

INSPECTION REPORT

MANNINGTREE HIGH SCHOOL

Manningtree

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 115206

Headteacher: Miss D Hollister

Reporting inspector: Mrs J Greenfield
7070

Dates of inspection: 29th April – 2nd May 2002

Inspection number: 192847

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11 - 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Manningtree High School Colchester Road Lawford Manningtree Essex
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr L Cheesman
Date of previous inspection:	2 nd December 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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7070	Mrs J Greenfield	Registered inspector		The school's results and pupils' achievements. How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
14756	Mr J Lovell	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?
20709	Mr D MacIldowie	Team inspector	English	
3643	Mr D Jones	Team inspector	Mathematics	
12356	Mr R Dickason	Team inspector	Science	
31688	Mr B McGonagle	Team inspector	Art and design	
15163	Mr E Deeson	Team inspector	Design and technology Information and communication technology	
3827	Mr J Knight	Team inspector	Geography	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
30317	Mrs E Barthaud	Team inspector	History	
12624	Ms A Farren	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages Equal opportunities	
31660	Mrs M Young	Team inspector	Music	
4647	Mrs J Evans	Team inspector	Physical education	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Manningtree High School, which caters for boys and girls aged 11-16, serves the town of Manningtree and the surrounding district. With 878 pupils on roll, the school is about the same size as most other comprehensive schools. Numbers have increased considerably since the last inspection and many pupils travel some distance. Pupils' attainment on entry is broadly average. Because of the selective system in the area, the school has fewer higher attaining pupils than is usual for a comprehensive school as many attend local grammar schools. A considerable minority of pupils are from less favourable rural backgrounds, some of whom are socially and economically disadvantaged, but overall the home circumstances of the majority of pupils are slightly better than average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free schools meals is broadly average. There are very few pupils from ethnic minority heritages and none is learning English as an additional language. The proportions of pupils with special educational needs (16.5 per cent) and with a statement of special education need (1.8 per cent) are below the national averages. The range of special needs includes specific learning difficulties, behavioural difficulties, general learning difficulties, physical disabilities, autism and visual and hearing impairments. Just under three-quarters of pupils continue with their education, either at college or another school, after the age of 16.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Manningtree High School is a good school that provides an effective education for its pupils. Standards are above the national average and are above average when compared to similar schools. Most pupils make good progress through the good quality of much of the teaching and their positive attitudes to the school. Relationships are very good. The headteacher, with the strong support of the governing body and senior staff, leads and manages the school well and engenders an ethos in which all pupils are valued and expected to do their best. The school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards in national tests and public examinations are above average and are reflected in much of the work seen during the inspection.
- The good quality of the teaching and learning overall enables pupils to make good progress and achieve well.
- The very good quality of the support provided for pupils with special educational needs helps them to make good progress, especially in English, mathematics and science.
- The ethos of the school, which values all pupils as individuals, ensures good behaviour, positive attitudes, an enthusiasm for learning and very good relationships.
- The good leadership provided by the headteacher, with the strong support of senior staff and the governors, has a clear focus on improving standards and the quality of provision.

What could be improved

- Standards in history are not high enough.
- Information and communication technology does not meet National Curriculum requirements in some subjects and is not used enough to support teaching and learning.
- In some subjects, the assessment of pupils' work is not accurate enough and data are not used sufficiently to inform target-setting and curricular planning.
- The planning, co-ordination and monitoring of cross-curricular aspects, such as literacy, numeracy, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and information and communication technology, are not rigorous enough.
- The curriculum at Key Stage 4 does not meet the needs of all pupils as effectively as it might.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good progress since the last inspection in December 1996. Standards have improved, especially at Key Stage 3 and also, although less sharply, at Key Stage 4. The quality of teaching has improved, with much more that is good or very good and a reduction in the amount of unsatisfactory teaching. Good progress has been made in improving the school's understanding of equal opportunities issues, which has resulted in considerable improvements in relationships and pupils' behaviour. Monitoring and evaluation procedures are robust. Most staff implement school policies consistently but further action is necessary to ensure that they all play a full part in implementing some important cross-curricular aspects, such as literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). Opportunities to share and evaluate good practice are satisfactory and assessment is more closely related to clear and precise objectives. However, the outcomes of assessment are not used sufficiently by some departments to inform planning.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
GCSE examinations	B	B	B	B	very high A* well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E

The school's results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 were in line with the national average in English and above average in mathematics and science and for all three subjects together. When compared with schools of a similar kind, as measured by the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, the results were also above average. Over the past few years the school's performance has improved at a faster rate than the national trend. Pupils' current work indicates that standards overall are broadly similar to the picture provided by the test results and overall are above average. Standards are average in English and above average in mathematics and science.

The GCSE results over the past four years have been above the national averages and have improved in line with the national trend. In 2001, the results were above average. When compared with similar schools, the school's performance was also above average. When account is taken of their earlier attainment in the Year 9 national tests, pupils' performance was below average, indicating that some pupils did not do as well as might have been expected. The results in English, mathematics and science were above the national averages. The strongest subjects were English literature and music, and the weakest subjects were art, drama, design and technology (resistant materials) and particularly history and statistics. The school met its targets in 2001. The work seen in lessons broadly reflects the picture painted by the examination results, although standards have improved in art, drama, design and technology (resistant materials). In most subjects, pupils are making good progress and are achieving well in relation to their earlier attainment. Standards in history are well below average at both key stages.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have good attitudes to school. They are proud of their school, work hard and care for resources well.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The behaviour of the vast majority of pupils is good at all times.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils collaborate well, respect each other's views and beliefs and have formed very good relationships with teachers and each other. They show initiative and are willing to take responsibility.
Attendance	Good. Both authorised and unauthorised absences for the last year were better than the average for secondary schools nationally.

The overall positive attitudes, good behaviour and strength of relationships contribute extensively to the ethos of the school. The school has an ethos in which there is good equality of opportunity. The significant majority of pupils respond well to the school's high expectations. They enjoy school, appreciating and taking good advantage of the opportunities provided. Many make good contributions to the overall life of the school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is good overall throughout the school, with many examples of very good and sometimes excellent teaching. The teaching has improved since the last inspection and is making a strong contribution to the above average standards achieved by many pupils. The teaching is better at Key Stage 3 than at Key Stage 4, having a higher proportion of good or better teaching and a smaller proportion of less than satisfactory teaching. The teaching in English, mathematics and science is good overall. The teaching in mathematics, modern foreign languages and drama in Years 7 to 9 and also in music throughout the school is very good. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is mostly satisfactory but not all departments are clear about the contribution they need to make to developing pupils' skills in these areas. Teachers plan appropriately challenging work to meet the needs of pupils well. They manage their classes very well and consequently most pupils make good progress in their studies. The support provided for pupils with special educational needs is good. Pupils are keen to learn and nearly all work hard. A small amount of teaching is unsatisfactory, mostly at Key Stage 4, and is occasionally poor. This results from one or more of the following: unclear expectations; a lack of challenge in the work; poor class management; poor planning and work that does not match pupils' needs; and weaknesses in the teacher's subject knowledge.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is satisfactory overall, but there are weaknesses in the provision of ICT across the curriculum and a restricted work-related curriculum. The range and quality of extra-curricular activities are good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Pupils receive good support from their teachers and learning support staff, which enables them to make good progress. They have full access to the curriculum and the work is effectively matched to meet their needs.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school makes very good provision for pupils' social development and good provision for their moral and cultural development. Provision for their spiritual development is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The pastoral care and support of pupils is good and the school's ethos ensures that pupils are valued. This is reflected in the pupils' good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning.

The provision for ICT at Key Stage 4 does not meet requirements and some subjects are not doing enough to use ICT to support teaching and learning. The legal requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship is not fully met. Procedures for assessing pupils' academic progress are satisfactory overall but some departments are not making sufficient use of data to track pupils' progress and inform their planning. The organisation and co-ordination of the programme for pupils' personal, social and health education has some weaknesses although the content covers all the recommended strands. The school's links and relationships with parents are good.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	With the strong support of senior staff and governors, the headteacher leads and manages the school well. In a determined, but low key way, she has effected improvements in many areas of the school's work, particularly in improving pupils' behaviour and ensuring greater consistency of approach in implementing the school's policies.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors, under the strong leadership of the chair of governors, understand the school's priorities well and are committed to improvement and the maintenance of high standards. The governing body meets most of its statutory responsibilities well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school's systems for monitoring and evaluating its performance are robust, especially the quality of teaching and learning, but the monitoring of some cross-curricular aspects are not so sharp. Planning for the future is good and the priorities are well targeted. Arrangements for performance management are very good.
The strategic use of resources	The school manages its budget efficiently and allocates its funding towards meeting its educational priorities.

Most staff are deployed effectively to make best use of their expertise, but there are some deficiencies in ICT. Accommodation is satisfactory overall, but some areas are less than ideal, for example shared use of the canteen for drama and the small size of some of the classrooms. Resources for learning are

good overall, particularly in the provision for ICT, which is better than in most schools. The school pays appropriate attention to obtaining best value for money.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils are expected to work hard and do their best. • The good quality of the teaching and the good progress their children make. • Their children like school. • They feel comfortable about approaching the school if they have any problems or concerns. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More information about pupils' progress. • Closer working relationships between the school and parents. • Better consistency in the arrangements for setting homework.

Inspectors agree with all of the points that please parents most. Inspectors find that homework is set and used satisfactorily to extend pupils' learning and that the school has an effective partnership with parents, working closely with them for the benefit of pupils. Information about pupils' progress is considered to be good.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Standards overall are above average, although not consistently in all subjects, and most pupils are achieving well in relation to their attainment on entry to the school, which is broadly average. In the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2001, the results overall were above average. The school has maintained this level of performance since 1999. Since the last inspection, the improvement in the school's results has been at a faster rate than that found nationally. When all pupils are taken into account, the school's results were above the national averages in mathematics and science and were in line with the average in English. In English, however, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected Level 5 or above was above average. Boys and girls do equally well in English in relation to their respective national figures, but girls do better than boys in mathematics, and have done so for the last three years. In science, the girls' performance has usually been better than that of the boys, although the situation was reversed in 2000. When the 2001 results are compared with those in schools with pupils from a similar background (based on the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals), the school's performance overall was above average, being well above average in science and average in English and mathematics.

2. In the other subjects formally assessed at the end of Year 9 in 2001, teachers judged the overall attainment of pupils as being well above average in art and design, modern foreign languages and music; above average in design and technology, geography, information and communication technology (ICT) and physical education; and average in history. Inspectors consider that these judgements are generally accurate in geography but that from the evidence of pupils' work they are too generous in the other subjects. Teachers are not applying the level descriptions for these subjects accurately enough in assessing pupils' work at the end of Key Stage 3. By the age of 14, standards are above average in mathematics, science, geography, modern foreign languages and music; broadly average in English, art and design, design and technology, ICT, physical education and religious education; and below average in history. In all subjects, other than ICT and history, pupils' generally make good progress and achieve well in relation to their attainment on entry to the school. They make satisfactory progress in ICT and unsatisfactory progress in history.

3. The GCSE examination results in 2001 were above the national average overall and also for the proportion of pupils achieving five or more grades A*-C and five or more grades A*-G. The school's results over the past four years have been above the national averages and have improved in line with the national trend. The school met its targets in 2001. When compared with similar schools, the school's performance was above average overall and at five or more grades A*-C. At five or more grades A*-G, the school's performance was well above average. When account is taken of pupils' performance in their Year 9 national tests, the results were below average at five or more grades A*-C and overall. This suggests that pupils are not doing as well as might be expected when account is taken of their earlier performance and indicates that they are capable of achieving higher standards than they are currently.

4. In 2001, the GCSE examination results in each of the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science were above the national averages. In other subjects, the results were significantly better than average in English literature and music; above average in graphics, food studies, textiles, French, German and physical education; average in geography and drama; below average in art and resistant materials; and significantly below average in history and statistics. The work seen in lessons broadly reflects the picture shown by the examination results, although standards have improved in art, drama and resistant materials. Standards of pupils' current work are above the national average in mathematics, science, modern foreign languages, music and drama; average in English, art and design, design and technology, geography, physical education and religious education; but well below average in history. Weaknesses in some of the teaching and in the leadership and management of history are affecting standards in this subject. Pupils following the GCSE examination course in physical education are attaining above average standards. Standards in ICT are below average by the end of Year 11. Pupils are given insufficient opportunity, either through subject teaching or through a specific course, to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding in ICT. Overall, most pupils make

good progress as they move through the school and achieve well in relation to their starting point at the beginning of Year 7.

5. Standards of literacy across the curriculum are above average and the contribution made by subjects to pupils' competency in literacy is broadly satisfactory, although not always explicitly planned for. In most subjects from Years 7 to 11, pupils speak clearly and listen with concentration to the teacher and to each other. High standards of group discussion are maintained in English, drama and physical education. Pupils read aloud fluently and with good expression in history and science. They write coherently for different purposes, such as reports for science and notes for geography. Some of the lower attaining pupils in geography, however, find it more difficult to write at length because of their weaker literacy skills.

6. Standards of numeracy are broadly average overall. Pupils are able to apply their numeracy skills in a number of subjects but as yet there is no overall strategy to ensure a consistent approach. Standards are above expectations in geography, mathematics and science. In geography, mental calculations are used well in determining average temperatures and fieldwork is analysed using simple statistical techniques. In science, formulae are used well to calculate speed and acceleration, and experimental data is handled effectively. The development of spatial awareness occurs in art, creating a sense of three dimensions on a two-dimensional surface. Standards are broadly average in art, design and technology and ICT. Opportunities to apply their numeracy skills occur in other subjects, for example in English in Year 7 work on data and floor plans, but they are rarely included specifically within the planning.

7. Standards in ICT in Years 7 to 9 are just satisfactory. Pupils learn well in their discrete ICT lessons, but do not have enough opportunity for developing their understanding and applying their skills outside these lessons. In Years 10 and 11, there is no separate provision for ICT and in only a few subjects is much work done using computers. As a result, what most pupils know, understand and are able to do by the age of 16 is below the standard expected.

8. Pupils make good progress in developing and consolidating their knowledge, skills and understanding in most subjects, including English, mathematics, science, art, design and technology, geography, modern foreign languages, physical education and religious education. In music and drama, their progress is very good. Progress in ICT is satisfactory in Years 7 – 9 but unsatisfactory in Year 10 and 11. In history, progress is unsatisfactory overall. There is no significant difference in the progress made by boys and girls and the work provided is suitable for both groups. Good relationships allow boys and girls to work co-operatively together to enhance their learning.

9. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well overall and make good progress in both key stages in relation to their prior attainment. They make particularly good progress in modern foreign languages and good progress in all other subjects except art, where it is satisfactory, and history where it is unsatisfactory. Although their levels of attainment remain below national expectations by the ages of 14 and 16, they still have access to externally accredited examinations at the end of Key Stage 4. In addition to GCSE examinations, pupils with learning difficulties are able to sit Certificate of Educational Achievement examinations in subjects such as English, and a group of 30 pupils in each of Years 10 and 11 follow a Youth Award Scheme course.

