

INSPECTION REPORT

CIRENCESTER DEER PARK SCHOOL

Cirencester

LEA area: Gloucestershire

Unique reference number: 115771

Head teacher: Mr D Carter

Reporting inspector: Mr R Palmer
31198

Dates of inspection: 17th – 19th September 2001

Inspection number: 192506

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Foundation

Age range of pupils: 11 to 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Stroud Road
Cirencester

Postcode: GL7 1XB

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Dr G Potter

Date of previous inspection: 3rd March 1997

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Cirencester Deer Park School is a co-educational, foundation comprehensive school for pupils aged 11 to 16 years, located on the edge of the market town of Cirencester in Gloucestershire. The school has 1089 pupils (567 boys and 522 girls), is bigger than most other secondary schools in England and is over-subscribed. It became a specialist technology college in September 1995. In recognition of its successful work in information and communication technology (ICT) and the strengths recognised in its previous inspection report, it became a 'Beacon School' in September 1999. Pupils are from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. They come mainly from the five local primary schools in the town and the primary schools that serve the surrounding, rural villages. The attainment of pupils on entry at age 11 is slightly above average overall. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals (5.1 per cent) is below the national average. The proportion (1.4 per cent) of pupils who speak English as an additional language, is a little higher than in most schools, but none are at an early stage of learning English. A small proportion of pupils, around two per cent, are of non-white ethnic background. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs (17.2 per cent) is below average. Most of these pupils have specific or moderate learning difficulties or emotional and behavioural difficulties. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs (3.3 per cent) is average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Cirencester Deer Park School is a very good school. It has some excellent features and justifies its status as a 'Beacon School'. It provides a very good quality of education for pupils of all backgrounds and levels of attainment. The excellent leadership and management of the headteacher and the very good support provided by the governors and senior staff are key elements in the school's continuing success. Results in the National Curriculum tests taken by pupils at the age of 14 and in GCSE examinations by the age of 16 are well above national averages. These results represent very good and often outstanding achievement based on pupils' prior attainments. Achievement is high because expectations of both teachers and pupils are high. Within a very caring and friendly environment, pupils work hard and respond very positively to the very good teaching they receive. The school has many significant strengths and no important weaknesses. It provides very good value for money because pupils improve their standards of work considerably during their time at the school.

What the school does well

- Results in external examinations are well above national averages and represent very good and often outstanding progress and achievement.
- The excellent leadership and management of the headteacher, with the very good support of governors and senior staff, ensure that the school continues to build on its successes.
- The very good teaching and pupils' very positive attitudes to their work help pupils to achieve high standards.
- The school makes excellent use of information and communication technology (ICT) to

enhance the quality of teaching and learning and to promote the academic and personal development of all pupils.

- The very good quality of care, support and guidance and the school's commitment to the social inclusion of all its pupils, contribute significantly to pupils' all-round development.

What could be improved

- Pupils' GCSE results in history and geography in recent years have sometimes been lower than their results in other subjects.
- There is insufficient provision of religious education for pupils in Year 11. The school does not meet statutory requirements for the provision of a daily act of collective worship.
- The setting of homework is inconsistent and results in pupils sometimes having too much and sometimes too little homework.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Improvement since the previous inspection in 1997 is good. The school has done well to consolidate and build upon its previous strengths. It exceeded its challenging targets for GCSE results in 2001. Results and achievement in external examinations taken by pupils at the ages of 14 and 16 remain high, despite a slightly lower level of attainment of pupils when they enter the school at the age of 11. The performance of boys in GCSE examinations has improved significantly. The school continues to provide a very caring and positive environment for purposeful learning. The quality of teaching and learning has continued to improve and, on balance, in the lessons observed was very good. Leadership and management continue to make powerful and positive contributions to the school's many successful developments and ensure that pupils receive a high quality of education. Very good strategic and financial planning ensures cost-effectiveness. Progress has been very good in tackling two of the three key issues identified in the previous inspection. Provision for pupils with special educational needs now enables these pupils to make very good progress. The behaviour of the younger pupils in lessons is now very good overall. Progress on the third key issue is unsatisfactory because the school still does not meet statutory requirements for the provision of a daily act of collective worship.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
					well above A
					average B
					above average C
					average

GCSE examinations	A	A	A	A*	below average D well below E average
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Results in the national tests for 14-year-olds were well above average in 2000. Results in English, mathematics and science were well above average in all three subjects in 1999 and in 2000. These results indicate very good achievement for boys and girls of all levels of attainment when compared with pupils' previous attainment in the national tests taken at the age of 11. Compared with the results of similar schools, results in 2000 were well above average in English and science and above average in mathematics. Results are improving at a rate similar to the national improvement. This is a good achievement for the school because its results started from well above the national average. The standards of work seen in classes in Year 9 are currently well above average in English, mathematics and science.

