

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **SOUTH AXHOLME COMMUNITY SCHOOL**

Epworth, Doncaster

LEA area: North Lincolnshire

Unique reference number: 118094

Headteacher: Mr M. Toms

Reporting inspector: Mr T. Parish  
15465

Dates of inspection: 29<sup>th</sup> October – 1<sup>st</sup> November 2001

Inspection number: 192564

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Burnham Road Epworth Doncaster South Yorkshire
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr R. Warner
Date of previous inspection:	3 <sup>rd</sup> February 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
15465	T. Parish	Registered inspector		Information about the school The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9710	R. Burgess	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
20119	T. Bell	Team inspector	Mathematics	
30899	K. G. Boden	Team inspector	Design and technology	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
14874	K. Butwilowska	Team inspector	English	
4689	M. Christian	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
18447	R. L. Cohen	Team inspector	History	
17709	A. J. Giles	Team inspector	Physical education	
21971	J. Glennon	Team inspector	Religious education	
12470	B. Greasley	Team inspector		
15407	M. Harrison	Team inspector	Geography	
6432	M. Sewter	Team inspector	Science	
16950	C. Orr	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages Equality of opportunity Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	
31680	R. P. Redican	Team inspector	Art and design	
7222	A. Watson	Team inspector	Music Provision for pupils with special educational needs	

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

South Axholme Community School is an Arts Technology College. Opportunities available to boys and girls have been extended through developing, successful courses embracing expressive arts. The intake is comprehensive and pupils' attainment on entry is about average. A substantial minority of pupils travel from well out of area to attend the school. No pupils require English as an additional language support. The number of pupils, 921, is about average, but well above the number the school is built to accommodate. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is about average though there are more pupils with statements of need, including a wide range of physical needs, than are generally found in a school of this size; the school has a deserved reputation for providing very well for these pupils. The school maintains close links with the community and employs many people from it.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

South Axholme is a good school with some outstanding features. Attendance is well above average; pupils' attitudes to learning are good and their behaviour and relationships are very good. Standards are above average in Year 11. Overall, pupils achieve well in many subjects by the time they leave school; girls achieve very well. The school is inclusive; pupils with special educational needs, including those who are gifted and talented, make good progress. Teaching is good overall; a significant proportion of lessons are very good. Leadership is very good; the headteacher and governors share a clear vision for short and long-term future improvements that are clearly expressed in the management plan. Management is good. The school does have high costs and value for money is consequently judged as satisfactory.

#### **What the school does well**

- Standards in drama and dance are high.
- Teaching of English is very good overall, and of information and communication technology (ICT), very good in Years 10 and 11.
- English, modern languages, expressive arts and special educational needs departments are very well managed.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; social development is excellent.
- Extra-curricular work; there are many diverse clubs and activities. Many pupils benefit from instrumental music tuition and participation in choirs and contribute very well to school and community events.
- The provision of pastoral care and educational support and guidance is very good.

#### **What could be improved**

- Pupils' attainment could be raised still further, especially boys' attainment in English, design and technology, geography, German, GCSE physical education, and GCSE religious education.
- The quality of teaching in geography in Years 7-9.
- Management of and provision for the humanities faculty; history, geography, religious education



and business education.

- The use of ICT in many subjects.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in February 1997. Improvement since then is satisfactory. Academic standards have fallen and risen again and are now similar to standards in 1997. There is a much higher proportion of very good teaching. Arts Technology College status has been achieved and this has helped the school improve the cultural and spiritual dimensions of its work. ICT is much better provided for but still needs to be better used in many subjects.

## 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				<b>Key</b>
	all schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
GCSE examinations	B	B	B	B	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E

End of Year 9 test results in English, mathematics and science, improved in 2001. This confirms the improvement that began in 2000. Results in tests are above average and the only significant difference in how well boys or girls do is English, where girls do better.

GCSE results in 2001 improved significantly from 2000 due to the much better performance of girls than boys. Attainment of boys has remained pretty consistently just above average and there remains room for further improvement.

The school sets itself challenging but appropriate GCSE targets, higher than might be expected from predictions based on pupils' attainment on entry. It did not meet its targets in 2000, when girls achieved less well than expected, or 2001 when girls did rather better.

Overall, pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well between when they start at South Axholme and when they leave; boys could do better in some subjects. By the end of Year 9 standards of work are above average in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, history and drama. Standards are average in all other subjects. Pupils are achieving well in music and ICT as pupils start school in Year 7 with below average standards in these subjects. In Year 11, standards are similar, but ICT and music are also now above average, whilst standards in geography are below average and all pupils do not achieve satisfactorily. Standards of work in business studies lessons are generally below average but GCSE results in 2001 were in line with the national average.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Attitudes to learning are good but a number of pupils could work more on their own initiative. Pupils care well for resources and the school's environment. Pupils like school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good overall, a few pupils in some lessons are silly rather than badly behaved. Out of classrooms it is very good too, sometimes exemplary.
Personal development and relationships	Very good, pupils are responsible young people and are developing confidence through such work as expressive arts. Relationships between pupils are most often exemplary and with adults, on balance, very good.
Attendance	Well above average.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	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.*

Overall, the quality of teaching meets the needs of all pupils. Though a good proportion of very good lessons were seen, and nine excellent lessons, there were also seven unsatisfactory lessons, six in Years 7-9, four in Year 9. Unsatisfactory lessons occurred in mathematics, science, geography, physical education, religious education and business education. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is almost invariably satisfactory or better, most often good or very good.

Teaching in English is very good, in mathematics and science good across all years. Teaching of literacy skills is good and of numeracy skills, satisfactory. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory in Years 7-9 and good in Years 10 and 11, helped by very good provision in the study groups. Pupils with particular statements of need, including physical, are very well provided for. Gifted and talented pupils are making good progress, particularly where their particular needs are well identified in subjects.

Teaching of almost all subjects is good, including geography in Years 10 and 11. Teaching of ICT is very good in Years 10 and 11. Teaching of art and design and physical education is satisfactory. Teaching of geography in Years 7-9 is considered to be unsatisfactory; a significant proportion of pupils do not learn well enough. Though almost all lessons in religion education were judged to be satisfactory, teaching of it, over time, in Years 7-9 is considered to be unsatisfactory; none of the teachers are specialists, their subject knowledge and methodology are not secure.

Common strengths in pupils' learning are: they acquire knowledge, skills and understanding well, they are prepared to think and work hard, they work quickly and show a lot of interest. Pupils' knowledge of how well they are doing in a particular subject is variable and is unsatisfactory in religious education.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good in years 7-9. Satisfactory in Years 10 and 11; the great value expressive arts brings to the curriculum is tempered by inadequacies within the humanities faculty and some anomalies in timetabling.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good, particularly when learning support assistants are well used and especially in Years 10 and 11. Specialised support is very good.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall; good spiritual and cultural, very good moral, excellent social. Arts Technology College status has greatly enhanced this aspect of the school that spills over into the local community. More emphasis on wider cultural influences in society would make provision even better.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good educational and personal support and guidance to pupils runs in tandem with good monitoring of academic performance.
How well does the school work in partnership with parents	Good links with parents, including clear information and an interesting governors' annual report. Parents are well informed about pupils' progress. Annual reports are satisfactory, except for ICT.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good leadership by the headteacher supported the vision for Arts College status and provides energy for further developments. Management is good; curriculum issues, particularly in humanities, need to be resolved. English, modern languages, expressive arts and special educational needs are very well managed. The number of teachers is less than in schools with similar numbers of pupils; this contributes to difficulties of allocating existing teachers to, for example, humanities and physical education. Accommodation is unsatisfactory and recognised as such by the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. The governors are given very clear and well-balanced leadership by the chair. They have the interests of the school at heart and meet their legal responsibilities very well overall. Collective worship does not fully meet requirements though regular assemblies are of a very high quality.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school knows exactly where it is in relation to others and is taking further steps to improve the school's position.
The strategic use of resources	Very good overall. Money is well spent and best value pursued and often achieved. Teaching staff are deployed adequately to cover the curriculum but at the expense of the quality of provision in some subjects. Resources are inadequate in some subjects. The computer-pupil ratio is below average but almost all computers are less than three years old.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• High expectations.</li><li>• Teaching.</li><li>• The school is approachable.</li><li>• The management of the school.</li><li>• Pupils mature well and are responsible people.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Closer links between parents and school.</li><li>• Information about progress.</li></ul>

Inspectors agree with parents about their more positive comments. Some further improvement could be made to reports on progress, particularly about ICT, but the school does work hard to provide information between reports and to sustain a good relationship with parents.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and pupils' achievements**

1. Standards are judged against national standards, which include all secondary maintained schools, against similar schools, and against results predicted as likely when test results at the end of Year 9 are taken into account. GCSE results in 2001 are above the national average overall and above the national average for the proportion of pupils attaining five or more A\*-C grades. Results are well above the national average for the proportion of pupils gaining five or more A\*-G grades or at least one A\*-G grade. When GCSE results in 2001 are compared to pupils' overall end of Year 9 test results in 1999 (the 'value-added' measure), then they are much higher than might have been expected. However, it is likely that the end of Year 9 test results were a little lower than they should have been, so 'value-added' is good to very good rather than very high. If 2001 GCSE results are compared to those of similar schools then an interpretation of the national tables used has to be made: the attainment of pupils when they start at South Axholme is broadly average, lower than might be expected from other indicators such as the small proportion of pupils taking free school meals; conversely, the proportion of pupils with special educational needs is rather higher than might be expected. The inspection judgement is that GCSE results in 2001 are above average when compared to those in similar schools.

2. GCSE results in 2001 were significantly better than in 2000, due almost entirely to a much better performance from girls, who achieved well above average results. Boys' results were similar to 2000, a little above average. The school monitors national tests and teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 and GCSE examination results meticulously by gender. There are a very small number of minority ethnic pupils and the senior management team monitors their performance which is as good as their peers. Consequently, the school is very aware of its performance across all subjects for all groups of pupils and its comparative performance within the immediate locality. At GCSE, the gender difference in results from the national averages is significant in English, design and technology, geography, physical education, religious education and modern languages, more particularly in German. The underperformance of boys is the main factor in this difference.

3. The overall trend in GCSE results since the last inspection has been below the national trend of gradual improvement, though the detail is complicated. Results improved significantly between 1996 and 1998, fell fairly sharply to 2000, and then picked up again in 2001. GCSE results tend to follow pupils' attainment at the end of their respective Year 9 test results; they are generally predictable. The proportions of boys and girls in the cohort leaving has some impact too; boys tend to do less well than girls

nationally and the cohort in 2000, for example, had a significantly higher proportion of boys in it.

4. GCSE targets set for the school have not been met in 2000 or 2001. For example the 63 per cent target for 5 or more A\*-C set in both years; in 2000 the actual figure was 48 per cent, in 2001 57 per cent. Average points scores targets were more closely met, reflecting good progress made by pupils with special educational needs and very good attendance; pupils who come to school generally enter and pass examinations. The targets are challenging and above what might be expected from pupils' attainment on entry.



5. In 2000, the better performing subjects were expressive and performing arts and English literature. The weakest subjects were geography, German and information studies. Overall pupils did better in science, expressive arts, design and technology, English language, English literature, and French than they did in art and design, business studies, geography, German, history, information studies, mathematics or physical education. Girls did least well in art and design, geography and German. Boys did least well in art and design, geography, German, business studies, information studies and physical education. The school is aware of these differences in performance and has begun to address some of them through changes in the curriculum offered, for example GNVQ ICT; option rules, for example German, and allocation of teachers, for example geography in Years 10 and 11, and physical education. At the time of writing this report comparison of subject performance is not easy to make for 2001 results. However, judgements about improvement will be found in each subject section.

6. The attainment of pupils by the end of Year 9, revealed mostly through tests in English, mathematics and science, was a minor issue in the last report; pupils made most of their progress in Years 10 and 11, implying they did not make enough in Years 7-9. The trend in the school's results since then is mostly downhill until 2000 when overall results were again above national and 2001 results were even better. Results are currently above national and science has improved the most in the last two years. As pupils' attainment on entry is about average then pupils in the current Year 10 achieved well between when they started the school and the end of their Year 9. GCSE targets for 2002, including 65 per cent 5 or more A\*-C grades, become more appropriate based on pupils' prior attainment at the end of Year 9 in 2000; achieving them will represent good progress.

7. Overall, pupils achieve well by the end of Year 9 and by Year 11. In work seen during the inspection, standards in drama and dance, components of expressive arts, are high. This is undoubtedly due in part to the thrust the school has made in this direction through becoming an Arts Technology College but it is also due to the very good management of the department and the infectious enthusiasm of the teachers involved. Pupils respond accordingly and perform very well. Standards in English, mathematics, science, design and technology and history are above average; standards in ICT and in music are above average in Years 10 and 11, average in Years 7-9. Standards in ICT look set to rise further as new equipment and courses settle down, though significant advances need more accommodation for computers and more computers. Animation work, one of the expressive arts modules, is of a high standard. Standards in music, below average by the end of Year 9 and average by Year 11, do not reflect adequately the involvement of significant numbers of pupils in school and community musical activities and events; another example of Arts Technology impetus helping to raise standards and pupils' achievement. Standards in art and design, modern languages, physical education and religious education are average across all years. The lack of any specialist teachers makes it all but impossible for pupils to achieve better in religious education. Standards in National Curriculum physical education in Years 10 and 11 are adversely affected by too few lessons, pupils cannot be taught enough in the time available. Standards in geography are average in Years 7-9 and

below average in Years 10 and 11. This unsatisfactory attainment is a reflection of previous work rather than current teaching, which is good in Years 10 and 11. Standards of work seen in the three business education lessons visited were below average, largely a consequence of the very wide range of ability in classes but also due to the lack of an appropriate specialist teacher, and inadequate accommodation and resources.

8. How well pupils achieve within the subjects they take generally mirrors their attainment in each subject, above average attainment results from achieving well. In ICT and music in Years 7-9, because most pupils start from a lower level of prior attainment than in other subjects, their achievement is generally good.

### **Literacy and numeracy**

9. By the end of Year 9, standards of literacy are good; pupils can use an appropriate variety of words correctly within sentences and paragraphs. Pupils' writing is legible and attractively presented and the writing of higher attainers is confident with ideas being well organised and coherent. By Year 11, pupils' writing is fluent and shows good ability to plan, draft and re-draft. Pupils develop their reading skills well as they progress and there are opportunities for pupils to demonstrate their reading ability. In general, pupils are confident in talking and use the technical language of some subjects confidently. Pupils listen with interest to each other. The school is effective in promoting amongst pupils sensitivity to the views of others.

10. Standards of numeracy are satisfactory overall. There are good examples of numeracy in ICT, physical education, history, geography and science. Pupils use spreadsheets to analyse data in ICT, they measure distances and time in athletics, they analyse statistics in history, measure distances and use scale in geography and use algebra and graphs in science.

