

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **KING ARTHUR'S COMMUNITY SCHOOL**

Wincanton, Somerset

LEA area: Somerset

Unique reference number: 123869

Headteacher: Mr Ian Campbell

Reporting inspector: Mr Roger Holmes  
2632

Dates of inspection: 4<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> March 2002

Inspection number: 192881

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 – 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: West Hill  
Wincanton  
Somerset

Postcode: BA9 9BX

Telephone number: 01963 32368

Fax number: 01963 33735

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Edward Hoadley

Date of previous inspection: 4<sup>th</sup> November 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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2632	Roger Holmes	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it?  The school's results and achievements  How well are pupils taught?  How well is the school led and managed?  What should the school do to improve?
14404	Alan Rolfe	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development  How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
13623	Jim Waddington	Team inspector	History  Information and communication technology	
1288	Dorothy Barraclough	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	Special educational needs
17868	Eileen Metcalf	Team inspector	Art and design  Religious education	Equal opportunities
18846	Philip Priest	Team inspector	Music	
17923	Michael Shaw	Team inspector	Mathematics	
3758	Tony Barringer	Team inspector	English	English as an additional language
23402	Berhinda Singh	Team inspector	Science	
10385	Keith Hopkins	Team inspector	Design and technology	
17833	Karen Ardley	Team inspector	Geography	How good are curricular and other opportunities?
2628	Jim Edwards	Team inspector	Physical education	How well does the school care for its pupils?

The inspection contractor was:

Independent School Inspection Services (ISIS)

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

King Arthur's Community School is a mixed comprehensive, taking boys and girls between the ages of 11 and 16. There are currently 732 pupils on roll, which is fewer than in most secondary schools. Numbers have risen in recent years as the school has become more popular and drawn pupils from an increasingly wide area around Wincanton. Almost all of the pupils are white and all but two have English as their first language. Six per cent of pupils have free school meals, which is lower than in most schools. This reflects the high level of employment in the area; other social indicators for the area are also above average.

When they come into the school at 11 years of age, pupils' attainment is very close to the national average and has a wide range, including roughly equal numbers of pupils well above and well below the expected level for their age. Twelve per cent of pupils are on the school's register for special educational needs, which is lower than average and five per cent have statements, which is more than in most schools.

The school has recently achieved sports college status and has had a large sports centre built, which is used jointly by the school and surrounding community.

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

Kind Arthur's is a good school. Pupils achieve well in almost all subjects, as a result of good teaching. The school has very effective leadership, which has established a strong sense of purpose. Pupils are treated very well and they respond positively, developing well in maturity and lively self-confidence. The school provides good value for money.

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

- Pupils make good progress in almost all subjects.
- Standards are high in mathematics and physical education.
- Teaching is good and pupils have positive attitudes to work.
- Relationships are very good.
- The headteacher provides very good leadership.
- Links with the community are very strong.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.
- Support for pupils with special educational needs is very good.

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

- Boys do not do well enough in Years 7 to 9.
- The use of assessment information in a few subjects.
- The use of monitoring to improve the quality of teaching.
- The teaching is literacy across the curriculum, especially the use of spoken language in some lessons.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has improved well since its last inspection in November 1996. All four of the key issues raised in the report have been addressed: provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has been improved considerably; spelling is now taught effectively; good use is now made of speech in French; monitoring of teaching has been introduced, although this still needs some development. The school has also achieved Sports College status and has well-developed plans to build on this success in order to raise standards generally. The school is well placed to continue moving forwards.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	B	B	B	D

**Key**

well above average      A

above average            B

average                    C

below average            D

well below average      E

Pupils' standards of attainment are very close to the national average when they join the school at age 11 and cover a wide range of ability with roughly equal numbers of pupils well above and well below average. They make sound progress overall in their first years in school, and when they take their National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9, the results are in line with national averages for English, above in mathematics and below in science. This has been the pattern for the last few years. Girls do better than boys, even more than in most schools. The relatively low performance of boys and the results in science are causing the school's progress to begin to fall behind the rate of progress in other schools at this stage. In the work seen in school, standards are lower than expected in science, at the expected level in English, design and technology, geography music and religious education. They are higher in mathematics, art and design, history, ICT, modern foreign languages and physical education.

The school's results at GCSE are better than at the end of Year 9. They have been consistently above the national average for several years and this represents good progress from pupils' starting points when they joined the school. A larger proportion of pupils achieve the highest grades of A\* and A than in most schools and the school's overall targets for GCSE performance are met. Girls attain higher grades than boys, but the difference is far less marked than at Year 9. The highest results are in mathematics, physical education and statistics. Results in other subjects are at least as high as in most other schools. Standards of work seen in the school are at the expected level in science, geography, ICT, music and religious education. They are higher in English, art and design, design and technology, history and modern foreign languages. Standards are particularly high in mathematics and in physical education.



## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have positive attitudes to the school and take a pride in doing well.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They respond well to the responsibilities they are given.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are very good in the school. Pupils develop a lively self-confidence as a result of the way they are treated in school.
Attendance	Satisfactory overall, with less unauthorised absence than in most school.

The school gives the pupils considerable responsibility, trusting them to use the school's facilities at break and lunchtime and respecting their views and ideas. They respond particularly well, developing into considerate, confident and self-assured members of society.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is good overall and even better in the older classes than earlier in the school. A high proportion of very good and excellent lessons were taught, amounting to almost one in three lessons in Years 10 and 11 and one in four overall. This is an improvement on the situation at the time of the last inspection. The great majority of lessons are planned carefully and meet the pupils' needs. They are often lively and stimulating so that pupils learn well and make good progress. Teaching is at least satisfactory in all subjects, but there are some inconsistencies, which have not been picked up or addressed through monitoring. In English, design and technology, history, ICT and modern foreign languages, teaching is good. It is very good in mathematics, art and design, physical education and for pupils with special educational needs.

Literacy and numeracy skills are taught satisfactorily across the school. In accordance with the government's schedule numeracy is less well developed because the strategy has been introduced more recently. Approaches to literacy are well established and effective in English, history, modern foreign languages, art and design and in personal, health and social education (PHSE).

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum is broad and balanced and there is a very good range of extra activities. Provision for PHSE is very good and careers education is good.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good overall. Provision is very good when pupils are given specialist support, particularly when they are withdrawn from lessons. This specialist support is often not available to pupils in classes and provision is then satisfactory.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very few pupils need this support. Provision is satisfactory.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall. Provision for spiritual development is good; arrangements for moral, social and cultural development are all very good. The strength of this area of the school's work contributes well to pupils' good behaviour and the way they grow in maturity.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school takes very good care of its pupils. Arrangements for assessing how well they are doing are satisfactory and improving.

The school has a satisfactory partnership with parents. They have a high regard for the work of the school and the way it treats its pupils. Links with the wider community are very strong and contribute well to the pupils' learning.

#### **HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides very effective leadership and with the strong support of the senior management team he has established a clear sense of purpose for the school, understood by all. The school is well managed and runs smoothly.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are very committed to the school. They are well informed and carry out their duties responsibly. Apart from the provision of a daily act of collective worship, all statutory requirements are met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school analyses its overall performance effectively and bases its development plans on these findings. The performance of some individual teachers is not monitored well enough.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are used effectively. The school has been particularly successful in gaining sports college status and has imaginative plans to use this position to enhance provision throughout the school.

Overall the school has adequate resources and accommodation to support its work. Spending decisions have been made wisely after due consideration of alternatives.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pupils make good progress</li><li>• Teaching is good</li><li>• There are high expectations</li><li>• The school is approachable</li><li>• Management is strong</li><li>• Children grow in maturity</li><li>• There is a wide range of extra activities</li><li>• Pupils like school.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The quantity of homework – some want more, others less</li><li>• More information about pupils' progress</li><li>• More opportunities to work with the school.</li></ul>

The inspection team agrees with the parents' overwhelmingly positive views of the school. With regard to their concerns: homework is used well in most subjects but the timetable is not always followed, so that there are peaks and troughs; reports are useful, but do not always give enough details on progress; the school provides ample opportunities for parents to become involved in its work and encourages them to do so.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

- 1 When they come into the school at age 11, pupils' attainment is very close to the national average. Results of the National Curriculum test, which they take at the end of their primary schooling, in English, mathematics and science have all been close to average over the past few years. Standardised tests carried out in the school confirm this picture and also indicate a wide range of ability on entry, with roughly equal numbers of pupils well above and well below average.
- 2 Pupils make steady progress overall in Years 7 to 9, but there is some variation between subjects. In the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2001, results were in line with the national averages for English and mathematics, but below in science. Results in 2001 were a little lower than usual in all three subjects but there has been a similar pattern for the last few years, with pupils making good progress in mathematics, sound progress in English but unsatisfactory progress in science. Within these results girls did relatively better than boys, even more than in most schools; girls achieved particularly well in mathematics and boys performed much worse than usual in science. Overall the results at the end of Year 9 are boosted by the good performance of girls and depressed by the lower than usual performance of boys. Test results have stayed much the same over the last five years while the national averages have risen. Consequently, although the results have remained broadly average, they have moved from above the national average line to below, largely as a result of under-performance in science.
- 3 The standards of work seen in the school in Years 7 to 9 match these test results, being above average in mathematics, average in English and lower than usual in science. The differences between boys' and girls' performance is far more noticeable in written work than in lessons, where boys often show good understanding of the work being covered. In other subjects in Years 7 to 9, pupils make sound progress and achieve at the expected levels in design and technology, geography, music, and religious education. Pupils do better than usual in art and design, history, ICT, modern foreign languages and physical education.
- 4 Pupils make good progress and generally achieve well in Years 10 and 11. GCSE results have been above average for the last five years and are rising in line with the improvements nationally. The results represent good progress overall from pupils' starting points when they come into the school. In the GCSE result for 2001 the proportion of pupils achieving at least five passes at grade C or above was higher than in most school. More pupils than usual achieved A and A\* grades in several subjects, indicating that able pupils do particularly well. The proportion of pupils achieving at least one grade G or better, whilst in line with the national average, was not as high as other measures of GCSE performance. Overall the results met the school's targets for GCSE although the percentage achieving five A\*-C grades was a little below the optimistic figure that had been set. Results in mathematics, physical education and statistics are significantly higher than in most schools and other subjects do at least as well as in other schools. Girls' performance contributes more to this strong picture than boys', but not as much as in the Year 9 tests; girls exceed their national average in all subjects while boys exceed theirs in all but art and design, science, English and geography.

- 5 From the work seen in the school, standards in Years 10 and 11 are at the expected levels in science, geography, ICT, music and religious education. They are higher than usual in English, art and design, design and technology, history, and modern foreign languages. In physical education and mathematics they are particularly high.
- 6 Pupils with special educational needs achieve well and generally make good progress in nearly all subjects. In geography they make satisfactory progress but would make greater progress with more support. In history and in some French lessons, achievement is enhanced because there is good match between the task and the needs of the pupils. All departments receive copies of individual education plans but they are not used consistently for lesson or course planning.

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

- 7 Pupils' attitudes to learning, their behaviour, and personal development are good, and relationships in the school are very good. Generally, all these aspects have been maintained since the last inspection and have a positive impact on pupils' learning.
- 8 Almost all pupils enjoy coming to school. Discussions with pupils in all year groups indicate that they have positive attitudes to learning. They are able to identify favourite subjects and a significant number of pupils participate in the wide range of extra activities provided by the school. The majority of pupils are interested in what they are doing and take an active part in their learning. They listen carefully to their teachers' instructions, maintain concentration for appropriate periods of time and make positive contributions to classroom discussions. In many lessons pupils showed the ability to work well together, sharing ideas and learning with each other. For example, in a Year 8 PHSE lesson where pupils were discussing children's rights, pupils' attitudes and behaviour were excellent throughout the lesson. Pupils had researched this topic prior to the start of this lesson, and were able to present a wide range of rights relating to children's physical needs, and emotional and intellectual development. They made good contributions to classroom discussions, for example on child labour, and were able to recognise that with rights come responsibilities. Pupils clearly enjoyed the lesson; they worked well together sharing ideas and learning from each other and therefore made very good progress in the lesson – indeed, they did not want the lesson to end. Most pupils take a pride in their work; they are able and willing to talk about their work and explain their ideas.
- 9 The overall standard of behaviour is good. In the majority of lessons behaviour was good and often very good. For example in a Year 11 science lesson, where pupils were testing reaction times before and after drinking coke, their attitudes and behaviour was excellent throughout the lesson. Pupils worked hard, they enjoyed the lesson and had very good relationships with teachers, support staff and their peers. These elements have a positive impact on pupils' learning. In only a very few lessons was there any evidence of even low levels of unsatisfactory behaviour or poor attitudes to learning. These occurred mostly in Year 7, and were often linked to uninspiring teaching. Pupils in all year groups are aware of what is and is not acceptable behaviour; they have a good understanding of the school's system of rewards and sanctions, and readily accept the principle of sanctions as an appropriate response to instances of poor behaviour.
- 10 Pupils are very well behaved in the curriculum support base and work hard. They may be there for different reasons, such as temporary disability, illness, behaviour difficulties or slow learning difficulties, which mean that they need time to catch up on certain tasks which they have not had time to finish in class. They get on well

together, respect each other's feelings and do not disrupt each other or the calm ambience of the base.

