

INSPECTION REPORT

THE THOMAS AVELING SCHOOL

Rochester, Kent

LEA area: Medway

Unique reference number: 118923

Headteacher: Mrs E Ruston

Reporting inspector: Mr Brian Rowe
1695

Dates of inspection: 12th – 14th February 2001

Inspection number: 192512

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Secondary Modern

School category: Foundation

Age range of pupils: 11 - 18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Arethusa Road
Rochester
Kent

Postcode: ME1 2UW

Telephone number: 01634 844809

Fax number: 01634 818385

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Richard Wood

Date of previous inspection: November 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Team members | | |
|--------------|----------------|----------------------|
| 1695 | Brian Rowe | Registered inspector |
| 9334 | Jenny Mynett | Lay inspector |
| 19026 | Brian Downes | Team inspector |
| 11584 | David Lee | Team inspector |
| 12331 | Vera Grigg | Team inspector |
| 3755 | Trevor Hulbert | Team inspector |

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33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Thomas Aveling is a mixed secondary modern school for students aged 11 – 18 years. It is situated in Rochester in the Medway unitary authority, which is an area that operates a selective education system. Consequently, the students' attainment on entry to the school is well below average. The school draws students from an extensive geographical region around the school. There are students from a wide range of backgrounds, but the proportion from disadvantaged backgrounds is much higher than average. There are currently 1077 on roll, larger than an average secondary school. The proportion of students from ethnic minorities is 9.6 per cent, which is close to the national average. Those speaking English as an additional language is higher than in most schools. The proportion of students (21.8 per cent) receiving free school meals is high when compared to the national average. Over 50 per cent of the students have been placed on the special educational needs register. Twenty-six of them have statements for special educational needs; this is much higher than average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Thomas Aveling is a highly effective school. By the time students leave at 16 years of age, they achieve academic standards that are higher than those of other similar schools, but lower than the averages for all maintained schools nationally. Students continue to make good progress in the sixth form. Most students have very positive attitudes about the school and work to improve their own performance. The vast majority are well behaved and form supportive relationships with each other and their teachers. However, there are a few who do not take their work sufficiently seriously. Most students attend school regularly and try hard in lessons. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good, but teachers new to the school need time to establish their authority before becoming fully effective. Teachers are conscientious and develop good relationships with the students. This contributes greatly to the friendly and positive ethos and ensures that students make good progress as they move through the school. There is a very high level of care and support for students and the school has developed a range of procedures to monitor and support students' academic and personal development. Students with special educational needs and English as an additional language are supported well to raise their attainment and develop their learning skills. Most parents appreciate the efforts of staff and regard the school highly. Parents receive regular information about their children's progress and what is happening in school. The school has made very good improvement since the last inspection and is aware of its strengths and areas for future development. The headteacher, who is very well supported by the senior management team and the governors, provides outstanding leadership and gives a clear direction for the school. The sixth form is cost effective and overall the school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Provides outstanding leadership and management.
- Good teaching ensures students achieve well in their subjects, particularly at Key Stage 4 and the sixth form.
- It creates a very positive environment in which each student has good opportunities to develop socially, culturally and academically.
- Provides a high level of care and support for students.
- Develops the students' creative and performing talents.

What could be improved

- The use made of performance data (the results arising from teachers' marking of pupils' work and tests) to set group and individual student targets.
- The use of information and communication technology across all subjects.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

At the last inspection, which took place in November 1996, the school was judged to provide a very good education for all students. Since then the school has made very good improvement. The key issues identified in the previous report have been addressed, with the exception of providing a daily act of collective worship. There have also been significant improvements in other important areas. These include a continued focus on raising students' attainment. The school is able to show considerable value-added performance, especially in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form.

There has been a remarkable amount of development. For example, the school has gained the Investors in People and Sportsmark awards, achieved the Basic Skills Quality Mark and Technology College status.

Improved support for lower attaining students has been achieved through an increased number of teaching assistants. The staff work hard to ensure all students have access to a suitable range of subjects and courses. The students' cultural development has been improved since the last inspection. The school has successfully established a behaviour improvement programme and also Summer Schools to improve new students' literacy and numeracy skills. It has successfully introduced systematic review and monitoring systems. The arrangements for assessing students' performance have improved and the school uses this information to set individual student targets for progress, although this is an area for further development. There have been several innovative curriculum initiatives including the introduction of vocational and work related programmes. The school has also won a prestigious Top Scholars Award for developing the carnival theme as a learning module in a GNVQ course. The school is also successfully involved in the initial training of teachers.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 and 18 year olds based on average point scores in GCSE and A/AS level examinations.