### **Special educational needs**

11. Pupils with special educational needs are carefully identified and make good progress through Years 7 to 9. Pupils in Years 10 and 11, in the learning support study groups, are making good progress. In the 2001 GCSE examinations, nineteen special educational needs pupils achieved better results than were predicted from their standard of work in Year 9. Seven pupils achieved below their predicted levels. The school is beginning to implement a formal policy for gifted and talented pupils. Where they have been identified, for example modern languages, their progress is at least good. Their needs are well met by looking carefully at what they are taught, a supportive mentorship scheme and a range of appropriate extension activities.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

12. Overall, pupils have good attitudes to school and their standards of behaviour are very good. Pupils' abilities to show initiative and demonstrate personal responsibility are very good and relationships in the school are very good.

13. Pupils show much enthusiasm for school and many show an interest in the activities offered and are keen to become involved. The school is popular and some pupils who live outside the catchment area choose to attend this school. The range of activities is often cited as one of the reasons for their choice, but a significant number do not participate in extra-curricular opportunities. Pupils' attitudes to lessons are predominantly good throughout the school; they are very good or excellent in many English lessons and particularly in extra-curricular dance and

drama sessions. In science, pupils are keen and interested, especially in practical work, and communicate well. In ICT lessons, pupils are highly motivated to use computers effectively and share their ideas well. A minority of pupils, mostly in Year 9, demonstrate unsatisfactory attitudes to school. In Years 7 and 10 no unsatisfactory attitudes or behaviour were seen.

14. Behaviour in the school is very good. Some exemplary behaviour was seen in assemblies and around the school at dinner times. Behaviour around the school, arriving and leaving, and in the dining area, is generally very good. In lessons it is very good, except in some Year 9 lessons that are marred by excessive chatting, gum chewing and other disruptions. Most of this unsatisfactory behaviour is from boys, but there is a small minority of girls in the year group who display excessive silliness. Pupils generally respond well to their teachers. Fixed term and permanent exclusions are very low.

15. The school is effectively free of oppressive behaviour, and there is no evidence of sexism or racism. Although some bullying occurs it is well handled and is not an issue for most pupils. Only some Year 9 pupils consider bullying or bad behaviour to be a problem. Pupils understand well the impact of their actions on others, and show very good respect for other people's feelings, values and beliefs. They demonstrate a very good empathy in drama, both in timetabled lessons and in extra-curricular rehearsals. In dance, they show respect for their peers' performances. In assemblies, and in conversation with adults, they are respectful and polite. In one assembly pupils gave spontaneous applause to show their appreciation of the head teacher.

16. Pupils with special educational needs form good relationships with teachers, support staff, visiting specialists and with each other when they are working in small groups. They are well motivated and concentrate well. They like to succeed. Personal development is good and well supported by very good quality education plans for each pupil.

17. Pupils' ability to show initiative and demonstrate personal responsibility is good. Pupils act responsibly when using valuable equipment, such as in ICT, science and music lessons. In music, pupils cheerfully pass on their skills to primary school pupils. A few help with library duties. They act sensibly in the dining hall and volunteer help with 'household' duties. All year groups are represented on the School Council and attend meetings, although most pupils do not consider the council an effective means of influencing school life. Relationships in the school are very good, both between staff and pupils and between groups of pupils. Pupils generally work well together in pairs and in groups, although this is less obvious in physical education lessons than is seen in most schools. Collaborative work in dance is good.

18. Attendance is very good and well above the national average. Unauthorised absences are well below the national average. In no year group does the average rate of attendance drop below 91%. Pupils are punctual to lessons, which start promptly. Sometimes pupils arrive late in the morning, often due to irregularities in the bus services, on which many pupils rely.

19. Since the last inspection positive attitudes and very good standards of behaviour have been maintained. Good personal development and very good relationships, both between pupils and teachers and between groups of pupils, have been sustained. A very low rate of exclusion has been sustained.

## **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

20. In Years 7-11, teaching is satisfactory overall though 61 per cent of lessons seen were good or better and 23 per cent very good or excellent. Seven per cent of unsatisfactory lessons, spread across geography, science, religious education, mathematics and physical education are reflected in the judgement. None of the teachers who had unsatisfactory lessons were newly qualified or inexperienced though 'non-specialists' took three of the six lessons. Lack of sufficient planning, inappropriate work, lack of pace, all sometimes leading to unsatisfactory pupils' behaviour were the characteristics of unsatisfactory lessons. In Years 10 and 11 the picture is better; 67 per cent of lessons were good or better, twenty-four per cent were very good or excellent, all but one lesson, business studies, were satisfactory or better. In the business studies lesson the pace was too slow, the work did not suit the wide range of ability in the class and some pupils quietly slipped into activities other than work. Nine excellent lessons were seen. They occurred in English (three lessons), science, expressive arts (drama and dance), German, ICT, and personal and social education. Excellent lessons were the result of at least very good planning, a variety of work, challenge and pace, and an excellent relationship with pupils who reciprocate the hard work put into their lessons by working hard themselves.

21. Teachers' style, language and questioning include all pupils equally in both mixed-ability classes and sets, except in geography. Consequently teaching styles are not apparently a significant reason for the much better achievement of girls. The very few minority ethnic pupils are thoroughly integrated in their teaching groups. The talented and gifted are identified well in all subjects and teachers are aware of their needs, except in geography and physical education. In art and design and mathematics these pupils are given extra time after school for extension activities. In English they are given challenging work in creative writing. In modern languages they are in top sets and can do two languages. In science they are given good extension work. In music they are encouraged to take up instrumental tuition. In ICT some modules of work have been altered in title and context for boys. These various initiatives have generally had insufficient time to affect standards though recent rapid improvement in science may be attributable to them. Teachers do not significantly challenge stereotyped and stereotypical attitudes to subjects, except in physical education where teachers do it well. Boys' relatively weaker performance in some subjects, for example English, may be due to the value they place on the work involved. ICT is not used sufficiently well or often enough in many subjects.

22. Teaching is very good in English in all years. Expressive arts' teaching is very good too and this judgement is supported by work seen out of lessons, such as dance and drama rehearsals, as well as in them. On balance, teaching of ICT is

very good though lessons in Years 7-9 were taught well, rather than very well. Teachers' knowledge, planning, expectations of pupils' work and use of assessment have not quite got the edge seen in Years 10 and 11. Teaching of mathematics is good, *relative* weaknesses are the range of methods used, how work is assessed, and how work with pupils with special educational needs is approached. Resolving inconsistencies in how mathematics teachers approach their work that is the key to future improvement. Teaching of science is good with *relative* weaknesses in the pace of lessons; the information pupils are given about how well they are doing and how pupils with special educational needs are taught. Teaching of personal and social education is good overall, though some lessons are much better than this. The quality depends, to an extent on the enthusiasm of the teacher and the interest in the topic. A first aid lesson seen was exemplary and all pupils, and the inspector, made significant gains in knowledge and understanding.

23. Teaching in design and technology, history, modern languages, and music is good. They share some common *relative* weaknesses; the teaching of basic skills, which include literacy, numeracy and the use of ICT, and, except for modern languages, how work is assessed.

24. Teaching of art and design is satisfactory overall with strengths in teachers' knowledge and how teachers assess pupils' work. Teaching needs to encompass more exciting and adventurous work. Teaching in physical education is satisfactory. Teaching of basic skills and the use of time and resources are *relative* weaknesses. Teachers have too little time to teach National Curriculum physical education in Years 10 and 11 and have to rush even more when lesson time is eaten into through such things as assemblies or time is reduced on Wednesdays for personal and social education. Teaching of business education lessons seen is, on balance, satisfactory, though it is very far from best practice seen elsewhere. Pupils considered it consisted of too much writing and the lack of modern business studies resources and accommodation, and inspector observations, supports their view.

25. Teaching of geography is unsatisfactory in Years 7-9 but good in Years 10 and 11. In Years 7-9, teaching of basic skills, the expectations teachers have of pupils, the range of teaching methods and the use of time and resources are all unsatisfactory.

26. Teaching of religious education is unsatisfactory in Years 7-9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Many of the teachers involved actually do better in the classroom but none are specialists; they lack knowledge; have too low expectations and use too narrow a range of methods. Assessment of the work is also weak. A specialist head of religious education is needed to organise and plan the work more appropriately.

27. In an excellent Year 8 English lesson, the teacher demonstrated excellent knowledge of the subject, 'Macbeth', through their skilled and enthusiastic reading of a passage. Very clear objectives for the lesson were set and they met the diverse needs of the pupils. All pupils were able to participate well and consolidated their knowledge about key words and learnt how to speak and listen more effectively. In an excellent Year 9 drama lesson the teacher thoroughly understood pupils' capabilities and had appropriate but very high expectations of them; an excellent relationship with pupils helped them deal with a relatively difficult social topic, homelessness; the teacher finished the lesson with a very good plenary that helped pupils to assess and understand exactly what they had learnt. In a very good Year 11 dance lesson the excellent knowledge of the teacher was supported by previous very good use of external resources, a visit to a dance performance. The teacher was able to be a role model during the practical work of the lesson and this had a significant impact on pupils; it set a standard and gave them aspirations. To make the lesson excellent a better balance between talk and action was needed. In a very good Year 11 French lesson for lower attaining boys, the teacher provided lots of challenge a fast pace and used well known and practised procedures. Pupils were paired very well to tackle their work and resources such as flash cards and pictures helped them build their confidence. Consequently they learnt very well and could speak short phrases with at least approximate accents.

28. In a good Year 11 science lesson, the teacher gave a clear introduction to work on the light spectrum, followed it with a good question and answer session, a demonstration, and then consolidated pupils' learning with some good board work, emphasising key words like 'spectrum'. To be better the demonstration needed to be

a little more carefully managed and the range of work broadened to both challenge and support a higher proportion of pupils. In a satisfactory Year 10 physical education lesson related to basketball, the teacher made satisfactory use of examination board material to guide pupils' thinking about attainment levels. The lesson started without a warm up session or appropriate initial questioning but the game activities were well supported by the teacher. Overall, learning was satisfactory but could have been improved through better use of evaluation strategies and key words.

29. In a satisfactory Year 9 mathematics lesson about estimation, pupils with special educational needs were well supported by child support assistants. However, the work was confusing due to the overuse of pictures and drawings to different scales rather than real objects. The work was all the same for all the class too, so the range of attainment in the class was not well met. This was balanced, to an extent, by good support of pupils whilst they were working and a good plenary, though this missed some opportunities to emphasise the correct words to use.

30. In an unsatisfactory Year 9 religious education lesson, otherwise sound planning was based too closely on a textbook that led to an unsatisfactory pace and little challenge for higher attainers. Pupils with special educational needs were better supported through individual help. A lively discussion would have helped students become interested and more motivated and pictures and artefacts, even web site visits would have provided opportunities for more challenging work. In an unsatisfactory Year 8 science lesson, it was obvious the teacher had only laypersons' knowledge of the topic, drug abuse, and comments and questions from pupils were put down to some extent. The lesson was ideal for small group work, possibly poster presentation, but was confined to a printed handout and some writing in books. Pupils had many misconceptions that needed talking through and sorting out. Marking in books was nominal, ticks with the odd very good or excellent, against what standard is unclear.

### **Literacy and numeracy**

31. Pupils' work in English shows that literacy skills are taught well. Training for the National Literacy Strategy has resulted in short, medium and long term planning of strategies and developments. All teachers of English have experienced a literacy hour in one of the feeder primary schools; this should help to develop the strategies needed to ensure that the literacy policy is practised in all subjects. Speaking and listening skills are taught well across a range of subjects as well as English, but key words need to be actively promoted by most to ensure new specialist words are well understood. In physical education the use of such key words is poor.

32. Numeracy skills are satisfactorily taught. The school is currently developing numeracy in line with the National Numeracy Strategy. Key teachers have been trained. Plans are in place to train the rest of the mathematics department and lessons are already planned for classes in Years 7 and 8. More informed mathematics teachers are already using the recommended teaching techniques with an emphasis on mental and oral work at the beginning of the lesson.



## **Special educational needs**

33. The overall quality of teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory and for older pupils it is good. Teachers often match challenges in lessons appropriately to pupils' specific needs and pupils then make good progress over time. Teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good in some subjects, for example, English, science, design and technology, music and modern languages; teaching is well supported by the effective deployment of child support assistants; teaching is well planned, enabling pupils to learn in small but challenging steps. Overall, teachers use good methods and appropriate resources to enable pupils with special educational needs to learn effectively. There are satisfactory links with literacy and numeracy strategies. When teaching is less effective, in some mathematics lessons, geography and art and design, less use is made of assessment and target setting; teaching has insufficient emphasis on, individual learning programmes, standards of presentation of pupils' work, and language development. Consequently work in books is poorly presented and lacks obvious evidence of significant improvement.

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

34. Overall, the curriculum is satisfactory; it is good in Years 7-9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. A suitable range of learning opportunities is provided for all pupils. Statutory requirements are met for all subjects, an improvement since the last report, when the requirements for ICT and religious education did not meet requirements. Changes brought about by the school's move to Arts Technology College status are a strength of the curriculum. They have enriched the overall provision and brought about the inclusion of many good features. Dance and drama, for example, make a positive contribution to pupils' curricular and extra-curricular opportunities. Expressive and performing arts courses allow effective cross-curricular co-operation with, for example, music, art and design and technology. There are, however, some areas for concern. The management and delivery of the humanities curriculum is unsatisfactory. The four component subjects of history, geography, religious education and business education are taught as separate entities. There is no head of religious education to control and direct the subject. The high proportion of non-specialist teaching across all four subjects divides teachers' time and energy, helps to depress standards of work in religious education, geography and business education and hinders their development. Despite better provision throughout the physical education curriculum, pupils' learning is restricted by a lower than average allocation of time. This is exacerbated by relatively large group sizes and three-quarters of lessons for Years 10 and 11 occurring on Wednesdays, when lesson times are shorter. Curriculum time for mathematics in Year 11 is below average.

35. The curriculum for Years 7 to 9 includes all the subjects of the National Curriculum, personal and social education and religious education. Time allocations for religious education and ICT are below average but sufficient to fulfil statutory requirements and syllabus demands. Though music gets an average time allocation

over the three years it is not distributed evenly; a reduction in time occurring in Year 9 when pupils are considering option choices. There is good curricular provision in art and design, where improvements since the last inspection have led to a well-organised curriculum, and in design and technology where pupils experience a wide range of technological activities including electronics and control technology.

36. Curricular provision for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory overall. Arts College status has extended to 10 the number of GCSE subjects pupils can study. The school's requirement for all pupils to study one expressive and performing arts subject has been broadened to include technology subjects such as textiles. The course in computer animation studies has proved to be a popular and creative option. A small group of pupils for whom a full range of GCSE subjects would not be appropriate is disapplied from the need to study a modern language in order to pursue a 'supported studies' course. They receive valuable help with the development of basic skills, such as literacy and numeracy, and additional help with coursework for their remaining GCSE subjects. Pupils opting for modern language courses are now given more active advice in order to match the suitability of their choice with their level of achievement in Years 7 to 9. There has been a reduction in the number of more able pupils opting to study a second language.

37. As yet the school offers little opportunity for pupils to seek accreditation through alternatives to GCSE. The adoption of an 'on-line' GNVQ course available over the Internet, combined with flexible time-tabling arrangements, has provided an innovative solution for those pupils wishing to take an ICT qualification. The course is timetabled partly after school. Other GNVQ courses, such as business studies, are under consideration but no decisions have yet been made.

