

INSPECTION REPORT

CHALLNEY HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

Luton, Bedfordshire

LEA area: Luton

Unique reference number: 109682

Headteacher: Ms A Batten

Reporting inspector: Roderick Passant
2728

Dates of inspection: 4 – 8 February 2002

Inspection number: 192875

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Secondary school

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 to 16 years

Gender of pupils: Girls

School address: Stoneygate Road
Luton
Bedfordshire

Postcode: LU4 9TJ

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Cllr M Akhtar

Date of previous inspection: 3 November 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2728	Roderick Passant	Registered inspector	Special educational needs	<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>How high are standards?</p> <p>a) The school's results and achievements</p> <p>How well are pupils taught?</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
11104	Michael Fleming	Lay inspector		<p>How high are standards?</p> <p>b) Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well does the school are for its students?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>
31983	Kay Lord	Team inspector	Physical education	
30281	Dorcas O'Dell	Team inspector	Art	
30545	David Castell	Team inspector	Geography	
4891	John Bryden Keenan	Team inspector	Urdu	
8361	Malcolm Burley	Team inspector	Science	
12630	David Naylor	Team inspector	Mathematics	
12121	Jack Mallinson	Team inspector	English	
8104	Joan Child	Team inspector	Music	
1990	Graham Preston	Team inspector	Design and technology	
20877	David Pink	Team inspector	Equal opportunities History	
12179	Laurence Moscrop	Team inspector	English as an additional language Religious education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students
10449	Rowland Hull	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	

11751	David Sutcliffe	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Challney High School for girls is a comprehensive school for girls aged 11 to 16. The majority of the girls travel to the school and do not live in the immediate neighbourhood. The school is average in size with 893 girls on roll. It is a cosmopolitan community with pupils from a range of ethnic backgrounds. The largest groups of pupils are: Pakistani (67 per cent), Bangladeshi (12 per cent), Black Caribbean or African heritage (6 per cent) and UK heritage pupils (5 per cent) but there are also pupils from a range of other ethnic backgrounds; 80 per cent of the school are members of the Moslem faith. Over 85 per cent of pupils speak English as an additional language, the main home languages being Urdu, Pahari, Punjabi, English and Bengali. Approximately 125 pupils are at an early stage of acquiring English.

The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals (54.3 per cent) is very high. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs including statements (39.1 per cent) is well above the national average. The percentage of pupils with statements of special educational needs is below the national average.

Attainment on entry to the school is very low in mathematics and science as measured by National Curriculum tests. Attainment of pupils joining the school in Year 7 in English, although low has shown recent improvements. The number of pupils who join the school throughout the school year, often joining older classes has shown recent increases. Often these pupils have little English or formal education.

The school is a Beacon School, which means that it has had to reach certain standards and provide support and initiate activities designed to raise attainment with other participating schools. The school is part of the Excellence in Luton initiative. The area where the majority of pupils live is part of a regeneration zone but the school is not situated within that area.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Challney High School for Girls is a good school and pupils make good progress and achieve well as a result.

Most pupils start school with very low levels of attainment. Attainment by Year 9 is average in English but well below in mathematics and science. However, when their performance is compared to similar schools, the girls perform well.

Pupils make good progress in Years 10 and 11 and although standards are below average in the percentage gaining A* to C when compared to schools nationally, the percentage of pupils gaining 5 A* to G is average. Overall levels of attainment are well above average when compared to schools with similar free school meals and those achieving similar attainment in Year 9.

Pupils behave well and have very good attitudes to learning. The school is racially very diverse but it is a very cohesive community in which the provision for pupils' social development is excellent. It is a very inclusive school and it works very hard to meet the additional needs of pupils so that, for example, pupils with English as an additional language and special educational needs make good progress. The care and concern for individual pupils are very good. The quality of teaching is good.

The headteacher provides very good leadership and there is an effective partnership with the governing body. They fulfil their statutory duties very well although there is insufficient time for religious education in Years 7,8 and 9. Overall across the school leadership and management are very good. The school provides good value for money

What the school does well

- Staff are very committed to the girls and there is a very high level of care.
- The school's excellent social provision develops very positive attitudes to learning and very good relationships.
- Pupils make good progress and achieve well.
- Good quality teaching.
- High quality of leadership ensures that there is a sustained focus on raising attainment.
- The organisation and skills used to foster and encourage reading- particularly the paired reading programme.

What could be improved

- Partnership with parents so that all parents support the aims, values, school activities and pupils' learning.
- Review the way the curriculum is organised to ensure that subjects have sufficient time and to ensure that statutory requirements in religious education are met.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Overall there has been very good improvement since the last inspection. Standards have risen in Year 9 National Curriculum tests. Pupils attain above average GCSE results compared to similar schools and the pass rate at GCSE at A* to G matches national averages. The school has introduced specific strategies to raise standards in literacy and numeracy and help pupils catch up. There have been improvements to the provision for ICT and it is now adopting a more flexible approach within the curriculum to meet the needs of pupils. The quality of teaching has made significant improvement and is now good. The key issues identified in the last report have been addressed well.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools ¹	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
GCSE examinations	D	C	D	B	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E

Standards in the National Curriculum tests in Year 9 are improving at a rate that is above the rate nationally. Standards in English match the national average and pupils make very good progress. Standards are well below the national average in mathematics and science. However, when compared to similar schools they are well above average in all three subjects. Pupils make good progress in mathematics and science because they are starting from a low level as measured by the National Curriculum tests taken in primary school.

The school has effectively developed strategies to improve pupils' literacy skills. Reading ages of the lower attaining pupils show very good progress. Strategies to improve mathematical skills are currently being developed. Skills in information and communication technology (ICT²) are developing well but are

¹ Similar schools are defined by schools which are in the same free school meals band and not by any other defining feature such as size or nature of the school population.

² Throughout the report the abbreviation ICT is used to describe the use of information and communication technology within subjects. The abbreviation IT (information technology) is used to describe the subject

hampered by the quality and quantity of the computers. There has been significant improvement in this aspect since the last inspection.

Standards by Year 9 are below national expectations in most subjects but because pupils start with very low levels of skills or understanding they have made good progress. This overall good progress continues throughout Years 10 and 11. The work of the current Year 11, in lessons and in books is nearing national average standards in most subjects. The provision (the way subject staff ensure that pupils make good progress, for example through good teaching and a well organised curriculum) is good in almost all subjects. In English it is very good and in science and mathematics it is good. There are weaknesses in an aspect of design and technology relating to resistant materials. In physical education, pupils start from a very low base line of skills and overall the provision is satisfactory.

Erratic attendance, and sometimes lengthy absences make it difficult for some pupils to make consistent progress over time and particularly when the examination syllabus requires the completion of coursework.

The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and pupils make good progress, as do those pupils for whom English is an additional language. The school monitors examination results carefully by ethnic group but sometimes the numbers are small and there is no clear pattern. Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils perform close to the school average. As part of its policy of meeting pupils' additional needs the school is developing strategies to ensure that higher attaining pupils³ are appropriately challenged. The strategy has only been recently introduced.

The school sets itself targets for its examination performance that are carefully constructed from assessment data. It failed to meet its targets in 2001 after a particularly good year in 2000. The school is more confident about future performance. Raising attainment in GCSE examinations is the sustained focus of the school's development plan.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have very good attitudes to school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is good. Behaviour in lessons is often very good. In a small minority of lessons, some pupils misbehaved. There were relatively large numbers of fixed-period exclusions last year because of a school policy. No pupils have been excluded permanently in recent years.
Personal development and relationships	This aspect is very good particularly in pupils' relationships with one another.
Attendance	Attendance last year was below the national average. The school has very good procedures in place to improve attendance. Long trips to homelands, perceived domestic responsibilities and extended observance of religious festivals cause erratic attendance for some pupils which makes learning more difficult

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11
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³ There is a government initiative aimed at raising the aspirations of pupils who are capable of attaining high standards. Participating school identify those pupils who are 'gifted', -pupils capable of attaining high standards across a range of subjects and those pupils who have a particular 'talent', for example in sport or music. Within the report the term higher attaining pupils is used to describe these and other pupils capable of attaining higher grades GCSE.

Quality of teaching	Good	good
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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 across the school and good teaching was seen in all subjects. Lessons are planned and prepared well and teachers are careful to explain the purpose of the lesson. Most lessons proceed at a good pace and the work is carefully matched to the needs of the pupils within the group so that pupils with additional needs make good progress towards their targets. There is good teamwork between teachers and learning support assistants. Teachers question well and questions are used effectively to make pupils think and to check what has been learnt. Members of staff have good classroom management techniques and are enthusiastic about their subject. This helps to ensure that pupils maintain their interest.

A very small number of lessons seen was unsatisfactory because some of these positive aspects were missing.

Literacy skills are taught well across the school. There is a numeracy policy but it has yet to be implemented fully. Teaching in English and science is good and in mathematics it is competent with some good teaching

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provision covers the National Curriculum although there are some aspects of geography and design and technology, which do not fully meet the requirements. The time allocation to these and other subjects requires review, as do the arrangements for the introduction of the second modern foreign language. The curriculum provides an appropriate mix of experiences that meet the needs of its pupils.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	There is good provision overall.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The provision is well organised. The quality of the teaching is good. The department operates a flexible support system to help pupils.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Overall the provision is good. The social provision is excellent, opportunities for pupils to work, play and create together are particularly important for some girls. There is a strong sense of community and the social provision is important in fostering achievement.
How well the school cares for its pupils	This is a strength of the school. The school is a safe and secure place.

There is insufficient time for religious education in the lower school, that is Years 7,8 and 9, to allow full coverage of the Agreed Syllabus.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher	The leadership of the school is very good which means that there is a

and other key staff	shared commitment to raising standards and a clear sense of direction.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is very effective. It is supportive but it also holds the school to account well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school makes very good use of data to compare and set targets.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are used well.

Learning resources are satisfactory overall. ICT requires additional investment within departments. The acoustics in modern foreign languages accommodation are poor. There is a good match of the staff to the curriculum.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are very confident that the school expects their daughters to work hard and that this results in good progress. • Most parents are happy with the teaching and management at the school. • The school is approachable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A significant minority do not feel that the school works closely with parents. • Some parents would like more information about their children's progress.

The inspection team found that the information provided by the school for the parents is of good quality. Reports on pupils' progress are detailed and include targets to help pupils focus their efforts. Many pupils' families recognise the value of education but not all are yet convinced of the benefits that pupils receive from full participation in all the teaching and extra-curricular activities the school offers. The school is very sensitive to parents' feelings in all these matters, and is well positioned to achieve greater participation through its continuing efforts.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. In science and mathematics many pupils have low levels of attainment when they join Challney High School for Girls, as measured by National Curriculum tests taken in their last year in primary school. They make good progress and achieve well, although, by the end of Year 9 the National Curriculum tests scores are below the national average. However, when their results are compared to similar schools⁴, school in the same free school meals band, the results are well above average.
2. Pupils' attainment on entry in English has improved recently from well below to below average. Pupils achieve very well and attain results, which match the national average. As with mathematics and science, the results in English are well above average compared to similar schools.
3. By the end of Year 9 standards in art, geography, ICT and music match national expectations. They are below expectations in design and technology, history, physical education and religious education. Pupils make good or at least satisfactory progress in all subjects and the reason why some subjects do not reach national expectations by Year 9 is that the pupils start from a very low base-line of skills or knowledge when they enter the school.
4. In modern foreign languages, pupils achieve well, and attain standards that are above national expectations. Languages are valued in the school and many pupils are bi-lingual and clearly have developed a facility with language. This interest and motivation to learn overcomes some difficulties in the way the introduction of two languages is organised. However, the current curriculum arrangements do not facilitate learning particularly for those who do not speak other languages. The school has significant success in teaching Urdu and pupils make good progress. It would be easy to assume that this is an easy option because it is the community language. In fact this is not the case in that many pupils speak a dialect, which is not a written language. The girls' good progress in learning to read and write Urdu should not be underestimated.
5. Good achievement is seen in design and technology, ICT, geography, history, and overall in modern foreign languages. Satisfactory achievement is seen in art, music, physical education and religious education. In the case of physical education, standards are poor when pupils enter the school and this presents the department with a particular problem of teaching very basic skills before they can build on them. In art and music, standards are not as depressed on entry to the school and the satisfactory progress pupils make means that they can achieve national expectations in the subject by the end of Year 9.
6. The overall good achievement that pupils make continues in Years 10 and 11. Whilst the overall pass rate in GCSE in the A* to C grades in 2001 was below the national average, the percentage of pupils gaining A* to G grades was average. The average point score⁵ is below average because the school is not yet achieving the same proportion of higher grades as nationally. Almost all pupils left the school with at least one qualification in GCSE, which is above the national average. A feature of the school is that a very high proportion of pupils sit examinations in English Language and mathematics.

⁴ Similar schools are defined by schools which are in the same free school meals band and not by any other defining feature such as size or nature of the school population.

⁵ The average point score is determined by giving each grade at GCSE a numerical value. The higher grades carry a higher numerical value. The number of passes are then totalled and then divided by the number in the cohort. It provides a method which gives due value to all pupils attainment and a point of comparison rather than simply the percentage of pupils gaining a particular threshold.

