

INSPECTION REPORT

WALTON-LE-DALE HIGH SCHOOL

Bamber Bridge

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique reference number: 119743

Headteacher: Mr A Hutchinson

Reporting inspector: Nigel Pett
17331

Dates of inspection: 18th – 21st February 2002

Inspection number: 192406

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 - 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Brindle Road Bamber Bridge Preston Lancs
Postcode:	PR5 6RN
Telephone number:	(01772) 335726
Fax number:	(01772) 339494
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr G Woods
Date of previous inspection:	24 th February 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
17331	N Pett	Registered inspector		Standards; How well are pupils taught? How good are learning opportunities? How well does the school care for its pupils and students?
14756	J Lovell	Lay inspector		Attitudes, behaviour and personal development How good are partnerships with parents? How well is the school led and managed?
31135	R Hobson	Team inspector	English English as an additional language	
10905	A Brewerton	Team inspector	Science	
30576	P Bannon	Team inspector	Mathematics	
7084	J Haslam	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
31129	J Pickering	Team inspector	Art	
7531	E Cole	Team inspector	Design and technology	
14573	H Wareing	Team inspector	Geography	
31772	A Kelly	Team inspector	History	
31783	G Holland	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
15208	A Briggs	Team inspector	Music	
17709	A Giles	Team inspector	Physical education	
12003	A Marfleet	Team inspector	Religious education Equal opportunities Teaching	
14943	E Peagam	Team inspector	Special educational needs	

The inspection contractor was:

PPI Group Ltd
7 Hill Street
Bristol
BS1 5RW

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33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This comprehensive school is situated in the town of Bamber Bridge, close to Preston in the South Ribble Valley. Pupils come from the immediate area and from surrounding settlements. There are 652 boys and girls on roll aged between 11 and 16. It is smaller than the average secondary school nationally. Pupils come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds, and there is some social and financial disadvantage. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is broadly in line with the national average. Their ethnic heritage is mainly white European and the percentage of pupils not having English as their first language is very low in comparison with the national average. Pupils' attainment on entry into Year 7 covers a wide range, although in the last two years there have been more pupils who have achieved average and above average standards for their ages. About a third of the pupils are identified as having special educational needs and 32 hold statements to address their specific needs. These numbers are above the national average. The school's aims seek to provide for the needs of all of its pupils and to develop their personal skills, confidence and academic potential, recognising and rewarding achievement.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an improving school. Pupils in Years 7-9 achieve well in National Curriculum tests. Standards in Year 10 are better than in Year 11 where they are affected by the unsatisfactory levels of attendance and behaviour of some pupils. A significant minority of pupils do well in GCSE examinations for their prior attainment. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. The headteacher has a clear vision and gives effective educational direction. A good range of initiatives is being taken and these are leading to improvement in standards and the quality of education. Some aspects of management need to be improved to ensure better consistency. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Promotes the progress of the large majority of pupils who attend regularly.
- Teaches effectively in a significant proportion of lessons.
- Supports pupils with special educational needs well.
- Provides an effective pastoral system and good personal education programme.
- Has effectively implemented the literacy and numeracy strategies.
- Is planning effectively for improvement.

What could be improved

- Consistency in leadership and management to raise the quality of teaching and learning.
- Pupils' success rates in GCSE examinations.
- The behaviour and attendance of a minority of pupils.
- Opportunities for pupils' spiritual and cultural development.
- Aspects of investigations in mathematics and science, and the use of computers across subjects.
- Statutory requirements for collective worship and some elements of health and safety.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the school was last inspected in 1997, it has made satisfactory improvement. Standards have risen, but not in all subjects. Significant improvement has been made in results in National Curriculum tests in Year 9. The quality of teaching has improved and there is now more very good and good teaching and less unsatisfactory teaching than at the last inspection. The improvement in the provision for pupils with special educational needs has been good. The National Curriculum requirements for physical education are now met. Very good progress has been made in improving the quality of accommodation. Improvement has been unsatisfactory in ensuring that there is a daily act of collective worship for all pupils and in the provision for spiritual and cultural development and in the use of tutorial time. The strategies set to improve pupils' behaviour have been revised and are having a positive impact.

The strategies designed to promote and improve pupils' attendance have been less successful. Planned initiatives have the potential to improve attendance through an electronic registration system. The approaches to planning have shown satisfactory improvement. Very good improvement has been made in the resources for information and communication technology. Recent changes to the leadership team and staff with middle management responsibilities have strengthened the management of the school effectively. The potential for further improvement is good but depends upon careful monitoring and evaluation to ensure that action plans are effectively implemented.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 year olds based on GCSE examination results.

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	D	D	E	C

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

Standards have varied in relation to the national average. There is value added as pupils improve their performance in relation to their prior attainment and the trend in improvement at GCSE has been close to the national trend. Results at GCSE were below the national average in 2001 but in comparison with similar schools, results were average when taking into account pupils' prior attainment. This shows added value especially as this year group contained a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and a significant number of boys did not fulfil their potential. Targets for the percentage of pupils reaching the national levels in GCSE were not met. Results in the 2001 National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 show that pupil attainment in the core subjects is improving over time. The average points score for all three core subjects together was close to the national average. Results in English were above average but were below average in mathematics and science. In comparison with similar schools, the average points score was above average. Standards currently being achieved in Years 7-9 reflect these results and standards in Year 10 are more often average or close to it, supporting the judgement that attainment is improving. Most pupils in Years 7-10 are now making better progress overall, and the majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well for their prior attainment. In Year 11, there is a wide variation in standards and, although a minority of pupils are reaching average standards, attainment overall is below average, reflecting the weaknesses still present in the attitudes of a minority of pupils.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	The majority of pupils who attend regularly have satisfactory attitudes towards their work and teachers. A minority of pupils, mainly in Year 11, have unsatisfactory attitudes and do not respond sensibly.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Overall, behaviour is satisfactory with a significant number of pupils who behave well. They understand the difference between right and wrong. A minority, mainly in Year 11, have unsatisfactory standards overall.
Personal development and relationships	Most pupils enjoy good relationships with teachers and each other. A minority of pupils, mainly in Year 11, act in an immature way, or are disaffected.
Attendance	Satisfactory. The overall attendance rate is close to the national average. There are fewer unauthorised absences than the national average. A significant minority of pupils have poor attendance patterns, much of which is condoned by parents.

Most pupils enjoy school and try hard. Their positive attitudes, good behaviour and relationships with each other and adults in the school help to support their achievement. Mainly amongst the older pupils, especially in Year 11, there is a significant minority of pupils who are disruptive and this interferes with their learning, and that of some other pupils. They do not relate well to staff and other pupils, have irregular attendance and, when they do attend school, they sometimes display anti-social attitudes, which results in their exclusion. Punctuality is generally satisfactory, although there is a minority of pupils who are regularly late to school and to lessons. There is little graffiti, but some pupils persist in dropping litter.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged 11-14 years	Aged 14-16 years
Lessons seen overall	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

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

The quality of teaching has shown significant improvement since the previous inspection. The majority of lessons seen during the inspection were at least satisfactory, with a significant proportion of good teaching, and occasionally very good and outstanding lessons. Teaching is better in Years 7-10 than in Year 11. The teaching of English is good overall, but in mathematics and science, whilst there is good practice, there is still a minority of lessons in which teaching is unsatisfactory. Support for learning in literacy and numeracy, through the implementation of the national strategies, and for information and communication technology in the specific subject lessons, is good. In subjects across the curriculum, support for learning in literacy and numeracy is satisfactory, but the application of computer skills is underdeveloped. Whilst a significant majority of teaching is effective over time, there are shortcomings. Some learning is undermined by the unsatisfactory behaviour and the irregular attendance of a minority of pupils. It also occurs where teachers do not consistently implement the assertive behaviour policy and where teachers' expectations are not high enough. Pupils with special educational needs are supported very well through the effective work of the learning support staff. The individual learning needs of pupils are supported through the teaching sets in many subjects, but in a minority of lessons the different learning needs of pupils are not always well met.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum provides satisfactory breadth and balance. In Years 10-11, alternative arrangements are being effectively introduced to address pupils' differing needs. Extra-curricular activities are satisfactory.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision is good. Statutory requirements are met. Individual education plans are not always used effectively to plan appropriate work.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Unsatisfactory as not all subjects plan effectively to meet the needs of this very small minority of pupils.
Provision for pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	There is an effective personal and social education programme. Social and moral provision is satisfactory. The provision for pupils' spiritual and cultural development is unsatisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Most staff know and care about their pupils. Assessment procedures are good but their use is inconsistent.

The curriculum provides effectively for the needs of the pupils in Years 7- 9. In Years 10 and 11, opportunities for vocational education are being satisfactorily planned for and a minority of pupils already have alternative programmes which meet their needs. The provision for investigations in mathematics and science in Years 7-9 are underdeveloped. There is a good partnership between teachers and support staff for pupils with special educational needs. Statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship are not met. Procedures to promote good attendance are satisfactory. Most tutors provide their pupils with good support and guidance but a minority do not carry out their work effectively enough.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	Satisfactory. The headteacher has good vision and the educational direction he gives has initiated good improvement. At both senior and middle management levels, a minority of post holders are not managing with sufficient rigour.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are supportive of the school, but statutory responsibilities are not fully met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good analysis of test results is carried out and is used for target setting. The school analyses well for best value. It recognises that systems for assessment are not used to their full capacity to support the raising of standards.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are effectively used and the school is giving satisfactory value for money.

The headteacher provides good leadership and management, being well supported by the majority of staff. Recent appointments at both senior and middle management levels have strengthened the school's potential for further improvement. Management is satisfactory, with examples of very good and effective leadership at all levels, and for the literacy and numeracy strategies. The headteacher receives generally good support from senior staff, although some shortcomings in leadership and management are limiting the pace of change. In the quality and range of monitoring and evaluation, not all staff have the same levels of expectation. Governors are committed and involved but do not meet their responsibilities for ensuring that the statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship, and for health and safety, are met. In most subjects, there are sufficient experienced and qualified staff. However, when non-specialist staff have to teach, this lowers the standards being achieved in some subjects. Learning support staff function very well and administrative and general support staff make a very good contribution to the daily running of the school. Teaching accommodation is generally good with some recent new development, but both science and physical education facilities are unsatisfactory, as are social and dining facilities. Financial support to address the problems in science has been applied for. Resources are generally satisfactory and effectively used, although there are shortcomings in science, music, art and religious education.

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 quality of teaching. • The progress being achieved by their children. • The school has high expectations. • Pupils with special educational needs are well supported. • They can approach the school with questions or problems. • Pupils are encouraged to mature and become responsible. • School is effectively led and managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The standards of behaviour. • The quality of homework. • Extra-curricular activities. • Information on pupils' progress. • The way that the school works with them.

Only a minority of parents attended the pre-inspection meeting, but there was a good return to the questionnaire. Inspection evidence generally supports all of the points that please parents and carers most. Whilst expectations are generally sound, there are some shortcomings in teaching. Inspectors agree that standards of behaviour and the consistent pattern for homework require improvement. Inspection evidence shows that extra-curricular activities are satisfactory. The school complies with statutory requirements on information relating to pupils' progress and that reports are satisfactory. The school does try to ensure that relationships with parents are effective.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Pupils' attainment on entry into Year 7 covers a wide range, although in the last two years there have been more pupils who have achieved average and above average standards for their ages. A significant minority of pupils join the school at a variety of times, some of whom have underachieved at their previous schools. Overall, about a third of pupils are identified as having learning difficulties. Only two pupils have English as an additional language. This background has had a significant effect on results in National Curriculum tests and GCSE results in recent years, but inspection evidence clearly shows that the large majority of pupils make good progress and achieve well. Analysis of assessment and examination data shows that many of the pupils who have attended the school throughout their education benefit from the progress they make and that their achievement shows good added value. These pupils have positive attitudes towards their learning and significantly improve upon their prior attainment. Unfortunately, a minority of pupils do not gain from their opportunities because of their unsatisfactory attendance and attitudes. They underachieve and have a detrimental effect on the school's results overall.
2. Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 for 2001 in terms of the average points score were above average in English but below average in mathematics and science. In English, results were again above average at the higher level, close to it in science but below average in mathematics. This indicates that pupils of higher attainment can achieve and do achieve well with effective teaching. In comparison with similar schools, English does very well in comparison to mathematics and science. When taking all three subjects together, the average points score was close to the average for all schools and above average for similar schools. Girls perform better than boys. The trend in the school's results is improving at a rate better than the average trend nationally.
3. GCSE results for pupils aged 16 have been below the national average for the last three years and were well below in 2001. The proportion of pupils gaining 5 A*-C grades in 2001 was well below the national average, and was below the national average for those pupils achieving 5 A*-G. The proportion of pupils gaining 1 A*-G grade was average. Many of the pupils in the 2001 Year 11 cohort had low prior attainment and a high proportion of pupils were identified with special educational needs. There was a high absence rate and a significant number of boys did not fulfil their potential. Targets set for the percentage of pupils reaching the national average at GCSE were not met. In comparison with similar schools, the results were average for the overall points score. The trend in examination results over the last three years is positive and shows improvement in line with that found nationally in all schools. Taking into account pupils' prior attainment on entry, the level of 5 A*-G grades is more appropriate than 5 A*-C grades. On the basis of this inspection, it is clear that there is underachievement in Year 11, but better attainment is being achieved, especially in Years 7-9 and in Year 10, a reflection of the changing culture of the school. Consequently, the evidence supports the inspection judgement that attainment is improving.
4. Standards from inspection evidence in Year 9 are average in all subjects except mathematics, art, music, physical education and religious education, where they are below average. In mathematics there is a continuing trend of improvement and in the majority of subjects pupils are beginning to achieve well. Achievement for the majority of pupils is good. By the age of 16, standards are less secure and it is only in drama, the physical education GCSE course and information and communication technology where they are average, being below average elsewhere. Achievement in Year 10 is sound but in Year 11 there is a significant minority of pupils who are underachieving. This reflects variation in the quality of teaching, brought about in some cases by significant changes in staff in previous years which affected prior learning and by the attitudes and attendance of these pupils. Taking account of the better levels of achievement in Years 7-9, more secure staffing and improved accommodation, the potential exists for higher standards in the future.