38. Provision for personal, social and health education is satisfactory. The school has recently undertaken a complete audit to ensure that citizenship studies are fully covered in personal, social and health education lessons and other curriculum areas. External visitors' contributions to health education are very good. Careers education and guidance is satisfactory. The school works closely with the careers service and local Further Education colleges. Pupils in Year 11 are not fully aware of all the career pathways open to them and have yet to undertake a week of experience in the world of work.

39. Provision for extra-curricular activities is very good. There are extensive opportunities for pupils to participate in drama, dance, music, physical education, educational visits and 'holidays' (considered very good for social development). The necessity for pupils to travel long distances to and from school is a factor in the variable pupil participation rates but the provision of late buses at key times is a measure of the school's commitment to extra-curricular work and pupils' involvement has improved accordingly. Particularly strong provision occurs in expressive and performing arts and in physical education where links with the community have been developed and where there is joint use of facilities. Other curriculum areas provide good additional support for pupils to complete or extend coursework.

40. The provision for pupils' spiritual development is good. This is an improvement on the time of the previous inspection when it was unsatisfactory.

There is a good programme of themes for assembly. These embrace a variety of topics that lend themselves to a spiritual dimension. All assemblies finish with a corporate act of worship related to that day's theme. The atmosphere is set by live music being played by pupils as classes enter. Pupils respond very well to assemblies and the whole results in a spiritually uplifting start to the day. The school has worked hard to ensure the very high quality of assemblies but the limited accommodation prevents more than one-year group being present at a time. The school is still not meeting statutory requirements. A number of subjects contribute to pupils' spiritual development. In religious education younger pupils reflect on the nature of prayer and worship; older pupils consider where they stand on ultimate questions such as the existence of God and the beginning of the universe. Expressive arts add to pupils' spiritual development where it features strongly in both dance and drama. Through these media pupils explore their humanity as in a hot-seating exercise where they handled the theme of homelessness with sensitivity. Regular musical performances in and out of school add further to spiritual experience. In a science lesson, pupils were awe-struck at the expanse of space and time.

41. Pupils' moral development is well provided for; high standards are expected, very good behaviour about the school, especially when pupils are not being closely supervised, exemplifies this. Morality features prominently in the list of assembly themes. Pupils consider the implications of capital punishment and the duties of rich nations to the third world in religious education. In drama pupils explore conflict and confrontation. In music, pupils show respect for the performances of others. Pupils base paintings on images of war and in history they consider the moral implications of the rich-poor divide in Victorian times. Access to the Internet has clear guidelines that pupils accept. In physical education pupils accept the rules and moral codes in games activities. Pupils respond well to regular collections for charity, the most recent instance being a generous contribution to the New York tragedy appeal.

42. The provision for pupils' social development is excellent. The school is socially inclusive and pupils with a range of special educational needs play a full part in its life. There are a number of whole-school events in which pupils learn to interact with others. The annual party for local pensioners is a large-scale event directly involving many pupils. The certificate evening and leavers' ball both contribute well to preparing pupils for the world after school as well as being enjoyable occasions. School parties abroad such as the recent visit to Barcelona provide good social as well as cultural experiences. The learning support department broadens the experience of the pupils by taking them on a residential visit to the Isle of Man. In the extensive programme of extra-curricular music, sporting and drama activities pupils learn how they rely on each other. For example, over 150 pupils are involved in 12 different musical groups, some of which also involve primary school children or students from a local college. In most subjects pupils work in groups at different times and they collaborate well on such occasions. For example, in English and drama they are supportive when watching or listening to each other. In ICT the higher attainers willingly help others. Pupils socialise very well with each other out of the classroom in playgrounds, the dining hall and areas of the fields where they chat and play.

43. The provision for pupils' cultural development is good. The work involved in the status of Arts College plays a major part in this aspect as all the expressive arts are heavily involved in cultural education; there are good programmes of drama, dance and musical performances by pupils as well as by groups visiting the school. One hundred and thirty pupils receive instrumental tuition and visits by musicians; able pupils can also attend master classes. Pupils participate in dance troupes and there are dance theatre visits. A sculptor is in residence and pupils visit art galleries. The modern language department features Bastille Day as well as French and German days. Pupils watch productions in French by visiting companies. There are French and German exchanges but the take-up is low. The Year of Language is celebrated by very good displays. Less emphasis is made on cultures other than that of the western world although a number of departments make a contribution. Multi-cultural themes are pursued in dance, and Japanese, African, Indian and Chinese music are all studied. In religious education the major faiths of the world play an important part in the syllabus. Other subjects make a contribution to multi-cultural provision. African masks are made in art and design, and textiles from around the world are part of the work of the design and technology department. Even so, the good practice in some departments has not been spread to all.

### **Literacy and numeracy**

44. In general, subject departments are effective in helping to raise literacy standards. A literacy policy is in place and strategies are employed by some departments to address literacy problems. The literacy training day, immediately after this inspection, should help to ensure that the demands of the policy are understood and used, for example use of key words, speaking and writing opportunities, and then regularly monitored.

45. There has been insufficient time for developmental work in numeracy to raise further the standards of numeracy across the school. Liaison between mathematics and other departments, and training for all staff in the school is planned for later in the year.

### **Special educational needs**

46. Curricular provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. A varied menu of small teaching groups in English, mathematics, science, technology and modern languages in Years 10 and 11, and in-class support and withdrawal groups across the school, enable the pupils' individual needs to be effectively met. The learning resource area provides an important focus for pupils and staff when addressing issues of special educational needs. The thirteen pupils in Year 11 and twelve in Year 10 make good progress as a result of the additional supported study, which they receive in place of a second modern language. There is good provision for pupils' support in class and sixteen learning support assistants work with individual pupils and with small groups. Individual targets are well thought out and are reviewed regularly. These targets include goals for literacy, numeracy and behaviour. The needs of pupils with statements of educational need are effectively met and their reviews provide a good focus for future learning.

## **Gifted and talented pupils**

47. Techniques to raise the performance of gifted and talented pupils have been effectively introduced. Special provision is being made for sixty identified pupils across the different age groups. A mentorship scheme to support these pupils effectively operates in Years 10 and 11. It is planned to extend mentorship from Year 7 upwards. A curriculum audit for these pupils has resulted in links with a local FE College, and challenging activities in subjects such as mathematics. Extra lessons in a number of subjects provide appropriately challenging work. Extra activities have included, for example, a visit to a college in Oxford, industry days, instrumental tuition, and success in the kayak championships. This initiative is well managed and has been recognised nationally as an example of good practice.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

48. The school makes very good provision for the care of its pupils. There are established procedures to identify and handle issues related to child protection; teachers are informed of their responsibilities at regular intervals by the designated teacher and in the staff handbook. Good procedures are in place to protect the health and safety of pupils and staff, with written assessments of the risks associated with school activities established or underway. Good procedures are in place to deal with first aid and minor emergencies.

49. Overall the school's monitoring of academic performance and personal development is good, and the educational and personal support and guidance available to pupils is very good. Pastoral care is very good and well informed by careful record keeping. Pupils remain in their tutor groups as they progress up the school, keeping the same form tutor and head of year whenever possible. Year team heads and tutors are well informed about pupils' academic progress and personal development by a system of thorough monitoring procedures.

50. Procedures for monitoring attendance are very good. Registration is efficiently conducted and data conscientiously collated. Pupils with good records of attendance are rewarded appropriately. Attendance records are closely monitored to establish patterns of absence and the services of the educational welfare officer are used appropriately.

51. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and eliminating oppressive behaviour are very good. Effective procedures have been adopted to eliminate bullying. There is no evidence of oppressive behaviour in the school. Most pupils say incidents are dealt with well, although Year 9 pupils did not fully agree. Rewards and sanctions are used well and consistently.

52. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and academic progress are good overall, and the use of assessment information to guide curricular planning is satisfactory. Assessment procedures in English and science are very good; pupils are carefully monitored in line with national standards, the results are shared with pupils and inform curricular planning. In mathematics, assessment is good, but it is not used satisfactorily to help teachers plan or to improve pupils' learning. There is no assessment in religious education. Marking is satisfactory and pupils know how they are getting on. There is a marking policy outlined in pupils' journals and work is marked more consistently than was seen in the last inspection. Targets for improvement are set and reviewed with pupils after the work scans are completed; these are recorded in pupils' journals. Expected GCSE grades, based on prior performance, are shared with pupils in Years 10 and 11. A mentoring programme is in place for pupils whose predicted grades fall in the C/D band, and is being extended to stretch gifted and talented pupils. In the lower part of the school, National Curriculum levels are not always used with pupils to help them know where they are and what they need to do to achieve the desired results at the end of Year 9. Results of national tests are used well to set pupils by ability from Year 7. Gifted and talented pupils in Years 7 to 9 are being identified and supported appropriately, as explained in the curriculum section. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress are good and those for personal development are very good. Teachers know pupils well and provide very good support and guidance through regular contact, backed by detailed written evidence of achievements and concerns. Data, from the regular work scans, identifies well those pupils who are working hard and making good progress as well as highlighting pupils whose performance gives cause for concern. Results are communicated well to parents and pupils.

53. Since the last inspection the school has continued to provide a secure and supportive learning environment for all its pupils. Child protection, health and safety issues are catered for well. Procedures to monitor attendance and behaviour continue to promote high standards. Assessment of pupils' attainment has improved in many, but not all subjects. Marking of pupils' work has improved but departments need to ensure that all pupils in all year groups know how well they are doing in relation to national standards.

### **Special educational needs**

54. The care and support of pupils with special educational needs are very good. Well-established links with neighbouring primary schools ensure that detailed information is provided before pupils transfer to secondary school. This information, together with end of unit and other tests, enables the learning support department to have accurate and up to date records on individual pupils. The care and well-being of pupils is effectively addressed through regular contact with parents. Pupils'

progress is kept under review and they are able to move on or off the special needs register as is appropriate. Learning support assistants know pupils they work with well. The curriculum is inclusive and there is a genuine commitment to equality of opportunity throughout the learning support department. Pupils with special educational needs have opportunity to be involved in all school activities.

## HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

55. Parents' views are that this is a very good school. The responses to the questionnaires and the few parents who attended the meeting were very positive about most aspects of school life. Most parents are particularly happy about the way they can contact the school with questions or problems; they feel the school expects their children to work hard to achieve their best, and that the teaching is good and as a result their children are helped to become more responsible and mature and to make good progress. A few parents are less happy about the way they are kept informed about their child's progress and say the school could work more closely with them. The inspectors agree with parents about the positive aspects of school life. Most teaching is good with high expectations; pupils' abilities to show initiative and demonstrate personal responsibility are good; the progress made by all groups of pupils is good and the school encourages regular interaction between staff and parents. They agree that some further improvements could be made to reports on progress, for example in ICT, but found the school worked hard to sustain a good relationship with parents and reports were well supplemented by other information described below.

56. Overall the school has good links with parents. Good information is provided and parents feel able to approach the school if there are concerns or problems. Parents' involvement in the work of the school and the contribution they make to their children's learning at school and at home is good. The school is responsive to parents' views and in the past year conducted a survey of their views. Consequently, the frequency and length of the newsletter was changed to provide more frequent communication.

57. The quality of information provided to parents is good. Clear information about the school is contained in the prospectus and regular newsletters. The governors' annual report provides a full and interesting picture of school life and achievements. Pupils' journals are well used to provide a link between home and school. The home-school agreement is published in the journal, as are homework and lesson timetables. The results of the regular scans in every subject are presented in the journal and parents informed of this by letter. Parents are invited into school as soon as concerns arise, whether these are identified through the scanning procedures or by other means. Annual progress reports are satisfactory. These have improved since the last inspection and now give some indication of attainment specific to the subject. Formal reports are supplemented by other data, including the scans and test results, at regular points throughout the school year, so that overall the contact with parents on their child's progress is effective.

58. Parents' involvement in the work of the school is good and they are supportive in encouraging studies at home. There is a full allocation of parent governors for which a ballot was held, and they are fully involved in most aspects of school governance. Until very recently the parent teacher association has put on social and fund-raising events which enable all parents to become involved in the life of the school, but owing to a shortage of candidates to form a committee the school is relying on ad hoc help to continue events, such as jumble sales, bingo



nights and supply of refreshments at a variety of performances and events. The contribution, which parents make to pupils' learning at school and at home, is good. As a major employer in the town, a number of parents work in the school, both on the teaching and support staff and in administrative roles. Some parents directly help their children by providing computers at home, particularly for pupils studying GNVQ ICT.

59. Since the last inspection parents have maintained their pride in the school, and continue to fully support its aims and values. A good and effective partnership has been sustained.

## HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

60. The leadership of the headteacher is very good; though standards have fluctuated, pupils are achieving well and teaching is good, strengths and weaknesses of the school are well understood and are, in the main, being logically tackled. The headteacher also teaches very well indeed; this provides an example of what is expected of others. He is also one of the regular duty team between and after lessons and so monitors attitudes and behaviour regularly. He knows the pupils very well and can congratulate or admonish them as and when they deserve. He led the move to Arts Technology College status that was achieved over a year ago; it is having a very positive influence on the development of the school. In addition to much needed improvements to accommodation and resources it has lifted cultural and spiritual development and is providing many opportunities for pupils to excel in diverse activities, many involving the community. Senior managers perform their roles very well; there are many very good features of management, for example, tight control of finances, day-to-day administration, and analysis of performance data. Management overall is good. There is some inconsistency in the way the schools' aims are interpreted and pursued by teachers and departments. The way humanities subjects are managed and monitored is unsatisfactory and the allocation of teachers and time to the timetable needs reviewing. Leadership and management is very good in English, modern languages and expressive arts, and good in mathematics, science, design and technology, history, ICT, and music. It is satisfactory in physical education and art and design. Leadership and management related to geography, business studies and religious education is unsatisfactory.

61. The curriculum manager for learning support gives very good leadership and direction to this area of the school. Documentation is full and easily accessible. The coordinator's knowledge and understanding of special educational needs and of the pupils on the register are very good. Developmental plans for the future of special educational needs support within the school are well thought through. Resources and accommodation are very good.

62. The governing body is very effective. It is very well led and takes its responsibilities seriously. Statutory duties are almost all well met; requirements for a daily act of collective worship are not fulfilled, but assemblies for significant numbers of pupils are regular and they are good. The governors supported the application to become an Arts Technology College and are fully behind any action that leads to better provision for pupils. The governing body has all places on it filled, has senior representatives of post 16 colleges on it and co-opts expertise when it is needed, for example financial knowledge.

63. The school's policy for equal opportunities dates from 1996 and is in need of review, to include the more overt mention of issues concerning inclusion. Most departments have an equality of opportunity policy in their handbook, but most of these are very brief and amount to no more than a few lines. There is at present no work being done about equal opportunities, but the intention is to create a small committee on the governing body to oversee developments. The main aims of the

school stress the need for equal opportunities for all and the whole school has a strong commitment in this context.

64. Teachers' performance management has been well managed and monitoring and evaluation of teaching is at least satisfactory; lesson observations and work scrutiny form part of it. The school was well aware of most strengths and weaknesses in teaching before this inspection. New teachers are well inducted into the school, newly qualified teachers receiving good support from managers and subject staff. Significant numbers of student teachers are training in the school from time to time and the very orderly atmosphere is very supportive of them.