7. When the results are compared to similar schools, they are above average. When the results are compared to schools which had similar attainment in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9, the results are well above average indicating that the pupils achieve well.
8. The overall percentage of pupils gaining an A* to C grade remains a stubborn statistic which the school is finding difficult to change.
9. The pupils in 2001 did not do as well in their GCSE examinations as the school expected or as careful analysis indicated. However, in real terms the under-performance of eight pupils made a difference of five percent in the overall percentage performance. In English, mathematics and science, attainment was below average in 2001. Evidence of the current Year 11 work seen in classrooms and in books indicates overall standards that are closer to the national average, particularly in these three subjects.
10. The school is very inclusive and works hard to meet the additional needs of all pupils. There is very effective strategic management of the school's additional needs provision and very good communication between those members of staff involved. The school makes time to focus on the needs of individual pupils and seek ways to provide effective support, liaising closely with Social Services and other agencies.
11. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. Teachers are aware of who the pupils are and in the main match carefully the work to the pupils. Whilst some aspects of individual education plans could be developed and refined, nevertheless, the strong teamwork and support by the learning support assistants and the fact that the special educational needs co-ordinator tracks pupils carefully ensures that, overall, pupils make good progress against their targets.
12. There are a few pupils in the school who present difficult behaviour and cause problems within classes. The school has recently developed a resource base where these pupils' learning continues very effectively within a specialist facility. The school has developed a flexible approach to providing alternative curriculum provision in the lower school⁶ and in Years 10 and 11, seeking ways to keep the pupils 'on side' and within full time education. There are alternative accredited courses for pupils who are finding GCSE too difficult for one reason or another. Pupils respond well to the skilled teaching and the individual attention that they receive.
13. The inspection had to report, as an additional focus, on the attainment and progress of pupils with English as an additional language. This is reported in full in section nine of the report. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress.
14. Higher attaining pupils make satisfactory progress although there are subjects such as English and religious education where the work challenges and extends their skills very successfully.
15. The school carefully monitors attainment in National Curriculum tests and GCSE examinations by different groups of ethnic heritage pupils. The most statistically viable group in the school are Pakistani pupils who make up two thirds of the school population. Unsurprisingly, given this group's size, they perform at around the school average. Bangladeshi pupils in 2000 scored slightly higher in their average point score but achieved overall on average a D grade, as did Black African and Caribbean heritage pupils. However, this pattern changes year on year, for example in 2001, white UK heritage pupils did significantly better. This changing pattern is because the actual numbers of pupils from ethnic groups other than Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils are often very small and the performance of individual pupils can make a significant swing in the percentages. However, what is important is that the school is aware of the fact that there is always the possibility of potential underachievement and monitors results carefully to ensure that this is not the case - comparing the school's results to the performance of ethnic heritage groups across the borough.

⁶ Throughout the report the term lower school is used to describe Years 7,8 and 9.

16. Discounting for the moment the impact of teaching on the progress of pupils, there are a number of factors that make the pupils achieve well in the school.

- The commitment to equal opportunities within the school means that the school is inclusive and it tries to meet the needs of individual pupils.
- The school has instigated good systems of tracking pupil progress and makes particularly effective use of assessment data and sophisticated analysis of data to predict likely grades and set targets.
- There are departments within the school who use assessment particularly well, for example geography, ICT, design and technology and others where the pupils are explicitly made aware of what they have to do to move to the next level.
- The work the school has done on developing literacy in all subjects. The time given to reading in tutor time and the very well organised system of paired reading, where pupils have an older, trained reading partner, which along with displays of key vocabulary and use of techniques such as writing frames⁷ and the 'catch up' opportunities help all pupils, but particularly those who are in the early stages of English language acquisition, to develop their language skills.
- The open access to ICT, albeit with some limitations in the quantity and quality of equipment, does have a motivational element and aid pupils learning.
- The excellent social provision that means that pupils develop very positive attitudes to their work and behaviour but also develops their self-confidence and aspirations. A further by-product of the social provision is the very good relationships that exist between staff and pupils, which in turn leads to staff giving up much additional time and effort outside school hours to supporting the girls in, for example, their course work.
- The use of the school diary/notebook, which allows tutors to monitor pupils' homework.
- The fact that the school is a calm community. Day-to-day routines, even the computerised registration system help to signal to the pupils that the school is a safe and secure place and that staff are caring and looking after the girls.

Finally

- Many of the girls have a respect for the school and what it is doing. Informal discussions with randomly selected pupils about the school mostly elicited the same kind of articulate positive responses about the school and what it was doing and what they enjoyed about it. The girls were very supportive ambassadors of the work of the school.

17. However, there are factors that play a part in limiting standards. A number of them are factors that interrupt the pupils' learning.

- There are a growing number of pupils who arrive at the school at various points in the school year, some of whom have had little formal education and are at an early stage of language acquisition.
- The poor attendance of some pupils and often lengthy absence caused by extensive visits to the country of parents' origin. The fact that some girls are taking on family responsibilities or taking more than the locally agreed time off for religious festivals adds to the discontinuity in learning.
- Aspects of curriculum organisation, which lead to discontinuity. Overall, girls make good progress in modern foreign languages but for some the way the two languages are introduced makes progress more difficult.

18. There are also factors, which are sensitive and are particularly difficult for the school to manage.

- For some parents, the school's role in enabling pupils to become independent and self-determining challenges deeply held views and convictions or cultural conventions.

⁷ A writing frame is a method of helping pupils organise their thoughts for writing. It often consists of a series of prompts which might help the pupil to structure their work into a sequence of paragraphs

For example,

- The counsellor's caseload is largely composed of girls trying to come to terms with conflicting demands of their role within the home and community and the expectations at school.
- Some parents restrict girls' participation in some aspects of school life, which narrows the range of opportunities and denies them potential areas of success.

For example

- Not allowing residential experiences limits the opportunities for geography field work.
- Not encouraging reading at home because of other responsibilities.
- Not allowing girls to participate in extra curricular activities.
- Whilst it is easy to exaggerate the fact that some older girls 'switch off' when they realise that their lives are being planned for them, nevertheless for a few girls it remains true and it causes them particular tensions that are more difficult to resolve
- Possibly even more difficult for the school is to resolve is the overlap that exists between deeply felt spiritual beliefs and equally deeply felt cultural conventions. This can occur in the school when, for example, a girl is accused of not being a good Moslem by other Moslems because differences in their cultural inheritance shape their equally devout views of what a good Moslem is. In practical terms, in school, it may manifest itself in whether a pupil participates in swimming or not.

19. The school is sensitive to such issues and resolution of such issues can only be achieved by developing the close partnership with parents. Against this backdrop it is a very significant achievement by the school, and a major strength, to encourage the very high percentage of the girls (well over 90 per cent) to go onto some form of further education.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

20. Pupils enjoy their lessons and have very good, positive attitudes to all school activities. They are happy at school. Their enthusiasm enables lessons to start promptly to achieve a purposeful, hard-working atmosphere. Pupils build on their experiences to develop a confident approach to work; they are interested in the work they do. Pupils contribute well in discussions and are good at expressing themselves. They understand what is required of them and work hard to succeed. They have good relationships with teachers and respond well to good teaching, especially when it is challenging. Pupils have a good understanding of their progress and take justifiable pride in their achievements.
21. Behaviour is generally good in lessons and throughout the school. Pupils understand well the limits of what is permissible; they accept the consequences of misconduct. Last year, a policy of calculatedly strict behaviour management resulted in a relatively large number of fixed-period exclusions. Only a small proportion of these pupils re-offended and the rate of such exclusions has fallen. No pupils have been excluded permanently in recent years.
22. The impact of the excellent social provision is very clear. Pupils are open, friendly and polite towards each other, to staff and to visitors. They show respect for others' points of view and react with sympathy to their peers' problems. Their personal and social development is very good, especially their relationships with one another. Their mutual support and co-operation allows effective working as a whole class, in small groups, or in pairs, of which the paired reading scheme is an outstandingly impressive example. Democratic procedures, such as choosing teams or electing representatives for the school council, work very well in this school. The principles underlying the school council are understood and appreciated by pupils, who are enthusiastic participants. Pupils show initiative in organising charitable collections, and respond well to other opportunities, which foster their personal and social development, such as extra-curricular activities, work experience and the Young Enterprise Scheme.
23. The rate of attendance in the last full year for which data are available (2000/2001) was below average. Although the rate of unauthorised absence was broadly in line with the national average, the rate of pupils' attendance (88.9 per cent) was 2 per cent lower than in comparable schools.

The school's strategies to rectify this situation are proving effective. Data for the year in progress show the rate of pupils' attendance has improved to such an extent that it is expected to match the level of attendance achieved in similar schools, and to meet or exceed the governors' target levels.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

24. The most important reason why pupils make good progress and achieve well at Challney High School for Girls is the overall good quality of teaching. Teaching and learning are good in the lower and upper parts of the school and some good teaching was seen in all subjects. There has been a very significant improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection.
25. Teaching in English and science is good and in mathematics it is competent with some good teaching. There is some occasional unsatisfactory teaching, particularly in modern foreign languages and physical education, sometimes for technical reasons such as the teaching of gymnastics or not fully exploiting the language opportunities. Nevertheless, in these departments overall teaching is at least satisfactory and good or very good teaching was also seen. In modern foreign languages the poor acoustics in two of the classrooms contribute to the teachers' difficulties.
26. Pupils learn well in the school when they understand what the lesson is driving at. All pupils and particularly those who find learning difficult or for whom English is an additional language find it helpful when the teacher explains clearly what it is the class is going to do in the lesson and establishes the links with what the class has done before. Teachers in the school are good at this. Teachers plan carefully so they make clear what it is they are trying to get across and they are effective in sharing their intentions. The good teacher planning seen means that lessons progress in a calm way, each step in the lesson building on what has gone before. For example, in an English lesson on Romeo and Juliet with lower attaining pupils in Year 10, the lesson was particularly successful because the teacher had prepared the lesson very thoroughly. The objectives were very clear and achieved in the lesson and there was within the lesson a variety of activities which were well judged to maintain pupils' interest.
27. A further reason why this lesson was, overall, very good was because the tasks presented to the pupils provided them with the right amount of challenge, yet were achievable. The majority of classes in the school have a wide range of pupils of differing levels of attainment including high proportions of pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language as well as some higher attaining pupils. In some subjects the way classes are grouped narrows the range of attainment because classes are taught in sets. Nevertheless, teachers have to plan for a wide range of attainment. Again the teachers are on the whole successful in this aspect. Tasks set for the pupils in the lessons are matched well to the differing needs of the pupils and the teachers use a variety of approaches, such as using reading material with different demands and differing levels of support to ensure that pupils achieve success. Teachers know the pupils with special educational needs and through these means provide effective support. There is good teamwork with learning support assistants who work alongside the teacher providing specific support to groups of pupils or individuals.
28. Teachers have good subject knowledge so that they are able to use questioning skills well, both to remind the class what they have done before and to check that they have understood what it is they are doing. They also question effectively to help the pupils sort out their ideas. They use the information gleaned from the questioning effectively to refine what it is they are doing, going over a point again to ensure that all pupils have understood it. Explanations are clear. A particular feature is the good listening skills that teachers have, valuing what the pupils have to say.
29. The teachers in the school use pupils' mistakes effectively as an aid to further learning. They work hard to develop and maintain pupils' confidence in their own abilities. A key factor in this is the very good relationships that exist between the teachers and pupils. There is genuine mutual

- respect and teachers want the pupils to do well. This means that teachers often give up additional time outside lessons to provide additional help and support. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can do are overall good, particularly with older pupils as they urge on the pupils to achieve well. However, in a few classes, despite the best efforts of the teacher, pupils work at a more sedate, self-determined pace. What they do, they do well but they are capable of more.
30. Teachers use an effective range of teaching strategies that includes pair work and group discussion. This allows pupils to rehearse their ideas and learn from each other. Basic skills are taught well and there is good and effective reinforcement of literacy skills across the school. ICT is being developed well in many subjects although there are restraints on the quantity and quality of some of the equipment.
 31. Good teaching seen in the school has an additional dimension. Teachers are enthusiastic about what they are teaching. They are skilled in engendering pupils' interest and motivation and building on this enthusiasm for the topic so that pupils motivate themselves. This means that the pupils want to learn and as a consequence make more effort and work effectively. Teachers are also skilled at managing classes, establishing a productive calm working atmosphere and in managing effectively the individual who, for whatever reason, presents unsatisfactory attitudes or behaviour.
 32. In the few unsatisfactory or poor lessons one or two of these aspects were lacking. In one or two classes, the teacher's class management skills were lacking with that particular group mainly because there was a stately, pedestrian pace to the lesson and a lack of excitement, which caused the pupils to become restive. In a couple of modern foreign languages lessons, the teacher did not take all the opportunities for the pupils to use the language they were learning. In one or two lessons there was incomplete preparation of the lesson, which resulted in a poor match of work with the result that pupils were not challenged sufficiently.
 33. The teaching of literacy in English is very good. Teachers have adopted methods from the National Literacy Strategy and give regular guidance in writing. They provide plenty of opportunity for reading and make good use of the library. Indeed the school's organisation for improving reading and comprehension skills is one of its great strengths. The paired reading support for pupils in years 7 and 8 is particularly effective and a model of its kind. When teachers give pupils the chance to speak this is done well, but such opportunities should be extended.
 34. In other subjects, teachers are aware of the school's literacy policy and reinforce basic skills when the need arises. Key words commonly used in each subject are displayed in nearly all classrooms, and their importance stressed when the lesson's objectives are explained. Mistakes in pupils' writing are usually but not always corrected. Science teachers are aware of the difficulties faced by pupils whose first language is not English and prepare worksheets accordingly. Those teaching information and communication technology encourage the use of spell checks. They exploit the potential for discussion when pupils work in pairs at a computer. Speaking and listening activities in modern foreign languages are frequent and effective, with pupils commenting sensitively on what others have to say. Group discussion aids understanding in mathematics, history, art and physical education.
 35. There is a school numeracy policy. Planning for further developing the numeracy strategy across the lower school is well advanced but has yet to be implemented. In other subjects, for example in science, pupils in Year 11 are able to draw graphs appropriately and accurately and they are also able to use formulae appropriately. In design and technology, pupils show a good understanding of volumes and in textiles pupils are show good skills in estimating and measuring. In history, pupils in Year 10 can interpret graphs and use the information for example to find reasons for change in birth and death rates.
 36. ICT is beginning to develop in a satisfactory manner in subjects such as music, physical education, business studies, English, science, modern foreign languages, geography and mathematics. The Internet is being used effectively for research purposes to support learning, although outside the computer suites the quality and range of equipment limits the range of use.