- 11 Pupils move about the school in a mature and sensible manner. There were no instances of inappropriate behaviour observed in the circulation areas at lesson change over or at lunchtime despite the narrowness of some of the corridors. Pupils interact well together, outside lessons, before and after school, at lunchtime and breaks. They chat and socialise together without any signs of rowdy or boisterous behaviour. Generally pupils treat school equipment with care and respect, there is no evidence of vandalism and there is little litter around the school.
- 13 Staff, parents and pupils themselves confirm that instances of bullying are rare, and the school has in place an anti-bullying policy to enable them to react quickly to any known instances of bullying. Parents and pupils have indicated that these procedures are effective. The number of pupil exclusions in the last academic year was relatively high, with 57 fixed term exclusions relating to 28 boys and 9 girls. There have not been any permanent exclusions. Inspection of the school's exclusion records indicate that the reasons for exclusions are due to serious violation of the school's code of conduct, and that generally, the use of exclusion has been appropriate in the circumstances, contributing to the generally good standards of behaviour and ensuring no one is permanently excluded.
- 14 Pupils make good progress in their personal development. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good, and so too are relationships between pupils. In lessons, pupils work well together in pairs and small groups, taking turns and sharing resources; they listen to and respect the views of teachers and their fellow pupils. The school does not encourage pupils to undertake a wide range of whole school responsibilities, such as prefects or bus monitors, although there is a school council that enables pupils to have an impact on the school policies and procedures. Rather, the school encourages all pupils to take responsibility for their own actions, and to use their own initiative to become independent learners. This is fundamental to the school's ethos. For example, in a Year 10 GCSE art lesson, all pupils showed a good understanding of how to research their topics and speak with confidence when explaining how they are developing their ideas, and in a curriculum support lesson an older pupil was given the responsibility to help a younger pupil, who had been excluded from lessons, and as a result he made good efforts to complete his work. Pupils are developing their understanding of other people's faiths and cultures and are encouraged to reflect on the impact of their actions on others, mainly through their studies in religious education and PHSE. For example, in religious education, they were studying the five pillars of Islam, and in art African symbolic myths.
- 15 Overall attendance is satisfactory with 8.6 per cent of sessions missed through absence. This is broadly in line with the national average of 9.2 per cent, and similar to that found at the time of the last inspection. Unauthorised absence is much lower than the national average. Registration is undertaken morning and afternoon and meets statutory requirements. However, inspection of attendance registers show a significant number of pupils take holidays in school time and this has an adverse impact on overall attendance levels.

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

- 16 The quality of teaching is good. Across the school 96 per cent of lessons were at least satisfactory and 60 per cent were good or better. Teaching is most effective in Years 10 and 11, where 30 per cent of lessons were very good or excellent,

compared to 25 per cent in Years 7 to 9. Both of these figures are high and represent an improvement since the last inspection.

- 17 Teaching is at least satisfactory in all subjects overall. It is a good in English, design and technology, history, modern foreign languages and ICT. Teaching is very good in mathematics, art and design and physical education and in the specialist support of pupils with special educational needs. This very positive picture is an important strength of the school but there is nevertheless room for improvement, where individuals and departments can learn from the good practice elsewhere in the school.
- 18 Almost all lessons are orderly. Relationships are very good in the school and almost all teachers manage the pupils' behaviour well and achieve a purposeful atmosphere in the classrooms. Pupils respond very positively; their attitudes to work were very good or excellent in a third of lessons and were at least good in the great majority of lessons. They listen well, follow instructions and answer questions willingly as a result of the positive way they are treated. In the very few lessons that were spoilt by unsatisfactory behaviour, teachers did not make effective use of the school's agreed policies and procedures and allowed unacceptable behaviour to go unchallenged.
- 19 Most lessons are planned well and have clear objectives, setting out what the pupils will learn. In a few cases, the planning concentrates simply on what the pupils will do. This leads to a lack of focus on the lesson's main purpose and is one of the factors that make many science and geography lessons less effective than others in the school. In many lessons the material is chosen very carefully so that it is interesting to the pupils, and the teacher makes it even more stimulating by presenting it in a lively and imaginative way.
- 20 Many lessons capitalise on the pupils' good oracy skills with teachers encouraging pupils to discuss their work. This helps them to deepen their understanding and remember the material better and also further strengthens their ability to express themselves clearly. The school's literacy policy advocates this approach, as does the helpful section on teaching and learning in the staff handbook. It is used very successfully in many subjects, including English, history and physical education, but opportunities are missed to exploit this important route to learning in some lessons.
- 21 Literacy skills are taught satisfactorily across the school. There are effective approaches in English, history, modern foreign languages, art and design and in PHSE lessons. In these subjects teachers emphasise the importance of using language accurately and clearly and pupils benefit by developing deeper insights into the work they are covering; for example in a history lesson pupils examined contemporary cartoons and writing to explore English attitudes to Ireland at the time of the Easter Rising. Their discussion explored the ideas of rebellion and freedom extensively and linked naturally to current issues of terrorism. Numeracy is also taught satisfactorily overall. The school's policy for numeracy is at an early stage of development, in line with the national timetable for its introduction, and some subjects do not yet make as much use as they could of the pupils well developed numeracy skills. ICT skills are taught well in Years 7 to 9 and pupils make satisfactory use of them across the curriculum. This represents considerable improvement since the last inspection, but there are still some shortages of equipment and software in departments, which reduces the use that can be made of ICT in these areas.
- 22 In-class support for pupils with special educational needs, where available, is usually good and in English it is very good. In the best lessons seen, the support teachers

focus well on the individual pupil for whom they are responsible but also, when appropriate, help other pupils who may be experiencing difficulties. However, there is a need for more learning support in history, geography and music where pupils would make greater progress if more help were available. Support is not as good as it ought to be when it is not planned into the lesson and when the support assistant is not well used by the teacher.

- 23 The quality of teaching of pupils who are withdrawn into the curriculum support base is very good and at times excellent. Also, the quality of support that the pupils receive is excellent. Pupils are enabled to be effective at whatever task they undertake and work hard to achieve their success. The work they are given is challenging and the atmosphere in the class is purposeful, dynamic and conducive to learning. When appropriate, older pupils are asked to help younger pupils with their work and they carry out this responsibility well.

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

- 24 The quality and range of learning opportunities offered to pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 are good. The curriculum is broad and balanced. In addition to the subjects of the National Curriculum, pupils follow courses in religious education and in PHSE. Pupils have equal access to all subjects. The time allocated to each subject is appropriate. Twenty pupils in Year 9 have been identified as at risk of disaffection or as having needs and interests best met by following a vocational programme. These pupils follow courses in basic literacy and vocational education accredited by the Award Scheme and Accreditation Network (ASDAN). Time for this programme is created by disapplying them from the National Curriculum requirement for a modern foreign language to be studied. In Year 10 these pupils will follow a programme leading to a National Vocational Qualification Level 1.
- 25 The quality and range of learning opportunities offered in Years 10 and 11 are good. Within the National Curriculum requirements all pupils have appropriate choice of option subjects. The range and choice of the subjects offered is appropriate for the size of school. All pupils take a short course in religious education and the vast majority are successfully entered for the GCSE examination at the end of the course. The school is attempting to meet the range of needs of the pupils by broadening the curriculum beyond the academic focus of GCSE courses. A review of the curriculum for Years 10 and 11 is currently taking place and as part of the review a new vocational pathway has been offered to pupils currently in Year 9. From September 2002, pupils will be able to choose to study a programme leading to GCSEs in vocational ICT and Art and Design. It is expected that up to 90 pupils will follow the new vocational pathway and the school is being proactive in ensuring that the new courses are chosen by pupils from the full ability range. In addition a very small number of pupils, ten, will be given the opportunity to study for a General National Vocational Qualification in manufacturing, engineering or health and social care. These qualifications will be offered by a partnership of Yeovil College and ten secondary schools from South Somerset. A supplementary curriculum is offered to pupils who wish to take both history and geography, an additional foreign language or a short course in ICT. These pupils can study for GCSEs in geography, a language or ICT by attending supported self-study sessions after school. The school day is well organised to meet the needs of pupils and make the best use of time.
- 26 The current arrangements for ICT in Years 10 and 11 need developing although pupils are achieving appropriate standards. The subject is delivered through all subjects of



the curriculum and the school's systems for planning, delivering and monitoring the required ICT opportunities are not good enough to ensure that all pupils have similar experiences. The senior managers are very aware of this situation and have drawn up detailed plans to improve the provision for ICT from September 2002. The actions identified include providing additional hardware and software, requiring detailed curriculum plans from subject departments and the provision of staff training and professional development.

- 27 High priority is given to the provision for PHSE throughout the school. The curriculum is coherent and well planned to provide continuity and progression for pupils' personal development. It meets the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum with regard to drugs awareness, sex education and citizenship. The curriculum is supported well by good quality resources and learning activities. Staff working with their tutor groups use the PHSE materials well. The course offers a very good opportunity for pupils to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding of a wide range of issues and topics. The provision for PHSE is monitored effectively and evaluated by the heads of year.
- 28 Pupils with special educational needs have access to a broad and balanced curriculum. They are withdrawn particularly for literacy but do not miss other subjects. This is the only extra support that some pupils receive unless they have a statement. The quality of the literacy programme for pupils who learn in the curriculum support base is very good. The base also serves as a very valuable resource across the curriculum for those pupils experiencing behavioural or learning difficulties in class. All pupils who come into the base know that they have to work hard and settle quickly to the task they have been given.
- 29 The school is committed to promoting equal opportunities for all and has a very good equality of opportunity policy covering all the relevant aspects. The school meets the requirements of the Sex Discrimination Act and the Race Relations Act. Displays around the school promote an awareness of an ethnically diverse society and all groups are represented in non-stereotypical ways. Pupils are made aware of their own position and are sensitive to the needs of others. They are helped to become aware of world-wide inequalities through religious education, PHSE and in geography. The curriculum recognises cultural diversity and prepares pupils well for life in a multi-cultural society. There are no equal opportunities issues that need rectifying within the curriculum. Pupils do a formal study of equal opportunities within the religious education programme of work and all pupils are made aware of the inherent moral and ethical principles. This helps them to make informed judgements that will be of benefit in life.
- 30 The provision for extra-curricular activities is very good. There is an impressive range of activities on offer. Each lunchtime there are sporting, musical and artistic opportunities for pupils to choose. Some subjects make very good provision for visits and trips such as theatre visits in English. There are also opportunities for pupils to visit other countries.
- 31 Provision for careers education is good, and is co-ordinated by a senior member of staff, and is delivered by form tutors via the school's PHSE programme. Pupils in Year 9 have good access to careers guidance; they are advised of the information available in the careers library. Pupils and parents receive good quality information about the choices available to them as they consider their subject options. Parents have the opportunity to attend a meeting at which they can discuss the options

booklet with the careers co-ordinator, and can meet with subject heads and the Somerset careers advisor.

- 32 The school's very good links with the community provide good support for the careers programme. All pupils in Year 10 have the opportunity of a two-week work experience provided by local business and commerce. Pupils are encouraged to find their own placements, making both verbal and written contacts to secure their placements. The few who do not find their own placement are assisted by careers staff. The programme is well organised and monitored. However, the school does little evaluation of the effectiveness of work experience placements. The school make good use of the local and wider community with many visits to museums, concerts, theatres and field trips in the local area. Together with a range of visitors to the school, including theatre workshops on bullying, use of alcohol and relationships, prison and police officers, these make a positive contribution to pupils' learning. The school provides a wide range of adult education classes through its collaboration with the community education department. The development of the sports centre on site has provided enhanced facilities for both pupils and the community.
- 33 The school has good links with partner institutions. The transitional arrangements from Year 6 to Year 7 are good and are co-ordinated by a senior member of staff who, along with the special educational needs co-ordinator, visits partner primary schools. Information gained from these visits is used in the make-up of tutor groups. Year 5 pupils have a two-day experience of the secondary school, and a further day in Year 6 designed to ensure that pupils are fully prepared for the transfer. Parents are invited to an open evening at which they receive information about the transfer arrangements. The school has good links with other secondary schools, particularly with those with sixth form facilities. Pupils are provided with good information about the courses available, and individual guidance from Somerset careers advisors. The good links with local colleges have enabled the school to develop a range of vocational courses for pupils in the forthcoming academic year.
- 34 Provision for implementing the Key Stage 3 Strategy is satisfactory. Effective and detailed plans have been drawn up and implementation of these is effectively monitored and evaluated by the deputy headteacher as Key Stage 3 Strategy Manager with support from the governing body and the Local Education Authority Link School Development Adviser. Teachers and learning support assistants have been involved in appropriate professional development. Subject leaders have identified priorities and actions for their departments and pupils involved in catch-up activities are benefiting from the specific focus on literacy skills.
- 35 Since the last inspection improvements have been made to the curriculum with regard to providing more alternatives to academic GCSEs and opportunities for pupils to study more than one foreign language. Arrangements for ICT were weak at the time of the last inspection; they have improved, with much more equipment now available and effective arrangements for teaching in Years 7 to 9. Further development is need in Years 10 and 11 to ensure that all pupils meet the full range of the subject. Plans for September 2002 will improve this situation. Improvement to the curricular opportunities offered since the last inspection is overall satisfactory.
- 36 Overall, provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. The school has a very good policy with guidance for all subject teachers on how and where they can promote pupils' awareness of all these values. The school is very successful in realising its aims in practice and all these aspects are evident in pupils' behaviour, composure and demeanour around the school.