| Performance in: | Compared with | | | | Key |
|--------------------|---------------|------|------|-----------------|--|
| | All schools | | | similar schools | |
| | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2000 | |
| GCSE examinations | E | D | D | B | Very high A* Well above average A Above average B Average C Below average D Well below average E Very low E* |
| A-levels/AS-levels | E* | E | E* | | |

When students enter school in Year 7 their attainment is well below average. In 2000, the school's total GCSE/GNVQ points score¹ was below the national average, but above that of similar schools. Over the last four years, the trend in the school's average point score per student has risen in line with improvements achieved nationally. At the end of Key Stage 4 (Year 11), the proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE A*-C grades in the 2000 examinations was well below the national and similar school averages. The number of students gaining five or more A*-C grades over the last five years has improved steadily. Attainment in English mathematics and science is below national averages, but in each subject above similar school averages. Also in the 2000 examinations, the proportion of students gaining five or more A* - G grades was above the national averages and well above when compared to similar schools. The proportion of students achieving one or more A* -G grade was well above both national and similar school averages. The school has made good progress in raising the attainment of the students during the last few years and in ensuring students of all abilities gain examination success. At times, boys have outperformed girls, contrary to the national trend. Overall students' progress and achievement are good in Key Stage 4. However, achievement in geography, modern foreign languages and business studies was unsatisfactory, mostly due to staffing issues. The school sets realistically ambitious targets for improvement and is mostly successful in achieving them.

The 2000 Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9 reveal that the combined average points score for English, mathematics and science is below the national average, but in line with similar schools. Results over the last few years have broadly kept pace with the national trend of scores. Attainment in English was well below national and similar school averages. Attainment in mathematics was below the national average, but in line with similar schools. In science, attainment was also below the national average, but above that for similar schools. Given the low attainment on entry, the students make satisfactory progress. However, the school is finding it difficult to raise attainment significantly at Key Stage 3. In both key stages the standards of work seen in lessons and students' books reflect the attainment indicated by the test and examination results. However, in English, the quality of work seen was better than that suggested by the most recent examination results and more in line with results from previous years.

The number of students staying on in the sixth form and taking two or more A/AS levels or advanced GNVQs has steadily risen over the last few years. Compared to the national average, A level results are very low, but analysis of the A level results and the way the school helps its sixth-form students, shows that they frequently exceed predicted performance and their achievement is good. Students achieve well and have steadily

¹ The average points score provides schools with a single statistic to compare the overall grades attained by their pupils with the grades attained by pupils in another school. At Key Stage 3 the Level attained by each pupil, for example, in mathematics, is given a score. A Level 4 = 27 points, a Level 5 = 33 points and so on. Therefore the average points score in mathematics is worked out by adding up all of the points based on the Level attained by pupils and then dividing by the number of pupils who took the test. Therefore, a school whose average points score for mathematics in the end of Key Stage 3 tests is greater than 33 is one whose pupils are performing above that expected for their age. The calculation is similar for the GCSE points score. The only difference is the value of the points assigned to an individual grade, for example, an A* grade is worth 8 points, A is 7 points, B is 6 points and so on until grade G which is worth 1 point.

improved the results in the advanced GNVQ courses. The performance at Post-16 is a developing area of the school.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|--|
| Attitudes to the school | Very good. The vast majority of students show a genuine interest in the school and many make full use of the facilities. There are a small number of students in each year who are not sufficiently motivated. |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms | Overall, behaviour is good. |
| Personal development and relationships | Very good. Relationships between staff and students and the students themselves are warm and create an environment in which students flourish. |
| Attendance | Satisfactory. Attendance is broadly in line with other secondary schools. Punctuality to school in the morning and to lessons is good. |

TEACHING AND LEARNING

| Teaching of students: | Aged 11 – 13 years | Aged 14 – 16 years | Aged 17 – 18 |
|-----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------|
| Lessons seen overall | Good | Good | Good |

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

The quality of teaching is good overall. Teaching was sound or better in 96 per cent of lessons at Key Stage 3 and 90 per cent at Key Stage 4. In these key stages about 66 per cent of the teaching was judged as good or better. In about 33 per cent of the lessons, teaching was very good or excellent. Consequently, only a few of the lessons were unsatisfactory. There was only one poor lesson observed. These figures show an improvement in the proportion of good and very good teaching over that reported during the last inspection.