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

37. The school provision covers the National Curriculum and provides an appropriate mix of experiences that meet the needs of its pupils. To this end the school has recently revised its curriculum offer in Years 7-9 and changed the timetable to accommodate those changes. It is implementing a successful whole school literacy strategy and as part of this has created additional timetabled tutor time to improve reading and speaking skills. In addition it provides catch up opportunities for pupils as part of the literacy initiative operating in the lower school. It has increased the amount of time for English, mathematics and science in those three years as well as increasing provision for physical education and modern foreign languages in Year 7.
38. One of the ways in which the school has sought to accommodate greater curriculum breadth has been by increasing the number of lessons and reducing individual lesson time. Those shorter lessons have been to the detriment of subjects such as ICT, physical education and design and technology.
39. Design and technology and religious education both have particular problems in fully covering the prescribed programmes of study for Years 7-9. In the case of religious education, this results in the school not fully meeting the requirement of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. A further weakness in current arrangements is lack of a continuous learning experience in design and technology and modern foreign languages caused by considerable time gaps in the taught programmes. In Year 7 the pupils have consecutive six-month blocks in Spanish and French, while in design and technology, the internal departmental arrangements mean that pupils have up to a year's gap between their experiences of food, textiles and resistant materials respectively.
40. In Years 10 and 11, the school structures its option system to enable choice within the prescribed curriculum areas. The timetable blocks are created from pupil choices so do not constrain choice. On the other hand, it makes longer term planning within subject areas more difficult because in some subjects numbers vary considerably year on year. The school does allow a measure of disapplication, that is, allowing pupils to discontinue certain required subjects where there is justification and a worthwhile alternative. This is the case with those taking the pre-vocational course that is designed to strengthen pupils' basic skills and help personal development. There is sensitive use of alternative curriculum provision to suit the individual needs of pupils. There are no vocational courses currently provided though there are successful courses in business studies and child development that cater well for those interest areas.
41. ICT is now taught as a separate subject in all years and is being satisfactorily developed within the learning programmes of most other subjects. In Years 10 and 11 there is some collaboration between the taught programme and some other subjects to enable pupils to complete coursework leading to a GCSE short course award. Literacy skills are taught well across the subjects of the curriculum and there is a numeracy policy, which has yet to be implemented.
42. The opportunities for careers and work related education are very good. Pupils have good opportunities to develop their career-related skills, from Year 8, through the personal and social education course. Outside speakers are invited to the school to provide information about careers, and to raise the aspirations of the pupils. Good relationships exist between the local careers provider and local colleges and pupils are encouraged to make appropriate use of these resources. Pupils have very good access to careers information via information and communications technology. Work experience is offered to and taken by pupils in Year 11. The placements, as with the whole careers provision, are offered with sensitivity to local community interests.
43. There is good provision for personal, social and health education. The school invests significant time in providing tutor periods so that the tutors get a detailed knowledge of the pupils and follow them through the school. The way that the personal, social and health education programme is

taught is variable in that it depends on the weight and importance attached to the activity but nevertheless it is structured well. Aspects of the personal, social and health education programme, particularly those aspects relating to sex education, have been developed very carefully with the governing body to ensure that what is taught is sensitive to the pupils' cultural heritage. The personal, social and health education programme makes a good contribution to the overall excellent social provision in the school.

44. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The school seeks to meet the needs of the pupils and overall pupils are making good progress against their targets. Having an additional teacher to support the work of the special educational needs co-ordinator would enable her to carry out her strategic role even more effectively. The school has a realistic and informed approach to the process of progressing pupils to get specific help from external agencies, but does feel that there are a small number of pupils who are currently not receiving this additional support. There is good internal and external support for pupils who have behavioural and emotional difficulties.
45. As part of a government initiative to raise pupils' aspirations the school has identified a number of pupils who are gifted and talented. The initiative focuses on the higher attaining pupils in all schools. The project is being carefully established within the school but had only been running for two months when the school was inspected. The structures are being put in place carefully. It is seen as part of the school's commitment to equal opportunities, part of the school's inclusive policy to meet pupils' additional needs. The school is aware of the sensitivities surrounding the term. Girls spoken to were proud to be identified as part of the group but 'did not want it spread around.' The provision for gifted and talented is satisfactory but has only been recently implemented.
46. Learning mentors have been appointed recently to provide additional support to individual pupils but it is too early to judge the impact of the initiative. Considerable care was being taken to allow newly appointed learning mentors to shadow pupils who had been referred as needing additional support in class to see which of them the learning mentors felt they would be able to strike up the best relationship with so that their particular strengths matched the pupils' particular needs.
47. The school operates a good range of extra curricular activities to extend the opportunities for the girls and to provide other areas in which they can gain success. However, the participation rate by the girls tends to be low because some parents do not want the girls to stay on after school. There are good links with other schools and colleges.
48. There is overall good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Moral development is fostered well. In English, pupils consider the moral dilemmas facing characters in the plays and novels they are studying and in geography pupils examine specific conflicts of interest. In religious education issues, which are more emotionally charged, are considered sensitively and carefully. The provision for spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory. The school does work hard at fostering pupils' sense of self-esteem. The provision for social development is excellent. For some girls the opportunity to work co-operatively with the peer group outside school is restricted so that activities such as the creation of a dance-drama loosely based on West Side Story or working within a team in physical education is even more important in school. Provision such as the school council, taken very seriously throughout the school, pair and group work in lessons ensure that there is an ethos of mutual support. Members of staff are good role models and the support they give each other helps to further the sense of community. The work on paired reading transcends its main purpose of older girls supporting less confident readers, and opens up another dimension relating to the individual's role within the community and thus significantly supporting the school's developing work on citizenship and pupil's own aspirations. The school's social provision along with the development of pupils' self esteem is an important aspect of the school's encouragement of achievement.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

49. The effectiveness of the school's actions to ensure the welfare of its pupils, to monitor pupils' progress and well-being, and to support their development, is a strength of the school. A very safe and secure environment is provided. The health and safety policy is comprehensive and the whole school has undergone an independent risk assessment in the current year. Very good procedures for ensuring child protection are in place, including training by the designated member of staff, and good communications with relevant agencies.
50. Class teachers know their pupils very well as individuals and have very good relationships with them. This helps teachers' management of behaviour and learning in classes to be effective. A good range of information is collected about each pupil at the time they enter the school. This is supplemented by the results of frequent national and school-based assessments. In combination with personal and pastoral information and the results of individual consultations, this enables the school to monitor the academic and personal development of each individual closely. Class teachers and year heads are at the centre of the strong system for monitoring and supporting pupils, but many other staff are involved too. Until the computerised system for providing a single point of access to all the information about each pupil is fully operational (this is imminent), the quantity of information means the system is complex. However, the school achieves thorough monitoring and tracking of individuals and groups of pupils, which allows appropriate teaching to be provided and targets to be set.
51. Pupils benefit from the extensive and high quality support provided by a wide range of other staff as well as class teachers, including those who support pupils for whom English is an additional language, and those who help pupils who have special educational needs. The school has also developed valuable initiatives such as a Pupil Support Centre on the school site, which is very helpful in managing pupils' behaviour, the new learning mentors, the new support for gifted and talented pupils and a counsellor. As well as activities that foster pupils' social development such as the school council and the paired reading scheme, many pupils benefit from activities that form part of the personal, social and health education curriculum, and from very good individualised advice on topics such as careers.
52. Procedures for promoting good behaviour and eliminating oppressive behaviour are good, and for maximising attendance, very good. Attendance is recorded in great detail on an electronic system; this enables the monitoring of individuals and groups of pupils to be very effective. The school tries very hard to convince pupils and their families of the importance of full attendance. Its approaches, particularly through the home school liaison officer and the educational welfare officer, have proved effective, for instance in persuading some parents to change their holiday arrangements so as to allow their daughters to receive the maximum benefit from the amount of schooling available.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

53. Overall, the school's relationship with parents is satisfactory. In the pre-inspection surveys of their views, most parents expressed positive opinions about the school and its activities. They are very confident that the school expects their daughters to work hard, and that this results in good progress. Most parents are happy with the teaching and management at the school and recognise that the school is approachable, but a significant minority do not feel that the school works closely with parents, and some would like more information about their children's progress.
54. The inspection team found that the information provided by the school for parents is of good quality. The attractively presented prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents give parents a good guide to the nature of the school and what goes on there. Reports on pupils' progress are detailed and include targets to help pupils focus their efforts. School documents have been produced in community languages but few were taken up. As a consequence, the school consulted parents and established that spoken translations would be more welcome. Translation into Urdu and other languages is now offered, principally through the home school liaison officer, who also interprets at parents' evenings and during telephone contacts between the school and pupils' families. The school's employment of a home-school liaison officer is of great

value in communications between the school and pupils' families, and she is used effectively to promote good links between them. Ease of contact is also helped by the employment of a bilingual telephonist/receptionist.

55. Many pupils' families recognise the value of education, so a high proportion of pupils continue their education after they leave school, but not all are yet convinced of the benefits that pupils receive from full participation in all the teaching and extra-curricular activities the school offers. Working sensitively with these families to develop their support for the aims of the school and supporting their child in order to help raise standards is a key issue. Parent governors play an important part in ensuring that the governing body takes full account of parents' views. They have been closely involved in the development of the school's policies, for instance in refining sections of the personal, social and health education curriculum. The governing body have just agreed a more stringent classification of absences, which emphasises the negative impact of incomplete attendance on educational achievement; this should eventually bring a further improvement in the rate of attendance. The school is very sensitive to parents' feelings in all these matters, and is well-positioned to achieve greater participation through its continuing efforts.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

56. The leadership of the school is very good and, as a result there are consistent and shared values by all staff and a shared commitment to all pupils and to future improvement. This commitment has also brought about the very good improvement since the last inspection. The very good leadership stems from the headteacher who has a quiet, calm and reflective manner. The school's commitment to equal opportunities and the sustained focus on seeing this reflected in the overall improved attainment of the pupils stems from her. She sets a clear educational direction for the work of the school. These fundamental values are shared by the senior leadership team who work effectively with the headteacher to ensure that they are reflected in the corridors and classrooms on a daily basis.
57. Leadership within departments is also good and sometimes very good so that within subject areas there is a strong sense of teamwork and shared and consistent values. Members of staff are clear as to their responsibilities. Performance management has been very well used and linked to school improvement. A feature of the leadership is that initiatives are not just 'bolted-on' to school structures but integrated and linked into the school's overall ethos. For example, the initiative with higher attaining pupils is seen as part of the school's commitment to equal opportunities and an aspect of pupils' additional needs.
58. The management of the school is also very good. It runs well on a day-to-day basis and there are effective systems in place to ensure this smooth running. It is a calm community and the day-to-day routines reinforce a sense of the school being secure, safe and caring. The electronic registration system, after teething problems, is now effective. The fact that it is used so regularly throughout the day contributes to feelings of security and care that surround the school. Aspects of the school's information management systems are in the process of being integrated to provide easier access but staff are using comparative information to compare their subject's performance against national figures and to set targets for future improvement. Management across the departments is usually good or better but in modern foreign languages and physical education, whilst there are some strengths, there are weaknesses in the monitoring to ensure consistency in teaching. Improvements are required too in the management of resistant materials within design and technology.
59. The governing body is very effective in setting the direction of the school. There is a strong commitment within the governing body to raise attainment and to ensure that the school is tackling perceived under-achievement. It is not meeting fully its statutory responsibilities because religious education has insufficient time to cover fully the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. It recently passed a resolution to make any holiday longer than the statutory 15 days in a year unauthorised absence as part of this commitment to higher attainment. It provides very effective support to the headteacher but is appropriately challenging and does not simply rubber-

stamp the headteacher's decisions. Members of the governing body are attached to departments and in one or two areas this liaison is working well. Through presentations, reports and occasional visits the governing body have a good perception of the strengths of the schools and what needs to be addressed. There is good representation from the communities that make up the school population, which helps the school when tackling sensitive areas.

60. Equal opportunities are good. Although a culturally diverse community, it is a cohesive one and there are very few incidents of any tension. The small number of, for example Indian and white pupils are integrated well in the school. Pupils with differing needs, be it special educational needs or English as an additional language, are supported. They have good access to the curriculum. The more able pupils are identified, and improving provision for their needs is satisfactory. The emphasis on developing very good social relationship is embedded in the fabric of the school. The good monitoring by teachers and senior staff contributes to the success and openness of this provision.
61. The leadership of the special educational needs co-ordinator is very good, although she is juggling a number of roles, including teaching. Additional teaching time directed to the special educational needs team would allow her to fulfil her strategic role to better effect. There are good links established among the internal school support services. Behaviour support is led and managed well. The management of English as an additional language is effective.
62. The school has benefited from increased funding in recent years and the income per pupil is now above the national average. The school therefore enjoys favourable pupil-teacher and teacher-contact ratios, despite the proportion of the school's budget spent on teachers' salaries being below the national average. On the other hand, the proportion spent on all staff to support pupils is higher than average, which means that pupils gain good support from the adults working in the school.
63. Strategic planning is very good. Governors work alongside senior staff in financial planning. The annual budget reflects the priorities identified in the School Improvement Plan, in which all target areas are aimed at raising educational standards. Progress against targets identified in the School Improvement Plan is monitored carefully, which includes evaluating the effectiveness of expenditure. Specific grants are used effectively for the purposes for which they are intended. The appointment of a bursar has aided the effective use of complex funding streams. Financial control is very good and its administration is thorough. The school aims to use all the funding that is available and although a small underspend arose in 2000-01, this carried forward to the current year when income and expenditure are expected to balance.
64. The school applies the principles of best value and evaluates the quality and cost of all expenditure and makes effective use of comparative data to compare and internally challenge the school's performance. Effective financial planning is a factor contributing to the school's giving good value for money.
65. The school has very good strategies for the induction of new teachers and staff new to the school. There is a programme of induction for newly qualified teachers. In Art, a newly qualified teacher receives support from the department and the lead induction mentor. In mathematics, a teacher who is returning to classroom teaching is working alongside an experienced teacher in some lessons. The school is one of a group of schools providing school centred initial teacher training. There are currently trainees in the English and ICT departments. The school has trained mentors who support the trainees' development towards teaching qualifications.
66. Performance management is well organised and meets the statutory requirements. All teachers have an annual performance review where targets for the next year are agreed. The procedures, including lesson observations, are well organised and are managed and monitored by a member of the senior management. The teaching staff who are eligible to apply for threshold payments have received support and training in preparation for their threshold assessment.