65. The school is beginning to use information management systems effectively to support administration. More development is possible, as the new ICT network gets more accessible by all staff.

66. Financial matters are very secure. The school follows local education authority guidelines very closely. Hence there is very little balance carried over from one year to the next. Money is very well spent to support the pupils in the school and specific grants, for example for pupils with special educational needs, are also very appropriately used. Arts Technology College funding is kept separate from main school funding and appropriate targets, for example for community related work, are well met. The headteacher monitors much of the budget, ably assisted by other managers and efficient office staff. Appropriate governors are involved on a regular basis. Best Value is always sought, for example teacher absence insurance (the school can provide effective cover comparatively cheaply) and flexible working ( staff can work with pupils extensively after school and balance that time against normal work).

67. The school's planning for future improvement is thorough and appropriate and identifies, in part, issues identified in this inspection, for example raising boys' achievement further. Though aware of some issues within the humanities department actions taken, so far, have either been insufficient or not had time to take effect. The school's targets for public examination results are challenging but appropriate and provide a stimulus for better teaching and planning. All staff, teachers and others, certainly have a commitment to the school, take a pride in it, and, consequently, the school should improve further.

## **Staffing**

68. Staffing is unsatisfactory overall. The number of teachers is lower than average for the number of pupils in the school. This contributes to some of the teaching groups, in Year 9 in particular, being well over 30. Significant shortcomings are seen in the humanities faculty. Provision is poor in religious education as there are no subject specialists and no subject leader. There is a similar picture in business studies; teachers are insufficiently experienced to teach the subject very well and have greater commitments to other subjects. Staffing is satisfactory overall in history, geography, and physical education, but subject specialists do not always teach their own subjects and this does erode the quality of provision that could be made. For

example, insufficient teaching time is allocated to National Curriculum physical education in Years 10 and 11 whilst well qualified physical education teachers are teaching subjects they are inexperienced in. Otherwise, there is a good match of qualifications and experience of teachers to the subjects that they teach, for example, design and technology, art and design, English, and ICT.

### **Accommodation**

69. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. The number of pupils in the school is well above the numbers it was built to accommodate, and corridors can become crowded between lessons, making movement slow. Though the school library is light and airy, it is small for the number of pupils in the school, and there is a rota restricting access at times for pupils in Years 7 to 10, which means independent learning, research and investigations, cannot always proceed at appropriate times.

70. Accommodation is very good in physical education, where there is a full range of sports facilities provided. These include access to an on site community sports centre, which includes a swimming pool, and a newly built dance studio. Playing fields are extensive and floodlit, and there is very good provision of hard areas and all weather surfaces. In resistant materials, provision is very good; facilities are very up-to-date and include a multi-media workshop. Accommodation is good in modern languages, where the rooms are suited, and in English and mathematics. However, it is unsatisfactory in science, where the laboratories are poorly decorated, old, and dingy. It is also unsatisfactory in the humanities faculty, where rooms provided for subjects within it, for example business education and geography, show little sign of specialist provision. As a result, displays cannot contribute to the quality of education provided, and there is little sense of ownership of the rooms. In addition, in some subject areas where accommodation is satisfactory overall, for example in art and design, geography, and ICT, the rooms are too small for some of the larger teaching groups, and pupils are working in cramped conditions.

### **Learning resources**

71. The provision of learning resources is unsatisfactory. Though the books in the library are in good condition, their numbers are low considering the number of pupils in the school. The library is well-used outside lesson times by pupils, who read for pleasure, gather information for their homework and school projects, and use the computers provided to research topics on the Internet. The library also provides project packs for teachers, to support their lessons. Computers are of good quality but their numbers are below average for the numbers of pupils and this contributes to inadequate use of them by some departments. A range of equipment, such as digital cameras and camcorders, is available, and used to support the work of teachers. For example, digital cameras are used to document pupils' work in food technology, and to record and manipulate images in art and design.

72. Resources are good in design and technology, music, and art and design. In physical education a lottery grant has been used to fund new curriculum initiatives, such as the playing of rugby. In mathematics, the provision of resources is unsatisfactory, because there is restricted access to computers, and a shortage of practical resources. In modern languages, provision is also unsatisfactory, and there are not enough books for French and German in the library. In addition, there is a shortage of basic equipment such as overhead projectors, and this restricts the range of teaching approaches that can be used.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

73. To help raise the attainment of pupils further and to improve the quality of provision for learning the governors and the school should:

- (1) Continue the development of target setting for all pupils and mentoring of pupils deemed to be not doing so well as they might. In addition, ensure that the very good practice in motivating lower achieving boys seen in some lessons is adapted and emulated by other teachers.  
(Paragraphs: 2, 5, 21, 27, 30, 33, 52, 74, 76, 91, 122, 123, 130, 155, 172, 175)
- (2) Take steps to quickly improve the standard of teaching in geography in Years 7-9.  
(Paragraphs: 25, 134)
- (3) Consider all arrangements for the current teaching of the subjects within the faculty known as 'humanities' so that:
  - Religious education is managed effectively.
  - Teachers of religious education have sufficient subject knowledge and understanding of current best practice.
  - Business education is developed better.
  - The allocation of history and geography teachers to lessons is more effective.
  - Resources for all current humanities subjects are reviewed and improved, particularly ICT resources, as soon as possible.(Paragraphs: 7, 24, 26, 30, 34, 37, 60, 68, 135, 143)
- (4) Continue to improve provision for ICT across the school and ensure all departments have sufficient training and understanding of its use to help pupils to learn.  
(Paragraphs: 21, 103, 111, 136, 144, 152, 160)

In addition to the main issues above, the school and governors may also wish to consider the following minor issue in their action plan.

- Lessons in mathematics and science need monitoring more closely.  
(Paragraphs: 29, 102)
- The time available for National Curriculum physical education in Years 10 and 11 is insufficient.  
(Paragraphs: 7, 24, 174)
- The reporting of pupils' achievements in ICT to parents is inadequate.  
(Paragraph: 151)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	162
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	28

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	9	29	70	47	7	0	0
Percentage	6	18	43	29	4	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	921
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	53

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	32
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	176

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	18
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	20

### Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	6.4
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	113	99	212

National Curriculum Test/Task Results	English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	78	70
	Girls	84	63
	Total	162	133
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	76 (69)	63 (55)
	National	63 (63)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	36 (16)	25 (14)
	National	28 (28)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments	English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	71	75
	Girls	77	69
	Total	148	144
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	71 (76)	68 (73)
	National	64 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	38 (47)	33 (45)
	National	31 (31)	29 (28)

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



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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	87	74	161

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	40	81	86
	Girls	37	70	74
	Total	77	151	160
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	48 (51)	94 (97)	99 (98)
	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	40
	National	38.4

### *Ethnic background of pupils*

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	2
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	919
Any other minority ethnic group	0

### *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	8	1
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)	49.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.3

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of education support staff	21
Total aggregate hours worked per week	615

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	80.6
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	23.6
Key Stage 4	19.6

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### *Financial information*

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	2 427 802
Total expenditure	2 389 515
Expenditure per pupil	2 629
Balance brought forward from previous year	40 114
Balance carried forward to next year	78 401

### *Recruitment of teachers*

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	6.1
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	10.0

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0.0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0.0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## *Results of the survey of parents and carers*

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	900
Number of questionnaires returned	251

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	43	45	7	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	45	43	2	0	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	32	55	6	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	21	57	8	3	5
The teaching is good.	33	59	1	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	27	51	11	1	6
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	55	38	3	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	65	31	0	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	24	56	13	1	3
The school is well led and managed.	52	39	2	1	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	41	49	3	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	40	41	6	2	7

*Note: the questionnaire was sent out as Year 7 started and this accounts for most of the 'don't knows'.*

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

### ENGLISH

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

#### Strengths

- Teaching is very good.
- The close liaison with the special educational needs department.
- Leadership and management.

#### Areas for development

- Raising the attainment of boys further.

74. Results in the end of Year 9 tests have fluctuated slightly for the last few years but are generally good; in 2001 they were better than in 2000 and above the 2000 national average. Standards in GCSE examinations have also risen over the years and in 2001 results were above the national average. Results in English show a divide between the achievements of boys and girls at Grades A\* to C; in 2001 boys were just above the national average whilst girls' results were well above. In 2001, English GCSE results were similar to those in mathematics whilst science did even better.

75. GCSE results in English literature in 2001 are well above the national average but the proportion of pupils entered, around 58 per cent, is less than the national entry of around 90 per cent. English literature results are still better for girls than boys but considerably less so than in English language. The decision has been made that all pupils in Year 10 will study both subjects for examination in 2003.

76. In the work seen during the inspection standards in all years were above the national average. This represents good achievement from when pupils start in Year 7, when their standards of work are broadly average. In all years, pupils of all levels of ability learn well and make good progress. Girls tend to do better than boys. The school intends to review how GCSE groups are formed at the end of this Year 9 to try and ensure that boys with A\* to C potential in English language are more effectively placed.

77. By the end of Year 9 pupils are confident speakers and listeners. They take an active part in discussions, are articulate and fluent and listen well to each other and their teachers. In reading, they show an understanding of a range of texts and can read with accuracy and expression. This was seen in a Year 8 lesson where the pupils made a recording of a passage from Macbeth. The focus of the lesson was on speaking, listening, reading and dramatic technique. Good progress is made in

writing. Pupils sustain argument in both spoken and written English. In Year 11 pupils can ask questions that are relevant, have a good variety of expression and demonstrate a good vocabulary. In reading, pupils can identify key features, themes and characters, summarise, analyse and reflect. In a Year 10 lesson, pupils could articulate personal and critical responses when preparing the main aspects of an essay on the subject of: "Qualities of a good teacher". Pupils' writing is confident with characters and settings being well developed, ideas are organised and coherent and there is evidence of shape and impact. ICT is used to great effect in English with more able pupils. Examples of this are the poetry anthology web site and the impressive animations in Year 10.

78. Pupils know how well they are doing; this was well demonstrated in a Year 7 lesson on specific skills where pupils could identify what they needed to do in order to move to the next level. Pupils could explain, describe, analyse and question the information provided. More able pupils are well identified and experience challenging literature. Contexts and concepts are explored in depth and this extends pupils' understanding of their cultural heritage. Pupils work productively and respond well to the challenges teachers give them. For the most part, they take responsibility for their work and support each other.

79. Good progress and achievement is due to very good teaching in a very well run department. The head of department has a clear vision of the way English should be taught and all teachers in the department share this. Teaching is based around the development of basic skills, and assessment criteria are well used to identify the standards of pupils' writing and to decide their next targets for improvement. Overall, pupils learn very well. To raise the attainment of boys further, writing style and accuracy are two skills identified by teachers for development.

80. Work in books shows pupils' writing shows variety; imaginative vocabulary choices; poetry and book reviews are good. A particularly good example of pupils investigating and researching a topic: "Power Boats on the Trent" was seen in a Year 11 lesson.

81. Teachers have a very good knowledge of their subject and teach basic skills well. The implementation of the National Literacy Strategy has included differentiated materials to extend more able pupils. A good example is the spelling log for Year 7 in which more able pupils practise more complicated vocabulary work and spelling patterns. Effective planning and clearly stated aims take into account the needs of all pupils. High expectations challenge and inspire pupils. Contributions from pupils are well used to stimulate class discussions. A variety of teaching methods enable all pupils to learn effectively. In a lesson looking at the use of direct speech, excellent support for pupils with special educational needs was provided. The teacher created a confident atmosphere where pupils were responding enthusiastically and volunteering to read aloud. There was an atmosphere of achievement and pupils were not afraid to give a wrong answer because the relationships were so positive.

82. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are most often very good. They are interested, keen to do well and work well individually or in groups as required.

Contributions to class discussions involve most pupils and they listen carefully to answers of others. Pupils are kept on task by lessons that have good pace and sufficient challenge. The few lapses from high standards of behaviour were due to teaching lacking sufficient rigour and focus.

83. There are very good systems for assessing pupils and putting them into appropriate teaching groups. This is contributing to the rise in standards because lessons for the different groups are very well planned to ensure that all pupils are given work that is challenging and interesting and well matched to their abilities. The head of department monitors effectiveness through rigorous checking of test results. This has led to the department adapting to the curriculum in order to improve results.

84. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Most teachers in the department are involved in ICT training through the New Opportunities Fund. Primary liaison has improved further and the work on stories for children continues on an annual basis. The Transition Project was launched in September 2001 and teachers look for further improvement in information about pupils' achievements. The reading libraries have proved successful and form a positive part of lessons.

## Drama

85. Drama is a most successful subject within expressive arts. Pupils achieve very well. GCSE standards for expressive arts in 2001 are very high; well above the average for comparative subjects like drama (there are no national figures for expressive arts currently available). The department encourages learning and thinking skills and pupils are both challenged and enthused by some inspirational teaching.

86. Teachers teach with such confidence and enthusiasm that it becomes infectious. Preparation is very good and teaching materials cater for the needs and abilities of all pupils. Teachers have very high expectations and most pupils respond readily to these. Teachers use a variety of teaching strategies to ensure that pupils deepen their knowledge and understanding of dramatic techniques. A Year 10 lesson where the topic, "Conflict and confrontation", was effectively explored through hot seating was a very good example of pupils' willingness to participate in a challenging dramatic situation. Boys and girls work collaboratively and respond very positively to each other's views and opinions. In lunchtime rehearsal of "Gel" this close co-operation of boys and girls was much in evidence. Rehearsals for 'Our Day Out' were in full swing during the inspection. The energy of the teacher supporting direction was matched by the keenness of pupils to put on a good show. Improvements in their techniques, voices and positioning, were seen during the inspection week.

87. Teachers use a good range of practical activities and effectively group pupils to help them learn better from each other. There are many opportunities for pupils to make connections with other subjects as well as to develop spiritual, moral and social perspectives. In a Year 9 lesson that examined the social issues around "homelessness", pupils were guided to explore the many views and opinions on this subject with great empathy and sensitivity. They were provoked into making judgements by the challenging use of questioning.

88. The department works closely with other expressive arts subjects but also very effectively with English. Much research and investigation of best practice has led to the production of very good monitoring and assessment procedures including the involvement of pupils in self-evaluation. Drama has also produced levels and objectives that can be assessed and then recorded on progress charts. This process is very successful in ensuring the development of pupils as they move into the compulsory phase of Expressive Arts as a GCSE subject.

89. The head of department has a clear vision and the team of three works with dedication and commitment. The high standards achieved are the result of high expectations of staff, matched, in the main, by most pupils. They work with great interest and enthusiasm in an atmosphere where positive relationships are a key ingredient to success; pupils are prepared to take risks knowing that they are well supported. There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities that allow for full use of the excellent facilities.

## MATHEMATICS

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is good overall.
- Standards are above the national average at the end of Year 9 and at GCSE; there has been significant improvement over the past two years.

### Areas for improvement

- The monitoring role of the new head of department is still to be developed.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is unsatisfactory in some lessons.
- Provision for ICT and resources in general, are unsatisfactory.

