious education and instrumental music lessons. Where teaching is very good, pupils are made to feel confident to explore ideas and take the risk that the ideas may not be successful. The lesson content is presented in a way that relates it to pupils' experience and ensures that they build on what they have previously learned. Teacher and pupils are good-humoured. The learning targets are very clearly given

at the start of the lesson and the teacher's comments as pupils work are always well enough judged to help them respond quickly and make improvements. There is good teamwork by the subject teacher and the learning support assistant. Pupils with special needs are fully involved in all stages of the lesson. The teacher's attitude strongly encourages and expects pupils to succeed and communicates real interest in their work. Praise is used to very good effect. Teachers demand participation, concentration and effort and pupils give these willingly. The management of pupils is very effective and skilfully adjusted to suit the different lesson activities. Time targets are set for activities and the teacher briefly stops the whole class at times to go over a point so that all can benefit. The teacher guides pupils from general to technical vocabulary so that they are absolutely clear about meanings.

38. Some unsatisfactory teaching was seen in five lessons affecting mathematics, science, modern languages and physical education; teaching was poor on one occasion in science and modern languages; three of these lessons were taught by temporary staff. As a result, in all of these lessons, pupils' learning was less than satisfactory and on occasion, poor. In most of them, pupils' behaviour was less than satisfactory and on two occasions, poor. Where teaching is unsatisfactory or poor, insecure subject expertise weakens the lesson planning so that the way the content is introduced is not well judged and confusing. Pupils' discourtesy is tolerated and school codes not followed. Pupil management fails completely so that by the end of the lesson, pupils are no longer working at all. Relationships are confrontational and bad behaviour goes unchecked. Where teaching is poor, the teacher does not make any effort to involve pupils or check that they are on task and learning; work tails off as the lesson progresses. An aggressive lesson incident results in a teacher shouting uncontrollably at the class.

39. Pupils with special needs are taught well. In English, science, art and design, geography and history, the very good relationships and teachers' enthusiasm hold pupils' interest and attention. Learning support is very good and usually planned jointly with subject teachers. Support staff help pupils to stay on task and gain confidence in working independently. They keep detailed records on the progress of the pupils they support and contribute to their assessments by attending department meetings and annual reviews. In many subject lessons, teachers and support assistants help pupils with special needs to record the key words relating to the topic; they explain and demonstrate tasks clearly. This helps to improve pupils' literacy skills. However, the individual learning targets of pupils with special needs are not taken sufficiently into account in lesson planning for science, ICT, music and religious education.

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

40. At each key stage, provision is soundly based on the National Curriculum and religious education, with the addition of drama and personal and social education (PSHE). Drama is a strength. In the current year, the alternative arrangements introduced in the previous year involve 23 Year 10 pupils. For 19 of them, this entails one-day attendance at the local college of further education for work-related NVQ courses such as engineering, retail skills, building and hairdressing. Two other pupils with physical impairment have a modified curriculum in school. While this preliminary response to the reported lack of vocational course provision at the last inspection has been slow to get off the ground, this arrangement supports this group of pupils well. However, there is no firm start date for the introduction of vocational courses into the school's options for Years 10 and 11. The lack of a music option at GCSE is a persistent weakness; the school fails to provide an equal opportunity for pupils with commitment and talent in music to develop their skills, as happens in other subjects.

41. National Curriculum requirements are not fully met in science and in design and technology, where computer control is not included. In music, the requirements

for the Key Stage 3 National Curriculum are not met. Because of these weaknesses in meeting requirements, the overall judgement on the curriculum has to be that it is unsatisfactory. A further weakness is that, in the majority of subjects, including science, modern languages and music, ICT is not fully incorporated into curriculum planning.

42. Provision for equal opportunities is sound. There has been a successful focus on reducing the underachievement of boys who now do well in relation to their previous attainment. The school's arrangements for supporting pupils' learning by teaching them in groups that are organised on the basis of previous attainment are generally effective. However, there is no formal identification of gifted and talented pupils and the quality of lesson planning for higher attainers is patchy. Only in a small number of subjects are the higher teaching groups given appropriately challenging extension work. The timetabling of lessons does not always achieve the maximum benefit for all pupils. For a small number of lower attainers, the curriculum is enriched by the provision of vocational education at a local college. However, this means that these pupils miss the PSHE programme; no alternative arrangements are made. At both key stages, there are aspects of the timetable which prevent some pupils having equal access to equally good opportunities for learning. This arises, either because lessons are poorly distributed over the week as in English and modern languages; or because they are taught by two teachers for the same subject, as in history, with inadequate arrangements to ensure good continuity in planning.

43. Pupils with special needs have good learning opportunities. The majority are well integrated in subject lessons in Years 7 to 9, where they are taught with lower attainers in smaller groups than other pupils. They generally receive good support. A small number is withdrawn for specialist support in speech and language, literacy, behaviour and physiotherapy. There is good use of ICT to support literacy skills development, but support for numeracy development is limited. A summer school literacy project provides helpful support for pupils with special needs and refugee pupils in preparation for starting in Year 7. The school implements effectively the required provision for those pupils with the highest level of special need. In Years 10 and 11, pupils with special needs follow the day-release work-related course at the local college and take part in the Year 10 work experience programme. The lack of opportunity to take vocational courses in the school applies to pupils with special needs as to all others. Pupils with special needs have equal access to out of school activities, visits and the opportunity to play a variety of competitive sports. There is very good access to the school's curriculum for pupils with physical, visual and hearing impairment. Wheelchair users are able to take part in school activities and participate fully in school life.

44. Although the English teachers have drafted a literacy policy for the school this has not yet been adopted. In English, the strategies for teaching literacy skills are good, but across other subjects of the curriculum, the provision is patchy. In about half of the subjects, teachers give suitable emphasis to the technical vocabulary of the subject. In science this is a weakness. Subjects vary in the extent to which they create opportunities for pupils to develop speaking and listening skills. Religious education is exceptional in encouraging pupils to read aloud in class, but few chances to develop this skill are given in other subjects. Only in English, history and religious education are regular opportunities provided for extended writing. Generally, grammatical errors in speech and written work are not corrected by teachers. The development of a whole-school approach to literacy development is only rudimentary and provision across the curriculum is unsatisfactory.

45. There is no school policy for numeracy although the development plan shows details of its development in the near future.

46. The PSHE programme is suitably planned. Both drugs education and sex education are carried out effectively and help prepare pupils for life beyond school. However, teachers' knowledge of the planned topics is varied so that all pupils do not benefit equally from PSHE lessons. The school is taking action to improve this by moving towards the development of a specialist staff team to teach this important area of essential life skills. Careers education, a helpful careers evening and the work experience programme prepare pupils well for post-16 choices and benefit from effective support from the careers service.

47. Sound links are established overall with industry and the colleges. Hassenbrook is a BP link school. Good links have resulted, for example, in pupils' attendance and presentations at an annual national conference and an annual visit by a well-known ecologist to speak to Year 7. The Year 11 careers programme involves the colleges and college staff contribute to the PSHE programme.

48. A stimulating and imaginative range of extra-curricular activities is offered. The take-up is good; provision is extensive. There are 19 separate sports played at all levels, that involve most pupils in the school. Pupils of all abilities are included. There are open access clubs, leading to year group challenges and elite competition. In the past year, different departments, including design and technology, modern languages and physical education, have organised four separate education visits to the continent, involving over 100 pupils. There are regular cultural, social and education visits to the theatre and to other artistic events. In addition, special interest clubs are maintained at least daily by the art and design and ICT departments. However, regular instrumental opportunities are not provided except in preparation for a school show or concert. The school has taken part very successfully in annual public speaking contests, reaching national final level in 2000 and regional final level in the current year. It has a high profile road safety club involving the whole of Year 8 and a thriving Young Enterprise section. An active environment club has strong links with BP and its activities are very apparent about the school. About 12 per cent of Year 11 pupils gained the Project Trident gold award in 2000. Teachers maintain the programmes with energy and commitment; the pupils respond and participate with enthusiasm and pride.

49. Provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good overall, although not equally good in each area. There are no arrangements check on the quality of this provision. Personal development issues form part of pastoral and curriculum discussions. In English, art and design, physical education and religious education, the quality is good. However, in mathematics, science and music, for example, there are missed opportunities for pupils to discuss moral and social issues and reflect on what they learn.

50. While satisfactory, the provision for spiritual development is the least well developed. Assemblies, held twice each week in houses and in key stages, are planned and worthwhile experiences for pupils, which incorporate a variety of relevant themes. Pupils are effectively involved in planning and delivering these. For

example, after younger pupils heard the Bible story of the Prodigal Son read aloud by four Year 9 pupils, they were invited to think about what it means to say, 'I'm sorry'. Pupils' experience of worship is restricted to these occasions. Statutory requirements therefore, are not met. Religious education makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual development by providing opportunities for them to discuss their own beliefs and values and compare and contrast them with those of others. In art and design and drama, pupils express their feelings and emotions through a variety of experiences. However, except in art and design, opportunities for pupils' quiet reflection on what they are doing are rare.

51. Good provision is made for pupils' moral development. The clear expectations of the school's 'Code for Responsible Behaviour' are emphasised in PSHE and form tutor time. The adults working in the school provide pupils with very good role models of respect and thoughtfulness for others. Pupils are taught right from wrong and to accept responsibility for their own actions.

52. A particular strength is the school's very good provision for social development. There is a variety of ways in which pupils take responsibility for contributing to the quality of school life. They can do this for example, through undertaking prefect duties, for which they are trained, organising sports activities and serving on house committees and the school council. There are good mentoring opportunities, through which, for example, pupils in Year 11 support Year 7 pupils in their first months in the school. There is a good paired reading scheme involving prefects in Years 10 and 11 who help pupils from Year 7 upwards who have reading difficulties. The quality of relationships establishes a good basis for pupils to learn to see people's differing points of view. In many departments, pupils are encouraged to work together effectively in pairs and groups where they have to negotiate an agreed way forward. In history, pupils are given good opportunities to consider and discuss aspects of citizenship. In geography they are encouraged to consider the implications of not caring for the environment. Pupils work alongside those from different year groups in extra-curricular activities, in teams and the school show. In the houses, there is an emphasis on considering the needs of different groups in the outside community and pupils are regularly involved in fund-raising activities.

53. Satisfactory provision is made for pupils' cultural development. In art and design there is a significant contribution to this through projects on Hindu culture, Aboriginal art, African masks and Egyptian drawing. In food technology, pupils discuss dietary differences across the world and in textiles, they are made aware of the styles of dress and tastes in fashion round the world. However, this provision is generally underdeveloped. By contrast, pupils have good opportunities to experience European culture, with strengths in English. For example, pupils show excellent knowledge of works such as *Lord of the Flies* and *An Inspector Calls*.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

54. Overall, the school's care for its pupils is satisfactory. A strong pastoral system provides good support for pupils and helps them to make good progress in their studies. For those joining Year 7, there is a well thought out induction programme that successfully eases the transition from primary to secondary school. Younger pupils are paired with prefects in their early days in school so that they quickly feel comfortable and confident in the school community. All staff have a strong commitment to the care for pupils. Form tutors know their pupils particularly well because they stay with their tutor group throughout their time at school.

55. Procedures for keeping attendance generally up to scratch are good. The school has set an attendance target of 93 per cent. Individual attendance is checked daily. There is immediate contact with home if pupils are absent without the reason being notified. Those pupils whose attendance is unsatisfactory are discussed at the weekly pastoral team meeting and sometimes have a support plan prepared for them. The school receives good support from the education welfare service, for example, through undertaking home visits. Funds available for social inclusion are being appropriately used to provide extra-curricular support for disaffected pupils.

56. The 'responsible behaviour' policy is the backbone of the school's code of conduct and a very good feature of the school's provision. It is based on rewarding good behaviour and attitudes. Pupils are encouraged to consider the reasons for their poor behaviour and the effect that this has on other people's learning. This does much to encourage self-discipline and makes a significant contribution to the school's positive ethos. Most staff consistently apply this code and administer sanctions fairly; pupils are made clear about the consequences of inappropriate behaviour. The result is good behaviour. What constitutes oppressive behaviour, or bullying, is discussed in PSHE. Where behaviour is inappropriate, pupils are given individual support by their tutors or head of house. The support is aimed at modifying their behaviour through having a plan that involves teacher support and self-help. To aid the school in this work, suitable use is made of external agencies such as the Child and Family Support Service, Thurrock Family Support and 'Shout', a centre to help families overcome behaviour problems. Where pupils fail to live up to the school's expectations, the procedures for exclusion follow local education authority guidelines and appropriately involve the governing body.