10. The higher attaining pupils, including those who are identified as gifted and talented, are making good progress overall. Their progress is generally better at Key Stage 3 than at Key Stage 4. In most subjects, they are given more demanding work which gives them appropriate challenges. They are not stretched enough in modern foreign languages.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11. Pupils' attitudes to school remain a positive feature as identified at the time of the last inspection. Pupils are very enthusiastic about the school and what it has to offer. They take a pride in their school, some travelling up to 13 miles to attend the school of their choice. Pupils' good attitudes to work, together with the good range of extra-curricular activities on offer, have a positive impact on their achievement. They come to school expecting to learn and to make good progress. The significant majority of pupils show interest and enthusiasm for their work, particularly when lessons are purposeful,

the pace and challenge brisk, and when staff have clear expectations. Their level of involvement in the general life of the school and extra-curricular activities is good. Pupils enjoy undertaking responsibilities within the school and are committed to fulfilling their various roles, such as serving on the school councils and raising funds for the many charities they have nominated.

12. Standards of behaviour in lessons and around the school are usually good, and often very good. Pupils are generally courteous, trustworthy, show respect for property and behave well in class. However, on occasions, a minority of pupils lose interest in their work or seek to disrupt the learning of others. In the last academic year, there were 54 fixed period exclusions, involving 32 boys and 1 girl, a similar level of exclusions to that found at the time of the last inspection. Movement around the school and in the dining hall is closely monitored by staff but pupils accept the constraints imposed by the accommodation. For example, a drama studio serves as the dining hall, and the hall used for whole school assemblies is also used for physical education. Consequently, pupils have to sit on the floor during assemblies, and queue, uncomplainingly, in corridors at lunchtime.

13. In general, pupils behave well out of class and conform to the expected high standards of behaviour during the lunch break and when moving between lessons. The majority of pupils have a good understanding of the school's rules, which were drawn up in consultation with them. They respect the fair way in which staff treat them. At lunchtimes, there are examples of boisterous behaviour but incidents of oppressive or aggressive behaviour are unusual. There is no evidence of any systematic bullying although pupils, staff and parents recognise that some bullying does take place. Pupils are confident that any incidents are addressed quickly and effectively. They value the willingness of staff and 'buddies' to listen to them and provide support in resolving such issues and in seeking to reconcile relationship difficulties.

14. The quality of relationships throughout the school, between pupils and between pupils and all staff, is very good. Pupils have confidence in their teachers and feel comfortable about turning to them for support and guidance. Pupils work well together in lessons in pairs and groups. This was seen to good effect in a Year 9 mathematics lesson in which pupils were consolidating their understanding of the techniques used in expanding algebraic expressions and recognising that a double negative makes a positive. Through some very good mutual support, they developed their confidence and ability in preparation for the forthcoming national tests. Generally, within lessons, pupils show good concentration and develop their skills and confidence in working independently and effectively with others in small groups or pairs. The school is an orderly community in which each member is valued for their contribution and in which pupils appreciate the help and support that is provided.

15. Pupils respect each other's feelings, values and beliefs very well. For example, in a Year 8 citizenship lesson, pupils reflected upon what makes a point of principle and how different groups may have different principles and perspectives. In lively class and small group discussions, pupils listened carefully to one another's views and developed some sophisticated arguments to support and reject a particular view without failing to listen to and value all contributions to the discussion. In discussion with pupils in that class and around the school, they speak of the need to promote an inclusive society in which every member has the right to be treated equally, both socially and educationally. They strongly believe that they should listen to others and respect and value their views, even when they disagree with those views.

16. Pupils show understanding and consideration for the cultures and needs of others, which is developed through assemblies, in lessons such as religious education and through visitors such as a Buddhist who spoke of the Four Noble Truths of Buddhism. Pupils support a wide range of local, national and international charities throughout the year and in particular during charities week. These are selected by classes and have involved pupils in fund-raising activities to support causes such as breast cancer research, the Essex air ambulance and orphans in Romania.

17. Pupils of all ages respond positively to opportunities to exercise responsibility throughout the school. For example, pupils in Year 8, following training, act as 'buddies' to pupils in Year 7. They display considerable pride in being a 'buddy'. Throughout the school, pupils take great pride in serving on the school council and becoming involved in considering a diverse range of issues which affect the life of their school community. Pupils show initiative and maturity when carrying out these duties and the upper school council meeting, observed during the inspection, was extremely well chaired and managed

by a pupil in Year 11. The contributions of pupils were focused and directed towards providing constructive, positive suggestions. Pupils respond well to these opportunities for their personal development.

18. Overall attendance is good and has remained at a similar level to that found at the time of the last inspection. In the last year, attendance levels at 92.6 per cent are above the national average figures and unauthorised absence at 0.5 per cent is much lower than average. The majority of authorised absences occur as a result of illness and medical visits, with some absence for holidays. Because a high percentage of pupils travel to school by bus, delays in the service can affect the punctuality of large numbers of pupils, but generally pupils arrive in classrooms punctually at the start of the day and, although there are no bells to mark the end of lessons, sessions begin on time. However, a minority of pupils move between lessons with a lack of purpose and sometimes, when arriving late, fail to offer any apology or explanation. The good levels of attendance have a positive effect on pupils' learning and their attainment.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

19. The quality of teaching in the school as a whole is good and is one of the main reasons why pupils make good progress overall and achieve well. There has been an improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection, with a higher proportion of good or better teaching and a decrease in the amount of unsatisfactory teaching. The teaching is satisfactory or better in 95 per cent of lessons. Around two-fifths of the teaching is good and a further third is very good and sometimes excellent. The teaching in seven lessons out of the 144 inspected was unsatisfactory and in one instance poor. Improving the quality of teaching and learning has received high priority since the last inspection and in this regard the school has been very successful. Unsatisfactory teaching has been tackled firmly by senior managers.

20. The teaching is slightly better in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11, having a higher proportion of good or better teaching and a much smaller proportion of unsatisfactory teaching. In Years 7 to 9, nearly all the teaching is at least satisfactory; over four-fifths at least good and around two-fifths very good and sometimes excellent. In Years 10 and 11, the teaching in around nine out of ten lessons is satisfactory or better; over two-thirds is good or better and just under a quarter is very good and occasionally excellent. Most of the unsatisfactory teaching occurs in Years 10 and 11. As a result of the predominantly good teaching, pupils learn well. The quality of learning is good across the school as a whole.

21. Overall, the teaching in English, drama, science, design and technology, geography, physical education, religious education and the vocational course is good throughout the school and it is very good in music. The teaching of ICT is satisfactory overall. In other subjects, there are differences between the quality of teaching in Key Stage 3 and that in Key Stage 4. The teaching at Key Stage 3 in mathematics and modern foreign languages is very good and is satisfactory in art and history. At Key Stage 4, the teaching of art is good. In modern foreign languages and mathematics, the teaching is not as good as at Key Stage 3, being good in modern foreign languages and satisfactory in mathematics. The teaching in history and media studies in Years 10 and 11 is mostly unsatisfactory. Some very good teaching occurs in many subjects, including English, drama, mathematics, physical education, science, geography, history, modern foreign languages, music, religious education and citizenship. Some excellent teaching occurs at times in English, mathematics, science, geography, modern foreign languages and music. Some of the teaching in history at Key Stage 3 is poor and there is some unsatisfactory teaching at Key Stage 4 in English, mathematics, design and technology, history and media studies. The small amount of unsatisfactory and occasionally poor teaching results from weaknesses in the teachers' subject knowledge; unclear expectations and poor management of pupils so that they do not concentrate or work hard enough; and a lack of challenge as the work does not meet pupils' needs sufficiently.

22. Most teachers have good subject knowledge, which they use with confidence to plan an appropriate range of suitable activities to interest and challenge pupils of all levels of attainment. The intentions of lessons are usually clearly identified and the work is linked closely to and builds on previous work. The school has made good progress since the last inspection in guiding and helping staff

to set clearer learning objectives for lessons. This has led to work being more sharply focused and is one of the reasons why the teaching has improved since the last inspection.

23. Most lessons are carefully planned with clear purposes, to ensure that pupils' learning is developed in a systematic way through the provision of a range of worthwhile tasks and activities. Some of the planning in design and technology, however, does not pay sufficient attention to developing pupils' problem-solving skills. In the best lessons, careful planning ensures that the learning develops stage by stage through a series of linked and often varied activities. The planning ensures that lesson objectives are clearly articulated and shared with the class so that they know what the lesson is about. These lessons frequently start with a sharply focused whole-class introduction that builds on previous learning and checks and reinforces what pupils have learned in other lessons, include some skilful questioning to challenge the class and make them think, and end with a review of what has been learned in the lesson and setting a context for the next. Such approaches were seen to good effect in a Year 8 geography lesson on renewable and non-renewable energy sources, in which pupils made excellent progress in developing their understanding of the relative importance of each source and the environmental effects of their exploitation.

24. In most subjects, the teaching of literacy is good overall although not all subject teachers are clear about their role in developing pupils' literacy skills and their contribution is not as explicit or as planned as it should be. Literacy skills are regularly practised in modern foreign languages. In art, pupils are expected to talk about their work in a way that develops their awareness of what they are doing. Group discussion is encouraged in drama and geography. In citizenship lessons, pupils are expected to report back to the whole class. The school encourages reading for pleasure in the Friday morning tutorial session. In many subjects, particularly in music and drama, the specialist language needed is frequently practised and is used with growing confidence by the pupils. This emphasis on subject vocabulary is not consistent in history. The teaching of numeracy is good in mathematics, science and geography. It is particularly good in mathematics at Key Stage 3 where it is supported by the National Numeracy Strategy. In other subjects, teachers give appropriate attention to developing pupils' numeracy skills as and when they are required but this is seldom as part of a planned, clear and consistent strategy. Many teachers make insufficient use of ICT to support teaching and learning in their subjects. Consequently, pupils' skills are not as well developed as they might be. The lack of whole-school policies for these areas leads to inconsistencies in the way that they are taught.

25. Teachers use a good variety of effective teaching methods to interest and motivate their pupils. Most lessons include an appropriate balance between whole-class activities, individual and group work, with discussion used effectively to support learning. Pupils respond well in such circumstances. Explanations by the teachers are usually clear and well-focused. The majority set suitably high standards and insist on a high standard of response and in the content of written work. The best teaching challenges pupils with thought-provoking questions which make them think more deeply, explain their reasoning or consider alternative solutions to problems. In such lessons, teachers maintain a brisk pace while giving pupils adequate opportunity to reflect and respond. They instil a sense of purpose, which effectively maintains pupils' interest and concentration, and cover much ground in the lesson. These lessons are typified by high standards of learning, behaviour and endeavour.

26. In the majority of lessons, teachers manage and organise their pupils very well, ensuring that they remain focused and on task. This aspect is a particularly strong feature of most lessons. They praise and encourage, and have high expectations of the pupils' behaviour and response. In most cases, teachers insist on, and secure, high standards of attention, courtesy and effort. They do this by a combination of quiet determination, humour, very good relationships with pupils, and providing work that is interesting and challenging. Boys and girls work very well together in group work, and listen attentively to the views of each other. Teachers' management of pupils and their efforts to ensure equality of opportunity in lessons have improved considerably since the last inspection through the introduction of a range of effective strategies, including specific seating arrangements. On a few occasions, when the work lacks challenge and interest, or when expectations are not clear enough, some pupils do not behave as well as they might and can be disruptive, affecting the learning of others in the class. Such instances, however, are infrequent.

27. Most lessons begin promptly and on time. Lesson time is normally used well, ensuring that pupils remain on task and work effectively. The ends of lessons are not always as tightly controlled.

The school does not use an audible system of signalling the end of each lesson but relies on teachers' time keeping. The effect is that, in some instances, pupils themselves, rather than the teacher, decide when the lesson is about to end and begin to disengage from the work and gather their belongings together. In some lessons that are otherwise satisfactory, too little time is allowed at the end of the lesson to sum up, check what has been learned or to indicate what is to be covered in the next lesson.

28. Teachers carefully assess pupils' work and progress in lessons, picking up and remedying common mistakes, clarifying misunderstandings and giving constructive feedback on what they need to do to improve. However, the quality and use of assessment are not as strong as other aspects of teaching. Standards of marking are inconsistent, both across the school and within many subjects. Much of the marking is regular and encouraging, but too often it fails to provide guidance to pupils on what they need to do to improve their work or indicate how well they are doing. Marking is particularly good in mathematics, modern foreign languages and music. Homework is used appropriately to reinforce, extend and enhance class work. Inspectors found no evidence to support the concerns of a small number of parents that the setting of homework is inconsistent.

29. Most pupils apply themselves well to their work, are enthusiastic and keen to learn. They work well on their own and with others, making the best use of the time available in lessons. Many are willing and able to seek out information on their own and to undertake extension activities without the direct support and guidance from the teacher. Occasionally, a small minority of pupils lack self-discipline and a commitment to doing their best. Consequently, they make unsatisfactory progress in their learning.

30. Pupils with special educational needs generally learn well when taught by subject specialists in mainstream classes and this reflects the school's commitment to an inclusive philosophy within which the needs of all pupils should be met. Teaching has many good quality features that promote pupils' full participation in all activities. In particular, the input of highly effective learning support assistants has a significant impact on ensuring their involvement. Joint planning between teachers and learning support assistants in subjects such as mathematics, science and German means that the learning support assistants are extremely well prepared and therefore able to include pupils in all aspects of the lesson. Teacher's high expectations and effective classroom management skills also encourage pupils' good academic progress and personal development. Careful and sensitive consideration of their needs in English, art, French and physical education, for example, results in pupils being fully integrated members of the class, with groups constructed in ways which maximise their involvement in activities. Pupils' individual education plans are used well in some subjects, such as mathematics, as a basis for providing activities that match individual needs. However, their use is not systematically monitored. Consequently, the contents of individual education plans are not acknowledged consistently in teachers' planning. Pupils' personal development is promoted equally well in mainstream lessons. A combination of sensitive teaching methods and input from learning support assistants in subjects like English, science and German give pupils the confidence to express their ideas.

31. Pupils with special educational needs also learn very well in English and mathematics lessons taught by subject specialist teachers from the learning support department. Well-established relationships and very good knowledge of individual needs allow teachers to challenge pupils and they, in turn, respond very well. A range of teaching methods and strategies, including whole class teaching, group and individual work, promotes learning opportunities, and activities that are carefully chosen, well timed and changed appropriately maintain pupils' interest and concentration.

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

32. Overall, the quality and range of learning opportunities offered to pupils are satisfactory. They are good in Years 7 to 9 and broadly satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. There are, however, some weaknesses, especially in Years 10 and 11. Arrangements for ICT do not meet statutory requirements and the work-related curriculum is comparatively narrow. In addition, the programming of personal, health and social education for all year groups does not provide sufficient continuity in pupils' learning.

33. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 study the full National Curriculum and religious education, as well as drama, citizenship and personal, health and social education (PSHE). The banding and setting

arrangements provide a common curriculum and ensure that all pupils are provided for appropriately, whatever their attainment, ethnicity or gender. The curriculum has breadth and balance, despite a slight time bias towards art, music and religious education. Curricular balance is also affected by arrangements that produce clustering of teaching in some subjects within a few days of the fortnightly timetable, followed by a long gap. The effects are felt especially in history, where the curriculum has several weaknesses, including poorly planned schemes of work. Some departments do not contribute effectively to the development of pupils' ICT skills within a subject context.