5. Pupils' skills in reading and writing by the age of 14 are average. Higher attaining pupils are able to read a variety of different kinds of text for different purposes and extract and synthesise information from what they read. Lower attaining pupils read with less assurance but can usually interpret what they read in a straightforward way. Pupils speak quite confidently in informal situations. They join in discussions quite enthusiastically and put forward their points of view effectively. In more formal conditions they are more reticent, and although higher attaining pupils still express their ideas successfully in such circumstances, others are sometimes reluctant to develop their points and rely on a rather narrow range of vocabulary. Some subjects actively promote different writing skills, such as the development of essay writing, note-taking, articles and creative writing. The art and geography departments, in particular, use writing frames to enable pupils to structure what they write and there is an appropriate emphasis on the correct use of technical vocabulary in modern foreign languages, music and design and technology.
6. Provision for numeracy across the curriculum is satisfactory overall, although standards are below average. In science and modern foreign languages, pupils plot and interpret graphs satisfactorily and in geography a range of graphs, including bar charts, line graphs and pie charts are usually used effectively. However, pupils inappropriately use bar charts instead of line graphs to show climate. In information and communication technology, numeracy skills are sufficient to enable pupils to derive formulae for spreadsheets, to use scale in computer graphics and to calculate angles. Pupils measure lengths accurately using computer aided design. However, there are weaknesses in design and technology. In both graphics and resistant materials, measuring is inaccurate and is not usually corrected by teachers and there was an instance of an unsatisfactory explanation by a teacher of how to halve numbers mentally. Numeracy is often not written into schemes of work across departments.
7. There was limited evidence of the use of computers across the curriculum. Most pupils have average standards in understanding programs and the use of computers. However, the planning in subjects limits the opportunity for pupils to learn appropriate applications, to see the relevance of computers and how they are likely to be useful to them in their future lives. The school has plans to extend the range of opportunity by producing a scheme of work which sets out just when and how information and communication technology will be taught in all subjects.
8. Pupils with special educational needs progress at least as well as other pupils when supported in class and achieve well when withdrawn for individual or group specialist support. Pupils who arrive with significant literacy difficulties make good progress in improving their reading and are enabled to learn successfully in most classes. Other pupils with a range of emotional or behavioural difficulties achieve well as a result of careful attention to their needs, particularly when taught as a small group in the Learning Support Centre or supported in specialist lessons. Pupils who follow an alternative course in Year 10 achieve well in learning about the world around them. The very small minority of pupils with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress but provision for them varies between subjects. The gifted and talented also make variable progress, reflecting the quality of teaching and challenge within different subjects.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

9. The majority of pupils who attend school regularly have positive attitudes. In the best lessons, pupils respond well to challenging work and show initiative. In these lessons, where the teaching is good, pupils are motivated, interested and responsive. For example, pupils in a Year 9 English lesson were very enthusiastic and involved in their work on a Shakespeare play. Pupils usually work satisfactorily in pairs and in groups, sharing resources well, for example, in information and communication technology lessons. Again, pupils in religious education enjoy and work well on social issues which support their personal development. Pupils in Years 7-9 make satisfactory progress as independent learners, sustaining interest and taking responsibility for their own learning. A significant minority of pupils, mainly in Year 11, do not respond sensibly, have poor attendance records and, when present, can be disruptive. The poor behaviour of this minority of disaffected pupils, and their lack of consideration for others, affect attitudes and, in some groups undermines the learning process.

These pupils need constant encouragement and, in some cases, firm guidance and instruction to continue to apply themselves to their work.

10. Standards of behaviour are satisfactory, overall. The large majority of pupils behave well in class, and understand the difference between right and wrong. At breaks and lunchtimes, behaviour is satisfactory, but is not helped by the basic quality of dining facilities and the lack of social areas. Some pupils make use of the library and computer facilities and do so sensibly, respecting their resources and environment. Most pupils are courteous and trustworthy and show respect for the school and other pupils' property. They respond well to visitors and willingly engage in conversation. They move around the school in an orderly fashion. A minority of pupils fail to behave in an appropriate manner. They play truant, smoke off-site or in the toilets, as well as being openly defiant to staff. Some pupils indicate that they do not like using the toilets because of the attitudes of some pupils.
11. Relationships between most pupils and adults working in the school are good. Most pupils relate positively to their form tutors and teachers and do feel that they can readily turn to them for assistance. There are instances when pupils' relationships are poor and, on such occasions, they can be aggressive towards each other and inconsiderate in their actions. There were 30 fixed period and two permanent exclusions, which involved 16 different pupils in the last year. Most pupils excluded were white boys, and a majority of these pupils joined the school after having been excluded from their previous school.
12. The majority of pupils respond positively to opportunities to exercise responsibility. For example, younger pupils undertake a duty rota of meeting visitors and helping with messages during the day. This supports their personal development, confidence and self-esteem. Pupils show initiative and maturity when carrying out duties and when representing the school. The personal, social and health education courses provide good opportunities for pupils to discuss issues and to carry out presentations.
13. Overall levels of attendance are satisfactory at an average of 90 per cent, and broadly in line with the national average for secondary schools. Unauthorised absence is also broadly in line with the national average. The low levels of attendance and truancy have affected the progress of a significant minority of older pupils. At the start of sessions, a minority of these pupils arrive late and throughout the day lack a sense of urgency or purpose as they move between lessons. Some arrive up to 10 minutes late, which affects the learning and progress of the whole class.
14. Overall, the positive attitudes and behaviour of the majority of pupils support their attainment, achievement and personal development. The behaviour of a minority has a detrimental effect on the ethos of the school but these are mainly older pupils and the large majority in Years 7-9 and in Year 10 show better standards. This augurs well for the future as the school continues to implement its improvement plans.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

15. Teaching has significantly improved since the last inspection. The majority of lessons seen during the inspection were at least satisfactory, with a significant proportion of good teaching, and occasionally very good and outstanding lessons. Over time, teaching is satisfactory, and the improvement is beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' learning. Teaching and learning are at least satisfactory in over nine out of ten lessons in Years 7 to 9. It is also satisfactory in Year 10 but is unsatisfactory in Year 11. In this year group, about two out of every ten lessons were unsatisfactory because of some pupils' attitudes and behaviour and elements of classroom management. The teaching strategies in Years 7-10 are generally effective, but a significant minority of older pupils are disaffected and, in particular, boys learn less well than girls. The teaching of English is good, but in mathematics and science there is still an element of unsatisfactory teaching. Teaching in discrete information and communication technology lessons is generally good, but in subject areas, the application of computer skills is underdeveloped although there are good examples of practice. Teaching and learning in literacy and numeracy are satisfactory. The implementation of the national strategies in Years 7-9 is being well managed.

The literacy strategy is effectively used across the curriculum and is leading to better standards but there is still insufficient emphasis as a whole school initiative in implementing numeracy.

16. Most teachers have a sound knowledge and understanding of their subject. This is clearest in lessons in Years 7 to 9, where teachers of English, art, music and physical education, for example, use their subject knowledge well to enhance pupils' learning. A particularly good instance of the impact of this was also seen in a Year 11 drama lesson, where the teacher used her strong subject knowledge to prepare pupils for examination requirements in a very targeted way. The pupils responded with extremely positive attitudes and achieved excellent gains in learning.
17. Teachers' planning of lessons is satisfactory overall. Aims and objectives for lessons are usually clearly set out to focus the pupils' learning, and most lessons end with some kind of review or plenary. For example, a Year 11 English class were seen making very good gains in learning about a Ted Hughes poem because the teacher structured the tasks very well, including an excellent plenary and final discussion of their findings that caught pupils' imagination and generated a very creative response to the poem. A French lesson with Year 10 pupils was very good because of the way the teacher incorporated all the attainment targets for the subject into the lesson by planning demanding tasks.
18. Good lessons are also characterised by pace and challenge. An excellent science lesson with a Year 7 class was notable in this respect; pupils enjoyed making hydrogen and achieved excellent learning because of the level of challenge built into the lesson. Where teachers have high expectations, pupils learn well. Again, this is more noticeable in Years 7 to 9, although the better lessons in Years 10 and 11 also have this characteristic.
19. Teachers use a range of teaching methods, which prove to be satisfactory overall. Good use is made by some teachers of paired or group work: the latter worked very well in a Year 10 geography lesson, where pupils researched aspects of the Ruhr industrial area; groups were not static but pupils moved between groups as 'envoys' to share information discovered, with very good learning being achieved as a result. A Year 10 English teacher helped a lower attaining class to get to the heart of a difficult speech in *Romeo and Juliet* by setting them an imaginative task: they 'edited' the speech by choosing one word from each line that, when listed with the others in sequence, summed up the passage well. Many teachers use questioning well and assess pupils' learning effectively whilst they teach, but there are occasions when this is less well done. In a Year 11 science lesson, the questions were just not probing enough. In some lessons, the work set does not meet the differing needs of pupils. Teachers too often rely on the fact that most classes are set according to prior attainment, and even within the sets there are groups of pupils who need either to be stretched more or given extra support. Homework is used satisfactorily to further opportunities for learning.
20. The biggest single factor that contributes to effective learning is the way in which pupils are managed by the teachers. Where teachers do not control pupils' behaviour well, the lessons fail to have a positive impact. Poor learning took place in a Year 9 art lesson where pupils were allowed to behave in an unacceptable way. Time was wasted through noisy and disruptive behaviour, insufficiently controlled by the teacher. A Year 10 mathematics lesson resulted in excellent learning because the teacher instilled a real 'work ethic' in the class; pupils showed real enjoyment in discovering more about angles because of outstanding teaching. Where relationships are good, learning is effective. This was seen in a Year 7 physical education lesson where the teacher had an excellent rapport with his pupils. They learned effectively about passing a rugby ball in spite of the wintry conditions they were working in, because of the teacher's good humour and shrewd choice of strategies for learning. His energy and enthusiasm were clearly shared by the pupils, who benefited from the pace and demands he was able to make on them because of the good relationship they had. The lack of this kind of rapport, in some other lessons, has an adverse impact on learning. Pupils at this school work best when they feel they can trust the teacher to challenge them to do well.
21. Teaching in classes containing pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. Teachers are generally well aware of individual needs and make appropriate arrangements to accommodate and address them.

At times, as in information and communication technology, paired working is successfully used to support pupils with literacy difficulties. Teachers have a positive approach to managing pupils through good relationships so that where pupils exhibit behavioural difficulties, these are generally well dealt with. Effective deployment and briefing of in-class support assistants ensure that teaching is significantly enhanced by their contribution so that it is good at times and very good on occasion. However, there is some inconsistency between classes and across subjects in the extent to which special needs are met and this results in some unsatisfactory teaching. At these times, pupils do not learn as well as they should either because there is insufficient targeted planning which has taken notice of individual education plans, or there is a lack of support and the general behaviour in class deteriorates. As at the last inspection, teaching is good overall when pupils are withdrawn individually or grouped for specialist support from teachers or teaching assistants. Careful planning and individually targeted work that draws very effectively on previous assessment and knowledge of how pupils learn enable pupils to learn confidently and well. For some pupils with special educational needs, high levels of absence detract from the longer-term progress they make. In general, teachers make sound use of time, resources and support staff. Pupils with special educational needs are well catered for so that their learning is at least as good as that of other pupils; in Years 10 and 11, they learn better than most. The very small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language do not, however, learn well, as teaching is not sufficiently adapted to addressing their needs.

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

22. The curriculum has appropriate breadth and balance for all year groups. This includes a range of option choices in Years 10 and 11. The coverage of the programmes of study limits pupils' learning opportunities. In mathematics and science, investigations are underdeveloped, and in subjects across the curriculum the use of information and communication technology is underdeveloped. Overall the curriculum is inclusive in that there is equality of access and opportunity although there is scope for further developments. In Years 10 and 11, there are some extended work placements to meet the needs of a minority of disaffected pupils and opportunities are being planned for an alternative curriculum for these pupils. Arrangements for teaching the curriculum through sets also enhance pupils' learning opportunities.
23. The curriculum provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. There is an appropriate balance between in-class support and withdrawal and the curriculum offered to pupils with statements is a good match to that specified in their targets. Setting is effectively used to provide work which is matched to needs, and teaching assistants provide good support. Individual education plans are used effectively to provide broad individual targets to inform subject teachers of the needs of pupils. The learning support centre provides a good curriculum for pupils unable to make effective use of mainstream classes and there is a good alternative for pupils in Year 10 who do not take a modern foreign language. Pupils gain enhanced self-esteem through a sense of being valued by support staff and the success they achieve in reading. Experience of working with pupils from a special school contributes well to the social development of older pupils and helps them to develop empathy. Even so, the quality of teaching and support in some mainstream classes does not fully meet needs and individual education plans are not always used effectively. Support for gifted and talented pupils is satisfactory. There are examples where they are very well challenged but also instances where they are not challenged consistently and sufficiently.
24. Provision for literacy and numeracy is being enhanced by the implementation of the Key Stage 3 national strategies. The school has looked at ways to develop literacy across the curriculum, and all staff have had training to implement the literacy strategy in Years 7, 8 and 9. The school is currently focussing on promoting literacy skills in Year 7, and the Literacy Co-ordinator and the school's external consultant have been well supported by senior management in putting together a variety of elements in this strategy. The work of the literacy coordinator and her team has been recognised and they have been invited by the local education authority to become a lead department to share their good practice. A target group of Year 7 pupils attend literacy Progress Units to improve their skills. These are taken by classroom assistants, well supported by the Literacy Co-ordinator. This provision is currently satisfactory.

The school is aware that if it were able to timetable the sessions so that they were shorter and took place more frequently, then progress is likely to be more rapid. The school has recommended procedures for all teachers to follow, such as the display of specialist key words in classrooms and the emphasis on writing for different purposes in different styles. Whilst there are subjects which are making a good contribution, standards would rise further if all teachers promoted literacy skills in the same ways.