GCSE results have been well above the national average in each of the last four years. Results are improving faster than the national rate of improvement. Results in 2000 were well above average in most subjects and were particularly high in design and technology and in physical education. In 2000, the GCSE results were in the top five per cent, when compared with the results achieved in similar schools. They indicate very high achievement when compared with pupils' prior attainment two years earlier in the national tests for pupils aged 14. Pupils of all levels of attainment, including pupils with special educational needs and those who are gifted or talented, make very good progress and maximise their achievement. In 2000, the proportion of GCSE results at the highest grade of A* was high. The GCSE results of boys were very high.

In all years, standards of work observed in classes confirm the well above average standards suggested by recent test and examination results. Standards in literacy and numeracy are high. Pupils use their very good ICT skills very well to enhance their work in most subjects. This is a direct consequence of the school's very effective management of the resources available to it as a specialist technology college.

Provisional GCSE results for 2001 show further improvement. The school did particularly well to exceed slightly the very challenging targets set for performance in GCSE examinations in 2001. Not surprisingly, the school was publicly recognised in 2001 by the Department for Education and Employment as a 'School of Achievement'.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils work hard and are keen to do their best. They readily participate in a wide range of activities in school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good both in class and around the school. Pupils are considerate to one another and to their teachers. Exclusions of pupils are few.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils learn how to become responsible young adults by the time that they leave. They respect the views of others and are sensitive to the needs of those less fortunate than

	themselves.
Attendance	Very good. Attendance is well above the national average. Unauthorised absence is below average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

On balance, the quality of teaching and the quality of learning are very good throughout the school. Outstanding teaching occurred in a few lessons. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Teaching is very effective in meeting the needs of all pupils. On balance, teaching is very good in English, mathematics and science. In the few satisfactory lessons, the pace of learning was sometimes not quick enough. The teaching of literacy is very good in all subjects. The teaching of numeracy is good. Pupils make very good progress and achieve very well in most lessons because pupils and teachers both have high expectations, pupils work hard and enthusiastically, and teachers use a very good variety of methods to enable pupils to keep their concentration and interest throughout the lesson. Teachers make excellent use of their good understanding of ICT to assist their assessment of pupils' work and progress. They can quickly spot underachievement. Very good relationships among pupils and between teachers and pupils create a pleasant atmosphere for working. Learning is very good in most lessons because pupils want to achieve as well as they can. Pupils of all levels of ability bring very positive attitudes to their work. They respond very well to the brisk pace of lessons. Pupils acquire a clear understanding of what they are expected to learn and how they can improve, because teachers plan the lessons very well to ensure appropriate progression and constantly review pupils' progress. Pupils usually enjoy the work because it is often stimulating and of sufficient difficulty to keep them at full stretch. They enjoy working independently and use ICT effectively to develop their work in many subjects.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good overall. The modular curriculum with its frequent, short-term targets is very effective in helping pupils to raise their attainment. Provision for teaching the key skills of literacy, oracy and ICT is very good. Pupils considerably enhance their work and personal development through active participation in a wide range of extra-curricular activities of very high quality. Suitable plans to deal with the current issue of insufficient religious education in Year 11 are in place.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good and much improved since the previous inspection. The use of learning coaches has helped these pupils to make rapid progress and to raise their self-esteem.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good. The small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language achieve very well because the work provided is appropriate to the individual's needs. The support

	provided by the local education authority is very effective.
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Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good provision is made for pupils' personal, moral, social and cultural education. Provision for spiritual education is good. Subjects contribute well to pupils' spiritual development but the insufficient amount of daily collective worship slightly restricts progress in this aspect.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. Pupils are well known as individuals. They receive excellent support to assist their academic and personal development. Suitable procedures for child protection and to promote health and safety are in place.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership of the headteacher is excellent. He receives very good support from all senior staff and others with managerial responsibilities. Their work focuses clearly and successfully on helping the pupils to make the best possible progress in everything they do.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The support, commitment and work of the governing body are a strength of the school. Governors know the school's strengths and areas for development very well. They set a clear direction and have very high expectations for the school's future progress.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Excellent. The school makes extremely effective use of data to monitor and evaluate all aspects of its performance. It sets very challenging targets for improvement. Systems to raise pupils' attainment and to enhance the quality of teaching and learning operate very successfully.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Financial management is very good. The school makes very effective use of its very good staffing, accommodation and learning resources. Spending decisions are carefully considered and are suitably related to the school's stated educational priorities.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents are very pleased with almost all aspects of the school's work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A large number of parents say that the amount of homework set is inconsistent