57. Arrangements for ensuring pupils' welfare are satisfactory overall. However, those for child protection are not because school policy is out of date. Apart from attending a general briefing, the member of staff responsible has not received substantial updating on the latest national guidance, although the school does have an updated local education authority manual. In terms of health and safety, most of the issues raised in the recent safety audit by the local education authority have been satisfactorily attended to, although risk assessments are not fully in place in science. Arrangements for first aid and for pupils' welfare needs are good.

58. Assessment procedures are satisfactory overall. School policy encourages teachers to indicate clearly to pupils how their work can be improved, although this is not always made clear in pupils' annual reports. School examinations are held annually for all year groups and 'mock' National Curriculum tests and GCSE examinations are taken in Years 9 and 11 in preparation for external public assessment. The information from these internal and external assessments is being used to predict individual performance and set individual targets. This is sound, overall. However, the information is not analysed in sufficient detail to enable the school to compare the progress, for example of boys and girls from Year 7 onwards, or of pupils from ethnic minorities and other pupils. Some faculties and departments assess achievement well, using the information effectively to help pupils to make progress, as happens in physical education. This is not true of all departments, particularly science, ICT and music. In these subjects, procedures for assessment and its use to plan work appropriately to meet pupils' learning needs are unsatisfactory.

59. The school has recently introduced a mentoring scheme in which tutors meet with their pupils individually on a termly basis. Based on pupils' termly summary reports, individual targets are set to raise attainment. It is too early to evaluate the effectiveness of this new initiative which has the capacity to serve pupils well. However, school records show that the mentoring of Year 11 pupils has led to an improvement in their performance in GCSE examinations.

60. Pupils' special needs are appropriately identified. Effective assessment procedures are in place for pupils who have statements of the provision required, as well as for pupils at earlier stages of need. External agencies, parents and pupils are helpfully involved in interim and annual reviews. Learning support assistants have had behaviour management training and outside agencies such as the Speech and Language Unit and Thurrock Educational Support Service (TESS) make a good contribution to the school's provision for pupils' learning needs. The progress of pupils in the early stages of learning need is regularly monitored and checked. Pupils' learning targets are effective because they are subject specific; they are written into pupils' diaries and are known to staff. Pupils receive regular individual mentoring, often involving parents, when their targets are reviewed and revised. Parents are kept well informed of their children's progress, for example, through positive commendation letters or letters of concern.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

61. Those parents who attended the pre-inspection meeting, six per cent of parents, think the school is good. The responses to the questionnaire from 13 per cent of parents are very positive. Parents feel that their children are expected to work hard and are making good progress; that teaching is good and their children like going to school. Concerns were expressed about the links between the school and the parents, the amount of information parents receive about their children's progress and the amount of homework children have. Some parents at the meeting thought the amount excessive.

62. The inspectors judge the links with parents to be good. They find that parents are encouraged to work in partnership with the school. For example, when difficulties in attitude or behaviour occur, parents are closely involved with heads of house in preparing a support plan with targets for improvement. They help to monitor their child's progress in meeting the targets. This is good practice. As part of the school's focus on celebrating pupils' successes, letters are regularly sent home to parents about their children's achievements. Good quality termly newsletters inform parents of school successes and events.

63. The quality of information that parents receive, particularly about pupils' progress, is generally satisfactory. In addition to the required annual report on pupils' progress, sent in the summer term, brief summary reports are sent in the other terms. However, annual reports do not always contain clear enough information for parents to gain a good idea of the strengths and weaknesses in their child's work in each subject. Consultation evenings, held after the annual reports have been sent home, give parents the opportunity to meet subject staff to discuss their child's progress. A small number of parents expressed some concern about the efficiency of these evenings, particularly about the system through which pupils are responsible for booking their parents' appointments. There is some concern about the timing of consultation evenings. However, parents are able to make an appointment to discuss their child's progress at any time.

64. A well-produced glossy prospectus is an inviting document that gives a good flavour of the school. Some of the required information is omitted, for example, the right of parents to withdraw their child from religious education and worship. The annual report to parents, not a glossy, gives very helpful information about the purpose of the annual meeting, although the annual statement of account and the attendance figures are presented in an unnecessarily complicated way. The report gives parents only limited information about special needs funding and provision.

65. In general, parents' involvement has a positive effect on the school's activities. Many parents help to transport pupils to external sports competitions. The parent teacher association runs social events to raise funds for the school. Parents' views have recently been sought on the school development plan and parent governors are regularly consulted by the headteacher. However, a significant minority of parents still fail to ensure that they send their child regularly to school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

66. Leadership and management are overall satisfactory. There are strengths in leadership and some weakness in management. Visitors to the school have an intimation of its strong ethos as they approach the entrance and are welcomed in Reception. Courtesy and friendliness characterise the response of adults and pupils alike in their day-to-day work. The school's valuing of pupils and respect for them as individuals are a powerful thread in its pastoral work. The headteacher gives the leadership that has brought this about. He has a clear vision for the kind of school Hassenbrook should be and shows, by example, a profound commitment to the notion of individual responsibility, both for pupils and for staff.

67. Since the last inspection, the number on roll has grown by 40 per cent. Prior to 1996, the roll had fallen by over 50 per cent, which necessitated reduction in staffing. Through the period of regrowth, there has been a steady drive by the governors and the headteacher to make improvements geared to sustaining their vision for the school. In the last year, they have been able to make some additional staff appointments. The governing body also took the opportunity to transfer three senior teachers to the assistant headteacher pay spine, each of whom, on a termly basis, acts in turn to deputise for the headteacher when necessary. However, the lack of a deputy head post, a staffing weakness reported at the last inspection, persists. While the commitment to individual staff responsibility has been unwavering, systems are not sufficiently in place to ensure that this vision is consistently reflected in all day-to-day aspects of the school's work, to the equal benefit of all pupils. Responsibilities are delegated but without clear enough definition of the accompanying accountabilities, for example, in job descriptions. This lack of systems for accountability can restrict the achievement of high performance from the senior staff team and heads of department because it does not ensure that repetition or continuation of weak performance or provision are prevented. This has depressed the quality of what is provided, for example, in the science curriculum and examination provision, in modern languages teaching, in the Key Stage 3 music curriculum and management of the music department and in examination work in religious education.

68. In general, governors and staff are strongly committed to achieving a successful school. There is ample evidence that improvements are made thoroughly, although sometimes rather slowly. The strategic plan to improve the school's premises has been carried out efficiently. Improvements reflect the school's values well and have effectively updated subject accommodation to meet current curriculum requirements. All subject areas have wheelchair access by lift or because they include a ground floor teaching space. Lunch at round tables in the aptly named 'restaurant' for pupils and staff is a very pleasant and civilised occasion where pupils talk to each other in an unhurried way. The recently published development plan to 2004 is an improvement on the previous one, which was a rather cumbersome document. It lacked the focus of time targets, specified monitoring arrangements and clear criteria for evaluation in terms of the benefit to pupils' learning. Attention to the latter is needed in the current version. While

development targets are appropriate, the school has not identified for incorporating into the plan the areas of management needing improvement.

69. Governors make a good contribution to clarifying the direction for the school's work. Very efficient committee procedures and minuting ensure that key roles are carried out to good effect. In particular, the work of the finance and general purposes committee that acts rather like an executive committee for the governing body, is notable in this respect. There is very good financial management. The school has continued the annual audit undertaken during its period of grant maintained status; the most recent reported a high standard of accounting. Current high balances, reducing in 2002, have accrued from two sources. Expenditure on boiler replacement, science refurbishment and the drama studio was unexpectedly met from local education authority capital funds at the beginning of the current financial year. Additional, but unanticipated monies have become available from government. Additional funding is put to good use. The use of special needs funding in particular gives good value for money, an improvement since the last inspection.

70. New technology is soundly used for aspects of administration such as tracking pupils' individual progress from year to year and collating attendance figures. Within the curriculum, ICT is used soundly so that pupils make satisfactory progress in ICT skills over Years 7 to 9, although not over Years 10 to 11. The potential for analysing trends in the progress of different pupil groups is unexploited, however. This reflects a weakness in the school's use of the findings of the lesson monitoring carried out by heads of department in their own subject. The monitoring programme has been implemented in the current year as part of the school's performance management policy. The reports seen were generally helpful in identifying strengths and weaknesses as well as targets for improvement. What has not been put in place is the pulling together of the strengths and weaknesses found through the monitoring to gain a whole school picture of where pupils are not benefiting equally from its provision. The potential benefit of monitoring for strengthening the school's growth is largely untapped.

71. The school's resources are satisfactory overall. Accommodation, to which thorough and strategic attention has been given, is good. Pupils' learning has benefited from the improvements and further upgrading is in process. The current exception is in religious education, where lessons are taught in six different rooms by six different teachers. This restricts the development of suitably resourced teaching spaces for the subject and so limits pupils' learning in some lessons. This situation will cease at the end of the current academic year, and a new teaching post will operate thereafter. While there are generally satisfactory learning resources, the number of computers available for pupils is well below the national average. In music, the range of instrumental resources for the Key Stage 3 curriculum is unsatisfactory. There are weaknesses in staffing in mathematics and religious education which will be resolved in the next academic year. In mathematics, there are insufficient specialist teachers to deliver the curriculum, with some detrimental effects on pupils' learning. In religious education, the curriculum is delivered by six non-specialist teachers whose work is mainly in other subject departments. This is a restriction on the development of a cohesive subject team with common department approaches, although specific arrangements for this group

of staff to meet on a half-termly basis have been in place. Effective specialist training has been provided for those staff supporting wheelchair users.

72. Leadership and management of the learning support department are good. Improvement since the last inspection has been managed effectively. The development plan focuses appropriately on the range of learning opportunities for pupils with special needs and the school's overall awareness of special needs issues. Learning support team leaders make a good contribution to the organisation and team spirit of the department. Learning support assistants are effectively deployed, mostly in English, mathematics and science, to support those pupils with higher levels of need. However, there is still a lack of strategies to support pupils in subjects such as ICT, music and religious education.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

73. In order to ensure that all pupils have equal opportunity to raise their standards further, particularly in Years 7 to 9, governors and senior staff should implement, systematically and with sufficiently challenging time targets, procedures for setting the following development priorities in train:

- (1) Expedite monitoring procedures for ensuring that all pupils benefit equally from the school's curriculum and pastoral areas of work, through:
 - implementing scheduled, regular and systematic monitoring by senior managers of the effectiveness of all aspects of the school's provision
 - revising the job descriptions of all managers to include responsibility for the monitoring, evaluation and reporting of areas in their charge
 - revising the job descriptions of senior managers to state clearly their responsibility for ensuring that provision meets both external and internal requirements
 - ensuring that the focus of monitoring and the criteria for evaluating what is seen are sharply targeted at the effects on pupils' achievement, standards and welfare
 - preparing and implementing school inclusion policy, in particular, incorporating the comparative analysis of the performance of different groups of pupils, especially of boys and girls and pupils from different ethnic groups
 - monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of inclusion policy at an early stage of its implementation
 - reporting regularly to the governing body on the findings of monitoring.

(Paragraphs: 10, 13, 21, 22, 28, 40 - 42, 57, 58, 63, 64, 66 - 68, 70, 71, 82, 98, 106, 108, 109, 146, 149, 155, 156, 166, 172, 174, 175, 192, 193)

- (2) Improve standards in science, ICT in Years 10 and 11 and music through:
 - ensuring that the new head of science has the time and facilities to implement the improvements he is already planning effectively
 - implementing a whole school scheme of work for ICT in all subjects and courses
 - ensuring regular support for and monitoring of this ICT development across all subjects
 - ensuring that the music curriculum fully meets statutory requirements

(Paragraphs: 4, 8, 13, 21, 22, 67, 100 - 104, 135, 149, 150, 152, 169, 170, 172, 192)

- (3) Implement with immediate effect a common strategy for teaching literacy and numeracy skills to all pupils in all subjects and courses, through:
- ensuring that all subject schemes of incorporate planning for teaching these skills
 - identifying members of staff to take responsibility for managing the early stages of implementation in each subject and drawing up an appropriate task description for this
 - ensuring that whole-school approaches benefit fully from the Key Stage 3 literacy strategy
 - focusing lesson monitoring on this development for a given period at an early stage of implementation to check whether, and where, planning or delivery needs improvement.