34. In Years 10 and 11, all pupils study English, mathematics, science, a design and technology option, physical education, religious education and citizenship. The majority also study one modern foreign language, but none is currently studying both French and German. In addition, pupils are able to choose further National Curriculum subjects as well as drama, media studies and statistics. Those pupils for whom a full programme of GCSE courses would be too demanding follow a very well planned ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) Youth Award course. This gives opportunities to develop basic communication skills, raises their self-esteem and aspirations and leads to nationally-recognised accreditation. In addition, a small number of lower attaining, or less motivated, pupils attend access courses in conjunction with a local tertiary college and have work placements with local businesses. These courses are valuable for the small numbers of pupils involved, but provision for vocational education is much narrower than in many similar schools. There are no separate lessons or any course leading to certification in ICT. The teaching of this subject depends on effective teaching within other subjects across the curriculum. This varies in quality between departments, is uncoordinated and does not meet statutory requirements.

35. Curricular provision for pupils with special educational needs is good overall. At Key Stage 3, they have the same access as their peers to the good quality and range of learning opportunities that are provided. In addition, the school's grouping and timetabling arrangements mean that these pupils are taught English and mathematics by teachers from the learning support department at the same time as their peers have these lessons. Therefore, they do not miss other subjects for additional support in these core subjects.

36. The curriculum for pupils with special educational needs in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory, although it suffers from the same shortcomings in areas such as ICT as the whole-school curriculum. However, it is broad and balanced and made particularly relevant for some pupils by providing them with alternative courses and qualifications, such as the Youth Award Scheme. A more work-related curriculum is offered through links with Colchester Institute so that pupils are able to follow ten-week taster courses in a range of vocational options. These half-day courses require pupils to travel independently and the school maintains effective liaison with the college to monitor pupils' academic and personal development. The school also tries to meet pupils' needs by making very specific individual curricular arrangements, such as, in exceptional circumstances, having pupils placed full-time in the local college but retaining very close contact to monitor and assess progress.

37. The school has identified gifted and talented pupils in academic and sporting fields, and provides a varied programme of activities during and beyond the school day. Subject departments are currently undertaking development work, reviewing their policies and provision. Higher attaining pupils as well as those identified as gifted and talented are able to sit GCSE examinations in geography, mathematics and statistics at the end of Year 10. Some will go on to follow courses at AS level.

38. The school's provision for the development of pupils' literacy skills is satisfactory. Across the subjects in the curriculum, the skills of speaking and listening, reading and writing are generally actively encouraged. In many areas, pupils' writing is displayed to encourage high standards in written work. The school has produced guidance on developing literacy across the school but few subjects include literacy within their scheme of work. Overall, strategies for developing pupils' numeracy skills are generally satisfactory but are inconsistently applied. The school has planned a whole-school initiative to develop a numeracy policy later this year. Policies are in place in mathematics, science, design and technology and geography. The science scheme of work lacks a clear strategy for developing numeracy skills but has identified opportunities to use them to solve problems. The department is clear about the contribution it makes. The geography department has a good policy, which is having a good effect on standards in the subject. The same is true of mathematics where the teaching of basic skills is good. In design and technology, the department has no clearly defined strategy for developing pupils'

numeracy skills. Other subjects have no overall policy and opportunities are either missed or taken up naturally through the good teaching.

39. All pupils follow a personal, social and health educational programme (PSHE). This is delivered mainly through 'special events' days for each year group, when the school timetable is suspended for the age group involved. The content of this programme covers all the recommended strands, including health, sex and drugs education, as well as covering careers education and guidance from Year 9 onwards. In addition, some aspects of sex education are addressed in science and religious education. Citizenship lessons and the extended morning registration time, known as period R, on non-assembly mornings are also used for teaching some aspects of PSHE. However, period R is not uniformly well used, and some of the activities are not co-ordinated across year groups. Careers education is thoughtfully delivered within PSHE and there is a well-planned work-experience programme at the start of Year 11. The local Rotary Club sponsors an annual award for the pupil who presents the best work-experience feedback. Although the content of the PSHE course includes all the recommended strands, and is strengthened by input from visiting experts, its programming does not provide pupils with the continuity of learning desirable for the steady development that will help them to develop the skills to make informed choices about their futures.

40. The school's provision of extra-curricular activities is good. Pupils and parents appreciate the considerable efforts made by many teachers who run support and revision classes at lunchtime and after school. There are numerous well-supported sports clubs and teams. Overseas activities include skiing and water sports. The music department holds daily lunchtime and after school activities for both instrumentalists and singers. Nearly a quarter of the pupils have instrumental lessons from peripatetic music teachers. The modern foreign languages department organises exchange visits with French and German schools. Most subject departments are involved in out-of-school activities. All these opportunities extend and enhance pupils' experiences and their learning.

41. The school has developed good links with other schools and colleges. Positive partnerships have been established with primary schools, with examples of meetings for parents of pupils about to transfer to the school, joint meetings of staff for in-service training, and the transfer of information and assessment data about the pupils. In addition, the school's laboratories and the swimming pool are used by primary school pupils. Good links have also been established with institutions to which pupils transfer at the age of 16. The school's links with the community are very good.

42. The school has addressed all the curriculum issues raised in the last inspection. The revised arrangements for grouping pupils now ensure equality of access. All pupils now study religious education. The school has been less successful in addressing imbalances in the distribution of lessons within the fortnightly timetable. Curriculum planning shows foresight in the way citizenship lessons have been introduced well in advance of the statutory requirement. Governors take a keen interest in curricular matters. The practice of having governors linked to departments is longstanding. The recent establishment of a governors' curriculum committee, led by a proactive chairperson, has strengthened these links.

43. Overall, the school makes good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC). The provision for their social development is very good. Provision for moral and cultural development is good, and provision for their spiritual development is satisfactory.

44. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory overall. Assemblies take place twice a week for each year group. Assemblies rarely constitute an act of Christian worship although one good assembly on the theme of treating others with kindness did provide some opportunity for reflection. Tutor time does not provide opportunities for spiritual development. The statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship is not met. There is some planning in departments for pupils' spiritual development, but this is inconsistent and lacks structure. The PSHE programme contributes little in this area. In some subjects, opportunities occur for the spiritual development of pupils. For example, the religious education curriculum makes an excellent contribution. Pupils are encouraged to consider and respond to questions about the meaning and purpose of life. The notions of good and evil, explored in texts such as *Lord of the Flies* and *Macbeth*, enable pupils to reflect on these concepts. In art and design, pupils demonstrate their ability to look inwards and explore their own attitudes, beliefs and value systems through their drawings, paintings and craft objects. Opportunities for pupils to reflect on their

experiences are also evident in drama. However, opportunities are missed in most subjects to develop this aspect of the curriculum.

45. The provision for pupils' moral development is good. Opportunities are targeted largely through the PSHE programme. Topics such as attitudes to bullying, sex education, drugs awareness, equal opportunities and ethical issues, for example, genetic engineering, provide a sound curriculum for discussion and the development of attitudes and values. The school has clear expectations of pupils knowing right from wrong and they respond well when they are corrected. The headteacher and staff are very good role models for pupils. Assemblies make a significant contribution to this area. Pupils have raised significant amounts of money for various charities. Their active concern for the disadvantaged is very strong. Several subjects contribute well in providing opportunities for moral development. In religious education, pupils are able to respond to aspects of morality using their knowledge of religious and ethical issues. They explore feelings, develop attitudes and values and form judgements very well. In English, pupils discuss moral issues in literature. They write reflectively on conflicting moral codes and issues after reading books such as *Animal Farm*. This enables them to develop moral principles and values. In physical education, pupils demonstrate their attention to fair play and playing to rules.

46. The school makes very good provision for pupils' social development. The school provides significant opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and develop social understanding. The PSHE programme provides many opportunities in this area, in terms of specific curriculum provision such as rights and responsibilities, healthy environment, citizenship, and sex education, making a valuable contribution to developing attitudes and fostering independent thinking. The 'buddy' system enables pupils to show responsibility in helping new pupils to settle in well and feel safe and confident. In addition, lunchtime clubs and sporting activities all help to develop skills of social interaction. The school council provides good opportunities for pupils to develop their communication skills and make important contributions to the life of the school. Most subjects contribute towards developing pupils' social awareness. For example, pupils work well together and many opportunities are provided for them to express their views in paired work, group work and general discussion. In music, pupils support each other very well. They respect each other's contributions. Pupils' involvement in concerts enables them to grow in confidence by performing to large audiences. Pupils create a safe environment, free from intimidation and their concern for others is evident in class and around the school.

47. Provision for pupils' cultural development is good. There are several opportunities for pupils to be involved in activities that extend their cultural development. The school's curriculum, however, does not provide sufficient planned opportunities for pupils to develop an awareness of the rich variety of different cultures and traditions that exist in this country, although there are aspects of religious education that make a significant contribution. The school's curriculum in PSHE provides some opportunities. For example, topics such as racism, stereotyping and discrimination enable pupils to develop appropriate attitudes and values. There are aspects of religious education that make a significant contribution, especially in the study of different religions and the cultures that support them. The use of theatre visits, fieldtrips, visits to art galleries, exchange visits to France and Germany and links with other schools in Sweden and Denmark all assist pupils' cultural awareness. Some subjects make a significant contribution to the cultural development of pupils. For example, in music, displays are used to encourage participation in cultural events, and resources reflect multi-cultural music. In English, pupils study a wide range of literature from different ages, and the study of poetry by authors from Pakistan, India and the West Indies enables pupils to appreciate different cultures and traditions.

48. Across the school as a whole, there is insufficient recognition by the school that the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness has an important impact on their progress, attitudes and achievement. There are some references to these aspects of pupils' personal development in the school's documentation, especially with regard to behaviour, equal opportunities and bullying. Policy documents relating to these aspects and collective worship have been produced recently, but lack sufficient detail. The PSHE programme forms part of the school's provision for enhancing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There are plans to develop this aspect of the curriculum in the future. This should provide a valuable starting point for a planned and co-ordinated approach to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development across the school in terms of a shared policy for the planning, delivery and monitoring of this aspect of the curriculum. The religious education syllabus provides very good opportunities in these areas, and there are valuable examples of opportunities for reflection and discussion of spiritual and moral issues.

49. Since the time of the last inspection, there has been some improvement in the opportunities for pupils' spiritual development although the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship for all pupils is still not met. The provision for moral and social development has improved and cultural development continues to be good. However, the provision of opportunities for pupils to develop a greater awareness of the rich variety of cultures and traditions that exist in this country is still in need of further development.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

50. The pastoral care and support of pupils are good. The school's ethos ensures that pupils are valued and this is reflected in their good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning. The school provides a good environment for pupils to learn. Staff know pupils well and expect high standards of them in their work and their attitudes. Teachers and staff provide good role models.

51. Pupils are confident that they can approach staff with any problems and feel that they are well supported. Staff have a good understanding of pupils' personal development and in those tutorial sessions, which are structured and planned at the start of the day, good use is made of the time to reinforce and develop relationships and issues relating to their personal and social development. However, on occasions, tutorial sessions are unstructured and opportunities are missed. There are close links between the monitoring of pupils' personal development, attitudes and academic progress within a structured system that supports staff well in fulfilling their pastoral roles. The good links between tutors, heads of upper and lower school, departments and members of the senior management team, combined with good personal and academic support and guidance, enable pupils to benefit from the educational opportunities that are offered. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for managing their learning and for themselves. The school council provides an opportunity for pupils to involve themselves in the wider community of the school, and activities to raise funds for charity or participate in the local carnival involve them in the wider community. Individual targets set by staff, together with those set by pupils themselves, are recorded and shared with parents. They are monitored and reviewed to ensure that they are realistic. The monitoring of pupils' academic progress and personal development is used effectively to improve standards and learning.

52. Procedures for the assessment and monitoring of pupils' academic progress are satisfactory overall but there are areas for further improvement. Assessment has improved since the last inspection and the school is continuing to develop its systems for monitoring pupils' progress and target setting based on their earlier attainment. The school uses a range of data with greater understanding. Middle managers and heads of department have benefited from well-planned professional development on self-evaluation, making best use of data, National Curriculum levels and measuring progress. Data on individual pupils is now available to all staff on the school's intranet and reviews of pupils' progress are more frequent. The results of these reviews are used to identify underachieving pupils, who receive extra support and guidance. The use of National Curriculum levels is well established in the core subjects, but there are inconsistencies in their use by some other subjects and inaccuracies in the formal assessments undertaken by teachers at the end of Key Stage 3 indicating some lack in teachers' understanding of the level descriptions.

53. Procedures for assessment are very good in mathematics, science and music and good in English. In science, data is used effectively to set targets for improvement and in mathematics, the excellent quality of the reports gives clear and precise targets. The use of assessment to guide curricular planning is excellent in mathematics and very good in music. In many other subjects it is inconsistent and in history it is poor. The use of assessment information in Year 11 is excellent in mathematics providing detailed topics for revision for each pupil based on prior results and in music subject performance is carefully monitored.

54. The school has developed good systems and processes for monitoring and supporting the academic and personal development of pupils with special educational needs. The main vehicle for doing this is the good quality of individual education plans, which are effective because of their simplicity. They are well set out, concise plans written in straightforward English that provide subject teachers with practical suggestions as to how they can provide pupils with opportunities to meet their

targets through the teaching strategies they employ and the activities they provide. However, one aspect of the plans that requires further development in order to increase their effectiveness is in setting consistently sharp targets with clear success criteria so that pupils' progress can be evaluated more effectively. The key targets set for pupils at the annual review of their statement of special educational need are appropriate and challenging. However, whilst there are implied links between successive year's targets, these are not always sufficiently explicit to enable improvements in academic performance and personal development to be tracked effectively in the intervening period. On the other hand, there is a consistent and impressive link between the targets set for pupils at these annual reviews and the subsequent individual education plan that is produced.

55. Although the school has good systems for assessing how well pupils with special educational needs develop broader academic skills, such as independent work and organisation, the learning support department is aware that other procedures need to be developed further. In particular, these relate to assessing accurately what pupils can do, know and understand in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. A number of these pupils make progress in relatively small steps and current assessment techniques are not sufficiently detailed or refined to identify these small scale achievements. However, the department is in the process of implementing a newly purchased commercial scheme in order to evaluate its effectiveness in providing this information.

56. The school's ethos and the high expectations of all adults working within the school are usually successful in promoting pupils' good and often very good standards of behaviour in and around the school and during lessons. The school has very good procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour, and instances of oppressive behaviour or bullying are quickly identified and addressed. The procedures are consistently applied by staff and clearly understood by pupils. Staff work closely with parents and pupils to ensure that if pupils are having problems in meeting the expected standards of behaviour, they are supported through a range of appropriate strategies which include both internal exclusion and fixed period exclusions. Pupils value rewards, such as merits and certificates, which they may earn and the recognition that they receive for success within the classroom and in sporting activities. They recognise that sanctions are applied fairly. The effectiveness of the school's strategies including close monitoring, ensures good standards of behaviour throughout the school. The ethos of the school promotes very good personal relationships, engaging pupils in their learning and providing opportunities for collaboration within the classroom and through activities. Together, the good standards of behaviour and very good relationships have a positive effect on pupils' attainment and progress.