- 37 Provision for spiritual development is good. There is a very positive promotion of pupils' self-esteem and worth in all areas of the school. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural policy is embodied in the school's aims that pupils will enjoy learning, realise their potential and leave school with high self-esteem and live and work developing self-respect and respect for others. There is evidence of the school's success in these respects. In assemblies pupils get opportunities to reflect on issues of human rights and are given insights into the courage of those who demonstrate for the rights of others, such as the courage of the women of Chile and the student who defied the might of the Chinese army in Tiananmen Square in his protest for human rights. In religious education pupils learn the spiritual elements of the major world religions. In art pupils gain a very good understanding of the spiritual elements underpinning the art of other cultures, particularly in the art of some African and Native North American cultures. Pupils study spiritual elements such as joy and sorrow, good and evil, ambition and deceit in literature, especially in poetry and plays like *Macbeth*. Visiting speakers such as the Samaritans give pupils an insight into human suffering and also experience of the generosity with which others respond to and help those in need. The school does not make provision for a daily act of collective worship and to some extent there are missed opportunities for spiritual reflection here.
- 38 Provision for moral and social development is very good. The moral and social aspects of education are well inter-linked. The aim is to have a rationale that is based on reason and that can be explained to pupils and by pupils. Pupils display a clear understanding of right and wrong, particularly with regard to their relationships with each other, their teachers and the wider community. Moral issues are studied formally in geography and religious education where pupils study issues such as giving aid to the needy. These arise in consideration of global issues and economic practices. Pupils' understanding of right and wrong is evident in their social development. The school takes an active role in challenging the morality presented in modern television culture that aims to shame and humiliate individuals. The school feels that these offer poor examples for pupils to follow and there is an aim to educate pupils to a better moral and social understanding. There are no prefects, as a matter of principle. This is viewed as selective and offering credit only to those chosen. All pupils are expected to have firm self-discipline and the school is successful in achieving this aim. There is a school council to give pupils the opportunity to be represented in the management of the school. The school promotes the ideas of democracy and all those who wish to serve their class are invited to make their presentations in hustings and elections are held. Teachers are keen to develop pupils' social skills in all lessons. There is a clear expectation that pupils will help each other where possible, respect each other and listen and learn from each other. There are frequent opportunities for pupils to work together in small groups. This provision is particularly good in music, art and modern foreign languages.
- 39 Provision for cultural development is very good. There is a very wide range of extra-curricular provision that supports pupils' cultural awareness. There are visiting theatre groups presenting drama from a wide range of cultures. There are plays and concerts by pupils that help them to study music and literature of cultural significance. Pupils visit art galleries, including the National, the Tate and the Tate Modern. They visit museums including the Barbican, the Imperial War Museum and the Museum of Medicine. There are foreign exchanges with France, Germany and Belgium. There is an annual ski trip to Europe and one planned this year to America. Pupils are encouraged to enter competitions, particularly in art, poetry and short stories, and they achieve considerable success. In religious education pupils study the cultures associated with the major world religions. They study the art and music of different

cultures including non-western cultures. All these give pupils a broad basis in learning that enhances their studies and helps raise standards.

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

- 40 The school provides pupils with a very good level of personal support and guidance in an environment in which they are happy and secure. The school's pastoral system is well organised and makes a positive contribution to pupils' learning. There are good procedures for the monitoring and promoting of good attendance and behaviour.
- 41 The pastoral care for pupils is very good and there have been some improvements since the last inspection. Parents report that they are pleased with the care offered to pupils and the quality of support given by the school. The school's pastoral system is very well organised; form tutors and heads of years know their pupils well and are responsive to pupils' needs both inside and outside the classroom. Pupils new to the school benefit from a well-organised induction programme and pupils report that they are pleased with the support they get in settling into their new school. Pupils are valued by staff and continuity of care is enhanced by pupils staying with the same form tutor throughout their time in the school. Pupils in all year groups say that this has increased their confidence in approaching their tutors should they have any problems of either a personal or academic nature, and that appropriate advice and guidance would be forthcoming. Overall, the school's pastoral system provides pupils with a good level of academic and personal support. This enables pupils to concentrate on their lessons and has a positive impact on their learning.
- 42 Form tutors and heads of year support pupils jointly and work together well. An assistant headteacher has overall responsibility for monitoring the pastoral work throughout the school. Tutors and subject teachers monitor pupils' academic progress and all pupils have a mentor to discuss targets for improvement. This is an improvement since the last inspection. All pupils understand the range of sanctions and rewards and follow the school's code of conduct. Commendation slips encourage pupils to raise their attainment in the lower school and letters of commendation are sent to parents recognising pupils' achievements throughout the school. The Record of Achievement is available from Year 7 when pupils record their own achievements. In Years 10 and 11 it becomes more formative and used by pupils for mock interviews and entry into the next stage of their education.
- 43 The quality of the school's assessment and monitoring of pupils' academic performance is overall satisfactory but variable across subjects and departments. Assessment is very good in English and art where pupils are very aware of National Curriculum levels and involved in self-assessment activities. Marking is constructive and formative and includes very good target setting. The results of assessment are used to inform and modify the planning of teaching and learning. Assessment is good in modern foreign languages and design and technology. In these subjects pupils are involved with assessment activities and they know exactly how well they are performing. They have clear targets for improvement and they know precisely what they need to do in order to meet their targets. In science, mathematics, history, geography, music, physical education and religious education, summative assessment of end of unit performance is satisfactory. Pupils are given feedback through marking which identifies how well they are performing in each subject with regard to attainment and effort. What is less well developed in these subjects is clarity about assessment criteria linked to National Curriculum levels and pupils being made aware of exactly what they need to do in order to improve. Pupils are not given regular opportunities to be involved with the assessment of their own learning and progress.

- 44 Some subject departments are analysing, interpreting and applying the performance data generated centrally in the school to raise achievement and identify under-performance. This information, based on prior attainment at the end of primary school and in a range of tests taken in Year 7, has only recently been provided to subject departments. The current effectiveness of the use of the data varies between departments. With consistency of use, the school has the potential to target attainment for all pupils in all subjects and intervene when appropriate to ensure that performance for all groups of pupils is maximised.
- 45 The school is committed to providing a safe working environment for both staff and pupils, and has in place a health and safety policy that meets statutory requirements. Procedures for general risk assessment are in place. However, inspections are not always recorded, and fire risk assessments have not been carried out. There are good risk assessment procedures for educational visits. First aid procedures are good, there are sufficient qualified first aiders, and satisfactory records of accidents and injuries are maintained. Overall, arrangements for child protection are good. The school has a child protection policy in place linked to the Area Child Protection Committee's procedures. A senior member of staff is the designated teacher and has received appropriate training on child protection procedures. All teaching staff are provided with a copy of the child protection policy; however, lunchtime supervisors have not received child protection training. The school has good links with outside agencies and the designated teacher attends case conferences as appropriate.
- 46 The school has good procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance. Administrative staff monitor absences on a daily basis; pupils who are known to have poor attendance records are closely monitored, and contacted on a 'first day' basis when absent. Heads of year follow up any unexplained absence and liaise with the education and welfare officer on a weekly basis, at which time they discuss and agree appropriate action to be taken in relation to instances of poor attendance. In an effort to discourage truancy, the school carries out random attendance checks during the school day.
- 47 Overall, the school has good procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour. There is a well-established code of conduct, that provides a progressive system of rewards and sanctions. The rewards system is popular with pupils and the majority of pupils readily accept the principle of sanctions as an appropriate response to instances of poor behaviour. Incidents of poor behaviour are notified to heads of year through the referral system; where there is cause for concern about any pupils' behaviour, heads of year refer cases to the pastoral support group, who seek to provide appropriate support designed to moderate poor behaviour

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

- 48 The school's partnership with parents is satisfactory overall. Approximately 40 per cent of parents returned the parents' questionnaire and 29 parents attended the parents meeting. Overall parents' views of the school are good. Almost all parents are pleased with the progress their children are making in their learning, the quality of teaching and the expectation that their children will work hard. Parents also indicate that their children enjoy coming to school, that the school is helping them to become more mature and responsible, teaching is good and the school is well led and managed. Evidence from the inspection confirms these positive views of the school. A significant minority of parents expressed concerns about the school, including the information that they receive about their children's progress, the amount of homework

their children receive and the standard of behaviour in the school. Evidence from the inspection indicated that all parents are given the opportunity to discuss their children's annual report; however, there are some inconsistencies in the content of pupils' reports. Information from the parents meeting indicated that parents have mixed views on the provision of homework: some considered homework provision excessive whilst others thought it to be insufficient. Evidence from the inspection indicates that the amount of homework pupils receive is appropriate and makes a good contribution to pupils' learning, although there are sometimes peaks and troughs in the amount set when the timetable is not followed. The overall standard of behaviour in the school is good; however, there are pockets of poor behaviour, and this is reflected in the school's relatively high number of fixed-term exclusions.

- 49 Overall parents' involvement in their children's learning is satisfactory. Only a few parents help in classrooms and then not on a regular basis. However, there is good parental support for concerts, musical events, providing financial support to their children to receive tuition on a range of musical instruments and sporting events where some parents are involved, for example, refereeing football matches. Heads of years say they have good relationships with parents and indicate that they receive good support from parents when required. For example, the school has recently introduced a policy of identifying pupils who are a cause for concern and involving parents at an early stage in discussion on how appropriate support and guidance can be provided. This has been well received and supported by parents. One of the objectives of the school's homework is to involve parents in their children's learning and this is working in most cases. There is a small but active Friends of the School Association which arranges social and fund-raising events, and they have raised significant funds that have been used to provide additional learning resources which have had a positive impact on pupils' learning.
- 50 The links with parents of pupils with special educational needs are very good. The school does all that it reasonably can to involve the parents in the learning of their children. The information, advice and support that the parents receive about assessment procedures and the progress of their children are very good. Parents are informed when the school gives extra help; they are invited to annual and other reviews and are asked to send their views if they cannot attend.
- 51 Overall, the range and quality of information provided for parents are good. The school prospectus and governors' annual report provide a wide range of information about the school and its activities.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

- 52 Leadership is a strength of the school, as it was at the time of the last inspection. The senior management team has been reduced to five members and reorganised over the last few years, but has maintained a clear sense of purpose and a sharp focus on the academic and personal development of pupils. The headteacher, in particular, has a well-developed, firmly held and clearly expressed philosophy, which sets out the way young people should be treated and the value that should be given to their views and ideas if they are to reach their full potential and contribute positively to society. Senior management share these convictions and as a result a strong and distinctive ethos has been established in the school. Pupils are given considerable freedom and treated with respect, and they respond by acting responsibly and developing usually mature attitudes to their work and relationships with others.

- 53 Management roles within the senior management team have recently been re-aligned, with the appointment of two new assistant headteachers, one of whose responsibilities is to develop the use of assessment information in the school. Effective systems have been introduced since September and the use of assessment is continuing to develop well as subject departments make increasingly consistent use of the information provided. Other roles within the senior management team are also appropriate and carried out effectively. The deputy headteacher supports the headteacher very well across a wide range of areas in addition to having specific responsibility for curriculum and staff development, both of which are managed successfully. Pastoral support comes under the overall management of an assistant headteacher. This is carried out very effectively, ensuring that there is consistency between the year groups over important areas of policy whilst allowing heads of year appropriate freedom to develop their own ideas and initiatives. The senior administrative officer also contributes well to the team and ensures that administrative systems run smoothly and match the requirements set out in the school policy.
- 54 Other staff with management responsibilities generally carry out their duties well. Almost all subjects are managed well and management is very good in English, mathematics and design and technology. All year groups are managed well and heads of year are taking on increasingly important roles in reviewing pupils' performance across all of their subjects.
- 55 The provision for pupils with special needs is very good and it is very well managed. There are good links with primary schools and also with post-16 institutions. One of the support assistants will soon accompany a pupil for his interview at a local college to ensure good continuity of study. There are good procedures for the identification of need and monitoring of progress for all pupils who have special needs. The school has very good links with local education authority services and outside agencies and uses their help very effectively. However, links with the governing body should be strengthened. The department has almost finished transferring documentation to the new Code of Practice, well ahead of the deadline, and the co-ordinator has provided some training for staff concerning the new Code of Practice. The curriculum support base is very well managed and is a very welcoming and warm-hearted area for vulnerable pupils, where staff are challenging and supportive of the pupils in equal measure.
- 56 Plans for development are based on an accurate analysis of the school's position. This has enabled the school to use resources effectively to make improvements, such as in the provision of ICT resources. Targets for examination results have been met for 2001 and pupils are on track to meet the 2002 targets. Although the school has effective systems for monitoring its overall effectiveness, for example identifying that performance is better at GCSE than at the end of Year 9, its procedures for monitoring the work of individual teachers are less effective. These procedures were established after the last inspection and at first the monitoring was carried out by senior staff. Monitoring has now been largely devolved to heads of department and this has led to inconsistencies. Head of department are sometimes looking for different things in their monitoring and follow up in different ways. Weaknesses that are identified are not always addressed and strengths are not used well enough to spread excellent practice across the school.
- 57 Although monitoring, which was an issue raised in the last report, still needs development, the school has made good progress since the previous inspection. The other three key issues have all been addressed well: ICT provision is much better;

spending has been improved; and, oracy plays a much bigger role in French lessons. The school has also kept up good results at GCSE and maintained its very positive ethos leading to good achievement and personal development. The school has also achieved sports college status. The school's successful bid sets out very clear plans to capitalise on the strength of sports within the school to raise attainment in all subjects and strengthen links with the community even further. The plans show how the school will make imaginative use of this new initiative to match its existing aims and purpose.