25. There has been an effective start to implementing the National Numeracy Strategy in Year 7. The numeracy co-ordinator has been in post for just over a year and has been the driving force behind this initiative. She has shown good leadership and outstanding commitment to the project and has worked extremely hard to encourage colleagues in the mathematics department to do the same, often in their own time. The co-ordinator has downloaded good quality plans from the Internet and, with good support from her colleagues, has adapted these in the spirit of the Framework for teaching mathematics to produce schemes of work suitable for this school. Apart from the initial training provided by the local education authority, arrangements have been made for mathematics teachers in the school to observe leading teachers of mathematics in primary and secondary schools in order to promote consistently better teaching. Very good resources, including whiteboards for individual pupils, overhead projectors, dice, cards and counters as well as computer software, have been purchased. Whilst these resources are used very effectively by some teachers, the quality of practice is not consistently high within the mathematics department, despite considerable improvement in planning.
26. Planning for the initiative has sensibly had a different focus in each half-term of the current year. For example, the previous half-term's focus was starter activities, currently it is plenary sessions and in the summer term will focus firstly on key vocabulary, then sharing good practice by observation and team teaching. Senior management has shown its support by allowing the department time in the summer term of 2001 to prepare schemes after initial training. There is a commitment to two twilight sessions in the current academic year to support numeracy across the curriculum and the training of support assistants to allow for extra support in the next school year. As a Phase 1 school for the initiative, the school will continue to receive regular support from the mathematics consultant of the local education authority. With this support, and the improving leadership of the numeracy co-ordinator, the potential exists to further improve standards of numeracy and mathematics in its widest context throughout the school.
27. Extra-curricular activities are satisfactory. There is a range of sporting activities, including competitive fixtures with other schools, but these are not as well supported by pupils as the school would like them to be. Pupils are encouraged to join local sports clubs and relationships with the latter allow pupils to develop their interests and gain representation at a higher level. Clubs operate, and pupils take good advantage of the access to computers outside of the classroom, and also through their attendance at booster classes. There is a range of visits to theatres and places of cultural interest, such as trips to the European continent, as well as a residential outdoor activities week for Year 8 pupils. School performances and opportunities within music are well supported. The programme for personal, social and health education is good. It effectively covers matters relating to sex, alcohol and drug abuse, smoking and personal development. Good opportunities exist for visiting speakers from support agencies, including the police, to work with pupils in a designated lesson. Pupils are well informed about option choices in Year 9 and the careers programme in Years 10 and 11 provides pupils with a good range of information, for both continuing education at other institutions and for immediate access to the workplace. Good links exist with the community, which is used as a learning resource and for opportunities for work and personal development. Many organisations are very supportive of the school. Links with partner institutions are good, including primary schools and post-16 institutions, both of which contribute to the continuity and progression in pupils' learning.
28. The overall provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in the school is unsatisfactory. Provision for social development is good, for moral development, sound, but unsatisfactory for spiritual and cultural development. Good practice occurs in the provision for spiritual development, but opportunities are missed in assemblies, in tutorial time, in lessons and across the life of the school because the provision is not coordinated. The school does not comply with the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship.

Where assemblies are held, opportunities are missed to explore spiritual themes, as seen, for example, in a talk about Australian aboriginal beliefs. The relationship between nature and spirit drew conclusions no deeper than the importance of not dropping litter. The weekly themes are not covered adequately in tutorial periods. Spirituality – the development of values and beliefs and a sense of awe and wonder – is not consistently developed across the curriculum. Good practice occurs in English, where texts such as *Macbeth* explore the supernatural and the nature of tragedy, and in drama, where pupils were seen exploring how we react to fear. In religious education, the nature of personal sacrifice was investigated with a Year 8 class, and the beliefs of all the major world faiths are studied. In art, the work of various artists is studied with reference to religious topics in their culture; pupils are encouraged to comment on any spiritual message. However, in other subjects this work is underdeveloped.

29. Good practice occurs in moral development in art lessons through the study of surrealism, with an emphasis on moral themes. English lessons include a wide range of moral issues studied via texts or in topics, such as responses to terrorist acts, that provides the basis for written work. Religious education lessons include discussions on forgiveness and social justice. In history and personal education lessons, moral issues are discussed, but there are missed opportunities, too. There is very good provision in personal and social education, with detailed schemes of work; visiting speakers make valuable contributions to the personal development of pupils. The code of conduct for behaviour is not always applied and, linked with shortcomings in spiritual issues, lowers the positive effect of the moral development.
30. In many lessons, pupils work well in pairs or small groups. This occurs in personal and social education, modern foreign languages, English, drama, religious education and art, but in some subjects such opportunities are missed, as, for example, in mathematics. Opportunities occur in extra-curricular activities, such as music and physical education, when pupils appreciate the chance to participate in choirs, bands and teams, socialising well together. A school council has recently been created, and there are opportunities for pupils to serve as prefects.
31. The study of world faiths in religious education and the prescribed multi-cultural anthology pieces in GCSE English contribute effectively to cultural awareness amongst pupils. There are established links with a school in Swaziland, and some African art and craft is studied in art, along with a detailed study of major European artists. A limited coverage of music of other cultures occurs, and displays in mathematics include charts of famous mathematicians from various countries and cultures. Western culture is better represented, for instance in the annual Year 7 visits to France and in the opportunity for pupils to correspond with pen-friends in France and Germany. The British cultural heritage from *Beowulf* onwards is well catered for in English, with Shakespeare being particularly well treated. The music department participates in concerts with the wider community, including a joint project with local feeder primary schools and the Halle Orchestra. Pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to study non-European cultures and fully appreciate how culture affects life styles and is a feature of our diverse society.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

32. The overall quality of care is good. Pupils are well known. The provision for their personal development has some strong features. Assessment procedures and the support for pupils with learning difficulties are good, and well improved since the last inspection. Child protection and general welfare arrangements are satisfactory, but procedures for monitoring attendance and elements of health and safety have some shortcomings.

Assessment

33. The procedures for assessment have shown significant improvement since the last inspection. There is now very good analysis of data which includes National Curriculum tests results, results from a wide range of alternative testing systems, which are nationally recognised, and GCSE results. Assessment is also linked to the monitoring of teaching and learning. This data is being well used to set and review targets for departments and for individual pupils. On a day-to-day basis there are good systems for termly formal assessments and the annual reports to parents

on pupils' standards and progress. The 'Trackmaster' system has been introduced into Years 10 and 11 to facilitate the monitoring of targets.

Where the procedures have shortcomings, there is inconsistency in their use to further inform lesson planning so that work set meets the differing needs of pupils consistently. This inconsistency is also reflected in the quality of marking which varies from some providing exemplary support for pupils to some which is cursory and uninformative. Where marking is good, it has helpful comments to show how work might be improved. Overall, the procedures for the monitoring of pupils' academic progress are good, but where tutors and teachers do not fully implement the agreed strategies, then the provision loses its impact.

34. Procedures for assessing special educational needs and monitoring the progress of identified pupils are good. The school maintains an effective special needs register, although the system by which pupils are included on entry leads to some inconsistency from year to year. Annual reviews of statements are regularly carried out and supported by advice from parents and external support agencies as well as from staff within the school. The development of individual pupils' reading skills is monitored through the setting of specific and measurable targets by learning support teachers who communicate this information well to other support staff. Progress of pupils at all stages on the register is monitored, so that pupils are added to or removed from the register as needs change.

Advice, support and guidance

35. The procedures for monitoring pupils' personal development are good. Pupils are well known and support and guidance are well linked to the work on assessment. This information helps pupils to know how they are doing and this raises their confidence and self-esteem. Where tutorial practice and teaching are good, pupils report that they feel well supported and can turn to the staff for advice and guidance. The arrangements for personal, social and health education also serve this provision well. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are well monitored and effective action is taken through rewards and sanctions which are generally well applied, although there is some inconsistency, as shown in the quality of teaching and in the roles of tutors. Staff with whole school pastoral responsibility operate well and monitor their pupils effectively. There is appropriate use of exclusions for anti-social behaviour and the procedures for eliminating oppressive behaviour are satisfactory. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance have shortcomings. Whilst pastoral section leaders monitor attendance, the daily administration does not generate information quickly enough, or fully utilise the systems to ascertain patterns of attendance. but new initiatives are planned to address these issues.
36. Since the last inspection, the school has addressed the shortcomings, and very good support is now provided for pupils on the special educational needs register, especially those with emotional and social difficulties. There is better sharing of targets in individual education plans, the level of support to pupils has increased and the development of the Learning Support Centre has taken place. Preparation for the admission of statemented pupils is well managed to ensure that teachers are well briefed and good relationships with primary schools ensure that good quality information is transmitted about pupils with lower levels of need. This is achieved through the behaviour support structure and the availability of confidential counselling for pupils who feel they would be helped by it. There is good support and guidance for pupils with sensory impairment, including specific training for support staff and access to external specialist services. The use of computer technology has been extended to include the use of Global independent learning systems. Overall improvement has been good and the school has identified areas for future development, including a more detailed response to the new Code of Practice, introducing more measurable targets in individual education plans, and establishing clear staff links with each subject department to ensure a more consistent and informed response.
37. Links with outside agencies for personal and social support are good, including contributions to the personal, health and social education programme. There are also good links with the local education authority staff on a wide range of matters including assessment techniques and curriculum initiatives. Arrangements for child protection, first aid and health and safety are satisfactory overall. There is a designated child protection officer and appropriate training has been undertaken.

There is a health and safety policy adopted by the governors and arrangements are broadly satisfactory, although there are issues in design and technology and physical education which require urgent attention. These include the markings around machinery in workshops and the facilities for showering after sports sessions.

38. Advice, support and guidance for pupils as they move through the school are effective. There is effective literature for pupils and parents for the choice of subjects in Years 10 and 11. Good consultation arrangements exist to ensure that pupils make appropriate choices, although there have been some constraints in choice, as illustrated by some pupils currently taking geography. The opportunity to take alternative courses and examinations, for example, Certificate of Achievement and ASDAN is good support. Governors have adopted appropriate policies for personal development and the provision within personal, health and social education lessons, and through subjects such as science, ensures that issues are effectively covered. Careers advice is effectively covered through specific modules, with additional support from the community and careers agencies. It also includes good links with post-16 providers for those pupils who wish to continue in education.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS AND CARERS?

39. The provision for the partnership with parents is good and overall partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Only a small minority of parents and carers attended the pre-inspection meeting but about a third of them returned the questionnaire. Overall, these parents and carers expressed positive views about the school, recognising the improvements which were taking place and they felt that they could approach the school to discuss issues. Many feel that their sons and daughters are achieving well in relation to their prior attainment. They feel that the school has good expectations and teaching is generally good, yet recognising some shortcomings. Some expressed concerns about behaviour and this affected how well their children enjoyed school. They also expressed concerns about the quality of homework. Inspection evidence confirms these concerns, although homework is broadly satisfactory. They also would like to see a greater range of activities outside lessons although inspectors' judgements are that is satisfactory but not always well supported by pupils. Parents and carers were generally pleased that the school helps their children to mature and become responsible. Some parents and carers feel that the school does not work closely enough with them, but the large majority feel that it is well managed and led.
40. There is an effective partnership between the school and the parents and carers of pupils with special educational needs, who speak highly of its work for their children. Parents are appropriately involved in annual reviews and are kept informed of progress leading to changes in targets or support plans. The school works very closely and successfully with outside agencies to support pupils and their parents. The general school prospectus and the governors' annual report provide parents with appropriate information and pupils' reports fulfil requirements. The roles of parents are encouraged prior to pupils entering the school through links with primary schools. There are consultation evenings for all year groups, and occasions when additional meetings provide information, for example, about how parents can help their children to learn. The home/school agreement policy is implemented and most parents sign it. Inspection evidence shows that a minority of parents are not fully supportive of the school in relation to pupils' attendance and behaviour.
41. There is an effective parent-teacher association which provides valuable support through resources, events and mock interviews. To support parents further, the school in partnership with the local education authority is about to pilot a parent support group with reference to parenting skills.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Leadership and management

42. The school has appropriate aims and these are being increasingly met as it improves and strives to meet the personal and academic needs of its pupils. The headteacher provides good leadership and management and he has initiated good improvement since the last inspection. He has a clear vision for the school and has done much to raise its profile through improved National Curriculum test results and in the quality of accommodation. There have also been significant changes in staffing since the last inspection in both senior and middle management posts and in the teaching staff in general. These changes have helped improvement to be made but there is still work to be done. For example, there is still inconsistency in the manner in which some senior and middle managers, in both subject and pastoral roles, carry out their work. Overall, the rigour and efficiency of implementing, monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning and whole-school initiatives are not sufficiently consistent. Teachers' expectations are not always high enough and this leads to differences in standards and outcomes. This is partly recognised by senior staff but is not always challenged to ensure that pupils understand the expectations they have to meet. Consequently, this has a negative impact on the quality of work and behaviour. Some teaching staff find that this undermines their work and the quality of education which they can achieve.
43. The management of special educational needs, which are experienced by nearly one-third of all pupils in the school, is a significant strength. There is a high level of commitment and senior management takes a leading role in promoting this. Management of pupils with learning difficulties by the learning support co-coordinator is very effective and delegated responsibilities are well monitored. This includes supervision of the work of teaching assistants and monitoring of behavioural targets via the behaviour support co-coordinator and Heads of Section.
44. Governors play a good role in the overall life of the school. They operate through appropriate meeting schedules and committees. They are well informed by regular reports in their decision making and in monitoring. Involvement in school improvement planning through partnership with the headteacher and senior staff is good. The improvement plan, linked with the plan for raising achievement, is well structured and sets the focus which is being followed for changing the learning and achievement culture. The improvement plan is strategic but it is affected by financial constraints. Governors operate well as critical friends to the staff but they do not fulfill their statutory duties with regard for a daily act of collective worship and in respect of some health and safety matters. Governors have a good involvement in financial planning. Since the last inspection there has been significant progress in reducing a large budget deficit and this illustrates the efficiency with which the headteacher has managed the school and the budget. Good prudent work has enabled buildings to be refurbished and new facilities built but have reduced the money available for resources. There is still a deficit but current planning is good and has the potential to rectify the issues in the next financial year. Dedicated and special funding is well monitored and appropriately spent. Taking into account the improving provision, standards being achieved, improvement in teaching, but recognizing the key issues which have to be addressed, the school gives satisfactory value for money.
45. The school was last inspected in 1997. The overall improvement has been satisfactory. Standards have risen, but there are still inconsistencies between subjects. Significant improvement has been made in results in national tests in Year 9. The quality of teaching has improved and there is now more very good and good teaching and less unsatisfactory teaching than at the last inspection. The improvement in the provision for pupils with special educational needs has been good. The requirements for physical education are now met. Good progress has been made in improving the quality of accommodation, although there are still issues in physical education. Improvement has been unsatisfactory in ensuring that there is a daily act of collective worship for all pupils, and in the overall provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and in the use of tutorial time. A range of strategies has recently been introduced to try and improve further pupils' behaviour and their attendance, but there has been insufficient time to make a positive impact. The approaches to planning have shown satisfactory improvement. Resources for information and communication technology have shown very good improvement but its use across the curriculum is underdeveloped.

Recent changes to the senior management team have strengthened management but without careful monitoring and evaluation of action plans the potential for further improvement is limited.

