

INSPECTION REPORT

WILLIAM EDWARDS SCHOOL

Essex

LEA area: Thurrock

Unique reference number: 115354

Headteacher: Ms B Watson

Reporting inspector: Philip J H O'Neill
3162

Dates of inspection: 26 – 29 November 2001

Inspection number: 192290
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 students:	11 - 16
Gender of students:	Mixed
School address:	Stifford Clays Road Grays Essex
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr C Robinson
Date of previous inspection:	March 1997

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

William Edwards School is a mixed comprehensive school. It has recently changed from grant maintained status to that of foundation school and is currently seeking designation as a specialist sports college. It caters for students from the ages of 11 to 16 years. It mainly serves the immediate community of Grays, however, a number of students come from further afield. Transport is not provided specifically for travelling to the school. The school is in Thurrock, a unitary local authority on the north of the Thames estuary, to the east of London, and the surrounding area is characterised by some social deprivation. Many students come from low-income families. The immediate area reflects relatively low levels of academic achievement and few parents are employed in professional occupations. Students join the school with overall average levels of attainment. Standards of attainment on entry are steadily improving.

The school is bigger than many other secondary schools, having 1203 students on roll, of whom 674 are boys and 529 are girls. The imbalance between numbers of boys and girls, resulting from parental preference for a local girls' school, is gradually being reduced. The number on roll has not changed since the last inspection. The school is over-subscribed. Forty-two students joined the school other than at the usual time of admission and 30 left before the age of transfer. This arises as a result of parental mobility. At 6.2 per cent, a below average proportion of students is eligible for free school meals. This represents a fall over recent years that may have been caused by the introduction of the family credit scheme. The percentage of students identified as having special educational needs, at 9 per cent, is below average. The percentage of students with statements of special educational need, at 1.2 per cent, is also below average. A below average number of students come from ethnic minority backgrounds and, at 3.4 per cent, the proportion of students speaking English as an additional language is above the national average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

William Edwards is a good school, where, through very effective leadership and management, students receive a high proportion of good and very good teaching. Standards are good for 14-year-olds and satisfactory for students aged 16. Students achieve well in relation to their attainment on entry. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Students achieve high standards in religious education.
- Students learn well as a result of good teaching.
- The quality of relationships supports students' learning well.
- The leadership and management of the school are very good.
- The initiative for training graduates is having a very good impact on what is provided for students.
- The school has very good relationships with other schools and colleges in the area.

What could be improved

- Students do not achieve well enough in Years 7 to 9 in information and communication technology or in design and technology.
- Standards are not high enough in music, and in modern foreign languages in Key Stage 4.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was previously inspected in March 1997. Since then it has ceased to be self-governing under grant maintained status and is now a foundation school. The governors were slow to respond to the issues raised in the previous inspection. The pace of improvement was accelerated considerably under the new headteacher, with the result that the school has improved well over the last few years. There is now greater emphasis on raising standards of attainment. The quality of teaching has improved considerably through more sharing of good practice, systematic monitoring to extend teachers' skill in class control and in the use of a more imaginative range of teaching strategies. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is more appropriate than at the time of the previous inspection, as are time allocations for subjects and courses. Weaknesses in the management of the school have been resolved. The governors are much more closely involved in the work of the school. Spending is now more closely linked to planning. One of the most significant improvements has been in the work the school has undertaken in training graduate teachers. The school has the drive and the imagination to bring about further significant improvement in all aspects of its work.

STANDARDS

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

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

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

Students' levels of attainment on entry to the school are average, but have been rising over the last four years. In the 2000 national tests for 14-year-olds, attainment was above average in English and mathematics and average in science. In relation to those schools with a similar proportion of students eligible for free school meals, attainment was average in English and mathematics and well below average in science. The comparatively lower attainment was mainly as a result of many changes in staffing beyond the control of the school. Boys and girls reach comparable standards. There is no difference between the standards achieved by students from different ethnic groups. The results achieved by 14-year-olds represent a significant improvement on the standards achieved at the time of the last inspection. In the GCSE examinations in 2000, overall attainment was average in relation to all schools and above average for similar schools. The results from the most recent examinations, which were unconfirmed at the time of the inspection, show some improvement.

In lessons and in work inspected in Year 9, the standards achieved exceed national expectations in English, mathematics, science and religious education. Standards meet national expectations in art, design and technology, geography, history, modern foreign languages and physical education. Standards fall below expectations in information and communication technology and music. In the work seen in Year 10, standards exceed expectations in religious education. In Year 11, standards meet the expectations of the courses followed in English, mathematics, science, art, geography, history, information and communication technology and physical education. Standards fall below expectations in design and technology, modern foreign languages and music. These differences across the subjects can be traced to some difficulties in staffing and weaknesses in monitoring teaching and learning in some departments and problems with accommodation.

Standards of literacy across the subjects are good for students in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory for students in Years 10 to 11. Standards of numeracy are satisfactory in most subjects across the school. The school sets and meets challenging targets for improving standards of attainment. Students achieve very well in religious education and well in English, mathematics, history and physical education. Achievement in science, art, geography, information and communication technology, modern foreign languages and music is satisfactory. Achievement in design and technology is unsatisfactory. Students with special educational needs make good progress in relation to the targets set in their individual educational plans. Able and talented students generally make the progress of which they are capable through the provision of work that is appropriately challenging. This is also true of the students for whom English is an additional language.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	The attitudes of the majority of students are good. They value what the school offers them and respond well.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Students generally behave well in lessons and are polite, although a few students misbehave and disrupt their own and others' learning. Behaviour outside lessons is satisfactory. There are some incidents of overbearing and loud behaviour in corridors.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships between students and among students and staff are good and this supports learning. Prefects show responsibility in the way they undertake their duties. The scheme whereby students befriend others who experience bullying is a good opportunity for personal development.
Attendance	Satisfactory and improving. Students are generally punctual to lessons, which start on time.

The students show real enthusiasm for their work. They are eager to take responsibility when given the opportunity. They respond well to the school's behaviour policy and see it as serving their interests. Most show considerable maturity when working independently, and care for the schools resources.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

The overall quality of teaching is good and steadily improving as a result of effective monitoring and help for teachers who experience difficulties. This is a school that has imaginatively confronted the weaknesses in teaching caused by instability in staffing and shortages of staff in key areas by making excellent use of the graduate training programme.

English, mathematics and science are taught well. Religious education is very well taught. The quality of teaching in history and physical education is good. Teaching is also good in design and technology and information and communication technology in Years 7 to 9 and in modern foreign languages in Years 10 and 11. Art, geography and music are taught satisfactorily, as are design and technology in Years 10 and 11 and modern foreign languages in Years 7 to 9.

A key to the success of many lessons lies in the effort teachers make to include all students to the full extent of their capabilities. In the best lessons, there are many opportunities for students to think for themselves and to defend their views. Students rise to the challenge of the work when they realise the teachers believe in them and in their capacity for sustained commitment to learning.

Teaching is occasionally weakened by the lack of variety in the teachers' strategies and the provision of work that is too easy for some and too hard for others. The teaching of students with special educational needs is good. These students are sometimes taught as part of the usual classroom programmes, while others who need special help are given more specialist teaching. The school identifies the able students and those with particular talents. Teachers generally allow for their capability of rapid development, with the consequence that most of these students make the good advances in learning of which they are capable. There are some occasions when these students are given work that is too easy, with the consequence that a few settle for modest achievements. Students for whom English is an additional language are taught well.

The teaching of literacy is good and is beginning to bear fruit in the rapid progress made by students in Years 7 to 9, particularly in the standard of writing. The teaching of numeracy across the curriculum has been slower to take off, but is beginning to have an impact on the teachers' work. The use of information and communication technology has been improved significantly.

Students are good learners and use well the opportunities provided for independent work. Where advances in knowledge are modest, students are not given enough encouragement to think for themselves or to come to respect their own ideas. Learning is occasionally impeded when teachers, often unwittingly, answer their own questions and do not allow students the opportunity to become fully involved in discussion.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	There is a good range of learning opportunities, including extra-curricular activities. The school works hard to ensure that all students are included in what is provided. The requirements for the provision of a daily act of worship are not met.
Provision for students with special educational needs	The students with special educational needs are taught well and helped to become good learners.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Students with English as additional language are supported well in the development of fluency and make the same progress as their peers.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	This provision is good overall. Religious education and the assemblies make a good contribution to students' spiritual development. The school places strong emphasis on the moral development of the students.
How well the school cares for its students	The school provides satisfactory care for its students. The procedures for monitoring attendance are satisfactory. Assessment data is not always used well to track the progress of individual students.

The school has established a successful partnership with parents. The arrangements made to provide for the health and safety of the students are satisfactory.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership and management of the school are very good. The headteacher, well supported by her senior colleagues, has established a sense of common purpose and direction for the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is well led and has now, in general, a good understanding of where the school works at its best and fulfils its responsibilities well. Governors are now well placed to take the school forward in its development.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school takes a number of very effective measures to evaluate its work and to set targets for the future. Feasible realistic targets are set.
The strategic use of resources	The school is very good at planning for the use of resources directed towards the areas of greatest need. This it does with a clear view to its future development.

There is an adequate number of teachers and support staff to carry out the school's work. Difficulties in recruiting to some areas have mainly been addressed through the graduate-training programme. There are enough support staff to help students with learning and other difficulties. The unsatisfactory accommodation, particularly the lack of an adequate water supply, is an abiding concern of staff and governors. Resources are satisfactory overall, but are inadequate in science, design and technology, history and information and communication technology. The use of information and communication technology is satisfactory. The attractive library and resource centre is very well managed. Considerations of cost and value are at the forefront of all decisions about significant expenditure. Given the

standards achieved by the students, the progress made since the last inspection, the good quality of teaching and very good management, the school provides good value for money.

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 progress their children make• their children are expected to work hard• their children like coming to school• what is provided for children outside lessons	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• the way the school informs and works with them about progress• the behaviour of some children• the arrangements for homework

The inspection findings confirm parents' positive views. While the school is no longer able to meet the high expectation for more than one report each year it does, nevertheless, meet requirements in providing an annual report and the opportunity to discuss it. The quality of information is inconsistent in the way it describes attainment. Behaviour is usually good: the few students who misbehave are generally dealt with well. There are some inconsistencies in the use of homework timetables.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

1. Students join the school with average levels of attainment. Standards demonstrated at the start of Year 7 have improved considerably over the last four years. In the 2000 national tests for 14-year-olds, attainment was above-average in English and mathematics and average in science. In relation to schools in similar circumstances, namely schools with a similar proportion of students eligible for free school meals, attainment was average in English and mathematics and well below average in science. The relatively lower attainment in science arose as a result of many changes in staff. Boys and girls reach comparable standards. There is no difference between the standards achieved by students from different ethnic groups.
2. The results achieved by 14-year-olds represent a significant improvement on the standards achieved at the time of the last inspection when attainment in English was around average; in mathematics and science it was below-average. These improvements can be traced to developments in teaching and, in particular, the teachers' growing awareness of the learning needs of individual students. Students in turn have become more sensitive to their responsibility for their own learning. The school has also responded well to concerns about staffing difficulties that were impeding students' progress, through the imaginative use of graduate trainees. These and other developments have ensured that students now make good progress in their work as they move through the school.
3. In the GCSE examinations in 2000 overall attainment was average in relation to all schools and above average for similar schools. The results from the most recent examinations, unconfirmed at the time of the inspection, show considerable improvement. The trend in the averages points scored by each student is above the national trend. Attainment at GCSE is well above average for schools where students joining their courses had similar levels of attainment. Average attainment was reached in combined science, drama, French, mathematics, religious studies and sociology. Attainment was below average in biology, chemistry, design and technology, economics, English language, English literature, geography, history, home economics, physical education and physics. The best standards were reached in combined science, drama and religious studies. Standards were lowest in design and technology and geography. The differences in attainment relate mainly to the quality of teaching.
4. In lessons and in work inspected in Year 9, the standards achieved exceed national expectations in English, mathematics, science and religious education, whilst meeting them in art, design and technology, geography, history, modern foreign languages and physical education. Standards fall below expectations in information and communication technology and music. In the work seen in Year 11, standards exceed expectations in religious education. The standards achieved by students in Year 11 meet the expectations of the courses followed in English, mathematics, science, art, geography, history, information and communication technology and physical education. Standards fall below expectations in design and technology, modern foreign languages and music. These differences across the subjects can be traced to the relatively low levels of attainment of Key Stage 4 students on entry, some difficulties in staffing and weaknesses in monitoring teaching and learning in some departments.