- 58 Governors are committed to the school and well informed about its performance. They share the management team's commitment to achieving the best for all in the school and carry out their duties diligently. All statutory duties, apart from the provision of a daily act of collective worship, are met.
- 59 Administrative arrangements in the school are good. The school runs smoothly and administrative staff are very successful in reducing the impact of bureaucracy on teaching staff so that they can concentrate on their main role. Financial control is very secure: the recent auditors' report was very favourable and its few suggestions for improvement have been implemented.
- 60 The number, qualifications and experience of teachers and support staff generally match the demands of the curriculum. There is some weakness in English where a 0.4 f.t.e. post is filled by a temporary teacher. Overall, the provision is satisfactory. There are insufficient learning support assistants in classrooms to provide for the curriculum needs of those pupils who have special educational needs but do not have statements. This problem could be eased by either the employment of more staff or a different deployment of the current staff.
- 61 There is a good induction programme in place for newly qualified teachers and staff new to the school. The teaching load for newly qualified teachers is not more than 90 per cent and there is a named induction tutor. Observations of lessons are frequent and both oral and written feedback is provided. However, targets are not always made explicit.
- 62 There is a satisfactory professional development system in place. The training programme, however, needs to focus more directly on teaching and its impact on learning. Priority should be given, for example, to training on assessment for learning, and enhancing the monitoring skills of middle managers and the use of pupils' performance data to monitor progress, identify underachievement and take effective action.
- 63 Accommodation is satisfactory overall. That for physical education and sport is very good with the provision of a new sports centre on site, including a swimming pool, shared by primary schools and the community. Dance and gymnastics are still taught in the school's original gymnasium. All other subjects have satisfactory spaces, which in general have adequate specialist fixtures and equipment. Science rooms have a variety of layouts, allowing interesting comparisons, but need more storage space. There is some teaching outside these specialist areas in geography, music and religious education. Rooms are generally small. For a few large classes, space is cramped in English, history, modern foreign languages and some design and technology rooms (resistant materials), but this is not currently affecting learning adversely. Temporary classrooms are still used for modern foreign languages and some geography lessons. Teachers make good use of spaces for learning, including display. The community centre building, on site, provides extra classrooms for



English and drama. Some corridors are narrow, but the generally good behaviour of pupils, and staff supervision, keep conditions safe. The site manager undertakes 'minor works' alterations, the latest being a teachers' workroom, and is well aware of needs that are arising. The recruitment of cleaners is a problem in the local area. Maintenance staffing is currently well below requirements, resulting in the unsatisfactory appearance and cleanliness of, for example, food technology rooms. The school is well advanced in expanding the main entrance of the school, including the reordering of some administration offices, and the development of the gymnasium as a multi-use, flexible space for performance arts. Community use for adult education ensures efficient use of the whole complex.

- 64 In most subjects the resources for learning are adequate except for easy access to computers. Resources are very good in physical education but good quality apparatus and equipment are not always readily available in teaching areas. Resources are good in art and modern foreign language and satisfactory in all other subjects apart from in science where they are unsatisfactory and affect standards. Whilst the ICT equipment is of a good quality it is used to capacity and is insufficient to provide pupils' with their full entitlement in Years 10 and 11, together with ready access for all subjects when required by them. The excellent work of the librarian ensures that the library is a very good learning environment, stocked with an appropriate range of reading and reference material and a small cluster of Internet-linked computers. The librarian works very hard to ensure that the library is a pleasant and well-stocked resources area and she ensures that pupils have ready access both within and outside of curricular times. Whole classes are accommodated comfortably to research work and the facility is well used. The school's reprographics centre is very well managed and works very effectively with the teachers in the preparation and production of a wealth of very good teaching materials. It provides an excellent cost effective support for pupils' learning.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

65 In order to raise standards and improve the quality of education even further, staff and governors should address the following issues:

- (1) Improve the performance of boys, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Addressing the remaining three points for development will help to achieve this.  
(See paragraphs 2, 3, 66, 94, 95)
- (2) Make more systematic use of assessment information, to identify individual pupils' strengths and weaknesses, and to set targets to help them move forwards. This is already happening in some subjects and should be extended to all.  
(See paragraphs 43, 44, 100, 170)
- (3) Refine the monitoring system so that it is more effective in improving teaching. This will involve:
  - ensuring that all monitors gather appropriate information from their monitoring
  - identifying clearly features in lessons that make them either effective or unsuccessful
  - providing support to overcome identified weaknesses
  - making use of strengths identified in teaching across the school.  
(See paragraphs 18, 19, 102, 170)
- (4) Ensure that all subjects contribute to the development of literacy skills and make effective use of pupils' use of spoken language in lessons. This is currently a strong feature in some subjects and under-used in others.  
(See paragraphs 20,21, 74)

In addition to these points, the school should also address the following:

The provision of more ICT equipment and the inclusion of plans for the coverage of ICT in departmental schemes of work, as set out in the school's development plans.

(See paragraphs 26, 64, 147-151)

In order to meet statutory requirements the school should also seek to provide a daily act of collective worship.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	142
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	32

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	9	27	49	51	6	0	0
Percentage	6	19	35	36	4	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	732
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	46

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	33
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	91

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	13
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	32

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.3

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3

National comparative data	8.1
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National comparative data	1.1
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Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	64	72	136

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	31	48	36
	Girls	49	54	46
	Total	80	102	82
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	59 (71)	75 (76)	60 (71)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	29 (25)	38 (42)	22 (24)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	32	50	36
	Girls	54	59	46
	Total	86	109	82
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	63 (61)	80 (72)	60 (72)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	37 (19)	48 (43)	23 (30)
	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)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	2001	70	48	118

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	27	62	67
	Girls	34	47	48
	Total	61	109	115
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	52 (53)	92 (91)	97 (97)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results	GCSE point score
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Average point score per pupil	School	42.4
	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	0
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	731
Any other minority ethnic group	0

### **Exclusions in the last school year**

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	1	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	56	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

### **Teachers and classes**

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	38.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19

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

Total number of education support staff	14
Total aggregate hours worked per week	332

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

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	24.9
Key Stage 4	23.4

FTE means full-time equivalent.

### **Financial information**

Financial year	2000-01
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	£
Total income	1731563
Total expenditure	1715584
Expenditure per pupil	2516
Balance brought forward from previous year	40173
Balance carried forward to next year	56152

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	8.2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	9.4

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0.4
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

40%

Number of questionnaires sent out

732

Number of questionnaires returned

293

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	39	48	10	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	47	43	7	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	20	58	11	3	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	23	57	15	4	1
The teaching is good.	34	53	8	1	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	34	46	15	3	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	51	40	6	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	54	38	6	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	26	50	17	3	4
The school is well led and managed.	45	41	7	1	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	38	48	8	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	41	38	8	1	12

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

### ENGLISH

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

#### Strengths

- Almost all teaching is good and much is very good
- Teachers' knowledge of the subject is very good and lessons are very well planned and prepared
- Pupils' attitude to the subject is very positive
- The quality of speaking and listening is above that found nationally
- The GCSE results of girls in literature in 2001 were well above the national average

#### Areas for improvement

- Boys' performance in 2001 in national tests at the age of 14 and in English language at GCSE was below the expected level

- 66 Pupils' overall standard of attainment at the age of 14 is in line with that found nationally. In national tests in 2001 their average points score matched the national average for pupils in Year 9. Over recent years test results have been in line with national standards. In national tests in 2001, boys' results were further below their own national average than girls' were theirs. Pupils' performance is less good than it was at the time of the last inspection. Taking into account pupils' level of literacy on entry, steady progress is maintained from Year 7 to Year 9.
- 67 The standard of attainment at the end of Year 11 is above that found nationally. Although the percentage of pupils achieving grades A\*-C in the GCSE for English language in 2001 was below the national average, pupils' average points score was in line with it. Girls' results were above their own national average but boys' were below theirs. Performance in English literature was well above average. Boys equalled their own national figure and girls did outstandingly well with results significantly above their national average. The trend over recent years is of steady progress in language and clear improvement in literature. Taking their prior attainment into account, pupils make good progress by the end of Year 11. Results in English have been better than in science, but not as high as in mathematics.
- 68 The quality of speaking and listening throughout the school is above that generally found. Almost all pupils listen attentively and work effectively in pairs and small groups. All but the lowest attaining pupils answer questions audibly and fluently. High attaining pupils in Year 11, for example, in a simulated speech to influence government legislation, made clear, relevant, cogent and articulate contributions. As part of their study of *Romeo and Juliet*, lower attaining pupils aged 16 remained convincingly in role during a hot-seating exercise and made extended comments under questioning. They showed a thorough knowledge of the text as well as confidence and competence in their speech. When pressed by robust questioning, pupils throughout the school were confident and fluent in speech. In all year groups, pupils collaborate well in group work because of thorough preparation by teachers and effective use of clear agendas and guidelines for feedback. By the age of 14 the great majority of pupils use the spoken form of standard English.



- 69 The overall standard of reading comprehension throughout the school is close to that expected nationally. The great majority of pupils read well enough to understand and enjoy the wide range of literature which they study. Those pupils in Years 7 and 8 who encounter particularly difficulty with reading receive specialist support and make rapid progress. During the first three years, reading for pleasure is given special emphasis. All lessons for pupils with special educational needs begin with ten minutes of planned, silent reading. Much skilled and sensitive assistance is given and pupils are regularly heard reading. By the end of Year 9 pupils have studied texts from various genres and identify accurately and with understanding elements such as plot, themes and characters. Regular, constructive use is made of the wide choice of attractive fiction in the excellent library. In Years 10 and 11 pupils develop a mature appreciation of complex meanings in texts. High attaining pupils in Year 10, for example, in their work on Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, grasped fully the broad moral and spiritual significance of the themes in the novel. This high level of response was a direct result of the high academic standard set by very good teaching. Pupils with special educational needs were skilfully guided to a clear understanding of some of the main characters in the first Harry Potter book. Many activities and competitions which promote personal reading and the love of books are arranged in the library. Good GCSE examination results in literature owe much to teachers' own love for the subject and their ability to communicate that enthusiasm powerfully.
- 70 The overall standard of the written work of 11 year old pupils is in line with that found nationally. They write with enthusiasm and interest for different audiences and purposes. Pupils throughout the age range draft their work effectively and final versions kept in files are, on the whole, neatly presented. The majority of pupils in Year 7 make good progress with sentence building, punctuation and expression of ideas. A minority of lower attaining pupils, however, make frequent errors with spelling, punctuation and choice of vocabulary. The main weakness is a failure to think clearly what they want to communicate before setting pen to paper. Much of the best work of 14 year old pupils is lively and inventive and mainly accurate in technical detail. The good quality of this work of high attaining pupils at the end of Year 9 is reflected in the comparatively high number who achieve level 7 in national tests. By the end of Year 11 some of the best writing arises from pupils' response to literature. In their study of love poems by Marvell and Donne, for example, high attaining pupils wrote accurate, mature and sensitive critical commentaries on very complex poems. Some of the writing of lower attaining pupils is enthusiastic but lacks insight and depth of understanding, as well as tending to be too brief. There is much attractive written work on display in classrooms with some particularly lively poetry.
- 71 Pupils of all age groups are, in the main, well motivated and eager to learn, regardless of their levels of attainment. Behaviour is uniformly good. Pupils work well together and show respect for the opinions of others. They generally maintain concentration well and relationships within the classroom are positive and purposeful. Pupils respond well to stimulating and imaginative teaching.
- 72 The quality of teaching is good overall. In Years 7 to 9 it is good or better in most lessons. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is very good. Teachers' knowledge of the subject is good throughout and is especially strong in the GCSE course in literature. Lessons are carefully planned and prepared. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' performance and are skilled in preparing them for national tests and examinations. Lessons are carefully prepared and the content of lessons is skilfully matched to pupils' level of attainment. Teaching materials are of good quality and classroom management is efficient. Teachers use a wide range of appropriate methods and approaches. In the best lessons recent learning is revised, pupils are

clear about tasks, targets are set, pace is brisk, questioning is robust, and, finally, learning in the lesson is consolidated. Very occasionally impetus is lost through teachers talking far too long, with pupils consequently losing concentration. Pupils with special educational needs are taught with great skill and sensitivity. In almost all lessons the good working relationship gives pupils confidence to express themselves freely and articulately. Written work is marked consistently and conscientiously with much constructive comment and guidance about ways to improve. The quality of assessment and record keeping is very good.

- 73 The curriculum meets statutory requirements, although allocation of time to the subject is below that commonly found. Departmental documentation is thorough and informative. The literacy strategy has been fully implemented with consequent modification of schemes of work and teaching techniques. Insufficient use is made of ICT because of lack of equipment in the department and inadequate staff training. Classrooms provide an attractive working environment through lively use of display, but they are too small for large classes and for classroom drama. Rooms are not conveniently grouped together. Storage capacity is very limited and there is no departmental office. Regular monitoring of teaching and learning has helped to maintain the high standards despite some staffing shortfalls. Tasks and responsibilities cannot be properly delegated as there is no assistant head of department. The subject has been very well managed through recent difficulties and is making good progress. Leadership is very good.