Resources

46. The experience and expertise of the staff are broadly satisfactory. Recruitment has posed some problems, as is the case nationally, leading to some non-specialist teaching. Many staff have good expectations including those who are recently qualified. The procedures for induction and support are good and this is also reflected in the overall staff development process. Many training opportunities are designed to support initiatives in curriculum development and in teaching and learning. Performance management is developing effectively with appropriate target setting. The work of learning support staff is good and in many instances they form good partnerships with teachers, although there is some inconsistency. This occurs when the planning does not include the learning staff so that they can maximise their roles. All teaching assistants have been trained.
47. The accommodation is broadly satisfactory for the curriculum but unsatisfactory for pupils' needs. The opening of a new technology block has greatly enhanced facilities. The library is an effective centre and many subjects are now grouped in adjacent classrooms, which aid communication, with displays for learning. Special educational needs has two well-appointed specialist teaching rooms in the centre of the school that reflect its overall status. There are shortcomings in the quality of the fabric and, in some areas, the buildings are worn. Windows need to be replaced, and in some parts, corridors and stairs are very narrow, making movement difficult. The facilities for dining are very poor and there are no social areas for pupils to meet in. The buildings are well spread out and in wet weather this presents problems when moving between blocks. In physical education there is a health risk because the showers malfunction.
48. Learning resources are satisfactory overall. The ratio of computers to pupils has been well improved. Resources for special educational needs are sufficient and well managed with good additions of computer technology to support learning. The library offers access to computers and a good number of books although some texts are old and information is out of date. There are specific shortfalls in science, art, music and religious education. Overall, satisfactory use is made of resources available except for computers and in several subjects this inhibits the development of skills and learning.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

The governors, headteacher and staff now need to ensure that the overall management and leadership continue to give impetus to improvement by:

- i. raising the quality of teaching, learning and achievement, particularly for boys and for GCSE in Years 10 and 11, by improving the consistent practice of senior and middle managers so that they:
 - ensure that there is rigorous and effective monitoring and evaluation of lessons and tutorial practice;
 - consistently manage and support the implementation of whole-school policies;
 - address the issues to improve standards of behaviour; and
 - raise levels of attendance.
(Paragraphs 1-5, 9, 13, 19, 21, 23, 25, 32, 35, 40, 42, 45,46, 52, 55, 56, 61-63, 65, 70, 71, 73, 79, 81, 88, 91, 99, 105, 106, 115, 126, 134)
- ii. improving the:
 - teaching and learning through the development of investigative skills in mathematics and science; (Paragraphs 8, 15, 59)
 - use of information and communication technology across the curriculum; (Paragraphs 4, 6, 15, 22, 45, 65, 70, 72, 74, 81, 82, 84, 85, 90, 109-116, 124, 128)spiritual and multi-cultural provision throughout the school. (Paragraphs 28, 31, 45, 72, 79, 90)

iii.

- ensuring that the assessment procedures inform target setting, are consistently and robustly implemented and contribute to raising standards across the school.
(Paragraphs 33, 73, 80, 95, 106, 108, 115, 126, 128, 135, 140)

iv.

- ensure that the statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship and for health and safety are met.
(Paragraphs 32, 47, 91)

Other issues which warrant consideration are the following:

- provision for the minority of pupils with English as an additional language;
- improve the consistency of marking;
- continue to seek ways to improve the quality of accommodation.
(Paragraphs 8, 33, 45, 47, 73, 74, 89, 106, 135)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7-11	124
	Sixth form	n/a
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		34

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7-11							
Number	4	14	48	47	9	1	0
Percentage	3.2	11	39	38	7	0.8	0

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	643	N/a
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	116	N/a

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	38	N/a
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	218	N/a

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	38
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	35

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	10.05
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.7
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	67	71	138

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	33	37	38
	Girls	60	47	41
	Total	93	84	79
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	67 (53)	61 (62)	57 (59)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	40 (20)	31 (28)	26 (20)
	National	31 (28)	43 (52)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	23	37	27
	Girls	43	47	35
	Total	66	84	62
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	48 (52)	61 (66)	45 (53)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	25 (23)	33 (31)	20 (23)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	68	42	110

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	9	56	66
	Girls	11	37	41
	Total	20	93	107
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	18 (25)	85 (92)	97 (96)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	29.0
	National	39.0

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

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	3
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	1
Indian	5
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	3
White	629
Any other minority ethnic group	1

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	30	2
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	40.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.2

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	17
Total aggregate hours worked per week	311

Deployment of teachers: Y7– Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78.5
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Average teaching group size: Y7– Y11

Key Stage 2	n/a
Key Stage 3	24
Key Stage 4	22

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001
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	£
Total income	1792291
Total expenditure	1748238
Expenditure per pupil	2929
Balance brought forward from previous year	-47004
Balance carried forward to next year	-2991

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	21
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	21

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	652
Number of questionnaires returned	249

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	23	57	14	4	1
My child is making good progress in school.	36	49	10	4	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	20	53	15	4	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	18	50	21	9	1
The teaching is good.	24	58	8	5	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	26	47	18	8	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	51	44	2	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	51	38	4	3	3
The school works closely with parents.	26	43	20	6	4
The school is well led and managed.	31	47	10	4	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	23	57	11	4	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	15	45	15	9	16

Only a minority of parents attended the pre-inspection meeting but there was a good return to the questionnaire. Inspection evidence generally supports all of the points that please parents and carers most. Whilst expectations are generally sound there are some shortcomings in teaching. Inspectors agree that standards of behaviour and the consistent pattern for homework require improvement. Inspection evidence shows that extra-curricular activities are satisfactory and that the school complies with statutory requirements on information relating to pupils' progress and that reports are satisfactory. Evidence indicates that the school does try to ensure that relationships with parents are effective.

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Standards are rising and the focus on developing pupils' literacy skills is having a significant impact.
- Teaching is good.
- Pupils' work is helpfully marked showing how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

Areas for improvement

- Raise achievement in Years 10 and 11 by improving teaching even further.
- Provide consistent opportunities for pupils to use computers to help them learn.
- Ensure that the needs of pupils with English as an additional language are met, even though they are a very small minority.

49. In the National Curriculum tests for 14-year olds in 2001, results were above average, and well above results in similar schools. They were better in English than in mathematics and science. The results in 2001 were much better than those in 2000, which was a year in which a number of classes had to be taught by supply staff. 2001 saw the reverse of a declining trend over time. When pupils come into the school their attainment levels in English are below average, and they achieve well during their first three years. Girls achieve better than boys, and the attainment gap between boys and girls is considerably wider than that found nationally. GCSE results in English in 2001 were well below average. They were over 10 per cent lower than in 2000. Pupils did better in English literature than in English. Results have fluctuated over time. Girls achieve better than boys, by a wider margin than that found nationally. When compared with pupils' prior attainment, these results in both English and literature represent satisfactory achievement in Years 10 and 11.
50. Standards of work seen by 14-year-olds during the inspection were in line with the national average. Higher attaining pupils by the end of Year 9 write detailed, technically accurate pieces. They can adapt their writing effectively for different situations and readers and they learn to do this from Year 7. For example, a good range of writing was seen in Year 7 folders which included autobiographical writing, poetry and imaginative stories, and extended, confident writing on the subject of animal testing by a Year 9 pupil was seen. The skills of literary analysis are well and carefully taught. Lower attaining pupils develop their skills in writing for different readers and purposes, although their writing lacks detail and, sometimes, technical accuracy. They can make straightforward judgements about writers' intentions. Higher attaining pupils can express their ideas confidently when speaking in different situations and they use varied vocabulary. Lower attaining pupils lack confidence in expressing their views, particularly in more formal circumstances.
51. Inspection evidence shows that standards are generally below average in Year 11, reflecting the large proportion of lower attaining pupils. Some pupils, in both Years 10 and 11 are, however, on target to attain the highest grades and they learn how to employ skills of literary analysis skilfully, and write extended pieces accurately, in a lively and imaginative way. They can use textual quotations well and they clearly enjoy studying literature. Some interesting essays on Priestley's *'An Inspector Calls'* were seen in which pupils were able to see below the surface and discern Priestley's intentions. They quoted well from the play to back up their ideas. Middle-attaining pupils generally write accurately and use a good range of vocabulary appropriately. Some work on *'The Crucible'* by Arthur Miller showed that they had a straightforward understanding of character and plot. Lower-attaining pupils write less detailed pieces and tend to 'tell the story' rather than analyse its features.

Pupils' speaking in formal situations is less developed than would be expected nationally overall, although higher attaining pupils express their views clearly and confidently and can adapt their speaking for different situations and audiences successfully. Pupils with special educational needs make progress in line with others, from entering the school until they are 16. There are currently two pupils in the school who are at an early stage of learning English. Provision for them in the subject is unsatisfactory.

52. Teaching and learning throughout the school are good. During the inspection, two thirds of lessons seen were good or better. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. When lessons are good or very good, teachers plan for a variety of tasks and activities and the pace is brisk, maximising use of available time. In one very good lesson in Year 9 pupils working on '*Twelfth Night*' in preparation for the National Curriculum tests learnt a lot about plot and characterisation because the level of challenge was appropriately high. The pace of the lesson was energetic and purposeful and the lesson was planned to include a range of tasks to keep pupils motivated and on task. In a Year 10 lesson on '*Romeo and Juliet*', the teacher's very good class control, together with imaginative lesson planning and good pace, enabled very good learning to take place. Where teaching is satisfactory, lessons lack pace and impact. Teachers allocate too much time to some activities, which results in groups of pupils, particularly the higher attainers, not being challenged to think and work as hard as they could. Lessons also lack a sense of energy and vitality.
53. Pupils have good attitudes in lessons and behave well. On the whole, they enjoy the subject and are keen to do well. They volunteer answers to questions, and when they get the opportunity they collaborate effectively in pairs, groups and as a whole class. For example, in a Year 7 lesson, pupils were learning about how to extract information from indexes and leaflets. There were very good relationships among the pupils and with the teacher, and positive attitudes resulted in a spirit of shared endeavour that helped learning in the lesson to be good.
54. The department uses performance data to assess how both individuals and groups of pupils achieve. Teachers mark pupils' work thoroughly giving helpful development points and recognising good work. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 usually know what National Curriculum level they are currently working at, as indeed pupils in Years 10 and 11 know which GCSE grades they are aiming for, their current performance level, and targets for improvement. The department has rewritten the schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 in the light of the requirements of the literacy strategy. These are detailed and helpful and provide good guidelines for teaching knowledge and skills. Pupils are introduced to linguistic and literary analysis effectively. Although the department does encourage the use of computers in learning, particularly as a tool for redrafting work and for research purposes, practice is currently inconsistent and that aspect of the National Curriculum is not met in full. Pupils are introduced to literary texts from other cultures as required by the GCSE syllabus, but there is room for developing this further and for drawing out particular issues with a spiritual dimension in lessons.
55. Accommodation for teaching English is satisfactory overall. Although several of the English classrooms are good, with plenty of space to enable group work and other active learning methods, one classroom has inadequate noise insulation from a neighbouring room. In three lessons seen, noise intrusion made it difficult to concentrate and affected learning. The department is well led and managed by the head of department and her deputy. Teachers work effectively together as a team. The head of department carefully reflects on how well pupils are doing and she uses performance data to identify underachievement and to set targets, and this continues to be a development area. Although a programme to monitor teaching has recently been put in place, this has yet to have an impact on learning.
56. Advancing pupils' literacy skills has been identified as a priority and people have worked hard to do this successfully. Whilst teachers of English are instrumental in teaching literacy, most subjects make a contribution by displaying subject-specific words, highlighting correct spelling and giving pupils opportunities to talk both formally and informally in lessons. Practice is not consistent across the school, however, and pupils could make even greater progress if all teachers tackled the teaching of literacy skills systematically.

Particularly effective work was seen in the use of writing frames in art to help pupils develop the skills of critical analysis and by modern languages teachers who reinforced correct spelling and grammatical structure and stressed key words. Whilst pupils who are particularly gifted in English do not have special work planned for them, the department does enable the highest attaining pupils to achieve well.

57. A department priority in the last two academic years was to manage a difficult staffing situation with long-term absence and vacancies. The head of department focused on the GCSE targets set by the LEA that resulted in more able pupils receiving more consistent specialist teaching. The other side of the coin was that some other pupils experienced disrupted teaching and standards were affected. The department has made good progress since the last inspection in addressing the major issue of assessment. They have made a good start in implementing the Key Stage 3 literacy strategy and this is starting to have a positive impact on pupils' literacy skills and is raising standards. Schemes of work have been revised in line with new teaching and learning requirements. Now that staffing problems have been largely resolved, the department is well placed to develop further.

MATHEMATICS

Overall, the quality of the provision is **satisfactory and improving**.

Strengths

- The focus on the National Numeracy Strategy is effective in raising standards of attainment in Year 7.
- Teaching is improving.
- Pupils' attitudes to mathematics are good or better when teaching is more than satisfactory.
- The change to the new modular GCSE examination is helping to improve the attitudes and attainment of pupils in Year 10.

Areas for development

- The raising of standards across the school.
- The quality of teaching.
- Investigative work in Years 7 to 9.
- The opportunities for group work and information and communication technology.

58. In 2001, results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were below the national average and the average of similar schools. However, this still represents satisfactory progress, as the large majority of pupils enter the school with attainment below average. Results in GCSE examinations were well below the national average and those for similar schools.
59. By the end of Year 9, standards of attainment are below average, and reflect previous National Curriculum test results. Standards of numeracy are at least satisfactory in Year 7, and satisfactory in Years 8 and 9. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. Whilst higher attaining pupils round large numbers to one significant figure accurately, their understanding of the concept is insecure. They have difficulty in stating the lowest whole number that would round to 1000. Average attaining pupils plot points correctly on scatter graphs and recognise that for a given group of pupils, performance in physics is positively correlated to performance in chemistry. Almost all, however, are unable to think of any situations in life where correlation is negative. The lowest attaining pupils, all of whom have special educational needs, are able to appreciate the idea of weights in grams and kilograms when related to food items, but have little have concept of weight beyond their immediate surroundings. Overall, the lack of emphasis on investigative work is reflected in the inability of most pupils to think for themselves or solve problems, especially when given information in an unfamiliar way.
60. By the end of Year 11, standards of attainment are well below average. In terms of prior attainment in National Curriculum tests, this represents unsatisfactory progress. Standards of numeracy are satisfactory in Year 10, but unsatisfactory in Year 11. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls.

Higher-attaining pupils use Pythagoras' theorem accurately to calculate the longest side in a right-angled triangle and calculate the area of a circle from the radius. However, only the few very highest attaining pupils estimate confidently or approximately, the length of the shorter sides of a right-angled triangle or the radius, given the area of a circle. Average attaining pupils calculate the next number in a sequence accurately, but too many have difficulty generalising patterns into algebraic sequences. Too many lower attaining pupils struggle to put the numbers one to nine into a five by five number cross to reach a given total vertically and horizontally. Almost all fail to see how to determine the central number in the cross that counts to both the vertical and horizontal totals.