5. Standards of literacy across the subjects are good for students in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory for students in Years 10 to 11. Students speak confidently in discussion and are aware of the adjustments to language required for different purposes. Students read a limited range of books, but they read well the books they encounter. The work undertaken by the librarian has created an increasing interest in books and in reading. Writing, particularly spelling remains a weakness for many students.
6. Though the school's numeracy policy has not yet been implemented fully, standards of numeracy are satisfactory in most subjects. In science, design and technology, geography and information and communication technology students use their knowledge of number well to support their work.
7. The school sets and meets challenging targets for improving standards of attainment. Its faith in being able to fulfil these targets was justified in the most recent results, where standards are better than in the previous year. This is a further indication of the school's renewed pride in itself and its will to succeed. Students achieve very well in religious education and well in English, mathematics, history and physical education. Achievement in science, art, geography, information and communication technology and modern foreign languages is satisfactory. In design and technology achievement is unsatisfactory. Students with special educational needs make good progress in relation to the targets set in their individual educational plans. Able and talented students generally make the progress of which they are capable, through the provision of work that is appropriately challenging.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

8. The attitudes of students to school and their learning are good. Most take considerable pride in their work, enjoy learning and show interest and enthusiasm for their lessons. This is particularly so when the work they are given is planned to ensure their individual needs for challenge and achievement are met. In Years 10 and 11 they are well motivated by opportunities to contribute to their records of achievement. They value the support their teachers give them with revision and the acknowledgement they receive for their achievements. Students usually enjoy practical work and respond well to high expectations for them to give of their best. A few students, usually boys in Years 10 and 11, have poor attitudes to work and are not interested in their lessons; this has an adverse impact on how well they learn. Most students focus on their work well and persist independently with tasks set, only asking for help when it is really needed. Homework is usually recorded with care and most students complete it well. Students make good use of the library for personal study, using it well at lunch times and after school to do private research for lessons as well as their homework. They appreciate these opportunities for them to visit the library outside lessons and some are sufficiently interested to say that they would like to see it open before school as well. Most students, throughout the years, are confident in the use of computers for information retrieval: this supports the development of their independence in learning. Activities provided outside lessons are popular and usually attended well. Students who are not well motivated by their lessons, and who are provided with alternative arrangements as a means of avoiding exclusion, respond well to the vocational activities planned for them.
9. The response of students to the high expectations for their behaviour, both in lessons and around the school, is usually good. These incidents are usually managed well by the teachers. Generally students have a good understanding of school rules and respond very well to firm and fair discipline. They respect the right of others to work. The school does all it can to avoid excluding students and maintains a low rate of

permanent exclusion; there was only one during the school year prior to the inspection. The number of fixed term exclusions has increased over the period since the last inspection; most involve students from Years 8, 9 and 10. Exclusions were above the national average in the year prior to the inspection, but are being steadily reduced. Behaviour around the school at break and lunch times is usually sensible. It has improved since the time of the last inspection. Most students respond well to the trust the school places in them by allowing largely open access to the premises. They show respect and courtesy to staff on duty at lunchtimes and behave well in the dining room. There is little litter around the site. Displays of students' work around the school are treated with respect.

10. Relationships throughout the school are usually harmonious. Students from ethnic minority backgrounds are well integrated into the school community. There is no evidence of racism. Although there are a few instances of bullying they are dealt with well when brought to the attention of staff. Most students respond well to the anti-bullying culture in the school. There are usually high levels of respect between adults at the school and students, fostered well through the house system. Students like their teachers and find them approachable. Most students offer help willingly to others where needed and relate effectively in groups. Students, particularly those in Years 10 and 11, respond very well to the high expectations for them to take responsibility for some aspects of school life. Prefects are respected by other students and carry out their duties in a responsible manner, working well as a team. Students progressively develop strong social skills as they move through the school. Older students show a good understanding of citizenship, for example, through work they undertake in courses in sociology and law as well as a module within personal, health and social education. Students provided with alternative education respond in a mature manner to the vocational nature of their work, although this commitment is not always maintained when they rejoin their classes for mainstream lessons.
11. The school's attendance is in line with the average for similar schools. Reasons for absence are always required from parents and the sample examined indicates that these reasons are usually sound. A few students persistently refuse to attend and these cases are followed up well in collaboration with the educational welfare officer. Students usually arrive on time for the start of the school day and move between lessons in a business-like manner, ensuring that minimum time is lost.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

12. The overall quality of teaching is good and steadily improving as a result of diligent monitoring and regular help and support for teachers who experience difficulties. Improvements in teaching are having a significant impact on the rate at which students make progress in their work. This relates, to a significant extent, to the success of the initiative by which graduates are trained in the school. This is a school that has imaginatively confronted the weaknesses in teaching caused by instability in staffing and shortages of staff in key areas.

13. Of the lessons seen, more than one in six was very good or excellent; one in three good and a similar proportion satisfactory; one in every 16 was less than satisfactory. Religious education is very well taught overall. The quality of teaching in English, mathematics, science, history and physical education is good. Teaching is also good in design and technology and information and communication technology in Years 7 to 9 and in modern foreign languages in Years 10 and 11 where standards are beginning to improve. Art, geography and music are taught satisfactorily across the years, as are design and technology in Years 10 and 11 and modern foreign languages in Years 7 to 9.
14. A key to the success of many lessons lies in the effort teachers make to include all students to the full extent of their capabilities through clear instructions and explanations. This is a particular strength in religious education, where often-difficult ideas are made clear to all. The quality of the teachers' planning strengthens many lessons, setting out very clearly what students are expected to learn. In the best lessons, there are many opportunities for students to think for themselves and to defend their views by giving relevant reasons for their opinions. In many effective lessons, teachers communicate to the students their ability to succeed even at the most demanding tasks. The students, in turn, rise to the challenge of demanding work when they realise the teachers believe in them and in their capacity for sustained commitment to learning.
15. Teachers are often adept at encouraging students to provide extended answers, to clarify the concepts they use and to give reasons for their opinions. Many teachers test persistently for understanding through progressively demanding questions. They rephrase and recast their questions in order to ensure that all the students are included in discussion and all learn well. This is in marked contrast to those less helpful lessons where questioning tends to be directed at the more confident and assured students.
16. The quality of the relationships between the teachers and the students and the good climate for learning created in the classrooms are further strengths. This encourages the students to take risks and to give their imaginations free rein, often persevering in their work when not under the direct supervision of the teacher. Homework is generally used well to support independent study in enriching students' learning. This is particularly true of English, mathematics, history, modern foreign languages and religious education.
17. Teaching is occasionally weakened by the lack of variety in the teachers' strategies, and in the provision of work that is too easy for some and too hard for others. Introductions are occasionally too ponderous to fire students' enthusiasm, with the consequence that a few students are willing to enliven the proceedings with some idle chatter or to settle for modest achievements. Weaknesses arise, too, when insufficient use is made of opportunities for independent learning or for discussion. There are occasions when teachers do not relate what is taught to the interests and enthusiasms of the students, with the consequence that the point and purpose of the proceedings eludes them.
18. The use of assessment in teaching is very varied across the subjects. It is used very well in science, where teachers know the different levels of attainment well and have communicated them to the students. This helps students to focus their efforts in order to improve and their learning is correspondingly enhanced. Assessment is not used well in design and technology and modern foreign languages with the result that neither teachers nor students have an accurate measure of levels attained.

19. The teaching of students with special educational needs is good. These students are sometimes taught as part of the usual classroom programmes, while others who need special help are given more specialist teaching. Planning for these students' learning is good. Work set in lessons for students withdrawn for special help, and work provided for those supported within the classroom, relates closely to the students' individual targets. Though the individual education plans indicate the nature of the students' difficulties, the targets are often too general to be helpful. Many teachers use them effectively in, for example, English, history, information and communication technology, modern foreign languages and vocational education, but others have a limited understanding of their use. Learning support assistants give good support to their individual charges and, where possible, to others who are experiencing difficulties. They strike a fine balance between providing support and encouraging independence. Teachers create an atmosphere of trust and encouragement and set high standards for all students. There is close teamwork between the special needs co-ordinator, class teachers and support assistants. The students respond by acquiring a strong sense of achievement and eagerness to improve. They show real interest in their work and take pride in work and in their often hard-won achievements. Students for whom English is an additional language in the home are taught well through ensuring that they are integrated fully into lessons. Should they experience difficulties in understanding the tasks set, they get the right level of support to help them make good progress.
20. The school identifies the able students and those with particular talents. Teachers generally allow for their capability of rapid development, with the consequence most of these students make good advances in learning and rise to the challenge of demanding work.
21. The teaching of literacy is good and is beginning to bear fruit in the rapid progress made by students in Years 7 to 9, where improvements, particularly in the standard of writing, are beginning to show. Apart from English, opportunities for the development of literacy are used well in science, art, history and religious education. An imaginative development in physical education, by which the students produce a sports page, does much to encourage good writing. The teaching of numeracy across the curriculum has been slower to take off, but is beginning to have an impact. This is particularly true on science, design and technology, geography and information and communication technology. The use of information and communication technology has been improved significantly and is now satisfactory.
22. Students are good learners and use well the opportunities provided for independent work. Many use the library to good effect in the development of their work, others make good use of the Internet to gather information to support their work. They are quick to develop their knowledge, understanding and skill across most subjects. Where advances in knowledge are modest, students are not given enough encouragement to think for themselves or to come to respect their own ideas and their capacity for expressing them fluently. Where the teachers pose questions at the right level or make the task manageable and challenging for all, students are more at ease with their work in lessons and are more willing to get productively involved. The pace of learning is usually good. Students tend to work attentively without the constant intervention of the teacher. Most students have a good knowledge of how well they are achieving. Learning is occasionally impeded when teachers, often unwittingly, answer their own questions and do not allow students the opportunity to become fully involved in discussion and the exchange of ideas.

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

23. The quality and range of the curriculum are good overall. The curriculum meets the needs, interests and enthusiasms of the students, and caters well for the different levels of attainment. The school seeks to provide students with a challenging academic environment that creates an inclusive ethos in which all feel equally valued. In addition there is a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities. There is a wide range of competitive sporting activities in which many students participate and achieve considerable success. The curriculum caters well for students who are inclined towards more practically oriented work. Good careers guidance and work experience opportunities help to extend students' horizons. The requirements of the National Curriculum are fully met, though the time allocated to science in Years 10 and 11 is barely adequate. In response to the previous inspection, students in all years now have separate information and communication technology lessons, that help to build their skills progressively, though the limitations of accommodation for information and communication technology make it difficult to make the best use of the equipment available for students in Years 7 to 9. Opportunities for using computers are much better planned in all subjects than was the case at the time of the last inspection when the students' experience of information and communication technology was very limited.
24. The school's commitment to the inclusion of all students shows itself in the effective management of setting and grouping arrangements that work to the advantage of all students. Where appropriate, students change sets. The school's concern for the good of all students is revealed too in the effective work with students with special educational needs, who are helped to participate as fully as possible in all subjects and activities. However, not all teachers make good use of the individual education plans established to support these students' learning. Students with special educational needs are very well integrated socially, and participate fully in school functions. Those students who are disaffected with school life participate in a special programme of activities. The school has also made strenuous efforts to ensure the inclusion of all students to the full, with the help of learning support assistants. Overall, the school implements its equal opportunities policy well by monitoring the progress of all students carefully and responding to their needs. There is effective provision for the highest-attaining students and those with particular talents. They are generally identified and supported in extending their knowledge and skill to the full extent of their capabilities, though there are some instances where this is not the case.
25. The school's strategy for the development of literacy has taken root in all departments and already is having a very positive impact on writing. The strategy for the development of literacy is more securely embedded than that for the development of numeracy. The mathematics department incorporates the national numeracy strategy effectively in planning work for students. In science, design and technology, geography and information and communication technology opportunities for applying and extending students' skills with number and measures are used well.

26. Students' personal and social development is promoted well in lessons and assemblies, through teachers' guidance and support, through work experience and in the tutorial lessons. The tutorial programme has clear aims, known to all staff. It covers well aspects of sex education, drug education, careers education, guidance and citizenship. Other aspects of health education are covered effectively in science lessons. An important feature of the tutorial programme is that students come to understand the consequences of their actions for themselves and others.
27. Careers education and the guidance programme are good and comprehensive. Students review their own strengths and weaknesses and set the right targets for improvement. There are very good links with local further education colleges. The school is very involved with its cluster of primary schools, enjoying excellent relationships. The library is used well to support the development of literacy. The librarian has done much to encourage the use of the library both for independent study and as a quiet area for reading.
28. The school provides good opportunities for the spiritual development of all students, particularly through the very good teaching of religious education. Other subjects, too, provide opportunities for students to reflect on issues of deep personal concern in their lives. For example, in English, the poem of Elizabeth Barrett Browning to her husband was used well to explore the theme of unselfish love. In history, students empathised with the feelings of people forced to work in Victorian factories, on the sacrifice made by so many in world wars and on the inhumanity of the Holocaust. In science, visits of people with life-threatening illnesses enable students to hear at first hand about the impact of illness on their lives and to share their optimism and hope for the future. The need for all members of the school community to express their deeper feelings is recognised, especially at a time of bereavement.
29. What the school does to support students' moral development is good. There is a strong emphasis on responsible behaviour in personal, social and health education, in the school behaviour policy and in religious education. All staff support moral responsibility by encouraging positive behaviour. Assemblies promote some deep reflection on moral issues. For example, the use of sustainable technology in design and technology, the implications of the development of nuclear energy in geography and the morality of genetic engineering in science are explored in relation to the moral questions they raise. Students are prepared to take a moral stance as they did in setting up peer counselling to combat bullying.
30. The school has worked hard as a community to maintain a good standard of provision for the students' social development. This is reflected in the good relationships between students and the teaching and non-teaching staff and in the positive way students work together in lessons. Students are encouraged to listen to and accept alternative points of views. The personal, social and health education programme encourages positive social relationships. The prefect system is used well to encourage the exercise of responsibility. Aspiring prefects are provided with appropriate leadership training. Students with special educational needs are helped to become fully involved in the life of the school. Students learn about the rights and roles of people in society in all subjects, but particularly in sociology. Extra-curricular activities help students to mix confidently with one another.