67. Resources are generally satisfactory, although ICT still requires additional investment. The accommodation does have some shortcomings. There are still two classrooms in modern foreign languages that have very poor acoustics which hampers learning and causes additional difficulties for the teacher. The school has limited hard play area so that in winter the pupils do not have access to recreational areas during their lunchtime. The care and attention paid to the reception area, with its carpets and fresh flowers and the colourful bright dining room throw into relief the more institutional feel of much of the rest of the school - particularly in the long and echoing corridors. It is the hardness of the acoustics and subsequent amplifying of noise and the fact that the girls have nowhere to go which gives the lunchtimes a noisy restlessness despite safe havens such as the library or ICT suites.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

68. In order to improve examination and National Curriculum test results the governing body, headteacher and school staff should improve
- i) The partnership with parents so that all parents support the aims, values, school activities and pupils' learning.
(paragraphs: 18, 19, 52, 55)
 - ii) Review the way the curriculum is organised to ensure that subjects have sufficient time and ensure that statutory requirements in religious education are met
 - There is adequate time to teach subjects
 - Discontinuities caused by curriculum arrangements such as the introduction of the second language are minimised.
 - Statutory requirements are met in religious education
(paragraphs: 38, 39,)
69. The school improvement plan identified working with parents as a specific focus along with attendance. In addition given the attention given to it by the school and the governing body the school should
- As a minor key issue,
- iii) Continue to monitor and improve the attendance of a small but significant number of pupils.
(paragraphs: 17, 52, 55)

THE PROVISION FOR ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE

70. The provision for pupils who have English as an additional language is good. About 85 per cent of the pupils have English as an additional language. Of these there about 7 pupils who are the beginner stage, 19 are at level one with about 90 at level two, that is, at the early stages of language acquisition. About 200 hundred pupils are at about the middle stage of language acquisition. Most of the pupils at the early stages receive targeted support, particularly in English, maths and science. Other subject that have a heavy reliance on language, such as history, geography and religious education also have support teachers in the lessons.
71. Such large numbers of pupils make heavy demands on the language support team. The team comprises one full -time head of department and one full time bi-lingual support teacher. The rest of the team is a mix of part-time teachers of English as an additional language and part-time and full-time support assistants. Provision for the pupils is well organised. The policy documents are clear and detailed and the department as a whole manages its affairs very well. A lot of time and care goes into preparing materials to support the pupils both in subject classes and withdrawal classes.
72. The department operates a flexible support system whereby collaborative decisions are made as to how best to support the pupils that need help. Some pupils are withdrawn for 2 or 3 lessons a week in small groups to give them very specific support and their progress is reviewed after an appropriate period of time. The progress of all pupils is monitored regularly, and reviews determine if the pupils are achieving the language targets that have been set for them. These targets include all the major skills that are needed for effective use of the target language. To help them in realistic target setting, the department uses detailed information from junior schools and other sources such as the usual reading tests that are set by the school during the normal course of events.
73. Pupils who come to the school at other times, such as in the middle of the term, are assessed within the language support unit and an appropriate plan is worked out for them. In all cases, the

heads of departments receive detailed information about the language needs of pupils for whom English is an additional language. This information is then available for all subject teachers in order for them to plan their lessons accordingly and to give them the specific help that they require.

74. Overall the quality of the teaching for English as an additional language is good, though there are some variations of satisfactory and very good teaching. Lessons and materials are prepared in advance in conjunction with the subject teachers. These materials often include word lists, simplified comprehension exercises and other activities that both hold the interest and motivate the pupils in their learning. The pupils respond very positively to this and are well behaved and co-operative. As a result the pupils' learning is good: they make significant progress and rise steadily through the levels of competence.
75. Where the teaching of English as an additional language is very good, a wider use of the facilities in the classroom is incorporated into the teaching strategies. This includes an intelligent and productive use of such things as the blackboard, whereby important words and expression are written down and highlighted while the main class teacher is presenting the material. This technique could be put to wider use by the department as it is an important tool, not only for the pupils who are at an early stage of learning, but also to help consolidate the learning of those who have reached the higher stages and also for other pupils in the class generally.
76. The very good teaching is also characterised by precise and detailed preparation plans before the lesson starts. This preparation includes not only the general content to be covered but also the best strategies to put across the subject matter effectively. Lessons which are satisfactory are adequate for the pupils to make progress but involve less imaginative strategies and are more restricted to responding to a teaching situation rather than developing the teaching situation to its best advantage.
77. English as an additional language is effectively managed. It is clear that there is a lot of expertise in the department. This expertise needs to be more widely shared, both in ideas and practice. In this way more subject departments in the school might benefit from the experience, which the English as an additional language staff have. The department has an excellent range of resources, both items that have been purchased and items that have been prepared by the department itself. The accommodation is good.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	179
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	7	43	72	47	7	3	0
Percentage	4	24	40	26	4	2	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	893
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	467

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	10
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	272

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	757

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	49
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	37

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	10.4
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.6
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001		156	156

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys			
	Girls	102	70	62
	Total	102	70	62
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	66 (63)	45 (50)	40 (38)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	28 (21)	29 (26)	17 (10)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys			
	Girls	86	64	63
	Total	86	64	63
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	54 (60)	40 (52)	40 (41)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	17 (18)	23 (26)	17 (11)
	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		179	179

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			
	Girls	58	161	176
	Total	58	161	177
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	**32 (40)	90 (93)	99 (100)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

** The school is currently in discussion with the DfES about this overall percentage.

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	34.2
	National	39.0

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	33
Black – African heritage	23
Black – other	7
Indian	42
Pakistani	603
Bangladeshi	105
Chinese	2
White	43
Any other minority ethnic group	35

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	5	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	6	0
Indian	1	0
Pakistani	40	0
Bangladeshi	3	0
Chinese	0	0
White	5	0
Other minority ethnic groups	2	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)	57.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.5

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	31
Total aggregate hours worked per week	905

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	70
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Average teaching group size: Y7-11

Key Stage 3	21.7
Key Stage 4	20.3

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000-01
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	£
Total income	3,061,184
Total expenditure	3,134,079
Expenditure per pupil	3,590
Balance brought forward from previous year	72,895
Balance carried forward to next year	0

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	13.7
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	21.7

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2.9
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	893
Number of questionnaires returned	248

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	42	48	7	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	38	55	3	1	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	45	43	6	2	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	42	40	11	3	4
The teaching is good.	41	47	6	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	38	40	15	4	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	42	42	6	3	7
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	62	27	4	1	5
The school works closely with parents.	31	43	17	4	5
The school is well led and managed.	36	47	7	1	9
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	44	40	9	1	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	26	42	11	8	13

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 **very good**.

Strengths

- The commitment of teachers to the care and progress of their pupils so that there is high quality learning.
- The quantity and quality of the written work observed during the inspection. The attitude and behaviour of pupils.
- The organisation and skill to foster and encourage reading.

Areas for improvement

- To devise ways in which examination results can be made to better reflect the quality of work done in the classroom.
- To encourage all pupils to speak more frequently.

78. Until recently the attainment of pupils on entry to the school had been consistently well below nationally expected levels. However, it has risen rapidly in English in the last two years, and is now nearly in line with the national average. Attainment by the end of Year 9 has also been rising, so that it also is now at the national average. The National Curriculum tests in 2001 showed that Year 9 pupils achieved very well, and made very good progress since they joined the school. Results in GCSE English language have been below the national average but none the less indicate satisfactory progress and very good progress in 2000. Fewer pupils are entered for GCSE Literature, but in 2001 the candidates' results were in line with the national average. Results, both in National Curriculum tests and GCSE, are very high in comparison with similar schools and better than results in mathematics and science in the school.
79. Standards in lessons in Year 9 are in line with the National Curriculum test results, that is to say, in line with national averages. Standards in Year 10 and 11 are also in line with national averages, that is to say, higher than the results achieved in GCSE examinations in 2001. These rapidly improving standards are due, in part at least, to very good teaching. Girls respond enthusiastically to this, and work hard. The quality of learning is very high.
80. Pupils in Year 7, 8 and 9 display positive attitudes, writing accurately, neatly and to a very good length. The skills of spelling, paragraphing and punctuation are all at nationally expected levels. The ablest pupils are writing imaginatively and analytically. Some in Year 7 had understood the language and imagery of poems by Blake, putting their ideas on paper with genuinely felt pleasure. Among all pupils in all years the range of composition is wide, including newspaper articles, diary entries, literature criticism, stories and the occasional poem. Pupils prepare speeches with titles such as 'Technology will soon replace books'. Pupils redraft their best work, correcting mistakes but not necessarily improving the style. In Year 8 pupils engage intelligently with '*Macbeth*' and '*Romeo and Juliet*'. Comments are perceptive with apt references to the text.
81. Those who enter the school with English as an additional language make good progress. Minor errors of idiom continue in Years 8 and 9, but by the end of Year 7, thanks to the extensive help that they receive, they are nearly all able to write with grammatical accuracy, and understand the language used by the teacher and in text books. Those pupils with special educational needs make good progress, particularly those in the lowest sets, who receive support.
82. Standards of writing in Years 10 and 11 are at national expectations. There is evidence of methodical study, with a high degree of care in the preparation and word processing of essays. Pupils use a wide vocabulary and mature sentence structure. Lower attainers understand the themes found in '*Jane Eyre*' and write convincingly about the heroine's predicament. Particularly good is the work done by pupils of all abilities on '*An Inspector Calls*' in which pupils come to

terms with the attitudes of middle class England at the turn of the last century. They weigh responsibility of each character for the suicide of the factory-hand and dissect the role of the inspector. Equally impressive is the work of the more fluent pupils in their half-fictionalised accounts of their own experiences, and their search for independence.

83. Standards of speaking vary. Some girls in all years are so keen to express themselves, and are so adept in expression, that it is sometimes difficult for others to compete. But sensitive handling by teachers in the low sets ensures that all such pupils get a chance to voice opinions and all progress well. There is evidence in the written work of pupils preparing speeches, and in one lesson pupils used an overhead projector to present their well-researched and well-argued analysis of each character in the play.
84. There is high achievement in reading. The degree of organisation and skill with which reading is fostered is one of the great strengths of the school. All pupils read during form periods. The extent of time and its regularity endows reading with high status. All pupils keep a reading record. Exchange of books also occurs routinely. Library loan rates are high. While younger pupils read to themselves, older pupils monitor their progress and keep notes of what they observe. These monitors are in turn checked by senior prefects to see that the system is working as it should.
85. There is, in addition, a paired reading scheme, which operates on two mornings of every week. Fifty or so weaker readers in Years 8 and 7 are paired with specially selected 'reading assistants' in Years 10 and 11. The 'assistants' are trained and keep a record of their pupils' progress. Finally, there are catch-up lessons for those who joined the school with a weakness in language. Run by English specialists, with support from the Librarian and learning support assistants, these lessons provide successfully pupils with personal tuition based on the Literacy Strategy, giving them confidence and such reading skills as 'scanning' and 'skimming.'
86. The quality of teaching is very good. Teachers plan and prepare well. Relationships are based on friendliness, a tight structure in lessons and concern for progress. Behaviour is consequently good. Teachers communicate their enthusiasm to pupils. They use effectively the best practice described in the literacy strategy, modelling clearly, injecting the appropriate pace, and structuring lessons in manageable sections, so that the syllabus gets covered and pupils know what to expect. Teachers mark thoroughly. It is these qualities of conscientiousness and skill, which result in high standards of learning.
87. In some lessons, however, the quality of learning could be improved, chiefly by greater challenge in oral work. Pupils answer factual questions readily, but too seldom engage in argument. If pupils had even more time to work on their own in small groups, the teacher could spend more time with individuals, pointing out errors and suggesting ways to improve. At times the teacher may provide stimulating ideas without sufficiently ensuring that these ideas have been digested and recorded. It is clear from the schemes of work that a far wider range of methods is used than those observed. That said, more use could be made of ICT, tape recorders and video and other strategies such as role-play.
88. There has been good improvement in many respects since the last inspection. Standards at the end of Year 9 have improved substantially, and in GCSE to a lesser but still marked extent. Progress is now good. The weakness found in planning and target setting has been overcome. Indeed, the department now makes very good use of assessment data, so all teachers and pupils are aware of prior attainment, and targets are consequently appropriate. Learning support assistants are now integrated into the work of the department well. The use of ICT is greater, but still leaves room for further development. However, where learning could be most effectively improved is in widening the scope for discussions in lessons, thus encouraging all pupils (rather than a few) to become more self confident and independent. Overall leadership and management remain very good. Regular observation and analysis of lessons has helped to raise standards whilst preserving high morale. Teachers feel well supported, and take pride in their success.

MATHEMATICS

The provision in the school for mathematics is **good**.

Strengths

- Achievement of the pupils.
- Attitudes and behaviour of the pupils in mathematics.
- Monitoring and of teaching and learning.
- Leadership and management of the department.

Areas for further development

- Teaching and learning strategies to raise the pace and challenge of learning within some lessons.
- The use of ICT in mathematics teaching.

89. In national tests for Year 9 pupils in 2001, the standard reached by pupils in the school was well below average for schools nationally. However, the results are well above the results achieved in similar schools. Pupils' results in mathematics are a little above than those achieved in science but are below the results achieved in English. Over the last three years the average points score in national tests in Year 9 has been well below the national average points score, although it has been rising broadly in line with the national trend.
90. The number of pupils in Year 11 who achieved grades A* - C in GCSE results in 2001 was well below the national average and it has been so for the last three years. In 2001, results as measured by A* to C fell slightly from the previous two years. As with the Year 9 tests, the results in 2000 and in previous years are well above those achieved by similar schools. Results in GCSE at A* to C are similar to those achieved in science but below those achieved in English. The school enters virtually all pupils for the GCSE examination and most of these pupils achieve a grade in GCSE mathematics.
91. In class, standards vary. Pupils are organised in sets on the basis of prior attainment and the standards seen in the higher sets are in line with, or above expectations. In a Year 11 class, for example, pupils were able to simplify complicated algebraic expressions including algebraic fractions. More able pupils in Year 9 can interpret cumulative frequency diagrams. However, attainment is below national expectations in those sets containing pupils whose prior mathematical achievement places them in the middle band. In a Year 11 class, for example, pupils were learning to work out the general term of an arithmetic sequence. The standards achieved by some pupils are affected by the number of times they are absent from school: in only one mathematics lesson observed was there a full attendance.
92. Whilst standards of attainment are below average overall, pupils' progress in mathematics is good across the school. From a very low base line pupils make good progress to achieve standards that are below national average but well above average when compared to similar schools.
93. The attainment of pupils in mathematics when they enter the school in Year 7, as measured by the end of Key Stage 2 tests, is well below national expectations. There are a significant number of pupils who join the school during the school year and many of these pupils have limited prior achievement in mathematics. There is a wide range of attainment within the year group. Higher attaining pupils in Year 7 are able to understand that letters can be used in algebra to signify an unknown variable. However, other pupils were not sure about how many grams there were in a kilogram.
94. The good progress made by pupils is best illustrated by an example relating to percentages. Pupils in Year 8 are able to use a range of strategies to work out the percentages of very large numbers and by Year 10, pupils have progressed to the stage where they can use their

understanding of percentages to work out compound interest. Nevertheless, the very limited calculation skills of many pupils are having an effect on their standards in mathematics and slow progress. For example, a pupil in a Year 8 had to use her calculator to work out the value of 20×6 .