61. The attitudes of pupils to mathematics are almost always related to the quality of the teaching. Overall, they are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, but are better in Year 7, where they are often very good or excellent; they are occasionally unsatisfactory in Year 9, even where teaching is satisfactory. Pupils work well together when given opportunities in Year 7, but some pupils at all levels of ability are reluctant to apply themselves to their studies. The attitudes of pupils to mathematics are unsatisfactory overall in Years 10 and 11. They are worse in Year 11, where a significant minority of average and below average attaining pupils stop working the moment the teacher or support assistant moves away from them. However, an entire class of lower attaining pupils in Year 10 demonstrated superb attitudes. The relationships with their classmates and their teacher were excellent and they were engrossed in their learning throughout the lesson. Whilst teaching in this lesson was excellent, this class and others in Year 10 are motivated to work harder than their Year 11 counterparts by the modular nature of their examination.
62. The quality of teaching varies between Years 7-9 and Years 10 and 11. It is satisfactory overall in Years 7 to 9 but unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11. In Years 7-9 there are examples of outstanding teaching and it is rarely unsatisfactory. Almost always, teachers work hard to include all pupils equally. In an excellent lesson with the lowest attaining pupils, almost all pupils were engrossed in their work throughout the lesson. They were confident in adding single digit numbers quickly and during the lesson worked extremely well in pairs to devise multiplication questions for their partners. The teacher and support assistant demonstrated an excellent knowledge of the pupils' abilities. The lesson objectives were shared with the pupils and activities were challenging and timed very well. Relationships were very good. The teacher used competition and collaboration extremely effectively to motivate the pupils to learn. There was a clear structure to the lesson, and the idea of using the context of money motivated almost all pupils to be able to multiply amounts of money in pounds to two decimal places by a single digit number. At the end of the lesson, the teacher took the opportunity extremely effectively to discuss with the pupils what they had learned and to tell them how they would be using what they had learned in the next lesson. This quality of teaching, embodying the principles of the National Numeracy Strategy, was also seen with the highest attaining pupils in Year 7. In a lesson with just above average pupils in Year 7, the unsatisfactory planning and lack of scanning were significant factors in creating an unsatisfactory working atmosphere. Objectives were not clearly shared with the pupils and questions were made up and written on the board as the lesson progressed. Whilst some pupils were keen to learn, the quality of learning was adversely affected by shouting out and repeated pauses when the teacher waited for some pupils to pay attention.
63. In Years 10 and 11, there is a significant difference in the quality of teaching of different teachers. In one outstanding lesson with lower attaining pupils in Year 10, the entire class made excellent progress in an exceptionally well-structured lesson, demonstrating wonderful relationships and very high expectations. The teacher ensured that all pupils could give values for acute, obtuse and reflex angles and define each of these. After this very effective and fast paced starter activity, the pupils accurately and sensibly cut out four different sized angles from paper, beginning with a right angle and halving each time. They thoroughly enjoyed the activity of making different sized angles and showed particular determination in successfully stating how these angles could be compounded to make a variety of the more difficult reflex angles. This level of work was above what could be expected, given their ability on entry to the school. In too many lessons there is insufficient planning or expectation.

Most teachers do not use a sufficiently wide range of resources to motivate the pupils to learn. In two unsatisfactory lessons seen, the pupils were left to work for too long on the same task without progress being reviewed.

64. Teachers assess by marking work regularly according to the department policy. The pupils understand the system and know their target grades for both National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 and GCSE at the end of Year 11. Homework is used satisfactorily, but rarely involves research or preparation for the next lesson. Overall, assessment is satisfactory.
65. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. However, whilst the head of department supports colleagues well with disciplinary matters, there has been insufficient attention paid to the causes of indiscipline. Planning and the use of resources are inconsistent across the department. There is insufficient use by all teachers of information and communication technology, including graphical calculators, to enhance learning in the subject. There has been improvement in standards, although they remain low in Year 11. Together with the improvement in teaching since the last inspection, when one third of lessons were unsatisfactory, the department has made satisfactory improvement.

SCIENCE

The provision in science is **satisfactory and improving**.

Strengths

- Standards have been rising in Year 9 and are now average.
- The work of the department is now being managed well and a number of important initiatives are being put in place.
- Good provision is provided for pupils with special educational needs in Years 7 to 9.
- Leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils' attainment and achievement in GCSE examinations.
- Experimental and investigative science in Year 7 to 9.
- The quality and consistency of teaching.
- The poor accommodation and unsatisfactory levels of learning resources.

66. Standards in the 2001 National Curriculum tests for pupils in Year 9 were below the national average and also below average for schools with similar backgrounds. The proportion of pupils reaching higher levels was average. Boys and girls reached similar standards. At the last inspection, standards of attainment were also below average; since then standards have fluctuated. In 2001 they were closer to the national average than in previous years. Standards in 2001 were similar to those in mathematics and well below those in English.
67. In 2001 pupils were entered for either double or single award GCSE examinations. The percentage of pupils attaining an A*- C grade in the double award course was well below average with the proportion attaining an A*-G grade being average. Results in the single award course were also well below average. Over the past four years, a minority of pupils have not attained any certificate in science.
68. Standards seen in the inspection in Year 9 are average and show the rise in improvement over recent years. Achievement has improved and is now satisfactory. The higher and average attaining pupils are making satisfactory progress, but pupils with special educational needs are making better progress because they receive good support from their learning assistants and the strong teaching. The two pupils who are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language are receiving satisfactory support in their lessons. Standards are strongest in the biology topics where teachers' expertise is also strongest. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of the topics they are taught are at the expected level but there are some pupils who have important gaps in their knowledge. For example, pupils in the top set in Year 9 can use circuit diagrams to make series and parallel circuits but do not always draw the symbol for an electrical component correctly.

Pupils in the bottom set are being taught effectively, but they can only name a few acids or alkalis and need help when undertaking practical work. Standards in experimental and investigative science are below average because there are too few opportunities for investigations, although pupils' practical skills are sound and they work safely when using apparatus.

69. Standards in Year 11 remain well below average. The potential exists for improvement in GCSE results this year but achievement remains unsatisfactory and standards are still not as high as they should be. Standards are better in Year 10 than in Year 11 because some classes in Year 11 were taught by supply staff last year and some Year 10 work was not taught at all. The pupils in Year 10 also have better attitudes to their work. The standards reached by the small number of gifted and talented pupils are as expected and they have made sound progress through the school. However, too many pupils in Year 11 have a poor understanding of the topics they are studying although standards in biology are stronger than in chemistry and physics. For example, pupils in the top set in Year 11 lacked proficiency in recalling the essential symbols for chemical elements, the formula of simple compounds and in balancing chemical equations using the correct conventions; lower attaining pupils in Year 11 cannot recall the names and functions of the main parts of the digestive system. More attention is given to experimental and investigative science than in earlier years and some good examples of pupils planning worthwhile investigations were seen, but the range of investigations covered is narrow. Some pupils can use their knowledge and understanding to explain difficult ideas well but there were very few examples of them using scientific models to explain some of the abstract ideas they are learning about. The lower attaining pupils taking the Certificate of Achievement are generally making sound progress and many were discussing how to set up an investigation regarding craters.
70. More attention is being given to teaching key vocabulary, especially in Years 7 to 9, and this is proving beneficial. Good encouragement is sometimes given to pupils writing independently to develop their own understanding, but in some lessons pupils are using a very narrow range of writing styles. Overall, there is insufficient focus on developing scientific descriptions and explanations in Years 7 to 9, and on linking a series of ideas well together in extended writing in Year 10 and 11. Little project work is evident that might serve to extend pupils' understanding of the ideas and evidence that inform science. There is no systematic approach to developing reading in the subject. Standards of presentation are generally good as a result of the teachers setting clear expectations, with some excellent work seen in the top set in Year 8. Adequate opportunities are given to enhance work with calculations or graphs. Too few pupils currently use information and communication technology to help enhance their work, either in experimental or theoretical work.
71. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 but unsatisfactory overall in Years 10 and 11. It ranges from unsatisfactory to excellent. Inspection evidence shows that over time, some teaching has not been strong enough to challenge pupils to do well and enable them to raise their standards; this situation is improving. Teachers' expectations of what their pupils can achieve in Years 10 and 11 are inconsistent and not high enough. The very best teaching results in very positive classroom relationships, brisk learning which is sustained through the lesson and a series of good learning activities which challenge the pupils. An important strength of teaching in such lessons is that a three part lesson structure is used in which the teachers first make the learning goals of the lesson clear to pupils, then move onto a sustained period of varied theoretical or practical work before finally summing up at the end. This structure worked extremely well in a Year 7 lesson where the pupils were preparing and testing hydrogen gas and very well in a Year 8 class who were learning how crystals of different sizes are formed when volcanic rocks cool at different rates. Similarly, it worked well in a Year 11 chemistry lesson in which pupils were learning about different kinds of reactions. Learning is helped in many lessons by the way in which most pupils work productively, listen attentively and work independently when encouraged. However, in around half of the lessons seen, the teachers did not make the learning goals or the overall structure of the lesson clear and, as a result, the pupils were unclear as to what they were seeking to learn or understand by the end of the lesson.

In approximately a third of lessons in which teaching was satisfactory, teachers did not challenge pupils sufficiently strongly because of a lack variety in the lesson, questioning that did not probe understanding well enough, a modest but not quick enough pace to learning and insufficient use of high quality materials for learning. The effectiveness of teaching methods is weakest in Years 10 and 11. Unsatisfactory teaching in some classes in Years 10 and 11 resulted from teachers' unsuccessful management of behaviour and learning, with pupils being allowed to drift unproductively for too long a period. Teachers regularly set homework, are using key vocabulary effectively in Years 7 to 9 and have enlivened most laboratories with appropriate displays of work.

72. The quality of learning opportunities is unsatisfactory. In Years 7 to 9, too little attention is paid to teaching and developing experimental and investigative science. The quality and range of learning experiences used in all years are too narrow but are being extended. Some teachers are using more challenging activities within their lessons, but in too many lessons, the pupils use poor quality workbooks, questioning does not probe or include all pupils or too few visual aids are used to stimulate learning. There have been some welcome improvements in the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 such as the introduction of the more appropriate Certificate of Achievement course in Year 10, which is catering well for the needs of the lower attaining pupils. There are satisfactory opportunities for pupils to discuss the social and moral implications of issues such as using fertility drugs, alternative energy sources or mining ores, but too few examples of spiritual and cultural issues are included in learning. The new ideas and evidence component of the GCSE course is not yet fully established to help to improve pupils' learning.
73. The work of the department is now being well led and managed by the recently appointed head of department and her extremely able second in department. A strategic sense of direction is evident. They have correctly identified the need to improve the curriculum, the overall quality of teaching and learning, and resources, if standards are to rise. A number of important initiatives are systematically being put in place to achieve these aims and most staff are responding well. More urgency needs to be injected in some areas. A good example of where clear progress is being made is that pupils' work is now monitored more thoroughly. This has led to some improvements in the marking of pupils' books and the regularity with which homework is set. Classroom teaching is now monitored more effectively. The good plans to increase the use of information and communication technology, the much improved schemes of work and an important review of the suitability of the GCSE syllabus are poised to help improve provision. There has also been some focus on developing ways of assessing how well the pupils are doing and the recently introduced "Science scheme for achievement" is working particularly well in all years. Assessment of GCSE coursework is also much improved; the weakness in pupils' ability to analyse and evaluate experimental evidence has been identified and is receiving attention. Insufficient use is made of occasional testing which identifies the levels pupils have reached in their learning to add to the good assessment information gained from a departmental scrutiny of pupils' work, marking and yearly examinations. Discussion about pupils' target grades takes place, particularly at GCSE, but there are no clear scientific targets for pupils to aspire to in all years.
74. The quality of the accommodation is poor and is adversely affecting standards in that the shortage of space, the potential hazards and the high level of inoperative services restrict the learning activities that can be planned. The fabric of the laboratories and services are deteriorating rapidly. There are important shortcomings in the availability and range of equipment and resources that are available for teachers to use and major investment is needed to bring them up to an acceptable level. The school is hopeful that this will soon be available under the national modernisation programme. Staffing difficulties and a lack of expertise in physical science have hindered the work of the department and its development. Progress since the last inspection has been broadly satisfactory with improvement in Year 9 tests results and in the overall standards being seen in Years 7-9. GCSE results are improving slowly but there is still some underachievement in Years 10 and 11. The shortage of texts and use of information and communication technology has not been fully addressed.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- GCSE results that are amongst the best in the school.
- Support for pupils with special educational needs.
- Teachers' planning.
- Equality of access and opportunity.

Areas for improvement

- Teaching of basic skills of observation and analysis through drawing.
- Use of sketchbooks for experimentation and investigation.
- Monitoring of teaching and learning.
- Development planning to raise attainment.
- Use of computers.

75. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 indicate that a significant proportion of pupils achieved average standards in 2001. Results at GCSE were below average in A*-C but close to the average for A*-G. The girls' results were close to average while the boys' results were well below the national average for boys. Pupils achieve well in this subject compared to their results in other subjects that they took. Above average numbers of pupils opt for GCSE art.
76. From inspection evidence, standards for pupils currently in Year 9 are below average and do not reflect the standards achieved in 2001. Pupils are skilled and confident in making effective use of oil pastels to make brightly coloured, good quality compositions based on fruit and vegetables. However, sketchbooks are not used for experimentation, investigation or research into the world around us. Pupils' basic skills of drawing are below average. Few are able to use line to create space or texture and they tend to destroy the form of an object when they apply shading. The pupils have good skills when handling clay and other three-dimensional materials, but insufficient personal response through investigation and development of ideas limits the quality and originality of the work. Pupils also print from polystyrene blocks but there is no evidence of pupils working with textiles or generating and modifying imagery with computers. They look at the work of other artists and are increasingly familiar with Cubism, Andy Warhol and Pop Art.
77. By the age of 16 standards are below average although pupils generally achieve well for their prior attainment. Once again, the pupils have under-developed skills of observation. Large-scale drawings of peppers are exciting and innovative, allowing pupils to be creative, in sharp contrast to their pencil drawings which are grey and over-worked exercises. There is a strong emphasis on finished work, often at the expense of development work. A set of carrier bags, influenced by the work of famous artists, including Escher, Munch, Renoir and Dali, is of a particularly high quality. Drawings of dragons adapted into jigsaws, and clock faces modified to show the way people change as time passes, demonstrate good understanding of decorative and compositional skills. Sketchbooks contain insufficient information or annotated diagrams of the process behind these compositions.
78. Pupils enter the school having had varied and often limited experiences of art. Their undeveloped basic skills, failure to use a sketchbook for research and experimentation, along with a degree of non-specialist teaching, lead to unsatisfactory achievement by the age of 14. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have more positive attitudes and respond positively to their teachers. The achievement of these pupils is satisfactory. The extra care girls bring to their studies allows more rapid progress. Weak skills of analysis prevent many pupils engaging in independent learning and there is a high dependence on teachers for guidance. The progress of pupils who have special educational needs is satisfactory and better than that of their classmates. These pupils benefit from the dignified way their teachers relate to them. Pupils who are gifted and talented make satisfactory progress in Years 10 and 11, because their teachers make themselves available outside of lesson times.