Throughout the school, students usually understand what is expected of them and most get on with their work. However, some teachers, particularly those who are new to the school, have not yet developed effective student behavioural management skills and at times are having difficulties managing some students who can be restless, rude and lose their concentration. There were no significant differences in the quality of teaching between the key stages or between subjects. The teaching of English, mathematics and science was good and there are examples of very good teaching in most departments. There were no general weaknesses in the teaching and specific strengths include the management of students, the use made of assessment to set targets, the effective teaching of literacy and to a lesser extent numeracy. The school is successful at matching the work to meet the needs of all students

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

| Aspect | Comment |
|---|---|
| The quality and range of the curriculum | The quality and range of the curriculum is good. It is very well supported by additional voluntary lessons, visits and activities. The school has developed its curriculum to raise students' attainment. It ensures that a high proportion attend school regularly so they make progress in their subjects and personal development. |
| Provision for students with special educational needs | The school provides extensive and effective support for students with special educational needs. |
| Provision for students with English as an additional language | About 10 per cent of the students have English as an additional language, but few are at an early stage of language acquisition. The support is effective. |
| Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social & cultural development | The school provides very good opportunities for students' personal development. The older students are given positions of responsibility to support younger students and this promotes their personal development. Students' cultural development is especially strong. This aspect has improved since the last inspection. |
| How well the school cares for its students | Very good care is provided for students. There are very good procedures to ensure child protection and students' welfare. Students' progress is reviewed regularly and there are very good systems to monitor and support students' academic and personal development. |

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|---|
| Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff | The headteacher, who is very well supported by the senior management team and the governors, provides outstanding leadership and gives a clear direction for the school. Most aspects of the school are very well managed and many are implemented to an extremely high level of effectiveness. |
| How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities | The governing body is very well informed about school issues. Governors fully understand their responsibility and contribute well to the school's strategic development. They are not fully meeting statutory requirements for providing a daily act of collective worship. |
| The school's evaluation of its performance | The school has established very good review and monitoring procedures that help to identify both its strengths and weaknesses and provide information about future developments. |
| The strategic use of resources | The school applies good principles of best value. The school makes very good use of a number of specific grants. |

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

One thousand questionnaires were sent out, of which 230 (23 per cent) were returned. Approximately 20 parents attended a meeting prior to the inspection to express their views about the school.

| What pleases parents most | What parents would like to see improved |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students enjoy going to school. • Students make good progress. • High expectations for attainment and behaviour. • The school helps students to mature and take responsibility. • The range of activities outside lessons. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The behaviour of students. • The amount of homework. • The way the school handles questions and problems. • Providing more information about their children's progress. • Working more closely with parents. |

The inspectors agree with the positive views identified above. With reference to the areas that the parents would like to see improved, the inspectors found that overall behaviour was good. Homework is regularly set and contributes positively to students' learning. The school has good procedures for dealing with questions and problems and several parents gave anecdotes to express their satisfaction with the way in which issues had been dealt with. The quality and quantity of information provided to parents is good and there are many opportunities for parents to make contact with the school. The school is continually seeking ways to involve parents in their children's education.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Provides outstanding leadership and management

- 1 One of the main strengths of the school is the quality of leadership at all levels. The headteacher demonstrates outstanding leadership. She has a clear vision for the future of the school and is determined to ensure a continual improvement to the quality of education provided for the students. The school has a clear set of aims and objectives that is recorded in the school's development plan and other published documents. The school is very successful in implementing its aims to ensure the educational and personal progress of its students.
- 2 One person alone cannot provide the necessary support for teachers to promote consistent improvements. In this respect the school is well served by a hard working, cohesive and dedicated senior management team. Since the last inspection, there have been very good improvements in many important aspects of school life. The senior management team is aware of any weaknesses that have to be addressed. For teachers this is a challenging and innovative school to work in. Many demands are placed upon them, but they know they will be well supported.
- 3 The management structure is particularly effective and the school has established clear roles within the senior and middle management team. The work of all academic and pastoral managers is supported through an appropriate structure of meetings that ensures good communication. The heads of faculty are efficient and have ensured that improvements have taken place within their departments. As over half of the students are placed on the school's register for special educational needs, the role of the special educational needs co-ordinator is particularly important and onerous.
- 4 The school has been especially successful in gaining and maintaining a number of important and prestigious management accreditations. For example, the school has gained the Investors in People and Sportsmark awards, achieved the Basic Skills Quality Mark and Technology College status. There has been a continued focus on raising students' attainment. The school is able to demonstrate considerable value-added performance, especially in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. The school has improved the support for lower attaining students through employing an increased number of teaching assistants. It works hard to ensure all students have access to a suitable range of subjects and courses. The school has established a behaviour improvement programme and Summer Schools for new entrants to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. The school has successfully introduced regular review systems to monitor students' work and the quality of teaching and learning. The arrangements for assessing students' performance have improved and the school uses this information to set individual student targets for progress, although this is an area for further development. There have been several innovative curriculum initiatives including the introduction of vocational and work related programmes. The school has also won a prestigious Top Scholars Curriculum Award for developing the carnival theme as a module in a GNVQ course. The school is successfully involved in the initial training of teachers.
- 5 The governors are aware of their responsibilities to meet all statutory requirements and for the overall performance of the school. With the exception of not complying with the requirements to provide a daily act of collective worship, the governors fulfil the statutory requirements. The governing body has a strategic view of the school's development due to the good review and monitoring procedures. Governors are confident with regard to fulfilling their role. They are committed to the school's improvement and work hard in a well-organised committee structure to ensure continuous development. The governors are very well informed about the school's successes and areas for development. They