31. Overall provision for the cultural development of students is good. The school is a community with some cultural diversity. Every step is taken to ensure that students from all ethnic groups are equally and fully involved in the life of the school. The curriculum supports cultural diversity. Students learn about Chinese, Japanese and Islamic art; experience music from other cultures; learn about the cultures linked with world faiths in religious education and about specific countries such as Brazil, Italy and Japan in geography. Students are aware of famous people from other cultures who have contributed to the development of areas such as art, science and mathematics. Subjects such as archaeology enrich the curriculum, providing an understanding of classical civilisations. Students are given good opportunities for out-of-school learning, for example, in geography and science fieldwork for GCSE, and visits to art galleries, the law courts and places of worship. Extra-curricular provision, particularly in history and drama, adds to the students' cultural experience.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

32. The arrangements the school makes to provide for the welfare, health and safety of students are satisfactory. Arrangements for students to become familiar with the school before they start in Year 7 and the usually positive relationships throughout the school ensure that students starting secondary education settle well, with the confidence that there is someone with whom they can share concerns. There is a suitably trained person with designated responsibility for child protection: procedures to be used are included in the induction of teaching staff. The policy has not been updated for some time and does not include all the latest requirements. The governors, however, have recently introduced a regular cycle for reviewing all policies, including child protection. The school has a good relationship with support services and liaises suitably where this is needed in relation to individual students. The full-time nursing officer monitors students very well, acting as a confidant to many and liaising effectively with form tutors and heads of house. This supports pastoral care very well.
33. There is an appropriate health and safety policy, with suitable procedures to ensure effective day-to-day management. Emergency evacuation procedures are practised with sufficient frequency to ensure staff and students know what to do in the event of a fire. The requirement for regular testing of equipment and appliances is fully met. Members of staff have been trained in risk assessment and the procedures used are usually effective, although in the resistant materials department dust extraction is not adequate and some machines are not well positioned, with the consequence that they could become a danger to health and safety. Despite the positive arrangements to provide a safe working environment for students, the school has had recently to deal with the major problem of a contaminated water supply. Investigations into this and the best way to ensure a good quality supply of fresh water in the long term have been thorough; however, it is unlikely that action to be taken will come to fruition before Easter 2002. In the short-term, lavatory and hand washing facilities for students do not adequately meet their health needs. Concerns expressed at the time of the last inspection about the need for a separate walkway into the school from the road have been suitably addressed.
34. The effectiveness of the school's arrangements to promote high levels of attendance is satisfactory overall. Form tutors and heads of house monitor individual students carefully, identifying patterns of absence by reviewing absences noted in registers and following up concerns well. Monitoring is not done, however, against a background of clear information about levels of attendance being achieved. For example, percentage attendance levels are not worked out for individual students, or groups making up the

school's community, for example boys and girls; this limits opportunities to make comparisons with expectations for similar schools, to track overall levels or identify trends.

35. The school has thoroughly reviewed its policy and procedures for behaviour and discipline, consulting parents about their views. There is now a clearly defined policy, a code of conduct displayed in classrooms that is known well by students and suitable guidance for staff to promote consistent practice in the management of students. These procedures have been recently introduced and are not yet fully embedded with all staff; however, students are motivated very well by the system of awards that recognises achievement in all aspects of their lives. There are suitable procedures to deal with incidents of bullying which are communicated well to students through the personal, health and social education programme. This has not, however, given all students the confidence to report incidents of bullying. In response to this, the 'Pupils As Listeners' scheme was started, by which the students provide a forum for their peers to handle their concerns. Students at risk of exclusion are identified well and, where appropriate, are given alternative provision during specific lessons that they are most likely to disrupt. This provision is largely of a vocational nature, although it does not lead to an accredited qualification. Students respond very well to this opportunity although, for some, behaviour patterns at other times remain unchanged. It does, however, result in a low incidence of permanent exclusions. Where exclusion is used there are sound reasons and procedures fully meet requirements.
36. Form tutors and heads of house monitor the personal development of students well. Although many teachers are new to the school there is generally good continuity of pastoral support through the house system, tracking students effectively as they move through the school. The development of responsible attitudes and the use of initiative is promoted well. Prefects are given good levels of responsibility and prepared well for the roles they undertake. For example, they have recently been on a residential team-building course. There is a well thought-out careers guidance programme and suitable arrangements for work experience. The personal, social and health education programme ensures consideration of family and relationships as part of the sex education programme. The personal support given to students in lessons is usually effective; although on occasions the work planned does not sufficiently meet the needs of the most and the least able. There are many examples of good practice in marking, that help students to understand what they must do to improve their work. The school identifies students whom teachers consider could be doing better than they are; the subsequent mentoring by members of the senior management team shows that overall standards for this group improve. Most subjects have opportunities outside lessons for students to get help where needed and there is a useful study skills course, together with support for revision. The involvement of students in target setting in subjects and evaluating their own progress is not yet established across the school, most targets set relate to students' attitudes to work.
37. The effectiveness of arrangements for assessing and monitoring academic standards is satisfactory overall. Key members of staff with responsibility for this have recently been appointed. Good information about individual students' academic achievements has been received from primary schools for the last two years, since systems were standardised by the local education authority; this enables the school to assess how well students in Years 7 and 8 learn in comparison with their previous achievement. Overall, the gathering of information is effective and beginning to form a sound basis for planning. Its subsequent use is inconsistent across the school. It is used very well indeed, however, in religious education where assessment is a strength, tracking the individual progress of students very well and resulting in well thought-out targets that

result in raising standards of attainment.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

38. Most parents are satisfied with what the school provides and achieves. Inspection evidence supports these positive views. Some parents are not happy about the homework provided and feel that their expectations through the publication of homework timetables are not met. Inspectors agree that there is some inconsistency in the regularity of setting homework. However, most homework that is set provides a suitable extension to lessons, or prepares students well for their next lesson; and in some cases there are high expectations for independent research. There is also concern about the information given about their children's progress, and some parents feel that consultations about progress are too late for them to be useful. Parental expectations for information about progress are high. Until recently, there were interim reports to supplement those received annually. Although it is no longer possible for the school to provide these, the frequency of reporting about progress and opportunities to discuss it meet required standards. Reports do not, however, always give enough information about how well students are doing and what they must do to improve.
39. The school has good links with parents. The prospectus and governors' annual report, provide a suitable range of information about routines, expectations and the school's performance. The newsletters, sent home each half term, offer good information about news and events, together with achievements, in a lively and interesting manner. At times when choices must be made, for example about which GCSE courses to follow, there are suitable arrangements for parents to inform themselves so as to guide their children effectively. Well-written handbooks for both lower and upper schools provide a clear overview of the curriculum. Parents of children in Years 10 and 11 are given good information about coursework, the expectations, and how they can support their children in managing them effectively. Where individuals fall behind with their coursework parents are informed of the arrangements made for them to catch up during a week set aside for this purpose. There are clearly published homework diaries, which are usually in students' journals, ensuring that parents know expectations for homework. Most parents find that students' journals provide useful opportunities for two-way communication.
40. Annual progress reports give suitable information about students' attitudes to school and their personal development. Though all subjects include an outline of the courses being followed, they are not always written clearly enough. Inspectors agree with those parents who feel that reports do not consistently provide them with a clear evaluation of what their children understand and can do, the progress they have made and whether they are doing as well as they should. Targets set are usually of a general nature about improving attitudes to work rather than helping parents to understand what needs to be done to improve standards in the subject. This limits opportunities for parents to support their children at home. There are suitable arrangements for parents to meet with teachers to discuss the contents of their children's reports. These meetings are planned well to allow parents time to read and reflect on reports in advance.
41. The involvement of parents with the school and their impact on students' learning is satisfactory. There is a newly recruited and enthusiastic parent and teacher association committee with strong membership. They have already planned social and fundraising events for the current school year with the intention of supporting their children's learning through these activities. Parents have been consulted about behaviour and their views have contributed to the governors' review of the policy and procedures. The number of parents who take the opportunity to discuss their children's progress at

consultations arranged for them after the issue of annual progress reports is disappointing. Most, however, are interested in their children's work and notice where homework is not given when it should be.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

42. The school is very well led and managed. The headteacher, supported by a very effective deputy and other senior colleagues, has provided very clear leadership and direction to the work of the school. She has continued to raise the profile of the school in the area. She has also led the school very decisively in creating the documentation and systems required to underpin management and to support the teachers in their work. The senior management team, with the collaboration of a skilled and dedicated community of teachers and other staff, has succeeded in improving standards over the last four years. They have created a dynamic, exciting and cohesive world in which students thrive, feel secure and are made to feel proud of their achievements. A central concern of the school has been the shortage of teachers and the difficulty in recruiting to the area. In response, the management team decided to create their own teachers, seizing the opportunity to train graduates in the school. A striking feature of the school and a mark of the quality of management is now revealed in the success of this venture, manifested in the quality of teachers who have been trained through this programme.
43. Since the last inspection, the governors have formed themselves into a more cohesive team and are very well led in working more closely with the school, whilst respecting the professionalism of the teachers. They are now more diligent in holding the school to account for what it does. All the governors are steadily realising the full extent of their responsibilities. They ensure that the school meets its statutory responsibilities through a series of well-organised committees. As at the time of the previous inspection, the school fails to meet the requirements for the provision of a daily act of collective worship for all students. However it has moved steadily closer to complying and what it offers is good, providing many opportunities for prayer and reflection. The governors have managed well the transition from grant maintained status to that of foundation school.
44. Most policies and procedures are implemented consistently across the school. The implementation of the policy on the development of literacy is gathering pace and beginning to raise standards of literacy. This is particularly evident in Key Stage 3 where students, at all levels of attainment, show considerable improvement in the quality of their writing. The development of the numeracy strategy is being managed effectively, but is not yet as far advanced as the literacy strategy. The programme of the monitoring of teaching and the quality of support offered to the teachers is very good. A real strength of the school is the excellence of the work directed towards the support and development of the professional skills of the graduate trainees. The sensitive but rigorous monitoring of teaching has led to increasing refinement in the teachers' understanding of their own teaching and its impact on students' learning.
45. The headteacher delegates responsibility very effectively, ensuring that colleagues to whom she assigns responsibilities have the skill and imagination to carry them out. The senior managers work closely and constructively with their colleagues, with the consequence that innovation is experienced as a challenge and not as a threat. They use their complementary skills to very good effect, measuring the pace of innovation carefully and ensuring that there is common understanding about how key policies and procedures are carried out. They are careful to create documentation that does not exist for its own sake but serves the purposes of the teachers. The headteacher and governors have worked hard to take advantage of all possible sources of additional support and funding.

46. The school development plan is clearly focused on raising standards of attainment and on seeking ways to include all students to the full extent of their competence. It is very sharply focused on precise actions to be taken and steers clear of vague intentions and wishes. Realistic targets are set for development and they have the support of all the staff. The current plan is well constructed and has arisen from a clear analysis of the school's needs and the involvement of the governors. It has been developed through very effective consultation. Meetings to determine or to evaluate the implementation of policies are very well conducted, with the right emphasis given to matters of greatest importance. The staff are well briefed about matters relating to day-to-day management.
47. The work of the school clearly reflects its aims. It is very successful in achieving what it sets out to do and does so by attending to the needs of all the students and to the training needs of the staff. The results of national tests and examinations are used very effectively to judge how well it is doing. The success of this work springs from the very good use of ways of predicting grades and by providing the students with the right level of support. There is a strong emphasis on ensuring that all students get a fair deal. The school is very good at building on its experience and comparing what it achieves to the achievements of schools in similar circumstances. It is outward looking and willing to learn. The will to improve pervades its life.
48. The leadership and management of departments is good overall. Religious education is excellently led through the clarity of its aims and the very strong shared commitment to improvement. Science and history are very well led and managed. The clarity of the direction given to the work of these two departments is a strength. The leadership and management of English, mathematics, information and communication technology and physical education are good. Art, design and technology, geography, modern foreign languages and music are satisfactorily led and managed.
49. Provision for students with special educational needs is managed well, given the recent difficulties in staffing. This large and complex department does much to contribute to the inclusion of all students, irrespective of talent or temperament. Learning support assistants are supported well through well-organised programmes of training. Despite the department's best efforts, staff shortages and the number of new staff have had some adverse effects. This is particularly evident in the backlog of work related to the preparation of individual education plans for all students who need special help. Accommodation is good and covers well the needs for teaching space, a counselling room and office space. The department has maintained the good standards of the last inspection. Learning support assistants are now generally well deployed.
50. There is an adequate number of teachers and support staff to carry out the school's work. There have been some significant difficulties in recruiting to some areas. These have mainly been addressed through the graduate-training programme. There are enough support staff to help students with learning and other difficulties. The school takes great care in the induction of staff new to the school and makes best use of their talents. The unsatisfactory accommodation, particularly the lack of an adequate water supply is an abiding concern of staff and governors. Resources are satisfactory overall, but are inadequate in science, design and technology, history and information and communication technology. The use of information and communication technology is satisfactory overall. It is very well used in the management of the school, particularly in the school office. However, because of the limitations imposed by the accommodation and the current state of some of the equipment, it not sufficiently used to extend students' learning.