The inspection team strongly supports parents' views that this is a very good school. Inspectors agree with those parents who say that there are inconsistencies in the setting of homework. The school is acutely aware of parents' perceptions about the setting of homework. It is appropriately reviewing procedures. The quality of homework is usually very good and is an important contributory factor towards pupils' very good achievements. However, there are times when pupils have too much homework and other occasions when they have very little to complete.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Results in external examinations are well above national averages and represent very good and often outstanding progress and achievement.

1. The school's very good achievements in external examinations at all levels have been publicly recognised. In March 2001, the school received a 'School of Achievement' award from the then Department of Education and Employment for the excellence of its examination results compared with the results gained by similar schools. The school regularly exceeds the targets set for its achievement as a specialist technology college. It justifiably has the status of a 'Beacon School'. In this latter capacity, the school has provided much valuable assistance to help other schools to improve their standards.
2. When they enter the school at the age of 11, pupils' attainment is slightly above average. In recent years, the intake of pupils has continued to represent the whole range of attainment, but with a gradually increasing proportion of pupils of lower attainment. Pupils' results in national tests at the age of 14 and in GCSE examinations at the age of 16 are well above average. When compared with their previous attainment, these results represent very good achievement by the age of 14 and outstanding achievement by the age of 16. Pupils of all backgrounds and levels of prior attainment make very good progress throughout the school. Standards of work seen in classes and in scrutiny of pupils' work are similar to those attained in external examinations recently. Pupils are making very good progress and producing work that is well above average overall.
3. In 2000, the performance of pupils aged 14 in the national tests was well above average in the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science. These results indicate very good achievement in English and science, and good achievement in mathematics. In all three subjects, a well above average proportion of pupils gained Level 6 or above. In 2000, GCSE results in English were well above average and represent very good achievement based on pupils' prior attainment. Results in mathematics and science in that year were above average and indicate good achievement.
4. Pupils achieve very well in English because the teaching is often very good and pupils are keen to succeed. Teachers of English work well together to monitor pupils' work carefully and to ensure that pupils make appropriately rapid progress. Pupils acquire very good skills of oracy and literacy and use these skills to very good effect in all subjects.
5. In mathematics, pupils succeed because teachers make very effective use of systems to assess pupils' strengths and weaknesses in the subject and subsequently use the information to teach topics at the appropriate level of difficulty. Pupils increase their competence and confidence in mathematics through many good opportunities, in many subjects, to use and apply their numeracy in a range of interesting and investigative activities.

6. In science, pupils attain high standards because the well-planned programmes of work provide pupils with stimulating experiences in relevant scientific contexts. The lively and interesting lessons in science encourage pupils to acquire positive attitudes and to play an active part in their learning. Teachers make effective use of the excellent facilities in the science department and use ICT well to help pupils to make rapid progress.
7. The GCSE results in 2000 were well above the national average. They represent outstanding achievement both when compared with pupils' previous attainment in the national tests taken two years earlier and when compared with the results obtained by pupils in similar schools. Results in design and technology and physical education were particularly high and represent excellent achievement. Results in many subjects were high. Provisional GCSE results for 2001 show further improvement. The school is justifiably proud of its success in exceeding its very challenging targets for attainment in GCSE examinations in 2001.
8. In design and technology, GCSE results are usually very high, with a large proportion of pupils attaining grades A* and A. These results are particularly pleasing and reflect the school's standing as a specialist technology college. Standards are so high because the leadership of the department provides inspiration to the pupils and teachers to achieve at the highest possible level. The expectations set by teachers are very high, as they are in most subjects. Pupils gain a very good understanding of the subject through the policy of ensuring that the process of design is central to work in all aspects of the subject. Pupils increase their motivation in the subject through projects that are seen as relevant to industrial or commercial usage.
9. In physical education, standards are also high. In 2000, pupils achieved outstanding GCSE results in the subject. Several factors account for pupils' success in physical education. Teachers plan their schemes of work very effectively, after a careful analysis of pupils' skills and learning needs. Pupils receive plenty of encouragement to do well. The department operates on the principle that every pupil has the capacity to succeed in some aspect of physical activity. The arrangements for monitoring pupils' performances provide all pupils with appropriate and personal guidance on how to improve. The excellent leadership and management of the department and the commitment and industry of the talented teachers motivate pupils to seek the highest possible standards.
10. The performance of boys in GCSE examinations has improved considerably in recent years. The school has succeeded in significantly closing the gap between the GCSE results of boys and girls. In 2000, the average total GCSE points scored by boys were very high. The score has risen from four points above the national average in 1996 to nearly 15 points above in 2000.
11. Several contributory factors are responsible for the outstanding improvements in the academic performances of boys. The increase in the number of reports on pupils' progress from two to four has led to an earlier detection of potential underachievement. The regular and frequent setting of targets, resulting from the modular curriculum, has increased motivation, particularly of boys. An excellent programme of personal mentoring for all pupils has increased levels of commitment. The modular approach to the curriculum has helped boys who had previously not organised their work well. They now respond well to clearer deadlines for the completion of coursework and gain a clearer understanding of the objectives of the