(Paragraphs: 44, 45, 81)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	152
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	53

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	24	49	21	5	1	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	695
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	105

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	112

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	19
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	25

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.5
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.3
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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	63	60	123

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	28	38	33
	Girls	36	37	23
	Total	64	75	56
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	52 (71)	61 (52)	46 (47)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	16 (26)	35 (26)	17 (12)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	38	N/A	32
	Girls	49	N/A	22
	Total	87	0	54
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	72 (73)	59 (54)	44 (50)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	34 (32)	38 (24)	19 (14)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	33	57	90

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	17	29	30
	Girls	24	54	55
	Total	41	83	85
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	46 (45)	92 (98)	94 (99)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	39
	National	38.4 (38.0)

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	2
Black – other	5
Indian	3
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	681
Any other minority ethnic group	1

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	47	2
Other minority ethnic groups	4	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	38.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	22
Total aggregate hours worked per week	576

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77.2
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 2	26
Key Stage 3	21

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	1 955 241
Total expenditure	1 926 006
Expenditure per pupil	3 397
Balance brought forward from previous year	155 147
Balance carried forward to next year	184 382

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	695
Number of questionnaires returned	92

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	43	47	8	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	53	38	8	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	31	58	6	1	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	32	42	18	8	0
The teaching is good.	35	56	5	1	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	44	39	16	1	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	52	37	8	4	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	63	33	3	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	27	47	18	5	2
The school is well led and managed.	37	50	8	1	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	42	46	10	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	26	52	14	1	7

Other issues raised by parents

There were some concerns about the delay in responding to parents' phone calls and the organisation of parents' evenings.

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

ENGLISH

74. In 2000, results in the GCSE examinations in English language and in literature were above the national average. Boys and girls achieved similar results in both examinations. The school entered a larger proportion of its pupils for English literature than is entered nationally. During recent years, results have steadily improved from average to above average in English language and in literature.

75. In the Year 9 national tests in 2000, the performance of pupils overall was well below the national average for all schools and the average for similar schools. In the same year, pupils' performance in mathematics was average and in science it was well below average. Over time, the performance of both boys and girls at the end of Year 9 has declined from above average, although the gap between the performance of boys and girls is narrower than the national one. The 2000 teacher assessments were above the average reported nationally.

76. When pupils join the school in Year 7 their attainment is well below the standard expected for 11 year olds. The work seen in Years 7 to 9 improves well, so that by Year 9 it is at an average standard. This is good achievement. About a quarter of pupils are working at a standard that is well above average. The great majority of pupils are articulate speakers and show good concentration when listening, both to the teacher and to each other. They use the spoken language well in a variety of situations, including debates, role-play and presentations to the class. Standards of reading aloud improve during these years so that by Year 9 the higher attainers are able to cope with demanding texts such as *Macbeth* and confidently rephrase them in their own words. Overall fluency in reading is above average. Many pupils show a high level of appreciation of the use of language in poetry, plays and fiction. Even in Year 7, they have begun to develop a sound critical vocabulary for commentaries on their reading. They speak and write with confidence about non-fiction texts such as advertisements and the media of television and films.

77. Pupils develop above average skills in writing for different purposes and readers, expressing original and challenging viewpoints on issues such as animal rights and euthanasia. The majority of pupils develop a wider vocabulary and most of them have mastered the skills of punctuation and accurate grammar by Year 9. Both boys and girls write interesting and fluent poetry; Year 7 pupils contributed a large number of poems to a recently published anthology. In general, girls tend to write at greater length and take more care about spelling and presentation than boys. Pupils with special needs and those who speak English as an additional language make good progress.

78. In Years 10 and 11, pupils' achievement continues to be good so that they raise their standard further. In the work seen, their attainment is above average. By the end of Year 11, most pupils write detailed and perceptive commentaries on the plays, novels and poems they study, showing for example an above average understanding of dramatic impact in Shakespeare and how the characters' words can indicate their state of mind. Their explorations of power and authority in *An Inspector Calls* and *Lord of the Flies* show excellent knowledge of the books and above average understanding of themes and relationships. Lower attainers show that they have gained sound understanding of the plot and its development in *Macbeth*, for example, but are not able to work out the possible significance of the apparitions. By the end of Year 11, most pupils have developed an above average command of style and can adapt their writing very effectively for different purposes. Generally, however, pupils do not make as much use of ICT in their work in English as is required by the National Curriculum.

79. The teaching of English is good throughout the school; there is some very good teaching. Pupils feel able to take risks and develop their thinking because a secure climate for learning has been established. Good attention is given to literacy skills in Years 7 to 9. Pupils' learning is good at each key stage. In most lessons, they are given a sequence of instruction and tasks that enables them to build on previous skills and understanding so that they make good progress. Occasionally a thirty-minute lesson lacked really clear purpose and timing so that its effect on pupils' learning was limited. In other short lessons, however, demanding timing and clear tasks led to brisk pace and a good outcome; for example in Year 10, where pupils produced some skilful and entertaining pastiches of *The Diary of Adrian Mole*. Teachers have good knowledge of individual pupils and appropriately high expectations of them. In most lessons, all pupils are included in the learning activities and are expected to make a contribution. However, in a minority of lessons in Years 10 and 11, the girls were not as fully involved in the class discussion as the boys were. An appropriate range of tasks and teaching approaches enables pupils with special needs to succeed. Learning support assistants work very effectively with the teachers to ensure that all these pupils are fully included in activities so that they make good progress. Pupils who speak English as an additional language and gifted and talented pupils make good progress. The marking of pupils' work is generally thorough and encouraging, although during Years 7 to 9 there is rarely any specific advice on how to improve. As a consequence, pupils in Years 7 to 9 have only a satisfactory idea of how well they are getting on, whereas, in Years 10 to 11, pupils have a good idea about this.

80. Pupils usually learn well in their English lessons during Years 7 to 9. They show genuine interest and enthusiasm when watching or listening to other pupils contributing to the lesson. Two Year 8 classes, brought together for a briefing on their spoken English project, behaved in a mature and responsible way in spite of a temporary shortage of seating. On this occasion, when a teacher gave a deliberately inept reading of a speech by Martin Luther King, the pupils were visibly sympathetic to her until they realised that her hesitation and nervousness were intended to illustrate a learning point. Learning continues to be good in Years 10 and 11, with a high level of interest and involvement from the great majority of pupils. Behaviour in

English lessons was seen to be good throughout the school, with the single exception of a minority of pupils in a Year 9 class in the last lesson of the day.

81. The provision made by the English department for the development of key skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing is good. The English teachers have drafted a literacy policy that has not yet been adopted by the school; consequently the contribution made by other subjects to literacy development is not equally developed. In art and design, design and technology, history, modern languages and physical education, teachers actively encourage pupils to use subject vocabulary accurately, and give them many opportunities to speak and listen in whole class and group work. In science, there is insufficient stress on subject-specific vocabulary in Years 7 to 9, however. Through research and through recording the design process, pupils' reading and writing skills are developed in design and technology. Religious education is exceptional in encouraging pupils to read aloud in class, but few chances to develop this skill are given in other subjects. Only English, history and religious education provide good regular opportunities to write in an extended way for various purposes and audiences. Generally, except in English and history, subject teachers do not correct grammatical errors in speech or written work. Currently, the development of a whole-school approach is rudimentary and overall provision for literacy across the curriculum is unsatisfactory.

82. The department is well led and managed. A carefully structured scheme of work enables pupils to develop a sound balance of skills, knowledge and understanding as required. However, the effectiveness of this scheme is lessened somewhat by the uneven distribution of lessons across the week for some groups of pupils in Years 7 to 9. For example, the top A group in Year 8 have two separate double lessons on Tuesdays and one double and a separate single lesson on Fridays. In Year 9, A groups have six of their seven lessons in the 24 hour period from after break on Wednesday mornings to the last lesson before break on Thursday mornings. In the four lessons before break on Thursdays, these groups have a double English lesson, followed by a single lesson in a different subject, then a single English lesson.

83. Provision for pupils with special needs is good. The department has created and maintained a good working environment with stimulating display; the resources for learning, books and equipment, are well cared for. There is a broad programme of extra-curricular opportunities in which many pupils take part, through which they can develop further their skills in writing and public speaking. The wide range of literature and the issues discussed in English lessons contribute well to pupils' development of moral and social understanding.

84. Since the last inspection, improvement has been satisfactory. Standards have risen in GCSE examinations, but have declined in the Year 9 tests. There have been several substantial improvements in the department's work since 1996. Individual reading is more effectively encouraged in Years 7 to 9 and re-drafting of work is leading to greater progress. There has been further improvement in the quality of teaching, especially in the provision for pupils with special needs. The department is well placed to make further improvements.

Drama

85. The 2000 GCSE results for both boys and girls were well above the national average. Over time, drama has proved to be a valuable option for pupils wishing to develop their performing and social skills.

86. Drama makes a very significant contribution to the skills and understanding required in English, although it is taught as a separate subject. The teachers' effective class management and excellent subject knowledge, combined with a good sense of humour, engage pupils fully in drama activities. The climate of trust and mutual respect enables pupils to share their personal feelings in an open way. In the work seen, the quality of preparation and performance in Years 7 to 9 was well above the standard expected. In a Year 7 lesson based on the 1939 Evacuation, the teacher's high expectations and good management led to excellent learning in collaboration and improvisation. These very high standards are maintained in spite of the severe limitations imposed by the 30-minute lessons in Years 7 to 9. In 30 minutes, it is not possible for pupils to go through the full cycle of warm-up, briefing, preparation, performance and evaluation that provides the full learning experience in drama. In a Year 10 lesson, the exceptionally high level of involvement during the pupils' own preparatory work led to good progress and, in particular, to their growing independence in managing their own learning.

87. Pupils' learning opportunities are enriched by the extra-curricular activities offered by both English and drama teachers, which involve theatre visits and school productions.

MATHEMATICS

88. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2000 were at the national average for all schools. These results were above the national average for schools with a similar intake. Boys did much better than girls in gaining higher grades and there was a significant improvement in the proportion of boys gaining grades A*-C. All pupils who entered the examination achieved a grade. While pupils did less well in mathematics than they did in their other subjects, the difference broadly reflects the national picture. Since 1998, there has been a steady improvement in the results at the higher grades.

89. In the Year 9 tests in 2000, pupils' performance was close to the national average for all schools, with boys performing slightly better than girls. Over the last four years, the trend in Year 9 results is similar to the national trend, although rising more steeply from 1999 to 2000. When compared to schools with a similar intake, pupils' performance was average. The 2000 teacher assessments in Year 9 matched the average reported nationally.

90. Overall, attainment in the work seen in Years 7 to 9 is at an average standard. The work of higher attainers in Year 9 shows that they have very good skills in using and applying their mathematical knowledge in their coursework; they

not only generated results, but also expressed their rules algebraically and explained their findings. For pupils of this age, this is above average. Lower attainers in Year 7 can apply their knowledge of tables, coupled with their understanding of square and cubic numbers, to devise two or three-step rules for function machines. This shows above average attainment and is better than that of pupils in one of the higher groups where pupils could apply the formula for calculating the area of a triangle, but did not understand why it worked.

91. The work seen in Years 10 and 11 is at an average standard. Higher attainers in Year 11 are working at an average standard, for example, by using a cubic graph to solve related equations. However, the work of higher attainers in Year 10 is above average. For example, these pupils are competent in the use of function notation and can recognise and discuss the transformations produced by a change of sign in an expression. Lower attainers in Year 10, while having a satisfactory knowledge of multiplication tables, have difficulty in applying their knowledge to long division.

92. Pupils' achievement is good overall. Pupils enter Year 7 with standards that are below those expected nationally; they make good gains throughout the first three years and satisfactory gains in Years 10 and 11. Pupils with special needs make satisfactory progress at each stage. There is not enough evidence to judge the progress of pupils for whom English is an additional language.