90. At the end of Year 9, pupils are reaching standards above average in tests. The number of pupils attaining a Level 5 or above is above average. The number of pupils achieving Level 6 or above is well above average. Over the period 1997 to 2000, results improved, though the improvement is below national trends. The school is achieving in line with similar schools. The results for 2001 are broadly similar to those of the previous two years. There are no consistent differences between boys and girls.

91. In 2001 GCSE results are above national averages. There are no consistent differences between the performance of boys and girls but girls did do a little better in 2001. Results are not quite so good as those in English and science.

92. In Years 7-9, standards of work seen in books, lessons and established through talking to pupils are higher than expected of pupils of this age. Pupils are achieving good standards in most areas of mathematics, for example, they are able to use number effectively when solving problems. Higher attaining pupils develop skills in algebra when working with square numbers and finding general rules. Low attaining pupils develop their basic skills including measuring and working with money. One group demonstrated good estimation skills; they were able to estimate lengths and heights of objects in the classroom accurately. Mental and oral skills are being developed through the recent implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy. However, this has had insufficient time to impact significantly on all numeracy standards. Though some pupils applied their mathematical skills to problem solving and investigations, in general there were insufficient opportunities for pupils to practise these skills.

93. In Years 10 and 11, standards of work seen in books, lessons and established through talking to pupils are above national expectations. Pupils are making good progress and demonstrate clear gains in confidence and competence in all areas of mathematics. Higher attaining pupils are able to use high level algebra skills when working on equations, using computers to draw graphs and analyse patterns, thus significantly improving their understanding of different types



of graphs. Low attaining pupils show clear gains in knowledge and understanding of numbers and are able to use number effectively when solving problems. For example, one group was able to round large numbers and learned when accuracy was important. Pupils show good levels of independent working and problem solving skills in their coursework tasks. Mental and oral skills are well developed by some teachers, but this is not consistent and some pupils have few opportunities to practise these skills.

94. There is no significant difference between the standard of mathematics of girls or boys. However, standards of presentation, in the books of some boys, particularly in lower attaining groups, are unsatisfactory and sometimes poor. Standards of literacy development in mathematics are satisfactory overall. However, in some lessons there are few opportunities for pupils to develop their mathematical language.

95. Pupils achieve well in mathematics. Pupils enter the school with slightly above average performance compared to national averages. In Year 11, pupils have made progress and achieve above average. In work seen in books and in lessons, they make clear gains in knowledge and understanding in most topics. They show good understanding of number and can apply their skills confidently. Higher attaining pupils develop their algebra skills to solve problems. Low attaining pupils consolidate and extend their basic skills. Pupils understand the properties of shape, developing skills with area and volume of increasingly complex shapes. In better lessons, thorough planning, a good pace to lessons and close monitoring of work ensures that pupils waste no time and make good or better progress. Despite inconsistencies in teaching achievement and progress is good overall.

96. The teaching, attainment and progress of pupils with special educational needs are satisfactory overall. Pupils' progress is best where work is closely matched to their needs, for example when using computers for individual learning programmes pitched at their level of attainment. However, in some lessons, all pupils do the same work. Assessment is not used to diagnose both group and individual weaknesses and devise learning programmes. As a result, some topics are inappropriate. When talking to pupils it is obvious that in some topics they have little understanding of underlying mathematical ideas. For example, a group of pupils could multiply decimals by ten and a hundred accurately, but did not understand what a decimal was. Short term, meaningful targets are not set for both mathematical achievement and presentation of work. Little use is made of computers. Mathematical language is not developed, for example by focussing on key words for the topic and allowing pupils to talk about their work. Some of these pupils make unsatisfactory progress as a result.

97. Gifted pupils make good progress overall, but in some lessons work is not planned to challenge these pupils. In better lessons, questioning and harder work ensures that most of these pupils are challenged. Good additional support is given to older pupils through extra lessons after school.

98. Most pupils enjoy mathematics and many are very enthusiastic, are very well behaved and have good levels of concentration. This positive attitude has a positive

impact on the quality of work. Standards of behaviour in mathematics lessons are very good.

99. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. This is an improvement on the previous inspection. One unsatisfactory lesson was seen; others were mostly good and sometimes very good. The department has mostly experienced staff and teacher knowledge and understanding of the subject is good overall. Where teaching is good or better, teachers explain the content of the lesson clearly; what pupils are to learn, and how the lesson fits into a sequence of lessons on the topic. Planning is thorough and caters for the range of ability in the set, with easier work for lower attaining pupils and challenging extension work for the higher attaining pupils. Lessons move forward at a pace. Pupils are involved in the lesson and develop their speaking and listening skills when explaining to the class how they tackle problems. Questions are targeted carefully to check understanding and are at appropriate levels. Teachers monitor classwork closely, picking up any problems as they arise and stopping the group to explain general difficulties.

100. Marking is thorough, picking up errors and showing ways to improve. Discipline is good and any instances of misbehaviour are quickly stopped. Very high standards of behaviour are expected in almost all lessons. These teaching strategies ensure pupils waste little time in lessons and pick up ideas quickly. Work is interesting and learning is effective. In some lessons with younger pupils, teachers use National Numeracy strategies effectively, helping pupils to develop their mental mathematics skills. Some teachers extend these activities to work with older pupils. Teachers have to work particularly hard in Year 11 as the time available for lessons is less than average; they provide additional lessons after school for some pupils.

101. Lessons that are just satisfactory or less than satisfactory contain several of the following faults. Planning lacks detail and does not include work specifically for low or higher attaining pupils; all do the same work. Computers are not used to enhance teaching and learning. Pupils have few opportunities to contribute orally in lessons. High standards of behaviour are not always expected. In many books, the quality of marking is unsatisfactory; marking is superficial, with a large amount of work not marked and few comments on ways to improve standards or about careless and untidy work. As a result, mistakes and misunderstandings are not identified, careless methods develop and presentation does not improve.

102. The head of department is a recent appointment. Leadership is currently satisfactory; his monitoring role is not yet sufficiently developed and there are inconsistencies in teaching, for example in the quality of lesson planning and in marking. Departmental development planning does not yet include detailed long-term plans to systematically address issues such as raising standards or improving the use of computers.

103. There has been some staffing instability within the department over the past four years. Some lessons are still taught by non-specialists, occasionally unsatisfactorily. Accommodation is satisfactory overall but relatively large classes cramp rooms and hinder group work. Resources are unsatisfactory; there is insufficient access to computers, and insufficient practical equipment to support adequate group work. Book resources are adequate. Display in classrooms and in corridors is good, positively enhancing the working environment and celebrating pupil's successes.

104. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. The standard of teaching is much better. There are improved systems for assessment and monitoring. Primary school liaison is well established and documentation has been reviewed. Plans are in place to implement the National Numeracy Strategy and the department is currently reviewing the schemes of work in preparation for the new syllabuses for older pupils. The school has plans to address the inadequate access to computers.

## SCIENCE

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

### Strengths

- Attainment at the end of both key stages is above the national average.
- The use of assessment information to group pupils and set them targets is very good.
- Teaching; expectations, planning, marking, are largely good.
- Most pupils enjoy science and are enthusiastic; they behave very well and take pride in their work.

### Areas for improvement

- The quality and level of resources and accommodation.
- ICT is not used well enough in practical investigations in laboratories.

105. Pupils' results in Year 9 tests have improved in recent years. In 2001, results are above the national average and in line with those of similar schools. There is no particular trend in results and most often very little difference in the attainment of boys and girls.

106. Pupils achieve well between Years 7 and 9. Pupils' work shows good knowledge and understanding; as a preparation for planning an investigation, pupils in Year 7 collected and displayed valuable data on heating water; from their research, pupils in Year 8 understood about the place of the planets in the solar system and were amazed at the size and scale of events. In these and other lessons, less competent pupils were well supported in their work.

107. In Years 10 and 11, most pupils achieve well in lessons and in GCSE examinations. Following an exceptionally successful year in 1998, the proportion of pupils gaining A\* to C grades has gradually increased and, in 2001, is well above the national average. Girls do better than boys, as they do nationally. The proportion attaining grades A\* to G is about average. A small number of lower attainers took single award science in 2001 and most achieved appropriately. Pupils do well in science in comparison with many other subjects.

108. Standards of work in Years 10 and 11 are above average. Year 10 pupils extend their knowledge and understanding of chemical reactions by making copper sulphate; Year 11 pupils are able to correctly explain and identify patterns and pathways of refraction as a change in the speed of light. They can successfully describe the transfer of energy by waves, and calculate chemical formulae by combining weights.

109. Behaviour in lessons is most often very good and attitudes to learning are positive. Most pupils take great pride in their work and books are well looked after. Pupils' enthusiasm supports the good progress they make in lessons, particularly in practical work, as in the Year 10 lesson preparing the salt of a transition metal. Pupils generally apply themselves well and report results thoughtfully and accurately, effectively deepening their understanding of principles and processes in science. A Year 9 class was not particularly well behaved or motivated though the unsatisfactory content of the lesson contributed to this.

110. Teaching and learning is good; some lessons during the inspection were very good, one was excellent and one was unsatisfactory. Expectations of most teachers are high and relationships are generally good. Almost all teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of science. However, poor preparation and understanding of work on drugs, in Year 9, contributed to a lesson being unsatisfactory. Most teachers organise and prepare individual lessons conscientiously, often with detailed plans and lesson notes, as in the lessons on heating things in Year 7, and working on chemical reactions and equations. Lower attaining pupils are helped very well by a learning support assistant and good use is made of developing numerical skills in the drawing of graphs and choosing and using scales appropriately. In nearly all lessons aims and intended outcomes were displayed and known by the pupils. This clearly contributes to their understanding and the overall success of the lesson. A range of teaching and learning methods is used and homework is largely well thought out, relevant and clearly extends pupils' learning. Whole class questioning is regularly used and effective, and the pace of lessons is generally good. In very good and excellent lessons, most pupils are challenged and confident and they show clear gains in knowledge, understanding and skills. This is demonstrated well where pupils are engaged with the formal aspects of planning investigations related to heating things, elasticity, dissolving things and the conditions for decay. Assessment is properly organised and effective and there are regular opportunities for assessment such as end of unit tests and the outcome of practical investigations. Most teachers mark pupils' books and other work well, often using praise and supportive and informative comment. Written work is of a good standard although, for some pupils, there is a paucity of creative and imaginative writing and recording in science.

111. Teachers are developing the skills of using computers effectively in science lessons and for administration. However, there are few opportunities for pupils to use data collection within their laboratory work, indicated by lack of evidence in lessons and pupils' books.

112. The curriculum manager for science is well experienced and has a clear vision, and is ably supported by an enthusiastic second in the department. Teachers' work successfully together and the sharing of good practice is supported by proper delegation. Documentation is good, well organised and a helpful resource. There are links with out of school activities such as the science club and visits to outside events and lectures. The quality of pupils' work on display in some science laboratories is good and sometimes it is excellent. An exception is the dowdy 'mobile' classroom used as a laboratory

113. Accommodation is unsatisfactory both in quality and quantity and in the general level of services (electrical, gas, water) provided. Though pupils and teachers generally put up with this it is unreasonable that they have to do so. Apparatus and equipment has been very well looked after but is now generally in short supply, old and worn out.

114. Since the last inspection, there has been good improvement in science. Over the past three years, standards have improved. Department documentation is well organised and up-to-date; schemes of work and teaching strategies have been revised and supported by new texts. In particular, an increase in the use of ICT and the recent provision of a web site assists pupils in their research and in the planning and recording of investigations. The development and frequent sharing of good practice has assisted teachers in working more closely together, and improving the quality of teaching. The tracking and recording of

pupils' success, using data about pupils' performance is now very good. In addition to prior attainment, the results of regular marking, end of module tests, and other material are successfully used to group pupils by ability, to set individual targets, to support and generally inform teachers' work and pupils' learning. This is a major strength. Teachers and technicians are familiar with safe working practice and daily routines reflect this, and the appointment of another science technician has made a positive impact on the quality of pupils' work.

## ART AND DESIGN

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

### Strengths

- Results at GCSE have shown steady improvement since the previous inspection.
- Pupils draw well.
- The subject makes a very good contribution to cultural development.

### Areas for improvement

- Pupils' painting skills.
- The work is not exciting or adventurous enough.

115. End of Year 9 teacher assessments for 2001 indicate standards are in line with national expectations and this is confirmed by inspection of work. Pupils in Year 7 are also working at national expectations. Given the increasing range of skills knowledge and understanding developed between Years 7 and 9, pupils' achievement is satisfactory.

116. In Year 11, standards of work are average. Results at GCSE in 2000 were below average, with one half of pupils gaining grades at A\*-C against a national average of two-thirds. Results in 2001 are much better and in line with national results. Pupils' achievement, between Years 9 and 11, is satisfactory. Results at GCSE have shown a steady improvement since the previous inspection. Differences in the attainment of boys and girls are in line with national differences.

117. By the end of Year 9, pupils can draw from observation and from imagination, using a range of materials, for example pencil, chalk and charcoal. As a result, some strong studies are seen, based on plant forms and cut tomatoes, which show a confident use of line and tone. Pupils also learn to make collages from coloured paper, and some bold pieces are seen which are based on the study of the work of Henri Rousseau. Their painting skills, however, are less well developed, and their sketchbooks show little evidence of experimentation with materials. In Years 10 and 11, pupils continue to make steady gains in their ability to draw, with increasing emphasis on observation work, from natural forms and from everyday objects. These include potted plants, kettles and transistor radios. They use colour well, and produce some bright and lively lino prints based on musical instruments. They also learn to develop ideas, starting from drawings and paintings, into three dimensions. As a result, some constructions in clay, card, and wire, based on portraits, are bright and bold, and form an attractive display. However, pupils lack confidence when painting, and their work in paint is tentative and timid. Pupils with special educational needs, and talented pupils, achieve satisfactorily in all years.

118. Pupils' attitudes are good. They enjoy their art and design lessons, and show good levels of application when drawing, painting and printing. Their behaviour is invariably good, and they show particularly high levels of interest in their work when the teaching in the lesson is good. Pupils working on the expressive and performing arts course in Years 10 and 11 are particularly well motivated.

119. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in all years. In the best lessons there is a good match of materials to the interest and attainment levels of pupils. This was seen in a lesson where pupils could paint, draw, or make lino prints. This approach produced good levels of personal interest in the work, and high levels of engagement with the materials, particularly in the printing. This produced good learning. Teachers are also very encouraging, and have good subject knowledge, and can give good individual advice as a result. However, too much of the work set is not exciting or adventurous enough. As a result, in some lessons pupils begin to lose concentration, and begin to talk about things other than their work. This means that they work slowly, or without really thinking about what they are doing, and learning is restricted to a satisfactory level.

120. The subject makes a very good contribution to the cultural development of pupils, and there is a good programme of visits, to galleries and to nearby towns, where pupils draw and take photographs to prepare for their class work. There is a good range of materials available in the school for pupils to research the work of other artists, such as Picasso, Van Gogh, and Salvador Dali. The school also uses artists in residence to extend and enhance the quality of provision. For example, a professional sculptor is currently working with pupils on a piece to celebrate the expressive and performing arts. The accommodation for the subject is satisfactory overall, but the teaching rooms are too cramped for some of the larger groups of pupils. This means that in some lessons there is not enough space to spread work out fully, and this makes it difficult for pupils to work on a larger scale.

121. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good; overall standards and pupils' achievement have improved by the ends of Year 9 and 11. This is because the leadership and management of the subject have successfully tackled the shortcomings identified in the previous inspection.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Good teaching supported by well-planned courses leads to above average standards.
- Good working relationships and the effective management of resources enable pupils to learn well.

### Areas for improvement

- Better strategies for meeting the needs of gifted and talented pupils are needed.
- Strategies for raising the attainment of boys need developing.

122. The attainment of pupils in Year 9 is above average. Teacher assessments in 2001 suggest that attainment is well above average but this is not borne out by work seen during the inspection. Although some higher attaining pupils have a good understanding of the design process and gather information from a variety of



sources, analyse its usefulness and use it in support of their projects, independent learning is limited to a few pupils. For example, Year 9 pupils were able to identify the design constraints that might determine the size and shape of their warning device project but their independent research, drawn from a variety of sources including the Internet, lacked depth. Lower attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs are helped to respond to all the stages of the design process by well-structured course materials. Pupils use ICT skills for a range of applications. In a Year 7 control technology lesson, pupils with special educational needs, in particular, developed a greater understanding of time delays and intervals between flashing light emitting diodes by using computer software. The difference in attainment between boys and girls was highlighted in a Year 9 food technology lesson where the lower standard of work from boys was directly related to their lower levels of concentration and perseverance. Pupils of all abilities make good progress and, as pupils enter the school with average attainment, their achievement by the end of Year 9 is good.

123. The attainment of pupils by the end of Year 11 is above average. Pupils continue the good progress made in earlier years and generally achieve well. GCSE results in 2000 were a little above average but overall 2001 results are below. The proportion of boys achieving an A\*-C grade is below average whilst the proportion of girls is well above. The policy of entering all pupils who complete the course has been rewarded by pass rates at A\* to G of well above average. In 2001, almost all pupils entered gained at least a pass at grade G.

124. Standards of work reflect the examination results. Higher attaining pupils can work independently to produce detailed design folders containing research from a range of sources including the Internet and first hand sources. Pupils are able to use ICT skills to process data gathered from questionnaires and present it using bar graphs and pie charts. Good access to computers helps many pupils to improve the quality and presentation of work. Higher attaining pupils extend classwork by using computers for research and homework purposes at lunchtime and after school. The interest and motivation of one lower achieving Year 11 pupil was improved by using a computer graphics package to make a working drawing, and then use computer-aided manufacturing techniques to make his project. The quality of design folder work produced by girls reflects their ability to work in a careful, independent and conscientious way. An introductory Year 10 resistant materials project does not further the development of independent working skills but GCSE projects are carefully chosen to be within pupils' achievable limits and progress is greater at this stage.

125. Attitudes and behaviour are good. Pupils listen attentively and usually work with interest and concentration. They work sensibly and safely in practical situations and have due regard for the safety of others. Pupils enjoy design and technology work and this contributes to the positive learning atmosphere in many lessons. Good personal development skills are developed through carefully managed group work. For example, Year 7 pupils working in groups for control technology, considered each other's views and ideas, allocated tasks and responsibilities without dissent and worked harmoniously as a team. The groups had been carefully compiled to provide a balance of skills and this was particularly beneficial in allowing pupils with special needs to contribute.

126. Teaching is good. Over four fifths of lessons were good; the remainder satisfactory. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Planning of courses and individual lessons is thorough and leads to good progression. Year 7 pupils, for example, had little understanding of food groups or nutritional values but higher attaining pupils in Year 9 were able to discuss the sensory evaluation of food with an appropriate vocabulary. Good management of pupils, resources and practical activities improves pupils' learning. For example, effective team teaching from two teachers and a learning support assistant enabled Year 7 pupils to understand how to use the computerised sewing machine and pupils with special educational needs to make similar progress to their peers. Teachers support pupils' literacy and numeracy development well. Key words and technical vocabulary are displayed and pupils make good use of them in, for example, the sensory evaluation of food. Measuring, weighing, and estimating are integral parts of many lessons and pupils in electronics make good progress with the calculation of resistor values. Thorough marking of

work in Years 10 and 11 gives pupils detailed advice on how to improve but in earlier years some marking is not precise enough to do this. Teachers working across traditional subject and gender divisions create good role models for pupils. Gifted and talented pupils are encouraged to extend the quality of their project work but no specific strategies are used to ensure this. Although the quality of teaching features prominently in departmental discussions it is not formally monitored. Teachers receive valuable support from technicians but their time allocation is insufficient to allow their deployment in a classroom support role. There is good liaison with learning support assistants, some of whom have been trained in practical skills.

127. The leadership and management of the department are good. The experienced and capable head of department has generated good team spirit based on a clear vision and a firm desire to work in the best interests of the pupils. Good assessment procedures ensure that pupils know the National Curriculum level they are working at and what they must do to improve. Coursework tracking procedures for GCSE projects ensure that pupils maintain progress. As yet the system is cumbersome and identifying underachieving pupils, a boy for example, is time consuming. Plans to use a school database for this may enable more effective action to be taken. The curriculum provides pupils with broad and balanced technological experiences including electronics, control technology and computer aided design and manufacturing techniques. Staff training has enabled ICT to be integrated into project work at all levels and pupils benefit from good access to computers. Extra-curricular activities are not extensive but pupils benefit from additional coursework time and the departmental involvement in expressive and performing arts activities. Very good workshop accommodation provides a stimulating working environment. Food and textiles areas are in need of refurbishment but are enlivened by good classroom displays.

128. Since the last inspection improvement has been good. Overall GCSE results have improved, staff training needs have been more closely focused, resources for ICT and computer aided design and manufacture have been improved and use of these resources is more effective.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is **unsatisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Teaching for pupils taking GCSE courses is good.
- Good individual support is provided for low attaining pupils.

### Areas for improvement

- There is unsatisfactory teaching in Years 7-9.
- Specialist geography teachers are not used effectively.
- Schemes of work; they are insufficiently focussed on what must be taught.
- Tracking of pupils' progress over time.

- ICT and resources in general need to be better used to support a better variety of work appropriate for all abilities.
- Fieldwork needs to be done better and by more pupils.

129. Teachers' assessments of end of Year 9 work in 2001 are above average. Work in books shows only a little detailed writing and creativity; standards are broadly average but some pupils do not achieve well enough.

130. GCSE results are well below average. There has been a declining trend for the last three years. In 2000, the proportion of pupils who attained results at grades A\*-C was well below the national average. In 2001, the proportion of pupils attaining an A\*-C grade is poor, though this has to be set against a much larger entry than is general. Since 1999, boys' results have markedly decreased and girls' results have similarly improved.

131. In Years 7-9 pupils develop map skills using work sheets and prepared tasks and occasionally map extracts. Lower attainers enjoy the work but have difficulty understanding some concepts, for example, contours. In a Year 7 lesson on scale, some good practical work was seen which pupils clearly enjoyed but help was needed with the worksheet. Detailed writing is not often seen and there is little evidence of creativity until Year 9. The writing of news reports, diary entries and fact files is rare and the creation of posters or original maps infrequent. Work seen in a Year 9 class on volcanoes required heavy reliance on text and pupils set the pace of the lesson as the teacher spent time giving individual help to low attainers and finding and explaining work for high attainers; appropriate work had not been prepared beforehand. An assessment on volcanoes at the end of Year 9 requires an original report and some thoughtful input from pupils. This type of work requires some detailed writing and helps pupils to develop some understanding for themselves. Given broadly average attainment on entry, on balance pupils achieve just satisfactorily; more able pupils do not, whilst pupils of lower prior attainment progress satisfactorily due to the individual help provided by teachers.

132. In work seen during the inspection attainment in Year 11 is below average. However, standards are improving; two good teachers teach in Years 10 and 11. Although some pupils still find it very difficult to interpret data and place too much reliance on textbooks, they are developing the ability to arrive at an answer for themselves. For example, in a Year 11 lesson on ports, pupils were presented with a map of east coast ports and trade information; lower and middle attainers were very slow to recognise that the data was in front of them and could be used for answers, but careful encouragement by the teacher developed pupils' confidence, they found the information from the map themselves, and had some success in the time allowed; higher attainers enjoyed the exercise and found it more rewarding than using text from a book. Pupils' coursework for GCSE is based on shopping areas and is varied in quality and quantity. Most low attainers have a satisfactory record of data collection, a few maps and charts but minimal data presentation and little or no analysis. Higher and middle attainers do much better work. There is a planned structure, at least satisfactory and sometimes good use of graphs and of analysis of data. Higher attainers also provide value judgements on the hypotheses tested and write

reasoned conclusions based on the data analysis. Graph skills vary from the use of basic bar charts to very good use of line graphs, pie charts, and a variety of specialised diagrams. In all years, numeracy is being developed with graph and map work but only one teacher uses key word displays and encourages reading aloud. There is very little use of ICT.

133. Pupils' behaviour in the classroom is good. They have mostly good relationships with their teachers, are responsive in class and listen well to instructions. There is some chatter in lessons when the pace is slow but all pupils are willing to learn.

134. Teaching is unsatisfactory overall due to the proportion of teaching that is unsatisfactory in Years 7-9. Teaching is good in Years 10 and 11. Lessons are unsatisfactory when there is too much repetition of information, insufficient time given for pupils to contribute, and the pace is slow. In these lessons pupil progress is slow and unsatisfactory. In satisfactory lessons, there is good questioning of pupils, clear explanations of tasks and some provision of challenging tasks, for example, the lesson on scale. However, some satisfactory lessons do not have good pace, pupils' progress is not always checked and the tasks provided sometimes offer little variation in lessons. In these lessons, pupils' overall learning is satisfactory but higher attainers are not always sufficiently challenged. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is good. There is good, brisk questioning of pupils to consolidate previous knowledge, tasks are well prepared to develop ideas and some variety of materials is used, for example in the lesson on ports. The pace of learning is good with checks on pupils' progress through the lesson. Marking and assessment are well organised and well monitored and marking is good.

135. There is no head of geography within the humanities structure; leadership and management of geography within that structure are unsatisfactory. The humanities faculty structure is used to disseminate subject specialists into shortage areas. For example, the head of humanities, a geographer, spends 34 per cent of his contact time teaching outside his specialist area. No teacher is clearly focussed on developing or teaching the subject. Humanities rooms do not sufficiently indicate that geography takes place in them, for example, through the proper and frequent display of pupils' work. Analysis of pupils' assessments to track their progress, against ability and gender, is under-developed. Schemes of work are complete but too descriptive and insufficiently focussed on required knowledge, skills and resources. Currently only Year 7 has any planned provision for the use of ICT. Fieldwork provision is barely satisfactory and only available to pupils in Years 8 and 10; wider opportunities for more pupils would provide pupils with greater motivation and more learning experiences.

136. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. GCSE results are well below average. There is some unsatisfactory teaching. Assessment has improved and pupils know attainment levels. There is good record keeping and marking is generally good. The use of ICT has not improved.

## HISTORY

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

### Strengths

- Achievement in Years 7 to 11 is good.
- Good teaching by subject specialists.
- Pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour.
- Effective and efficient management of the subject within humanities.

### Areas for improvement

- Subject specialists are not used as often as they could be to teach pupils history.
- There is not enough emphasis on the skills which encourage more independent learning for all pupils.
- Gifted and talented pupils are not well enough identified or catered for.
- There is insufficient access to ICT to support pupils' learning.

137. Teachers' assessments, at the end of Year 9, indicate standards that are above national expectations. The standard of work seen confirms this. GCSE results in 2001 are above average; the proportion of pupils taking history was a little above average. The standard of work seen is also above average.

138. Pupils achieve well between Years 7 and 9 and between Years 10-11. Pupils enter the school with average levels of skills and knowledge. By Year 9 they have a good knowledge of the periods they are studying and they are effectively able to relate causation to effect. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 build on the progress made in the first three years and they increase their analytical and evaluative skills. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress throughout Years 7 to 11. However, the achievement of gifted and talented pupils is not yet good enough because of the lack of more rigorously focussed and targeted work for them.

139. In Years 7-9, pupils handle historical facts to good effect and they increase their knowledge of types of historical evidence, which they interpret well. For example, Year 9 pupils, in their study of the living conditions in England in 1850, can effectively use statistical data and evidence, not only to show the differing life expectancy rate of the wealthy and the poor sectors of the population but also to explain the prevailing conditions that enabled such variations. Pupils effectively judge the reliability and validity of such evidence.

140. In Years 10 and 11, pupils are skilful at linking several facts together to make a comprehensive and cohesive historical picture. For example, Year 11 pupils, in their answer to the question of "Why the British government put troops into Northern Ireland in 1969?" could not only make accurate reference to the events, in the province, of the late 1960's, such as the Civil Rights marches in Londonderry in 1969, but could also effectively allude to longer term factors, such as the Home Rule Movement, The Easter Rising and Partition, as long- term incidents which formed the background to the differing sectarian hopes and fears which equally underpinned the events of 1969.

141. The attitude of pupils is very good. Very often, their behaviour in class is exemplary. They show good application to their work. They respond diligently, settle quickly to task and sustain concentration. Their positive behaviour and response is an important factor in their increased learning.

142. During the inspection, only specialist teachers of history were observed teaching the subject. Teaching is good overall throughout Years 7 to 11 and pupils learn well as a result. No lesson observed during the inspection was less than satisfactory and some lessons were very good. Teachers have good knowledge of the subject. Lessons are well planned and well prepared and pupils are consequently helped to learn. A characteristic of history teaching is that the teachers' belief in the value of the subject is reflected in their enthusiasm for it. This has a strong impact on pupils' learning. Teachers are good at establishing good relationships. In some lessons, teachers tend to be overly didactic and pupils are not sufficiently encouraged to become independent learners. In the best lessons, however, teachers are particularly adept at drawing out significant points from material which is both challenging and exciting and they successfully encourage pupils to become more active participants in their own learning. For example, in a Year 10 lesson on the history of medicine in Roman times, the teacher introduced primary sources, including some with a humorous content, to establish interest. Amongst them, one such source, a contemporary letter, referred to a Roman social climber who "dallied in the public latrines in order to achieve an invitation to dinner". Humorously, but purposefully, the teacher encouraged the pupils to see beyond the humour and he was able to get them to extrapolate a host of pertinent facts concerning public amenities such as baths and toilets and how they contributed to the health of the citizens of Rome. The quality of his teaching led to good learning since pupils were stimulated by the challenge and applied their best intellectual and creative efforts to fulfil the tasks he set. Overall, the quality of teaching makes a significant impact on pupils' learning, attainment and progress.

143. History is a subject in the faculty of the humanities. The second in charge of humanities effectively and efficiently leads and manages history. He is well supported by his specialist colleague. However, the deployment of specialist and non-specialist teachers is not effective enough, since, too often, classes are taught by non-specialist teachers. These teachers are more heavily committed to other subjects in the curriculum, for example geography and religious education.