work. Boys feel encouraged to improve because they receive rapid feedback on how well they are doing. In many lessons, boys improve their work as a result of the teacher's focus on developing boys' oral skills.

12. The provision of revision classes and homework clubs after school, plus refreshments, is of particular appeal to boys and helps them to improve. The increased use of ICT enables boys to enhance their learning in many subjects. The teaching technique of seating a boy next to a girl in many classes, as in classes of modern languages, deters boys from idle chatter and enables them to concentrate fully on their work. The attendance of boys, especially those of low attainment, is closely monitored to ensure that boys do not fall behind in their work.
13. In all subjects, pupils' standards are influenced positively by the quality of teaching, which is seldom less than good. Pupils make a very positive contribution to their own standards through their mature approach to learning. The school is not complacent about the high standards it achieves. It is constantly seeking ways to do even better.

The excellent leadership and management of the headteacher, with the very good support of governors and senior staff, ensure that the school continues to build on its successes.

14. The excellent leadership of the headteacher is a significant factor in the school's continued success and impressive improvements. The previous inspection report in 1997 referred to leadership and management as strengths of the school. They remain as considerable strengths. They focus suitably on raising achievement, assisting pupils' all-round personal development and constantly seeking improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. The headteacher receives very good support from the governors and from staff at senior and all other levels. Pupils, parents, governors and teachers all commented very favourably on the very positive influence of the headteacher on the school's high standards and its deservedly very good reputation locally.
15. The headteacher and governing body set out a very clear educational direction for the school that is communicated very effectively to all staff. They have very high expectations of staff and pupils. The headteacher is approachable to staff and pupils alike and has a very visible presence around the school. He has a good knowledge of the pupils. He leads by personal example and through persuasion. Under his sensitive but firm guidance, the school continually strives to achieve a very high quality of performance in all aspects of its work. The school has a determination to succeed. It has a commitment to assist pupils of all backgrounds and levels of attainment to maximise their academic achievements and their all-round, personal development.
16. The aim of raising the attainment of all pupils to the highest possible level is clearly evident throughout the school and is achieving considerable success. This success is indicated in the outstanding GCSE results gained in 2000. These results were considerably higher than expected when measured against pupils' previous attainments in the national tests taken at the ages of 11 and 14. Results in 2001 were even higher overall, and provide compelling evidence of the school's refusal to be complacent about its standards. Pupils know that they are expected to work hard. They respond very positively to try to achieve their best. Teachers have a

strong and shared commitment to improve further the quality of teaching and learning.