93. Pupils' attitudes are good and their behaviour is satisfactory. These are very good in some lessons but in a small number are less than satisfactory. In most lessons, pupils show interest in their work and are fully involved in their tasks. At best they are enthusiastic as seen when Year 7 pupils were inventing the rules (or functions) for number machines. They behave well, are polite and helpful, and have developed good working relationships with their teachers and with their peers. For example, pupils in Year 9 willingly presented their work to the rest of the class at the end of the lesson; the rest of the class listened with interest and appreciated their efforts. However, in a small minority of lessons, many pupils showed little interest or involvement in their work and their behaviour was unsatisfactory. This had a negative effect on the learning. For example, in a Year 7 class, several boys showed little or no respect for the teacher; they were noisy, did insufficient work and made it difficult for others in the class to learn.

94. Teaching is satisfactory overall. In nearly half of the lessons seen, teaching was good or better. All teachers have at least satisfactory subject knowledge; those with good subject knowledge demonstrate this partly by their confident delivery of the lesson, and also by their skill in explaining concepts in different ways so that pupils are helped to understand. They use every opportunity to improve pupils' basic skills of numeracy but there is little support for developing literacy skills, for example, by drawing attention to key words. However, the displays of technical vocabulary and pupils' work, both in the classrooms and in the corridors, create a good atmosphere for learning. Pupils' learning is satisfactory. Generally, pupils put effort into their work and are interested in what they are doing. They work well independently in Years 10 and 11. Pupils with special needs and those who speak English as an additional language learn effectively. Those with special needs are supported by the class teacher's knowledge of their learning targets and by the well-prepared support given by the learning support assistants.

95. Generally, lessons have clear learning targets, although these are not always explained to the pupils. Not all teachers review the targets with pupils at the end lessons to check on progress, although most go over what has been done. There is a good balance between the time pupils spend on listening to the teacher and the time they spend on doing their own work. Teachers follow the scheme of work, which is linked to the text book, and plan appropriately for their pupils' needs. However, activities are seldom planned for the different attainment levels in the teaching group, except for extension questions which are sometimes provided in the text or on the board. The mathematics department has introduced a three-part lesson structure for pupils in Years 7 to 9. Teachers make good use of the first part of every lesson to develop pupils' mental skills. This practice ensures continuity in learning and enables pupils to increase their confidence. Aspects of the National Numeracy Strategy have been incorporated into the work for Year 7 and are currently being incorporated into the work for Years 8 and 9. Teachers use effective strategies to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of written methods and also guide them to use a calculator appropriately. They regularly assess pupils' progress according to departmental policy and keep useful records. Homework is regularly set and marked, with helpful comments and suggestions on how pupils can improve their work; targets are written in pupils' books. This makes a positive contribution to pupils' learning. It helps pupils to have a clear idea of how well they are doing, particularly in Years 10 and 11.

96. In the best lessons, teachers expect pupils to do well. They utilise a good variety of methods and resources to help pupils learn. For example, using the context of a café and 'taking orders' to give pupils practice in early algebraic coding; using ICT to project questions on to the whiteboard; or using graphic calculators when exploring quadratic graphs. They also challenge their pupils by providing tasks that make them think for themselves, and by setting or agreeing time limits to keep them alert. These methods make a positive contribution to pupils' learning. However in a small number of lessons, teaching was unsatisfactory: there are two main contributory factors. The first is a weakness in lesson planning. For example, when an activity or task is too long, or is not pitched at the correct level, pupils lose concentration and either do insufficient work or misbehave. The second is a lack of effective pupil-management skills where challenging behaviour is allowed to distort

the learning ethos of the lesson. Weakness in teaching was most noticeable in lessons taken by temporary staff and by some non-specialist teachers in Years 7 to 9.

97. There is no school policy for numeracy although the development plan shows details of its development in the near future. Provision for the development of numeracy skills is very good in geography.

98. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The head of department, who has been in post for less than two years, provides a good example for the other teachers. The priorities for development clearly show the direction in which the department wishes to move forward and are entirely appropriate. These are principally concerned with raising standards, improving the use of ICT for pupils in Years 10 and 11, and completing the incorporation of the National Numeracy Strategy into the scheme of work for Years 7 to 9. The department's policies reflect those of the school. The teachers show good commitment to working as a team and their subject expertise ensures that improvements can continue. There has been some good monitoring of teaching. Assessment procedures are good; the analysis of assessment data is now being carried out more fully although some of this is still at an early stage. This data is being used well to check the suitability of curriculum planning. Accommodation is good and well maintained. Learning resources are good. However, there are insufficient specialist staff to ensure that good teaching is provided for all pupils. The department has had to rely on temporary or non-specialist teachers. Happily, following three unsuccessful advertisements over the last nine months, the school has been able to appoint a qualified mathematics specialist as second in department from the beginning of the next academic year. However, the school's procedures to ensure that pupils' progress is not affected by temporary staffing arrangements have not been effective enough.

99. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. Pupils' performance in Year 9 tests is now closer to the national average. GCSE results are close to the national average; boys' results have improved so that they now do better than girls. Pupils now make appropriate use of calculators and do not use them excessively for simple calculations. Throughout the school, pupils have opportunities to develop their skills in using and applying mathematics. There remains a small proportion of unsatisfactory teaching.

SCIENCE

100. In 2000, GCSE results in double science were well below the national average for all schools as was the proportion of pupils gaining higher grades. However, the double science results at grades A*-G were above both the national average for all schools and the average for similar schools. Boys' and girls' results were broadly similar. In biology, chemistry and physics the results were below the national average for all schools, and well below the average for the proportion of pupils gaining higher grades. All pupils gained a graded pass in each of the separate sciences. Pupils' performance in all science examinations is lower than in

their other subjects. Moreover, the results of those pupils taking the separate biology and physics courses are even lower in comparison with their other GCSE results than the results of those pupils taking the double award science examination. Chemistry results are somewhat better, relatively speaking, than the other sciences, but are still worse than pupils' average in all their subjects.

101. In 2000, results in the Year 9 tests were well below the national average for all schools. They are also well below average for the proportion of pupils reaching both the expected level and the higher levels. The proportion reaching the expected level was well below that in similar schools, whereas at the higher levels it was only below the results for similar schools. This shows that higher attainers do comparatively better than other pupils. Attainment in science has declined over the last few years and performance of girls has been consistently lower than that of boys. Performance in science is similar to that in English but well below that in mathematics. In 2000, the Year 9 teacher assessments were well below the average reported nationally.

102. In work seen at the end of Year 9, attainment is below average. Notebooks contain limited evidence of investigative work. Pupils have little practice in the skills required to answer questions requiring scientific thinking, as opposed, for example, to writing descriptions of observations. No discernible difference between the performance of boys and girls was identified; however, the department has no data on attainment monitored by gender to check how this relates to prior attainment.

103. In work seen at the end of Year 11, attainment is below average. Lower attainers are well supported and their attainment is at an appropriate standard. Teaching of other pupils is not targeted to provide work of appropriate challenge.

104. Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory overall. Pupils with special needs make satisfactory progress in Years 7 to 9; these pupils and some other lower attainers make good progress in Years 10 and 11. This results from good teaching and effective liaison with learning support assistants. In many other lessons, work does not meet the needs either of lower or higher attainers, because it does not provide for the range of pupils' attainment. Some teaching is challenging, for example a Year 10 GCSE biology lesson on pollination and fertilisation of plants included almost continuous dialogue between the teacher and the pupils, a thread of which was the way in which points could be improved. A Year 7 lesson on the characteristics of the moon moved along at a very good pace, questions were well targeted at individuals and scientific vocabulary was very effectively introduced. Never-the-less, there is little written work which makes pupils think, especially in chemistry and physics. Notebooks contain very few targets or comments that help pupils to learn how to improve their work. Pupils have plenty of experience of practical work, but skills in planning and evaluation of investigations are insufficiently developed, for example in an investigation of the effect of temperature change on the rate of a chemical reaction. Thus, in Years 10 and 11, higher attainers do not achieve as well as they should in scientific enquiry. The progress of those pupils who speak English as an additional language is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11; there is not enough evidence to judge their progress over Years 7 to 9.

105. Attitudes to science are good, and pupils behave well in lessons. Pupils have respect for equipment and pay appropriate regard to safety aspects of experimental work. They work well in small groups and co-operate effectively in practical lessons. Relationships are good. Notebooks are generally well kept. In some classes, when questioned, pupils said that they enjoyed science. There was particular enthusiasm for the subject in Year 7, where several pupils said it was their favourite subject. An example of good attitudes to the subject occurred in a Year 7 lesson, where pupils investigated factors that affected the number of swings per second of a pendulum. The laboratory space was cramped for this large group to carry out an experiment such as this, yet their behaviour was exemplary and enjoyment unmistakable. Apart from one class where pupils were noisy during practical work, pupils behaved well in all lessons. However, some older pupils appeared passive during lessons, and showed a lack of interest in the subject.

106. The quality of teaching overall is satisfactory. In almost all lessons, the quality was satisfactory or better; it was often good or very good. However, the

satisfactory quality now being provided does not yet show in an improvement in achievement although the changes by the new head of department have the capacity to make a difference. Teachers have a good command of their subject. Some lessons are well planned, with clear, realistic learning objectives that are, in the main, shared with pupils. Other lessons, for example examination revision or coursework practical assignments, have only very general plans, with insufficient strategies to enable all pupils to achieve their potential. Pupils are, almost without exception, very well managed. Lessons are well paced and make good use of resources. Learning support assistants are very well used to support pupils with special needs. However, the standard of marking is unsatisfactory. It is usually little more than ticks, with a comment on presentation, or of general encouragement. There are very few comments that help pupils to learn how to do better. Teachers do not always plan work for different attainment levels in the group, or provide sufficient challenges to higher attainers. There are some imaginative homework assignments, particularly in biology. This work helps pupils to develop writing skills. However, marking does not give enough guidance about how pupils can improve the scientific standard of their work, and some errors are left uncorrected. Although homework is sometimes used constructively for some lower attainers, it is often limited to completing the work started in the lesson. Planning for the development of literacy, numeracy and ICT skills through science is unsatisfactory.

107. Pupils' learning is satisfactory. They concentrate well and maintain interest throughout most lessons in Years 7 to 9. For example, Year 8 pupils were interested in, and challenged by a discussion on the behaviour of tyres on ice and snow. Pupils studying separate sciences for GCSE work at a good pace in practical lessons. They are confident in the use of a range of apparatus. Pupils with special needs learn securely in most lessons, and particularly well in Years 10 and 11. However, in other lessons, especially in Years 10 and 11, pupils make less effort, concentrate less well and the pace of their work slows down as the lesson proceeds. Overall, pupils do not have a clear idea how well they are doing, or what they need to do to improve their work. This is holding back their achievement. There is not enough evidence from which to make a judgement about the learning of those pupils who speak English as an additional language.

108. Leadership and management of science are unsatisfactory. There had been an acting head of department for over a year, but at the time of inspection a permanently appointed head of department had been in post for a month. There is ample evidence that this new head of department has identified very clearly the weaknesses in the operation of the department and has begun to put changes in place. The current development plan is weak, and does not adequately identify targets and strategies for improvement. Schemes of work do not fully reflect National Curriculum requirements and give insufficient guidance on teaching strategies. Internal assessments are similarly out of date and unreliable. Results of the recently introduced end of year examinations in Years 7 and 8, which reflect current requirements, show little correlation with progress records. There is no detailed analysis of trends in standards in science, either year-on-year or to compare attainment of boys and girls. In the absence of such analysis, the department is unable to assess whether current arrangements for three separate sciences at GCSE best serve the needs of higher attainers by giving them an equal opportunity

to succeed well. The department does not currently monitor and evaluate teaching and so it is not possible to share good practice or identify issues for development. Although in the lessons seen, teachers paid appropriate attention to safety matters, there is no formal procedure in place for risk assessments. Science teachers are well-qualified and supported by efficient technicians. The laboratories and preparation rooms are all close together and provide a pleasant working environment. They are enhanced by the display of a variety of work by pupils.