maintain close monitoring of finances and make informed decisions based on accurate budget information. The chair of the governors' finance committee works closely with relevant school staff and the responsible officer to keep track of all expenditure. Both senior managers and governors are clear about the cost of developments and the identified targets in the development plan. The school applies best value principles very effectively.

- 6 The quality of the school's development planning and the systems for monitoring have improved since the last inspection. The thorough school development plan has been written after a process of review, involving the staff and the governors. The school's development plan identifies appropriate targets based on detailed review procedures. The planning is linked to staff appraisal and their training needs. The school is in a very good position to implement the forthcoming performance management requirements and sustain improvements.

Good teaching ensures students achieve well in their subjects, particularly at Key Stage 4 and the sixth form

- 7 The quality of teaching is good throughout the school. Of the lessons observed, 3 per cent of the teaching was excellent, 32 per cent was very good, 37 per cent was good and 23 per cent was satisfactory. There were only a few unsatisfactory or poor lessons. The quality of teaching is a strength of the school and has improved since the last inspection. Examples of very effective teaching were observed in most subjects and these included English, mathematics, science, art, drama, history, design and technology, music, physical education, vocational courses and personal, social and health education. However, some teachers, particularly those who are new to the school, have not yet developed effective student behavioural management skills and at times are having difficulties managing students who can be restless, rude and lose their concentration.
- 8 The good quality of teaching has a direct impact on raising students' attainment and this is especially notable in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. The number of students gaining five or more A*-C grades over the last five years has improved steadily. Attainment in English, mathematics and science is below national averages, but in each subject above similar school averages. In the 2000 examinations, the proportion of students gaining five or more A*-G grades was above the national averages and well above when compared to similar schools. The proportion of students achieving one or more A*-G grade was well above both national and similar school averages. The school has made good progress in raising the attainment of the students during the last few years and in ensuring students of all abilities gain examination success. At times, boys have outperformed girls, contrary to the national trend, though girls have achieved well in English. Students' progress and achievement are good in Key Stage 4.
- 9 The number of students staying on in the sixth form and taking two or more A/AS levels or advanced GNVQs has been steadily rising over the last few years. Compared to the national average, results are very low, but a value-added analysis reveals that the students frequently exceed their predicted performance and their achievement is good. The performance at Post-16 is a developing area of the school.
- 10 Teachers provide students with the key skills they need to learn effectively and gain success in public examinations. Teachers build on students' self-confidence to develop their independence and enjoyment of learning. Students' learning and achievement is strongly promoted through the teachers' high level of subject expertise and enthusiasm for the topic being taught. They frequently present interesting material in a lively manner. Most teachers have high expectations and set the students demanding challenges. Very good relationships between the students and teachers in the classroom create a positive learning environment where students learn effectively and with enjoyment. Teachers provide students with individual support when necessary and make good use of

systematic assessment to ensure a good rate of progress is maintained, both in lessons and throughout the units of work. Homework is used well to reinforce learning and develop the students' learning skills. In some lessons the teachers do not provide sufficient opportunity for students to take the initiative and develop their own ideas. In a very few lessons the learning outcomes planned were not shared with students; therefore, they were unsure what they were trying to achieve, hence they were not able to adequately assess their own progress.