57. Procedures for monitoring and promoting regular attendance are very effective and contribute to the overall good levels of attendance and the good progress which pupils make in their learning. Good attendance is recognised by the award of certificates, and efficient support by administrative staff ensures that parents are contacted on the first morning of any unexplained absence. The educational welfare officer works well with the school in addressing any particular problems.

58. Arrangements for child protection are good. They are based on the local area child protection committee policy and comply with requirements. The child protection co-ordinator and two other senior members of staff have been fully trained in child protection. A strength of the school's provision in this area is the very good understanding which all staff have of the procedures to be followed in the case of any concerns. The good foundations for this are laid in the induction procedures which set out arrangements clearly and the good training provided for all staff and reinforced regularly at in-service training sessions. The school exercises its responsibilities with care and sensitivity and has effective liaison arrangements with outside agencies.

59. Procedures for monitoring and promoting health and safety are very good and staff promote high standards of safe practice in lessons. The school has a clear health and safety policy, which is supported by a very comprehensive policy provided by the education authority. In addition, there is a whole-school action plan which clearly sets out a manageable work programme and identifies areas for further development. Fire equipment, apparatus and electrical appliances are tested regularly and recent slippage in the programme for testing electrical equipment has been identified and addressed effectively, with realistic priorities established. Defective items are taken out of use immediately, until they can be repaired or disposed of. Emergency evacuation of the building is practised regularly. The school has developed a portfolio of risk assessments and reviews of the site have monitored the deteriorating condition of the surface of the four netball courts, two of which are now considered to be dangerous and

should be taken out of use. Arrangements for the provision of first aid are good.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

60. Partnership with parents has improved since the last inspection and is good. The school endeavours to involve parents in its work and life for the benefit of pupils. The partnership between school and home is promoted through the provision of good information about pupils' learning, the curriculum and the policies which affect the community of the school. This partnership is reinforced by the home/school agreement, which has been completed by nearly all parents.

61. About a fifth of parents responded to the parents' questionnaire, distributed before the inspection. They generally express satisfactory views of the school and the education that it provides for their children. They are particularly positive about the high expectations of staff, the good progress being made by their children, the good quality of teaching, the ease with which they feel that they can approach the school with questions or a problem. Inspectors support these positive views. A significant minority of parents, however, express concerns about the arrangements for homework given to pupils, the closeness with which the school works with parents and the information they receive about pupils' progress. The inspection team found no evidence to support these concerns. Inspectors judge that homework is used satisfactorily to extend pupils' learning; the school has an effective partnership with parents and works closely with them for the benefit of pupils; and information about pupils' progress is good overall.

62. Parents' support for pupils' learning at school, at home and in their wider activities is good. This is evident in the good support that parents provide for pupils' homework and the high levels of attendance at consultation evenings. The school makes strenuous efforts to encourage all parents to attend consultation evenings and tries to ensure that those parents who do not attend are offered an opportunity to meet staff on a different occasion. Staff seek to involve parents at an early stage in the event of any concerns being identified and are readily accessible to parents. The Parents' Association supports the school well through its fundraising activities. Pupils and staff appreciate the parents' support, which makes a positive contribution to pupils' progress and attainment, and enhances the resources and facilities available to support pupils' learning.

63. The information provided for parents is good, and has some very good features. The school has a clear 'customer focus' and tries to establish good communications with parents prior to pupils coming to the school. At this time, parents are invited to a presentation, which is well attended and addresses not only opportunities offered by the school but carefully explains the school's ethos and attitude towards issues such as bullying and how pupils, staff and parents can work together to resolve any concerns. Three formal opportunities are available each year for parents to meet staff. These meetings are well attended. Parents receive a full annual report and a brief 'settling in' report during the autumn term. Annual reports provide good information about pupils' progress and are written with great care. Reports set targets for improvement, which are generally subject-specific, although there is some inconsistency, to inform parents of how pupils can move to the next stage of their learning and make further progress. The reports prepared by the mathematics department are excellent and very clearly focused whilst, in contrast, those for ICT sometimes fail to focus sufficiently on the progress and attainment of pupils as individuals.

64. Good information is provided to parents about activities and the life and work of the school. A particular strength of the monthly newsletters is the focus which they have on school policies and curricular areas. They also provide information about the life and work of the school and the many charitable activities undertaken by pupils and ensure that parents are aware of key dates in the school calendar.

65. The parents/carers of pupils with special educational needs are encouraged to become involved in their children's education and are kept well informed about all developments. They are involved in reviewing individual education plans and are provided with the new targets, and are consulted closely when alternative curriculum provision is considered at the end of Year 9.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

66. The headteacher leads the school well. Since her appointment shortly after the last inspection, she has worked in a purposeful and determined way to secure the commitment of staff to improving what the school has to offer its pupils and to raising standards. The headteacher has clear views of the school's future development, including the need for a broader curriculum and the greater involvement of both staff and pupils in the process of improvement. She provides the driving force, in partnership with the governing body, for improving the quality of provision. In this task she is ably supported by her deputy, in particular, and by the other three senior managers, who together make up the leadership team. The school has made considerable strides since the last inspection and the pace of change and improvement is accelerating. The school is now in a good position to build on the progress made so far and to secure further improvements, not only in raising standards even further but also in improving the consistency of some aspects of the school's work that are referred to elsewhere in this report.

67. The school's aims and values are well articulated and widely shared with staff, parents, governors and pupils. These aims, which are comprehensive, place significant emphasis on pupils' academic and personal development and preparing them effectively for their future lives and careers. There is a clear commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity and some very effective work has been done to improve the school's approach and practice in this area. The ethos of the school positively reflects these important values and aspirations in its day-to-day work.

68. Governors have a very good understanding of the school's priorities and, under the strong leadership of the chair of governors, play an effective role in its strategic management. They have a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses, are fully involved in longer-term development planning, and contribute effectively to determining its future direction and the setting of priorities. They are very supportive of the headteacher. They carry out their responsibilities very effectively for the most part, but have not yet ensured that all pupils participate in a daily act of collective worship or that the school's arrangements for teaching ICT, especially in Years 10 and 11, fully meet National Curriculum requirements. They undertake their monitoring role well, effectively holding the school to account for its performance, in particular the examination results.

69. The school is managed well. Senior staff have complementary skills and share a commitment to providing a wide range of opportunities for all pupils and to ensuring that they receive an education of the highest possible quality. They provide effective support to the headteacher and, together, they make an effective contribution to the continued improvement of the school and to its day-to-day management. All the senior managers have clearly delegated areas of responsibility. They work well as a team and convey a shared sense of purpose. They have a good capacity to reflect critically on aspects of the school's work and a determination to implement changes to make improvements. Systems of communication, consultation and meetings across the school are good.

70. The effectiveness of staff with leadership responsibilities for subjects varies from very good to poor, but is satisfactory overall. Heads of departments are becoming increasingly robust in the way they strive for improvement. In many subjects, including English, science, modern foreign languages, music, physical education and drama, these key staff lead and manage their departments well. Leadership is particularly effective in mathematics. In art, design and technology, geography and religious education, leadership and management are satisfactory. The management and co-ordination of ICT are unsatisfactory and in history they are poor. Where leadership and management of subjects are more effective, there is greater co-ordination and consistency of approach in areas such as planning for improvement and assessment, and more explicit support for developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills as well as their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. Many subject leaders do not monitor and evaluate the work of their departments systematically enough or with sufficient rigour and do not use performance data, currently available in the school, effectively enough to set targets for improvement, either for individual pupils or for the department as a whole, or to inform curricular planning. Pastoral teams are effective in the main but the work of tutors is not monitored sufficiently, especially during tutorial periods. Consequently, there is undue variation in the quality of provision in these lessons.

71. The learning support department is very well managed and led by a highly organised and effective head of department, who is also the school's special needs co-ordinator. She has a clear vision of educational inclusion, which is shared by senior managers and the governing body through its

learning support committee. Under her leadership, many aspects of the new Special Educational Needs Code of Practice have already been incorporated into the school's procedures. As a result, special educational needs has a high profile as the school moves increasingly towards being a fully inclusive organisation. The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection in meeting the needs of its pupils with special educational needs. This provision is now good because it is underpinned by a whole school commitment to educational inclusion. This philosophy is becoming increasingly translated into practice, such as focused in-service training that has heightened staff awareness of different special educational needs. In addition, senior managers have taken positive decisions in terms of staffing and resources to enable in-class support and to reduce withdrawal sessions, thereby maintaining pupils' broad curriculum entitlement. For example, the decision to increase the number of learning support assistants rather than employ an additional teacher in the learning support department has had a positive impact in this respect. As a result, this additional support enables pupils with special needs to benefit from mainstream specialist teaching alongside their peers without any adverse effect on the learning opportunities of others. The learning support department recognises that it needs to evaluate further its effectiveness in meeting the diverse needs of pupils as well as its contribution to helping to raise standards across the school.

72. Senior managers are clear about the school's priorities. Longer-term planning is clearly identified in the school's development plan and the priorities, which are relevant to its stage of development, are appropriately linked to improving standards and the quality of provision in the school. However, the development plan is a rather unwieldy management tool. Timescales and success criteria are not sharp enough to enable the school to monitor and evaluate effectively its progress in meeting its priorities.

73. Systems for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the work of the school by senior managers are generally robust, in particular the quality of teaching and learning and its performance in external tests and examinations. This enables them to identify strengths and weaknesses effectively. The evidence is gained through the careful analysis of performance data, through regular line-management meetings between senior and middle managers, lesson observations and the scrutiny of pupils' work and homework. Such activities are leading to improvements in the consistency of approach in a number of areas across the school. Senior staff, with external support, have been rigorous in tackling poor performance and systematic in implementing a range of strategies for effecting improvement, with some considerable success. As yet, some cross-curricular aspects, such as literacy, numeracy, ICT and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are not monitored as rigorously, with the result that practice across the school in these areas is inconsistent.

74. Staffing is a strength of the school. The qualifications and experiences of all staff, both teaching and support, closely match the demands of the curriculum, although there are too few people to teach ICT. All curriculum areas are fully staffed with permanent teachers in post. The learning support department is staffed by well-qualified teachers and very effective learning support assistants.

75. The staff development policy is clearly linked to whole-school improvement priorities and performance management systems, for all staff, are fully embedded within it. The chair of the personnel and pupil welfare committee of the governing body views the development and welfare of all staff as a high priority. Both he and his committee are actively involved in the development and monitoring of a wide range of policies, which seek to ensure that the school provides a positive environment for learning for both staff and pupils. The school was recognised as an *Investor in People* in December 2000. The external assessor's final report commended the degree to which the school has integrated teaching and support staff in a way that has promoted learning between staff members. A particularly good example of this is the relationship between teaching staff and the teaching assistants who support pupils with special educational needs.

76. The school contributes significantly to the training of prospective teachers by working in partnership with the universities of De Montford and Anglia. The training offered to all staff working within the school, whether permanent staff or teachers in training, is very good. The school has very thorough procedures in place to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the training.

77. Overall, the accommodation is satisfactory for teaching the curriculum and has been improved since the last inspection by new provision for English and music, changing rooms in physical education,

additional drama space and refurbished science laboratory and library accommodation. Although there is some good and very good provision, such as that for English, music and modern foreign languages, some aspects of the accommodation are not ideal and, in some cases, adversely affect pupils' learning. For example, some drama lessons are taught within a large and flexible space which has satisfactory blackout and lighting facilities but also serves as a canteen, with the consequence that cleaning and setting up effectively results in 10 minutes' loss of teaching time in many lessons. Some accommodation is cramped for the size of classes, such as the laboratory that is used on occasions for the teaching of geography, in which the benches along one wall restrict the floor space, and also the art rooms. There is insufficient storage space for pupils' work and for equipment and materials in art and design. The condition of the outdoor hard play area used for physical education is poor and two courts are in a dangerous condition. Displays are used effectively throughout the school to celebrate pupils' work, inform pupils about activities and act as a stimulus. One particularly stimulating area, lit by natural light, is located on the first floor and is used to display large pieces of design work. This area is particularly appreciated by the pupils.

78. Resources for learning, such as books, materials and equipment are good overall. There has been significant improvement since the last inspection and most of the deficiencies identified at that time have been rectified. In science, although there are sufficient books for class use, there are not enough for pupils to take home to support revision and to enable homework tasks to be set. In art, there is also a lack of modern technology, such as photographic equipment, computers, scanners and printers, to enable pupils to explore their ideas in a more vocational design context. The library resource centre is a light and spacious working area that attracts all pupils. There is ample room for a class to be taught or for pupils to pursue their own research. The range of books provided for pupils is good. Reference materials are available on CD ROMs on one stand-alone computer. A video and audio library has been set up to support literature studies. Provision for ICT has improved considerably since the last inspection and the ratio of one computer for every 4.5 pupils is better than usually found in secondary schools. Most departments have a good range of accessible computers, although they are not used sufficiently in some cases. Pupils have access to laptops in English.

79. The school works very efficiently on a day-to-day basis and administrative arrangements are effective in supporting the work of the school. Administrative staff are clear about their responsibilities and carry them out in a positive and helpful manner. The school makes good use of new technologies for administration purposes, record keeping, financial planning and management, and to support the school's analysis of data and in target-setting. The school manages its resources well. Financial planning is good and expenditure is closely related to the school's educational priorities. The system of allocating resources to departments and other budget holders is effective and monitored closely. The funding for pupils with special educational needs is used effectively and appropriately, as is the specific grant provided through the Standards Fund. Financial procedures and controls are clear and carried out efficiently. The governing body, through its finance committee, receives regular financial reports, which it monitors carefully, and maintains a strategic overview of the deployment of resources. The school seeks and obtains best value in its areas of expenditure.

80. The school has made good progress since the last inspection. It has a very positive ethos, in which all pupils are valued as individuals, and relationships are very good. Leadership and management are effective. Pupils achieve well and attain above average standards through the overall good quality of the teaching. In view of all these factors, the school provides good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

81. The school should:

(1) raise standards in history, by:

- improving the quality of some of the teaching, especially at Key Stage 4;
- rewriting the schemes of work to comply with the National Curriculum and to support teaching and learning more effectively;
- improving the arrangements for marking, assessment and moderation of pupils' work;
- improving the leadership and management of the subject.

[Paras: 2; 4; 8; 21; 24; 53; 70; 125-129]

(2) raise standards in ICT and ensure that statutory requirements are met in full, by:

- ensuring that all subjects use ICT more frequently to support teaching and learning;
- improving the quality of some of the teaching to ensure that the work is sufficiently challenging for all pupils;
- improving the arrangements for assessing pupils' skills in ICT;
- extending the use of ICT outside of lessons;
- increasing the amount of time for ICT in Key Stage 4.

[Paras: 4; 7; 8; 24; 33; 34; 36; 70; 87; 106; 130-135; 141; 151]

(3) improve the accuracy and consistency of assessment in some subjects, by:

- making marking diagnostic to help pupils improve;
- assessing pupils' work more frequently;
- moderating teachers' assessments more effectively;
- using data more rigorously to set challenging targets for individual pupils to improve their learning and to inform planning and teaching.