51. The attractive library and resource centre is very well managed. The librarian has a clear vision about what is needed and how to use this resource to best effect. The library plays a key part in students' learning. Students use it well for researching ideas for their work or to select books to read for pleasure. The librarian is also developing links with subject teachers so that she can better support the curriculum. She makes good provision for students who have learning difficulties, particularly in reading.
52. The main weakness in management identified in the last inspection, relating to the gap between planning and budgeting, has been addressed effectively. The management of finance is now very good. The school has been particularly astute in exploiting sources of additional funding and in directing its resources towards the best interests of the students. The ten per cent carryover in the budget results from prudent saving under grant maintained status and is clearly earmarked for urgent improvements in accommodation. The governors receive clear information on budgeting, ensuring that funding is appropriately directed. All funds received for particular purposes are spent in the manner required. In all significant investment in staffing and resources, considerations of cost and value are paramount. An efficient school office carries out day-to-day management very effectively. Standard procedures are clearly established, published and maintained, particularly those relating to the health and safety of the students.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

53. In order to take the school further forward in its development and build on the good work that already exists, the governors and staff should:
- (1) Address the underachievement of students in information and communication technology and in design and technology in years 7 to 9 by:
 - providing enough machines and/or reducing class sizes to enable all students to engage fully in lessons.
(Paragraphs 105, 107)
 - (2) Raise standards in modern foreign languages in Key Stage 3 by:
 - improving the opportunities for students to develop their oral work.
(Paragraphs 115, 116)

- (3) Raise standards of attainment in music by:
- placing greater emphasis on teaching students to play music and read from notation;
 - increasing students' musical vocabulary.
(Paragraphs 122, 123, 124)
- (4) Improve accommodation by:
- addressing weaknesses in the accommodation provided in science, art, design and technology, information and communication technology and music;
 - addressing the danger to the health and safety of the students constituted by the condition of the toilets. This is a matter of great concern for parents and students.
(Paragraphs 33, 80, 85, 95, 113, 127)

Other issues for the attention of staff and governors are raised in the reports on individual subjects.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	158
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students	51

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	6	23	59	60	8	2	0
Percentage	3.8	14.6	37.3	38	5	1	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. [When the total number is substantially less than 100, add] Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one [two, three, etc] percentage point[s]. [Where the total is close to or greater than 100, use only the first sentence.]

Information about the school's students

Students on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of students on the school's roll	1203
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	74

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	14
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	178

English as an additional language	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	41

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	42
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	30

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.9

National comparative data	7.7
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National comparative data	1.1
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Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	132	108	240

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	94	102	96
	Girls	88	70	65
	Total	182	172	161
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	77 (73)	72 (73)	67 (63)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	32 (27)	42 (42)	26 (20)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	81	97	90
	Girls	68	68	59
	Total	149	165	149
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	62 (53)	69 (67)	62 (51)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	19 (12)	41 (39)	30 (17)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	2001	137	98	235

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	50	125	131
	Girls	49	93	97
	Total	99	218	228
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	42 (39)	93 (86)	97 (95)
	National	49.8 (47.4)	88.8 (90.6)	94.5 (95.6)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	41.9 (40)
	National	39.1 (38.4)

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

Ethnic background of students

	No of students
Black – Caribbean heritage	3
Black – African heritage	8
Black – other	2
Indian	29
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	5
Chinese	9
White	1120
Any other minority ethnic group	26

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	136	1
Other minority ethnic groups	1	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	51.5
Number of students per qualified teacher	16.5

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	22
Total aggregate hours worked per week	613

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	70
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	26.2
Key Stage 4	20.6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/01
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	£
Total income	3393449
Total expenditure	3269619
Expenditure per pupil	2729
Balance brought forward from previous year	374285
Balance carried forward to next year	498115

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	36
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	47

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1203
Number of questionnaires returned	355

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	32	54	10	3	1
My child is making good progress in school.	36	55	5	1	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	22	54	15	4	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	22	56	15	6	1
The teaching is good.	24	60	10	2	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	19	46	24	7	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	37	48	10	3	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	51	44	4	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	17	51	23	4	5
The school is well led and managed.	26	52	11	5	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	27	57	13	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	34	52	8	1	5

Other issues raised by parents

Parents are very concerned about the risk to health and safety constituted by the unhygienic state of the toilets.

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

ENGLISH

54. Overall, provision in English, drama, and media studies is **good**.

Strengths:

- Results in national tests at age 14 are above national averages.
- Teaching is good overall; particularly in the effective use of good subject knowledge to question students and build their skills and confidence in speaking and writing.
- The department is well managed; the support of both graduate trainee teachers and of those teaching English as their second subject is effective in enhancing teachers' skills.
- Students' enthusiasm and their zest for learning in class are good features of lessons.

Areas for improvement:

- Most students need help to extend their vocabulary, to use varied sentence structure, and to spell conventionally.
- Marking of work is not always focused sharply enough to give students directions about what to do in order to improve.
- Students need more help in developing their confidence to think and to work independently.

55. Results in national tests in English for 14-year-olds have improved considerably over three years. Previously they were below national averages but are now above them. They also match those of similar schools. Following the national picture, girls do better than boys. GCSE examination results for 2001 confirm a stable pattern in which one-third of students entered gain the higher grades A*-C. Overall attainment reflects national standards, although the proportion of those obtaining higher grades A*-C is below average. Results in English literature are similar. In relation to their other examination results, students do better in English literature and drama than they do in English language. Boys are also further behind national standards for their gender than are girls. In media studies, results are good, and in drama, results are well above national expectations for the subject, where more than half those entered gained higher grades A*-C. Since the last inspection, overall standards of English have risen but remained stable for GCSE English, while rising in drama.

56. Students learn well in English and in drama. By the age of 14, students exceed national expectations in the standards achieved. In their first three years in school they answer questions confidently in class and explain clearly their understanding of what they read as a result of careful guidance and questioning by the teacher. Students read aloud with clarity and understanding, demonstrating confidence in considering and reflecting sensitively on underlying themes and ideas in books and plays. In one good lesson, a group of 14-year-old students quickly developed maturity in identifying issues of social responsibility, peer pressure and the problem of homelessness when studying Melvyn Burgess's novel, *Junk*. By this age, students have achieved well in their written work, so that standards in lessons match those reached in recent tests. Here, their written work benefits from logical thought, clear well-formed handwriting, and good presentation. Approximately half of all students find difficulty with spelling; tending to spell words as they sound, rather than conventionally. This is a difficulty that they bring with them on entry to the school. In recognition of this, teachers help students to make

considerable improvements as a result of special exercises and focused marking of written work.

57. By age 16, overall standards are average. Students read aloud quite difficult passages from Shakespeare with understanding and enjoyment. They understand and describe the key features of major characters and events in Shakespeare's Othello and identify relevant phrases and scenes accurately to illustrate their answers. They produce a good range of writing, including diaries, letters, original stories, and analyses of books, plays, and poems, drawing capably upon what they have been taught in class. For example, one pupil's moving piece, written as an imaginary diary for 1915, explored evocatively the thoughts, fears, and hopes of a local young soldier sent to the front from Grays. A continuing strength, which students develop from their earlier years in school, is the ability to lay out an argument or convey a set of ideas logically. At the same time, most students find it difficult to vary the structure of their sentences, and are slow to develop an extended vocabulary. Difficulty with spelling also persists for approximately one-third of students. When writing about plays or poems they have read, students tend to note themes and ideas accurately with appropriate reference to the text, although they rarely develop ideas at length or analyse their own responses in depth.
58. The department has identified these challenges and is improving its methods of helping students to tackle them. Throughout the age range, girls' written work is better than boys', but boys are more articulate in class. Students with special educational needs make good progress. Those students speaking English as an additional language also make good progress in line with their peers.
59. In drama, students learn well as a result of careful coaching and prompting by the teacher. They acquire poise, control, and physical self-confidence as they work together in small groups to prepare scenes for performance to an audience.
60. Students' attitudes and behaviour are good in English and very good in drama. Students listen well to each other's ideas, and answer questions enthusiastically in class. They take care with their written work, and make good efforts to improve it in response to suggestions and comments by the teacher, especially on their homework. Relationships are always good, both between students and between teachers and students.
61. The quality of teaching is good across the years. It is good or better in two-thirds of lessons observed and there is no unsatisfactory teaching. In drama it is good. This is a considerable improvement from the previous inspection. It is also particularly noteworthy in the context of the school's difficulties in making permanent appointments to the head of department post and to the subject team. English is taught by a large group of staff, of whom most are graduate trainees; several also teach English as their second subject. Teachers use their good knowledge of the subject to extend and probe students' understanding, and match their levels of expectation well so that they hold students' interest consistently. They ask questions skilfully in order to consolidate students' knowledge and to check on what they already know. All teachers mark work conscientiously and help their students with sensitive, well-judged comments on their individual strengths; although they could sometimes be more explicit about what students need to know and do in order to improve further. In class, they provide opportunities for students to work together and think for themselves: these opportunities are particularly successful in the lower years, and in drama. In order to improve the quality of written work still further, staff could usefully build on this foundation by providing more opportunities for students to work independently and to reflect upon their

own and each others' ideas before they tackle written assignments. Opportunities to use computers are well planned and improving.

62. English is well led by a senior member of staff who has stood in to assume responsibility for the subject while a vacancy remains unfilled. She has been particularly effective in enabling and supporting a largely inexperienced team to perform well in the classroom. In consequence, standards of students' work are rising steadily, particularly for those preparing for GCSE examinations.

Literacy

63. The school is doing much to help students in their understanding of subject specialist vocabulary and the skills of writing at length, and spelling. Overall, written work is well presented, with well-formed handwriting, particularly in English and music. In physical education, design and technology, mathematics, geography and art, for example, key subject-specialist vocabulary is displayed in classrooms, and referred to appropriately. In art, geography and religious education, new words are explained very carefully by the teacher and discussed with positive effect on students' understanding and spelling.
64. The school's common approach to teaching writing in order to improve its quality and depth are yielding positive results, particularly in Key Stage 3, in design and technology, history, geography and English. In science, particularly effective examples of teaching students to extend their use of writing were observed. Here, students think and write in depth about scientific concepts, using their own ideas and imagination well. In the same subject, students are also encouraged to read aloud with enjoyment and comprehension, and to communicate their ideas and thoughts clearly to the rest of the class.
65. Much of the improvement in the teaching of literacy has come about following realistic analyses of the students' strengths and weaknesses in literacy, well-led policy development, staff training, and involvement in national initiatives such as the literacy summer schools. As a result, methods of teaching spelling, marking written work, and introducing new words and ideas are bearing fruit because most teachers understand them well and know how to use them productively in their classrooms.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths:

- Students' attainment at the end of Year 9 is above the national average.
- Results in the GCSE examinations are improving year on year.
- Teaching and learning are good across the years.
- Students' attitude to their work and behaviour are good.
- Teachers have a commitment to high achievement for all students.

Areas for improvement:

- The use of plenary sessions, from the National Numeracy Strategy is under-developed.
- The use of the school system for assessment of students' work is patchy.
- Monitoring of teaching and learning and sharing of best practice are under-developed.
- Information and communication technology is not used sufficiently.

67. Students' attainment in 2001 mathematics tests at the end of Year 9 is above the national average. Results have improved every year since 1996 with a slight dip in 2001. Boys achieve marginally better results than girls, because when they come to the school their standards are higher. Their performance in the tests is in line with those in similar schools. Inspection evidence shows that overall attainment by the end of Year 9 is above the national average. More able students work confidently on significant figures, make use of the trial and improvement method to solve quadratic equations, determine the area and circumference of circles and calculate the mean and range of grouped data. Middle-attaining students accurately use an appropriate non-calculator method to multiply a three-digit number by a two-digit number, substitute into formulae and draw a simple cumulative frequency graph. They are systematic in investigational work, detecting patterns and then representing them by a simple formula. Lower-attaining students determine some factors of numbers but do not always find prime factors. Some students do not readily recall basic multiplication facts.