- 11 Teachers assess students' progress through regular testing and the marking of work in class and homework. Teachers make good use of assessment data to set realistic but challenging targets for students to achieve. The marking of work usually gives students information and ideas about how to improve their work and understanding of the topic. Students who are not making sufficient progress are quickly identified and appropriate action to support them, including those in sixth form, is taken. Departments also monitor progress by undertaking reviews of students' work and analysing the results of tests throughout the year. The good use made of assessment and monitoring linked to good teaching is supporting the rise in academic standards and examination success.
- 12 The standard of teaching in English is good. It is very good in drama and in the teaching of literature. The specialist teachers have very good subject knowledge, which is used effectively to plan lessons and respond sensitively to issues raised in discussions. Learning objectives are shared and lesson summaries usually bring sessions to an elegant conclusion. Homework is regularly set and collected. Students are encouraged through regular use of written targets. Questioning in class and helpful comments improve the rigour of lessons and keep students on task. This was especially effective in a Year 11 lesson when students answered questions about the death of Macbeth. Most students are keen to do well and their positive attitude pervades the classrooms and is evident in the pride they take over the presentation of their work. Written work is regularly marked, with clear guidance on ways to improve offered. Attractive displays of students' work are used as teaching aids. The displays have good guidance statements to direct the reader to key features of students' work together with references to assessment criteria. With experience, teachers adapt well to the demands of the school context, but newer members of staff need time to develop their relationships with students so that lessons can proceed with pace and relevance.
- 13 The good teaching evident within the mathematics department underpins the learning students make throughout the school. Teachers use their good subject expertise effectively to encourage and motivate students to learn. In many lessons, teaching is good. The pace of lessons is well managed, enabling students to build confidently their knowledge, skills and understanding. This was seen in a Year 8 lesson where students made good progress with using negative numbers in a range of contexts. In another Year 8 group, students developed their confidence with using terms such as factor, multiple and prime through a mental activity which required them to provide different facts about a number. Students in a Year 9 group improved their mental arithmetic skills through effective teaching and regular practice in each lesson.
- 14 Most lessons are well planned and taught. In some lessons, limited consideration is given to the needs of the range of ability in the teaching groups and work does not always closely match the ability and needs of the students. Teachers have established good relationships with the students they teach and this enables groups to function effectively. In a Year 10 lesson, the teacher employed a skilful mix of questions with direct talking to students to demonstrate the process required to produce line graphs.
- 15 Teaching of mathematics in the sixth form is very good. Teachers' good subject knowledge is effectively used to promote learning. The enthusiastic way in which the subject was taught did much to generate confidence in a Year 12 lesson when students tackled some demanding aspects in a statistics unit of work.

- 16 Teaching is good in science. In all the satisfactory and better lessons, teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge, which promotes students' understanding. However, in a session about earth science the teacher had inadequate knowledge to produce an inspiring lesson. Very good lessons result from dynamic teaching, where an enthusiasm for the subject is shown by the teacher and transferred to the students. For example, in a Year 8 lesson on variation in inheritance showing students newspapers with the latest information about genes inspired them to visit web-sites. The students took the paper enthusiastically and copied down the web-site onto their hands as their books were packed away. In a Year 8 lesson, imaginative teaching methods were used and students were required to act out the solar system. There was a good variety of tasks used that engaged students' interest and ensured their motivation. In several lessons the pace was so breathtaking at times that no time was wasted and students made significant progress in their learning. Questioning is often very good. In two Year 8 lessons, probing questions such as '*What can you see*', '*how*', '*what do you think*', '*when*' and '*how often*' were used until students realised the effect of the environment on the growth of plants and there was deeper thinking about the complexities of the solar system. In a Year 10 lesson, the teachers' high expectations of students' behaviour, combined with a challenging piece of work motivated their learning, particularly the lower attaining students.
- 17 Teaching in modern foreign languages is satisfactory in just over half of the lessons and good in just under half. There is a small minority of poor teaching. Where teaching is poor it is mainly because inexperienced teachers have not yet developed sufficiently strong strategies for dealing with challenging behaviour. As a result, there is some disruption of other students' work. Where teaching is good, teachers have very good student control that is achieved without fuss and with quiet authority. In a Year 10 lesson, teaching methods were good and teachers made creative use of the overhead projector, flashcards and repetition 'games' as well as speaking, listening and writing tasks. These kept students involved in the lesson and busy all the time. Where teaching is satisfactory or better students behave well. They show good attitudes to work and take care over the presentation of their written work. The teaching has a positive impact on the achievement of students.

Creates a very positive environment in which each student has good opportunities to develop socially, culturally and academically

- 18 Relationships between staff and students and between the students themselves are good. These relationships are friendly and caring, creating a very positive atmosphere where students can flourish and develop well socially, culturally and academically. These positive relationships and the high level of care foster high standards of personal development. Through the wide variety of extra-curricular clubs and the opportunities for involvement in performing and creative activities the school has improved the cultural development of students since the last inspection.
- 19 Students are valued as individuals and for their contribution to the daily life in the school. Most students are polite, friendly and proud of their school and have a strong sense of loyalty. The older students are given considerable levels of responsibility that include acting as prefects and organising activities for younger students. Students show a great deal of respect to the building and the extremely attractive displays that are to be found in all areas of the school. The school takes every opportunity to praise students and celebrate their successes. There is an extensive reward system and students regularly receive public commendations to raise their self-esteem and motivate them to further achievements. All of these features, the stimulating displays and the supportive relationships combine to create a very positive environment in school.

Provides a high level of care and support for students.