[Paras: 2; 28; 52; 54; 63; 68; 70; 87; 104; 106-107; 108; 111-112; 114; 118; 125; 129; 141; 148; 150; 158]

(4) improve the consistency of the provision for some cross-curricular aspects, by:

- developing better planning, co-ordination and monitoring arrangements;
- ensuring that all departments promote more effectively and explicitly pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

[Paras: 5; 6; 24; 38; 44; 48; 49; 51; 66; 70; 73; 118; 128]

(5) improve the breadth and organisation of the curriculum, particularly at Key Stage 4, by:

- extending the range of vocational courses;
- extending the opportunities for pupils to develop and use their ICT skills;
- improving the timetabling arrangements to spread some subject teaching more evenly;
- making better use of tutorial time to enhance the personal, social and health education programme.

[Paras: 32; 33; 34; 39; 42; 70]

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	144
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	55

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	10	38	62	27	6	1	0
Percentage	7	26	43	19	4	1	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	878
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	84

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	16
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	145

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	13
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	12

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.9
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.5
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 (Year 9)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	86	83	169

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	57	57	60
	Girls	64	60	61
	Total	121	117	121
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	72 (66)	69 (74)	72 (74)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	28 (22)	47 (48)	41 (39)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	43	61	66
	Girls	64	65	67
	Total	107	126	133
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	63 (58)	75 (n/a)	79 (80)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	34 (18)	46 (n/a)	36 (48)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	77	77	154

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	38	72	73
	Girls	48	76	77
	Total	86	148	150
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	56 (51)	96 (95)	97 (100)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	42.8
	National	39.0

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

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	1
Indian	3
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	868
Any other minority ethnic group	6

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	54	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	47.26
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.7

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	16
Total aggregate hours worked per week	400.6

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	73.5
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	26.2
Key Stage 4	22.7

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	2,361,166
Total expenditure	2,428,658
Expenditure per pupil	2,759
Balance brought forward from previous year	223,025
Balance carried forward to next year	156,533

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	9
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	8

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	878
Number of questionnaires returned	196

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	36	54	6	4	1
My child is making good progress in school.	45	49	3	2	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	26	59	8	1	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	15	60	19	4	2
The teaching is good.	25	67	5	2	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	26	44	25	4	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	49	41	6	2	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	60	35	4	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	24	47	21	2	5
The school is well led and managed.	37	51	5	2	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	39	50	7	3	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	30	45	12	2	12

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

- Good teaching by specialist teachers who provide good learning opportunities to most pupils.
- Very effective provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- The good behaviour and attitudes of the pupils.
- The subject's contribution to pupils' moral, social and cultural development.

Areas for improvement

- Using ICT more effectively to support teaching and learning.
- Monitoring teaching and learning more rigorously to ensure that all pupils have a broad and balanced programme of study.

82. In 2001, the standards attained by pupils in the national tests at the end of Year 9 were close to the national average for both boys and girls, and in line with those for similar schools. In that year, standards in mathematics and science were above the national average. Over time, standards for both boys and girls have been consistently close to the national averages. At the end of Year 11 in 2001, standards in English were in line with the national average but below schools with similar prior attainment. Standards in English literature, which was entered by nearly all pupils in addition to English language, were above average. Girls out-performed boys in both subjects, reflecting the national picture. Compared to pupils' performance in other subjects, English was close to the average, slightly below the results in mathematics and science. Since 1997 there has been a steady and significant improvement in English, particularly by boys. Literature has also steadily improved.

83. In the work seen during the inspection, standards in Years 8 and 9 are average, and they are above average in some Year 7 mixed-ability classes. Pupils speak and listen to the teacher and to each other with confidence and concentration. Higher attaining pupils are capable of extended statements and arguments, and nearly all pupils speak in complete and coherent sentences. Standards in reading aloud are average overall, with some pupils showing an outstanding ability to read difficult texts such as Shakespeare at sight. Pupils with special educational needs read with confidence and growing fluency, as they are provided with an appropriate level of text. By the end of Year 9 the higher attainers write detailed and perceptive commentaries on *Macbeth*, illustrating their points effectively with apt quotations. Most pupils show good knowledge of the events and characters in the play they have studied. Pupils in Year 7 show above average understanding of the situation in the opening scenes of *Hamlet* and others in Year 7 manage to deduce the meaning of a passage from Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*. When writing for a range of different purposes and audiences, the great majority of pupils present their work neatly and accurately. Personal writing is often lively and uses a broad vocabulary with increasing confidence. Year 8 pupils show sound understanding of the language and conventions of the tabloid press when writing reports based on *Holes*. Only a minority, however, take advantage of ICT to enhance their presentation of a newspaper front page. Overall, progress made during Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory, and pupils with special education needs make good progress in developing their language skills.

84. Standards by the end of Year 11 are average overall, with some pupils attaining very high standards in their written and spoken English. Pupils' skills in speaking and listening are generally better than average, as for example in a Year 10 lesson where both boys and girls were reporting back to the class on a poem they had studied for the first time. They made close references to the text, and valid comparisons and contrasts with other poems they had read. They showed a mature understanding of the situation of three different writers who found themselves in a potentially alien culture. Pupils have clearly been given good opportunities to increase their awareness of moral, social and cultural issues. When writing comparative studies of poems or short stories, higher attainers show well above average appreciation of nuances and conventions in language. Many pupils make good progress in organising and illustrating their responses to literature during their preparation for the two GCSE examinations.

They show average understanding of the persuasive devices used by the mass media, and they produce convincing original examples of advertising leaflets and posters. These are sometimes further improved by the use of ICT. Personal reflective writing on a variety of subjects, including euthanasia, is direct and well structured. Given clear models and frameworks, pupils with special educational needs are able to write for a variety of purposes, with limited vocabulary but accurate spelling and grammar. The great majority of pupils in Years 10 and 11 make good progress overall.

85. Improvement since the last inspection has been good overall. Standards have been maintained in Years 7 to 9 and improved in both GCSE English language and literature. The gap in attainment between boys and girls has been reduced.

86. The quality of teaching has improved. It is good overall throughout Years 7 to 11. In four out of every five lessons it was good or better, and in one-third it was very good and occasionally excellent. Only one unsatisfactory lesson was seen. Teachers' enthusiasm for English is infectious and maintains pace and pupils' involvement in most lessons. Lessons are carefully planned so that pupils are able to build on previous knowledge and understanding. High expectations lead to good attitudes to learning - pupils settle quickly to work and they are keen to succeed. They learn from each other through discussion in very carefully directed mixed-gender groups, with clear tasks and carefully chosen materials that ensure that all are included in the work. Teachers know individual pupils well and are able to respond to their needs. Pupils with special educational needs are very effectively supported when in mainstream classes, and in withdrawal groups they are given highly structured tasks that enable them to make good progress. Relationships between teachers and pupils are generally very good, providing a secure climate for learning in which pupils are able to take risks and develop their understanding. In just one lesson, excessive teacher talk and a lack of clarity about the task and its purpose led to unsatisfactory progress.

87. The programme of study for most classes is broad and well balanced between literature, language and media and the skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing. For a minority of classes, both the range of literature studied and the variety of writing experiences are too limited. Generally, pupils have too few opportunities to organise and present their work using ICT, and in this regard the requirements of the National Curriculum are not being met. Marking is regular, encouraging and detailed but does not always give specific advice on how to improve. Pupils are encouraged to evaluate their own progress and most of them show good awareness of their own learning.

88. The English department is well led and managed. The well qualified specialist teachers share a common sense of purpose in raising standards of achievement for all pupils. The monitoring of individual classes' programmes of work is insufficiently rigorous, however, to ensure that all pupils are receiving the broad and balanced diet already enjoyed by the majority. The accommodation for English is spacious and well furnished, and display is used well to reinforce learning and to celebrate pupils' achievements. The department is well resourced, and has identified the development of ICT in teaching and learning as a priority for improvement.

Drama

89. Overall, the provision for drama is good. In the GCSE examination in 2001, standards were close to the national average. Boys were above average and girls below, which differs from the national picture. In recent years, standards at GCSE have been close to the national average except for a drop in 1999. In the lessons seen, standards were above average overall, indicating that standards are rising as a result of the very good teaching. In most classes, pupils work very well together in preparation and performance. They have good knowledge of drama terms and techniques, which they use with confidence. Most pupils achieve original and convincing characterisations. They are able to make good use of the conventions of different dramatic genres, for example in a Year 9 lesson where they very entertainingly performed a space adventure, a medical soap opera and a spy thriller. Another Year 9 class showed above average appreciation and understanding of a scene from *Romeo and Juliet*, and a Year 7 class showed that they could empathise well with evacuees during World War Two. Pupils in Year 10 made good progress in developing an ensemble improvisation based on tensions in Northern Ireland, building up their confidence and involvement through rehearsal. In most classes, standards of evaluation are above average, and pupils are able to make perceptive and constructive comments on

each other's work. No differences were seen in the standards achieved by boys and girls, and pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated and achieve success.

90. Teaching and learning are very good overall, and in Years 7 to 9 they have improved substantially since the last inspection. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, which gives pupils confidence in them. They have high expectations and very good management skills, so time is well spent and everyone is included in the work. Relationships are trusting and purposeful, and this is reflected in the very good teamwork achieved by most groups. Sound and lighting are well used to enhance pupils' performance. Because the majority of lessons require the pupils to explore serious issues in depth, the subject makes a very important contribution to their moral, social and cultural development. Resources for drama are particularly good in the specialist studio, where the sound and lighting are flexible and accessible. Both rooms are spacious, but the second one doubles as a dining and assembly area. Consequently, time is lost at the start or end of most lessons. Drama is well led and managed. Regular public performances enrich the extra-curricular life of the school.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Leadership of the department is very good and is responsible for the good improvement since the last inspection.
- Teaching and learning are good and pupils achieve well.
- The use of assessment to support teaching and learning is excellent and reports to parents are outstanding.

Areas for improvement

- Sharpening teaching methods and lesson planning in some lessons in Years 10 and 11.
- Reviewing the organisation of some teaching groups in Key Stage 4.

91. In the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2001, standards were above the national average for all schools and matched the average for similar schools. The performance of girls was better than that of the boys, although not significantly so. The school's results have been rising in the last three years in line with the national trend. The results in mathematics were better than those in English but not as good as those in science. Standards have improved since the last inspection.

92. In the GCSE examinations in 2001, the results were above the national average at grades A*-C, and slightly above average at grades A*-G. The girls' performance was better than that of the boys. The results have been above the national average for the last few years, although varying slightly from year to year. Most lower attaining pupils achieved a certificate of numeracy. Sixty pupils were entered for the GCSE examination in statistics, but the results were well below average. Higher attaining pupils completed an advanced course of study with a number of notable successes in AS-level mathematics. More pupils sit GCSE examinations than was the case at the time of the last inspection.

93. Standards of work in Year 9 are above average, reflecting the results in the national tests in 2001. Pupils are achieving well compared to their average levels on entry to the school. Pupils with special educational need make good progress due to the small group size and the very good teaching they receive. Their work on number is developing well in Year 7 and in Year 8 a good start is being made in the study of algebra. Average attaining pupils in Year 9 have grasped the concept of double negatives and are now progressing further in their algebraic studies. Work on percentages is accurately done and pupils know their formulae, for example, the area and circumference of a circle. Higher attaining pupils in Year 9 are becoming fluent in the use of algebra through their extended oral contributions in lessons. Challenging targets have been set for the department, which are being met.

94. Standards of work seen during the inspection in Year 11 are also above average and an improvement on the results of 2001. Pupils are achieving as expected throughout Years 10 and 11. Pupils with special educational need consolidate earlier learning gains satisfactorily. In computer

assisted learning, for example, the machines are operated well by most of these pupils. They have difficulty with the mathematics of the simple algebraic programmes and require the support of teachers to ensure successful outcomes. Some of these pupils are unhappy using the computers, but the learning support assistant provides good alternative help in lessons to ensure that they maintain satisfactory progress. In revising for their GCSE examinations, average attaining pupils use excellent assessment information that informs each pupil of areas to study to improve their estimated grade. They still have some difficulties with simultaneous equations in algebra, especially when negative numbers are involved. Problems involving fractions are difficult for pupils because their understanding of the concepts is not secure. Higher attaining pupils are working individually. Not all concepts are secure; for example, area representing frequency in work on histograms in statistics, but these pupils are on course to achieve grades above grade C. Standards of literacy and ICT are in line with expectations, and their numeracy levels are above average. All pupils are fully involved in lessons and given equal opportunities.

95. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, which is why pupils achieve well. The teaching is better in Years 7 to 9 due to the very good teaching support provided by the special educational needs department. There is a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching. Approximately two-thirds of the teaching is good and is often very good and occasionally excellent. The satisfactory teaching occurs in Years 10 and 11. Teaching has improved since the last inspection and staffing difficulties of the recent past have eased.

96. Recent developments from the National Numeracy Strategy are being used effectively in Years 7 to 9. This is particularly so with the lower attaining pupils because the teaching has some excellent features, for example the management of pupils, lesson planning, teaching approaches and methods of assessment. The marking of pupils' exercise books is at times excellent and comments are helpful to pupils' learning. The learning in some instances is not as good as the teaching as some concepts are beyond pupils, and their learning difficulties are significant. Higher attaining pupils benefit from some excellent teaching, which stems from the complete confidence of the teacher's subject knowledge, smoothly translated into purposeful learning through excellent lesson planning that focuses very well on pupils' needs. Sharp timescales motivate and challenge pupils so well that productive learning is at a high level. Average attaining pupils learn well as their teaching is good. Mental work at the start of lessons is appropriately challenging, resulting in productive learning, as pupils are required to explain their methods and debate alternative solutions. Appropriate emphasis is given to problem-solving.

97. Teaching is very good in some revision lessons in Year 11. This follows from the very good planning and very effective teaching methods. The focus of learning is split into a variety of short-term goals, which maintain a high level of work in the lesson, that are focused accurately on pupils' boundary of learning by the very good procedures for monitoring their attainment and progress. In lessons that were otherwise satisfactory, teaching methods and lesson planning are not as effective as in the better lessons. For example, in a revision lesson in Year 11, pupils were supported individually but there was no whole-class teaching to stimulate discussion or to motivate pupils to work hard. The unsatisfactory teaching arose because the work lacked challenge, as it was too easy to do, with the result that a significant number of pupils were not working for significant periods of time in the lesson.

98. The curriculum is good, meets National Curriculum requirements, and incorporates the use of ICT on a regular, planned basis. The department has good software packages to support the teaching of mathematics. The contribution of the subject to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory, but its success is dependent on individual teachers as there is no formal policy. The monitoring of subject performance is very good. The department examines a wide range of data, looking at the performance of different groups of pupils, for example, enabling staff to take appropriate action. Assessment has improved since the last inspection. In some lessons in Year 11, pupils are studying for different levels of entry for their GCSE examinations but not all the higher attaining pupils are in the same group. This is because the timetable is not sufficiently flexible and standards suffer as a result.

99. The quality of leadership and management is very good, and is responsible for the good improvement made since the last inspection. The very good and clear direction for the department is seen through the commitment of the teachers and the very good procedures used within the department and in discussing teaching and its development formally in meetings. Leadership and management have improved since the last inspection.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- The high quality of the best teaching.
- The assessment and target-setting process.
- The very positive relationships between teachers and pupils.
- Pupils' very good, and safe, behaviour in laboratories.

Areas for improvement

- Extending the use of ICT to support teaching and learning.
- Marking work more thoroughly and regularly to encourage pupils and help them improve.
- Increasing the quantity of books to support pupils' learning.