95. Pupils with special educational needs and pupils for whom English is an additional language make good progress. In a Year 10 group of pupils with special educational needs, the pupils were working effectively on individual programmes to develop their basic skills. In another group of these pupils in Year 7 one pupil for whom English is an additional language was being given individual support to enable her to read and tell the time in English.
96. Overall teaching in mathematics in the school is good. Of the 18 lessons seen there were 10 good or very good lessons and only one lesson seen was unsatisfactory. All teachers have appropriate subject knowledge. In a lesson where learning was very good, the teacher shared the learning objectives with the pupils, used questioning well to challenge pupils and established an appropriate pace. In another lesson the pupils were aware of what was required of them and responded to the challenges set. In the very best lessons teachers are sharing the objectives of the lesson with pupils and pupils and teachers are working collaboratively to meet the demands of the objectives. However this was not always the case even in otherwise good lessons. In some lessons the teachers had imprecise learning objectives and in others there was too much dependence on the textbook. The whole- class part of the lesson, the plenary, was not always used effectively. In some lessons there was good use of open-ended questions addressed to individual pupils in order to encourage independent thinking. Most lessons started with a short period of consolidation and review of previous work. In general, mathematics teachers in the school are aware of the National Numeracy Strategy guidance on the organisation of mathematics lessons. However, further development work is needed to ensure that the starter and plenary sections are more effectively used to focus learning and raise expectations within the lesson.
97. Teachers are aware of those pupils in their classes for whom English is a second language and in some lessons there is good use of strategies such as stressing the key mathematical words to support the pupils' learning. The Language Support Assistants are effective in providing support to pupils for whom English is not their first language. Teachers are also aware of those pupils who have special educational needs and those who are in the sets for lower attaining pupils are particularly well supported. In one class of lower achievers in Year 9 the learning was taken forward in small steps that enabled the pupils to make appropriate progress. Where Learning Support Assistants help is available it is effective in supporting learning of individual pupils. However, liaison between the special educational needs department and the mathematics department could be further developed. For example, individual education plans do not always provide targets that can guide the pupil's learning in mathematics lessons.
98. Further work is required to develop strategies to deal with the range of ability within each class. Although pupils are set on the basis of their prior attainment there is a range of ability within each of the mathematics classes in the school and, although overall pupil progress is good, further thought needs to be given to catering for the range of ability.
99. Overall pupils show good attitudes to mathematics and apply themselves to their work. They work collaboratively when required and they help one another if necessary. Behaviour in most mathematics lessons is also good. However, there are occasions when pupils are boisterous and need firm management. Classes that contain pupils in the middle attaining range in particular are sometimes quite chatty and can move off-task if not monitored and managed carefully.
100. Pupils show good interest in mathematics and are keen to answer questions. Where teachers set a good pace and have good expectations then the pupils work productively and with concentration. Pupils are given opportunities for independent learning, for example in a Year 8 class, pupils had undertaken a research activity to consider population statistics.
101. The curriculum in mathematics fulfils requirements. There are opportunities for pupils to do investigations and research. However, the opportunities to use ICT to support learning in

mathematics are limited. It will be difficult for the department to follow the National Numeracy Strategy guidelines with the current arrangements for accessing ICT equipment. The department provides very good support outside the classroom. There are opportunities for pupils to see their teachers at lunchtime and study clubs are held after school each evening. A small number of pupils are involved in extension work through a lunchtime club for higher attaining pupils.

102. There is a school numeracy policy. Planning for further developing the numeracy strategy across the lower school is well advanced but has yet to be implemented. In other subjects, for example in science, pupils in Year 11 are able to draw graphs appropriately and accurately and they are also able to use formulae appropriately. In design and technology, pupils show a good understanding of volumes and in textiles pupils are show good skills in estimating and measuring. In history, pupils in Year 10 can interpret graphs and use the information, for example to find reasons for change in birth and death rates.
103. Overall the assessment of pupils in mathematics is good. Marking of pupils' mathematics work is diligent. However, there is limited use of feedback commentary either to recognise achievement or provide diagnostic support for learning. There is regular testing of pupils and the data are collected and analysed by the department. This information is used, for example, to review which set pupils should be allocated to. The department also analyses attainment data such as GCSE and Key Stage results. Targets are being developed and have recently been introduced in both the lower and upper school. However, further work is needed in this area - currently the targets are not consistently or sufficiently linked to learning objectives in order to ensure that pupils know what it is they have to learn and understand in order to raise their own level of achievement in mathematics.
104. The department is well led and managed. The arrangements for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning are a particular feature. The developments planned for numeracy are well thought through and ensure that they have a high priority within the school. The initial planning and delegation of tasks shows that the department has appropriate objectives and action plan to raise standards as part of the lower school strategy development.
105. Since the last inspection there has been satisfactory progress. Resources have improved; some graphical calculators are available but not enough for a teaching group to have one each. All pupils have their own textbook. There are some computers in one of the mathematics teaching rooms. However the use of ICT within the department remains limited. There is now good monitoring and evaluation of the department. Assessment is more secure and regular; target setting is being developed but does not yet indicate to pupils their next stage of learning. Further development is required to ensure that each teacher is planning and identifying specific and clear learning objectives.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Leadership and management of the department.
- The quality of relationships with pupils.
- Staff work well together and are committed to raising standards.
- The quality of teaching and overall provision result in good achievement.

Areas for improvement

- Improve the quality of marking so that it gives pupils clear guidance on what they need to do in order to improve their work.
- Make objectives of lessons more focused and display them in the classroom.
- Increase the use of investigative techniques in lessons.

106. In the 2001 national tests at the end Year 9, the proportion of pupils reaching level 5 and above and the proportion reaching level 6 and above was well below the national average. They were however well above average in comparison with similar schools. The average points score was higher than that of the previous year and has been rising over the past three years. Pupils performed well in relation to their prior attainment. The results were below those obtained in mathematics and English.

107. In the 2001 GCSE examination in double award science, the proportion of pupils obtaining grades A* to C was low in comparison with the national average. The proportion obtaining grades A* to G was close to the national average. The results were similar to those of the previous year but not as good as those in 1999. They were higher than those in mathematics but lower than those in English. Pupils performed well in relation to their prior attainment at the end of Year 9 and results were above average in comparison with similar schools. The small group of pupils entered for the Certificate of Achievement examination achieved well and attained grades appropriate to their prior attainment.
108. Inspection evidence shows that standards towards the end of year 9 are below the nationally expected level. Pupils enter the school with levels of attainment that are well below the national average, but they make good progress during Years 7 to 9. The highest attaining pupils are performing at levels close to those expected nationally and they develop a sound knowledge and understanding in all aspects of the course. They have a sound understanding of the basic principles of genetics and about the structure of the heart and circulatory system. They know about the behaviour of solids, liquids and gases and can perform simple experiments to investigate the reaction between metals and acids. A Year 7 group was observed in the library using a range of book and non-book resources (including the Internet) to prepare presentations on different types of energy. Lower attaining pupils, especially those in Year 7, have only a rudimentary knowledge of science.
109. By Year 11, the highest attaining pupils have developed a good understanding of the National Curriculum programmes of study. For many students, standards are approaching national expectations and for some they exceed it. Pupils currently achieve well in Years 10 and 11 largely due to careful lesson planning and improved strategies for teaching and learning. They are familiar with the concept of evolution and understand about the factors affecting the rates of chemical reactions. A group of lower attaining Year 11 pupils extended their knowledge of the periodic table through a well-planned lesson on the nature of acidic and basic oxides. Pupils know about the structure and functions of the kidney and about the role of the blood in maintaining many of the body's functions. A group of pupils following the Certificate of Achievement course has a basic understanding of the nature of sound.
110. In both key stages pupils with special educational needs make good progress. This is most marked when they have additional support but their peers also help them. Although the department is aware of the needs of these pupils it does not always make sufficient use of material, which has been specially adapted. Pupils for whom English is an additional language make good progress but those with the most limited understanding of English experience difficulty when they are asked to read and act upon material in the text book. In particular they have difficulty with technical and scientific words because many lack the phonic skills to read them. Gifted and talented pupils are not always provided with sufficiently challenging material.
111. The written work in science of average and higher attaining pupils in all years is usually satisfactory and often good. Most pupils take good care over their presentation. Lower attaining pupils take less care and pieces of work are often left out or remain unfinished. In some groups work consists too frequently of notes copied from textbooks or the blackboard and lacks the creativity associated with real enjoyment of the subject. Pupils, especially those for whom English is an additional language, do not have the benefit of keywords clearly displayed in laboratories. Numeracy is at least satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 to support their science work but in Years 10 and 11 it is good. Pupils handle data well and the graph drawing skills of high attaining students is very good. Attention is paid for example to ensuring that axes are labelled correctly and pupils are able to interpret graphs relating distance time and velocity. Pupils handle competently, formulae appropriate to their level of attainment. The shortage of suitable hardware limits the use of information and control technology but where it is used pupils do so competently.
112. The department has responded positively to the last report and has made good progress. Schemes of work in all years are now of good quality and are constantly under review. Accommodation and resources, especially textbooks, have now been considerably improved although the provision of good quality computers is still limited. The range of teaching and

- learning strategies has been extended. Attainment in national tests and examinations is still below the national average.
113. The quality of teaching is always at least satisfactory and in just under two thirds of the lessons observed it was good or very good. Teachers have a secure knowledge of their subject and plan their lessons well. Plans contain details not only of the content but also of the pupils in the group. Objectives are often shared with pupils verbally but they are sometimes insufficiently sharp and are not displayed. Pupils therefore do not have a clear idea what the lesson is about and unable to plot their progress. Teachers do not always spend sufficient time at the end of lessons consolidating what has been learned. Relationships with pupils are very good and humour is often used to good effect. Praise, which raises pupils' self esteem, is a feature of many lessons. In the best lessons teachers use a variety of activities to maintain interest and provide constant challenge. In a Year 8 lesson on the circulatory system for example, the teacher stimulated interest by inviting pupils to call out all the words they could think of related to the topic. This was followed by a discussion on the function of the heart and the pupils joined in a demonstration to calculate the amount of blood moved in a day. Pupils made their own notes and the lesson ended with a good summary. Pupils of all levels of attainment were stimulated by the activities and achievement was good as a result.
114. Pupils enjoy practical work but this is often presented in a prescriptive way and pupils are not always given the opportunity to use the investigative skills of predicting, evaluating and considering variables. As a consequence, coursework related to investigative experimental work is regarded as an addition to rather than an integral part of the science curriculum. Pupils respond well when they are given the opportunity to take some responsibility for their own learning. Lower attaining pupils also respond when they are presented with materials and situations with which they are familiar. In a Year 10 group for example, the teacher introduced a lesson on electrolysis with a simple demonstration reminding them about the nature of an electric current. Pupils then investigated the electrolysis of some solutions, which they encounter in daily life. They were allowed to design their own methods for recording their results. All pupils made good progress towards a better understanding of the topic.
115. Pupils are generally enthusiastic and well motivated. They respond readily to questions posed by the teacher. They are however rarely given the chance to reflect on what they are doing and answer at length. The department's recent involvement with the Cognitive Acceleration through Science Education (CASE) project has provided a welcome opportunity for pupils to develop their cognitive skills. In a well planned lesson with a Year 7 group the teacher used CASE material to help pupils develop their understanding of classification. All pupils made progress in classifying animals using a variety of criteria and a small group of pupils who had been identified as gifted were able to extend their understanding through other classification tasks.
116. Books are marked regularly but the quality varies from simple acknowledgement to the use of meaningful marks, grades and comments. Comments, however, do not always tell pupils what they have got wrong and what they need to do to improve. Assessment information is very well used to monitor pupils' progress and provide them with realistic yet challenging targets.
117. The head of department provides strong positive leadership. Staff work well together and are committed to raising standards. Pupils enter the school with levels of attainment, which are well below average, but the department's good provision ensures that all pupils achieve well. Teaching is well supported by a team of hardworking technicians. Accommodation is adequate and laboratories have excellent displays of work providing a stimulating and welcoming environment.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Pupils make good progress across the school and achieve well in examinations at GCSE.

- Assessment and monitoring informs planning.
- A focus on achievement is reflected in an ethos which encourages success.

Areas for improvement

- Investment in ICT.
- Increased development of pupils' curiosity and 'risk taking' in art and design.
- The teaching of drawing from observation.
- The involvement and support of parents.