79. Teaching and learning in the department are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. The management of pupils is good and tasks are appropriately pitched. Lesson planning is good and tasks are invariably appropriate and challenging. The teachers' methods of starting a lesson with revision of previous learning, followed by a clear explanation of the planned activity, provide good opportunities for pupils to make rapid gains in knowledge. In a good lesson, Year 7 pupils made rapid gains in knowledge when making mosaics in the manner of Roman floor designs. The pupils accepted the challenge eagerly, working with pace and interest. The teacher's expectations of behaviour and creativity were clear and a classroom assistant provided good learning support for those children with special educational needs. The pupils were disappointed when the lesson ended. In a very good lesson, Year 7 pupils deepened their understanding of colour and composition when making a collage from brightly coloured letterforms. The pupils' weak basic skills slow learning from Year 7 to Year 11 and few realise how well they are doing or how they might improve. Pupils have insufficient knowledge of the work of European or multicultural art. The use of writing frames in Year 11 is improving pupils' skills of critical analysis and their literacy skills. In the only poor lesson seen, the pupils were required to make a drawing of a melted shoe in the style of Salvador Dali's "*Persistence of Memory*". The pupils' drawing skills were too weak and their knowledge of Dali's work was insufficient. The unacceptable behaviour of a majority of pupils, boys and girls, interfered with those few pupils who wanted to learn. The poor attendance evident in some lessons is having a negative effect on the continuity of learning. There are good equal opportunities in art and those unable to opt for GCSE due to timetable clashes are taught after school.
80. The curriculum is broad and balanced and allows pupils to work in two and three dimensions, with painting and drawing, ceramics, printmaking and sculpture. The lack of computers and insufficient opportunities for pupils to visit galleries or museums, or to work with artists-in-residence, limit learning. Assessments at the end of Year 9 require modification to more closely match national standards.
81. The management of the department is satisfactory. The head of department provides leadership which pupils and teachers are pleased to follow. Strategic planning for developments in the subject is very thorough but lacks details of methods for raising attainment or for working with computers. The monitoring of teaching and learning in the department requires more rigour so that those teachers who are new to the department more closely match the methods and expectations of behaviour and creativity. The accommodation is good. The department has two spacious rooms with very good natural lighting. Displays in the department and in the public areas of the school improve the atmosphere and raise the status of the subject. Resources for learning, including provision for teaching information and communication technology, need further investment.
82. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Standards remain below average and, while teaching continues to be satisfactory, there is insufficient emphasis placed on basic skills. Decorative design continues to be of a better standard than objective drawing. Considerable effort continues to be put into the planned programme of art activities, and there is good support for pupils outside of lessons.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Overall, provision for design and technology is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Satisfactory or better teaching, with the best lessons in food technology.
- Literacy is well promoted.
- Significant improvement in accommodation, staffing and resources.

Areas for improvement

- Raising standards in GCSE in construction, graphics and systems and control.
- Raise teachers' expectation for pupils' work, and standards of behaviour.
- Leadership and management.
- Statutory health and safety in the workshops.

83. The GCSE examination results in 2001 were well below the national average in A*-C grades in design and technology overall; at the national average for A*-G grades they were below average. Both boys' and girls' results were below average, and boys underachieved significantly. The performance in the GCSE examinations has declined since the last inspection. There is considerable variation and fluctuation in pupils' performance between the contributory subjects of resistant materials, graphics, systems and control and food technology. Results are the highest and most consistent in food technology; graphics has improved but in resistant materials and systems and control, they are very low at the A*-C grades. The results achieved by pupils were lower than in several of their other school subjects. There was some disruption because of building work.
84. Standards by Year 9 are broadly satisfactory. Students' skills in making are satisfactory and the finished product is broadly average, showing some individual creativity. Pupils use a generally adequate range of graphical skills in their design work. They are able to design and make items using a satisfactory range of materials, including food, acrylic, wood, metal and electronics. In Year 7, pupils use these skills to design and make a puzzle, improving their knowledge and skills of working with wood. The average and below average pupils do not always produce sufficient design ideas or develop and present these ideas to a high enough standard. The higher attaining pupils have satisfactory drawing skills but research is basic and the end product often lacks precision. The attainment of pupils with special educational needs is below average, but the level of additional support is infrequent, especially for practical work. Graphics is taught at the end of Year 9 and this is too late. It results in below average standards in the designing, refining and evaluation components. Standards of technical graphics are not given sufficient prominence, particularly the use of computer aided programs to show two and three-dimensional diagrams, and how rotation affects the design. Theory work is not well presented, with too little use of technical language to explain activity. The strategies for teaching the basic skills of literacy are good and this helps raise standards. The use of numeracy and information and communication technology does not take sufficient account of the specific needs of all groups of pupils because arrangements are inflexible.
85. Standards by the age of 16 are below average, except in food technology, a similar picture to that shown by the last external examination results. The higher attaining pupils can design and produce work to an average standard but their work lacks the required depth and rigour. The work of average and below average pupils and those with special educational needs in food studies shows that responses to questions, and the quantity of work covered over the course, are good. Coursework is developed with too little use of information and communication technology to present questionnaires and illustrate results in a variety of ways.
86. The way pupils learn has some shortcomings. About three-quarters of pupils make satisfactory progress by the age of 14 and 16 because they respond well with a degree of motivation to the teaching. They come to the department wanting to do well and are prepared to work hard. The remainder is less willing to work and many lessons are spoilt by unsatisfactory behaviour, such as in an electronics lesson. One third of pupils' learning is unsatisfactory because of the failure to complete coursework, and the presentation of their written work, drawings and products, lacks care and exactness. In Year 9, lower ability pupils produced a pizza, making both the base and a variety of toppings because the teacher's approach helped to create good relations and encourage the pupils' participation. Many pupils have little knowledge of how they are progressing and show little sense of urgency about the work. Insufficient attention is paid to identifying pupils with a particular talent for practical work.
87. Students' attitudes are satisfactory. They enjoy using the facilities to create their own ideas and this helps them to achieve in making skills. The majority of pupils behave well, enjoy good relationships with teachers, and often help each other to promote positive attitudes to learning. However, in too many lessons, there is unsatisfactory behaviour and answering back to adults.
88. The quality of teaching is similar to that seen at the last inspection and is satisfactory, but there are elements requiring attention. One lesson in three is good but there is an element of unsatisfactory teaching. The highest proportion of good teaching is in food technology where teachers have high expectation, use a wider range of teaching strategies and manage discipline.

Their lessons are well organised and managed and the teachers' enthusiasm helps the pupils to sustain concentration. In all areas, teachers' good subject knowledge, including the teaching of literacy, ensures that pupils listen and answer questions. However, teachers' expectations of what pupils might achieve are inconsistent and not high enough. In construction activities, too much teaching time is lost because of pupils' poor behaviour and teachers often fail to provide a sufficient range of easier or difficult tasks to keep them on task. Homework is set quite consistently, and on occasion used constructively to develop class work. For example, in a Year 7 resistant materials lesson, pupils were tested on the spelling of words related to their unit of work.

89. For a significant minority of pupils, their intellectual and physical effort is not seen as self-rewarding. It is also frequently hindered by absenteeism and this hampers pupils' progress and lowers their standards. Marking is inconsistent. Pupils are not sufficiently aware of how well they are doing, partly because they are unaware of the National Curriculum level they are working at, and partly because their knowledge, skills and understanding are tested too infrequently. Across the department there are missed opportunities for pupils to practise and improve their skills of measurement to raise standards. There is satisfactory technical support that plays a valuable part in ensuring that resources are available in the time that pupils are in the department, although food technology benefits the least. Pupils' work is satisfactorily displayed to stimulate thought on the topics that are undertaken. Teachers try to ensure that everyone is included in the lesson, although there is too little individual support for pupils with special educational needs and the very few pupils for whom English is an additional language.
90. Statutory requirements are met although the curriculum lacks breadth. It is unsatisfactory in that there is no provision for textiles in the Year 7-9 curriculum, and at GCSE for the coverage of pneumatics, robotics and automation and alternative energy. The amount of time allocated to the subject is significantly below that usually found and this is another contributory factor to examination results. Very limited use is made of information and communication technology for measuring and controlling events, designing models with variables to meet an identified design brief and presenting work. The department makes limited planned contributions to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
91. The arrangements for the leadership and management of the department are satisfactory and there is now an established team of specialists and satisfactory resources. The school's procedures for monitoring, evaluating and developing teaching are sound although the monitoring of individual pupils' progress lacks rigour. To improve, there is a need for clearer direction in setting priorities with achievable targets followed by decisive action to account for accomplishment. For example, analysing and moderating end of unit work in Years 7-9, adjusting to the provision for GCSE and improving those aspects of teaching which impact on pupils' learning are all required. Since the last inspection, there have been satisfactory improvements. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 achieve better than those in Years 10 and 11. Achievement is better in food technology throughout the year groups. The food technology resources are now satisfactory and the department is better equipped with computers but they are not used sufficiently. The main improvement has been the building of a new technology block but there are health and safety issues and non-compliance with risk assessments which need to be urgently corrected.

DRAMA

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

Strengths

- Teachers have good specialist subject knowledge.
- GCSE pupils have very positive attitudes to their work.

Areas for improvement

- Ensuring that achievement is maintained with the new staffing arrangements for the subject.
- Using easily understood criteria for assessing pupils' work in Years 7 to 9 so that they know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

92. The GCSE results in 2001 were below national standards, although the percentage of pupils achieving an A* to C grade rose by six per cent from 2000 and standards have risen considerably since the last inspection.
93. The head of department, who took up her post in January, was absent during the inspection, so a number of issues were unable to be pursued during the week. Two lessons were seen taught by teachers with specialist knowledge of drama, and one lesson was covered by a non-specialist. Insufficient pupils' work was seen to make a judgement about standards at the end of Year 9 or about how well pupils achieve in their first three years. One Year 11 lesson was observed and a selection of GCSE coursework scrutinised. Pupils are on target to attain a full range of GCSE grades, although overall standards are below what would be expected nationally. They start the course, however, with limited drama skills and make at least satisfactory progress through Years 10 and 11. Pupils understand how to use a range of dramatic and theatrical techniques to convey character, emotion and plot. In the Year 11 lesson seen, pupils were exploring using freeze frames, monologues, voiceovers and a range of special effects and props, on their GCSE course theme of 'Ambition'.
94. Teaching over time is broadly satisfactory. A Year 11 lesson was of a very high quality. Pupils made excellent progress in working on their devised pieces because the teacher's strong subject knowledge underpinned her explanations, and targeted advice in preparing pupils for the forthcoming examination was very clearly made. The pupils had positive attitudes to learning and they worked in a very serious, committed way.
95. There was no evidence in the schemes of work for Years 7, 8 and 9 that learning objectives are matched to assessment criteria, and this is a development area for the department.

GEOGRAPHY

Provision for geography is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Standards at the end of Year 9 as indicated by teacher assessments.
- Recruitment to Year 10 GCSE courses.
- Management and leadership.

Areas for improvement

- Consistency in learning objectives.
- Setting work which meets the differing needs of the pupils. Ensure that achievement is maintained with the new staffing arrangements for the subject.
- Using easily understood criteria for assessing pupils' work in Years 7 to 9 so that they know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

96. Standards, indicated by teacher assessments in 2001 are average at the end of Year 9 and this is confirmed by inspection evidence. GCSE results in 2001 were well below the national average and have been so for several years.

97. By the end of Year 9, the most capable pupils can explain geographical processes, explain how different geographical processes may interact in order to create geographical patterns and they can also evaluate their own work. In Years 7-9, classes are set for ability and pupils in the lower sets can answer questions verbally to a higher standard than in their written work. Literacy development is helped through the use of word walls, keywords for the lesson being displayed on the board and definitions of these keywords being explained and used in context. In lower sets pupils are given help with their literacy development through the use of cloze procedure exercises. These did not allow pupils to extend from descriptive work into explanations. Pupils have made good progress in Years 7, 8 and 9.
98. Standards by Year 11 are below average. In Year 11, some pupils who have not chosen the subject are studying geography. Many in the lower set are disaffected and not keen to learn. In Year 10 there is a different picture. Over half the year group have opted to study geography. There are now three sets for geography and pupils are keen and sustain concentration. The work seen in these classes was at least in line with national expectations and is further evidence of improvement within the department. Pupils in Year 10 are making good progress but for those in Year 11 progress is unsatisfactory.
99. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Lessons seen varied from very good to unsatisfactory. Where teaching is good, teachers' knowledge of both the subject and pupils is good, key questions are used to set objectives and pupils' basic skills and geographical skills are developed. For example, the definition and contextual use of key words are used and the use of sketch maps to summarise key points is developed. In these lessons, wall displays are helpful and pupils' independent learning skills are developed and well used. This was seen in Year 8 lessons where pupils are researching information about differences between North and South Italy and in Year 10 where pupils research information to complete annotated maps of the Rhine. Group work was used to good effect to develop pupils' listening and speaking skills, and encourage the concentration of pupils in lower sets in Year 10. Where teaching is only satisfactory, the pace of lessons is slow, learning objectives are neither clear nor concise and teachers' knowledge of the National Curriculum levels means that tasks are set that do not allow pupils to make progress to the higher levels. Teaching is also only satisfactory when more emphasis is placed on display than on accuracy of work, or geographical conventions. Where teaching was unsatisfactory, it was affected by the unsatisfactory attitude and learning of some disaffected pupils in Year 11. Teachers' use of assertive discipline ensures pupils' concentration and maintains the pace of work. In the majority of lessons, pupils' attitude and behaviour were at least satisfactory and did not impinge upon learning. In many lessons, particularly in Year 10, pupils' attitude and behaviour were good and helped learning.
100. The head of department gives effective leadership for improvement. He also makes great effort to support non-specialist teachers and ensure a good learning environment for all pupils. The scheme of work has been redesigned to incorporate level assessments in Year 7 to 9, to increase the amount of field work, and to raise the profile of the subject and increase recruitment in Year 10. Courses offered now support the planned development of information and communication technology and the use of computers now contributes to the overall assessment across the curriculum. Courses also support the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. There are regular departmental meetings and teaching is monitored and evaluated to support improvement.
101. Since the last inspection, results in GCSE have fallen although there are now signs of improvement. Learning objectives for each lesson have been introduced, as have the systems for assessing pupils to National Curriculum levels at the end of each topic of work. Marking of pupils' work is now following departmental policy, resources have improved and there is a greater variety in styles of teaching. Recent improvement has been sound and the potential exists for further developments.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Improving standards.
- Development of literacy in Years 7-9.
- Provision for pupils with learning difficulties in Years 10 and 11.