100. In the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2001, the results were above the national average and were well above average when compared to similar schools. Since 1998 there has been a significant and sustained improvement in the results that is better than the national figures. The results obtained by girls are a little better than those of boys but the gap has narrowed during the last two years and in 2000 the boys did better than the girls. The science results are slightly better than the results in English and mathematics. Pupils' achievements in science on entry to the school were slightly below average; pupils, therefore, make very good progress in science in Years 7 to 9.

101. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C in the GCSE examinations in 2001 was above the national average. The performance of girls was generally better than that of boys. Better results were obtained in the previous two years but the trend in results overall is similar to the national pattern of improvement. Pupils make satisfactory progress during Year 10 and 11 and gain the grades that can be predicted from their test results at the end of Year 9. Overall, between Years 7 and 11, pupils make good progress. Pupils' results in science are a little better than those they achieve in their other subjects.

102. From pupils' work seen in lessons and in their books, standards by the end of Key Stage 3 are above average. In a Year 9 lesson about relays, the standard of pupils' work was well above average. Practical skills, displayed when using a microscope, are above average as are the investigative skills displayed in a lesson in which pupils identified the features of a fair test and decided how to present numerical information. In another lesson about acids and alkalis, pupils' achievements were below average but this represented good progress for this group. In Years 10 and 11, standards are also above average. They were very high in a lesson in Year 10 when pupils showed a very clear understanding of the reasons why voltage and current can change in electric circuits. In Year 11, in a lesson about stretching springs, practical skills were above average and in a lesson about radiation in which pupils used a simulation programme, their ICT skills were also above average. Although the standard reached by some of the lower attaining pupils in a lesson investigating the performance of washing powders was below average, they made good progress during the lesson. Boys and girls do equally well.

103. Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are above average. Many pupils are able to explain the scientific principles they learn about clearly and articulately, and they are often very willing to do so. Pupils with special educational needs are able to explain their ideas well. The great majority of pupils listen carefully to explanations and instructions. Written work is clear and accurate and pupils with special educational needs make good progress with their writing skills. Data are put into tables carefully and graphs are plotted accurately. Averages and the energy efficiency of power stations are calculated carefully.

104. Teaching throughout the school is good. No teaching is unsatisfactory and in a substantial number of lessons, the teaching is very good and sometimes excellent. Overall, pupils make good progress. The best lessons are well organised and appropriate attention is paid to improving pupils' literacy. The teaching is challenging and demanding so that pupils learn difficult ideas; for example about electricity and plant nutrition. Relationships are very good; pupils are encouraged and supported so that they gain in confidence and are willing to answer hard questions about nutrient absorption by

plants or electric circuits. In these circumstances, pupils with special educational needs make particularly good progress because their teaching is very good. Question and answer sessions are used very effectively to check on pupils' understanding and to teach them to think for themselves. Classroom management is very good. Teachers have a very good command of their subjects and of the means of teaching them: they ensure that key ideas, for instance about light, are understood by pupils. Careful attention is paid to teaching investigative work so that pupils learn the skills of observation and interpretation. In a minority of lessons that were otherwise satisfactory, the pace of learning is slow because expectations are not high enough and time limits are not set. Opportunities for pupils to learn independently are missed and too much of the lesson is led by the teacher. In these lessons, summaries are not used to consolidate what has been learned and occasionally pupils are allowed to chatter for too long. Much of the marking of pupils' work is superficial; too much work is not marked and helpful comments are not used systematically to encourage pupils. The consequence is that some pupils' work is incomplete and poorly presented.

105. Pupils' attitudes to science and their behaviour are very good. Pupils are very well behaved, they work hard and, particularly in the interesting and demanding lessons, they are very well motivated. Pupils are willing to offer tentative and explanatory answers to questions and they take responsibility for their work because teachers foster this. Pupils with special educational needs benefit especially and in many lessons teachers are highly respected. At times, when the teaching is less interesting, some disrespect is shown to teachers but overall behaviour is very good. During practical work, pupils are well organised, they cooperate very effectively and show mature responsible attitudes to their work: social skills are very good. They are careful and responsible because teachers insist on this and provide clear explanations.

106. Management of the department is good. Teaching plans include investigations, problem solving and strategies for improving pupils' literacy through discussion and presentation. The teaching plans also include many opportunities to learn about moral issues such as energy and biological conservation. This is done well but there are fewer opportunities to learn about cultural aspects of science. High quality teaching materials have been prepared to support teaching of pupils with special educational needs. Opportunities to use ICT are identified in these plans but insufficient use is made of ICT during lessons and the National Curriculum requirement to use ICT to collect information is not met. The system for recording pupils' progress and setting targets for them is very good: pupils who are underachieving are identified and supported. Teaching plans and books are being evaluated but, currently, there are not enough books for pupils to take home and opportunities to revise and read or research for homework are restricted. There is insufficient monitoring of teaching to improve marking and ensure greater consistency in teaching. Science technicians make a strong contribution to the success of pupils' work by careful preparation of teaching materials. The head of the department has been appointed recently and an application for specialist school status for science is under consideration.

107. Progress since the last inspection has been good. Recording and assessment systems now clearly identify levels of attainment, marks from a variety of sources are kept and data are evaluated to monitor pupils' progress but not to inform planning or teaching. Accommodation is very good. The pace of learning is still a little variable but teachers no longer undertake a supervisory role as was noted in the last inspection report, and they regularly check on understanding. Monitoring of teaching through the performance management system has improved but more needs to be done especially to improve marking. There is sufficient laboratory apparatus and a good supply of audio-visual equipment.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good and this results in good learning.
- Teachers plan and organise lessons well.
- Teachers make good use of time and available resources.
- Pupils are interested in the subject and behaviour in lessons is very good.

Areas for improvement

- Assessing, including the setting and marking of homework, recording and tracking procedures lack rigour.
- Insufficient use is made of performance data about pupils to inform target-setting.
- Not enough use is made of modern technology in design work.

108. The assessments undertaken by teachers of pupils' work at the end of Year 9 in 2001 indicate that standards were well above the national expectation for pupils of this age. However, work seen during the inspection shows that pupils are working at a level that is broadly in line with national expectations, suggesting that teachers are not applying the National Curriculum level descriptions accurately enough. There is little difference between boys' and girls' performance. At the end of Year 11 in 2001, the proportion of pupils achieving grades A*-C in the GCSE examination in art and design was below the national average. Boys' attainment was in line with the national figure for boys but girls' attainment was significantly below the national figure for girls. There has been a steady decline in standards over the past three years.

109. Pupils enter the school in Year 7 with a level of attainment in the subject that is below the national expectation for pupils of this age. In the initial stages, the majority have difficulty in achieving control over media and materials such as pencils, coloured pencils, paint and a variety of craft materials. Pupils are keen to learn, however, and make good progress in the first year. In Year 8, pupils make satisfactory progress, but many experience difficulty in using line, tone and colour in their observational studies of everyday objects. On the other hand, the highest attaining pupils develop the technical skills that enable them to communicate their concepts and ideas to others. In Year 9, the work produced by the lowest attaining pupils is derivative and there are many examples of copies of cartoon or comic characters. They struggle with basic drawing and painting skills. However, the majority of pupils acquire greater control over line, tone and colour and are beginning to produce drawings of a standard that is broadly in line with national expectations. The higher attaining pupils produce drawn and painted studies that exceed the national expectation. In one Year 9 lesson, pupils explored the paintings of Claude Monet, M C Escher and Bridget Riley. From these initial research studies, they worked to produce their own highly personal paintings. Most pupils in Year 9 achieve well, producing work to a standard that is broadly in line with the standard expected nationally. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into the teaching groups. Teachers' expectations are such that they make a concentrated effort to work to the best of their ability and as a result make good progress.

110. In Years 10 and 11, the majority of pupils are keen to develop their ideas in an art and craft context. They apply themselves readily to the set tasks, are productive and work at a good pace. By this stage, many have developed the capacity to think and learn for themselves. Their visual diaries and sketchbooks contain studies that have been carried out independently, away from the art studios. They work within a predominantly Fine Art model of the curriculum, with emphasis on the use of traditional media and materials such as pencils, coloured pencils, watercolour paint and acrylic paint. Only a minority of pupils have begun to explore ideas through modern technology using photography and computer-aided design. The higher attaining pupils have acquired the self-confidence to explore their own ideas, concepts and beliefs through a variety of art and craft activities. Much closer attention is now being paid to the requirements of the GCSE examination assessment objectives. In particular, greater emphasis has been placed on the need for pupils to relate their own work to the work of other artists, craftspeople and designers, and to the context in which it was created. They are also developing skills that will enable them to analyse and evaluate work from other times and other cultures involving the use of a specialist art vocabulary. This partly explains why there has been improvement in the

overall standard of work that Year 11 pupils are producing this year when compared with the results in last year's GCSE examination. Teachers have high expectations of pupils with special educational needs, who are well integrated into teaching groups and are making good progress. On the whole, pupils in Year 11 are achieving well and their attainment is in line with the standard expected nationally.

111. Teaching ranges from satisfactory to very good, and is good overall. Teachers possess sound knowledge and understanding of the subject and are familiar with the GCSE examination requirements. They are technically competent to teach basic skills in drawing, painting and in the use of craft materials. There is sound planning, good organisation and good use of time and resources. However, the writing of briefs, and the setting and marking of homework do not give pupils a clear enough understanding of the standard that they have attained. Pupils receive insufficient feedback on a regular basis, and detailed and accurate records that are available to both pupils and teachers are not kept. Most pupils respond to good classroom organisation and are, as a consequence, productive and work at a good pace. Learning is good and most pupils are keen to produce two-dimensional studies and paintings of a high standard. The studies that are found in their visual diaries and in sketchbooks show clearly that pupils have the capacity for carrying out research work, either at home, on location or in the library, well away from the art studios and the influence of teachers. Some of these pupils have collected a body of interesting visual images based upon the events of 11 September in New York. Others have collected photographs and illustrations of art, craft and design objects from other cultures, such as Chinese, Japanese, African and Indian. These images are later to be used as source material from which the pupils can work to develop their own highly personal paintings. This is an area where there has been significant improvement since the last inspection.

112. Leadership and management are satisfactory, and have many positive features. There have been several changes of staff since the last inspection, which has resulted in the head of department having to train new teachers and introduce them to the workings of the department. This has resulted in the production of a significant amount of written documentation. In light of recent changes, however, much of this material needs to be reviewed and evaluated in response to Curriculum 2000. The teachers' assessments of pupils' work at the end of Year 9 are too generous when compared with national standards. There is a need to improve the quality of assessment at this level so that pupils' work is more directly related to the National Curriculum levels. In Year 11, there has been a steady decline in standards over the past three years, but the head of department has taken steps to remedy this by placing much greater emphasis on historical and contextual studies within pupils' coursework. Oral feedback is given to pupils on a regular basis. This process is reinforced by comments and grades that are written on the back of pieces of art work. However, there were several examples of pupils' finished art work on which there were no comments by teachers. This can create difficulties in providing pupils with accurate information about their past performance and in setting targets for the future. Data on pupils' performance is not used sufficiently to inform target-setting.

113. The range of activities on offer to pupils at the moment is too narrow. There is very little evidence of three-dimensional work or of images that have been created by means of photography or ICT involving problem-solving in a vocational, work-related context. Accommodation for art and design lessons is unsatisfactory. There are two art studios and one additional room that is shared with other subjects. The class sizes of 31 or 32 in Years 8 and 9 are far too large for the available space, which places severe restrictions on pupils' ability to explore materials and on the scale of art or craft objects that they can make. Storage space is restricted, both for equipment and materials and also for pupils' work. At present, pupils' GCSE examination work is stored on a bench in one of the art studios.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- The improvement in the GCSE examination results in recent years.
- The good quality of much of the teaching.
- The commitment shown by the team of teaching and support staff.

Areas for improvement

- Placing more emphasis on problem-solving.
- Identifying specific learning objectives in schemes of work and lessons and assessing pupils' work against these.

114. By the end of Year 9, pupils' attainment in design and technology is broadly in line with the national expectation, slightly below the level suggested by the formal assessments undertaken by teachers at the end of Year 9 in 2001. As yet, the department has not established reliable systems for assessing the pupils' attainment, and there has been a tendency to over-estimate their attainment in the subject. In Years 10 and 11, pupils follow a GCSE course in one of the design and technology areas of food, graphics, resistant materials and textiles. Overall, GCSE examination results in design and technology have steadily improved in recent years from rather below the national averages to slightly above: the improvement has been greatest in textiles and graphics, and also, since the last inspection, in food.

115. Standards of pupils' work in all four areas of design and technology are in line with expectations by the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. In Years 7 to 9, many pupils gain above average levels of skills in working with the different types of raw material, in graphics and with computers. A significant minority also develop a basic working knowledge of the underlying concepts in all four areas, such as the production of different pastries, the effectiveness of various techniques for shading and colouring a surface, the basic properties of different types of wood, and when to use a particular stitching style. Although some pupils by the end of the key stage have an idea of what such terms as 'design' and 'evaluation' mean, very few have a clear and correct understanding about more than a few such words and view design and technology as all about solving problems. In other words, in Years 7 - 9, pupils develop a better grasp of the different components of design and technology than of the nature of the subject as a whole.

116. A similar picture also applies to pupils in Years 10 and 11. They make satisfactory progress with the specific skills of their chosen area of design and technology, but in general are less able to define the problem solving cycle or its various stages, or to apply their problem solving skills to new situations. As they approach their GCSE examinations, pupils become fairly adept cooks, draughtspeople, or workers with wood or fabric, and some of the coursework products and coursework folders are of an impressively high standard. However, very few are able to extend their specialist skills and knowledge to designing a novel sauce, type of publication, mechanism or garment, for example. These skills are more evident in textiles technology and graphics products. In the former case, there are some good displays and explicit concern for how people react to different fabrics and styles of product, while in the latter case, some pupils connect the different aspects of their coursework by evaluating their products against design targets.

117. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support from their teachers and from the unusually knowledgeable learning support staff and, as a consequence, they make good progress. Most pupils achieve well in relation to their grasp of the skills and knowledge of the various specialist areas.

118. Overall, the quality of teaching is good, broadly similar to the picture at the time of the last inspection. There is a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching at Key Stage 4, due in the main to weaknesses in managing pupils. Most teachers expect pupils in Year 7 to 9 to work hard, which they do, with enjoyment and good behaviour. Teachers manage lessons well, ensuring they keep up a good pace all the time and by expecting the pupils to carry out a wide range of tasks. Some teachers provide clear whole-class introductions to lessons and check pupils' learning at the end, on occasion with some effective probing questions. Most teachers have good control of the work and of their pupils. However, although the teachers mostly put a lot of effort into planning, they do not yet ensure that the plans start with clear, specific learning objectives. Consequently they are unable to assess the success of each lesson by comparing what the pupils know, understand and are able to do against those objectives. As a result, most pupils' learning in the shorter and longer term is less effective than it might be. Teachers do not have a clear enough picture of how well each pupil is doing, and the pupils, particularly in the lower school, do not have specific targets or sufficient indication of how well they are doing. Design and technology does not contribute as much as in some schools to the pupils' self esteem, values, social development or understanding of their own and other cultures. Despite these drawbacks, the pupils generally work hard, and the generally good teaching leads to good learning in most lessons. However,

the as yet infrequent and weakly focused assessment opportunities mean that, in the longer-term, the pupils' learning is no better than satisfactory.