109. Since the last inspection, there has been unsatisfactory progress. Although provision for lower attainers has improved, there is still insufficient extension material or challenge for the most able. Standards overall have declined since the last inspection. Little improvement has been made in provision for ICT. Development planning for science is weak. The lack of continuity of leadership has resulted in a lack of clear direction in the teaching of science. School aims have not been reflected in the work of the science department. The school's management of the subject through the period of staffing difficulty has failed to ensure improvement in the areas of weakness in its operation.

ART AND DESIGN

110. About a quarter of the year group took GCSE art and design in 2000. The results were at the national average for all schools. Pupils do a little better in art and design than they do in all their other subjects, much the same as happens nationally. The proportion of pupils gaining the higher grades, while a little lower than the national average, was not significantly different. Girls performed better than boys at the higher grades. At the time of the last inspection, the results at the higher grades were above average. This was maintained until 1998, but fell in 1999. In the past three years, all pupils entered for GCSE have gained an A*-G grade.

111. The Year 9 teacher assessments in 2000 were close to the average reported nationally.

112. Attainment in the work seen at the end of Year 9 is at an average standard. Pupils' achievement is good. This is because they are taught skills systematically through exploring a wide range of media. Their enthusiasm and developing awareness of painting techniques help them to improve the quality of their work. Most pupils can combine images and materials, such as collage and paint, to build up a surface representing water and develop their ideas into a composition. Younger pupils know the primary colours; most can name artists and use with growing confidence the painting and stylistic devices of particular artists in their own work. Lower attainers mix and control paint with increasing accuracy. However, skills in drawing from observation and in three-dimensional work are underdeveloped. Where pupils have opportunities such as the mask-making in Year 8, the process helps give average and lower attainers the confidence to combine visual and tactile qualities successfully. Higher attainers show that they can apply themselves to following through ideas, although they do not use sketchbooks sufficiently as a studio tool. None-the-less, they make good progress. Pupils with special needs and gifted and talented pupils make good progress over Years 7 to 9.

The good teaching helps them to learn well. There is not enough evidence to judge the progress and learning of pupils who speak English as an additional language.

113. In the work seen, standards by the end of Year 11 are average. Higher attaining girls in Year 10 show above average attainment in drawing and painting. The achievement of most pupils is good, particularly for lower attainers and pupils with special needs. This is because activities are well structured to support and improve their written, visual and oral skills. Examination work on display shows appropriate evidence of research and investigation. The highest attainers show strengths in well-considered links with the work of different artists. However, the sketchbooks of average and lower attainers show limited skills in analysing and interpreting ideas. Pupils with special needs, gifted and talented pupils and those speaking English as an additional language make good progress. Their learning is good.

114. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. They enjoy the challenging activities and work well together. They work independently and usually listen carefully to each other in evaluation sessions, for example, when discussing artists or talking about techniques. They behave well because they are motivated to make choices and select their own materials. Pupils with special needs co-operate well and most are eager to answer questions.

115. Teaching and learning are good. A strength is the calm working atmosphere where pupils are encouraged to work in collaboration with others. Learning is usually good because teachers use skilful questioning techniques to check pupils' understanding. For example, in a Year 9 lesson on a 'personal values' theme, the questioning helped pupils to analyse surrealist motifs and go on to select similar techniques for developing their own work. Teachers' planning shows high expectations and inspires pupils to look closely at the work of artists and to make links between the ideas they have investigated and their own work, particularly in Years 10 and 11. This helps them to improve the quality of their painting. Their work shows the influence of different cultural traditions and of the male and female artists they have studied. For example, when comparing the painting techniques of an English and a Japanese landscape artist, Year 7 pupils' understanding of techniques for blending and controlling paint developed; teachers gave them time to reflect on how paint is applied by these artists. As a result, pupils increased their awareness of how to build up a flat surface of colour. Teachers' expertise is good and their flexible and attentive style promotes the very good relationships with pupils seen in all lessons. Their helpful evaluative comments about the work enables pupils to have a good idea about how well they are getting on, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Lower attainers are helped to feel confident about volunteering their thoughts and ideas in discussion; higher attainers deepen their understanding through questioning and research.

116. Teaching is organised effectively to provide a good balance between activities directed by the teacher and opportunities for pupils to learn independently. For example, Year 10 pupils explored the theme of growth and the industrial environment, showing competent skills in planning a large-scale composition. This had been stimulated by a visit to a local power station where they recorded ideas

from direct observation for later development in lessons. Most pupils show increasing independence and confidence in drawing on artists' techniques as a source of inspiration. This is very good in Years 10 and 11. Where teaching is satisfactory rather than good, weaknesses occur in pace and productivity of the lesson; pupils are uncertain about how to improve the quality of their coursework because tasks are not always clearly presented. Teachers prepare pupils well for examinations, for example, through additional lunch-time and after school clubs. However, the use of sketchbooks as effective studio tools is limited and boys' preparation and research is weaker than that of girls. This is reflected in the proportion of higher grades gained by boys. The structured focus on literacy, through the use of key words, well-designed worksheets and effective writing frames, is helping pupils to improve their presentation and research on artists. The arrangements for homework, while sound, are the least well developed feature of the teaching.

117. Leadership and management are good. Staff are committed to raising standards by targeting those pupils on course to gain a D grade at GCSE and improve it to a C and through rigorous monitoring of boys' attainment. Assessment procedures are good and are effectively linked to the National Curriculum, although the new curriculum levels for this subject have yet to be incorporated. While in general, resources other than those for ICT are good, the lack of a computer and software in the second art and design room is having a detrimental effect on the quality and range of pupils' learning in all year groups. The art and design technician, also a learning support assistant, contributes well to the work of the department. The effective displays of art around the school, art clubs and visits to museums, galleries and cultural areas, such as the African village, help to make the curriculum interesting and stimulating for most year groups.

118. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory and has been managed adequately. The range of learning resources for critical and contextual studies has improved.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

119. The 2000 GCSE results were close to the national average for all schools. This maintained the performance of the previous year. The proportion achieving higher grades has improved in all the areas, particularly in resistant materials and textiles. School records show that the results in food technology, although below the national average, represent good achievement for the particular Year 11 group in 2000. Pupils do equally well in design and technology as they do in their other subjects, much the same as the picture nationally. This represents some overall improvement since the last inspection. However, boys do not perform as well as girls in the subject; their relative performance is lower in design and technology than it is overall in other subjects and compares unfavourably with the national picture.

120. The 2000 Year 9 teacher assessments are very high in relation to the assessments in English, mathematics and science, but are based on significant evidence from tracking pupils' progress. They were close to the average reported nationally.

121. The work seen in Years 7 to 9 shows average standards overall. Pupils' achievement overall is good. Pupils work safely and develop skills in a number of materials. They design and make a range of products, including creative home furnishings such as cushions, healthy eating 'fast foods' and mechanical automata. However, there is a lack of progression in the quality and finish methods in resistant materials projects. Pupils understand the need to produce step by step plans and can apply food hygiene principals and quality control procedures in food and textiles work. The department only partially covers requirements for the systems and control element of the curriculum and there are no opportunities for experiences with pneumatics or computer control. Good use is made of CAD (computer aided design) and CAM (computer aided manufacture) to allow pupils to enhance product quality. Pupils' designing skills are less well developed than their making skills; standards of graphical representation are variable across subjects, but generally low. Teaching is predominantly skills-based; this can unnecessarily limit variety, sometimes limiting opportunities for pupils to make critical evaluations of their work in comparison with that of others. Pupils with special needs make satisfactory progress. There is not enough evidence to judge the progress of pupils who speak English as an additional language; there is none from which to judge the progress of gifted and talented pupils.

122. In Years 10 and 11, average standards are maintained; achievement continues to be good. There are examples of good work. For example in textiles, some project work is finished with good attention to detail, utilising a wide variety of techniques; some project folders are well planned and contain good graphics and a variety of ICT applications. In resistant materials, pupils produce a wide range of products to an appropriate standard, mainly in wood. In graphic products (Year 10

only), the quality of practical work seen using card is below average. The standard of project folders is too variable, and there are some differences in the application of graphical techniques across the department. Higher attainers can present their ideas, modify them and develop good solutions. They supplement their designs with examples of test materials and try out techniques for joining materials, although there are few examples of modelling prototype products. Opportunities are offered to improve the quality of products by using CAD/CAM facilities. Pupils with special needs and those who speak English as an additional language make satisfactory progress. There is no evidence from which to judge the progress of gifted and talented pupils.

123. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good, often very good, across the year groups. The few instances of poor behaviour were seen and pupils are keen to work in the design and technology areas. School behaviour policy is well applied when necessary. Pupils are generally attentive and work well with each other and their teachers. Relationships between boys and girls are good. They respond to the demands made of them and sustain their attention to the task. Pupils at all attainment levels and backgrounds contribute equally well to lessons; they have very positive and supportive attitudes towards each other, regardless of attainment or background.

124. Teaching is good and on occasion, very good. The best teaching is well structured, uses a variety of styles and stimulates pupil interaction, for example, in textiles, when pupils undertake paired interviews on a revision topic and give feedback to each other. Teachers have good subject knowledge which contributes strongly to the quality of pupils' learning. They use and consolidate appropriate technical language so that pupils can understand and utilise it. Good teaching and learning occurs where teachers make use of stimulating resources, such as retail food products, or have developed teaching aids such as the mechanisms in resistant materials. These ensure that pupils' own designs are based on broad, firsthand analysis and evaluation of ideas and products that are available in everyday life. At best, display provides examples of good working practices and processes by pupils as well as stimulating examples, for example of textiles from differing cultural traditions. Workbooks, including homework booklets and other support materials, are specifically planned for different attainment levels. These have a positive effect on pupils' learning, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Homework is organised well and regularly set.

125. There is a general awareness of the needs of those pupils with special needs and of those who speak English as an additional language. The learning support provided is generally well targeted and used, although this is less good in Years 10 and 11 than it is in Years 7 to 9. Health and safety matters are dealt with appropriately and risk assessments are carried out. There is also some good practice in relation to risk assessment and quality control within pupils' own work in food and textiles. Teachers have incorporated ICT opportunities into much of the work, although ICT is less well utilised for lower groups in Key Stage 4 projects. There is not always an adequate summing up at the end of lessons. Good opportunities to develop social moral and cultural awareness are built into the curriculum, although opportunities are missed to explore some of these in detail.

Pupils apply some intellectual effort but are not always challenged to enter into the rigorous discussion of which they are capable. The department pays good attention to the literacy development; the use of writing guidelines, for example, encourages considered evaluations by pupils. However, expectations of pupils' designing are not always clearly planned, particularly in Years 10 and 11. There are deficiencies in the provision for systems and control in the curriculum for Years 7 to 9.

126. Pupils' learning is generally good at each key stage. In resistant materials in Years 7 to 9, pupils' learning is occasionally restricted where the unit of work limits the challenge to pupils. Pupils learn skills and knowledge through a series of appropriate focussed practical tasks which do not always develop sufficiently into design and make assignments. In Years 10 and 11, pupils are generally well organised. They learn well when they undertake mock interviews, carry out and analyse relevant market research and share ideas with each other and the teacher. Pupils approach their project work with interest and are keen to make progress. They have had opportunities to experience industrial processes through batch production, health and safety practice and quality control procedures, which they apply to their own work.

127. Management of the department is very good and the department is led well. There is a strong sense of shared direction, helped by the compact layout of the accommodation. Pupils are made to feel welcome. The department continues to develop the curriculum and its good monitoring procedures with some thought and care, having identified very effectively the major issues for improvement in its development plan. For example, it is revising the programme for computer control. Pupil tracking is well established. Assessment procedures are good and the information gained from assessment is used well to check the suitability of planning for individual and group teaching. Technical support is good and used well in resistant materials workshops. Resources and accommodation are good and generally matched to the needs of the curriculum. Some rooms are being used to maximum capacity and the current use of one of the resistant materials workshops for graphics is less than ideal. In contrast, the best possible use is made of the limited accommodation for food and textiles. The central provision of ICT and CAD/CAM facilities offers daily opportunity for pupils to improve the standard of their work and research. This is a good feature.

128. Since the last inspection, there has been good progress. Standards have risen, in resistant materials, notably between 1999 and 2000; pupils now have a clear understanding of the design process. There has been a significant improvement in the quality of teaching, which is now good throughout the department. Behaviour management is now very good. Safety issues have become an appropriate priority and are now well managed. However, there are still some low expectations in Years 7 to 9 for the quality of design and presentation. The department is in a good position to improve standards further.