Areas for improvement

- Standards in Years 10 and 11.
- Range and variety of teaching methods.
- Scheme of assessment in Years 7-9.

102. Standards in National Curriculum teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were broadly average. These figures were similar to those for 2000 but significantly better than those for 1999. Results in GCSE examinations were significantly below average at A*-C grades but the proportion of pupils gaining A*-G grades was close to the national average. Considering the prior attainment of the pupils, this is a better measure and shows good achievement.
103. By the end of Year 9, standards are average, reflecting the improving situation over the last three years. Pupils in Year 7 show good literacy skills when analysing texts and selecting information to produce well-structured explanations for the success of the Roman Army. This kind of analysis is extended in Year 8 where pupils can produce mind maps to prepare for a written account of living conditions in medieval towns. However, pupils in Years 7 and 8 have few opportunities to carry out investigative work using historical sources. As a result, younger pupils demonstrate little understanding of evidence and its uses. Source material is used for providing information for written accounts rather than as evidence to reconstruct aspects of the past. These shortcomings are compensated for in Year 9 where pupils make rapid gains in their ability to interpret and evaluate evidence. For example, higher attaining pupils understand that unreliable evidence can still be useful and most pupils can use evidence to assess competing interpretations of British failures at the battle of the Somme.
104. By the end of Year 11, standards are below average but better than suggested by 2001 examination results. In Year 10, pupils show good knowledge of aspects of the American West. They can use this to produce extended written accounts but only the ablest pupils can construct and sustain a relevant argument. From Year 9, pupils have the skills to evaluate source material for reliability but are less confident in assessing the usefulness of evidence for an enquiry, the general assumption being that most sources are useful because they contain information about the past. Only in Year 11 do some pupils begin to identify limitations as well as strengths when assessing the usefulness of source material. Considerable improvement occurs in essay work in Year 11, where pupils can sustain a coherent, well-structured argument assessing the relative importance of the contributions of Watt and Arkwright to the Industrial Revolution. Achievement by the lowest attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 is good. For example, these pupils in Year 10 can analyse a range of factors contributing to conflict between white settlers and Native Americans in a study of the American West and conclude from this that explanation of the actions of both sides requires understanding of conflicting cultures, beliefs and attitudes.
105. Most pupils make satisfactory progress in relation to their prior attainment. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, particularly in Years 10 and 11, and effective use is made of individual education plans in all lessons. However, the highest attaining pupils in all years are insufficiently challenged, demonstrating few of the higher order thinking skills. Difference in rates of progress made by the above average and below average pupils can be attributed to differences of expectation in teaching.
106. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and occasionally good. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Teaching is well planned, making use of a detailed, coherent scheme of work that makes clear links between teaching objectives, teaching methods and learning activities across both key stages.

Teaching is consequently informed by clear objectives that are effectively transmitted to pupils and classroom relationships are good. However, the range of teaching methods used to achieve these objectives is limited. Whole-class teaching predominates and insufficient opportunities exist for pupils to solve problems and carry out investigations. In most lessons, pupils' learning is productive but largely passive. A noticeable feature of teaching in Years 7-9 is the development of effective strategies to improve levels of literacy in the context of historical study. Methods of assessment are satisfactory and improving. Effective use is made of various performance data, in conjunction with the department's own assessment records, to track pupils' progress in relation to individual targets that have been set. Formative assessment in Years 7-9 is based on a series of common assessment tasks. However, the effectiveness of assessment practice is undermined by a lack of consistency between assessment objectives and task-specific mark schemes. Marking is conscientious but varied in its ability to identify precise strengths and weaknesses in the work of individual pupils. Due attention is given to both moral and cultural diversity issues in the teaching of the subject, for example in lessons dealing with trench warfare or the plight of the Plains Indians in the American West.

107. The quality of leadership and management is good overall. The head of department monitors the work of the department through lesson observations, book scrutinies and constructive dialogue with senior staff. Departmental development planning is consistent with whole-school priorities, in particular that of raising standards, and action planning to this end is precise, detailed and realistic. The style of management is collaborative, inclusive and self-critical and professional relationships within the department are good. Subject leadership is generally effective in terms of support given to non-specialist staff but less so in promoting variety in teaching approaches and strategies for challenging pupils.
108. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. The quality of pupils' extended writing is much improved and attributable to successful literacy strategies. Improvements have also been made to the scheme of work and to methods of assessment, although more work remains to be done in this area. More use is made of computers. Skills of historical enquiry, investigation and problem solving have improved in Year 9 but remain undeveloped in Year 7.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology is **satisfactory. It is good in the discrete subject but requires development in the use of skills in curriculum areas.**

Strengths

- Pupils have a sound grasp of concepts, apply them and overall are achieving satisfactorily.
- Teaching is good.
- Pupils collaborate well.
- A very good range of learning resources is being built up.

Areas for improvement

- Standards at the end of Year 9 and 11, through opportunities to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding through other subjects.
- Assessment across the school.

109. Teacher assessments in 2001 at the end of Year 9 show that the attainment is below average. The results show a decline on the previous year. The GCSE and GNVQ examinations in information and communication technology in 2001 were well below average at both A* - C and A*-G grades. The results show a decline over the previous year.
110. All pupils in the school have access to timetabled information and communication technology lessons and they learn about the full range of applications expected of them by the National Curriculum. They make good progress in these courses but there is a lack of opportunity to reinforce their skills in the other subjects of the curriculum.

111. Standards by the end of Year 9 are broadly average and show good improvement over the previous year. In their timetabled lessons, Year 7 pupils are gaining basic skills and are confidently applying them. They know some of the advantages and disadvantages of using computers and are able to use word processing and desktop publishing software satisfactorily to produce posters, letters, logos and letterheads. By the time they are in Year 9, they can transform the data they enter on their spreadsheets into charts. They use these to communicate their findings to others. They can also use spreadsheets to model information, such as when they work out the costs of different items of shopping. Pupils create and use simple databases. They can search for information on the Internet using straightforward questioning and use this to carry out research and download images. They have a broadly satisfactory understanding of the applications of control technology and they have hands-on experience and write simple programs to control movement through design and technology. Through a satisfactory coverage of the programmes of study in each year group, pupils experience a range of activities covering word processing, spreadsheets, use of power point, paint, logo, data base, image processing and the use of computer aided design in design and technology project work. There is use of word processing in modern foreign languages, and in geography, the use of the Internet, spreadsheets and word processing. Pupils have access to digital cameras and scanners. Although pupils are making progress, they are given few opportunities to develop their skills in other subjects of the curriculum and this affects their level of achievement.
112. Standards from inspection evidence are in line with national expectations by Year 11 for a significant proportion of pupils. These standards are better than previous examination results achieved. A GNVQ course has been introduced and the first entrants will receive their results this year. The progress all pupils, including those with special educational needs, are making in these courses is good. The estimated grades for the Year 11 group show that most are likely to achieve at least a pass grade. The course chosen makes very good use of information and communication technology as all course materials, including tutorials, are available on line. Pupils make good use of these and this frees the teacher to concentrate on working with individual challenges. Pupils have developed their knowledge, understanding and skills in all aspects of computer technology as indicated in Years 7-9 above. However, issues of insufficient use and application of computer technology across the curriculum remain.
113. Overall teaching is good, although one lesson seen was unsatisfactory. Lessons are well planned within the framework of a useful scheme of work for younger pupils and the GNVQ syllabi followed by older pupils. Lessons start with objectives that are shared with pupils and which give them a clear idea of what they have to do. A good feature of all lessons is the way that teachers systematically work around classes to promote the progress of individuals. Pupils ask for help when it is needed and are patient enough to wait their turn. At the end of lessons, teachers discuss what has been achieved and encourage pupils by praising them for the progress they have made. The course materials are challenging and are evidence of the high expectations teachers have of their pupils. The coordinator and support staff regularly work with pupils after school hours and will help them with their own projects, such as website design. Behaviour is generally good and pupils are mostly motivated by the technology. They show interest during the introductory sessions that set tasks but are keen to get down to practical work.
114. The department has responded to the last inspection and improvements made include an increased challenge in work set for pupils and a significant improvement in access. Pupils' achievements across the curriculum are assessed and fully recognised. Training has been provided for staff so that they can use applications and access the network. Opportunities for the consistent application and development of information technology are not sufficiently planned and co-ordinated across the curriculum to achieve coherence and progression. This leads to the programmes of study as required by the national Curriculum not being fully met in some subjects. This was an issue in the last inspection. Technical support is good. There are opportunities for pupils to use computers during the lunch time and at other times when pupils can develop their computer skills and have access to the Internet.

115. The leadership and management of the department are good, with a clear vision and direction which have the potential to promote curricular improvements. The department has specific aims and values, including a commitment to good relationships and equality of opportunity for all, which is reflected in the work of the department. There is good delegation, a shared commitment to improvement and the capacity to succeed. The departmental development plan identifies appropriate priorities but this needs to be reviewed to give consideration to current and future developments. There is a formal programme of monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching. A sharper focus needs to be given to levelling and moderation within the scheme of work to improve the standards achieved by pupils. The coordinator has sufficient time to monitor the work of the department but there is no monitoring across the curriculum. At present there is insufficient coordination of the use of computers through subjects as there is no curriculum plan outlining what aspects of computer technology subjects should deliver.
116. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory overall. Good elements of progress have been achieved within discrete lessons and the level of resources and equipment available in the school is now very good. Resources are still limited in the form of interactive white boards and LCD projectors. In subjects, progress has been broadly satisfactory but there are still subjects in which the use of information and communication technology is underdeveloped.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- The good progress made by pupils.
- The written skills of higher attaining pupils who write accurately using a range of vocabulary and idiom.
- Good teaching which includes a variety of activities to develop language skills.
- The quality of displays of pupils' work, presented using computers, enhances the learning environment.

Areas for improvement

- Results in GCSE examinations.
- Reducing underachievement of a significant minority of pupils in Year 11.
- Opportunities to further develop reading and writing skills for the majority of pupils.

117. Standards in assessment at the age of 14 for the majority of pupils are average, and inspection evidence confirms this judgement. GCSE results in both French and German in 2001 were well below average for grades A*-C and average for grades A*-G. Girls' results were higher than those of boys. This year pupils in Years 7 - 9 and in Year 11 learn French. In Year 10, pupils learn either French or German. There is no opportunity to study a second foreign language.
118. In Years 7-11 pupils achieve well. They understand French spoken by the teacher or heard on cassette and are keen to answer questions. They identify main points and details in texts, use dictionaries effectively but do not have the opportunity to select up to date books to read independently. Higher attaining pupils in Year 8 write accurately and at length and in Year 9 use past present and future tenses effectively. However, for the majority of pupils, written tasks are not sufficiently demanding.
119. Standards by Year 11 are below average and they are broadly average in Year 10. This anomaly reflects the whole-school situation. In Year 10, in both French and German, higher attaining pupils speak well on prepared GCSE topics and some pupils speak confidently in unrehearsed situations. In Year 11 the majority of pupils are very hesitant when speaking with a stranger, confine themselves to very short answers and cannot sustain a conversation. Standards in listening and reading comprehension are satisfactory overall. Higher attaining pupils produce good written coursework but most pupils do not write at length and there is significant underachievement in Year 11. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in speaking and listening skills and pupils from differing ethnic backgrounds make progress in line with their peers.

120. Since the last inspection, problems in recruiting and retaining well qualified staff have adversely affected standards. At present, all teachers in the department are well qualified linguists and teaching overall is good. This has had the immediate impact of raising standards in Years 7-10. Most pupils have positive attitudes to language learning and are attentive in class. In Years 7-9 they respond enthusiastically to the range of activities they encounter. In Year 11, pupils of middle and lower attainment, who made only slow progress last year due to staffing difficulties, do not persist when they find work difficult. Teachers speak French or German for most of the lesson and encourage pupils to do the same. On occasions, however, they revert too readily to English for explanations. In the best lessons, teachers have high expectations and match tasks carefully to the differing needs of pupils. All teachers plan lessons thoroughly to make good use of resources available: overhead projectors and colourful transparencies, flash-cards, cue-cards and well-produced worksheets.
121. The department is well led. The changes which are taking place are beginning to have a positive impact on raising standards. A thorough system of assessment is in place and teachers monitor their pupils closely. Since the last inspection, improvement has been good. Pupils now achieve well in Years 7-9 and higher attaining pupils write at length. Pupils now use dictionaries effectively and have better access to information and communication technology to present their work. The underachievement of pupils in Year 11 and the lack of opportunities to read for pleasure remain.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Teachers' subject knowledge.
- Work set generally meets differing needs.
- Pupils' enjoyment of the subject and their willingness to learn.

Areas for improvement

- Standards.
- Access to non-western musical instruments within lessons.
- Pupils' knowledge and use of musical language and terminology.
- Use of assessment.

122. Teacher assessments for 2001 show that by the age of 14 the attainment of the majority of pupils is well below average. In GCSE examinations for 2000 and 2001, the proportion of pupils achieving the higher grades A*-C was well below average. However, the small number of candidates entered for GCSE makes comparison with national figures statistically unreliable.
123. By Year 9 the attainment of the majority of pupils is below average. No significant differences were observed between the standards achieved by boys and girls and pupils from different ethnic groups. The majority of pupils are keen to learn; they enjoy the practical activities and participate willingly. Pupils understand the basic elements such as tempo, pitch and structure through performing and composing on keyboards and a small range of classroom instruments. Listening skills are generally well developed. Year 9 pupils have a poor vocabulary of technical musical language, which prevents them from accurately appraising their pieces and those of other composers. The majority of pupils show little technical skill in their compositions, which lack structure, musical expression and dynamics. Pupils generally work collaboratively in small groups when using electronic keyboards. Higher attaining pupils can manipulate and control sounds effectively and perform with an awareness of the different parts within their group. By the age of 14, lower attaining pupils can create simple compositions but cannot add suitable rhythmic accompaniments to their melodies. They are uncertain of rhythmic notation and do not have sufficient knowledge and understanding of music to develop their ideas. A minority of pupils have very low concentration levels. This lack of concentration, particularly during practical activities and listening exercises, can be disruptive to the rest of the class and can hinder learning.