### **Literacy across the school**

- 74 In other subjects across the curriculum the quality of oral work varies considerably. Pupils listen attentively in the majority of subjects but not in religious education. In drama, art, history, modern foreign languages, music, and PHSE, pupils are encouraged to use discussion as an important way of consolidating their own ideas, widening their knowledge, and hearing the views of others. The use of talk is satisfactory in design and technology and geography. In science, however, speaking and listening have not been fully integrated into schemes of work and regular classroom practice. Full advantage is not yet taken in some subject areas of the above average quality of oral work.
- 75 The reading comprehension of the great majority of pupils is adequate for their understanding of textbooks and other printed materials. In art and history pupils are encouraged to read for research and to extend their knowledge. Reading aloud plays an important part in modern foreign languages and music. Many subject areas display key words but they are not always used to the full. The library plays a key role in encouraging and widening reading. Some sections such as art are particularly well stocked to support research. In PHSE, time is devoted to reading for pleasure and boxes of books are provided by the library. Pupils' choice of reading during periods is not always carefully monitored and progress is not recorded.
- 76 The standard of presentation of written work varies in different departments. Pupils produce good extended writing in history, ICT, modern foreign languages and statistics. In geography, writing is satisfactory. The writing of non-fiction was the focus for an in-service training session as part of the development of the literacy strategy in Years 7 to 9. Much effort has gone into this initiative and there is an active management group to promote the whole school policy. Some departments, such as modern foreign languages, have a clear policy statement which is being very effectively implemented in the classroom. In some other areas of the curriculum development of policy and practice is less advanced.

## DRAMA

- 77 Provision is good overall. The standard of pupils' attainment at the age of 14 is in line with that found nationally. By the end of Year 11 the standard of attainment is above average. In the GCSE examination in 2001 the percentage of pupils achieving grades A\*-C was well above the national average. These results continued the upward trend over recent years. Pupils in Year 7 and 8 enjoy their work and respond energetically. Studio discipline varies and is good in Years 10 and 11 but is less so before the age of 14 when pupils do not always listen attentively or courteously to the presentations of classmates. They do, however, evaluate work thoughtfully and show good grasp of the requirements of effective presentations. Pupils work productively in groups and plan effectively through discussion and experiment. In their work based upon the theme of hypocrisy chosen from their study of *Measure for Measure*, for example, pupils in Year 10 worked together with great sensitivity and insight. Presentations of work in progress at the end of the lesson demonstrated good spatial awareness and control of body language and gesture. One group was working with perception and imagination at the level of high GCSE grades. Other pupils used lively, improvised dialogue.
- 78 Teaching is almost always at least satisfactory and is mostly good or better. Lessons are well planned and teachers' knowledge of the subject is good. Relationships are, on the whole, good and pupils are positive in their attitude towards the subject. In Years 10 and 11 there is a particularly fruitful interaction with pupils, who respect the expertise of the teaching. Departmental documentation and schemes of work are good. The subject makes a valuable contribution across the curriculum and to the whole cultural life of the school. There are frequent theatre visits and there has been a tradition of many successful major productions. The subject is well managed and leadership is energetic and effective.

## MATHEMATICS

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

### Strengths

- Pupils achieve very high standards
- Teaching is very good
- The leadership of the department ensures pupils progress rapidly
- Pupils enjoy very good relationships with their teachers which contribute significantly to their learning
- A wide range of additional provision helps pupils learn and enjoy mathematics

### Areas for improvement

- Classroom support is not sufficiently effective
- Reports to parents do not give enough information

- 79 Pupils enter the school at the age of 11 with standards of attainment in line with the national average. In 2001 results in national tests taken at the age of 14 were above the national average. In the last three years, these results have remained steady. At the age of 14, pupils have higher attainments in mathematics than they do in English or science.

- 80 Results at GCSE in 2001 were well above the national average. Just under one third of pupils also took GCSE in statistics and results in this subject were also well above the national average. There was no significant difference in the levels of attainment of boys and girls in tests taken at the age of 14. Girls attained higher standards at GCSE than boys did. This was because they had attained correspondingly higher standards before the age of 11. In 2000 boys attained higher levels than girls did at GCSE for the same reason. In recent years, all pupils who have entered the GCSE examination have gained a grade. GCSE results in mathematics are the best in the school for subjects entering a considerable number of pupils.
- 81 Standards of work seen during the inspection confirm the standards achieved in examinations. In Year 9, the highest attaining pupils can produce the formula for a term in a quadratic sequence and can factorise quadratic equations. Lower attaining pupils can interpret diagrams presenting data and can substitute values in a simple formula but still have some difficulties handling negative numbers. Pupils attain equally across all aspects of mathematics.
- 82 The highest attaining pupils in Year 11 display thorough mastery of all the skills tested at GCSE. They apply their learning competently to a wide range of situations. These pupils discuss their work in a most mature manner. A very good example was seen when pupils considered the moral aspects of data collection for the National Census. The highest attaining pupils in Year 11 have already taken GCSE at the age of 15 and gained results well above the national average. They are now preparing to take GCSE statistics. Lower attaining pupils can draw accurate pie charts but are less secure with basic algebra.
- 83 The standards attained mean that all pupils make very good progress as they move through the school. This progress is very good because they are very well taught. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection. In approximately two thirds of lessons the teaching was good or better. Teaching was very good or excellent in one third of the lessons observed. The very good teaching makes very good use of time. As soon as pupils have understood a concept, the teacher moves rapidly on to the next point to be learnt. No time is wasted in pupils repeating unnecessary examples. Where teaching is less effective, pupils repeat tasks unnecessarily. Homework is very well used. At home, pupils have the opportunity for individual practice. This does not repeat work done in class. Again, this helps to maximise the amount of class time for the teaching of new skills. Relationships between teachers and their pupils are very good. This is shown by the confidence and trust pupils have in their teachers. They are very confident to ask questions, even to the whole class when they are uncertain about a point. Teachers build very well on these relationships to establish a very purposeful working atmosphere. Many pupils speak freely of their enjoyment of mathematics lessons.
- 84 The quality of teaching is very good. Teachers use questioning very effectively to assess learning and to involve pupils in lesson. Pupils respond very enthusiastically to questions. The best teachers spend a high proportion of time teaching the whole class. This approach is effective because their very clear explanations ensure that pupils understand the work. Teachers hold very high expectations of their pupils. Pupils appreciate these expectations and they respond accordingly. The best teaching takes positive steps to develop pupils' skills in literacy. Not only do teachers pay close attention to ensuring that pupils use mathematical terminology correctly but also ensure that pupils develop more general vocabulary. One very good example was seen in a Year 8 when the teacher provided a dictionary so that pupils could research the meaning of homophones of 'right' when undertaking work on angles.

- 85 Good teaching also recognises differing styles of learning. Use is made of pupil movement such as when a class regularly waved their arms to demonstrate properties of a curve. These kinaesthetic activities assist pupils to memorise key facts.
- 86 Some use of computers is made in mathematics. A very good example was seen of pupils in Year 11 using spreadsheets to analyse data for projects on which they would be assessed. Not only was this an appropriate use of computers, allowing efficient analysis of data, but the teacher also grasped the opportunity to develop specialised facilities of the package which pupils had not previously encountered. Pupils use graphical calculators competently, for example, to solve quadratic equations.
- 87 Teachers make effective use of assessment so that pupils know what they have achieved and what should be the next steps in their learning. Reports to parents give basic information. More detailed information, including an assessment of the level at which a pupil is working in Years 7 to 9 and identification of what a pupil should do to improve further, would help parents support their children even more in their learning.
- 88 Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress because the teaching is well tuned to their needs. They are taught in smaller classes than other pupils are. All these pupils gain a grade at GCSE. Classroom assistants support a number of these pupils in class. Some of this support is effective such as when an assistant, primarily assisting a dyslexic pupil, assisted other pupils when she realised that this pupil did not need any help at certain points in the lesson. However, too often these assistants have not been made aware of what role they should play in the lesson. This can lead to them doing nothing for lengthy periods of time. Some of these assistants lack confidence in their own mathematical skills. Greater planning and training of these assistants would help pupils with special educational needs make even greater progress.
- 89 Classroom activities are complemented well by a very wide range of additional activities. These start most effectively before pupils even enter the school. In their final term at primary school, all pupils who will enter King Arthur's follow a unit of work covering material scheduled in the National Curriculum for Year 7. This has been prepared by staff at King Arthur's but is taught by their primary teachers. Mathematics teachers from King Arthur's visit the primary schools whilst this work is taking place. This makes a valuable contribution to helping pupils transfer schools as well as making very good use of time.
- 90 Additional sessions are organised for pupils to improve their work in mathematics and to provide additional support to achieve the highest grades. These sessions are very effective. Pupils taking statistics in Year 11 have attended residential workshops with pupils from other schools. The department recently worked with the National Trust, designing a maze which was installed at a stately home. A mathematical quiz was organised for families of pupils not only from the school but also from local primary schools. In 2000, the school organised an extensive series of activities and workshops, all of which were open to the full community. These involved organisations such as the Red Cross and were well attended. Parents are very supportive of the work of the department and have helped paint the very impressive mathematical display on the walls outside the classroom. Display is used very effectively to stimulate pupils' inquisitiveness. Some of these make pupils aware of famous mathematical problems. Mathematical puzzles are on display for pupil use.

Pupils' work, such as the life-size models used to calculate the surface area of a human body, celebrate achievement and stimulate enquiry.

- 91 The department is very well managed and leadership is excellent. The head of department has ensured a consistent approach to the teaching of mathematics. She has worked hard, successfully establishing an ethos of purpose which pervades her department. She provides good support to all teachers of the subject. Very good links have been developed with a local university. The school has been an active participant in a project of this university on developing the teaching of mathematics. The department has hosted visits at which this project has been demonstrated. The high standards reported at the previous inspection have been maintained and this constitutes very good progress.

### **Numeracy across the school**

- 92 On entry to the school, pupils' numerical skills are at the national average. These are well developed through teaching in mathematics. Some subjects make use of and develop these skills further. In geography pupils consider statistics when looking at population densities in Brazil. Statistics are also used in religious education when pupils examine the issue of poverty. However, other subjects do not take the opportunity to employ the numerical skills pupils possess. Greater use in science would help pupils analyse data from experiments to formulate and test scientific hypotheses. In physical education, pupils would gain a greater understanding of fitness if they examined measurements of performance levels.
- 93 Teachers have recently participated in well-received training on numeracy. Some developments are now beginning to make an impact. One good example is the booklets of numerical puzzles and problems which lower school classes use in form time. Identifying more opportunities to use and develop numerical skills would benefit some subjects and provide pupils with more regular practice beyond their mathematics lessons.

## **SCIENCE**

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

### **Strengths**

- A good science curriculum is in place
- The head of department provides clear educational direction
- The relationships are generally good
- Laboratories are well maintained and the quality of technical support is good

### **Areas for improvement**

- Lesson objectives are not identified clearly enough.
- Monitoring has not identified and addressed shortcomings in teaching
- There are some shortages of equipment

- 94 In the 2001 national tests the attainment of pupils was below the national average. The average points score for science in national tests compares unfavourably with English and mathematics within the school. The standards at age 14 have declined since the last inspection when they were above average and boys perform worse than in most schools.

- 95 The attainment of pupils at age 16 is in line with the national average. Standards have been sustained at this level since the last inspection. In the GCSE examinations girls perform considerably better than boys, and their attainment is well above the national average.
- 96 The standards of work seen in lessons in Years 7 to 9 confirm the trend shown by the national tests. Pupils acquire good experimental skills throughout these years and by age 14 most carry out experiments safely and can read measuring instruments such as a voltmeter, a thermometer and a stopwatch accurately. They record their observations in tables and use correct units of measurement such as volts, degrees celsius and seconds. They have less confidence with plotting line graphs accurately and interpreting and explaining relationships between variables. Pupils in Year 7 handle acids and alkali safely. In one Year 8 class, lower attaining pupils, including pupils with special educational needs, were able to heat copper safely and handle hot glass apparatus carefully. In a Year 9 class, the middle attaining pupils were able to design paper parachutes and carry out a test for best design. However, they were not able to describe their observations using scientific vocabulary such as 'vertically', 'upwards' or 'downwards', or state that forces of gravity and air resistance act in opposite directions. The higher attaining pupils understand that plants need light to carry out photosynthesis and, with help, are able to state the word equation for photosynthesis. Some also know the chemical equation. They are less sure of direction of forces, and the effects of forces on movement of objects.
- 97 By age 16 most pupils consolidate their experimental skills further. They plot line graphs and use correct units of measurement. However, their ability to identify pattern in data and state and explain relationships between variables remains weak. Pupils gain confidence in simple chemical calculations and are able, for example, to carry out relative formula mass calculations. In physics the high attaining pupils show sound knowledge of topics such as energy but are unsure of the nature of friction or potential energy. Most are unable to use scientific vocabulary to describe energy transfers. The lower attaining pupils in Year 10 know that petrol ignites more easily than paraffin but do not use the word ignite and do not understand the meaning of the word distillation. In a high attaining Year 10 class, most pupils know that the particles in a solid vibrate and those in a gas are further apart but they are not sure why. They are unable to describe the nature of the movements of gas particles using words such as 'random', 'collision' or 'change direction'. In a top Year 11 set pupils understand the meaning of the term 'variables', but do not use it to describe the data. They are able to use a computer to draw bar and line graphs, but they are less able to interpret the results.
- 98 Overall, the quality of teaching is sound. Teachers manage their classes well. The relationships are generally good. Resources are well managed and pupils' activities are appropriate. These have a good impact on pupils' learning and their behaviour, resulting in satisfactory progress being made. However, although overall satisfactory, many lessons have shortcomings. In these lessons the learning objectives are vague and neither the teacher nor the pupils are clear enough about the knowledge, understanding and skills to be learned during the lesson. In some lessons the level of explanation of concepts and ideas is too superficial to challenge the most able or to secure basic understanding for the rest. Too little use is made of pupils' oral skills, which are good. Questioning is limited to mainly factual answers and opportunities are missed to involve most pupils. Teachers do not expect pupils to respond in full sentences or use scientific vocabulary. Pupils do not get involved in extended discussion of scientific concepts. This lack of focus on understanding ideas and concepts acts as a disincentive to the higher attaining pupils who remain

unchallenged and sometimes not fully involved in the lesson. In the absence of clear learning objectives the summary at the end of the lesson either does not take place or is too general to focus pupils' minds on what should have been learnt. The basic experimental skills are taught well. This helps pupils with special educational needs and lower attaining pupils to make good progress. The aspects of investigative science relating to describing and identifying patterns and relationships in data are not taught well. This particularly hinders progress of high and middle attaining pupils. The use of ICT is infrequent.