- 20 The provision for the welfare of students is very good. It is underpinned by an effective pastoral system that ensures that a tutor knows each student well. This high level of care and support is maintained into the sixth form. Procedures for monitoring students' personal and academic development are also very good and tutors have a clear picture of their students' attainment in subjects and overall progress. Because staff know the students so well they consequently feel supported by the school. There is a good approach to health and safety and the school provides adequate supervision for all activities. Procedures for child protection and health and safety checks are good and meet legal requirements. Risk assessments are carried out within departments and there was no evidence of unsafe equipment in use.
- 21 The school is continuing to encourage attendance through a range of initiatives. Tutor time and assemblies are used to emphasise the need for students to attend regularly and explain any absences. Students are rewarded through the commendation scheme and through special awards for 100 per cent attendance. This system is also used to reward good behaviour. This and strategies such as the behaviour improvement scheme are used by the school as part of an overall programme to improve the behaviour of students.
- 22 Staff knowledge of students is used well through the systematic records they keep on them when offering support and guidance. Teachers are sensitive to students' needs and use their knowledge of students to ensure they are placed in the most appropriate teaching group. The identification of progress to students and their parents is good through comprehensive reports and consultation meetings. Each student has an individual planner and this contains academic and personal targets to be achieved. Students find this information very useful in making them aware of the effort required to gain success in examinations.
- 23 The Thomas Aveling School has a large number of students with statements for special educational needs. Over half of all students are on the register for special educational needs. They are well cared for and supported, with good compliance to the Code of Practice². The school uses a range of initiatives to support their development. Teachers have records of the students' Individual Education Plans. Within a context of current good and effective support there is a need to more rigorously monitor the quality and effectiveness of these plans throughout the school. Approximately 10 per cent of the students are from minority ethnic groups, nearly all of whom require some support with English as an additional language. They receive good support and are fully integrated into the life of the school. The school monitors the progress of all groups of students, identifying any significant trends of attainment.
- 24 The procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are good, but there is a lack of consistency in their use across departments. The school collects a great deal of assessment information centrally; much of it is stored electronically. The data includes Key Stage 2, Key Stage 3 and GCSE results together with various commercially purchased assessments. In Key Stage 4, 'target' and 'predicted' GCSE grades are recorded and used well. Good use is also made currently of data to set subject-specific individual learning targets for students. The school has clear guidelines on assessment, recording and reporting. There has been significant development into using assessment data to set subject-specific learning targets since the last inspection, but the school is aware that there is still room for further improvements. Year heads are closely involved in ensuring that assessment procedures are carried out.

² Code of Practice – this gives practical advice to schools and local education authorities about their responsibilities and tasks to ensure that pupils who have special educational needs receive the most appropriate help to further their learning and personal development. This is a statutory duty under the 1993 Education Act.

Develops the students' creative and performing talents

- 25 Thomas Aveling ensures that students have many very good opportunities to develop their creative and performing talents. These include accredited examination courses at Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, for example GCSE, Advanced Level GCE and GNVQ courses, and activities arranged additionally to curriculum time. The quality of work produced by students in a wide range of creative activities is very high. These activities include lessons in art, dance, design and technology areas such as food technology, resistant materials and textiles, drama, music and singing. GCSE examination results in art and textiles have been very high. In Key Stage 4, all students were entered for GCSE in design and technology in 2000. A wide range of technology options are available at Key Stage 4 to GCSE level. For example, students in a Year 10 art/textiles class are making sound gains in their knowledge and developing good practical skills through a range of different mediums. The standard of GCSE coursework in practical areas is good. Year 11 students are achieving high standards in food technology. The standards currently being achieved by students studying design and technology to GCE A level are high, with the expectation that a very high proportion will achieve a grade B or better in the forthcoming examinations.
- 26 Drama is mostly taught as a discrete lesson, but makes an outstanding contribution in school performances and to students' social development and self-confidence. For example, a Year 11 group acted out, in pairs, powerful scripted improvisations on a drugs dependency theme. Their peers assessed these performances using GCSE marking criteria. The rigour and pace of many lessons observed is typified by a Year 8 class that was introduced to the principles of theatre lighting. Through the medium of Marlow's *'Dr Faustus'* students confidently and sensitively created a frozen tableaux depicting 'desire' and 'fear' and subjected these to atmospheric lighting. Building on the taught theatre skills, students are encouraged to engage in a variety of public performances such as the carnival and a recent play written, produced and performed by Year 11 students for a local primary school.
- 27 The school further promotes students' talents through a variety of extra-curricular opportunities. These include clubs for dance and drama, choirs and music groups, large-scale school productions and entering a number of carnivals and competitions. The school takes regular opportunities to celebrate the students' success, for example, through assemblies and the magnificent displays of paintings and three-dimensional work that are exhibited throughout the school. The students are very proud of their work and the attractive displays are respected and enjoyed by all. The quality of this work around the school greatly adds to the positive school environment. The school has been awarded a prestigious curriculum award for its involvement in carnivals as part of a GNVQ course and has also been very successful in carnivals, winning several first place awards.
- 28 The lessons observed developed the students' creativity and imagination. The very effective teaching is the main reason for the high standards being achieved, which show particularly in the sixth form. Activities taking place outside of lessons demonstrate the commitment of students to their performances in the arts as a whole.
- 29 In art, drama and design and technology lessons the teaching was good. Teaching in the sixth form is frequently very good. Teachers have very good subject expertise and their high quality demonstrations help students to develop their own skills and understanding of the topic. Teaching and learning benefits from teachers' very good planning. Teachers frequently stop their class to focus their students' attention on the purpose of the lesson and the quality of the final product. Very good relationships between teachers and students encourage the students to be confident and innovative. The high level of challenge motivates students, as in a Year 7 art lesson on *'This is mission impossible time'*. There is frequently a high level of inspiration by the teacher, as seen in a very good