17. The school has a friendly and very purposeful ethos within which staff and pupils try very hard to achieve high standards of work and behaviour. The very good provision of care and support encourages very positive relationships between pupils and teachers that help to create a very encouraging environment for learning. Teachers contribute enthusiastically and very industriously to all aspects of life within the school. The morale of teachers and pupils is high. The very good relationships between teachers and pupils create a very good team spirit within the school. A very large proportion of pupils make significant advances in their academic and personal development through active participation in a very wide range of extra-curricular learning opportunities of high quality.
18. Procedures for evaluating the school's performance and planning for improvement are excellent. The outcomes of these procedures are excellent. The school has a self-evaluative culture that enables it to make important improvements. The headteacher, governors and senior managers frequently and rigorously monitor data relating to the school's performance. They conduct realistic appraisals of the school's current strengths and areas for improvement. The governing body sets very challenging targets for pupils' and all departments' performances in external examinations, following a careful study of pupils' prior attainment and of other relevant assessment data. In 2000, the school met its targets for performance in the national tests for 14 year olds and for GCSE results. It met the main targets set for performance as a specialist technology college. The school met its very challenging targets for GCSE results in 2001. This achievement is particularly praiseworthy because senior staff had been understandably anxious that the targets had possibly been set too high in relation to pupils' prior attainments. Targets for future performances in external examinations have been set at challenging rather than comfortable levels.
19. The leadership and management of subjects are very good overall. For example, the outstanding leadership and organisation of the design and technology and physical education departments ensure that the expectations of pupils and teachers in these subjects are as high as possible. These departments make very effective provision of curricular, teaching and learning resources to enable pupils to achieve excellent external examination results. Across all subjects there is a shared vision of pursuing the highest possible achievement for pupils from all backgrounds and levels of prior attainment. Teachers of all subjects show a capacity and commitment to raise standards further.
20. Pupils are generally happy at school and proud to belong to it. They know that they are expected to work hard. They respond very positively and in a mature fashion to try to achieve their best. Teachers in all subjects are committed to improving further the quality of teaching and learning; they benefit from a very good programme of staff development.
21. The work of the governing body is one of the school's many strengths. It is an important factor in the school's high achievements and all-round success. Governors carry out their responsibilities very effectively. They are actively involved in the work of the school and are very well informed about the performances of all subjects. They monitor developments closely and effectively. They review all aspects of the school's performance and take effective action to improve.

Governors suitably and sensitively call the headteacher and senior staff to account. They show a keen interest in the all-round development, as well as the academic success, of all pupils.

22. Through the commitment and hard work of staff at all levels and the active cooperation of the pupils, the school has made good progress since its previous inspection. The quality of teaching and learning has improved further and is very good. Attainment in public examinations remains well above the national average and represents significant added value.

The very good teaching and pupils' very positive attitudes to their work help pupils to achieve high standards.

23. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection and is very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Parents are justified in their view that the teachers are hardworking and caring. The quality of learning is very good because pupils have very positive attitudes and mature approaches to their work. Pupils make very good progress because they pay very good attention in class and work hard and enthusiastically.
24. The quality of teaching is very good, and occasionally excellent, in a substantial number of lessons. The overall quality of teaching seen was very good in English, mathematics and science. Just under half of the teaching in these subjects was good and a very small amount was satisfactory.
25. The school is succeeding in meeting its prime aim of continually improving the quality of teaching and learning. The arrangements for the professional development of staff are very effective. These include a strong focus on the observations of lessons, which are followed by detailed and helpful, professional feedback to teachers. The readiness to share good practice leads to a consistency in the quality of teaching across subjects.
26. Two significant factors that contribute towards pupils' very good achievement are the very good knowledge teachers have of pupils' learning needs and the very effective implementation of a mentoring system that helps pupils know how well they are doing and how to improve.
27. Teachers have very high expectations for pupils. They ensure that pupils learn very well and quickly in the large majority of classes because they plan the lessons very well and encourage pupils to participate actively. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very positive. Pupils generally are very keen to do well. They learn very well because teachers provide a very clear outline of the lesson's aims and provide a good range of timed activities and targets. Teachers relate the content of the lesson to past and future learning. Quick, but thorough revision of previous work then usually follows. Teachers use probing questions and relevant discussion. Because pupils have very good skills and confidence in speaking, most teachers make very effective use of the discussions in class, in pairs or in groups, to help pupils to progress at a fast rate. In lessons in modern languages, for example, teachers very skilfully ensure that oral questions are of appropriate difficulty for pupils of different levels of attainment. They are equally as skilful in ensuring that the responses from pupils are of a standard appropriate to the pupil's individual capability.