- 99 In science lessons pupils behave well. They take pride in their work and generally present work well. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Girls in particular apply themselves consistently to their work.
- 100 A good science curriculum is in place which covers all aspects of the subject and has appropriate emphasis on pupils gaining first-hand experience; all statutory requirements are met. The assessment procedures are sound and the records of pupils' performance data are good. This is a clear improvement since the last inspection. The results of assessment, however, are not used effectively to monitor pupils' progress or to identify and address underachievement. In Years 7 to 9 there is a lack of work on line graphs and there is some repetition of work done in Year 6, for example bar graphs.
- 101 The science accommodation is adequate. The addition of a departmental office would be helpful. The provision of science equipment needs to be improved further. Laboratories are well maintained and technical support is good. Consideration should be given to increasing the number of laboratory technician hours. This would allow the level of investigation work done by pupils to be enhanced.
- 102 The leadership of the science department is sound. The head of science gives clear educational direction. However, there is a need for more effective monitoring and action to rectify shortcomings in teaching and tracking of pupils' progress. Overall, progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

## ART AND DESIGN

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

### Strengths

- The quality of teaching is very good in all years, and results in very good learning and progress for all pupils
- The department leadership promotes high standards throughout the department
- There are very good displays of pupils' work in all areas of the school. These give the subject a high profile and inspire pupils to good efforts

### Area for improvement

- More use should be made of ICT in the development of pupils' work to raise standards even further

- 103 The GCSE results have been above the national average in the higher grades of A\*-C over the past three years. The overall pass grade has also been above the national average with 100 per cent pass rate in two of these years and a 98 per cent pass rate in 2001. In Years 10 and 11 a much greater than average proportion of each year



group studies art and these results represent very good achievement. In relation to their other subjects, pupils achieve well in art.

- 104 In work seen during the inspection standards are similarly high. Year 11 pupils are presently doing their GCSE ten hour controlled test and are on course to achieve well above average results. They have chosen widely from the questions set and have made a good, quick start to their work. They research and experiment with ideas in imaginative ways. They can draw accurately from observation and have a good awareness of how to use shading to achieve tone, texture and three-dimensional effects, including the use of highlights. In Year 10, pupils working on their 'Food' project can use a wide range of techniques to give their work distinctive and dramatic effects. They research well from a range of artists' work and thus gain a knowledge and understanding of the history of art as well as gaining inspiration for their own work. Sketchbooks are used well for research and experiments, with some pupils doing extensive work, particularly in observational drawing.
- 105 Standards achieved by Year 9 are also above average. In work seen in lessons and in folders, pupils' drawing and painting is done with confidence. In one Year 9 group, pupils studying African Art have created their own symbolic myths. They have presented these in paintings and are now extending their presentations into cloth paintings and clay modelling. They can explain the nature of symbolism such as the various connotations underlying the use of the snake as a symbol. In another Year 9 lesson, pupils are studying the art of the Native North American cultures. They have created very impressive light sculptures of traditional dolls in wicker work. They use their own sculptures for observational drawings. They have very good skills in the use of colour for tone, texture and three-dimensional effects. The work based on the art of other cultures is presented by teachers with a sense of purpose that captures the spiritual essence of the art. Pupils are helped to learn some of the emotional needs that are fulfilled by this art and they gain an awareness of self as well as a knowledge of other cultures.
- 106 All pupils, including pupils on the special educational needs register and the gifted and talented, make very good progress. They learn the skills of observation, drawing and painting in a formal manner from Year 7 onwards. Some of the techniques such as the use of oil pastel are demonstrated formally and pupils learn how to avoid the usual pitfalls. Pupils build on their skills from term to term and gain in confidence from seeing their own success. Some pupils on the special educational needs register have very good skills in art and achieve well above average standards. Some pupils have an exquisite sense of line in drawing.
- 107 Pupils' progress in all years is directly related to very good teaching. Art and design is taught by specialist teachers who have very good knowledge and understanding of the subject. They are enthusiastic about promoting art and display a genuine love of the subject that is transferred to their pupils. They show pupils how and where to do research for their topics. They demonstrate the techniques of how best to observe and use the different materials and this helps the pupils to be successful in their own work. In all years pupils are encouraged to experiment in individual ways.
- 108 Assessment is very good. It is ongoing in all lessons and teachers give all pupils individual attention. From Year 7 onwards and especially in GCSE pupils are made aware of the criteria on which their work is judged. These criteria are written simply and clearly and pupils are asked to assess their own work according to these criteria. In some lessons they are asked to assess the work of others. This helps them to gain

a deeper knowledge and understanding of art in general and this therefore helps to raise the standard of their own work. Close records are kept of pupils' attainment.

- 109 Pupils in all years have very good attitudes to art and design. They enjoy the subject. They listen attentively to their teachers, showing respect both for their teachers and for the subject. They have confidence in their own abilities and are willing to experiment.
- 110 The subject is well led and managed. Documentation is very good. The schemes of work are being revised in line with teachers' assessment of what will interest, support and extend pupils' knowledge, understanding and experience of art. There is a good balance of two and three-dimensional work. There is a strong emphasis on non-western art as well as good attention to a range of great western artists. There is very good support for the two postgraduate teachers in training. These teachers' ideas and plans are successfully integrated into the work of the department to ensure that all pupils have equality of access to the provision made for art.
- 111 The subject is part of the Creative Arts faculty and benefits from this wider perspective. The subject makes a very significant contribution to the music and drama productions by creating the scenery and contributing to all aspects of the design and marketing.
- 112 There is good provision for extra-curricular art. The teachers give generously of their time to run clubs at lunchtime and after school so that pupils can do extra work. The pupils' work is enhanced by a wide range of visits to art galleries, museums, a sculpture park and a range of professional and commercial institutions. They enter competitions with a good degree of success. These outside links give pupils opportunities to exhibit their work and learn from the work of others. There are extensive displays of pupils' high quality work in all areas of the school. These inspire pupils as well as enhancing the school environment very significantly. The department makes good use of artists in residence to extend pupils' learning in art.
- 113 The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, particularly by studying these elements formally as they relate to the work of artists and art movements across a range of cultures and periods of time. All these good and very good features are similar to those reported at the time of the previous inspection. The teachers work hard to maintain these high standards in all aspects of the subject.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- GCSE results in graphics products, food technology and textiles
- Teaching in Years 10 and 11, leading to high quality learning and above average attainment
- Very good leadership and management
- Good relationships between pupils and staff

### Areas for improvement

- GCSE results in resistant materials
- Marking of pupils' work in Years 7 to 9

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Opportunities to use the computer to design and manufacture products</li></ul>
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- 114 Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 show that the proportion of pupils achieving the expected level 5 or above is broadly similar to the national average for boys and above average for girls. This is supported by inspection evidence. The proportion of A\*-C grades varies between the contributory specialisms, with GCSE results overall in line with the national average in 2001. However, standards were significantly above average in graphics products, and well above the average in food technology and textiles. Results are below average in resistant materials. Results reflect an improving trend in attainment over the past few years. Girls attain better than boys in the subject, and achieve above the average for girls nationally. Boys attain in line with boys nationally but very few attain the very highest grades in any material area. Girls achieve well above the national average A\* grades. Apart from in resistant materials, pupils attain as well in their other material areas as they do in other subjects.
- 115 At the end of Year 9 standards of work seen are broadly similar to the national average expectation. This represents satisfactory achievement given pupils' average attainment levels on entry into the school. From early in Year 7 when pupils design and make a novelty bag in textiles, a cheesy beano pie in food technology and a weathervane in resistant materials, pupils are given good opportunities to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding in a broad range of materials. Their skills are further extended and developed in, for example, the Year 8 coat hook which incorporates a mechanical movement and the textiles project requiring pupils to design and make a cushion for the teenage market, where pupils show good levels of creativity and innovation. In a Year 9 lesson, pupils were mass producing an 'alien CD rack', learning effectively about industrial practices and applying them. The range of 'design and make' experiences resulted in most pupils being able to understand a design brief, to carry out effective research and to produce designs, which they enjoyed making. Presentation and graphical communication skills are very good in the work of higher attaining pupils and good for average attaining pupils. Lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, have satisfactory skills of presentation, make good progress and attain to their potential. Almost all pupils' making skills are good and most pupils are able to effectively evaluate their outcomes and identify how they can improve work by setting targets for improvement for the next design task.
- 116 In work seen by end of Year 11, standards are significantly above average in graphics, well above average in food technology and textiles and below average in resistant materials. This represents very good achievement in graphics and good achievement in food technology and textiles. The great majority of pupils produce design folios that show good research and development of their design ideas with good graphical communication skills. In graphics products, the work of one pupil is outstanding in her development of a design for a children's playground. A significant proportion of pupils in graphics products produce very high quality work with some use of computer-aided design and manufacturing equipment. In all material areas the work of girls and higher attaining boys is more meticulously developed with a greater emphasis on research and a clearer development of their ideas. In textiles, product outcomes are often very good, showing high levels of flair and imagination. Folios of work in food technology show very good presentation skills and most pupils have a very good understanding of the chemical and nutritional values of a wide range of food products. They also relate their work well to industrial practices. In resistant materials some design tasks are over-ambitious and not achievable in the time available. Whilst the design presentation and graphicacy skills of the higher and average attaining pupils are

satisfactory and occasionally good, there are weaknesses in the work of lower attaining pupils whose understanding of the design processes is less well understood and practised. A small minority of lower attaining pupils occasionally present work showing little concept of spatial awareness and the expected conventions of design drawing. However, practical skills are good and outcomes are well crafted by most pupils.

- 117 The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory with some good and very good teaching in some lessons. In Years 10 and 11 teaching is good with a significant proportion of very good or outstanding teaching. Although teaching is never less than satisfactory, in some lessons there is a lack of insistence on quality outcomes and some incorrect use of tools and equipment. In work related to these lessons, the marking of pupils' work is over-lenient, giving pupils a false expectation of the standards required and achieved. For example, the critical but constructive comments made by the teacher about incomplete or untidy work is not rigorously followed up. In the best lessons, teachers plan work well and have high expectations of their pupils and effectively challenge the higher attaining pupils. Strategies are adopted to ensure lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are supported on a one-to-one basis, resulting in their good achievement overall. Lists of new technical words are provided in all areas which are particularly useful to lower attaining pupils who find them very helpful in their writing. This is having a positive affect on the development of the pupils' literacy skills. However, rarely are pupils tested on technical terminology in lessons. The use of the computer by pupils to present work is underdeveloped in most material areas. Also, pupils' knowledge, understanding and practice in the use of the computer to design and manufacture a product are underdeveloped. In most lessons the teaching successfully generates a very positive attitude to learning. Pupils are expected to work supportively and to collaborate well with one another when sharing tools and equipment. Teachers expect and achieve very good behaviour from pupils. Behaviour is often good and sometimes very good because the tasks set by teachers are well matched to interest and intellect and as a result pupils enjoy what they do. Pupils are greatly assisted by the hard work and efforts of the learning support staff and occasionally the technician. However, technical assistance time is low in food and textiles.
- 117 Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Standards have improved considerably. The head of department, appointed since the previous inspection, provides a very clear and effective educational direction for the work involved and very effectively manages all the different material areas within the department. As a result the department has been successful in resolving all of the issues identified in the previous report within the limits of the resources available. Amongst all teaching staff there is now a shared commitment towards achieving high standards. The monitoring of teaching and learning is thorough and has led to improved teaching styles and techniques which have in turn resulted in the good results at GCSE in most material areas. However, although resources and accommodation are adequate there are inadequacies which affect standards, for example, low resources for ICT in the design area which affect work in computer-aided design and manufacture. The condition of the floor covering in food technology, especially around the edges of cupboards and appliances, is unhygienic, giving mixed messages to pupils.

## GEOGRAPHY

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

### Strengths

- Relationships between teachers and pupils
- Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and attitudes and pupils live up to these high standards
- Teachers really care about pupils; they want them to do well and enjoy the subject

### Areas for improvement

- Ongoing assessment is not always closely linked to the criteria for levels in the National Curriculum
- What pupils are learning in lessons is not always made clear at the start or reviewed at the end
- Learning activities are not always challenging enough for the most able.