144. There is a comprehensive assessment policy for the subject that is based on sound principles and achievable outcomes. The teaching rooms have displays of pupils' work which act as an incentive and which create an atmosphere conducive to learning. These walls and the walls of the corridor of the history suite are not sufficiently used to improve pupils' literacy by the addition of key words. There is insufficient access to, and use of, ICT to support the subject. There is, however, good use of visits to nearby places of historical interest, such as the mills at Cromford and The Thackray Medical Museum. These visits add effectively to the pupils' experience of history.

145. Improvement since the last inspection is good. The subject has continued to build on the firm foundations that were highlighted in the last inspection report.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- The overall quality of teaching is very good and leads to very good quality learning.
- Good quality equipment so pupils learn on up-to date computers.

### Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT to support teaching and learning in *other subjects* is inadequate and insufficiently monitored.
- Standards and pupils' achievements in data-logging are particularly weak.
- The reporting of pupils' ICT knowledge, skills and understanding to parents.

146. End of Year 9 teacher assessments indicate above average standards following several years of gradual improvement. In 1999 and 2000, GCSE results in Information Systems at grades A\* to C were well below average, and results compared unfavourably with those of other subjects taken. In 2001 they were greatly improved and results were well above average and amongst the highest in school. Girls attained slightly better results than the boys did. Most pupils gained at least a G grade. The first group of pupils through the GNVQ course will take the GNVQ ICT examination in 2002.

147. When pupils enter the school their skills in ICT are very varied as pupils receive differing access to computers at their former schools and not all pupils have computers at home. In general, attainment is below average. Pupils know about writing words, calling up pictures and moving robots, but very few know about databases or spreadsheets or drawing freehand on screen. A few pupils know how to use a CD-ROM or the Internet to find information. By Year 9, pupils' attainment is average, which shows good achievement during the first three years in school. In Year 10, when pupils begin their GNVQ courses, they make good progress and benefit from very good teaching to attain above average standards after only a few months.

148. Work seen during the inspection sometimes matches teachers' assessments as evidence in books and in lessons, point to high standards in many aspects of the subject. There is no discernible difference in attainment between girls and boys. Basic skills are good. Pupils know how to log on to the network, access the programs they need, recall files, save and print. Word processing skills are good. Pupils understand about presenting text and altering it to suit an audience. They know about size, colour and emphasis of text and all but the lowest attaining pupils understand how to mark text for alterations. Most pupils call up clip art files to insert graphics into their texts to improve presentation, and the highest attaining pupils



manipulate the images quickly in resizing and replacing. Year 9 pupils use the Internet facilities very capably and create hyperlinks to improve presentation of, for example, their research into chosen authors in English. Pupils use computer-controlled equipment successfully in both design and technology and in music. They have a sound basic knowledge of a spreadsheet and a database, but tend not to use them other than during the short taught modules. Data-logging work is weak and pupils need more practise in computer-aided art, sending e-mail and screen control.

149. Work seen during the inspection shows that standards overall are above average in Years 10 and 11. There are a few boys who show very advanced ICT skills, as they work extensively at home, and they are attaining very high standards in practical work. Pupils' work on word processing, leading to elements of desktop publishing, is good. They build on to the skills learned earlier in school and show better understanding of the menus and facilities within programs. Previous modules on databases and spreadsheets were short, so pupils have to think hard on these aspects, but in discussions with pupils, it is evident that most of them, except those with lower levels of literacy and numeracy, have good powers of retention and quickly add to the previous learning. Internet work is very good. Theory work is good, as most pupils have a reasonable amount of work in files and many of them, especially the higher-attaining pupils, are making clear comments on their printouts to explain their working and help them with revision. Most pupils have a good grasp of how ICT impacts upon society.

150. Pupils and students have very good attitudes to the subject. They enter the rooms cheerfully and appear keen to learn. They listen and watch attentively, even though they are keener to get to their own work. Pupils have the maturity to accept advice. They appreciate demonstrations as they gain insight into what is possible from some programs. After instruction, pupils settle well, respond positively to the set practical tasks and show high levels of perseverance and concentration. Behaviour is very good. Pupils are polite and respect the teachers and the equipment. They are given responsibility for printing and saving their own work on the school network. A few of the more confident pupils, both boys and girls, show maturity by helping others, there is mutual co-operation when pupils have to share computers and many of them have a genuine interest in others' work.

151. The overall quality of teaching in ICT is very good. In the 11 lessons observed during the inspection, the quality of teaching ranged from good to excellent and resulted in very good learning overall. Teachers of other subjects in Years 7 to 9 are well supported by highly skilled ICT teachers in lessons. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have these specialist ICT teachers for their GNVQ lessons. The support given by teachers and classroom assistants to pupils with special educational needs is also very good and helps them to achieve better than expected. Planning is very good and the tasks, more often than not, are very challenging, to make pupils think hard and produce high quality work. It also takes into account individual pupils' needs. For example, there is plenty of time allowed for one-to-one help during practical sessions, which gives confidence to the lower attaining pupils, and speeds up their efforts. By questioning, teachers persuade the higher attaining pupils to think further than the obvious, which stretches their aspirations. Lessons usually start with formal instruction, to settle the pupils and

focus them on the tasks. Because behaviour is very good, discipline is firm but fair and all pupils are treated equally, teachers have no difficulties in class management. Marking is good, as teachers not only help with literacy and numeracy by correcting spelling, grammar and inaccuracies in calculations, but also they add comments on work to tell pupils how they can attain higher marks. Pupils, however, especially in Years 7 to 9, are not fully aware of how well they are doing, as the quality of information on reports is poor. Assessment for these pupils is soundly based on collected work across the curriculum, but levels are not passed on to the pupils until the end of the year on reports that contain too many generalisations, lack teachers' comments and show only pupils' own comments about what they have done.

152. Many non-specialist teachers have received training in the subject and are gaining confidence in using ICT, so pupils have plenty of opportunities to show and add to their skills. The use of ICT by departments, however, is variable. Departments such as English and design and technology, use computers often for word processing, information finding and computer control. In art and design, history, mathematics, modern foreign languages, music, physical education and science, pupils use the equipment occasionally for scanning and distorting images, looking at data and making graphs, using spreadsheets, writing texts, composing and play back exercises, recording athletic performance, and data logging experiments. Other departments, such as business education, geography and religious education are missing opportunities to use ICT to extend the range of activities within lessons and in allowing pupils to practise their previously learned skills. A few departments do not have their own computers so they book sessions in the vacant computer rooms when needed. Some teachers are assessing pupils' work and awarding levels for it, which helps greatly with the accuracy of end of Year 9 assessments.

153. Leadership and management of specialised ICT lessons are good; liaison is good and teachers work well as a mutually supportive team. It is unusual not to have a head of ICT department and the ICT co-ordinator does not teach ICT except through control technology in the design and technology department. Monitoring of the work that does or does not go on across the curriculum is inadequate.

154. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. A new teacher has been appointed which enables the school to extend the range of courses offered and allow pupils in Years 10 and 11 to be taught by a subject specialist. A programme of staff training has resulted in the improved overall teaching quality and has helped many other teachers to improve their skills and knowledge. All pupils now receive their entitlement. The curriculum now follows the requirements of the National Curriculum, although the time allocated for it is low and has to be supplemented by negotiated time across other subjects. Year 11 pupils have twilight sessions to build up their taught time, but this is low for the requirements of the GNVQ. Pupils do not have textbooks, which adversely affects the amount and quality of research and the type of homework attempted. The selection of books in the library is poor. A qualified technician has been appointed who gives very good service and ensures all computers are in good working order. The ratio of computers to pupils is still below the national average, though all

computers are under three years old. There is insufficient pupils' work on show and there are no indications of the grading on the work. The booking of ICT rooms is not arranged systematically resulting in departments having unequal access to the equipment. Reporting of ICT does not meet national recommendations as parents and pupils have insufficient information about attainment, levels and targets.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

### Strengths

- The department is very well led and planning and documentation are very good.
- The quality of teaching is good.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are very good.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.

### Areas for improvement

- Standards in German at GCSE.
- The monitoring of teaching to ensure that the foreign language is used consistently, and that all attainment targets are covered in the planning of each lesson.
- The standards of literacy and presentation in exercise books in Years 7 to 9.
- Use of ICT hardware and software to support teaching and learning.

155. Teacher assessment results at the end of Year 9 in 2001 rose, compared to 2000, to slightly above the national average. GCSE results in French in 2001 were in line with national averages for the proportion of pupils gaining an A\*-C grade. All pupils gained at least a 'G' grade. The proportion of pupils entered was rather higher than average. Results in German were well below the national average related to A\*-C grades. Pupils had only begun the language in their Year 8 and a high proportion of the candidates were low attainers. These two factors affected the overall German results adversely. In 2000, GCSE results in French were above national averages, and pupils did better in French than in most of their other subjects. Results in French over the past three years have fluctuated, but have not yet regained the high levels reached in 1998. In 2000, the gap between the performance of boys and girls was wider than nationally. Results in German were well below the national average in 2000, and pupils' performance, especially that of boys, was below their performance in their other subjects. Results in German have been similar over the past three years.

156. In French, in pupils' work and in lessons, standards by Year 9 are average. Pupils listen very carefully to the teacher using the foreign language and to tapes. Most pupils make good progress in both listening and speaking skills when the teacher uses the foreign language consistently and purposefully in chorus work and drills, so as to develop pupils' own competence and confidence. For example, a large group of Year 9 low attainers sustained very good concentration and interest when they spoke in French about sport, because they had to listen to the language constantly and answer questions. In general, however, a significant number of pupils are rather hesitant in speaking, because they lack practise. By Year 9, most high attainers can recognise and use the past tense in speaking in simple dialogues and in writing about their past experiences. Middle and low attainers need much more support from their teachers to produce less complex accounts and descriptions. Standards of presentation of written work are lower than expected for a

considerable number of pupils during Years 7 to 9. Achievement is satisfactory overall, and often good for pupils with special educational needs and for higher attainers.

157. In German, pupils make a good beginning in Year 8 and many show real interest. They make as good progress as can be expected in the relatively short time allocated to the language. The higher attainers find it easier to remember the work covered in previous lessons. The department is seeking ways of acknowledging with some form of certificate the good work that is done up to Year 9 in pupils' second foreign language.

158. In both languages, in pupils' work and in lessons, standards by Year 11 are average. Pupils learn to write in a more extended form about themselves, and the middle and higher attainers can describe their lives and even their future plans. With mostly very good teacher guidance and support, pupils respond very well to the demands of GCSE coursework assignments. Higher attainers make good progress in expressing themselves, and much of their coursework is both interesting and detailed. Without such good support, a small proportion of pupils produce rather untidy work in class, and demonstrate little knowledge of vocabulary and expression. However, they make good efforts to present their finished assignments with care. Most pupils are prepared well during class work for the demands of the speaking tests, and they participate well in practice sessions. A small number of pupils have less opportunity to practise speaking, even though their listening comprehension is relatively satisfactory. Achievement is satisfactory overall, and often good for the pupils with special educational needs in the smaller groups created for them. The gifted and talented make good progress in the higher sets, and can take two foreign languages at GCSE. They participated well in activities for the Year of Language Learning.

159. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in class are very good. Relationships are good in the vast majority of lessons, and pupils are very well prepared to settle and learn. They particularly enjoy taking part in the language games that are a feature of many lessons, especially in Years 7 to 9. For example, in Years 7 and 8 pupils responded very well to guessing games on the names of clothes concealed in a bag. The department also reports a very good response to the numerous extra activities offered to pupils throughout the year, from Christmas services in French, to making puppets and watching productions by a French theatre company.

160. The quality of teaching is good and pupils learn well. Two-thirds of the lessons seen were good or better. One third was satisfactory. In one excellent German lesson in Year 10, pupils learnt very quickly how to form and use the past, tense using stimulating vocabulary work about parties. The presentation was rapid and thorough, and they responded very well to the teacher's high expectations and level of challenge. Strengths of the teaching include the good knowledge teachers have of the languages they teach. Pupils learnt best when teachers balanced each lesson with adequate opportunities to hear and use the language, as well as doing other reading or writing activities. In about a third of the lessons seen, when the pace was less purposeful and challenging, pupils participated less well and made only satisfactory progress in their learning. All teachers manage their pupils very well, so that pupils can concentrate well and make an effort on their own. Most teachers use good methods and resources, including the overhead projector; pupils enjoy the extra colour and stimulation of this type of activity, which provides opportunities for consolidation work and good progression from lesson to lesson. However they do not use increasingly common ICT support for modern languages, for example e-mail, language software or interactive whiteboards, often or at all. Teachers have developed very good methods of guiding written GCSE coursework and most teachers adopt these very well. Support staff are used very well to help pupils with special physical and behaviour needs.

161. The head of department manages the department very well; documentation is excellent and well organised, the development of the subject is well planned and relationships within the team are very good. Such resources as the department has are managed very carefully, but textbooks and some essential equipment are still in short supply. The department has already revised its policy for the choice of language in Years 10 and 11, to ensure greater success for pupils. Monitoring and development of teaching has not yet ensured the sharing of the best practice throughout the department. Some sets, particularly in Year 9, are very large and this affects standards.

162. Improvement since the last inspection is good, if one allows for the fact that more lower-attaining pupils now take GCSE. Results were much higher at the time of the last inspection because the only pupils taking languages for examinations were middle and higher attainers. Access to in-service training has improved. Strong leadership, the good quality of teaching, and the very good behaviour of pupils remain constant.

## MUSIC

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

### Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good.
- Accommodation and resources are good.
- The department is well managed.

### Areas for improvement

- Standards in GCSE music.
- Marking and target setting.
- There are insufficient opportunities for singing in assemblies and music lessons.
- The overall contribution and involvement of boys in lessons is not good enough.

163. Standards by Year 9 are below national expectations. In 2001, the proportion of pupils who gained an A\*-C grade was well below the national average. Almost all pupils gained at least a 'G' grade, about in line with national results. The proportion of pupils entered was about average. Results were not quite as good as in 2000. However, in the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music examinations from 36 entries (6 boys and 30 girls), 23 obtained pass grades, 7 merits and 3 distinctions in theory and instrumental performance.

164. In the work seen during the inspection in Years 7 to 9, attainment is below average but pupils generally achieve well. Pupils in Year 7 are familiar with vocal techniques and effectively sing variations of the song, 'Shoeflies'. They have a good understanding of the letter names of notes on the staff and have a satisfactory knowledge of some of the elements of music. Year 8 pupils make good progress with two-part singing and are able to compose and perform a simple melody on the keyboard. The pupils in Year 9 make good progress in structuring and organising an Indian music composition of their own. They are familiar with such technical terms as raga, tala, drone and improvisation. They effectively improve their ICT skills by recording their compositions on the keyboard and computer. Higher attaining pupils have good theoretical knowledge and confidently perform on a range of instruments. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are unsure of staff notation and are less confident when playing the keyboard. Singing should continue to be improved. Basic literacy skills are being developed as pupils use a number of technical words and expressions that are displayed on the "word wall". The pupils in Year 8 have completed extended pieces of written work on, "Franz Joseph Haydn"



and “Music in Everyday Life”. Music makes only a limited contribution to the development of numeracy with the emphasis being placed upon performance.