119. The department is led and managed satisfactorily. The requirements of the National Curriculum are met. The head of design and technology is working with other teachers in the department to establish greater consistency in a number of areas. These include developing a design and technology 'house style', implementing common approaches to planning, through identifying learning objectives more explicitly, to assessment, and to ensuring that all pupils in all contexts continually develop their skills, knowledge and understanding of design and technology within a problem solving approach.

120. As well as improved standards, the provision for design and technology has developed since the last inspection. The quality of the accommodation is much better now, although it is still dispersed. There are no longer concerns with the age of the equipment in textiles and food. The department is extremely well supplied with computers and most of these are efficiently used. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been good.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Teaching standards, including the teaching of literacy and thinking skills.
- Very good fieldwork.
- Effective deployment of very good learning resources.
- The use of ICT in teaching and in department administration.

Areas for improvement

- Undertaking an audit of the department's coverage of cross-curricular themes.
- Implementing measures to ensure that continuity of learning is not adversely affected by staff absence.

121. Teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2001 indicate that pupils' attainment was above the national average for both boys and girls. Girls outperformed boys by a wider margin than the national gender gap. These assessments have shown a steady improvement over the last three years. In 2001, the GCSE examination results were in line with the national average. Boys' results were slightly below and girls' results slightly above their respective national figures. Relative performance indicators show that, on average, pupils performed better in geography than in their other subjects in 2001 and in most of the previous five years. There has been a slight downward trend in results since the last inspection. This is, in part, attributable to an increasing proportion of lower attaining boys choosing the subject in recent years.

122. Inspection evidence shows that by the age of 14 most pupils' attainment is above the national expectation and is in line with the most recent National Curriculum assessments undertaken by teachers. This represents good progress over their first three years at the school. All pupils have good map reading skills. Higher attaining pupils, for example, evaluate their gathered fieldwork evidence critically and present well-argued summaries of their investigations. These qualities were evident during a Year 9 lesson on the microclimate of the school site. Lower attaining pupils plot their findings on a base map, but have more difficulty in evaluating their findings and are taxed by any requirement to write at length. By the age of 16, the attainment of the majority of pupils is in line with the national average. This represents satisfactory progress since they entered Year 10. Their attainment is in line with the latest GCSE examination results. Higher attaining pupils produce good quality course work in which they set up hypotheses and test them by analysing their fieldwork findings, using appropriate statistical methods. They use computers to enhance the presentation of text and graphs. They produce accurate notes, extracting relevant information from a range of sources, including the Internet. Lower attaining pupils present fieldwork findings accurately in graphs, but are less sure in the analysis of results. As with younger pupils, weak literacy skills adversely affect the fluency of their writing. They do, however, cope well with the short answers required for data response questions. Pupils with special educational needs, and those identified as gifted and talented, make similar progress to the remainder in all year

groups. The teachers of pupils with special educational needs know them well and learning support assistants, when available, make a valuable contribution to their learning. There is no obvious gender difference in pupils' attainment and progress.

123. Overall, the teaching is good. It is never less than satisfactory. In four out of five lessons, the teaching is at least good, and in two out of five lessons it is very good and occasionally excellent. This represents an improvement in quality since the last inspection. The best teaching is characterised by brisk pace, challenge, tasks designed to suit all levels of attainment and opportunities for pupils to organise their own learning. These features were seen in a Year 10 lesson on the quality of life in different parts of cities, when pupils were required to work quickly on extracting and presenting information from a variety of source material. All lessons begin with a clear statement of aims, often followed by a review of recent learning, allowing pupils to recall and consolidate what they have learned before. Good discipline is maintained, thereby ensuring calm conditions for learning. Learning is assisted further by the guidance teachers give in the use of very good learning resources. The frequent use of group work assists pupils' independence and develops their social skills. Pupils are frequently called upon to consider ethical issues. Examples include the effects of tourism on the environment, and living conditions in less developed countries. The department's link with a Brazilian school gives pupils insights of another culture. Comparatively less successful lessons are characterised by slower pace, lack of challenge for all and rather laboured explanations. Teaching that is designed to develop pupils' literacy and thinking skills is a particular strength of the department. Pupils are also given frequent opportunities to develop their numeracy skills and to practise and improve their computer skills. Homework is set regularly. It is marked thoroughly, usually with helpful comments, although there is some inconsistency of marking style between staff who share the teaching of some groups. Staff absence in recent months has necessitated a high proportion of shared teaching.

124. A thoughtful and hardworking head of department leads the subject. He ensures that staff keep abreast of current developments in the subject through contact with relevant professional bodies and examination boards. Although ill health has restricted his effectiveness in recent months, good teamwork and delegation have resulted in the department continuing to function well. All statutory requirements are fulfilled, including the development, through geography, of pupils' computer skills. Computers are also used well in departmental administration, both in the analysis of pupils' attainment and progress and through a very effective system that allows pupils and teachers to retrieve information quickly from the very wide range of resources held in the department. The few criticisms of the department raised in the last inspection have been addressed fully. Fieldwork now places more emphasis on physical geography, and pupils' awareness of cultural issues has been raised. The department is not resting on its laurels and knows that it will need to continue to keep documentation up-to-date, including schemes of work and development planning.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to work are very good.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is good.
- Liaison with teaching assistants to ensure support for the lower attaining pupils is very effective.

Areas for improvement

- The quality of teaching, particularly at Key Stage 4.
- The leadership and management of the department.
- The schemes of work in Years 7 to 9 do not comply with National Curriculum requirements.
- Current monitoring and assessment systems do not ensure that all pupils achieve high standards in relation to their earlier attainment.
- Marking does not ensure that pupils are given very clear guidance on what they need to do to improve.
- Internal moderation of Key Stage 3 assessments does not ensure that pupils' attainments are accurately assessed.

125. Standards in history by the end of Key Stage 3 are below expectations. When pupils enter the school, their knowledge and skills in history are broadly in line with the national expectation. They make unsatisfactory progress during the key stage and their achievement in relation to their earlier attainment falls short of expectations. Teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2001 indicated that pupils' attainment was slightly above the national average. Evidence from pupils' current work contradicts this, and shows that their attainment is below average. By the age of 14, most pupils are able to extract data from a variety of sources of evidence and to use information to make decisions. However, much of the work is undemanding, too frequently based on work sheets and the use of a narrow range of learning resources. The higher attaining pupils make unsatisfactory progress as they do not receive work that challenges them sufficiently. Consequently, their achievements fall short of expectations.

126. The GCSE examination results at grades A*-C have fallen over the last three years. The results since the last inspection have seen a downward trend. In 1999, the results were slightly below the national average but in both 2000 and 2001 they fell significantly and are now well below average. This picture is reflected in pupils' current work. Pupils who choose to study history in Key Stage 4 make poor progress as their learning is too directed by the teacher and fails to challenge them sufficiently. Their attainment by the end of Year 11 is well below the expected standards.

127. In lessons, all pupils are very keen to offer responses to questions posed by teachers: orally they are very confident. When given the opportunity, the majority of pupils are skilled at using a wide range of source material and are able to make clear deductions from both written and pictorial pieces of evidence. In one Year 8 class, pupils were using a wide range of historical sources to make judgements about whether Henry VIII should have ordered the dissolution of the monasteries. However, in several lessons in both key stages, pupils' are not given the appropriate range of resources to enable them to complete the tasks set. As a direct result, learning was unsatisfactory.

128. Teaching overall is unsatisfactory, although there is some very good teaching at Key Stage 3. In the most effective teaching, lessons are carefully planned and the interest of the pupils is captured from the moment they enter the room. They are actively encouraged to make a significant oral contribution throughout the lesson. Opportunities are planned for pupils to work independently, in pairs and in small groups. In one Year 9 lesson, pupils worked in small groups to research different aspects of World War 1. They used ICT to produce display work of high quality. They were able to access a wide range of written material both in the lesson and through visiting the library. Where the teaching is poor, learning opportunities for all pupils are limited. At present, the schemes of work written by the department do not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to use ICT regularly in lessons; nor do they support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There are no clear strategies in place to improve either the literacy or numeracy levels of pupils. As a direct result, the lower attaining pupils cannot easily extract information from the textbooks used within lessons. Consequently, pupils make poor progress as they move through each key stage.

129. Leadership and management of the subject are poor. The head of department has been in post since September 2000. All of the major areas for concern identified within the last inspection report remain. In addition to this, some of the positive features such as the attainment of pupils and the GCSE examination results achieved are now a cause for concern. The current Key Stage 3 schemes of work do not cover statutory requirements. The department does not have any centralised system for assessing the standards achieved by pupils as they progress through the course. The end of Key Stage 3 results published in 1999 relating to last year's Year 11 pupils indicate that at the end of Year 9 their attainment was in line with the national average. The 2001 examination results were well below those achieved by pupils nationally and were the worst subject results for the school. Evidence from the work produced by current Year 10, when compared to their individual Key Stage 3 history results show that the system for assessing National Curriculum levels attained by pupils is unreliable. Targets for improvement are not set for pupils within this subject on a regular and systematic basis. Policies and procedures that focus on raising standards are not yet in place. As a direct result of the poor leadership and management, the department is failing to meet the needs of all pupils. As a matter of urgency, the department needs to develop, implement and monitor systems and procedures to address each area for development stated at the start of this report. There is little evidence to indicate that the large number of weaknesses found in the last inspection report have been addressed and as a result progress since the last inspection has been poor.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- The number and current deployment of networked computers.
- The improvement in the provision for ICT for pupils in Years 7 – 9.
- The integration of schemes of work for ICT with those of design and technology in Years 7 - 9.

Areas for improvement

- Ensuring that the requirements of the National Curriculum are met in Years 10 and 11.
- Making greater use of ICT across the whole curriculum and within some subject areas.
- Improving the co-ordination of what is done with computers throughout the school.

130. Pupils' attainment in information and communication technology (ICT) by the end of Year 9 is broadly in line with expectations. The assessments undertaken by teachers at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2001 indicate that pupils' attainment is above average. However, the standards of pupils' current work suggest that these assessments are too generous. The school's assessment systems for ICT are still in the process of being developed and are not yet sufficiently robust. In their fortnightly ICT lessons, pupils in Years 7 to 9 are provided with a range of opportunities to develop their skills, and most develop these appropriately. For instance, almost all Year 9 pupils know their way round the Windows screen. Most are fairly adept users of word processing software, although few pupils use both hands to type and many spend far too long trying to produce fancy titles and inserting vaguely related pictures rather than getting on with the main text. Much the same happens in the case of related skills, such as editing pictures and producing PowerPoint shows, as well as using ICT for research and with other types of software. The teacher in charge of the subject works hard to make the work in the ICT lessons relevant to the pupils' needs by integrating it with what they do in design and technology. Even so, by the end of Year 9, few pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the value and use of ICT.

131. By the end of Key Stage 4, standards in ICT are below the national expectation. In Years 10 and 11, there are no specific ICT lessons and no opportunities for pupils to follow GCSE examination or other certificated courses. In addition, their opportunity to use ICT to support their learning across other subjects is inconsistent. As a result, the progress made by the majority of pupils in developing and applying their skills, knowledge and understanding in ICT is unsatisfactory. However, the skills and knowledge of the minority of pupils who *do* make much use of ICT are above average. The quality of the wide ranging work they produce is sometimes very high, and many are able to explain why and how they do what they do and to state how people use ICT, for instance in shops, libraries, travel agents and banks. Even these pupils, however, do not show a clear understanding of the general value and purpose of ICT applications in the wider world. For instance, few can say why computers may be better than manual methods for a given school-based task or when manual methods are better.

132. Most pupils in Years 7 to 9, boys as well as girls, achieve as expected. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well as they receive good support and most have time with computers additional to that in the ICT lessons. On the other hand, only those pupils of Years 10 and 11 who have frequent access to computers in the school achieve as expected. In all years, there are occasions when those with the best grasp of ICT make particularly slow progress, as for example in a Year 7 lesson when the teacher helped the whole class with a new complex set of steps and did not start the next step until every pupil had completed the previous one.

133. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, although there are examples of good and very good teaching of ICT within some subjects. As a result, pupils learn how and when to use ICT at a satisfactory rate, and sometimes well. A particularly good feature of ICT teaching is the teachers' high expectations so that pupils feel challenged and respond by concentrating well and thinking about what they do. Some lessons proceed at a brisk pace and make use of a variety of tasks and resources, thus keeping the pupils interested. Mainly because of the shortage of time for ICT in the school, work in the subject does not help the pupils' personal development as much as can be the case.

134. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection in the school's provision for ICT. There are now more computers than in most secondary schools of this size and they are well spread around the site. The effectiveness of work in Years 7 to 9 is considerably better, so that the school now meets National Curriculum requirements fully at this key stage. Even in these years, however, there is insufficient use of computers outside the discrete ICT lessons, either to support pupils' learning in other subject areas or outside lesson time. These weaknesses apply to pupils in Years 10 and 11, who do not use ICT in their studies often enough. Although the use of ICT by different subjects has improved, especially in the run-up to the GCSE examinations, and there is particularly good practice now in design and technology, geography, mathematics and religious education, as well as in music, the provision is inconsistent. Some subjects do not fulfil the National Curriculum requirements in relation to the use of ICT to support learning.

135. The provision for ICT in the school offers some important strengths, but there are significant areas that are unsatisfactory and require further attention. The management and co-ordination of ICT are unsatisfactory, as are the monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment of ICT throughout the school. The assessment of pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding is underdeveloped.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Teachers' excellent subject knowledge.
- Teaching is very good in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11.
- The consistent emphasis on listening activities is developing good aural skills.
- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 have a clear idea of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve further.

Areas for improvement

- Providing more challenging work for the higher attaining pupils.
- The quality and effectiveness of marking in Years 10 and 11 in setting targets for improvement.

136. In 2001, teachers' assessments of pupils' performance in modern foreign languages at the end of Year 9 were well above average. Although girls outperformed boys, the difference was not significant. The results at grades A*-C in the GCSE examination in French in 2001 were above the national average, although a lower proportion than average attained the highest grades. The performance of the girls was slightly better than that of the boys. In relation to other subjects in the school, performance in the GCSE examinations in French is improving.

137. Pupils achieve well in French and by the end of Year 9, their attainment is above the expected standard. Pupils in a Year 7 lesson were able to identify, at speed, places in a town and to give and follow directions using cardinal numbers. They speak with confidence and most with excellent pronunciation. In a Year 8 lesson, most pupils were able to arrange a time and place to meet, and note details from a recording of native speakers. In a Year 9 lesson, pupils performed role-plays on booking a hotel room, some without a written script. Lower attaining pupils are given differentiated tasks when appropriate and are achieving well. Whilst higher attaining pupils are making good progress, they are insufficiently challenged to do so further. Pupils' attainment in French by the end of Year 11 is above average and they achieve well. Pupils in Year 10 respond to challenging texts, using complete written sentences in French. Some produce computer-generated reports about work experience, using a range of tenses and feminine and plural agreements. In Year 11 lessons, pupils work independently to reinforce vocabulary and most are able to listen to a recorded passage and note the main points accurately. Pupils with special educational needs as well as those who are identified as gifted and talented achieve well.