118 Standards achieved by pupils in the teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were above the national average in 2001, 2000 and 1999. In each of these years a higher proportion of girls rather than boys attained higher grades. Overall, attainment in lessons and pupils' written work for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 is in line with the national expectations. Pupils of high prior attainment are attaining above or well above the national average. Pupils acquire, and use, a range of geographical skills and vocabulary. Most pupils have an appropriate sense of place. In Year 7 pupils use their prior knowledge of locations to identify and label towns and cities associated with successful football teams on a map of the UK. Year 8 pupils are able to describe tectonic processes. Most pupils can explain how volcanoes and earthquakes are formed and the high attaining pupils can analyse the role of aid agencies in providing for the survivors of natural hazards such as the recent earthquake in Goma. Pupils in Year 9 have good geographical vocabulary and they can use this to explain how areas may be affected by deforestation. Some pupils in Year 9 are able to respond to questions from their teacher to explain how the climatic conditions around the equator support the rainforest environment. Their accurate use of vocabulary indicates an understanding of the physical processes which create different landscapes and environments. Some pupils lack the skills of sorting and organising information to produce clarity in their written work.

119 At the end of Year 11 in 2001, 50 per cent of pupils gained GCSE passes at the higher grades. This is slightly below the national average of 56 per cent. In 2000 the percentage of pupils gaining GCSE passes at the higher grades was close to the average. This was an improvement from 1999 GCSE examinations when 47 per cent of pupils achieved the higher grades. Each year a small number of pupils achieve a Certificate of Achievement in geography and this is an appropriate qualification for these pupils based on their prior attainment. Overall attainment is higher for girls than boys. However, more boys than girls attain GCSE at the highest grades of A\* and A. Pupils in Year 10 are able to identify differing points of view and attitudes held by inner city residents. They are articulate and can use a range of geographical vocabulary to communicate the advantages and disadvantages of living in a rural area. The work of pupils in Year 11 is in line overall with the national expectation. The highest attaining pupils produce high quality coursework, class work and homework, whilst a small number of pupils are producing work which is appropriate for the Certificate of Achievement and this is well matched to their prior attainment and learning needs. Most Year 11 pupils can identify and explain the impact of the Common Agricultural

Policy on farming in the UK. They are also able to analyse the factors involved in rural to urban migration using a push/pull model.

- 120 The overall standard of achievement is satisfactory and good in some classes. The achievement of the most able pupils is good, especially in Years 10 and 11. Pupils with special educational needs attain satisfactory standards. Girls' work is generally of a higher standard than boys' work; however, the work of the highest attaining boys is very good, especially in Years 10 and 11.
- 121 Standards in literacy are satisfactory. From Years 7 to 11 pupils use a range of forms of writing including reports and newspaper articles. However, pupils with special educational needs are not always supported with writing scaffolds and organisational grids for information to enable them to produce high quality, independent writing. Almost all pupils listen effectively and many answer questions well in class. There are some missed opportunities for pupils to use, develop and extend their oracy skills. There is a good departmental literacy policy, which when fully implemented should have a positive effect on the standards of literacy in geography. Pupils' skills in numeracy are satisfactory. Most pupils can use co-ordinates to determine six-figure map references and produce and interpret simple graphs. Some pupils make use of their skills in ICT to improve the presentation of their work, especially homework.
- 122 The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory for pupils in Years 7 to 11. There is good teaching in a few lessons for pupils in Years 7 to 9 and for pupils in Years 10 and 11. A particular strength of all teaching is the quality of relationships between teachers and pupils. This has a positive impact on pupils' learning and attitudes to their work. Teachers give their pupils encouragement and support in completing and extending their work. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' attitudes and behaviour and pupils live up to these high standards so that lessons are characterised by pupils responding well to teachers' questions, concentrating hard and listening well. Pupils' work is regularly marked and graded for effort and attainment and as a result pupils are clear about how well they are doing in geography. They are less clear about exactly what they are aiming for and specifically what they need to do in order to improve. Pupils collaborate and learn well in pairs and groups when opportunities are provided. They are able to organise tasks within the group and work independently to gather information about countries such as Brazil. Opportunities to research and retrieve information sometimes include using ICT and the Internet in small groups. However, computers are generally under-used within the subject and opportunities to use ICT to extend and enhance learning in lessons are few. Many pupils make use of computers to complete homework and extra research for class and coursework. Homework is very well used to complete, reinforce and extend classroom learning. Tasks set are often interesting and varied. In some lessons activities are about recording information rather than using information to answer questions and solve problems.
- 123 The nature of some tasks does not encourage high order thinking or challenge pupils. More opportunities could be provided for pupils to discuss their knowledge and understanding and extend their skills in oracy. In many lessons the focus is on what pupils will do rather than what they will learn. In lessons where the teacher clearly identifies and communicates the learning objectives and takes time in a plenary session to review pupils' progress towards the objectives, good gains are made.
- 124 The curriculum is satisfactory. Use is made of fieldwork in Years 7, 8 and 10. Pupils enjoy these experiences. The coursework in Year 10 focused on West Bay provides an interesting and challenging geographical enquiry for all pupils. Good use is made of

topical issues such as the recent earthquake in Goma. Links with the religious education units in Years 7, 8 and 9 are effective and teachers are using this opportunity to develop work on aid agencies and sustainable development. Curriculum materials are often well matched to pupils' interests; for example, in Year 7 materials about football are used as a focus for a geographical study.

- 125 Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development can be identified in the subject planning. Pupils are given opportunities to discuss global issues and dilemmas and to work with others in pairs and groups. Cultural understanding is developed through units of work on Brazil and Italy.
- 126 The leadership and management within the humanities faculty are good and give the subject clear direction. Monitoring is regular and processes for evaluating and developing the quality of teaching and learning are in place. Resources in the department are satisfactory. There are appropriate numbers of high quality, up-to-date textbooks and maps. Accommodation is satisfactory. Access to computers and appropriate software to support, extend and enhance learning is a recognised priority. Since the last inspection progress has been satisfactory, although as the report combined history, geography and economics it is difficult to ascertain specific improvements.

## HISTORY

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

### Strengths

- Standards are good at both key stages as a result of good teaching and attitudes to work
- Opportunities for learning outside the classroom are good and deepen pupil learning

### Areas for improvement

- To improve the use of written target setting in order to raise standards further
- To monitor the relative performance of boys and girls and implement strategies to ensure that underachievement does not occur

- 127 Results in GCSE examinations at age 16 are slightly above the national average. This represents good achievement base on attainment at age 14. These results reflect a similar picture to both 2000 and earlier years when results were consistently above the national average. A small proportion of pupils take the Certificate of Achievement. They make good progress and in many cases secure merit grades. These are at least in line with their prior attainment. History is a popular option in Year 10 and attracts similar numbers of boys and girls.
- 128 At the end of Year 9, teacher assessments indicate that attainment is above average. Girls generally achieve higher levels than boys. The department is aware of this disparity but has yet to put in place a strategy for addressing underachievement by boys.
- 129 Standards in the work seen are satisfactory for middle and lower attaining pupils and good for higher attaining pupils. This is in line with the recent results achieved at the end of Years 9 and 11. These standards reflect good achievement for pupils, based on entry at each key stage. Oral skills are generally more fully developed at each key stage though boys are often more diffident.

- 130 During Years 7 to 9, higher attaining pupils produce a good body and range of work, for example in their study of medieval dynastic politics. Historical knowledge and understanding for those of all abilities is further developed by good empathy and historical game exercises, for example dealing with the Peace Settlement at the end of World War I. By the end of Year 9, pupils are producing increasingly confident pieces of extended writing and literary and presentational skills have considerably improved, for example in work on living conditions in Victorian towns. In Years 10 and 11, pupils become increasingly adept at analysing conflicting and contradictory evidence in coursework on 19<sup>th</sup> century America and on conflict in Ireland.
- 131 Teaching and learning are good overall, though there is some unevenness in lesson quality. In the best lessons, teaching is animated, with good variety of activities and a brisk pace of work. This was exemplified in work in a Year 10 class on the Irish Question using political cartoons, workbooks and group discussion. These lessons not only sustain pupil interest but enable them to deepen their learning through individual and group reflection, for example on the issues which led to increasing friction between the United States government and the American Plains Indians in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The most effective lessons also consider carefully the relative attributes of members of the class in determining the composition of working groups, for example in work on the Peace Settlement following World War I. Those lessons which are not so good have insufficient stimulus material, are conducted at too slow a pace and do not provide pupils with enough intellectual challenge.
- 132 In the lessons observed, there is a good match of task to the abilities of both higher attaining pupils and those with special educational needs. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress due to targeted teaching and support. Lessons are well planned and teacher knowledge of subject material is secure, for example in work dealing with the Black Death in Year 7. Teaching builds well on pupil knowledge and experience, including their knowledge of the history of the locality in which they live. Pupils' work is regularly marked with good summative comment and is keyed closely to National Curriculum criteria. Written target setting is not consistent and insufficient use is made of peer group assessment. There are good quality displays of pupils' work which reinforce a positive learning ethos. Expectation in terms of standards could be further strengthened if such work was annotated with teachers' comments regarding quality. There is good extra-curricular opportunity for learning outside the classroom.
- 133 Leadership and management are good. There is a clear vision for the subject. Schemes of work are well considered and match the range of pupil ability. They include good strategies for teaching and learning. Pupils' progress is monitored effectively. The department is beginning to make use of pupil performance data, particularly to target lower achieving pupils and this is starting to be reflected in written comments on coursework at both Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 to 11. Such analysis has begun to impact positively on pupils' learning, particularly in Years 10 and 11 with the introduction of the Certificate of Achievement for those whose literacy skills are below average. The department is making increased use of ICT, for example in the study of modern world history in Year 9. Pupils are encouraged appropriately in the use of historical web sites for the purposes of individual research, for example on Germany between the wars. Communication within the department is good. Meetings are well minuted with clear action points. This impacts well on maintaining a developmental approach to teaching and learning in the subject.
- 134 The subject was not reported on in specific detail at the time of the last inspection but improvement since then has been good. Standards have been raised and maintained



across the key stages. There are close and developing links with other areas of the school and, in particular, the ICT department and the library. The range and quality of resources have been extended, including subject-based CD-ROM material. The department has a good capability to improve. To make further progress, the department should develop the means by which assessment data more directly informs teaching and learning strategies. The use of ICT within the subject should also be extended.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

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

### **Strengths**

- Good teaching leads to pupils achieving well, especially by the end of Year 9
- The attitudes and behaviour of pupils are good and this helps them to learn effectively
- The school has well-developed plans to develop ICT, both as a discrete subject and in support of the wider curriculum

### **Areas for improvement**

- The number of modern computers is below national recommendations and limits access by other subjects of the curriculum
- There is not equality of access to ICT in Years 10 and 11
- The monitoring of the ICT curriculum and how ICT supports learning in some subjects in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory

135 Standards on entry to the school are broadly average, although the range of prior attainment is a wide one. Good teaching means that the pupils progress well. Achievement is very good in first three years, leading to above average standards by the end of Year 9. Standards at the end of Year 11 are satisfactory and represent satisfactory achievement. ICT is an increasingly popular subject at GCSE and pupils are prepared to give additional time in order to secure external accreditation.

136 The teachers' own assessment of standards at the end of Year 9 indicate that standards are above average, with boys performing better than girls at level 5 and above. There are no discernible trends for earlier years because available data is incomplete. Only a minority of pupils proceed to take either the full or 'short' GCSE accreditation. Results were around the national average in 2001. There were no comparable entries for previous years. These results represent satisfactory achievement for the pupils concerned.

137 In the work seen during the inspection, standards in the work seen are above average at the end of Year 9, representing good achievement overall. Lower attainers, including those with special needs, make satisfactory progress. At entry in Year 7, some pupils are unfamiliar with the basic features of the screen interface and have difficulty with basic procedures and mouse skills. In contrast others, who have more sustained prior experience, are already working at levels more typical of Year 8 pupils.

138 Pupils demonstrate appropriate competence across the programmes of study, including experience of desktop publishing, graphics and elementary control work. By the end of Year 9, many pupils are confident users of email and the Internet. More able pupils can share files and work in teams, for example in producing newspaper compilations. In Years 7 and 8, the recently revised course has resulted in pupils of all attainment levels and backgrounds making at least satisfactory progress in both basic

skills and the creative use of spreadsheets. By Year 9, most pupils have learned that their work in the subject must be fit for purpose and this is reinforced by teacher checks of files on a regular basis. Boys' progress is at a rather better rate than girls', for example in cell calculation work. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress although they are not normally supported by learning assistants.