165. In work seen during the inspection in Years 10 and 11 attainment is broadly average and pupils continue to achieve well. Year 10 pupils are familiar with primary chords and make good progress in composing music for a special event. Using computer and keyboard to record their compositions they effectively develop their ICT skills. Year 10 pupils make good progress in recognising how tonic and dominant chords hold a piece of music together. They apply this knowledge when listening to such pieces as ‘Borodin’s Symphony Number 1, movement 4’, and ‘Place To Hideaway’ by the Carpenters. The pupils in Year 11 develop good listening skills and are familiar with such terms as arco, sequences, vivace and fortissimo. The great majority of the pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in relation to their previous learning.

166. Pupils have a good attitude to music and usually enjoy lessons and the wide range of extra curricular activities. For many it is their favourite subject. The pupils are well behaved and older pupils are committed to obtaining good examination results. Pupils work well together particularly in composition and performance work. Music activities are all inclusive, involving boys and girls of all abilities. Relationships between pupils and with teachers are mature and productive. The pupils are courteous and trustworthy and handle with care the expensive instruments and resources they use. They show respect for their own and each other’s contributions and performances.

167. The quality of teaching, including instrumental tuition, is good. Teachers and visiting staff are accomplished musicians with a secure knowledge of their subject. They successfully impart much of their enthusiasm to the pupils who show good interest and concentration. Lessons are well planned with teaching objectives being clearly identified. This results in lessons having good pace and enables the pupils to approach their work with confidence. Care is taken to match the levels of work to the needs and abilities of individuals or groups, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Learning support assistants are effectively deployed and make a significant contribution to the pupils’ learning. As lessons proceed, work is effectively assessed according to the department assessment policy. There is room for improvement in the marking of the pupils’ work to include individual targets. The quality of teaching makes an important contribution to the pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, young musicians make a significant contribution to school assemblies and carol concerts in eventide homes and the Wesley Memorial Church. Cultural development results from an effective study of African, Chinese, Indian and Japanese music. Teaching is less effective when lesson outcomes are not made clear to the pupils. Teaching is most effective when pupils are given a time period to complete aspects of the lesson.

168. In all years, learning is good and the pupils make good progress in relation to their prior attainment. Younger pupils make good progress in their understanding of theory and the elements of music. Composition and performance skills are effectively developed on the keyboard and other instruments. There is an increasing

number of pupils opting for GCSE music and the thirty nine pupils in Year 10 and the thirty one pupils in Year 11, build on their previous learning and develop good listening, composing and performance skills. They consolidate the use of ICT to good effect when preparing their individual compositions for GCSE. Extra curricular music activities make an important contribution to the pupils' musical knowledge and performance skills. Higher attaining pupils make very good progress as a result of instrumental tuition. Insufficient opportunities are given for pupils to play their compositions in class and for other pupils to appraise their performances. Individual learning programmes would benefit the least and the most able.

169. One hundred and thirty pupils (94 girls and 36 boys) benefit from instrumental tuition. Up to 150 pupils participate in a wide range of choirs, instrumental groups and music clubs. School productions, such as 'Gel', garden parties, and craft fairs and carol services in the neighbouring churches involve large numbers of pupils. They effectively contribute to the broadening of pupils' musical experience and complement class lessons. Strong links exist with a local college and with local primary schools. The Showcase Concert involves 10 neighbouring primary schools. Pupils' attainment is assisted by good support from the North Lincolnshire Music Support Service. The requirements of the National Curriculum are fully met and accommodation, resources and staffing are adequate for its delivery. These, together with attractive wall displays effectively support pupils' learning. Insufficient opportunities exist for pupils to sing in assemblies.

170. Management of the department is very good. Since the previous inspection improvement has been good. The school has become a specialist Arts Technology College and more pupils are taking GCSE examinations in music or related courses. Singing needs to be improved further. Boys are insufficiently involved in extra curricular activities and the quality and presentation of their work is sometimes not good enough. There has been a significant development in the use of ICT in music.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- GCSE results in 2001.
- Dance - teaching and standards.
- Equality of access for pupils in curriculum and extra curricular activities.
- Teachers' subject knowledge.

### Areas for improvement

- Standards in National Curriculum physical education and boys' GCSE results.
- Pupils need to be challenged more.
- There are insufficient lessons in Years 10 and 11.
- Teachers need to manage time better and increase the pace of learning.

171. Although standards in National Curriculum physical education are in line with those expected nationally a significant number of pupils do not fulfil their true

potential. The 2001 GCSE examination results show very good improvement when compared with the 2000 performances.

172. Standards by Year 9 are average. Pupils' knowledge and understanding in a wide range of activities is average. Activities in dance, rugby and gymnastics show pupils linking skills and techniques to improve their own performance. However, limited previous experience of rugby means that boys are presently unable to apply their knowledge and understanding to the game. Although the quality and range of girls' gymnastic movement is satisfactory at this stage their performance is undermined by poor attitudes. Standards are also generally average by Year 11; a significant number of girls' badminton skills are below those expected.

173. The percentage of pupils passing GCSE physical education at A\*-C levels in 2001 is in line with the national average, a considerable improvement from 2000, when they were well below. This improvement is a return to standards achieved in previous years. The proportion of pupils entered is a little larger than average. Boys' results in 2001 and 2000 show boys results to be significantly weaker than those of girls, especially in theoretical aspects of their study. In lessons, the present Year 11 GCSE group satisfactorily link their knowledge of energy systems to training procedures. Standards are generally average. Those pupils who chose swimming have good ability in stroke performance and knowledgeably evaluate other performances for stroke improvement. Pupils' work shows improvements in extended theoretical study through the use of homework and exam-style answers.

174. Achievement between Years 7-9 is satisfactory. In a Year 7 dance class, pupils made excellent progress linking 'sporting' movements fluently into a dance composition. Achievement, in non-examined work, between the end of Year 9 and the end of Year 11 is satisfactory and is hampered by a less than average time allocation and some short lessons. It is better when pupils are expected to focus clearly on the learning targets given. In these lessons, improvement happens as a result of reflection on performance and evaluations made in light of the intended objectives. Year 10 girls are able to make good progress in using pivotal movement in netball because of very good teaching intervention and fault analysis. A Year 10 group made very good progress in their understanding of the decision process in choreography and Year 11 pupils reflected very well on contemporary issues of choreography style and created phrases from a set task. Standards in dance indicate very good achievement.

175. Pupils taking GCSE sport studies are making satisfactory progress. The extended length of GCSE practical lessons allows Year 10 boys time to analyse game performances in basketball and to consider roles and positions on the court. Year 11 girls make satisfactory progress in considering aerobic and anaerobic systems in fitness routines, enhanced by the measuring of heart rates with digital monitors. Achievement is not better than satisfactory due to insufficient challenges from teachers and lack of intellectual rigour in lessons.

176. The qualities of teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teaching ranges from excellent to unsatisfactory. Teachers have good practical subject knowledge and use clear and effective instruction and demonstration when

introducing new practices. In most lessons relationships are positive and pupils' good attitudes to the subject has a positive effect on skill acquisition. Very good teaching in dance and swimming uses methods that allow pupils to become involved in reciprocal teaching and to feedback each other's strengths and weaknesses. Learning in these lessons is very good because pupils are motivated to work effectively in groups or teams and they show an interest in commenting about their and others' work. Pupils with special education needs make satisfactory progress because of relevant and knowledgeable interventions by teachers and because group work involves all pupils. Pupils with physical handicaps do well when accompanied by support teachers and specialised resources and well prepared games further enhance their progress. In contrast some teaching is insufficiently considering the use of appropriate planning to identify higher achievers and the use of appropriate tasks to challenge them further. The short lessons severely restrict the amount pupils can learn. Teaching and planning cannot presently address the quantity of progressions needed for the necessary improvement and refinement of techniques, both for the quality of movement and the understanding of the principals of advanced tactics. Learning is further hampered in these lessons because teachers struggle to maintain a balance between pupils performing and talking to pupils, and often organise tasks that require pupils to wait before performing. Teachers are infrequently using key skills and effective literacy strategies to enhance understanding. Better teaching identifies key vocabulary and learning outcomes to describe the efficiency of swimming strokes, feet co-ordination in netball, the use of gesture in dance and attacking the defender in rugby. Other attributes such as pupil initiative, creativity and independence are restricted in lessons that do not have the necessary structure to enable pupils to plan and evaluate their work. In these lessons strategies are needed to improve pupils' ability to improve their speaking and listening skills, to improve behaviour and to focus more clearly on their work.

177. The acting head of the department is providing satisfactory leadership. Areas for development in the curriculum and about standards are being addressed. A very good range of extra-curricular activities covers all interests and the department is beginning to use outside agencies to enhance this programme further. A good start has been made in the use of ICT. Digital and video camera recordings help the analysis of work. The present development plans for the department show clear educational direction for the subject and good line management links with the senior management team. The present expertise of staff is not shared and further developed through a monitoring and evaluation programme.

178. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Recent specialist appointments and further staff development programmes have made a significant improvement to subject expertise. The below average allocation of time for older pupils remains an issue. Assessment and reporting does not tell pupils or parents enough; they are not sure how improvements can be made. The increase in inter-school competitions and sports mornings has had a significant impact on performance and pupil motivation. The ethos in the department has benefited tremendously from the schools' arts college status. The cross-curricular links between the expressive arts faculty is raising standards in physical movement generally, and dance specifically.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good.
- There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs.

### Areas for improvement

- The results of pupils on the GCSE short course are not as good as in most other subjects in the school.
- There are no specialist teachers of religious education and teachers' knowledge is unsatisfactory.
- Some lessons are routine and uninspiring.
- Comments in exercise books do not show pupils how to improve.

179. Standards of work seen during the inspection are average overall and meet the expectations of the locally Agreed Syllabus. Results have not varied much over the last four years. In 2001 the proportion of pupils achieving grades A\* to C was lower than in 2000 and well below their typical performance in other subjects. Girls consistently achieve better results than boys.

180. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 have satisfactory knowledge of the major faiths of the world. They understand the various themes that are common to most religions. For example, they are aware of forms of worship and the importance of prayer in different religions. They compare Jewish, Christian and Muslim ideas of God. However, pupils are not given enough opportunity to apply what they learn to their own lives. They learn facts but there is not enough emphasis on analysis, evaluation or exploration of their personal beliefs. The higher attaining pupils spend too much time simply retrieving information from the textbook. However, when given the opportunity to examine a topic in depth they rise to the challenge as when considering why Muslims might be critical of wealthy countries.

181. By Year 11 pupils' work is average. All pupils follow the GCSE short course although nearly half are not entered for the examination. Entry policy is at present under review. Pupils understand religious concepts and reflect on their own position. For example, in Year 10 they show understanding of various theories concerning the creation of the universe and ponder over their own beliefs about the existence of God. They know how the nature of God is viewed in different religions and understand the importance of revelation in the major faiths of the world. They explore their own values, for example, as in a sensible Year 11 discussion about sex outside marriage. Teachers take pupils' abilities into account in their lessons; for example, in a lesson on the "big bang" theory of creation with a low-attaining class, the teacher was at pains to plan her lesson to match the pupils' ability. Higher attaining pupils understand problems at a more complex level. For example, in a study of the

ethics of capital punishment higher attainers were beginning to explore general principles while lower attainers worked at a more concrete level by looking at real life examples such as the moors murderers. A minority of pupils, mainly boys, does not attach sufficient importance to religious education and this has an adverse effect on standards and the GCSE short course results.

182. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from the good support they receive from teachers and learning support assistants. Consequently they progress at the same satisfactory rate as other pupils. Standards of literacy are average. Pupils generally make good oral contributions in class and their written work is at the expected standard. However, pupils in Years 7 to 9 are not often required to write at enough length to explore the subject in depth. In Years 10 and 11 they take sound advantage of opportunities to write and talk about moral and social issues. Even so, teachers do not provide enough guidance. For example, the most successful part of a Year 11 lesson on sex outside marriage was when pupils were given a structured task. The lesson was less successful when discussion was more general.

183. In Years 7-9, teaching is unsatisfactory and in Years 10 and 11 it is satisfactory. This was not reflected in lessons seen during the inspection; there were a small number of good lessons and only one that was unsatisfactory. However, as at the time of the previous inspection there is no specialist religious education teacher, although there has been one between inspections. In addition, teaching is shared between eight teachers, five of who teach no more than three periods of religious education per week; for no teacher is religious education the prime commitment. Teachers' subject knowledge is inadequate, especially in Years 7 to 9. Consequently, teachers rely too heavily on the textbook and lessons are often uninspiring. Nevertheless, learning, of the subject matter presented to pupils, is generally satisfactory because of the good attitudes and behaviour of pupils. Most listen well in class and take care with their written work. They collaborate well in group discussions. They generally concentrate well throughout lessons although a few misbehave when the lesson is particularly dull.

184. Teachers' planning of individual lessons is barely satisfactory. Plans lack imagination and teachers do not make enough use of resources to bring a subject to life. For example, relevant artefacts are not used in lessons on the various world faiths. Expectations of pupils are often not high enough. High attainers, especially in Years 7 to 9, are often not given sufficient chance to develop a personal response to what they are learning. In Years 10 and 11 teachers sometimes accept work from pupils that is obviously not satisfactory. Teaching methods too often lack variety; in Years 7 to 9 pupils frequently simply read what is in the textbook, have a short discussion and then answer the questions. Teachers miss opportunities to enliven the lesson. For example, in a lesson on prayer the teacher explained how some people find it useful to use a lighted candle when meditating but the pupils were not given the chance to try this for themselves. When there was more variety, pupils showed more interest in what they were learning as was seen when Year 9 pupils made group presentations to the rest of the class. Not enough use is made of computers, although a few examples were seen of the Internet having been used for research.

185. Teachers' good management skills lead to pupils' good behaviour. Lessons are nearly always conducted in a good learning atmosphere created by good pupil-teacher relationships. Response is at its best when pupils have to perform a number of tasks and the pace is brisk. Pupils with special educational needs receive effective help from the learning support assistants and consequently are able to cope with lessons. Teachers' inadequate knowledge and marking are the weakest parts of teaching. Comments in exercise books rarely show pupils what they need to do to improve. Teachers are not always sure of exactly what they are looking for and pupils have only a vague idea of how well they are doing. Homework is set regularly and is at its best when it requires pupils to think more deeply about what they have learned in class.

186. The leadership and management of religious education are unsatisfactory. The faculty system does not assist standards in religious education as all three subjects within the faculty are organised and taught separately. The school has not managed to recruit a religious education teacher since the last one left so the organisation of religious education is the responsibility of the head of humanities faculty, who is also directly responsible for geography. The deployment of so many teachers to religious education, with nobody having a major commitment to the subject, is adversely affecting standards. Schemes of work are satisfactory, but lack variety in methods, and the resources needed to support non-specialist teachers; nor are teachers supported by an effective monitoring system. The lack of a subject base further detracts from the efficient provision for religious education.

187. Improvement since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory. However, the key issue that all Year 11 pupils did not then receive religious education has been addressed. Pupils' standards of attainment remain average. There are now some unsatisfactory lessons and teaching in Years 7-9 is unsatisfactory. The urgent need for a specialist to take responsibility for the subject still remains.