138. In 2001, the results at grades A*-C in the GCSE examination in German was above the national average and better than the results in French. Girls outperformed boys but at a lower level than that found nationally. As in French, a lower proportion of pupils attained the highest grades of A*, A and B

than found nationally. Performance in the GCSE examinations in German is improving in relation to other subjects in the school.

139. Pupils are achieving well in German and, by the end of Year 9 their attainment is above average. Pupils in a Year 7 lesson were able to look up genders of nouns in a dictionary and use them correctly in sentences. Year 8 pupils are able to give directions, substituting new words for places in the town to create new sentences. In a Year 9 lesson, pupils used a variety of strategies to sequence extracts in a range of tenses from a curriculum vitae. The excellent support provided for lower attaining pupils enables them to make very good progress. The higher attaining pupils are achieving well. Pupils' attainment in German by the end of Year 11 is above average and their achievement is good. Pupils in a Year 10 lesson were able to give details from a verbal report in the perfect tense about holidays, although higher attaining pupils were not challenged to progress further by producing full sentences. Year 11 pupils sustained their concentration during a listening comprehension examination paper and responded appropriately to humorous elements.

140. In both languages, the quality of teaching and learning is very good in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. It is never less than satisfactory and much of it is very good and often excellent. Teachers are confident in their knowledge of French and German, and they provide excellent role models. As a result, most pupils speak with confidence and accuracy. A good start to the lesson, with objectives shared with pupils and a link made to previous learning, enables pupils to reinforce their understanding. A Year 9 French lesson began by pupils brainstorming about what they look for in a holiday. They recapped on previous work and gathered new phrases to feed back to the class. In the most effective lessons, key vocabulary is carefully prepared, often using very good quality homemade visual aids. In a Year 8 French lesson, visual aids were colour-coded to facilitate pupils' learning of gender. Teachers and pupils work at a good pace and the learning time available is exploited to the maximum. Homework reinforces class work and, particularly in Key Stage 3, marking is of high quality and gives pupils a clear idea of their National Curriculum levels. Relatively less effective teaching and learning is characterised by lack of challenge for higher attaining pupils and pupils not being given targets for improvement when their work is marked. This limits opportunities for pupils to learn from their mistakes. Pupils' social and cultural development is well fostered through the subject.

141. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection. The department is well resourced and the provision of new materials is allowing greater opportunity for extended reading and reading for pleasure. Liaison with the school's literacy co-ordinator has resulted in the development of reading record cards for pupils. Pupils have more opportunities for extended writing and some are producing work of good quality using ICT. This requires more development and focus in Years 7 to 9, with particular reference to challenging the higher attaining pupils further. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 have a clear idea of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve further, but this is not as well established in Year 10 and 11 as the marking is less effective in setting targets for improvement. The involvement of pupils in assessing their own learning is underdeveloped. Increasing pupils' use of French and German to each other in class has not been successfully tackled.

142. Management of the department is good. Monitoring and evaluation procedures are in place, and the use of assessment data to inform planning is now an area for development. Strategic management of resources is very good and the provision of in-house training opportunities is having a positive impact on teaching. The provision for modern foreign languages meets statutory requirements. Members of the department are committed to raising standards, and welcome the stability and sure sense of direction offered by the team leader.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- The above average standards achieved by pupils in Years 9 and 11.
- The consistent standard of high quality teaching for all pupils.
- The team work and support of all staff, which promote high musical standards.
- The quality and range of extra-curricular activities.

- The excellent range of accommodation for music making.

Areas for improvement

- Developing a long-term plan and vision for the department.
- Increasing the number of pupils achieving A* and A grades.
- Increasing the number of chromatic percussion instruments and variety of computer programs available for pupils.

143. Over the last three years, the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 9, according to the formal assessments undertaken by teachers, have been well above the national expectation. There has been a steady improvement in standards since the last inspection. According to these assessments, the girls' attainment has been consistently higher than that of the boys. In work seen during the inspection, pupils by the end of Year 9 are attaining standards that are above the national expectation, with some of the higher attaining pupils well exceeding the expected standard. These pupils are familiar with chord formations including seventh chords, use musical language correctly and have good keyboard and ensemble skills. For all other pupils, including those with special educational needs, standards are above expectations. A strong application to the tasks set and a determination to achieve and perform correctly are evident in pupils' response. Pupils in Year 7 are confident instrumental users, know the names of instruments and consider carefully the balance and blend of instruments in ensemble work. Pupils make good progress during Years 7 to 9 and achieve well, with some of the higher attaining pupils making very good progress.

144. The GCSE examination results at grades A*-C in 2001 were significantly above the national average. Despite a slight dip in the GCSE examination results in 2000, there has been an improvement in standards since the last inspection. The proportion of pupils gaining the highest grades of A*/A in 2001 was better than the national figures, showing a considerable improvement over the figures for previous years. Increasing this figure and ensuring greater consistency from year to year in the proportion of pupils attaining the highest grades remains a priority for the department. From the work seen during the inspection, pupils' attainment by the end of Year 11 is above the standard expected nationally. Pupils' strengths are in composition and analysis of their work using musical language. Pupils study a variety of musical styles and use these influences in their work. Their compositions demonstrate a good understanding of these styles. For example, pieces contain influences and techniques used by minimalist composers. These influences are clearly described by pupils in their analysis of their work. Pupils are competent users of ICT and they make good progress during Years 10 and 11.

145. Teaching is a major strength and is never less than very good, with occasional examples of excellent teaching. The teaching is characterised by detailed and thoughtful planning, pace, challenge and high musical expectations. There is a consistency of approach between staff, for example, always emphasising correct finger technique when using the keyboards. Marking is detailed and thorough and is linked to regular assessment both by pupils and staff. Pupils are clear how well they are doing and how they can improve their work. Targets are set regularly. Pupils have very good attitudes to learning and persevere in order to improve their work. These positive attitudes and very good relationships in class were evident in a Year 9 lesson. After a short time to practise a blues chord sequence and an improvisation, two pupils performed their work. The rest of the class listened attentively and rewarded their efforts with spontaneous applause. Literacy development is well supported with displays in classrooms of key words associated with different units of work. Insufficient attention, however, is paid to the development of their numeracy skills. Pupils make good use of ICT for their examination coursework, but there is a lack of a variety of computer programs for use in Years 7 to 9. There is also insufficient computer and chromatic percussion equipment when parallel classes are timetabled together.

146. Pupils' positive attitudes are also found in extra-curricular events where concerts and rehearsals are conducted professionally with good response from all. Such activities contribute to pupils' social and moral development, with overseas and local visits promoting their cultural awareness. Instrumental teachers feel part of the department and contribute to promoting high musical standards, both for individual pupils and with ensembles. Approximately 25 per cent of pupils have instrumental lessons. Good progress has been made since the last inspection, with improvements in standards attained by Year 11 pupils, the quality of teaching and the state of the accommodation.

147. Overall management and leadership of the department are good, ensuring very good assessment procedures, strong teamwork and a determination to succeed. However, there is no long-term strategy to ensure that the department continues to build upon and develop the very good foundation already established.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Pupils achieve above average standards in GCSE examinations.
- Good leadership and management of a developing department.
- Teaching and learning are good: teachers are knowledgeable specialists, have high expectations and manage and organise pupils well.
- Pupils have very good attitudes to learning and very good relationships have been established between pupils and teachers and pupils.
- Good provision of extra-curricular activities.

Areas for improvement

- Improving the balance of activities at Key Stage 3 and introducing vocational qualifications at Key Stage 4.
- Further developing baseline assessment in Year 7 and improving the consistency of moderating teachers' assessments.
- Updating schemes of work and documentation and increasing the use of ICT to support teaching and learning.

148. Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 9 is in line with the standard expected nationally with a number of pupils attaining above average standards. However, these do not match the assessments undertaken by teachers at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2001, which indicate that pupils' attainment was above average, with a high proportion of boys attaining standards that were well above average. This variation is due to a new system that has been implemented in the department and a lack of consistency in moderating the new assessment requirements. By the end of Year 11, pupils' attainment in the core programme in physical education is also average, with a minority of pupils attaining a higher standard than this. The GCSE examination results in 2001 were above the national average at grades A*-C and this standard is reflected in pupils' current work. The girls who formed a smaller proportion of entry in 2001 did not achieve as well as the boys.

149. Pupils achieve well in relation to their attainment on entry and make good progress as they move through the school. Pupils with special educational needs are fully included in the physical education programme and make good progress. By the end of Year 9, pupils have a sound knowledge and understanding of skills and techniques in track and field events in athletics. In the triple jump, pupils perform with increasing confidence and control. In a Year 9 lesson, the higher attaining boys were beginning to plan their approach and use power and speed to increase their performance. By the end of Year 11, pupils increase their knowledge, skills and understanding in a range of activities. All pupils in Year 10 follow a GCSE short course in the physical education core programme. The standard of performance and theoretical understanding of pupils studying the GCSE full course is above the national expectation and represents good achievement for all pupils. However, the organisation and presentation of their written work are variable. Pupils demonstrate good levels of physical fitness and know how preparation, training and fitness relate to and affect performance.

150. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers are experienced, knowledgeable specialists and pupils respond well to the high expectations demanded of them. Pupils are well managed and organised, and their behaviour, attitudes to learning and participation are very good. Lesson planning is good and teachers are consistent in ensuring that health-related exercise is an integral part of the lesson. Assessment procedures are developing but do not pay sufficient attention to establishing a baseline assessment in line with National Curriculum levels or involve pupils in assessing their own final performance and setting targets in Years 7 to 9. Very good relationships are fostered between pupils and teachers, which develops confidence, trust and respect. Pupils demonstrate very good social and co-operative skills in group work and competitive team play.

151. Leadership and management in physical education are good overall. The department works well together as a team. Staff are committed, give generously of their time and make a good contribution in promoting positive attitudes to being physically active. Documentation and schemes of work have not

been updated to take account of the National Curriculum 2000. These need developing along with extending the use of ICT to support teaching and learning. The department currently has no gymnasium, nor a designated classroom for the teaching of the GCSE course. The condition of the outdoor hard play area is poor and two courts are in a dangerous condition.

152. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and pupils benefit from a wide range of activities. However, a significant amount of time is allocated to games in Years 7 to 9. In Key Stage 4, there are no opportunities to study vocational qualifications. The provision for extra-curricular recreational and sporting activities is good, with a number of gifted and talented pupils selected to play regionally and nationally. Good progress has been made since the last inspection in improving the quality of teaching and learning, including increased opportunities to assess and evaluate performance. Health-related exercise is now an integral part of every lesson. Dance has been established in Key Stage 3 and assessment procedures have been reviewed.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- The teaching is good and occasionally very good, and teachers manage their pupils very well.
- The curriculum at both key stages is good.
- The subject's contribution towards the spiritual development of pupils is excellent and is very good towards their moral, social and cultural development.

Areas for improvement

- Monitoring pupils' work more systematically in order to raise standards even further.
- Setting detailed targets, which are shared with pupils, against which their progress can be measured.

153. By the age of 14, pupils' attainment is in line with the expectations of the Agreed Syllabus. In the GCSE short course in Years 10 and 11, their attainment by the age of 16 is also in line with expectations. In Years 7 to 9, there are some good examples of pupils developing their knowledge and understanding of religious language, principles and concepts such as prayer, rights of passage, sacraments and moral issues. Pupils generally make sense of what they study and are able to relate it to their experiences of life. In Year 7, through a well-directed feedback session by the teacher, pupils demonstrated their knowledge and understanding of the importance of prayer for Muslims in their study of the key features of the Mosque. In Year 8, pupils develop a good understanding of the rituals and practices of Christian funerals. Through the use of a wide range of stimulating approaches by the teacher, pupils were able to express their views about life after death with confidence and clarity. In a Year 9 lesson, pupils explored the range and variety of Christian denominations. As a result of the teacher using a variety of approaches, pupils took command of their own research and developed a good understanding of the development of different Christian viewpoints. Pupils are able to form their own views, whilst respecting the different attitudes expressed in several Christian denominations. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. The use of key words, technical language and good discussion work are useful aids to improving their speaking and listening skills.

154. By the end of Year 11, pupils' attainment is in line with the expectations of the Agreed Syllabus. Pupils are able to express their views and feelings, for example about life and death. Questions about the morality of allowing doctors to deny life support show pupils' ability to produce balanced arguments and form important judgements. In Year 10, pupils are achieving well. They show a good understanding of issues such as the Christian attitude towards marriage and divorce. Through a good research task using the Internet, pupils demonstrated a good understanding of the differing Christian views on marriage, promiscuity and cohabitation. As a result of a good question and answer session by the teacher, pupils were able to explore their feelings about relationships. They are good at linking Christian principles with life experiences, and can make judgement and develop attitudes.

155. There are no significant differences in the standards achieved by pupils of different gender or ethnic background. Pupils with special educational needs and those who are gifted or talented make good progress. Overall, learning is good and pupils are achieving well.

156. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. They behave very well, are generally well motivated and apply themselves to the work. They collaborate well with one another and work at a productive pace. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good, and teachers support individuals both academically and personally. The pupils' behaviour makes a very good contribution to their progress and achievement.

157. Teaching is of good quality and has some very good features, making a significant impact on pupils' achievement. Planning is good, and this assists pupils to focus on information learnt in previous lessons. Lesson aims are shared with pupils in most cases. Teachers make good use of questioning to consolidate current learning and to review previous work. They use a suitable range of styles such as discussion, use of video and audio material and worksheets that match the needs of individual pupils. This enables pupils to *learn from* as well as *learn about* religion, and helps them to maintain their interest and develop an understanding of religious principles and concepts. Resources are well used, especially worksheets, and enable pupils with different needs to learn well. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour very well, contributing to a good climate for learning. Extension work and homework are used to good effect in allowing pupils to reflect on the information they have gained in class. Teachers have clear expectations of pupils and challenge them to succeed, and these are effective in contributing to their achievements.

158. The assessment of pupils' work is generally unsatisfactory although some helpful comments are made in exercise books. The current procedures do not provide a sound basis for assessing what pupils know and understand. The marking of pupils' work is inconsistent and the grading system requires further development. Assessment does not fully inform the teaching and learning cycle or the planning of new work. Consequently, pupils are unclear about the standards they are reaching and what they need to do to improve. This is recognised as an area for development.

159. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is broad, balanced and meets the needs of the pupils and the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus. Religious education also makes a valuable contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils, so providing opportunities for them to explore world issues of justice, relationships and personal beliefs. Spiritual development is particularly strong.

160. The department is managed in an appropriate way with a clear sense of purpose and direction. The head of the department approaches the task with enthusiasm, vigour and commitment. There is excellent support from other departmental staff. The departmental development plan does not focus sufficiently on areas that will have an impact on pupils' attainment. The systematic monitoring of pupils' work is also an area for development. Accommodation is good, and has the advantage of a network of 14 computers that are used on a regular basis to enhance pupils' learning. The quality of display that celebrates pupils' achievements is very high.

161. Since the last inspection, standards in all years have improved significantly, due largely to improvements in the quality of teaching and the very good management of pupils. There has been a significant improvement in the contribution religious education now makes to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. Overall, the improvements since the last inspection have had a positive impact on standards, pupils' achievement and progress. Progress since the last inspection has been good.