68. Students' GCSE results at the end of Year 11 are in line with the national average. There is a very encouraging trend of improving performance every year over several years. Boys achieve better results than girls, but the difference was less marked in 2001. Students achieve better GCSE results in mathematics than in most other subjects. By the end of Year 11, students' attainment overall is in line with the national average. More able students successfully use the appropriate formula to solve quadratic equations, draw the graph of the sine curve and calculate standard deviation. They sketch some straight-line graphs accurately but occasionally confuse positive and negative gradients. Middle-attaining students understand and use powers of numbers, recognise properties of various quadrilaterals and complete accurate travel graphs. They have sound basic algebraic knowledge and understanding, but make occasional errors in simplifying some more difficult quadratic expressions. Lower-attaining students complete basic numerical calculations in written form and with a calculator but are less confident in mental tasks. They are unsure about fractions, considering a fifth to be more than a quarter, but have a rudimentary understanding of probability in practical situations involving tossing a coin and throwing a die.

69. Students' attitudes to work and their behaviour are good in nearly all lessons and are often very good. They attempt class-work and homework tasks conscientiously, participate fully in discussions and respond well to the teachers' questions. Students co-operate sensibly on joint tasks. In a small minority of cases they have a short

concentration span and call out answers out of turn.

70. Teaching and learning are good in both key stages. Teachers have a secure knowledge and understanding of how to teach mathematics and are enthusiastic about the subject. This communicates itself to the students, enabling them not only to make steady progress in their grasp of mathematics, but also to enjoy the subject themselves. Teaching of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy is developing satisfactorily. Key words, such as 'product', 'symmetry' and 'ascending', and are often emphasised and discussed. In the best lessons teachers use a brief, brisk and apt starter activity to sharpen students' skills. For example, in a very well taught lower set Year 9 lesson on prime factors, the teacher gave a short mental test on odd, even and prime numbers to check students' competence, skilfully building on the results to develop a strategy for determining the prime factor of any number. On some occasions such opportunities are less well developed.
71. Teachers plan lessons thoroughly, routinely sharing objectives with the students so that they are fully engaged and have high expectations of what they know, understand and can do. Teachers are beginning to incorporate methods from the National Numeracy Strategy to enhance students' learning. For example, in a very dynamic and effective Year 7 lesson on coin tossing probabilities, the teacher encouraged students to come to the front to show their methods on the whiteboard, astutely using students' ideas to develop a systematic approach to listing all the possibilities when two, three and then four coins were tossed. In many cases teachers include punchy whole-class discussion as an integral part of a lesson but, on other occasions, they provide too little opportunity for students to give anything more than cursory responses. The use of a plenary session to summarise and review what has taken place in the lesson is under-developed.
72. Teachers have very good relationships with students and manage their behaviour well, in nearly all cases. In a few classes boys over-dominate, calling out answers and demanding attention so that the teacher spends too much time on their needs at the expense of the girls in the class. Teachers give appropriate support to students with special educational needs and, in certain lessons, there is a support teacher to provide more individual help. The support is enhanced further because all mathematics classes are set by ability, with fewer students in the lower sets. Teachers are aware of the needs of the few students for whom English is an additional language and respond well to their needs, for example, taking particular trouble to mark their exercise books, giving special help in understanding how to improve.
73. Teachers set and mark homework and class-work regularly and conscientiously and use the information well to inform their subsequent teaching. For example, in a very good Year 9 lesson on approximation, the teacher adeptly drew on the students' homework answers on decimal places to embark on the wider issue of how best to approximate very small or large numbers and the need for significant figures as an alternative approach. The use of the school's system for marking students' work is patchy. Students' targets are not always sufficiently specific. Some students are unclear about the meaning of the grades given.

74. The department is managed effectively: it shares a commitment to high achievement for all students. Staff, give freely of their time for extra-curricular revision and other support sessions. The production of a departmental booklet setting out clearly what is required to meet the different needs has been very helpful. The monitoring of teaching and sharing of best practice are under-developed. There has been good progress since the previous inspection. Students' attainment in tests at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE has improved considerably since 1997 despite difficulties in recruiting suitably qualified staff. The teachers whose main qualification is in another subject, such as physical education, compensate well by the quality of their general teaching and their sound basic mathematical knowledge. One classroom in the department contains sufficient computers for half a class to use one each or for a whole class to share in pairs. It was used very effectively in one observed lesson but, overall, there is insufficient use of information and communication technology to support and enhance the teaching of mathematics.

Numeracy

75. Students use numeracy satisfactorily in other subjects. In science, they record data, carry out calculations and draw and interpret graphs successfully. In design and technology, students calculate costs of materials, measure and weigh accurately. In information and communication technology, students understand and use basic formulae in constructing a spreadsheet for a survey. In geography, more able students use four-figure references confidently and complete bar and line graphs for rainfall and temperature. Lower-attaining students neglect to use scale when considering areas on a map and produce inaccurate drawings. Standards in numeracy show clear signs of improvement in Key Stage 3 as a result of some effective recent work.

SCIENCE

76. Overall provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Strengths:

- Teachers' specialist knowledge and understanding are very good, and lessons are well planned.
- Leadership and management are very good, and strongly support the aims of the school.
- Assessment and the recording of what students can do are very good and are used well.
- Students work well together in practical lessons and there is sound investigative activity.
- The marking of books is good, with high expectations, and generally students show a pride in their work.

Areas for improvement:

- Resources and the quality of accommodation are unsatisfactory.
- Information and communication technology is not used well enough.
- Information on students' attainments is not always used effectively to inform teaching.

77. Students' standards have gradually improved in recent years and most now achieve the standards expected by the end of Year 9. In the most recent tests in 2001, the proportion of students at or above Level 5 is above the national average. Boys are more successful than girls. At Level 5 and above, students were less successful in the tests in science than they were in English and mathematics.

78. In work seen during the inspection, students showed good knowledge and

understanding. In Year 9, the least able students gained valuable insight into the effects of the inappropriate use of drugs, and showed confidence in expressing and justifying their views. Others in the same year demonstrated a good knowledge of the effects of acid rain on the environment. Students in Year 7 relate the properties of materials to their use. Using their recently acquired knowledge of forces, students in Year 8 successfully build strong bridges in an activity governed by considerations of cost-effectiveness and value for money.

79. There has been consistent improvement in the proportion of students gaining grades A*-C in double-award science at GCSE over the past four years. Following an exceptional year in 2000 with results just above the national average, the proportion of students gaining A*-C at double award science in 2001 is now just below average. Boys and girls attain comparable standards. Whilst boys did much better than girls in 2000, the opposite of the national trend, girls did slightly better than boys in 2001. The proportion attaining grades A* to G is in line with the national average. A small proportion of the cohort takes alternative triple and single science for the last time this year and about half attained the higher grades A*-C in 2001. Students generally achieve as well in science as they do in mathematics and less well than they do in English.
80. In work seen during the inspection Year 10 students achieve satisfactory standards, for example, extending their knowledge of the nervous system and their practical understanding of the reflex arc. Year 11 students with limited attainment, were able to access information about the solar system from web sites on the Internet, correctly explaining and identifying some unique features and properties of the planets. Supported by the teacher, similar access is demonstrated by lower-attaining students in Year 11 in their quest for information about electromagnetic radiation. Another group very successfully planned an investigation on the effects of acid rain on germination and the students' enthusiasm enabled them to make good progress in a well-planned and excellent lesson. Students apply themselves particularly well in practical work, reporting results thoughtfully and accurately, deepening their understanding of the principles and processes in science.
81. Since the last inspection, the department has made some changes that support learning well. As a result, over the past three years, standards have improved at both key stages and from age 14 to 16 all students now study for double award science. Major curriculum revision has taken place; schemes of work in Key Stage 3 and teaching strategies have been revised completely and are now supported by new texts. Although overdue for review, documentation is well organised and the department handbook and welcome pack for new teachers are helpful. In particular an increase in the use of information and communication technology and the recent access to web-sites assist students in their research. The development and frequent sharing of good practice have assisted teachers in working more closely together, and have improved the quality of teaching. The results of regular marking and of examinations are used successfully to group students by ability, to set individual targets, to support and generally inform teachers' work and students' learning. This is a major strength. Teachers and technicians are familiar with safe working practice and daily routines reflect this. The support provided by technicians makes a positive impact on the quality of students' work.

82. Overall the quality of teaching is good and it is often very good. Teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of science, which they use well to interest students in their work. They organise and prepare individual lessons conscientiously, often with detailed plans and lesson notes. Lower-attaining students are supported well by teachers. In all lessons, aims and intended outcomes are displayed and known by the students. This clearly contributes to their understanding and the overall success of lessons. A good range of teaching and learning methods is used, although homework is largely not well thought out. In very good and excellent lessons, most students are challenged and confident, with many showing significant gains in knowledge, understanding and skills. This is demonstrated well where students are engaged with the formal aspects of planning investigations. Assessment is properly organised and effective and there are regular opportunities for assessment such as end of unit tests and the outcome of practical investigations. Teachers mark students' books and other work well, often using praise and supportive and informative comment. Lessons are supported by links with out-of-school activities such as the science club and visits to outside events and lectures. There are established links with other schools and with local and national industry, and sponsorship is used well.
83. Most students want to learn and are enthusiastic about work in science. Behaviour in lessons varies according to the experience of the teacher and some is poor, although attitudes to learning in science are largely positive. Expectations of most teachers are high; relationships are generally good and sometimes excellent. Most students take pride in their work and books are well looked after. Students are keen, willing and attentive, approaching work with enthusiasm and a sense of enjoyment. For a good proportion of students the level of engagement with new knowledge, skills and processes is high. Students enjoy practical work in science; often work collaboratively and with good concentration, as in lessons concerned with planning an investigation, building bridges or using the library. Written work by students is generally of a good standard and, for some students, there is evidence of creative and imaginative writing and recording in science.
84. The department is very well led. The new head of department for science provides clear educational direction and is ably supported by his colleagues who work successfully together. Documentation is good, well organised and helpful. The accommodation for science is unsatisfactory. During the inspection water services to the school, and in the science department particularly, were disconnected because of contamination in the system. As a result practical, investigative work in science was seriously reduced. The science laboratories are unattractive and bleak. They have a negative impact on students' learning and on the morale of the staff. There is little space for teachers and technicians to work or to store resources properly. Resources are unsatisfactory. Some apparatus and equipment is in short supply and most is old and worn out. The time allocation for double science in Years 10 and 11 is low, with barely enough time to cover the syllabus in sufficient detail. Teachers are developing the skills of using computers effectively in science lessons, for record keeping and administration. However, there remains a shortfall of opportunity to use sensors, data collection and data handling. The technicians support the work of the department very well.

ART AND DESIGN

85. Overall provision for art and design is **satisfactory**.

Strengths:

- The students have good attitudes to their work and behave well.
- Displays of work make a very good contribution to the school environment.
- Good student response to homework.

Areas for Improvement:

- The planning for the differing needs of students is not sufficiently refined.
- Students are not given enough encouragement to engage in independent learning in Years 10 and 11.
- There are missed opportunities for the use of information and communication technology to extend students' learning.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory.

86. Teachers' assessments in 2001 showed that students aged 14 were working well below the expected level for their ages. This was not confirmed by work seen during the inspection, when standards were average. The percentage of A*-C grades achieved at GCSE has remained around the national average since 1997. There was a sharp rise in 1999 and 2000, but group sizes have been very small, rendering further comparisons with national figures meaningless.

87. Standards of work seen are average at both key stages, representing satisfactory progress when taking into account prior attainment. Most students have a good understanding of tone, form and proportion, colour and composition and their work demonstrates increasing control and understanding as they progress through the course.

88. Some higher-attaining students in Year 9 use pencil sensitively to show the shape and form of flowers drawn from observation. Most students use coloured pencil and oil pastels expressively to develop drawings into designs for collages and understand how their work relates to that of the American artist Georgia O'Keefe. As students progress from Year 10 to Year 11 they demonstrate a more mature approach to research, including use of the Internet and word processing to improve presentation. However, finished pieces lack individuality because work tends to be too teacher-directed. Still-life work being prepared by higher-attaining students shows a lively sense of colour and composition akin to the work of Kandinsky and Miro. There is some good work too in printmaking, collage and in three-dimensional work in clay, wire, papier mache and plaster.

89. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall across the years. It varies widely throughout the department due to the inconsistent implementation across the department of procedures such as the planning of lessons. Three-quarters of the staff in the department are either unqualified, inexperienced or both. The absence of the head of department for the first six weeks of the term has had a direct impact on the quality of teaching, as her vital supportive role was missing. Where teaching is strong there is good teaching of basic skills at in Years 7 to 9, with the consequence that students understand and use a variety of skills and techniques. Teachers make the students aware of the language specific to art and encourage them to use it. Good class management sustains students' interest, as do the confident practical

demonstrations that ensure that students understand what to do and how to do it. Where there are weaknesses in teaching there is insufficient planning for the different needs of students, for example, to include the interests of boys; to enable those with special needs to make good progress and to prepare more demanding activities for the higher-attaining students in the group. There are missed opportunities to allow students in Years 10 and 11 to develop individuality, especially higher-attaining students, resulting in work of an average quality. Students respond very well to teachers and work hard. They listen intently and answer questions thoughtfully. Most students do their homework with care and bring materials into school to add to their work.

90. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Standards at 14 years have been maintained and standards at 16 years have risen slightly. Standards of teaching have been maintained and are satisfactory. The provision for information and communication technology has improved and is now set for further integration into schemes of work. Provision for those with special educational needs requires further development and is not as good as it was at the time of the last inspection. The department has sufficiently good procedures in place to enable the department to be led and managed satisfactorily. The head of department is well established, but recent staff instabilities and long-term absences have had a negative effect on standards of students' work. The large proportion of unqualified and inexperienced new teachers who teach in the department is also affecting standards. The number of option groups taking art this year has increased considerably with the effect that lessons have to be taught out of specialist rooms and with equipment that has to be carried around by the teacher. The importance the school has placed on improving access to art by increasing the number of option groups at GCSE needs to be matched by a commitment to support the development of teaching and to improve the inadequate accommodation the department uses at present.
91. The art department makes a positive contribution to the environment with the large quantity of inspiring artwork on display in the art rooms and all around the school, creating a stimulating environment for everyone.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- There is some very good teaching.
- Information and communication technology is used well to support learning.

Areas for improvement

- The results of teachers' assessments at the end of Years 9 and 11 are not good enough.
- Students do not make good enough advances in learning from their attainment on joining the school.
- Accommodation and learning resources for resistant materials in the resistant materials department are unsatisfactory. Dust extraction is not adequate and some machines are not well positioned.
- The monitoring and evaluating of students' performance is infrequent.
- Assessment is not used well to support students' learning.

93. Although technology examination results are very low, recent improvements in staffing and organisation are contributing to some very good teaching and improving achievement.
94. The results of the 2001 teachers' assessments were well below the national average, however, there has been a steady improvement during the last three years. GCSE results in technology are well below the national average and were the lowest results for the school in the year 2000 when compared with other subjects. Boys' results were much lower than those for girls'. Food technology results have improved consistently and are now approaching the national average. Child development, graphic products, textiles, resistant materials and systems and control have been consistently well below the national average. Results for electronics improved so that they were approaching the national average in the year 2000. The course did not run in 2001 but has now been reinstated. Overall, there has been little improvement since the last inspection.
95. Students' attainment is broadly in line with the national average on entry to the school although their experiences in technology are widely varied. During Years 7 to 9, students cover a wide range of work in the various subject areas. Much of the work is near the expected standard, particularly in years 7 to 9. However, the work is too often inconsistent and unfinished so that during Year 9, knowledge and achievement are too low. Work seen during lessons in Year 11 is still below expectations. Manufactured items need greater precision and coursework often needs more detail. As noted at the time of the previous inspection, there is not enough variation in the choice of project work. Students with special needs generally do the same work as others but sometimes benefit from the presence of a learning support assistant. More able students are identified, but could benefit from a structured programme to maximise achievement. The use of keywords supports the development of literacy although many students prefer to write single word answers, rather than sentences, in their workbooks. Students add dimensions to some diagrams but there is little use of numeracy to calculate costs or quantities. A modern information and communication technology facility is now part of the department. This is well used by some teachers for teaching electronics and to improve drawings and presentation. Students for whom English is an additional language are well supported and make the same progress as their peers.
96. Teaching is good for Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory for Years 10 to 11. Most of the teaching is satisfactory or better although a small proportion is unsatisfactory due to poor relationships between students and teachers or poor facilities. Some of the teaching is very good and even excellent. There is a wide range of expertise in the department so that many subject areas can be taught. There is a good balance between designing and making and students are made aware of the whole design process. Teachers are confident when using food, textiles, medium density fibreboard, wood and plastic. The management and control of students is good in most cases. Students' interest is very dependent on the nature of the tasks set so that in some lessons, greater challenge and pace are needed. Planning is generally good but a significant proportion of lessons do not have a clear enough structure. Teaching methods are often good, particularly where a greater variety of short experiences is presented. Homework is set regularly and is an important aspect of the work.
97. During Years 7 to 9, students are presented with well-structured work so that they acquire skills, knowledge and understanding. In all subject areas, Year 9 students produce complete design folders and a specific product and thus learn how the design process can progressively produce a good result. Some students need considerable help in organising their design sheets and producing a finished folder. When asked to

do so, students frequently use computers either at home or in school to aid the presentation of their work. Where short-term goals are presented, pace and achievement, are increased. The students enjoy the challenge of making a unique product but some tasks are too precisely defined. The quality of learning closely follows the quality of teaching but is also affected by the facilities provided.

98. Most students co-operate with their teachers and show respect for other people. However, students' attitudes to the various technology subjects are very dependent on the particular teacher. Where the room is well equipped and cared for and the teacher establishes good relationships through appropriate tasks, students behave well and enjoy the work. A minority of students challenge the authority of the teacher and reduce learning for themselves and others. This restricts the range of teaching strategies that can be used with a few classes and directly affects learning.
99. The range of subjects taught covers the requirements of the National Curriculum very well. The inclusion of electronics and textiles in addition to the usual resistant materials, food and graphics products provides for the needs and interests of the students across the years. Students choose three technology subjects during Year 9 so they can focus on their particular interests before making a choice of a GCSE technology subject. A few disaffected students in Year 11 are taught resistant materials in a small group where their special needs can be met more effectively. Although there is no specific technology club, a few students visit some rooms to continue their interests.
100. Although assessment has been developed and work is graded for effort and attainment at the end of a module, it is not sufficiently frequent to support students' learning effectively. The design process for technology is well understood by some members of staff although due to the variety of subjects and the fact that technology rooms are at opposite ends of the school, the teaching methods are often very different. There is some very good teaching in the department, therefore the policy of arranging for other teachers to observe this good practice should be extended as much as possible.
101. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There are now enough staff to cover the various needs of a department following a period of staffing difficulties. Their skills are together sufficient to provide for the requirements of the National Curriculum. Although a few teachers are not fully qualified, this does not affect the quality of the teaching overall. Two technicians provide valuable assistance and occasionally help students directly, in addition to carrying out their other work. Accommodation is unsatisfactory, in that some rooms are in urgent need of refurbishment. The positioning of some benches and power tools in the workshop is inappropriate. This is particularly the case in the resistant materials room where dust extraction is also not satisfactory and thus presents a possible health hazard. Resources are satisfactory in textiles, graphics, food and electronics but there is insufficient suitable wood for the teaching of resistant materials. The new information and communication technology room adds a valuable resource to the department and directly improves the quality and variety of possible learning strategies.

GEOGRAPHY

102. Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Strengths:

- Relationships between students and teachers are good.
- Good lesson planning ensures opportunities for independent learning.

Areas for improvement:

- The range of activities used by teachers is too limited.
- There are not enough opportunities for fieldwork and educational visits.
- Information and communication technology is not used enough.

103. Standards at 14 years remain close to national expectations but they are well below expectations at age 16. There has however been a slight improvement overall since the last inspection. Despite a rise of 6 per cent in the achievement of A*-C grades in the most recent examinations, students continue to do less well than in other subjects. However, geography remains a popular choice with students for GCSE. Boys outperform the girls at 14 and at 16. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress over time, especially in the GCSE course.

104. In lessons and in work seen in Year 9 standards attained are satisfactory. Higher-attaining students identify and apply indicators of development to the countries being studied. Older students identify differences in climate and present ideas on the influence of climate on farming. All students know and use the appropriate terminology confidently. Students work well together. They listen well to their teachers and peers, willingly share ideas and discuss what they learn. The written work of many students does not reflect the quality of group and class discussions. It is often brief, with limited explanations and careless presentation and spelling. Higher-attaining students write well and extend their answers and make good progress over time. Not all students are confident in their application of basic skills and this reduces their ability to manage their own learning. These students and others with special educational needs relating to literacy are disadvantaged by having to use work sheets and texts that do not match their needs. Progress for these students is slow. Time is wisely spent in Year 7 developing basic skills and students become more confident in using an atlas and locating places on ordnance survey maps using grid references. In Year 8, students develop their analytical skills looking more closely at differences in the way of life in different countries and contrasts within those countries.

105. In lessons and in work seen, 16 year-old students reach satisfactory standards. All students continue to engage in discussions and their written work is closer in quality to their speaking and listening. Although there continues to be little difference in the standard of written work of girls and boys, they continue to work in gender groups and girls' participation in lessons is poor. Relationships continue to be good with teachers and each other. Year 11 students are increasingly confident in extracting information from a variety of resources however a significant number are slow in interpreting this data. Year 10 students discuss changes in both cities and regions and can explain the "push and pull" factors that cause people to migrate. Higher-attaining students use data to predict future changes in energy resources and present this information graphically. These students make good progress over time. Lower-attaining students and some students with special educational needs find the work hard but they persevere in their efforts to improve. These efforts are sometimes frustrated by having to use resources

that do not meet their needs. GCSE coursework shows that all students can undertake geographical enquiry but most do not describe their finding in enough detail. They are also careless in their application of geographical conventions particularly in map work. A significant minority of students lack confidence in their application of basic skills.

106. Teaching is satisfactory overall. On occasion it is good or very good. All teachers have good subject knowledge, although not all are familiar with the detail of the National Curriculum or are aware of students' past work and level of skills. All teachers endeavour to provide a positive learning environment that supports the students' learning. Lessons are orderly, resources are well organised and classroom management is good. However, where teaching is satisfactory rather than good, planning targets the average students within the group. This disadvantages both higher-attaining students and those students with specific literacy needs. Better lessons provide more challenging work for those who can achieve more, use questioning effectively to target all students, including the girls, so ensuring full participation and maintain a pace brisk enough to keep everyone busy. Teachers recognise the challenge of independent decision-making and provide opportunities for students to think about and discuss geographical issues. The range of activities is narrow especially in Years 8 and 9 and there is some over-reliance on textbooks and work sheets. There is no current use of information and communication technology and teachers make insufficient use of fieldwork and educational visits to enrich students' experience. Teachers have high expectations that homework should be done, but not all have high expectations regarding the quality and quantity of written work
107. The department is well led and managed. It has acted upon the previous inspection report in ensuring that specialist teachers teach in all year groups, that all procedures relating to assessment, monitoring and recording are in place and that the activities within lessons are more varied. There is, however, still insufficient use of information and communication technology within the department for administration and learning purposes. The department is implementing a short-term development plan to improve standards at GCSE, which still remain low. The improvements to date show a determination to move forward. Given the new team of teachers there is a capability to do so. Resources in the way of books, maps and atlases are sufficient for this purpose. Opportunities for fieldwork remain undeveloped particularly for younger students. The department's policy for the provision of suitable materials to support the learning of students with special educational needs is not fully implemented and these students who are largely unsupported in lessons are disadvantaged. Accommodation is good and the department enjoys its own suite of rooms.

HISTORY

108. Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Strengths:

- Students' work in Years 7,8 and 9 is broadly in line with expectations. They make good progress.
- Teachers work hard to share their enthusiasm for the subject.

Areas for improvement:

- Fewer students than average gain high grades in GCSE examinations.
- Girls have not done as well as boys in examinations.
- Resources are inadequate.

109. Standards of work are broadly average and progress is good. Over the past three years, there has been an overall improvement in GCSE examination results. The proportion of A*-C grades has fluctuated, was below average in 2000, and dipped further in 2001. However, the 2001 results are rather better than the students' prior attainment would suggest they might have been. A number of candidates, though close to the C/D borderline, failed to reach it. High-attaining students do achieve A*-A grades but the percentage is consistently below average. Though the proportion of A*-G grades has been above average, it fell to just below in 2001. Several candidates, though they had completed the coursework, did not attempt the examinations. In the last two years, classes have been taught by a number of teachers, affecting continuity of provision. The difference between boys' and girls' attainment has been marked. In 2000, boys' results were closer to the average and they achieved higher grades in history than in their other subjects. Girls did less well than in their other subjects. The difference does not appear to be as great in 2001.