GEOGRAPHY

129. The 2000 GCSE results were broadly at the national average for all schools. However, the proportion of girls gaining higher grades was significantly lower than the average nationally. The number of boys taking the examination was too small for statistical comparisons to be made with the national results for boys. There has been a significant increase in the percentage of pupils obtaining higher grades over the last three years. However, pupils do less well in geography than they do in their other subjects; this compares unfavourably with the national difference.

130. The 2000 Year 9 teacher assessments were below the average reported nationally.

131. In the work seen in Years 7 to 9, pupils' attainment is above average. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. By age 14, pupils can describe the benefits and problems created by humans on the environment but have some difficulty in interpreting aspects of physical geography. For example, they can evaluate the effects of development and of population and settlement growth, but lower attainers find difficulty in evaluating the processes of river valley development. Pupils develop an understanding of the main differences between more developed and less developed countries and how these differences affect the people's lives. They successfully acquire basic geographical skills. The work seen generally shows good fieldwork practice and competence in analysing maps, statistics and graphs, although lower attainers have difficulty in identifying relief features. The emphasis on basic mapping skills in Year 7 has helped to raise standards of pupils' attainment in subsequent years. A visit to Corytown oil refinery helped pupils to begin to understand the links between raw materials and energy supply; they explored the social and environmental issues related to production and location. In Year 9, pupils identify the causes of volcanic activity and earth movements. The use of extension exercises from the textbooks ensures that higher attainers achieve a good standard; the individual attention given to lower attainers, through teacher questioning and worksheets specifically planned for them, results in their making satisfactory progress. As a result, there is much good, well-illustrated written work, accompanied by clear maps and diagrams, sometimes based on fieldwork. Lower attainers show a limited ability to write reports. Overall pupils' achievement is good.

132. In the work seen in Years 10 and 11, pupils' attainment is above average. This is better than suggested by the GCSE results in 2000. There has been a noticeable improvement in the standard of investigative work undertaken by the pupils. This has been achieved by teachers giving greater guidance as to how investigations should be conducted and by the head of department meeting pupils after school to help them. Particularly with the higher attainers, there is evidence of in-depth analysis and good statistical and graphical presentation of results. Pupils have a good understanding of the physical and human constraints on settlement sites; most can draw well-presented sketch maps from Ordnance Survey maps or photographs. Most pupils have a sound knowledge of geographical terms such as *urbanisation*, *zoning* and *urban morphology*. They are beginning to understand the reasons why industrial location changes over time. However, they find it easier to describe and justify interactions in human geography than in physical geography. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory over Years 10 and 11.

133. Most pupils have a good attitude to their work and to the subject. Behaviour in all lessons is very good. Pupils arrive quietly and are usually quickly ready to begin work. They co-operate well with staff and with each other. They show respect for their teachers but, at the same time, the relationship is friendly and purposeful. In discussions, pupils said that the fieldwork helped them to enjoy the subject and improve their understanding.

134. The quality of teaching is very good. Lesson topics are introduced clearly and concisely. Pupils respond well. Teachers have high expectations for their pupils in lessons. They have good knowledge of their subject and set the pupils challenging questions to suit their learning needs. The teaching of essential geographical skills is very good. Planning is very good in Years 7 to 9, with good use of resources, while in Years 10 and 11 it is good, making the best of the constraints of a detailed syllabus. In many lessons, teachers make a particular effort to involve the girls, although on some occasions, boys tend to ask or answer the most questions, or play a more active role in class discussions. Pupils are confident about asking for help; they also help each other. Teachers tend to focus their help on those pupils who need much support, but at the same time, higher attainers are extended by the tasks. In good teaching in a lower group, lesson time was broken up into short sections: each had an introduction, followed by class discussion, individual exercises and a brief plenary session. This structure enabled pupils to absorb small amounts of information at a time and consolidate their learning; a revision session concluded the lesson. The pace of each lesson ensures that attention is focussed on the work. The organisation of teaching groups by levels of attainment from Year 7 enables teachers to proceed at a pace appropriate to the pupils' understanding. Discipline is very good and results in a good learning atmosphere with new knowledge and skills acquired in every lesson. However, a significant minority of pupils are content to put sound effort into what they are doing, and no more, which makes their learning less good than the teaching they receive. Homework is regularly set and checked and teachers insist on its completion. Investigative fieldwork and teachers' questioning skills encourage pupils to think for themselves. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have a clear idea of how well they are getting on because they received feedback about their working of examination questions and from their enquiry work. In Years 7 to 9, through question and answer sessions, the marking of their work and end of topic testing, pupils gain satisfactory knowledge about their own progress, although this is not sufficiently linked to National Curriculum levels.

135. Sound provision is made for literacy development. Pupils have opportunities to write extensively, for example in fieldwork reports and commentaries on the problems experienced by people in different countries. They are given guidance about writing and spelling corrections are frequently discussed in lessons. Very good provision is made for numeracy development. From the beginning of Year 7, pupils are involved in measuring, calculating and interpreting and designing graphs. ICT provision, however, is unsatisfactory. Although individual pupils make very good use of school computers or home computers to complete homework, or to produce fieldwork reports and GCSE coursework, there is no structured course. A new geography teacher has been appointed for September to develop ICT within the department.

136. There is very good leadership and management. The two geography teachers, together with colleagues from other departments, are effective members of a team which is committed to raising standards. Teaching is monitored, but this is not undertaken systematically to ensure that teaching is of consistently high quality; not all lessons show the very good general quality. The scheme of work for Years 7 to 9 has good breadth; the scheme for Years 10 and 11 satisfactorily covers the minimum number of topics required by the examination board. Resources are good and accommodation, very good. The recent move to two spacious classrooms has made it possible for teachers and pupils to circulate freely as they work so that pupils can be given individual help more easily. Generous display space is used effectively to show pupils' work and to mount large-scale maps.

137. Since the last inspection, progress has been good. There has been a marked improvement in the proportion of higher GCSE grades gained by boys so that their results now exceed those of girls. However, there is no evidence to identify to what extent these results reflect the attainment on entry of the boys and girls taking geography in 2000. This requires attention.

HISTORY

138. The number of pupils who took the GCSE examination in history in 2000 was too small for statistical comparisons to be made with national results. Pupils' results ranged from A to F. Although the numbers taking the subject vary from year to year, the entry is usually too small for clear trends to be identified. However more pupils at the end of Year 9 are now choosing to study the subject at GCSE. Many pupils who choose history have difficulties with some aspects of reading and writing and some have special needs.

139. The 2000 Year 9 teacher assessments were close to the average reported nationally.

140. In the work seen, attainment is at an average standard. Pupils' achievement is good in relation to their standards on entry to the school. Pupils can use a variety of extracts to find information about the past and to make judgments about cause and effect and the motivation of individuals. By the end of Year 9, they understand some of the causes and results of the major developments of the last century. Higher attainers understand the impact of a world war and relate it to later events in Germany, for example. This is evident in detailed studies of the Great War, focusing on the role of General Haig. Average attainers understand how propaganda was used to persuade people to support the persecution of minority groups in Germany. A small number of pupils shows clear understanding of the fact that, at that time, children were taught to hate the Jews and would have followed the example of their parents and teachers. In all year groups, written work is often well presented and includes a wide variety of tasks. Gifted and talented pupils use complex information and detailed sources to reach mature judgements. While higher attainers have a good knowledge of the topics they have studied, only a few pupils are good at remembering detail or at evaluating primary and secondary sources of evidence.

Pupils with special needs and those who speak English as an additional language make good progress. Those with special needs show good levels of understanding, for example of the meaning and consequences of appeasement. They respond well because they are well supported, although most encounter difficulty with reading and written work. There is not enough evidence to judge the progress of gifted and talented pupils.

141. In Years 10 and 11, pupils are generally working at a below average standard. Most are meeting course requirements, although some fail to complete the coursework. The current Year 11 group has been affected by long-term staff absence and may not reach the department's GCSE target for higher grades. Achievement is satisfactory in relation to pupils' prior attainment. Some individuals show that they have a detailed knowledge of the topics that they are studying and the high level of skills in essay and document work that will help them to succeed at the higher levels. Most pupils answer and ask questions with confidence. Most base their ideas and judgments on a careful study of extracts and source material and understand how evidence can be misleading or biased; for example when looking at pictures and advertisements for vacuum cleaners from America in the nineteen-twenties. In Year 10, pupils respond very well to the complexity of the issues related to the development of popular culture in post-war Britain and they understand the significance of economic and technical factors in this. The majority of pupils have a clear understanding of the different levels of response to GCSE questions and of how to produce the quality of course work required. However, some fail to hand in work on time and do not make good use of revision time or of the support available in class. Pupils with special needs and those who speak English as an additional language make good progress. There is not enough evidence to judge the progress of gifted and talented pupils.

142. Pupils' attitudes to their work in history are generally good and they usually behave well.

143. Teaching is good. In the lessons seen it was at least sound and in the majority it was good or very good. Teachers use a variety of approaches to teaching and learning. They set a variety of tasks that make a valuable contribution to literacy skills, particularly through extended writing. The quality of displays is good. Provision for ICT is good. However, in Years 7 to 9, too little time is allocated for pupils to develop skills in independent research. Teachers have good subject knowledge and they manage pupils well. In the most effective lessons, the variety of resources and activities is very good and the teaching provides real challenges for the highest attainers. Day-to-day assessment is good; so too, is the questioning to review earlier work and assess and extend pupils' understanding. Homework is set regularly and helps pupils to progress well.

144. Overall, pupils learn well because they have opportunities to be active participants rather than passive listeners. Both the planning and the resource books ensure that skills and knowledge are built up well as pupils move up the school. In Years 7 to 9, learning is good. Pupils develop research skills and learn how to evaluate evidence as they study the events of 1066, for example, and the development of the feudal system. Local history is used particularly well to help

pupils to understand causes and events such as those relating to the revolt over the poll tax in 1381. They benefit from the opportunity to participate in role -plays which help them understand life in Tudor society. By the end of Year 9, the majority of pupils have a secure grasp of all aspects of the study of history and make sensible and reasoned judgments about cause and effect and the impact of change.

145. Learning is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Pupils who choose the subject at GCSE have the opportunity to acquire both the depth of knowledge and the skills required to meet the examination requirements. All those who study history have the opportunity to go on visits to historic sites and museums. This greatly enhances their learning. However, the learning of some pupils is affected by the fact that two members of staff teach the course. Not enough is done to ensure adequate continuity in learning with the result that, although the teaching is good, pupils' learning is only satisfactory. Generally, the depth and breadth of the topics covered ensure that the subject makes a good contribution the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils and to their awareness of citizenship; for example, through considering the lessons that can be learned from the Nazi treatment of the Jews.

146. The management of the subject is very good. There is a clear focus on review and development. Careful planning and monitoring generally ensure progression and continuity despite the current staffing problems. However, the effectiveness of the school's deployment of staff for GCSE teaching has not been checked through monitoring.

147. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Resources have improved and new assessment procedures have been introduced that are good. The department provides a rich experience in history for all pupils.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

148. No pupils were entered for GCSE in 2000. Results of Year 9 teacher assessments were close to the average reported nationally. There was no significant difference between the results of boys and girls.

149. In the work seen in Years 7 to 9, pupils' attainment is at an average standard. In the timetabled specialist course, pupils show sound skills in using ICT for word-processing, spreadsheets, databases, desktop publishing and Internet applications. However, pupils' attainment in ICT across the curriculum is less than satisfactory because it varies between subjects.

150. Attainment in the work seen in Year 11 is below average. A number of pupils, however, show good skills in areas of ICT where they have a special interest, such as desktop-publishing, research using the Internet, word-processing and spreadsheet applications. However, in Year 10, standards are generally average and reflect the challenge and focus provided by the newly introduced GCSE course.

151. Pupils join Year 7 with a very mixed range of ICT skills and experience but soon gain confidence and competence in using the computer network. Their achievement over Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. They extend their skills in spreadsheet applications and develop new skills in using the Internet for information, research and e-mail applications. For example, they use and construct simple spreadsheets to analyse the stock of a warehouse, use formulae in a spreadsheet and perform calculations automatically using the computer. Higher attainers combine word and spreadsheet programmes to prepare a suitably designed page incorporating text and tables. Pupils can produce simple scatter-graphs to show the relationship between two variables. The course is appropriately planned to ensure that higher and lower attainers are suitably challenged by the work. There is insufficient evidence from which to judge the progress of gifted and talented pupils and those who speak English as an additional language.