124. There is a wide variation in pupils' previous musical knowledge when they arrive at the school, with the majority achieving well below average standards. However, in relation to their prior attainment, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs are presented with appropriately challenging work and achieve satisfactory standards in relation to their previous levels of attainment. The more musically talented instrumentalists are not always challenged by the set tasks and could be stretched further. Contributions to literacy skills are well developed, with attention given to the use of key words and some simple musical vocabulary. Information and communication technology and numeracy skills are at a lower stage of development. Some pupils have the opportunity to receive instrumental or vocal lessons free of charge. This has a positive impact on their musical education. There is not enough use of non-western music and instruments within lessons, which restricts coverage of this important element of the National Curriculum.
125. In Year 11, attainment is below average. The minority of pupils who take music do not have the in-depth knowledge normally expected at this stage. Standards of performing and composing are variable but overall are below average. Higher attaining pupils are reasonable instrumentalists and understand the key components of melody and harmony and how to apply them to their compositions, as was seen in one Year 11 girl's piece of programme music depicting a Carnival. Most can follow traditional notation and know how to notate their own music using the computer software. A minority of Year 10 pupils are achieving above average standards of performance on their chosen instrument, as was demonstrated by one girl who performed the song "Maria" on the cornet with good tone and reasonable accuracy. Pupils can utilise more complex vocabulary such as modulation, polyphonic and cadence. Their listening skills are satisfactory and usually well focused. However, pupils' theoretical knowledge is generally of a much lower standard and they fail to use technical vocabulary when describing music they hear.
126. Teaching is generally satisfactory and, as a result, the pupils make reasonable progress in their learning and enjoy the lessons. The teacher has good subject knowledge, which is effectively passed on to the pupils. Lessons have a good variety of activities and changes in seating to give pupils changes of focus. Materials are designed to meet differing needs so that below average pupils make satisfactory progress. Listening skills are taught well. Planned activities are carefully sequenced and ensure satisfactory progress, but teaching sometimes lacks challenge and pace. In the better lessons, learning outcomes are clear and appropriate. There is a practical focus in lessons and pupils are supported in developing their musical skills and knowledge. Lessons have good openings with shared aims and end with a plenary to reinforce learning. In practical sessions, the teacher goes round the class giving support to pupils. However, the pace of these practical activities is occasionally slow with too much time spent on a single activity which results in pupils achieving low levels of progress and learning. The management of pupils is not always well handled and frequently results in wasted time. Homework is used effectively to develop the pupils' writing and research skills and to enhance the curriculum. The quality and effectiveness of assessment need to be clarified to ensure pupils are fully aware of its meaning.
127. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The department is well organised. Schemes of work are developing well and include opportunities for pupils to use computers and explore music from other cultures. There is a clear sense of purpose within the department, which is committed to raising standards and increasing participation in extra-curricular activities and instrumental lessons. There is a selection of extra-curricular activities, including choirs, bands and other ensembles that enhance the curriculum. Regular musical events are organised throughout the year, both within school and the local community, which enhance pupils' musical and social experiences.
128. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Resources have improved with the addition of a computer with sequencing software and several new electronic keyboards. However, there is still insufficient information and communication technology equipment to enable all pupils to use a computer for composing.

Assessment procedures have improved and now relate to the National Curriculum attainment levels, but there is still no formal mechanism to use assessment information to plan future work. The school library is underused as a resource for learning. There are not enough musical textbooks to enhance pupils' independent study.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The provision for physical education is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Overall quality of teaching.
- Curriculum innovations.
- Leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- Overall standards.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour.
- Assessment.
- Staffing arrangements and accommodation.

129. The most recent teacher assessments show a very high percentage of pupils who are performing at levels inappropriate for their age, and standards at the age of 14 are below the national averages. Inspection evidence confirms this judgement. The proportion of pupils achieving A*-C grades in the 2001 GCSE examinations was well below the national averages, but at A*-G grades, whilst still below average, reflect the prior attainment of the minority of pupils who take this course. With the exception of the year 2000 results, when average results were achieved, this continues a trend of results over the last four years. These results are below average when compared to those in schools in similar contexts.
130. Standards by the end of Year 9 are below average overall but pupils aged between 11 and 14 are presently showing good levels of achievement. Although learning can still be significantly improved throughout this stage, these achievements represent good progress from a low entry base. Inspection findings show that in dance and hockey performances in Year 9, pupils lack the skills and techniques to compose and play at appropriate levels. Year 7 boys make very good progress in handling and moving forward in rugby. Lower attaining Year 7 pupils make significant gains in understanding formation principles in dance. However, pupils with statements of special educational need in this group lack the additional adult support that would improve their confidence and focus on learning. Learning is often weaker than the standards of teaching. Pupils often fail to match teacher expectations, restricted by a combination of low self-esteem and confidence and immature behavior. This means that their planning and performing in groups, and their attention to tasks, are often limited.
131. Standards at the age of 16 are below average but pupils between the ages of 14 and 16 achieve well. At this age, many begin to appreciate the need for well thought out plans to involve tactical elements of their play but low skill levels prevent their involvement at expected levels. Progress is good in all lessons observed as a result of planning that challenges pupils to improve their understanding of tactics and decision-making. It also extends and improves their performances into appropriate game forms. Older pupils are more confident in their assessment of performances and the majority respond well when asked questions relating to the quality of their own and others' work. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress when teachers make one-to-one interventions, carefully guiding them in their application of techniques.
132. The standards of present GCSE work in Years 10 and 11 are average. Personal files are well structured and the pupils have a sound understanding of the syllabus requirements and are developing appropriate study skills. Pupils are presently making good progress. A new syllabus and consistently high teacher expectations mean that pupils are preparing well for each stage of practice.

Year 11 pupils independently practise hockey skills and make good progress in adapting these to a game that is new to them. Their theoretical work shows a satisfactory understanding of sport in society and physiological aspects of movement. However, at all ability levels, the work lacks extended thinking and writing, especially linking theory to their personal experiences.

133. Overall standards of teaching are good, with examples of very good teaching. There is no unsatisfactory teaching, which is an improvement since the last inspection. Teachers have good specialist knowledge and they inform their pupils of the appropriate skills and techniques in a range of activities. This is a major reason for the improving application of techniques in hockey, dance, basketball and badminton. Teaching methodology is challenging pupils to develop their planning, performing and evaluating skills. Decision-making skills are improved when Year 11 boys organise a rebounding exercise in basketball and Year 10 pupils discuss and operate positional roles in indoor hockey. Reciprocal learning works well when a Year 9 pupil makes valuable contributions to other groups' set dance routines. When pupils are keen to learn, the relationships with their teachers are very good. These responses are reflected in the considerably improved participation levels and appearance of pupils. A significant number of boys across all age ranges have poor attitudes and their behaviour in lessons disrupts the learning of many other pupils. Some of this disruption takes place during changing time, resulting in an unsatisfactory start to lessons. Lateness and slow changing compound this problem and activity in many lessons starts 20 minutes after pupils' arrival. New planning procedures are beginning to ensure a variety of interesting tasks that enthuse the pupils and pinpoint general progression in learning. However, planning does not consider the differing needs of all groups within each lesson, and although teachers are sensitive, tasks are not consistently given which are based on pupils' prior learning and achievements. The promotion of specialist vocabulary is beginning to make an impact on pupils' understanding of key concepts. These words are displayed in classrooms and informative displays in the corridors and also contribute to the improving standard of GCSE folders. The use of information and communication technology is being developed well in GCSE studies as a means to research materials and to present personal work.
134. The new head of department offers good leadership. Priority has been given to the development of a teaching and learning policy that has been directly related to the need to raise standards. The very good development plans show clear educational direction for the subject. However, in an attempt to address all significant and relevant issues, the feasibility of these plans is questionable and they need to be prioritised with appropriate timescales to guarantee success. A start has been made to appraise teaching as part of targeted professional development and formal head of department monitoring. This has allowed the two main teachers of physical education to achieve consistency in teaching delivery and to improve standards by sharing best practice. A new curriculum plan has substantially improved the range of learning opportunities for pupils. Developing schemes of work are beginning to ensure relevant progression in learning across all age ranges and are beginning to impact on standards. Links with local sporting clubs associations and development agencies are promoting good community links and allowing a number of pupils to perform at higher levels. In line with national expectations and achievements, the department is not presently successful in extending this learning to a larger number of pupils through active participation in extra-curricular clubs.
135. The department has made satisfactory improvements since the last inspection. Much of this has been achieved since the recent appointment of the new head of department. Time allocation has been improved for pupils aged 11-14 and now meets statutory requirements. Other recent improvements include the adoption of assessment procedures to record and report pupils' achievements. This is presently effective in challenging the GCSE pupils to make progress towards higher grades. Present department action plans recognise the need to make use of this system further. There is a need to ensure all pupils are aware of their present National Curriculum achievements to give them and their parents clear expectations of their next targets. Present staffing arrangements are unsatisfactory. In addition to the two full-time members of staff, six other qualified teachers are used to teach ten lessons, but the arrangements of some teaching for groups who are taken by different staff affects the continuity and progress in some pupils' learning.

The arrangement also makes it difficult to achieve appropriate consistency in teaching and a relevant and regular involvement of all staff in department activities and ambitions. Unsatisfactory accommodation remains a significant problem and restricts the development of pupils' learning. The playing fields and all-weather surfaces suffer from poor drainage. Young pupils observed playing rugby during the inspection had ankle-deep mud and water to contend with. After these experiences, they could not get clean for their next lesson because the school showers are currently not working. This problem has remained unrectified for a considerable period of time.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Teaching that is always at least satisfactory and sometimes good.
- The opportunity for all pupils to take an examination in the subject at the end of Year 11.
- The capacity for improvement now that a new head of department is in post.

Areas for improvement

- The attainment of pupils, particularly in the short course GCSE.
- The behaviour of a minority of pupils, particularly boys.
- The monitoring of pupils' performance in the subject, in order to set targets, guide curricular planning and create appropriate teaching materials.
- Resources for learning, including video films and computer technology.

136. Although there is no data on the level of religious understanding of pupils entering the school, the evidence from the work of Year 7 pupils points to a relatively low level of prior attainment. Standards are below average by the end of Year 9 and also by the end of Year 11, although most pupils are entered for the short course GCSE. Over the past four years results have been below average and in 2001 were particularly low. Girls perform better than boys.

137. Inspection evidence confirms these standards at both Years 9 and 11. From the low level on entry pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 7 to 9. Year 9 pupils can recall basic information about Christian beliefs and practices, such as the doctrine of the Trinity and prayer, and can name major festivals. The work they produce is not at a high enough level: they do have only a limited understanding of the beliefs and practices of the major religions of the world, including Christianity. There is, however, unsatisfactory progress in Years 10 and 11. Year 10 pupils are only able to discuss the problems faced by one-parent families in a fairly superficial way, and Year 11 pupils have little knowledge of how religion is presented in the media. Lower attaining pupils and any that are gifted or talented are not making satisfactory progress at any stage, because tasks set in lessons are not sufficiently designed to meet the differing learning needs of the pupils.

138. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and in a significant proportion of lessons, good. This has not been true, however, for the whole of this academic year; teaching was affected by a succession of temporary teachers at the start of the year, and many of the lessons in Years 10 and 11 are still being taken by non-specialists. These teachers are now being well supported, but it is still the case that pupils do not all benefit from good subject knowledge and understanding. Their learning is, however, enhanced by good lesson planning in the majority of classes and by sound teaching methods. An example of this was in a Year 7 lesson on the importance of social justice, where pupils worked first in pairs and then in fours to make difficult choices about what kind of people should be rescued from a sinking ship if not all could be saved. The negotiations that were involved in the task were an integral part of the learning. But much other teaching is satisfactory. Teachers do not always have high enough expectations of their pupils, especially in Years 10 and 11, where behaviour in lessons is not always managed well. This leads to the unsatisfactory progress of these pupils. A Year 11 class looking at religion and the media were allowed to chat amongst themselves too much and were not sufficiently challenged by the tasks they were given.

Skills, knowledge and understanding are acquired very slowly, although the basic skills of literacy and, to a lesser extent numeracy, are addressed well. Teachers assess the knowledge and understanding of their pupils by asking appropriate questions in lessons, often as a means of recapping work done previously. Year 8 pupils showed what they had learned about Hinduism, and could recall details of key beliefs and holy writings. Homework is set regularly and marking is thorough, although pupils do not have a great awareness of their own learning. Where there are clear national standards to be reached, in the GCSE short course, pupils are not clear what they need to do to achieve success. Their pace of working varies, as does the intellectual effort they contribute to their learning. To a large extent, this is a legacy of the past, and better teaching should enable them to achieve more. Where the teachers are able to catch their interest, pupils can be seen to be learning well.

139. The attitude of pupils to their learning is better in Years 7 to 9 than it is later, but overall it is satisfactory. Relationships with teachers can be quite positive. Although there is some unsatisfactory behaviour, it does not appear to be in order to cause trouble deliberately. Most of the unsatisfactory behaviour takes the form of off-task chatter and lack of concentration. Too many pupils are not taking responsibility for their own learning and waste time through a lack of commitment to their studies, particularly boys. The low standards can be attributed more to this poor learning culture in this subject that has arisen over several years than to deficiencies in teaching at the moment.
140. The head of department has only been in post since November, and still has much to do. All pupils in the school have lessons in line with the Lancashire Agreed Syllabus, with the short course GCSE available to all Year 10 and 11 pupils. At the moment, the schemes of work are in need of updating to bring them more fully into line with the syllabuses, particularly the GCSE. Assessment needs to be brought into line with external criteria and academic targets set in the subject. Learning materials are underdeveloped to meet the needs of different groups of pupils: better assessment will make this easier. Ideally, the department should move towards more specialist teaching, but support for the very committed staff who are helping with the provision of religious education is a short-term necessity. There has been some monitoring by the head of department, who is already creating a sense of purpose and direction, appreciated by his colleagues. Resources at the moment are just adequate: up-to-date books and relevant video films are seen as being needed. Computer technology is underused.
141. The provision is not significantly different from that at the time of the last inspection. This masks the fact that the provision was adversely affected earlier in this academic year. It is now satisfactory, with a real capacity for improvement.