110. By the end of Year 9, standards in lessons, teacher assessments and work seen are broadly in line with expectations. Progress is good. Students understand that society, changes for a reason, but they cannot always explain why in any detail. Students awareness of how past events can be interpreted in different ways is still limited. Wall displays and exercise books contain good examples of extended writing. Students accounts of life and conditions in the past are lively and interesting. The rise in standards since the last inspection indicates good improvement. In lessons, important differences between Years 10 and 11 are apparent. In Year 11, standards are below average and progress is only satisfactory, whilst in Year 10, students achieve well, broadly meeting average expectations. Year 11 students are less motivated and less enthusiastic. They too have experienced a change of teachers. Students try hard to acquire the facts and the high-attaining students link them together, making a reasoned argument. Many find linking their knowledge together difficult, and low-attaining students simply offer a series of correct but unrelated statements. Their extended writing skills help them in their coursework, which almost all complete. Few have a wide vocabulary or the ability to express themselves precisely. They need help in improving this aspect of literacy and teachers are providing writing examples that help them. In Year 10, students have made a very positive decision to study history and are benefiting from stable staffing. Many more have chosen history this year. There has been some improvement in standards since the last inspection.

111. The quality of teaching is good across the years. Most teaching in the lessons is good and the remainder is satisfactory. Teachers know their subjects well and convey their interest effectively. In a lesson on conditions in nineteenth century towns, Year 9 students grasped the squalor of many houses because of the realistic detail described by the teacher. In all lessons, there are very clear expectations of behaviour, work and homework. Teachers show consistency in applying departmental rules. Teachers provide for the range of ability, usually by encouraging questions and providing additional work for higher attaining students. Lessons which provide the greatest variety of activity or participation generate the most enthusiasm and concentration. In all classes there are fewer girls: they become less involved in lessons than the boys. In some lessons, teachers encourage more independent attitudes. The attention to literacy benefits all students, including those with special educational needs or who are bilingual. Homework is regularly set, well marked, and any not done followed up.
112. The department is very well led and managed. The head of department successfully sustains a very hard working team. There is insufficient use of information communications technology in lessons as result of difficulties in gaining access to computer suites. In almost every lesson, students in all years share textbooks. This is unsatisfactory in classes where, because of mixed ability organisation, there are students with very good and weak reading skills side by side.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

113. Provision in information and communication technology is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Standards are improving in Years 10 and 11.
- There is much good teaching, particularly in GNVQ lessons.
- Teachers' relationships with students are very good.

Areas for improvement

- The pace of learning in Year 7,8 and 9 lessons is too slow.
- Standards are adversely affected when students share computers.
- Monitoring and planning of information and communication technology in other subjects is uneven.
- Resources are inadequate.

114. Overall standards are below average because in Years 7, 8 and 9 lessons students have to share computers and make less than average progress over time. They do not have enough opportunity to develop their skills in other subjects. Standards are, however, satisfactory in Years 10 and 11.
115. In 2001 GCSE results in office applications were in line with the national average points score and for the proportion of students attaining A*-C grades. Nearly all students, including those with special needs, were entered and obtained a pass grade. The high trend of improvement from previous years was maintained. A small number of higher-attaining students were entered for the examination a year early and gained good grades through helpful after-school tuition. Current students in Years 10 and 11 achieve satisfactorily in GCSE lessons and achieve well in the additional GNVQ option because they have more lessons and classes are smaller. Work seen shows national expectations are being well met for girls and boys.

116. By the end of Year 9, students' attainment assessed by teachers in 2001 was well above the national average for their age. Standards have, however, improved significantly since the last inspection because most students have home computers on which to practise. They are now more confident in collecting, editing and presenting information in a variety of ways. Spreadsheets are used well to explore the effects of changes in financial data. In a good Year 9 lesson, most students wrote a series of commands and improved their numeracy skills by using distances and angles to make and move a series of shapes. However, most students do not achieve as much as they could in lessons because classes are far too large and they have to share computers. Although students do not have enough chances to apply their skills in other subjects, minimum statutory requirements for information communication technology are met in all subjects.
117. Most Year 9 students supplement the very limited practice time in lessons with work at home in their own time, showing very good interest in their chosen projects. They carry out and analyse their personal surveys. Higher-attaining students evaluate their results by producing clear, well-labelled graphs. Students without home computers make slower progress in lessons because they have to share machines in very large classes. Rooms are cramped.
118. Students do not yet have regular opportunities to use computers in other lessons. The school has recognised this problem and suites of computers are now being provided for other subjects. Year 9 students use their skills well to program instructions to draw various shapes, but some relevant equipment is yet to be used in technology. Students carry out research from the internet in mathematics although they do not use spreadsheets to model problems in algebra. In a very good Year 11 electronics lesson, students used their first lesson on new three-dimensional computer-aided design software very well to design alternators. They quickly made changes to their designs and developed good creative skills. Most Year 11 students have fluent word processing skills. Students with special educational needs use appropriate software to improve literacy. Those students who do not follow all parts of the curriculum use computers effectively in GNVQ foundation business modules and other planned activities.
119. Serious technical problems have prevented students from presenting, sharing and exchanging information sufficiently. They have had to delete previous work combining text and graphics in publications because of insufficient network memory. They have made slow progress in developing research skills because of delays in installing broadband technology. The two servers are incompatible at the moment. The newly-appointed technician is helping improve the situation.
120. The introduction this year of GNVQ from Year 9, through the electronic link with Thomas Telford School, is leading to higher standards. In good GNVQ lessons seen in Year 10, students used the Internet well to search for information in order to organise wedding travel arrangements. They create linked spreadsheets to record the school's athletics results and quickly highlight new record holders using sophisticated software. This part of the work is above average.
121. Teaching is good overall, particularly in Years 10 and 11 GNVQ and GCSE classes. Only one lesson seen was unsatisfactory compared to one fifth of all lessons on the last inspection. Lessons are well planned and organised. Teachers have very good, caring relationships with students and support individuals well. Students with special educational needs learn well, though without extra support. Most students behave very well, even when they have to share computers in the large classes. They work hard, concentrating on their tasks well. Homework extends class work so students can

research in their own time, and produce their own projects. Students without home computers are disadvantaged. Marking is thorough and helpful comments help students improve, although students do not always complete corrections.

122. The subject is well managed. The newly appointed co-ordinator has a good working relationship with students and staff, including an enthusiastic newly qualified teacher. Scattered computer rooms are well co-ordinated. Specific information and communication technology lessons form a basis for use in other subjects, though few subjects have yet planned regular computer use. Accommodation and resources for specific information and communication technology lessons are unsatisfactory because rooms are cramped for large classes and students have to share machines, despite increases in computers since the last inspection. There are now specific GNVQ lessons in all years for all students. Recent investments provide good bases in mathematics, English and technology. National Curriculum requirements are now largely met in all subjects except music.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

123. Provision for modern foreign languages is **satisfactory**.

Strengths:

- The students experience enthusiastic, energetic teaching, with good classroom management and control.
- Students have good attitudes and co-operate with each other and with the teachers.
- Boys' attainment is much closer to that of girls than nationally.

Areas for improvement:

- There is inadequate provision for those classes left without any specialist teaching.
- Attainment of 14-year-olds is not good enough.
- Assessment is not used well to support students' learning.

124. GCSE results are erratic from year to year and from language to language - from over 60 per cent at GCSE grade C or better down to 14 per cent in Spanish for instance, but there has been a steady general improvement over the last five years in B and C grades, if not in A and A*. In 2001, 37 per cent of the year group reached grade C or better in a language, this figure being affected by the 68 students who did not take GCSE at all in a foreign language. Of those who took French, 62 per cent achieved a higher grade, much better than in previous years. Only in Spanish is girls' attainment significantly higher than boys'. Work observed in the current Key Stage 4 indicates that results will be maintained, but with the three languages at much more comparable levels.
125. Teachers' assessments of 14-year-olds in 2001 place students a long way below the national average. No past tense work was observed in lessons for the current Year 9, although there is a little in exercise books. Work seen in lessons is not so far below-average as the 2001 assessments would suggest.
126. Students benefit from an excellent learning environment in attractive classrooms with appropriate display. A lunch-time club gives some the opportunity to start on a second language and there is an annual residential visit abroad that encourages the use of the language they learn at school. Students choose French, German or Spanish on entry but progress is slow through Years 7 to 9. The time allocation overall is average, but lower in Key Stage 3, and it has not been possible to experiment with giving students

experience of more than one language before a final choice is made. Progress is faster through Years 10 and 11. Most classes lack confidence in speaking and feel the need to consult exercise and text books before saying anything. They do, however, make independent use of dictionaries. Students with special educational needs are fully integrated and achieve standards at or above their expected potential.

127. Students' attitudes to learning the subject are good and no lessons are significantly affected by poor behaviour. When asked to work in pairs, they do so with little need for supervision. However, only a minority take the initiative to start a dialogue in the foreign language.
128. Most listen carefully and have little difficulty with recordings of native speakers, but they do not take the same care over written work. For example, in several lessons seen the word 'discipliné' was taught, but most copied it wrongly and few noticed the accent or appreciated that without the accent the meaning and sound would change.
129. The teachers are appropriately experienced and qualified, although some would benefit from the support of a foreign language assistant. In a majority of lessons, the skill of speaking is taught less well than the other skills. Teachers sometimes speak English when the students are quite capable of understanding the material in the foreign language and instructions are routinely translated into English without any check to see if this is necessary. It is wrongly assumed that students' confidence will be boosted if they are allowed to read from a text during oral work. In fact this inhibits fluency and has a detrimental effect on pronunciation. In the best lesson seen, a beginners' group did not see any text until well into the lesson. They all asked and answered a range of questions, in the higher ranges of the level expected for younger students, competently. When supporting text appeared later in the lesson, it had no effect on the quality of pronunciation. This was a lesson in which the teacher had a clear view of the standards to be attained and the approach needed to achieve them. In many lessons seen there was no such view and this inhibited the progress of all students, but particularly the most able.
130. All aspects of the department's work have been seriously disrupted by the long-term absence of one teacher. Attempts to find suitable specialist supply replacements have been unsuccessful and the head of department has taken on a heavy burden of supervision. The department runs smoothly and efficiently. Because of these difficulties there has been insufficient monitoring of classroom practice to reduce the wide gap which has developed between the different teachers' practices. This is particularly noticeable in the way the skill of speaking is taught and in the degree to which English is used. Similarly, translation is used as a standard teaching strategy by some, further detracting from oral fluency.
131. There has been considerable improvement in GCSE results and in overall behaviour since the previous inspection. Some aspects that were praised last time are even better now, for example, the setting of homework, the use of display and the range of materials. However, some weaknesses in classroom practice, as outlined above, were clearly indicated in 1997. The two main recommendations of that report remain recommendations today, namely to implement policies to spread existing good practice more widely through the department, particularly the use of the foreign language, and to find more ways to challenge and extend the most able students in each class.

MUSIC

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

Strengths:

- Teachers show secure class management skills.
- Teachers produce appropriate worksheets to aid students' learning.
- Teachers mark written work carefully.
- Both teachers work well together as a team.

Areas for improvement:

- Standard of students' work by age 14 and age 16 are not good enough.
- There are not enough opportunities for students to develop their listening and appraising skills in lessons.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory.
- Information and communication technology is not used well enough.

133. In the 2001 GCSE examination, no students gained A*-C grades. The results ranged from D-G grades. As the examination was only taken by a small number of students, no meaningful comparison can be made with the national average. However, students' results in music were lower than the other creative and performing arts subjects in the school. In the 2000 GCSE examination eight out of 10 students gained A*-C grades. There has been some fluctuation in teacher assessment results for students age 14 in the past two years. The results for 2001 were very low when compared to the national average. In 2000 the results were slightly above the national average.

134. In lessons and work seen in Year 9, attainment is below national expectations. There is a small minority of students who attain in line with national expectations. Standards were found to be variable in the last inspection and have remained much the same. Many students show good rhythmic skills. Students in Year 7 read simple rhythmic patterns and play them accurately on drum pads. They keep a steady beat and understand the way each pattern is notated. In Year 8, students show an awareness of differences in pitch. They listen to a short phrase and then indicate which note has been changed when it is played again. Many students take care in the presentation of their written work. By Year 9, students show limited skills in playing keyboards. They often find problems with locating the notes and their playing lacks fluency. There are a few students who show secure keyboard skills and are confident in reading and playing from simple notation. Some students show a limited knowledge and understanding of musical vocabulary. They do not use this regularly when discussing their work. Students who attend the singing group show a good vocal ability. Many sing accurately and learn a new part quickly. They sing confidently in two parts. The achievement of students through Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. Students gain confidence as performers and in using and understanding treble clef notation. They increase in their knowledge about music from other countries. For example, Year 9 students write about the music of India and Africa. They make satisfactory progress in understanding how the music of the two countries varies. Students with special educational needs, English as an additional language and the more musically able make satisfactory progress in lessons according to their capabilities.

135. By the age of 16, attainment is below national expectations. Although only one lesson was observed, scrutiny of work and discussions with students confirm this judgement. There has been a decline in the standard of students' work in Key Stage 4 since the last inspection. Many students show a limited musical knowledge. They are unsure about the periods of musical history and the different styles of music associated with each. The achievement of students, who start with below average attainment, is satisfactory. Students make satisfactory progress in composing. They gain skills in using a melody,

a simple chord structure and an ostinato accompaniment when creating a piece. They show some progress in playing together as part of an ensemble.

136. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall across Years 7 to 9. Two unsatisfactory lessons were seen. In these there was insufficient provision for developing students' listening and appraising skills. No secure judgement can be made about teaching and learning in Key Stage 4. In the one lesson seen in Year 11, teaching was satisfactory. Teachers have secure class management skills. They produce their own worksheets to aid students' learning. For example, in a satisfactory Year 8 lesson, students had to complete part of a given melody using keyboards. A well-produced worksheet enabled them to see the rhythmic pattern to be used and the final ending note for the melody. The worksheet also provided guidance on reading and understanding treble clef notation. As a result, many students produced an effective eight-bar melody. This success had a positive impact on students' learning. Although teachers plan lessons carefully, very occasionally there is a lack of practical music-making activities. The provision for developing students' literacy skills is satisfactory. Teachers mark students' written work carefully. There is no provision for the use of information and communication technology for composing activities in either key stage. This is due to a lack of suitable equipment. Extra-curricular activities provide satisfactory opportunities for developing students' performing skills. There is a rock band and a singing group. Students have performed at the lower school presentation evening and at a talent show.
137. Students have satisfactory attitudes towards the subject. They are mostly well behaved and co-operate with each other when playing keyboards. They have good attitudes towards extra-curricular provision.
138. The arts co-ordinator provides satisfactory leadership and management for the subject. There have been several staff changes since the last inspection. The co-ordinator, who has only been in post since September and the other music teacher work well together. Both are unqualified in this country, but they are hardworking and committed to improving the provision for the subject. Schemes of work and assessment procedures are in place and are being further developed. Assessment procedures will more closely monitor students' attainment in both key stages. The accommodation is unsatisfactory. There is only one practice room, which is mainly used for instrumental lessons. The two teaching rooms are small. The school is aware of the problems and has plans to improve the accommodation. The resources are adequate. There are keyboards and classroom percussion instruments. However, although there is a computer, it is not set up for music technology. Over 40 students receive instrumental lessons from peripatetic teachers. This provision enables students to develop their skills and to gain confidence as performers.
139. There has been a satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. The report then highlighted several areas of weakness. These have now been successfully addressed by the school. As a result, no poor teaching or poor student progress was seen in Key Stage 3. No noise or disruption to lessons was observed. The National Curriculum is now in place. The marking of students' work has been improved. Although the attainment of students in Key Stage 3 has remained the same, there are now signs of some improvement.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

140. The overall provision for physical education is **good**.

Strengths:

- There is good teaching in the majority of lessons.
- There is a very good range of extra-curricular provision.
- The students show a high level of commitment to their work.
- There is an increasing number of students opting for physical education at GCSE level.

Areas for development:

- There is not enough use made of information and communication technology especially by GCSE students.
- Curricular links with providing primary schools are not good enough.

141. In the 2001 GCSE examination, attainment was average overall. An average proportion of students entered gained A*-C grades and all students achieved A*-G grades. Although the percentage of students gaining the higher grades was slightly lower than in 2000, more than twice as many students sat the most recent examination compared with the previous year. The results for physical education also remain slightly above the school average for all subjects. Although far more boys than girls were entered, in percentage terms there was no significant difference in attainment.
142. Standards of attainment at age 14 have been maintained since the last inspection and remain in line with national expectations. The majority of students show a good range of skills in a number of different activities. During the inspection these included gymnastics, football, rugby union, netball, trampolining and table tennis. In the higher sets and in some extracurricular activities, a significant number of individual students attain above average standards, particularly in team games.
143. Inspection evidence shows that standards of attainment among most students at age 16 are also in line with national expectations. Students build effectively on the knowledge and skills developed earlier. Most students who are studying physical education at GCSE level achieve standards that are at least average for the course. This is the case in Year 11, where most students show a satisfactory understanding of the theoretical elements of the syllabus. In Year 10, where students are still in the early stages of the course, they are beginning to develop a sound understanding of the skeletal system.
144. In relation to prior attainment, most students are achieving well. For example, learning was particularly good in three Year 7 lessons involving hockey, rugby union and gymnastics. In most lessons, students show an increased understanding of various aspects of physical education and improved levels of skill. They are interested in what they are doing, most concentrate well and they are willing to work productively in order to make progress. All these factors have a positive effect on their learning. Students with special educational needs, who are fully integrated into all physical education lessons, progress as well as others.
145. This is also true of pupils for whom English is an additional language. Achievement is satisfactory for the majority of non-examination students in Years 10 and 11 who have only one hour of physical education each week. Those students in Year 10 who are working towards the Junior Sports Leaders Award are making good progress. They work independently in an extremely sensible and mature manner. GCSE students, including most of the students with special educational needs who are on the course, are generally making make good progress.
146. The quality of teaching is good overall and in some lessons teaching and learning are very good. Lessons are purposeful and most are structured carefully so that a progressive series of appropriate practices results in good learning taking place.

Students respond positively to the teaching they receive and learning is enhanced as a consequence. In some lessons, the quality of learning stems from very good teaching in which the teacher's enthusiasm, class management and high expectations are central to what is achieved. This was the case, for example, in a Year 7 rugby union lesson where all the boys were fully committed throughout and where above average standards were reached. The same was true in a hockey lesson involving a group of lower-attaining girls. Their level of commitment was very good and they made significant progress during the lesson. In some lessons opportunities to involve the students in evaluating work are missed. In a minority of lessons higher-attaining students are not sufficiently challenged. This has a detrimental effect on their learning. Without exception, students are always correctly dressed for physical activity whether indoors or outside. Relationships between teachers and students are good and expectations of work and behaviour are clear. As a result, behaviour is at least good in all lessons and in a significant proportion of lessons behaviour is very good. Students treat the resources with respect and they show a ready willingness to carry various items of equipment to and from the fields.

147. All four members of the department, supported by several other colleagues, contribute to a very good range of extra-curricular activities before school, at lunchtime and after school. These activities provide students with additional opportunities for improving their level of skill and they are well supported by boys and girls of all ability levels. During the inspection, for example, groups of committed and enthusiastic students participated in football, netball, basketball, rugby union, table tennis, hockey and trampolining. Students represent the school successfully in a range of sports. In addition to those already mentioned, they also include rounders, cricket, cross-country and athletics. Students are consistently successful in athletic and cross-country competitions.
148. Management of the department is good. There have been a number of significant developments since the previous inspection. Results at GCSE level have improved. The numbers following the examination course are increasing year by year. In the present Year 11, 48 students are studying the subject at examination level and in Year 10 the number is 58. Presentation of written work in theory lessons is better. 'Foundation football' offering specialist coaching to younger students has recently been added to the extra-curricular programme. This is beginning to have a positive effect on standards in Year 7. Table tennis is now part of the curriculum and so increases the range of options available to students in Years 8 and 9. The Junior Sports Leaders Award has been introduced this year. A learning support assistant with particular responsibility for physical education is now in post. As well as helping students in the examination groups, the support assistant is also making a good contribution in developing literacy within the department. A physical education technician has been appointed to maintain equipment to a high standard and to help in lesson preparation. Links with outside sporting clubs, particularly Thurrock Harriers and Thurrock Rugby Club, have been improved. These provide further opportunities for students to participate in competitive activities and to develop their talents.
149. Very few opportunities are provided for students to use information and communication technology to help them with their learning. Litter is still a problem on the playing fields as it was at the time of the previous inspection. The litter includes discarded drink cans that are a potential safety hazard. Indoor facilities remain barely adequate particularly in wet weather. The heating in one of the gymnasiums is inadequate.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

150. The overall provision for religious education is **very good**.

Strengths:

- The teaching of Years 10 and 11, by senior staff, is very good and this leads to equally good learning.
- Year 10 GCSE religious education results are very good.
- The leadership and management of the department are excellent.
- Documentation, both for teachers and for students, is outstanding.
- Teachers have high expectations of students, who are well motivated, resulting in very good standards.
- Assessment, target setting and mentoring of students is very effective.

Areas for improvement:

- There are limited opportunities for students' spiritual development in lessons.
- Department assessment procedures are inconsistently applied.

151. Standards in religious education for 14-year-olds are broadly in line with those expected in the Essex Agreed Syllabus and good in relation to standards on entry. At age 15, standards are very good in relation to the national results at age 16. Generous curriculum time enables GCSE religious education to be taken a year early and all students are entered. Overall standards have improved significantly since the previous OFSTED inspection, with a remarkable rise in attainment of A*-C grade passes and in A*-G passes. Successful strategies to promote boys' achievement have led to the current position where there are no noticeable difference between boys' and girls' GCSE results. All students, particularly boys, achieve much better in religious education than in most of their other subjects, taken a year later. Significant factors in the dramatic improvement in standards include very good teaching to Year 10 by experienced, senior members of staff and the challenging, imaginative curriculum provided by the department. Standards in GCSE sociology, also taught in the religious education department and taken by all students in Year 11, have been consistently high.

152. In work seen in Years 7 to 9, students show good knowledge and understanding, with Year 7 students` successfully distinguishing between physical and social needs in an introductory religious education lesson. Good recall of previous work on Christian worship enabled Year 8 students to note comparisons and differences when explaining how mosques are designed to help Muslims in their worship. A high-attaining student made the link between the Islamic call to prayer and the ringing of church bells. At the end of Year 9, students have a firm foundation in the understanding of Christianity and Judaism to develop in GCSE examination work. Written and oral work show a real depth of knowledge, with the use of the correct terminology and students illustrating their views well with supporting references to biblical texts. Presentation of written work is usually excellent, with students showing pride in their class and homework. Progress through Years 7 to 9 is good for all students.

153. Progress is very good in Year 10 religious education and Year 11 sociology because the teaching is excellent, there is more challenge in the work and student motivation is high. In Year 10, when students sit the GCSE examination in religious education, they give a balanced argument when discussing the best way to learn about one's faith. They also provide illuminating answers to questions about the secularization of Christmas by drawing on their own knowledge and personal experience. In their work on Judaism, most students show extensive knowledge of Jewish special occasions such as the Seder meal. Lower-attaining students give examples of foods on the Seder plate and explain the significance of some items but find it harder to recall how each action and

item on the table is linked to the events of Passover. Higher-attaining students remember the significance of the words of the phrase 'Next year in Jerusalem' invoked at the end of the meal. By the end of Year 10, students have a good understanding of what it means to be a Christian, a Hindu or a Jew. In Year 11, through the GCSE sociology course, students develop understanding of the factors affecting achievement, and the qualities needed to become a successful teacher. Coursework for both GCSE and sociology is outstanding in presentation and content with students making excellent use of information technology outside lessons.

154. The quality of teaching and learning is good for Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11, with the occasional excellent lesson. Teachers have good knowledge of the subject, evident in their use of an explanation of key theological ideas. Lessons are invariably relevant, with objectives shared with students from the outset and good use made of humour. Through skilful questioning, students are expected to recall previous lessons so that learning is reinforced. Brisk presentation and careful timing within lessons keeps students focused on their work. Praise, when deserved, is readily given and students' ideas are always treated with respect. The quality of relationships between teachers and students and between students is invariably good. Teachers have high expectations of all students and ensure that they make an active contribution to lessons. Plentiful, stimulating resources and excellent celebration of achievement, observed in display work, provide an exciting and inviting atmosphere.
155. In the best lessons, mainly in Years 10 and 11, teachers display a personal enthusiasm for the subject. Stimulating presentation evokes an enthusiastic response from students. Tasks are matched well to all levels of attainment. Particularly effective are the lessons which begin with music and relaxation exercises to focus students' minds. In one memorable lesson, the teacher sang a rap to explain the difference in spelling and meaning of 'there' and 'their'. Students are keen to learn in religious education and sociology, they concentrate well and show perseverance when faced with challenging tasks.

156. The management and leadership of the department are excellent. Many very effective new initiatives to raise attainment have been implemented, leading to consistently good teaching and a sense of common purpose. Outstanding documentation, including informative staff planners, which the head of department regularly monitors, are used to very good effect. Appropriate schemes of work and systems to check how students are doing, have all played a part in raising standards. Students' knowledge of their own learning is excellent. Short-term target setting by teachers includes achievable and challenging goals. This, together with the mentoring of individual students, has helped to raise the aspirations of all, but of boys in particular. Excellent, student revision booklets in Christianity, Judaism and in sociology have had a very positive effect on students' GCSE results. Reporting to parents has improved since the last inspection and now contains test and assessment results together with an information technology assessment.
157. Meditation and reflection are used well as opportunities for spiritual development, but overall, scope for spiritual development is too limited. Students know right from wrong, which regulates their personal behaviour and teachers are very good role models for students' moral development. There are many opportunities for paired/collaborative work in religious education and most students are very good listeners to teachers and peers. There is clear learning and appreciation of students' own cultural traditions, such as Easter and Christmas for Christians, and Ramadan for Muslims. An appreciation of the diversity and richness of other cultures is a prominent feature of examination course work. Extra-curricular activities include a religious education revision club and a visit to a Hindu temple as an extension day for all students.