Year 11 lesson, where a student wrote a very clear explanation of the development of ideas about Andy Warhol and his exploration of colour.

- 30 The arts are very effectively led and managed and ably supported by various heads of departments. High standards are promoted right across the school. This is very evident by the vast range of high quality artefacts on display, the completed pieces of work, the enthusiasm of the teachers and their breadth of knowledge and experience. The school has clearly identified issues for development, with the focus firmly set on improving standards throughout the school.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The use of information and communication technology across all subjects

- 31 The school has recently improved the provision for information and communication technology, but is aware through its rigorous systems of review that further developments to teach it through all other subjects are still needed. For example, departments have not sufficiently identified the ways in which information and communication technology can enhance the learning of their subjects. The school's own review of information and communication technology has ensured that appropriate and comprehensive management and development plans for information and communication technology have been devised. This planning is based on the current quality of use of information and communication technology by teachers and the standards being achieved by students. The plans have appropriate targets for development; they are realistic and ambitious.

The use made of performance data (the results arising from teachers' marking of pupils' work and tests) to set group and individual student targets

- 32 Since the last inspection the school has improved the ways in which it records and uses assessment information about students to set whole school and individual targets. However, the school still makes insufficient use of assessment results, but does undertake an analysis of performance data to indicate trends in achievement. Some teachers mark pupils work well and provide them with good individual feedback to help them improve their work and recognise why they were not achieving to their highest potential. There is a lack of uniformity between departments on recording the results of assessment and the use made of them. The school has recognised this issue and is soon to make greater use of a commercial database to store, retrieve and analyse this information. The inspectors endorse these developments and agree that the whole process should now become more rigorous. This process would be used to assist departments in setting group and individual student targets. The use of data analysis and target setting should also be a focus for teachers' line management reviews to ensure that agreed policies and procedures are being carried out.
- 33 The inspectors fully endorse the school's management and development plans and the priorities that are detailed within it. In particular the school should now ensure:
- a) further development of the provision for information and communication technology, and
 - b) greater use is made of performance data to set group and individual student targets.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

The school has already identified the following areas in its management and development planning. The inspectors fully endorse these plans and in particular the following two issues:

- (1) improving the provision for information and communication technology across the curriculum:**
 - the school has recently been awarded Technology College status. The bid to achieve this included detailed plans for implementing and raising the quality of students' learning about information and communication technology as well as learning about other subjects through the use of information and communication technology. The inspectors recognise that this is an appropriate focus for future development; (paragraph 31)

- (2) making even greater use of performance data to analyse progress and set group and individual student targets by:**
 - providing further training for heads of departments and senior managers;
 - ensuring greater consistency of use of performance data between faculties;
 - ensuring that detailed analysis of data exists in all departments, for all types of students, to inform teachers about issues of inclusion;
 - making greater use of computers to store and communicate the analysis of performance data. (paragraphs 32)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

| | |
|--|----|
| Number of lessons observed | 68 |
| Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils | 35 |

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

| Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very poor |
|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| 3 | 32 | 37 | 23 | 4 | 1 | 0 |

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

Information about the school's pupils

| Pupils on the school's roll | Y7 – Y11 | Sixth form |
|---|----------|------------|
| Number of pupils on the school's roll | 925 | 152 |
| Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals | 203 | 23 |

| Special educational needs | Y7 – Y11 | Sixth form |
|---|----------|------------|
| Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs | 26 | 0 |
| Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register | 498 | 0 |

| English as an additional language | No of pupils |
|---|--------------|
| Number of pupils with English as an additional language | 87 |

| Pupil mobility in the last school year | No of pupils |
|--|--------------|
| Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission | 7 |
| Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving | 15 |

Attendance

| Authorised absence | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 7.5 |
| National comparative data | 5.9 |

| Unauthorised absence | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 1.1 |
| National comparative data | 0.4 |