28. Many of the features common to the very good lessons observed in many subjects were observed in a particularly successful lesson in design and technology for pupils in Year 8. In this lesson, pupils of all levels of prior attainment made excellent progress because they were constantly challenged to think and to give detailed oral explanations of how to carry out work on a project in graphics. Throughout the lesson, which was conducted at a fast and appropriate pace, pupils responded very eagerly to the teacher's encouragement and praise. The lesson began with the teacher explaining clearly the criteria for successful completion of the project. After a review of homework, the teacher indicated appreciation of pupils' work and arranged for the class to circulate to examine and evaluate each other's work. Pupils enjoyed this activity. They developed confidence through increased understanding of the topic by saying what they liked about other pupils' work. The teacher made effective use of pupils' previous work to elicit ideas for their designs. He helped to develop pupils' creative and graphical skills through displays of examples of their finished products, and discussions about them. Carefully-timed activities ensured that pupils concentrated well. The teacher has established a very good working atmosphere within which pupils feel able to discuss and exchange ideas freely. At suitable stages, the teacher introduced skills such as lettering to keep up the momentum of the lesson. Pupils with special educational needs made very good progress because they received very good support from the teacher and the work was of appropriate difficulty. The outstanding displays of work in the classroom stimulated pupils' learning. At the end of the lesson, pupils very effectively reviewed what they had learned.
29. Pupils acquire very good skills, knowledge and understanding in the different subjects and improve their basic skills of literacy, ICT and numeracy. The teaching of literacy and oracy is very good. Pupils use these skills with confidence and competence in all subjects. Teachers in all subjects have acquired good skills in ICT. As a result, pupils receive many good opportunities to use their very good ICT skills to good effect to assist their work. The teaching of numeracy skills is good. Pupils use their very good mathematical skills well in many subjects.
30. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs has improved since the last inspection and is now very good. Teachers make effective use of the well-written individual education plans to ensure that the work is matched well to pupils' needs. Pupils of low attainment have improved their work considerably through the provision of a coaching centre in which they receive additional help, in small groups, to develop their key skills.
31. Pupils of all levels of prior attainment appreciate the opportunities to enhance their work through attendance at events after school organised by teachers. These include the 'almost period 7' session from 3.30 to 4.30, additional top-up sessions, revision workshops and surgeries, plus a range of extra-curricular activities of high quality.
32. The few pupils for whom English is an additional language receive very good teaching. Pupils who arrive at the school with little or no knowledge of English receive very good support and settle in quickly.

The very good quality of care, support and guidance and the school's commitment to the social inclusion of all its pupils, contribute significantly to pupils' all-round development.

33. Pupils and parents are right to be proud of their school because it provides a very good quality of education that enables all pupils to try to achieve their potential, within a safe, friendly and very caring environment. They know that the school has high standards of attainment and high expectations and that it is justifiably held in high regard locally. All of the 514 parental questionnaires that were returned before the inspection responded that the school expected pupils to work hard. About seven parents in every ten strongly agreed with this view.
34. The quality of pastoral care is very good. Relationships between pupils and teachers are very good and are based on mutual respect. The school provides pupils with very effective personal support and guidance through its team of caring tutors and heads of year. Pupils and parents greatly value the very effective system of mentoring. All pupils receive at least three personal, mentoring sessions of 15 minutes or so every year. Pupils feel that mentors make realistic appraisals of their academic and personal development. Mentors use the school's excellent data to analyse each pupil's progress and to determine short-term targets for future improvement. Individual targets are then written following consultation between pupil and mentor and are sent to parents. These academic and personal targets are referred immediately to all appropriate staff in the school. This means that all relevant teachers very quickly become aware of individual pupils' particular learning needs, so that, for example, any underachievement in a particular subject can be tackled quickly. A few pupils said that they sometimes feel under pressure in the mentoring interviews to give the answers that the teacher wants to hear. However, they also said that they greatly value these sessions because they helped them to raise standards and teachers really got to know them well. Mentoring is proving to be an important and valuable means of helping pupils to achieve very well academically and to aid their personal development. The school's appropriate intention is that all pupils should have their own 'individual education plan' that is reviewed regularly.
35. In this high-achieving school, pupils of all backgrounds and prior attainment are made to feel welcome. Pupils with special educational needs, for example, receive support and teaching of very good quality that enables them to achieve academic and social success. In GCSE examinations, pupils with special educational needs often gain results that indicate excellent progress, as shown by some of these pupils gaining A*-C grades in the GCSE examination in humanities taken one year early at the end of Year 10. These pupils play a full part in all aspects of school life, including extra-curricular activities. The few pupils of minority ethnic origin play a full and equal part in the life and work of the school. The school caters well for the small minority of pupils who have disaffection for school. It has suitably provided a more diverse curriculum, with a vocational bias, to raise the self-esteem of these pupils in Years 10 and 11. It also gives an entitlement to all pupils in these years to obtain vocational qualifications in ICT.
36. Pupils respond very well to the school's very caring approach. They show enthusiasm and very positive attitudes to school through good attendance and in their considerate and courteous behaviour. They have a commitment to work hard, to achieve high standards and are tolerant and respectful of the feelings of others. They readily cooperate with each other and with their teachers.