152. In the work seen in Years 10, pupils use a range of ICT applications with increasing confidence and most develop at least a sound knowledge and understanding of word-processing, spreadsheet, desktop-publishing and database applications. Many pupils use and apply word-processing with good levels of skill and accuracy and can integrate text and graphics effectively. Pupils have a reasonable grasp of how to design and create simple databases. Increasingly, they use the Internet productively to retrieve information for curriculum related topics and course work and for personal interests such as music and films. These achievements result from the introduction of the GCSE course. However, Year 11 pupils do not show an equivalent level of skills and knowledge, so that overall, pupils' achievement over Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory.

153. Pupils frequently work with enthusiasm and independence. Their behaviour is very good and the atmosphere in the lessons is calm and purposeful.

154. Teaching in the timetabled ICT course in Years 7 to 9 is good. The scheme being used, although planned only in outline, encourages pupils' interest. In most lessons, through effective and timely intervention, teachers give appropriate support to pupils to complete the exercises set and ensure that they make at least satisfactory progress. Although a sound foundation is being prepared in the areas of information handling and modelling, in practice, the overall provision for the subject is not as well balanced as the planning suggests and too little time is given to control technology. There is insufficient emphasis on problem-solving and investigations that require pupils to utilise the skills they have developed. The teaching in Years 10 and 11 is good. The ICT courses are well planned and teachers pay careful attention to the course programme, the demands of the examination and assessment requirements. Pupils are generally managed well. Teachers quickly identify where pupils need help and intervene sensitively. Many pupils show good levels of concentration. However, generally, teachers' marking of pupils' work and their comments in lessons do not help pupils sufficiently to understand how they can make improvements.

155. The school is taking positive steps to achieve the development of both ICT courses and the use of ICT in all curriculum subjects. There is committed and effective leadership and management of the timetabled ICT courses which are

contributing to the improving standards in all age groups. However, the leadership of ICT across the whole curriculum is not as effective as it should be, with the result that the use of ICT outside the specialist courses is unacceptably variable in provision and quality. There is a three-year strategic plan for ICT which clearly identifies priorities for development. However, the absence of school policy for ICT reduces the intended effect. No clear direction for the subject is established. For example, the majority of other subjects, including mathematics and science, have not yet included ICT within their own curriculum policies and planning. Arrangements for assessing ICT in all subjects are not in place, and so the results of assessment cannot be used to check the suitability of planning. Senior managers are not monitoring the use of ICT in subjects effectively enough to bring about sustained development in the cross-curricular use of ICT. There has been substantial recent investment to improve ICT resources, and access to them, but the number of computers available in relation to the number of pupils is still well below the national average for secondary schools.

156. Since the last inspection, progress overall has been satisfactory. Standards have been maintained. There have been some significant improvements in resources, including Internet connections to networked computers in the library, replacement of a network system and improvement in schemes of work, assessment programmes and reporting to parents. The outcomes of pupils' assessments are not used sufficiently well for planning purposes. Developments have now reached a stage where much greater account should be taken by the head of ICT of the need to ensure that curriculum planning, assessment and the tracking of pupils' progress is more rigorously and systematically managed in order to raise standards further.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French

157. GCSE French results in 2000 were above the national average for all schools. Both boys and girls did better in French than in their other subjects except English, this compares favourably with the picture nationally. Boys and girls performed equally well at the higher grades; this compares favourably with the picture nationally where boys achieve less well than girls. Relatively few pupils gained the highest grades. There is no easily discernible trend over time. At the last inspection, the GCSE results were very low compared with national results. In 1999 they showed significant improvement but remained below the national average. The 2000 results represent another significant improvement and coincide with the school's decision to change to an assessment scheme that has a significant coursework element. The school does not anticipate maintaining this rise in 2001, given the prior attainment of the group taking the subject.

158. In 2000, pupils' standards in French as measured by teachers' Year 9 assessments were significantly higher than those reported nationally. There is no discernible difference between the proportions of girls and boys attaining the national standard. A significantly higher proportion of girls were assessed at the higher levels, and these proportions mirrored closely the assessments reported nationally.

German

159. The number of pupils taking GCSE in 2000 was too small for secure statistical comparisons to be made with national results. All pupils entered gained a higher grade A* - C; these are good results. Pupils did at least as well in German as they did in their other subjects. The number of candidates entered, 12, was small and higher attaining pupils. The number entered in 2000 shows a decrease on the 15 entries in 1999. The anticipated entry for 2001 is seven.

160. The pupils who take German in Years 7 to 9 study it as a second foreign language. No German results are therefore reported nationally for these pupils.

French and German

161. In the work seen in Years 7 to 9, pupils' attainment is at an average standard. This represents a good achievement. Pupils learn to listen to French (over three years) and German (over two years) spoken by the teacher and by native speakers on tape. They begin to read and write in the foreign language. They identify important points in the materials they hear and read and give short oral responses to what they hear. For example, pupils say in French which subjects they study at school and whether they are good or weak at individual subjects. They talk in the past tense about preparations they have made for a party and about various items they have purchased. They act out brief role-plays in front of the class. Other pupils explain their daily routine in the present tense in German, using a good range of vocabulary. They recognise people from recorded oral descriptions and use vocabulary related to physical appearance and hobbies to take on a given identity. In both languages, pupils repeat orally after the teacher with good accuracy. Inspection evidence confirms that some pupils are working at the higher levels reported in 2000. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make satisfactory progress. Those with special needs make good progress because of the good support they receive. There is insufficient evidence to judge the progress of gifted and talented pupils.

162. In the work seen in Years 10 and 11, attainment overall is at the standard expected. However, this overall judgement reflects a wide range. During the inspection period, Year 11 pupils were following a revision programme related to their one remaining GCSE examination, the reading component. They extract key words from a range of reading material in French, but do not easily understand that complete French sentences make sense. Some pupils have difficulty in recognising common vocabulary, for example, *la clef*, *la salle d'attente*, *un aller-retour*, when talking about travel. Other pupils use dictionaries to check vocabulary and consolidate their use of common tenses. A small number of higher attainers begin to understand that there are different linguistic ways of communicating a piece of information. However, many find tenses difficult to understand unless the exercise involves one tense only. Little evidence was seen during the inspection of higher level attainment, although some Year 10 pupils used the perfect and imperfect tenses briefly while choosing their own vocabulary to talk about work experience, the nature of work done and their opinions of it. A very small amount of sustained written work was seen which communicated ideas well, but lacked linguistic accuracy. Overall, pupils' achievement is satisfactory at this key stage.

163. Pupils' attitudes to learning modern languages are somewhat variable across the school. In Years 7 to 9, pupils' attitudes are generally good. However, in a Year 9 class and some Year 11 classes, pupils' relationships with the teacher are less than satisfactory when the teaching does not motivate or interest them, or when they feel they are unfairly treated. Occasions were seen when pupils' poor attitudes turned into challenging and disruptive behaviour that sorely tested teachers' management skills and authority. Overall attitudes are good and behaviour is satisfactory.

164. Teaching is unsatisfactory overall because of the high proportion of lessons, a quarter, in which it was less than satisfactory. However, examples of good quality teaching were seen. The teachers' linguistic knowledge and understanding are not

equally good, but usually at least sound. However, teachers do not use the French language systematically in lessons throughout the school, although this is sometimes good. In other respects, teachers plan individual lessons very effectively and use a range of strategies to maintain pupils' interest. They incorporate activities which encompass listening and reading skills and frequently use technical aids to support pupils' learning, such as an overhead projector and a cassette recorder. However, teachers' expectations for pupils' achievement are too low. Although no formal assessment was observed during the inspection, teachers' informal assessments as lessons progress often have a positive influence on pupils' subsequent learning in the lesson. In a significant proportion of lessons, teachers' management of pupils' behaviour was unsatisfactory. On these occasions, the less effective teaching resulted in unsatisfactory use of time, poor quality relationships between teacher and pupils and low expectations leading to ineffectual learning.

165. None-the-less, pupils' learning generally is satisfactory overall in Years 7 to 9, although unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Despite the ineffectiveness of some teaching, pupils show established learning habits which, generally, they manage to maintain. They show interest in their work and collaborate well in pairs. They listen attentively to the teacher and to pre-recorded tapes. For example, Year 8 pupils worked well in pairs preparing and acting role-plays, completing information on *Que'st-ce que tu as fait?* Other Year 8 pupils are pleased when they accurately create a complete sentence, *J'ai achete un baladeur pour ma soeur*. Some Year 9 pupils think for themselves when they use their linguistic knowledge to work out the meaning of new vocabulary. Pupils understand the language structures and vocabulary at the time when they learn them, but poor long-term memory affects their ability to progress to new work because they have forgotten what they had learnt earlier. The learning of a significant minority of pupils is adversely affected by teachers' poor skills in managing behaviour and the consequent unsatisfactory relationships between teacher and pupils; these led to confrontational and aggressive incidents. Some pupils find concentration and stamina for more than a few minutes challenging. However, good teaching and learning was seen in a Year 9 German lesson where carefully planned activities supported good progression in pupils' learning. Pupils showed interest and involvement in listening to pre-recorded material spoken at normal speed. They made significant intellectual effort, working independently at first. They concentrated well on consolidating previously learnt vocabulary and increasing the range to new words. The teacher dealt firmly but sensitively with behaviour management issues. She interposed challenging questions which tested pupils' ability to analyse and think carefully about the language.

166. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Two joint acting heads of department are effectively administering the subject during the one term period between the departure of the previous head of department and the arrival of her successor. This joint role ensures the smooth running of daily matters, the necessary planning for the next academic year, and effective preparation for revision work for GCSE pupils. Currently the distribution of lessons in Year 10, with all Year 10 lessons on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, does not promote steady language learning. The scheme of work lacks planning for ICT development within

the subject. The school's arrangements for ensuring that the quality of teaching is at least satisfactory so that pupils' learning is soundly promoted are not effective.

167. Since the last inspection, progress has been satisfactory. A key issue then was to improve the standards achieved in French. Teachers' Year 9 assessments indicate that pupils make good progress over their first three years in the school. This is confirmed by inspection evidence. GCSE results have improved significantly from a very low base; they reached and exceeded national averages in 2000. Teachers' subject knowledge is now satisfactory. Arrangements for teaching groups, the quality of lesson planning, the adoption of a GCSE coursework assessment scheme, have all contributed to a rise in standards.

MUSIC

168. There is no provision for music in Years 10 and 11.

169. The Year 9 teacher assessments show attainment well below the results reported nationally.

170. In the work seen in Years 7 to 9, pupils' attainment is below average. When they enter Year 7, pupils' attainment is below the standard expected by age 11. Attainment tends to vary widely, with a small number of pupils working at an above average standard but the majority working at below average standards. There are no differences between the attainment of boys and girls. Pupils in Year 9 answer with confidence and perception when asked to articulate their personal responses having listened to two contrasting pieces of music. Pupils' knowledge of a range of notations is limited. The emphasis placed on work with staff notation, without pupils understanding the principles behind it, means that many have difficulty relating sounds to the symbols which represent them. This is not helped by the use of printed material that confuses. For example, Year 8 pupils use a system of notation that combines diagrams of the keyboard with text, with no reference to rhythm or relevant pitch. Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory.

171. Pupils' attitudes are good and their behaviour very good. Pupils settle quickly and quietly to their work and are well behaved throughout lessons. Generally, they work with purpose and focus. They know how to use equipment appropriately and treat resources with care and respect. Pupils support each other in potentially stressful situations. For example, during individual performances to the rest of the class on keyboards, a Year 8 pupil helped another to find the correct note in a melody. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and teachers are very good. Pupils are confident to ask questions if there is some aspect of their learning they are not sure about because teachers usually maintain a positive atmosphere in lessons.

172. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Teachers' subject knowledge is mostly good. Good questioning techniques are used to probe pupils' knowledge and understanding. Positive feedback from teachers reinforces learning, as does a lively, engaging style of delivery. For pupils with special needs, support staff offer an

important level of assistance, so that these pupils learn well ; this is especially true in practical lessons involving keyboards. Lessons usually proceed at a good pace. Instrumental tuition is provided by three visiting teachers and provides good value for money. However, there are a number of significant weaknesses. Learning targets are not always made clear at the start of lessons and are seldom reviewed at the end. Work is not planned to suit pupils' different attainment levels. Despite low levels of attainment on entry to Year 7, expectations are low and too often the work is unchallenging. For example, there are many instances of pupils in all years being required to complete 'wordsearch' puzzles or other writing activities that do little to promote musical development. In all years, there is an uncritical over-reliance on published materials that are not good enough. The quality of marking of work is poor, with no attempt to offer advice on how pupils' efforts could be improved. At other times, pupils receive positive feedback from teachers. The school's homework policy is not followed.

173. Pupils' learning is satisfactory overall. There is much evidence of pupils acquiring new skills, especially in practical keyboard work. For example, Year 8 pupils can work out on the keyboard a melody they have heard and improve their practical skills of hand and finger positioning. However, progress is limited by the lack of appropriate resources. For example, while all pupils use keyboards in lessons, no headphones are made available. The resulting sound levels are not controlled sufficiently to prevent a negative effect on pupils' development of sensitive aural skills. Ensemble activities outside the classroom do not take place on a regular or systematic basis. Opportunities occur in preparation for end of term concerts. The development of performance skills is therefore restricted. Singing only takes place as an extra-curricular activity, with the consequence that not all pupils may be involved. This does not meet National Curriculum requirements. Similarly, learning through group work in class lessons does not feature in lessons, nor does the use of ICT to create, manipulate and refine sounds. While electric keyboards offer important learning opportunities for all pupils in Years 7 to 9, there are few useable percussion instruments for class work.

174. Leadership and management are poor. Although schemes of work have been rewritten, they do not meet the music requirements of the National Curriculum 2000. The schemes lack rigour: for example, there is no indication of the time span for each unit of work and the tasks and activities are not linked to the statutory programme of study. The lessons seen during the inspection did not follow the scheme of work. There was little evidence of composition work in lessons or in pupils' records. The department uses assessment only for the purpose of completing pupils' annual reports. There is no evidence of assessment being used to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and curriculum planning. Departmental documentation is scrappy. The arrangements for ensuring that lesson plans are available when members of staff are absent are poor; these arrangements proved to be totally inadequate during the inspection so that pupils' learning was disadvantaged.

175. The improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. Many of the issues raised then have not received adequate attention, in particular, those related to assessment arrangements. Some planned activities are now available for higher attainers but there is little evidence that they are used. The weakness in provision for music in Years 10 and 11 has not been rectified by the school; opportunities for pupils with a commitment or talent for music are still not available. There remain few instrumental and choral opportunities for pupils. Monitoring of the department's action plan from the last inspection has been weak. Some improvements have been made. The accommodation has been improved to include a large specialist room and two instrumental rooms, although the latter were not used for instrumental work in the class lessons seen during the inspection. The department has acquired a compact disc player and a small number of discs. Instrumental tuition now takes place during the school day for about five per cent of pupils, which is a rather low proportion. Overall, the school has not ensured that the department is adequately managed and that the required curriculum is properly offered.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

176. Results at GCSE matched the national average for all schools in 2000. The proportion gaining higher grades was above the national average, although not significantly so. Results at A*-C have fluctuated since the last inspection, while remaining broadly similar overall. Pupils do better in physical education than they do in their other subjects; this is not significant because it reflects the picture nationally. The school's predictions show a rise in results in 2001.

177. Results in the Year 9 teacher assessments in 2000 matched the average reported nationally.

178. Pupils' standards in the subject on entry to the school at age 11 are below average. As a result of good teaching, attainment improves over Years 7 to 9 to reach an average standard at age 14. Over Years 10 and 11, pupils make further gains so that standards are above average at age 16. Overall, standards have risen since the last inspection, due in the main to good teaching by knowledgeable specialists, the extension of assessment, recording and reporting of pupils' work and the involvement of the pupils.

179. In the work seen in Years 7 to 9, there is no noticeable difference between the attainment of boys and girls. Pupils' achievement is good. In a significant majority of lessons, many individual pupils perform at higher levels and can modify their ideas in response to changing circumstances. In all lessons, pupils demonstrate increasing control and levels of accuracy in a range of catching, throwing and athletic skills. They have a good understanding of health-related fitness and of the effects of exercise on the body. They know how to warm up before strenuous activity and can name the muscles they are stretching. They are confident and willing to express their views when asked. Planning, performing and evaluating skills are developed well in lessons. Pupils have ample opportunities to observe and analyse their own and others' work, and to comment on performance against specific criteria.

180. In Years 10 and 11, the work seen shows a wide range in the quality of performance. None-the-less, pupils' good achievement is sustained. Pupils build on the strong foundations laid in Years 7 to 9 to apply advanced principles of games play effectively and proficiently. Many achieve significant success both in teams and individually, gaining local and regional honours. In lessons, pupils work hard to develop their knowledge and understanding of the principles of games play; they are tactically aware and can select and apply appropriate skills. They select roles and activities that suit their interests and level of skills and have a sound knowledge of health-related fitness. This is best exemplified by a Year 11 girls' aerobics class, the last physical education lesson these pupils would have prior to leaving the school. There was full attendance; pupils built a tremendous atmosphere, showed high levels of commitment and were involved in the expenditure of not inconsiderable energy.

181. In all years, pupils with special needs make good progress. They are supported in an unobtrusive manner. Gifted and talented pupils also make good progress. There is not enough evidence from which to judge the progress of those pupils who speak English as an additional language.

182. Attitudes to learning are good at both key stages. Pupils respond well in lessons to the stimulating and challenging environment created by the purposeful, yet sympathetic approach used within the department. They are enthusiastic and very well turned out for all activities, demonstrating a real enjoyment of the subject. They are polite, well-behaved and work in a co-operative and supportive manner. They respond very positively to the expectations of their teachers. They are attentive and listen carefully, and their capacity to sustain concentration is good. Relationships between teachers and their pupils are good. In all lessons, pupils work well both independently and collaboratively. This is because opportunities for them to take responsibility and undertake different roles, such as coach or official, are a common and good feature of all lessons.

183. Teaching is good overall and often very good. All specialist teachers have good knowledge of the subject, pay due regard to all aspects of health and safety, and are enthusiastic in their approach. They have very high expectations of their pupils, give clear and precise explanations and demonstrations and work hard to

raise levels of pupils' self-esteem. The use of shared learning objectives, together with brisk pace and appropriate levels of challenge, ensures that class management is uniformly very good. Assessments linked clearly to the Curriculum 2000 levels are carried out regularly at the end of every module of work; they are used diagnostically to improve lesson planning and delivery. The full use of technical vocabulary contributes strongly to the promotion of literacy skills within the school, particularly in Years 7 to 9. The teachers have successfully generated a positive atmosphere of successful participation for all, based on challenge, support and mutual respect. Further improvements in standards could be secured by engaging pupils more actively in their own assessments.

184. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of department has a very clear vision for the future, and a marked sense of purpose. Teachers form an energetic, well balanced and complementary team; they support each other well, have a strongly shared belief in continuous improvement and are well deployed to meet the demands of the curriculum. Their extensive involvement in a very wide range of extra-curricular activities sends a strong message to pupils about the values of personal commitment and endeavour. Schemes of work are now up to date, detailed and extensive, and assessments relate directly to them. Assessments and the evaluation of pupils' progress in learning and development of skills are used very well to ensure appropriate curriculum planning. The subject's development plan has clarity and robustness and is tied firmly to overall school planning. There are extensive and well looked after facilities, although some are beginning to show signs of age. The department is well resourced. The planned new floodlit outdoor facilities will give a significant boost both to the curriculum and to extra-curricular opportunities. Arrangements for monitoring teaching are good, although best practice could be better shared. In the course that all pupils follow, the curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. Across the school, a very extensive range of extra-curricular activities, and fixtures with other schools, provide many opportunities for pupils to further enhance and extend their knowledge, skills and understanding.

185. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Areas identified for improvement in the previous report have been tackled successfully; strengths have been maintained. Standards have risen overall and this strong department is well placed to make further significant progress. This subject is a strength of the school.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

186. In the work seen, pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9 is below average. Their knowledge and understanding of Christianity are at an average standard but their knowledge and understanding of other religions are well below average. Pupils can make informed judgements about religious issues but often confuse opinion, belief and fact. Their skills of investigation and evaluation are underdeveloped. However, they can interpret some stories and know the significance of some religious symbols such as the Cross. They are aware of the importance of water to cleanse in a number of religions. The underdevelopment of skills is due to the heavy emphasis formerly placed on the acquisition of knowledge.

187. Pupils' attainment in the work seen at the end of Year 11 is at an average standard. Pupils know the main facts associated with the life of Jesus and can describe some of the parables and what they mean. They apply some of the teachings of Jesus to the moral and social issues they are discussing. They make reasoned and informed judgements on moral and social issue. However, except in relation to Christianity, they do not apply their knowledge of different religious teaching to these issues with understanding. Pupils are able to reflect on their own beliefs and values and to compare them with others. Their skills of information gathering and evaluation are sufficiently developed for them to examine a variety of pieces of information, identify 'for' and 'against' and take part effectively in a debate on a specific social or moral issue.

188. Achievement is good at each key stage. Pupils are adding to their knowledge and understanding of Christianity and, to a much lesser degree, their knowledge of Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism and Judaism. They are consistently developing their skills of evaluation, analysis and reflection. Pupils with special needs make good progress. There are no significant differences in the achievement of boys and girls or between pupils of different ethnic groups. There is insufficient evidence from which to judge the progress of gifted and talented pupils and those who speak English as an additional language.

189. Pupils' attitudes to religious education are good; they arrive at lessons keen to learn. For example, Year 9 pupils listened to the 'Footprints' poem and then worked well on an extended piece of independent writing. Behaviour in lessons is very good and pupils work well. They show a high degree of interest in the subject and work together well. They help one another and share their beliefs and values giving respect to each other. In Year 11, for example, pupils had a variety of differing personal responses to civil rights issues but were prepared to listen to each other and reflect on their own ideas and compare them with others.

190. Teaching and learning in all years is good and some is very good. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good and so pupils are eager to listen and learn. Teachers manage pupils well so that pupils remain sharply focused in lessons. The subject knowledge of teachers is good overall, while better in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. Teachers are able to answer pupils' questions and deepen their understanding. There are high expectations of pupils, particularly in Years 7 to 9, so that they work hard and make good progress. For example, Year 9 pupils were helped to understand the concept of 'arranged marriages' by entering into role-play to compare and contrast this with the concept of freedom of choice in Christian culture for example. Work is marked conscientiously and comments made that encourage pupils and set them realistic targets for improvement. This helps pupils to have a sound idea of how well they are doing.

191. Religious education makes a good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. Pupils discuss and compare beliefs and values and have time for reflection. The use of music to create atmosphere and evoke feelings is, however, underdeveloped. There are good opportunities for discussing and evaluating moral and social issues, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Much of the work includes paired or group tasks through which pupils learn to work together. In Year 7, pupils consider the call of Muhammad and consider beliefs and values from a different culture.

192. Leadership and management are good. The new head of department has already made significant strides in modernising the department and incorporating into the work of the department the recent advances in the subject. Schemes of work and assessment are not currently clearly linked with the Agreed Syllabus but the head of department is working on this as a priority. Some difficulties over the GCSE syllabus in 2000 were not fully resolved in 2001. The school has not ensured that appropriate curriculum and assessment decisions are taken at each stage. The use of ICT, although satisfactory, has some limitations, but the department is aware of this and is building opportunities into the new schemes of work.

193. The improvement made by the school since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. Schemes of work do not link with the Agreed Syllabus. There is still lack of rigour in assessment and the levels of attainment remain the same. Pupils observed in classes are better motivated. The staffing position has deteriorated since the last inspection with currently six non-specialist teachers in the department teaching in six different rooms. However, a new full-time specialist appointment, taking effect from the beginning of the next academic year, will rectify this. The governors' curriculum committee minutes of the December 5, 2000 identify an

intention to cut the time allocation for religious education to one half-hour period in Years 10 and 11 from September 2001. The implementation of this decision would result in the school not meeting the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus for Years 10 and 11.