118. Usually, grades in GCSE Art and Design are good compared with other subjects in the school. In 2001, A* to C grades increased from 9 per cent in 2000 to 68 per cent. These are among the best results in the school although they are average when compared with national expectations. Numbers of pupils taking the exam decreased to 19 pupils in 2001 but the cohort for this year has increased again. There are now 45 pupils taking GCSE in 2002 and the subject has established a good reputation within the school. Teacher assessments of pupils aged 14 in 2001 were above average in comparison with national expectations. However, the use of National Curriculum levels in art is a relatively recent development and more work is required by the department to moderate their assessments and check their accuracy.
119. Pupils start their work in Year 7 with average attainment. There are a high number of pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language. Their achievement is good and they attain above average standards in Year 9 and in their examinations. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is good. Expectations are high, they are included in all work and achieve well. Teachers are sensitive to their needs and encourage all to do their best.
120. The present joint heads of department are working hard to address some recent staffing difficulties. Individual tutorials in Year 11 ensure each pupil's work is considered and individual pupils can receive appropriate help when preparing for examinations. Detailed project planning sheets help pupils to prepare course work. Parents are invited to help when specific targets are set although their participation and level of support is variable. Careful, relevant marking ensures continuity. The heads of department have also developed a monitoring system to track individual pupil achievement and each pupil experiences a broad art curriculum, which includes craft and design. For example, in Year 8 pupils make small wire sculptures in the style of *Giacometti* and use a digital camera and computer to stretch images in a similar style to the sculptor. There are colourful murals on display in the school. An interesting wall hanging in the dining hall reminds all of the school's aims while commemorating past teachers and pupils. A number of small silk paintings in the main hall show how effectively pupils' work when they have the involvement of an artist in residence.
121. Teaching overall is good, equipment needed is always to hand, classes are well organised and lesson objectives clear. Where teaching is strongest in Year 7 and 8, pupils are offered interesting creative tasks, the lessons are well resourced and there is a variety of media to develop expression and imagination. There is sensitive encouragement to talk about different cultures and how art can be used to express personal ideas. For example, pupils made small decorative boxes and were asked to show and draw some favourite small items they brought from home. All pupils brought something and listened carefully to each other but the spiritual and cultural elements of the subject are explored implicitly rather than stated clearly in aims and planning. Classroom management is firm and pupils are encouraged to listen and work hard. Teachers establish good relationships with their pupils and encourage them to be imaginative. Homework is set consistently and extends the work of the lessons.
122. Where teaching is less strong, pupils' work is undeveloped and experimentation is limited. In Year 9, although some pupils are dissatisfied with their designs for logos, they are not engaged in a dialogue to examine reasons and consider changes. The ending of a few lessons is disorganised, pupils are not reminded of the learning objectives and noisy, attention-seeking behaviour increases. In these less successful lessons, teachers are also less successful at showing pupils how to refine and improve their work and to critically analyse from first hand observations. For example, many pupils are not secure in their understanding of the effects of light on three-dimensional objects and the use of tone to create depth.

123. All pupils have sketchbooks and the majority are used well to show drawings, ideas and different media. For example, sketches and watercolours, coloured inks, crayons and pastels are used. Additional notes discuss feelings and comment on the pictures. Sketchbooks are less successful as examples of preparatory work where pupils try out and evaluate different techniques in colour, tone, line, form and composition.
124. In Year 10 and Year 11 where more experienced teaching is shown, pupils are encouraged to work from a number of sources. Progress since the last inspection is seen clearly in the use of objects for drawing as well as flat copy and photographs. Still lives are set up around the room and teachers use collections of interesting items from the Luton Resource Centre to aid drawing. Additionally, when pupils call on their own experiences to generate ideas this strengthens the relevance of the exercise. However, senior pupils still require intensive teaching to learn to observe closely, master drawing techniques and show curiosity about art work. Although some careful delicate drawing was observed in Year 11 the use of tone, proportion and perspective was undeveloped. When a number of items including a small Mexican tin nativity and a Buddhist Stupa were being copied, few pupils knew or asked what the collection of artefacts were. All were offered the same media, pencil and paper. Nevertheless, teachers work hard to emphasise the importance of enquiry and experimentation and pupils know that art lessons provide an environment in which they are expected to do well.
125. There is only one computer in the department and this is well used. Some interesting work is being achieved using a digital camera and scanner to supplement pupils' work in printing, sculpture and the formation and development of ideas.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

The overall quality of provision is **good**.

Strengths

- Pupils achieve very well in textiles and well in food technology.
- The overall teaching is good. It is very good in textiles technology.
- Assessment practice in textiles and food is exemplary.
- Overall subject leadership is strong.

Areas for development

- Well below average standards in resistant materials.
- Limited work schemes and assessment in resistant materials.
- Lack of provision for systems and control and graphics.
- Limited curriculum time in Years 7 to 9.

126. In the more recent GCSE results, overall standards in design and technology were broadly in line with national average though with considerable variation between courses. Pupils taking textiles technology achieved very well with nearly two thirds gaining grades A* to C. Food technology pupils also showed good achievement but those taking resistant materials did significantly less well when compared with their prior attainment and their other GCSE results. GCSE child development is also a popular and successful option course with recent standards well above national average and with a significant proportion gaining the highest grades.
127. Pupils come to the school with knowledge and skills in the subject well below national average and generally make good progress. This particularly true of pupils for whom English is an additional language with most making significant progress in their development of technical language as well as practical skills. Overall standards in Year 9 are little below national average and for most pupils this represents good achievement, particularly in food and textiles where pupils develop a sound understanding of the processes of design and making.

128. In textiles, pupils work with confidence and some accuracy in using different techniques and equipment. In one lesson, higher attaining pupils were able to use ICT to scan and reproduce embroidered logos and patterns as part of their chosen design. Most pupils, with the help of well-structured learning schemes, are able to plan their work and model and modify their design ideas. In food technology, most pupils have limited background knowledge of a range of foods and processes but, with support, are able to analyse different products effectively and successfully plan and make their own food products. In resistant materials, pupils make only limited progress in their understanding of design and in planning and presenting their ideas. The range of practical making experiences does, however, enable them to develop mostly sound skills in handling tools and equipment.
129. The great majority of pupils opt for the food and textiles technology options and continue to achieve well in those areas. Overall standards seen at GCSE are close to national average with notable differences in the three courses. In textiles, pupils in their major projects show strong and varied designs carry out effective research and development using ICT to develop their ideas and are confident in their measuring, cutting, tacking and machining skills. In the food option, pupils have a more modest range of design ideas but trial and modify their ideas well using product analysis and produce successful outcomes. Standards in resistant materials are significantly lower than in the other two options. Pupils' skills are strongest in manufacturing products but knowledge of, and skills in, research, planning and graphical and ICT presentation are limited.
130. Pupils following the GCSE child development course respond well to the thorough and effective teaching and make good progress in completing their course-work studies and examination preparation.
131. The overall standard of teaching is good and there is very good and on occasion excellent practice in the textiles and food technologies. In those areas the dedicated and knowledgeable specialists are actively involved in the development of the subject and their own teaching. This is reflected in well-planned and structured learning materials, the best of which include differentiated activities that enable pupils to work on different activities and at different levels of challenge. Class management is generally strong and enthusiastic with staff having high expectations of pupils, and this successfully engages the interest of pupils and ensures they do their best.
132. The very good lessons have clear learning outcomes, make effective use of exemplar material and use questioning effectively that encourages pupils to provide extended answers and helps them consolidate and develop their understanding. Assessment practice is very good in textiles and food with pupils having a very clear idea of their progress and what they need to do to improve. Teaching in the resistant materials area is satisfactory though lacks a number of the strengths elsewhere. In that area, pupils receive informed support that helps them develop practical skills but the learning activities and assessment are both insufficiently developed. These limitations result in pupils' making less progress in their design, planning and communication skills.
133. The overall head of design and technology provides strong and positive leadership though the current school practice of maintaining separately managed course areas inhibits the co-operation and the sharing of the best practice across all three aspects of the subject. There are considerable strengths in the textiles and food curriculum areas with increased use of ICT and some computer aided manufacture, but there are weaknesses in the management and provision of resistant materials. There are also weaknesses in graphics, structures and systems and control. The development of these aspects is limited by the whole school curriculum organisation including the amount of timetable time. More positively, the accommodation and resources have been much improved since the last inspection and teachers enhance most of the teaching areas with varied and informative displays.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Good teaching and support of pupils in class results in good progress throughout the school.
- Teachers work closely as a team with a commitment to raising standards.
- Activities are carefully planned and resources are produced which provide an appropriate challenge to all groups of pupils.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils undertake insufficient fieldwork in Years 7 to 9.
- There is limited study of the local area.
- Little use of ICT is planned for pupils, especially in the lower school.

134. Standards are low on entry to the school but pupils make good progress during Key Stage 3 so that by the end of Year 9 attainment broadly matches national expectations. There has been a steady improvement in GCSE results in recent years although the results in 2001 were lower than in the three previous years. The number of pupils attaining grades A* to C was well below the national average, but all pupils who took the examination gained at least grade G; this proportion is above the average. The department accounts for the fall in the number of higher grades by the personal circumstances of several more able girls. The evidence of the inspection indicates that pupils currently in Years 10 and 11 are making good progress and that their attainment is in line with national expectations. In both key stages pupils with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs are very well supported and are making good progress. Higher-attaining pupils are also suitably challenged and achieve well.
135. Pupils working in a Year 7 class had gained good map work skills since joining the school and clearly understood new concepts of the geography of settlement and they were able to use these in a decision making exercise in which they had to locate a new village. The development of enquiry skills in the classroom is a notable feature of the curriculum so that Year 8 pupils were able to weigh up conflicting interests in the proposed construction of a dam and Year 11 girls were evaluating conflicts resulting from coastal protection schemes in Yorkshire. Behaviour is good. Girls are keen to do well and take pride in their work. They work very well in groups, sharing responsibilities amongst themselves. Pupils show a high degree of sensitivity when considering current world issues. One example seen was a girl comparing people's ability to cope with flooding in Bangla Desh and in Oxfordshire. Similar empathy was shown in a diary written by a girl in Year 9 from the point of view of a recent migrant to a Brazilian shantytown.
136. The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 ranges from satisfactory to excellent. All lessons observed in Years 10 and 11 were very good or excellent. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject and introduce topical events into lessons. Lessons are thoroughly prepared, using a variety of resources and activities which pupils find stimulating, and the aims of the lessons are made clear to the pupils. Lively delivery captures pupils' interest although sometimes teachers tend to direct oral work too much and restrict girls' opportunities to contribute. The teachers work hard to prepare many original resources of high quality, such as a town redevelopment simulation and a video comparing the north and south of Italy. An outstanding feature is the very effective use of support teachers and classroom assistants. Teachers know their pupils' very well so they can give out resources and set tasks according to their needs. This extends the higher-attaining pupils as well as supporting pupils who have recently started to learn English and others with special educational needs. For example, in the Year 8 lesson exploring the North-South divide in Italy, the alternative written work which followed discussion of the video included choosing alternative words, using a writing frame, which helps to structure pupils' thoughts, and free writing. Exercise books are marked thoroughly, providing helpful support for the pupils and periodic assessments are well developed.

137. Schemes of work for the lower school are detailed and well resourced but there are shortcomings in respect of fieldwork and ICT so that all the requirements of the National Curriculum are not being met. Although pupils are encouraged to research topics on the Internet and to use ICT to present some of their work, there is little planned use for all pupils and it does not extend to using it as a tool for the analysis of data, for example. Fieldwork in Year 7 consists of simple traffic surveys and an optional visit to the visit to study the redevelopment of a former industrial site into Bluewater shopping centre and there is none in Years 8 and 9. The schemes of work also miss the opportunity to draw on the local area to any extent. More planned use of ICT and fieldwork in a local context would enhance further the pupils' experience and interest.
138. In Years 10 and 11 there is a very well-conceived fieldwork unit based on Hitchin which results in some GCSE coursework of very high quality. The Certificate of Achievement has been introduced this year for a class of girls with low prior attainment and during the inspection they were working keenly and with confidence and making good progress in a comfortable environment. The department's approach to teaching literacy and numeracy skills is well developed and supports the school's strategy.
139. The management of the department is good. Administration is efficient and monitoring of teaching and pupils' progress is secure. The geography teachers work well as a team, sharing ideas and responsibilities for curriculum development, and have a shared commitment to raising standards. Progress since the last inspection has been good and areas noted for improvement have all been tackled: all pupils are challenged in their work, homework is used well, assessment procedures are well developed and resources are good.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Good teaching with high expectations of standards and behaviour.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and use of appropriate literacy strategies to assist pupils in their language learning.
- The support given to pupils.

Areas for improvement

- More books suitably matched to the needs of higher and lower attaining pupils.
- Greater variety of teaching strategies.
- Greater use of ICT.
- Monitoring teaching and sharing within the department the very good practice.

140. Standards of attainment in history are below national expectations at the end of Year 11, as measured by the GCSE A* to C grades for 2001. However, the standards attained by all pupils are in line with expectations, and pupils do attain at the higher levels. The average points score per pupil at GCSE in history is in line with the national average. Erratic attendance among a small group of pupils, in Year 10 and Year 11, has an adverse effect on standards. The achievement of pupils is good because of the positive teaching and the support given to pupils for whom English is an additional language. History is a popular choice and attracts more pupils than is usual in Years 10 and 11. The standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 9 are good. Pupils of all abilities who regularly attend the school make good progress.
141. By the age of 15 pupils can conduct a lengthy investigation into the changing lives of women in Britain. They understand the role of women in the middle ages and how, in the 17th century, the popular view of witchcraft affected women. Pupils interpret statistical data on population changes in the 19th century in Britain. They can identify reasons why there have been movements in the birth and death rates. Pupils use this information to structure extended writing, which gives their views clearly supported by evidence. Whilst pupils can analyse and use information gained from

written and numerical texts, they do not exhibit the summary and notation skills associated with the exploration of written texts. Whilst they are knowledgeable about the changes in the treatment of disease and the change in social attitudes they lack the fuller understanding of the wider implications events and attitudes. Higher attaining pupils have these skills and develop work that is clear, thoughtful and accurate. The larger number of lower attaining pupils are well supported in writing activities but could be better supported in the development of reading skills.