The school makes excellent use of ICT to enhance the quality of teaching and learning and to promote the academic and personal development of all pupils.

37. The provision of ICT is a considerable strength of the school. It permeates the curriculum and is used very effectively to support the management of the school. The school has exceptionally good facilities that are used very effectively to help pupils to achieve very well both in formal lessons and in independent study. All pupils in Years 10 and 11 improve their knowledge and understanding of ICT through a vocational course of study that leads to accreditation. This course is taught through the school's Intranet and is intended to appear soon on the school's website. The course serves as a very good preparation for pupils to use ICT in the outside world of work or in further education.
38. Teachers have benefited from very good in-service training in the use of ICT. All teachers are sufficiently competent and confident to use ICT to enhance the quality of teaching and learning.
39. The use of ICT is central to pupils' education. It has a positive effect on pupils' standards. Pupils develop their very good skills in discrete ICT lessons in the lower years. They use these skills to very good effect in many other subjects for the rest of their time in school. For example, in a very good music lesson in Year 9, pupils made very good use of computers to help their understanding of musical composition. In the same lesson, the teacher used a wide range of ICT resources, including a PowerPoint demonstration, to illustrate the main teaching points and to ensure that pupils enjoyed the work.
40. A significant feature of the school's use of ICT occurs within the school's monitoring and administrative systems and has a consequent positive effect on the quality of education at the school. Computing systems are used most effectively to provide very up-to-date databases of pupils' records. These can be accessed quickly and easily by teachers and, as appropriate, by pupils. The records contain a host of useful information such as end-of-year grades and comments, modular grades for all subjects, pastoral records, individual education plans, pastoral support plans and results of academic and personal mentoring. Of particular usefulness is the listing of arrangements and organisation for the learning support staff for pupils with special educational needs.
41. Because teachers have good skills in using ICT they make efficient use of time. They use electronic markbooks effectively. Afternoon registration is properly carried out in subject teaching groups because teachers use electronic registration systems efficiently.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Pupils' GCSE results in history and geography in recent years have sometimes been lower than their results in other subjects.

42. In recent years, the GCSE results in geography and history have fluctuated and have been around, and sometimes above, the national average. The school's GCSE results in nearly all other subjects have been above or, more usually, well above the national averages.
43. The main reason for these generally lower grades in history and geography is that pupils study these subjects for a much shorter time than the two years usually provided. Until this year, all pupils have followed a course in humanities during Year

10. At the end of Year 10 they sat the GCSE examination in humanities one year early. They followed this by studying GCSE courses in one of religious education, history or geography during Year 11. Although some aspects of history and geography featured as part of the work in humanities in Year 10, teachers and pupils have been at full stretch to ensure all parts of the GCSE courses in history and geography have been covered in sufficient depth. Accordingly, results in both history and geography have been generally lower than the very good achievements made by pupils overall.

- 44. Achievement overall in the humanities subjects is high. Nearly all pupils have gained GCSE grades in the discrete humanities course at the end of Year 10 as well as in a discrete course in history, geography or religious education at the end of Year 11. In 2001, three out of every four pupils in Year 10 gained a GCSE pass at grades A*-C in humanities.
- 45. In an attempt to bring the GCSE results in history and geography to the same consistently high standards achieved in other subjects, the school has, from the beginning of the current school year, provided suitable amounts of curricular time for each subject in Years 10 and 11. It has, at least temporarily, shelved its policy of teaching a one-year course in humanities in Year 10.

There is insufficient provision of religious education for pupils in Year 11. The school does not meet statutory requirements for the provision of a daily act of collective worship.

- 46. The school is aware that its current provision for religious education for pupils in Year 11 is insufficient. The provision does not enable all pupils to receive their full entitlement according to the locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education.
- 47. The reorganisation of the teaching programmes for humanities subjects from September 2001 has led to more suitable arrangements for the teaching of religious education to all pupils in Year 11 from next year. All pupils in Year 10 currently follow a new, short GCSE course in religious education, which meets the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education. They will continue to study this course to the end of Year 11 next year.
- 48. The school does not meet statutory requirements for the provision for a daily act of collective worship. Although pupils often extend their learning and develop their personal skills through year-group assemblies and in tutor periods, they have few opportunities to experience worship. The school is unable to accommodate the whole school for assembly.