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

| | | | | |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
| Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
| | 2000 | 110 | 73 | 183 |

| National Curriculum Test/Task Results | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above | Boys | 32 | 67 | 67 |
| | Girls | 36 | 41 | 37 |
| | Total | 68 | 108 | 104 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above | School | 37 (68) | 59 (51) | 57 (41) |
| | National | 63 (63) | 65 (62) | 59 (55) |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above | School | 5 (17) | 23 (16) | 16 (8) |
| | National | 28 (28) | 42 (38) | 30 (23) |

| Teachers' Assessments | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above | Boys | 38 | 66 | 68 |
| | Girls | 45 | 40 | 46 |
| | Total | 83 | 106 | 114 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above | School | 45 (61) | 58 (54) | 62 (53) |
| | National | 64 (64) | 66 (64) | 62 (60) |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above | School | 19 (12) | 23 (18) | 8 (11) |
| | National | 31 (31) | 39 (37) | 29 (28) |

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

| | | | | |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
| Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
| | 2000 | 91 | 95 | 186 |

| GCSE results | | 5 or more grades A* to C | 5 or more grades A*-G | 1 or more grades A*-G |
|---|----------|--------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified | Boys | 17 | 85 | 90 |
| | Girls | 30 | 90 | 93 |
| | Total | 47 | 175 | 183 |
| Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified | School | 26 (31) | 94 (94) | 98 (97) |
| | 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 | 33.8 (33.8) |
| | National | 38.4 (38) |

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

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

| | | | | |
|---|------|------|-------|-------|
| Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
| | 2000 | 21 | 14 | 35 |

| Average A/AS points score per candidate | For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent | | | For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent | | |
|---|---|--------|-------------|--|--------|-----------|
| | Male | Female | All | Male | Female | All |
| School | 4.9 | 8.0 | 6.4 (10.5) | 4.4 | 3.2 | 4 (3.4) |
| National | 17.7 | 18.6 | 18.2 (17.9) | 2.6 | 2.9 | 2.7 (2.8) |

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

Ethnic background of pupils

| | No of pupils |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage | 3 |
| Black – African heritage | 5 |
| Black – other | 0 |
| Indian | 56 |
| Pakistani | 1 |
| Bangladeshi | 27 |
| Chinese | 2 |
| White | 973 |
| Any other minority ethnic group | 10 |

Exclusions in the last school year

| | Fixed period | Permanent |
|------------------------------|--------------|-----------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage | 0 | 0 |
| Black – African heritage | 0 | 0 |
| Black – other | 0 | 0 |
| Indian | 2 | 0 |
| Pakistani | 0 | 0 |
| Bangladeshi | 0 | 0 |
| Chinese | 0 | 0 |
| White | 15 | 0 |
| 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 – Y13

| | |
|--|--------|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 70 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher | 15.4:1 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

| | |
|---|-----|
| Total number of education support staff | 22 |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week | 540 |

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

| | |
|---|------|
| Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes | 77.3 |
|---|------|

Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

| | |
|-------------|----|
| Key Stage 3 | 26 |
| Key Stage 4 | 21 |

Financial information

| | |
|----------------|-----------|
| Financial year | 1999/2000 |
|----------------|-----------|

| | £ |
|--|-----------|
| Total income | 2,742,203 |
| Total expenditure | 2,814,397 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 2,660 |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | 143,731 |
| Balance carried forward to next year | 71,537 |

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate 23%

| | |
|-----------------------------------|------|
| Number of questionnaires sent out | 1000 |
| Number of questionnaires returned | 230 |

Percentage of responses in each category

| | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|--|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| My child likes school. | 28 | 57 | 8 | 6 | 1 |
| My child is making good progress in school. | 34 | 52 | 9 | 3 | 2 |
| Behaviour in the school is good. | 27 | 54 | 13 | 3 | 3 |
| My child gets the right amount of work to do at home. | 18 | 57 | 19 | 5 | 1 |
| The teaching is good. | 24 | 60 | 9 | 2 | 5 |
| I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on. | 28 | 42 | 21 | 7 | 2 |
| I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. | 39 | 45 | 10 | 5 | 1 |
| The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best. | 55 | 38 | 5 | 2 | 0 |
| The school works closely with parents. | 23 | 52 | 18 | 5 | 2 |
| The school is well led and managed. | 35 | 48 | 8 | 2 | 7 |
| The school is helping my child become mature and responsible. | 33 | 51 | 10 | 3 | 3 |
| The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. | 34 | 50 | 7 | 1 | 8 |

Other issues raised by parents

Parents were concerned about the effects of the recent high staff turnover.
 Parents were pleased that sixth form students now have more flexibility to study off-site.