142. The standards achieved by pupils at the age of 13, as reflected in the Year 9 teacher assessments, are good. Again, pupils of all abilities make good progress. All pupils gain a good grasp of a topic and are able to use a variety of evidence, and higher attaining pupils are challenged to identify wider issues surrounding a specific event. For example, by the age of 13 pupils, know about the assassination of President Kennedy in the USA in 1963 and are able to investigate the evidence of the assassination and understand some of the contradictions raised by the Warren Commission Report. The higher attaining pupils can take this investigation further and identify the wider issues associated with "conspiracy theories" surrounding the event, by understanding the wider context - the events in Cuba and criminal activity - around the time of the crime. In Year 8, for example, pupils investigate the ideas underlying medicine in 17th century Britain and explore how these were reflected in treatments for the plague in London in 1665. The higher attaining pupils begin to recognise that doctors, at the time, held differing and conflicting views about the treatment of illness. In Year 7, pupils understand that there were competitors for the throne of England in 1066 and, by using evidence of the Bayeaux Tapestry, they understand the sequence of events at the battle of Hastings. The higher attaining pupils identify some of the issues faced by the French speaking Norman William 1st, on his accession. Pupils are well supported in their writing and are helped to express their ideas and to use examples of evidence to support them. They are encouraged to make decisions based on evidence and find information to support these. They are encouraged to read their work in progress to the group. However, they have few opportunities to use books at appropriate levels to extend their reading skills.
143. The improvement since the last inspection has been good. The extension of the course, to include the development of historical skills, has been very good. Very good use is now made of evaluating and analysing evidence so that pupils see events from different sides and question versions of the story. Good use is made of developing chronology in time lines and in sequencing events. Structured writing is good and pupils draft their writing before completing final versions. More could be done to develop the skills of noting-taking and annotation - associated with understanding and analysing suitable printed texts. The regular assessment of pupils is good and helps pupils to improve their work. These assessments are used to improve standards and pupils in Year 10 and Year 11 begin to evaluate their own learning.
144. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teaching is mostly good and better. Occasionally, it is excellent and sometimes satisfactory. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. There is good and better teaching across all years of the school. Teachers have very good knowledge of their subject and are aware of the learning needs of pupils with English as an additional language. They have good relationships with the pupils, which help to build trust and confidence in the pupils. Pupils are aware of what is expected of them and they rise to the challenges offered by their teachers. Teachers support pupils of different abilities well and it is this support which allows pupils to make good achievements.
145. The opportunities for pupils to learn are good. Pupils, consequently, are well behaved, polite and interested in their work. The further development of the use of ICT would enhance the range of learning available to the pupils. There is an over-use of photocopied material, which is not always used to best effect and is not always attractive to pupils who are less confident in reading. Better provision of well-produced books and other texts to match the learning needs of all pupils would improve the teaching and learning. The classroom environment could be more stimulating with better use of displays and articles of interest. This would enhance the learning of pupils.
146. The management of the department is good. Teachers are well supported and there is a consistent approach by all teachers across all years. The system of assessment is good and informs pupils about their learning. Standards are set and expectations are high. Further

improvement could be made in the monitoring of teaching. There is a need for better guidance in teaching and learning for the higher and lower attaining pupils. Using the monitoring of teaching as part of in-service training for teachers would ensure that appropriate strategies are introduced to meet the needs of all pupils.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Quality of teaching and learning, especially in Years 7 to 9.

Areas for improvement

- Management of resources to ensure clarity of provision.
- Classroom design and layout in specialist areas.
- Staff training in other subjects across the school.

147. Progress since the last inspection has been significant with a new department emerging staffed by skilled and informed teachers.
148. Attainment by the end of Year 9 is now in line with national expectations, but still remains below national expectations by the end of Year 11. The school is effectively addressing this with the introduction a specific lesson per week targeted at a new vocational course.
149. All pupils receive a series of lessons that focus on the core skills of Windows based software, which promote a good understanding of computer applications. Pupils in the lower school understand the logic of traffic lights in control technology, with teaching staff delivering this element of the curriculum in complementary styles. Data base usage is understood with good practical activities in the use of this application in a model Video Shop context. Pupils learn how to filter information for data retrieval and explain their understanding with good word processing skills.
150. Older pupils work through a newly introduced project that has been designed to develop the core skills learnt lower down the school. This vocational based project, based around the workings of a Radio Station, has been well chosen to promote interest, motivation and research opportunities. Pupils learn how to reproduce organisational charts, marketing promotional materials, spreadsheet applications, analyse and interpret bar graphs and tables and produce reports. Pupils relate to the activities well. Pupils access the Internet for research purposes, using 'wizards' in desktop publishing software, using cut and paste techniques, file management skills and data organisation. For some older pupils, there has been the need to "catch up" significantly on the core skills and their achievement is very good.
151. In other subjects, noticeably music, physical education, business studies, English, science, modern foreign languages, geography and mathematics, the use of computers is now emerging in a satisfactory manner. Subject specialists use the computer department suites in an effective and relevant manner. Much use of the Internet access was observed for research purposes, enhancing pupils' learning experience considerably. This is less successful outside the reach of the computer suites, where the quality of the equipment available is less than satisfactory and needs developing.
152. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 (mainly from the IT Department) is very good, and in Years 10 and 11 it is satisfactory. The strength of the teaching is the clarity of lesson objectives and the very clear and thorough planning in teachers' preparation. The high level of personal expertise is helpful and motivating for pupils. Planning of lessons with older pupils across the subjects needs attention to the implementation of ICT. Some good examples were observed in Spanish, music, religious

education and geography, where pupils were expected to ensure that their research was targeted appropriately.

153. Teaching skills across the school are developing well, with the IT department leading training opportunities for teachers to upgrade their skills. Despite outside difficulties in the organisation of this training, the school has made good progress in the area, and this is having a good impact on learning.
154. Personal development, behaviour and relationships are good across the subject with pupils showing respect and care for both the equipment and the teaching staff. Pupils value the access to the machines and the school's computers are extensively used during lunchtime activities and research in the library. This is a high pressure point for staff to manage, which is undertaken effectively. Pupils, who are disaffected, find computers most helpful in their learning, and it was noticeable in lessons where pupils were less engaged, behaviour was significantly improved when practical computer applications were introduced.
155. The curriculum is developing well in most subjects with the integration of higher-level computer skills emerging. In music, good quality software is used to enable pupils to compose complex chord sequences. In Spanish, pupils researched Madrid's web sites for a travel guide. In science, information gleaned from electronic encyclopaedia was integrated into pupils' presentation on direct energy. In religious education pupils researched the Paddington Rail Crash to prepare discussion points.
156. The school has spent much time and energy on the development of resources available and has introduced new computers. Current networked machines are well supported by efficient staff and a technician, but the heavy reliance still on teaching staff to undertake many technical support functions is unhelpful. The management of the subject is well informed and is good. Clear planning and high expectations have meant that the school is developing well a pragmatic approach to teaching of computer skills. Good learning opportunities for pupils with special educational needs are found within the computer department through the good use of differentiation of support worksheets that have been carefully prepared. Similar good quality extension materials have been prepared within lesson plans to enable those more able pupils identified. This is not the case, however, for pupils who have English as an additional language, as little support was evident during the inspection. The only support offered to this cohort of pupils was from others whilst sharing machines.
157. The classrooms that house the computer suits are adapted classrooms and need to be reviewed so as to ensure that all pupils are able to see the whiteboards easily and without discomfort. In one computer suite that houses older computers, the layout is cramped and unhelpful. Both these issues are in hand within the department development plan, which is a helpful and supportive document.
158. The department is well placed to ensure that the good practice found within the confines of the department can be successfully integrated across the rest of the curriculum as the developing computer centres evolve within individual departments.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES-

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

French and Spanish

Strengths

- Speaking skills in Spanish.
- Use of ICT.
- The skills of some of the teachers and many of the language support assistants.

Areas for improvement

- There is insufficient time available for the study of French/ Spanish.
- There is too little use of different materials and activities for pupils with different abilities.
- The acoustics in three of the language rooms are poor and have an adverse effect on the teaching of languages.
- In the less good lessons the foreign language is not sufficiently used by teachers and pupils.

159. At the end of Year 9, standards in French in 2001 were below the national average for girls, whilst in Spanish they were exactly in line with them. At the end of Year 11, standards in both languages in 2001 at GCSE were below the national average, Spanish at 50 per cent grades A* to C and French at 42 per cent. This represents a gradual decline in Spanish since 1999 and steady improvement in French from previous very low standards. All pupils obtained at least a G grade in both languages, better than the national average. Standards of work in all lessons are in line with national expectations apart from two French classes, one in Year 8 and one in Year 9.
160. In Years 7 to 9 speaking skills are not well developed in French, largely because of poor pronunciation, whilst in Spanish, in all classes, speaking skills and pronunciation are good. In the scrutiny of work, pupils in Years 7 to 9 in Spanish show a rapid development of writing skills, whilst in French there are few signs of any independent writing, even by higher attaining pupils. In Years 10 and 11 there are good examples of extensive and fluent writing from pupils. Mistakes are few, indicating that pupils have a good grasp of grammatical principles. In the work of one Year 10 pupil there is evidence of good research skills using the Internet. In all classes pupils with special educational needs attain similar standards to those of other lower attaining pupils, as do many pupils who have English as an additional language. Amongst these, however, are some of the higher attaining pupils, one of whom writes very fluently in Spanish in Year 11. Progress over time is good in Years 7 to 9, especially in Spanish, whilst it is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11.
161. Since the last inspection there has been a gradual improvement in French and Spanish. The use of ICT is now good; girls use the Internet for research and for e-mail correspondence particularly with a school in Spain. Resources have improved and are now adequate, although there is not yet an overhead projector for each teacher. However, the acoustic problems mentioned in the last report have only been improved in one of the rooms. In three others learning is made difficult by echoing walls, high ceilings and a lack of carpeting. At the time of the last inspection there were exchanges arranged with schools in France and Spain, but these have now been discontinued.
162. In Years 7 to 9 teaching and learning were good or very good in all except one Spanish lesson (which was judged satisfactory). In these lessons there was very good use of Spanish by teacher and pupils, with activities suited to the needs of the pupils and a brisk pace. As a result, girls learned rapidly and were enthusiastic in their response, one girl saying 'we learned lots and lots today'. French lessons in Year 7 to 9 were, however, less good, with two unsatisfactory lessons and none that were good or better. There were examples of slow pace, too little or inappropriate use of French and a lack of clarity in what was expected of the girls; in one of the two unsatisfactory lessons class management was not good. As a result, the learning was limited with pupils having too little opportunity to practise their skills. In the least satisfactory lessons concentration was poor and many pupils spent time chatting in English.
163. In Years 10 and 11 most Spanish lessons were good, although in one in Year 10 negative attitudes from a small minority made the learning unsatisfactory despite positive features in the teaching such as good planning, appropriate activities and good support from both the learning support assistant and also the foreign language assistant. In the other good lessons there were examples of good use of ICT, and high expectations for the use of Spanish throughout the lesson. In these lessons there was good and very good learning, with pupils often in charge of their own work. One Year 11 French lesson was inspected. Here there was good learning because of the teacher's good planning, expectation of high standards and firm friendly control. Pupils indicated that they had been making good progress over time, 'fantastically good progress', in the words of one girl.

164. Pupils with special educational needs learn as well as others. For example, in one Year 8 class in Spanish, one girl was encouraged to develop her skills well, both by the learning support assistant and by the teacher who made special efforts to include her in oral work. However, one weakness of provision throughout the inspection was a lack of differentiated materials for pupils of differing attainments. For example, one bi-lingual girl in a Year 7 French lesson was expected to do the same beginners' work as the rest of the class, and as a result, her learning needs were not met. Equally in the scrutiny of work there was evidence, particularly in French in Year 9, that all pupils were being expected to do the same activities with insufficient opportunities for higher attaining pupils to attain high standards.
165. Pupils' attitudes are mainly positive and behaviour good. Sometimes it is better than this, especially in Spanish and the one Year 11 French lesson.
166. The curriculum in French and Spanish is not satisfactory. In Years 7, 10 and 11 the amount of time given to languages is below the recommended amount, whilst it is above the recommended amount in Years 8 and 9. In Year 7 there is a lack of continuity as girls are taught one language for the first half of the year with the other language offered in the second half. In Year 9, only two lessons a week are given to French and two lessons to a choice between Urdu and Spanish. Whilst these arrangements offer choice of languages in Year 10, and also provide a good opportunity to try out more than one foreign language, they also give too little time for the mastery of either French or Spanish, and therefore make it difficult for pupils to attain really high standards.
167. Social education is a strength of the department with many examples of pupils working together well. Assessment procedures are satisfactory with good arrangements for recording and tracking the progress of pupils. Marking is done well with corrections clearly indicated, but the policy of not giving grades for written work misses the opportunity for pupils to be fully aware of the standard that they are reaching. Overall, management is satisfactory. Weaknesses relate to the inconsistencies within the department, for example in the use of the foreign language as the main means of communication, resulting in a range in the quality of the teaching. The department benefits from the good work of many language support assistants and by the modelling of French and Spanish by the two foreign language assistants.

Urdu

Strengths

- Most teaching is good or very good.
- Most oral work is of a very high standard.
- Pupils work hard and are enthusiastic about the subject.
- They make rapid progress and achieve very good GCSE results.

Areas for improvement

- There are problems of control in a minority of lessons.

168. Pupils starting formal Urdu lessons in Year 9 have had a wide variety of contacts with the language. A majority speak a similar language at least some of the time at home but most have had little experience of reading and writing an alphabet that may be completely new to them. Even in Year 9, oral work is of a high standard and, over the three-year course, pupils make remarkably rapid progress in reading and writing. By the end of Year 11, they reach standards that are well above what might have been forecast from their attainment in other subjects. In 2001, 66 out of 106 entries scored grade C or above and only two scored as low as grade G. No national comparisons are available for Urdu but these are very good results.
169. A generally favourable inspection report was made on Urdu in 1996. Since then, the quality of oral work has improved still further, with pupils particularly good at the preparation of dialogues.

The last report referred to a 'dry diet of examination preparation' but the diet is not at all dry now. Timetable arrangements have improved. This represents good progress since the last inspection.

170. Teaching and learning are mostly good or very good. Lessons are very well prepared and are mostly well managed. The two Urdu teachers have had no opportunity to observe and learn from each other particularly in sharing strategies for class management and this led to poor learning in two lessons seen. Good results are achieved because of students' general approach to and enthusiasm for the subject, the pride they take in their work and because of purposeful teaching. Lessons take place almost entirely in Urdu, with whole-class oral work quickly reaching the standard of higher level GCSE. Reading and writing are more individual and provision is made for the wide range of proficiency. Dictionaries are available but are little used.
171. The provision of Urdu makes a significant and wholly worthwhile contribution to the curriculum. The good departmental documentation has not been related specifically to Urdu.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Good teaching and departmental management.
- Improving standards in the lower school.
- Wide range of extra-curricular opportunities.
- Use of ICT.

Areas for improvement

- Schemes of Work need revision.
- Assessment procedures need further development.

172. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 produce work in line with national expectations. They sing well and meet expectations in performing and composing, with the exception of Year 9 where performing skills fall below required levels of attainment. When pupils listen to and appraise pieces of music, they show satisfactory knowledge and understanding of musical vocabulary.
173. Pupils' standards of attainment vary in Years 10 and 11, but overall remain just in line with national averages. A significant minority of pupils in Year 10 is working below expectations in performing and composing although Year 11 pupils meet expected standards in these areas. A small but increasing number of pupils take the GCSE examination each year and results are well above the school average.
174. At both key stages, pupils display good skills in the use of information technology when playing and recording performances and compositions.
175. Overall, pupils make steady progress. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language produce appropriate work according to their individual talents and abilities and make similar progress to their peers. Higher attaining pupils make good progress in Years 10 and 11. Eighty-three pupils take instrumental lessons provided by tutors from the Luton Music Service. Extra-curricular activities cover a broad range of musical styles and traditions, ranging from a wind band to a samba group. These lessons and activities contribute significantly to pupils' musical progress.
176. Pupils' response to music is good, particularly in Years 10 and 11. They work collaboratively and respond well when listening to and evaluating each other's work. Older pupils organise the resources they need for their individual work responsibly and work independently and with concentration when required.

177. The quality of teaching is good. Lesson aims and objectives are clear and lessons are conducted at a brisk pace. Expectations are high and there is continuous attention to the needs of individuals, particularly with older pupils. In a lesson, for example, on the history of jazz with Year 8 pupils the lesson was structured well so that the girls were fully occupied and working at an appropriate pace on their tasks of practising a blues chord structure and singing. The teacher's high expectations were evident in the insistence on full participation and clear tone in the girls' singing. The final part of the lesson involved recording the pupils' work and then discussing how they could improve the overall standard of performance.
178. More use could however be made of homework to reinforce and develop learning. Schemes of work and assessment procedures need review in the lower school and need to be more closely linked to National Curriculum level descriptors.
179. The allocation of time for music in the curriculum meets statutory requirements and is just adequate. Time for pupils to listen to and evaluate each other's work is very limited. The department is well led and instrumental teaching is well organised. Accommodation and resources are sufficient for the department's needs at the present time.
180. The music department makes a significant contribution to pupils' cultural development through curricular planning and the wide range of extra-curricular activity. There has been good improvement since the last inspection, most notably the consolidation of standards in the lower school and improved planning to ensure an integrated approach to all aspects of the music curriculum.

Expressive Arts

181. A small sample of dance and drama lessons was seen. Teaching is satisfactory with some good features. The teacher evidently has good relationships with pupils and she knows them well. This allows her to conduct lessons in an informal manner and although pupils often become excited and noisy in their work control is never lost. Pupils enjoy the work and clearly gain a sense of success. In one Year 11 lesson pupils were undertaking a range of tasks related to their performing arts course work. Standards were average. Some pupils were using the dance option to utilise their traditional dance experience. They worked together well. In the 2001 examinations, 11 pupils took the examination and five pupils achieved grades A to C. All pupils gained a grade in the A to G range. National comparative data is not available. Some pupils find the completion of course work difficult, particularly as the practical work is often rehearsed after school. Younger pupils work well together although pupils find generating ideas difficult and the teacher structures the work. In one lesson some good work emerged along the lines of a 'West Side Story' type of theme. Pupils began to develop real sense of tension between the various groups and quality work was developing.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Pupils have very good attitudes to the subject.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and high expectations.
- The good range of extra curricular opportunities.

Areas for improvement

- Monitoring of the teaching to ensure greater consistency.
- Time for the subject.

182. Pupils enter the school with poor standards in physical education. Standards of attainment vary within and between the Key Stages, but are below national averages, as were the 2001 GCSE

results. Very few pupils are achieving beyond Level 4. In swimming, standards are well below average for many pupils.

183. In games, the girls lack basic skills, for example, stopping and hitting the ball in hockey. This creates problems in Years 10 and 11 because the lack of basic ball control limits the development of the tactics essential for competitive play. In swimming, the more able are taught to improve their strokes and techniques. The high percentage of non-swimmers presents a management and organisational problem for the teacher. In gymnastics, pupils have limited skills and a narrow range of movement vocabulary. Attention to the quality of movement is lacking. There is little evidence of more advanced gymnastics work.
184. The poor standards on entry to the school present a challenge to the teachers. Planning for the greater development of skill, coordination and control is essential if pupils are to improve beyond their current levels. New schemes of work are being developed for completion in summer 2002. These provide greater clarity, with learning objectives and learning outcomes for each lesson. The new GCSE short course begun in Year 10 should bring about an improvement in the examinations from 2003.
185. Most pupils can describe the effects exercise has on the body and its contributions to health. Teachers refer to these health benefits regularly within lessons. The use of heart rate monitors and establishing individual training zones gives a personal dimension to the learning.
186. Overall, teaching is satisfactory and all pupils make satisfactory progress. Some teaching is good and some very good. Teachers have good relationships with the pupils and establish a good ethos for learning. They expect pupils to be safely prepared, in smart kit, to behave well and follow instructions. Questioning is used well to develop and consolidate learning. Learning objectives are shared with the pupils so that they know what it is they are trying to do or improve. These objectives are revisited towards the end of the lesson to allow the girls to see the progress they have made. Demonstrations, when used, promote learning through the shared understanding of good technique, good tactics or quality of movement. Although teachers do praise pupils, it could be used more extensively and linked to formative assessment to aid progress.
187. Much work has been done since the last inspection on pupils evaluating their work. This is a feature in many lessons, providing an opportunity for pupils to reflect on their own performance and that of others. This reflection aids pupil progress. All lessons are planned well to a common format. Pupils with special educational needs are identified and there is evidence of differentiation by task and differentiated resources. This ensures activities present an achievable target to the different groups of pupils, although the lower attaining pupils still need more support. In some lessons the higher attaining pupils are used to assist learning.
188. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are usually very good. They behave less well when the task is not clear or matched to pupil capabilities. Pupils enjoy lessons and appear keen and enthusiastic. They wear smart and safe kit. Levels of participation are very high throughout the school. Most pupils can work independently of the teacher. They work well with each other when planning sequences, organising teams or helping to set out apparatus.
189. In the few lessons where teaching is unsatisfactory, the teacher does not give enough attention to helping the girls improve their performance. In these lessons the teacher manages the pupils and equipment well but only interacts to keep the class moving or maintain behaviour. The department needs to clarify safe practice especially when combining apparatus. Teachers sometimes do not give enough feedback to the pupils, with clear guidance on how to improve the skill or quality of the movement needs attention.
190. Where teaching is good and very good the constant feedback from teacher both encourages and motivates, whilst identifying for the pupil the area for development leading to improvement. This is especially evident in the swimming lessons.

191. The school offers a good range of extra curricular activities. This has been a key area for development with Year 7 and 8 pupils. Pupils value the variety although some pupils experience difficulty attending the after-school provision. There are competitions between schools and within the school, which gives opportunities for pupils to gain success and pupils view such opportunities as important. A small number of pupils take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme at the Bronze level.
192. The school has good indoor and outdoor accommodation enabling pupils to experience a range of activities. The sports hall and pool are shared with the boys' school and are used by the community in the evenings. This can create problems with equipment. Some of the gymnastic apparatus needs replacing following the recent apparatus inspection.
193. The time allocation is a particular issue in the Year 11 core programme and the core entitlement of two hours per week is not met. The length of the lesson also causes a problem because by the time the girls are changed the amount of time for the lesson is limited. In view of the low skill level on entry to the school, progress will be limited until pupils have enough time for skills to be both developed and consolidated.
194. Involvement in a future School Sports Coordinator Initiative in the town should be beneficial. The opportunity afforded by a member of department as Year Tutor for Year 7 from September 2002, should be utilised to establish closer links with feeder primaries. Overall the leadership and management of the department are satisfactory but there are weaknesses in the monitoring of teaching to ensure consistency across the department. The department has identified specific professional development relating to gymnastics as a priority.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall the provision for Religious Education is **good**.

Strengths

- There is some excellent teaching in the department.
- Some GCSE results are above the national average.
- The behaviour and attitudes of the pupils are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Statutory requirements are not being met in years 7 to 9 because of insufficient time.
- A more consistent policy on differentiated work would enable more pupils to make better progress.
- More emphasis on the spiritual aspect of the pupils learning would balance out some of the more factual learning that the pupils do.
- The pupils could produce more written work over the longer period of time.

195. Overall the standards of attainment in public examination at the age of 16 are above the national average for the pupils doing the full course GCSE examination. In year 2001, about 60 per cent of the pupils gained the higher grades of A* to C. This was down on the previous year but there is a general upward trend in examination results. The standards of attainment of the pupils doing the short course GCSE examination in year 2001 is below national averages but not significantly so. About 50 per cent of the pupils gained the higher grades of A* to C. It is a new course for the department and so no comment can be made about trends over time. Overall the achievement of pupils in Years 10 and 11 is good, as their entry level to school is low and some attainment in Years 7, 8 and 9 is also low. Specific groups of pupils such as those with special educational needs, those who are at an early stage of language learning and some gifted and talented pupils, could make better progress in some classes if the work were more carefully targeted at their needs.
196. The standards of work of the older pupils seen during the inspection, in their books, in the lessons and in discussion with pupils is broadly in line with the standards expected at this time Overall on

both courses, the pupils show a developed knowledge and understanding of Islam and Christianity. The pupils have acquired an adequate knowledge and understanding of the beliefs, values and traditions of the religions that they are studying and they can meaningfully consider and respond to many of the moral and social issues that are presented by the course syllabus. These include issues of abortion and racism. The ability of the pupils to relate the religious to the moral aspects and to be aware of how they might support or conflict could be more developed. The pupils are good at giving a verbal response. Their written work is of a variable quality and is not extensive in the amount produced over their period of study.

197. The standards of attainment at the age of 14 are below the standards indicated in the Agreed Syllabus though there is some variation above this. The pupils have a basic knowledge and understanding of several world religions including Christianity, Hinduism and Buddhism. The pupils can understand and use some religious language and concepts in a meaningful way and they can identify and describe a good number of significant aspects of these religions. Some work in Year 7, however, could be much stronger in this respect. In years 7, 8 and 9 as a whole, the pupils' knowledge and understanding is stronger in terms of the facts and figures of the religions they are studying than it is in being able to see and appreciate the possible relevance this information might have for their own lives and experiences. The pupils are good at giving verbal responses. The written work in their books is limited both in terms of quantity and quality. Some of the work has an inadequate religious content. More emphasis on writing would help not only with their literacy skills but would also replace some of the low level, time consuming tasks that the pupils sometimes do. Overall achievement of pupils is satisfactory though in some cases it is less so, particularly in Year 7 and there are instances where work more suited to particular groups of pupils would enable the higher and lower attainers to progress better. Differentiated work would also be of benefit to the pupils who have special educational needs and those with English as an additional language, though at present they are achieving satisfactorily and very well respectively.
198. Overall the attitude and behaviour of the pupils across the school are very good. The pupils are well behaved, attentive and concentrate well on their work. In the main they are able to sustain this concentration, though when the pace of the lessons is a bit slow some concentration is lost. The pupils show respect for the feeling, values and beliefs of others and they show respect for one another and the teacher. The pupils are keen to verbally participate in the lessons when the teachers encourage them to and conversely less so when the opportunities do not arise. The pupils are able and willing to reflect on a range of religious and moral issues that the lessons bring up, though these opportunities need to be more in number for them to develop these skills yet further. Overall the pupils have a very positive attitude to the subject and this is reflected in good public examination results.
199. Overall the teaching is good with some satisfactory and some excellent features. All lessons are well planned and the objectives are clear. At times the objectives of the lessons need to be clearer to the pupils themselves, such as in writing them more consistently on the board. This would give clearer focus to their learning in the instances when they have forgotten what the stated objectives are. Some teaching, particularly in Years 7 to 9, needs to have more emphasis on learning from religions as well as learning about them. In this way the pupils will be able to relate their knowledge and understanding of world religions more to their own lives and experiences. Some work particularly in Year 7 needs to have a stronger more explicit religious emphasis. Learning in some lessons in Years 7, 8 and 9 is not as fast as it could be, particularly over the longer period of time and learning as a consequence is similarly weaker over the longer period.
200. The teaching in Years 10 and 11 tends to be stronger than in Years 7 to 9. Differentiated work needs to be more widely and consistently available as many higher and lower attainers are not learning as well as they could. In general, the teachers use a very good range of strategies and exercises to help the pupils learn and to keep them interested in their work. In the cases where the teaching is excellent, the expectations are high and demanding tasks are set for the pupils so that a lot of ground is covered in the time available. Also in these lessons the teacher challenges the pupils to give personal responses to many of the religious and spiritual issues, and different

levels of tasks are set which enable the pupils with different abilities to achieve as best they can. The lesson objectives are also set out clearly so that the pupils can get on with their learning with less dependence on the teacher.

201. Homework is regularly set and there is an active assessment policy. Marking is done but it could be more detailed and give more information on how the pupils could make improvements in their work. Overall there is a lot of teaching excellence in the department but this needs to be shared more. An active monitoring programme, both of the teaching and learning would help considerably with this and ensure that standards of the pupils work are consistently high across the department.
202. The subject is well managed by a head of department. There are also two other specialist teachers of religious education so the staffing is good. Statutory requirements are not being met in Years 7 to 9, as there is insufficient time to teach the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus. There is a good range of GCSE courses in Years 10 to 11. The head of department is in the process of revising some of the schemes of work and lesson plans. The accommodation is good but there is significant need of more resources if the subject is to be delivered effectively. The department uses some ICT in its teaching. The department makes a good input to the pupils' literacy skills but written work needs more emphasis. The department makes a significant contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision in its study of many moral issues and world religions.
203. Progress since the last inspection is mixed but overall good. The issue of time in Years 7 to 9 needs to be addressed. Currently there is insufficient time in the lower school to meet fully the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. However, because of the strengths of the other aspects of the provision, this does not detract from the overall good provision. The standard of teaching and learning has risen markedly since the last inspection and some examination results are good. The issue of teaching resources still needs attention as it is having an impact on the pupils learning. No other particular issues were raised at the last inspection. The department has a very good capacity to succeed particularly through more monitoring by the head of department.