The setting of homework is inconsistent and results in pupils sometimes having too much and sometimes too little homework.

- 49. The overall quality and quantity of homework are good. Teachers set homework of appropriate difficulty and interest that is an important contributory factor to pupils' very good achievement. Pupils take their homework seriously. Most are keen to complete it as well as they can.
- 50. However, the school is well aware of the concerns of a number of pupils and parents that current arrangements result in pupils sometimes having too much homework to complete by a set deadline and sometimes having relatively little

homework to complete. The school has felt that the imposition of a rigid timetable for homework could result in teachers sometimes setting homework of inappropriate quality, simply to meet the requirements of the homework timetable rather than pupils' educational needs.

51. The school publishes a clearly defined timetable to ensure a balanced amount of homework for pupils in Year 7. However, in other years, in accordance with the school's homework policy, faculties set homework at an appropriate point in the module of study. This leads at times to an unequal load of homework for pupils in Years 8 to 11 on a day-to-day basis.
52. Pupils in Year 9, for example, said that the setting of homework was inconsistent among subjects. These pupils said that the operation of a two-weekly timetable resulted in more homework being set in one of the weeks than in the other. They also pointed out that because homeworks were set on different days for some subjects in alternate weeks, it was difficult for pupils to establish a settled routine for doing homework. They referred to Thursdays and Fridays as 'bad' days for homework.
53. The school is currently considering the effectiveness of its policy for homework and particularly how it can explain the policy more clearly to parents. Interesting developments include the listing of homework on the school's Intranet and departmental websites. In subjects such as history, parents sometimes communicate directly with the department through use of websites. The school recognises that not all parents can avail themselves of this service and is considering other means of suitably publicising the details about homework. Pupils enter the title pages of modules, which list the homeworks due to be set, in their exercise books to try to make the homeworks clearer. The school is developing systems to monitor the provision of homework more effectively during tutor periods.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

54. The school has a very good awareness of its strengths and the areas for development. In order to improve standards further the school should continue its work on the following issues.

- (1) Improve GCSE results in history and geography so that they consistently match the well above average results achieved in most other subjects.
(Paragraphs: 42, 43)
- (2) Ensure that pupils in Year 11 receive their full entitlement to the curriculum for religious education. Meet statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship.
(Paragraphs: 46, 48)
- (3) Improve the arrangements for setting homework, and monitor them closely so that pupils have a more consistent and balanced provision of homework.
(Paragraphs: 50-52)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

51

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

43

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	3	25	20	3	0	0	0
Percentage	6	49	39	6	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

Number of pupils on the school's roll

Y7 – Y11

1089

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

55

Special educational needs

Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs

Y7 – Y11

36

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

187

English as an additional language

Number of pupils with English as an additional language

No of pupils

15

Pupil mobility in the last school year

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

No of pupils

9

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

15

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.4
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2000	113	110	223

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	85	94	94
	Girls	96	92	85
	Total	181	186	179
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	81 (87)	83 (77)	80 (80)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	49 (47)	57 (49)	47 (43)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	84	97	90
	Girls	100	92	91
	Total	184	189	181
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	83 (77)	85 (88)	81(69)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	48 (43)	53 (51)	36 (32)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	2000	115	93	208

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	76	113	116
	Girls	61	91	94
	Total	137	204	210
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	66 (69)	98 (97)	100 (99)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	50.8 (50.5)
	National	38.4 (38.0)

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	12	66.7
	National		n/a

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	2
Indian	2
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	1081
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	7	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)	60.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	13
Total aggregate hours worked per week	470

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74%
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	25.6
Key Stage 4	23.2

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	2 984 081
Total expenditure	2 925 147
Expenditure per pupil	2681
Balance brought forward from previous year	310 485*
Balance carried forward to next year	369 419

*Committed expenditure

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	14
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	20

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1107
Number of questionnaires returned	514

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	39	54	4	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	50	47	3	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	24	67	6	1	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	24	56	17	2	1
The teaching is good.	40	56	2	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	52	41	6	1	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	59	36	4	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	68	32	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	40	51	7	1	1
The school is well led and managed.	60	38	1	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	46	48	4	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	53	41	4	1	1