- 139 By the end of Year 11, standards are around the national average and sometimes above it. Pupils show a good awareness of individual and independent learning and responsibility. Technical vocabulary is secure for middle and higher attainers. Numeracy and literacy skills are less of a barrier and pupils can undertake more complex applications, for example in spreadsheet work. Coursework presentation is generally satisfactory. Pupils are more confident in group exercises and they can import and download software from sources such as the internet. By the end of Year 11, pupils have a working knowledge of ICT in the world of business and the legal framework which governs its use, including the Data Protection Act.
- 140 The quality of teaching is good overall; none is less than satisfactory. Learning is also good. Teachers normally have high expectations and a good knowledge of their subject although many work in other departments as well as teaching ICT. This is seen in the quality of basic instruction, the ease with which teachers use hardware and software and the way in which they conduct question and answer work. Pupils have a sound knowledge of their own learning which is reinforced by regular and planned self-evaluation opportunities, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Teachers show a good competence in teaching basic skills, particularly through structured assignments and, for example, in designing spreadsheets and their accompanying applications. The curriculum followed by pupils aged 11 to 14 is challenging and encourages autonomous use.
- 141 There is satisfactory individual support in lessons although groups are large and the ability range is quite wide. Good teaching offsets this. Well-constructed plenary sessions and clear presentations make very effective use of digital projection facilities. In a small number of lessons, the teacher tolerates too high a level of background chatter and some pupils lose concentration. Overall, however, there are established codes of behaviour and teachers encourage pupils to work hard.
- 142 There could be greater emphasis on developing knowledge of control, for example in the use of turtles within schemes of work. Similarly, applied exercises could be constructed to support work in other subjects more explicitly. There is, however, good practice in introducing pupils to art-related and graphic design packages at an early stage in their secondary education.
- 143 Overall, pupils have good attitudes to the subject. They take their work seriously and are prepared to persist. The majority enjoy their studies though the confidence of less able pupils is slower to develop and lower attaining pupils, particularly girls, should be more carefully monitored within Years 7 to 9. Where pupils are asked to make an oral contribution to the work of the class, for example in work using 'look up' tables, the others listen attentively and show respect for the speaker's feelings.
- 144 Leadership and management are good. There are good quality schemes of work, which have been regularly updated. The department is making good progress from a modest base in improving networked access to ICT by other subjects, though a current shortage of modern computers due to resource constraints at departmental level limited usage during the inspection. Marking and assessment arrangements are satisfactory and pupil-tracking arrangements are being refined. These will be more

effective when combined with more consistent, written target setting at each key stage.

- 145 There has been satisfactory progress since the last inspection in Years 7 to 9. The curriculum has been well and comprehensively developed and includes features to be found more usually in the programmes of work for older pupils. Standards are above average. There is a developing vision for how the subject can enhance learning across the school as a whole, although this has yet to be implemented in detail. Within Years 10 to 11, however, progress has been unsatisfactory. ICT is not supported by the existing timetable with the result that only a minority of pupils pursue the subject and retention through to the end of the course is unsatisfactory. The school is aware of this and intends to introduce a wider and more accessible range of options in the new academic year.
- 146 Extra-curricular provision is satisfactory and pupils report positively on the support they receive outside lessons. Pupils have improving access to modern computers and good software in their specialist work. However, one room is still equipped with outmoded equipment and this restricts access to specialist facilities by other subjects. Technician support is now good and the department has the capability to make further substantial improvement at least in line with rising national expectations.

#### **The use of ICT to support learning across the curriculum**

- 147 The use of ICT to support learning within other subjects is uneven. Overall, progress since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. There is good practice in, for example, physical education where VCR technology is used to analyse both performance in sport and strategies for improving technique against monitored opponents in invasive games. Similarly, ICT is well used within modern foreign languages, where a lesson involving the use of *PowerPoint* with a lower ability group was observed.
- 148 In a range of subjects, the use of ICT is satisfactory, for example in art, history and mathematics. In mathematics, ICT is used very effectively for the teaching of statistics and an omnigraph software package has been acquired but not all staff have been trained in its use. History makes some use of web sites and the Internet both for class teaching and research. In art, image-scanning technology is used to good effect.
- 149 In other subject areas, the picture is less positive. The use of ICT is inadequately planned for in English, science and geography. There is no evidence of pupils using data logging or remote sensing in science, and extended writing and different means of communicating in English are not being developed. These deficiencies should be promptly addressed.
- 150 To some extent, unsatisfactory use of ICT is a result of limited financial resources. This has limited access to facilities although these continue to improve and the network is being progressively expanded. The school has embarked upon a programme of staff training to raise competence in the teaching of basic ICT and use within individual curriculum subjects. This has made only limited progress and substantial numbers of staff, including those in core subjects such as English, have yet to receive significant training.
- 151 There are no monitoring arrangements to measure the progress with which knowledge and skills are being acquired by pupils. The school is aware that the

mapping of ICT skills and strategies for meeting them across the curriculum are inadequate. Management arrangements have been strengthened to address these issues. To improve further, the school should prioritise completing basic skills training in ICT for all teaching staff. Similarly, the school should ensure that departmental responsibilities for delivering ICT within their subjects for older pupils are made clear and that these include provision for higher order ICT skills which match the learning needs of pupils aged 14 to 16.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

### Strengths

- Wide variety of teaching and learning strategies
- Good literacy policy being implemented
- Good improvement in speaking and writing
- Good leadership and management of the department

### Areas for improvement

- Match tasks to the learning of the pupils more closely
- Continue to develop speaking, reading and listening at length
- Continue to focus on boys' achievements

152 At GCSE in 2001, results in French at grades A\*-C were above national averages. At grades A\*-G they were at the national average. Average point scores at A\*-C were also above average when compared with national figures. The pupils performed best in speaking and writing. Their weakest skill was listening. Girls performed well above the national average and boys performed in line with the national expectation. Results in French have improved significantly over the past three years with good improvement since 2000. In German, the A\*-C grades were just below the national average, but average point scores were above the average because pupils with a wider range of attainment in this school are entered for the examination compared with national figures. All pupils gained A\*-G grades. Results in German have fluctuated widely over the past three years but this is partly as a result of smaller numbers of pupils being entered for the examination. Teacher assessment at the end of Year 9 is slightly above average.

153 Work seen during the inspection shows that overall standards in French and German are above average at both key stages and pupils achieve well. Higher attaining pupils reach above average and at times well above average standards in all language skills, although they need to speak more spontaneously and not rely so heavily on written prompts. Middle and low attaining pupils achieve average standards in speaking because they have good recall, particularly of vocabulary, and practise spoken language intensively; they are less confident in the use of structures and generally give only short answers; they also achieve a good standard compared with their starting points in reading and listening to short extracts. The department should continue to encourage the pupils to speak, read and listen at greater length to raise standards further. When pupils are given opportunities to write at length, often as a whole class activity in the first instance and then as a redrafting exercise, writing is above average. Writing and speaking have improved greatly since the last inspection and the department has begun to implement a good literacy policy, which should have an additional positive impact on standards. Pupils make good progress generally throughout both key stages and a comprehensive scheme of work for both languages

ensures continuity and progression. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and teachers are well aware of specific needs.

- 154 The quality of teaching and learning in French and German is good at both key stages because pupils have a variety of learning experiences. They listen well and learn from each other, they look for grammatical patterns, they dictate notes to each other and are involved in competitive language games. In a Year 9 French lesson, lower attaining pupils were given opportunities to move around the room in search of descriptions of various objects which they then passed to their team leaders. In this lesson the pupils strengthened their understanding of vocabulary and structure and enjoyed the competition with other teams. Pupils in another class of lower attaining pupils were involved in learning directions and described their actions as they moved around the classroom; this association of action with language used physical movement well to reinforce learning. There is evidence that this range of teaching and learning techniques is having a positive effect on the performance of boys. However, the focus on boys' achievements should continue. Teachers plan their lessons thoroughly and sequence activities well, especially when the activities provide increasing challenge to the pupils and allow maximum time for pupil participation. Activities are always well timed, which maintains a brisk pace of teaching and learning. Teachers always use French for practising the language but some opportunities for speaking French for the routine of the lesson are missed. Pupils are beginning to use the language for their own needs such as asking for paper and books. This practice should be extended further. Homework is consistently given and both quantity and quality are appropriate to the pupils' needs. Some good examples of matching learning to pupils' needs were seen; in a Year 9 lesson, three different levels of task were available to pupils, which enabled all pupils to be successful in their learning, to complete the task with satisfaction and at the same time as their peers. However, this practice is not consistent throughout the department and is particularly necessary in sets containing a wide range of attainment. The use of ICT is detailed in the scheme of work and some low attaining pupils have used *PowerPoint*, but limited access to ICT facilities inhibits progress.
- 155 Pupils behave very well. They are generally interested and enjoy physical as well as intellectual involvement in language activities. They sustain concentration well and persevere with tasks even when they have difficulties. Pupils respond well to each other when working in pairs and groups. They are often enthusiastic in class and are eager to respond.
- 156 Good assessment procedures are in place at both key stages and in both languages. Pupils are well aware of what they need to learn in order to progress. They also use self-assessment well and their targets for improvement are clear and concise. There is a need, however, for a more consistent approach to the marking of long pieces of writing and a clearer view about correction of errors and feedback to pupils.
- 157 The department is well led and well managed. The head of department has given very good support to newly and recently qualified staff. All teachers work very hard for the benefit of the pupils. The department has made good progress since the last report with improvements in the standards of speaking and writing, and in the quality of teaching and lesson planning.

## MUSIC

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

**Strengths**

- GCSE results sometimes exceed the national average
- Opportunities for making music beyond class work are rich and varied
- Teaching is enthusiastic and effective in promoting learning

**Areas for improvement**

- Use of computers by teachers and pupils needs urgent development
- Pupils should be more aware of precisely how to make progress
- Pupils' work and its assessment should be kept more systematically

- 158 Standards in music are at the expected levels by Year 9 and above in GCSE courses. Teacher assessment at the end of Year 9 is available only for 2001. This shows an above average proportion of pupils reaching the expected level. Girls' attainment is at a higher level than that of boys, as it is nationally. In the last three years GCSE results have fluctuated; the average number of A\*-C grades gained is somewhat above the national average. Numbers are small. Girls and boys are equally represented in A\*-C grades awarded in 2001.
- 159 The evidence from lessons and work sampled in Years 7 to 9 shows an average standard of attainment on balance. There is a wide range in all years, particularly in Year 9, where pupils have experienced staff changes. Most pupils recall earlier learning when prompted. They show knowledge of concepts as well as terms, for example when a boy in Year 7 asked if violins were percussion when played with the wood of the bow. Most pupils recognise features of music heard, appreciating differences in texture and colour. Many articulate their feelings in response to music they hear. Most can play keyboards, percussion or their own instruments in combination with others, with a sense of pulse and awareness of other players. However, pupils have no experience of computer-aided music making and therefore lack understanding and skill of this necessary aspect. A few in each class are at an early stage in accurately reproducing rhythmic and pitched patterns. There is generally an over-reliance on using note names. Progress in lessons is satisfactory, reinforced by occasional homework, and pupils often show their sense of achievement. This includes those with special educational needs who, in most cases, participate fully. Written work, including some notation, shows pride in presentation from most pupils, though none of this work is word-processed. The work of the eight girls and four boys across the two years of GCSE shows it to be close to the average nationally. Pupils in Year 10 are positive about their choice of music. Performance is a strength for the majority, supported as it is by investment in instrumental tuition, extra-curricular work and ensemble experiences in class. Pupils find composition more difficult, having done too little of this when they were in Year 9. One computer is now available to support this through sequencing and notation programs. Pupils in Year 10 are able to identify devices used in sets of variations, both aurally and with notation. Those in Year 11 would make faster and more assured progress if their work was kept in an ordered way to support learning.
- 160 Teaching in music is good overall, with some notable strengths and also areas for development. Teaching in all years is lively, enthusiastic and encouraging, with classroom management usually good. Where teaching is good or very good it is because listening comes first, before explanation or questioning. Teaching engages pupils well in analytical discussion, giving pupils opportunities to show their knowledge and understanding and be proud of it. Teachers recognise different modes of learning and provide a variety of experiences. They encourage pupils to be aware of different moods conveyed by music. Teaching works to develop the quality of pupils' singing and encourages those who learn instruments to use them in class, for example in

improvising blues or playing sea shanties. Teaching shows respect for pupils when establishing standards of behaviour and attention. Where teaching does not reach this high standard, no time is left for learning from the lesson to be emphasised at the end. Tasks are sometimes not specific enough, or are started before pupils are equipped to achieve success. There is insufficient use of differentiated tasks for the different levels of ability, interest and experience found in all classes. Learning is limited in those lessons where teachers do not expect pupils to record their progress, having to rely on memory to proceed. In GCSE classes, teaching provides imaginative tasks for composition and encourages development in ensemble performance. However, provision for computer-aided music work must be addressed more urgently. Checks should be made more frequently of pupils' notes, with higher expectations of presentation, if achievement and standards of attainment are to improve. Good teaching prevails in the extra-curricular groups and instrumental teaching sampled.

- 161 Leadership and management of music are generally good. The newly appointed teacher has re-written schemes of good quality and has appropriate priorities for development (though these have yet to be written down, timed and costed). Much time is spent in fostering and developing extra-curricular work which is wide ranging and includes performing groups, workshops and live professional music listening. Visiting teachers speak well of the teacher's organisation of their work. Links with senior management are strong so that both the teacher and the subject are supported well and valued. Music is represented at meetings with middle managers by the head of faculty. There are points for further development to ensure improvement. Criteria for levels of attainment in Years 7 to 9 must be clear to pupils to act as incentives and should be used openly in assessment. The storing of pupils' work should be consistent and valued by pupils as a record of their learning. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Standards of attainment have been maintained. Support for performance, including ensemble experience for GCSE pupils, is no longer lacking. Resources are now satisfactory, with the exception of computerised equipment. While curriculum time for Years 8 and 9 remains the same, overall time for music is satisfactory. Numbers of pupils opting for instrumental lessons, subsidised by the school, are above average and rising. Music making, in class and beyond, has a very good influence on pupils' personal development and raises the profile of the school in its community.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- GCSE results are well above the national average
- Teaching is good, and often very good, in Years 10 and 11
- Teachers are enthusiastic and form good relationships with pupils
- Pupils' attitudes are very good, often excellent
- There is a good range of extra-curricular activities

### Areas for improvement

- Curriculum planning
- Assessment of pupils' progress
- Involvement of non-participants
- Monitoring of teaching

- 162 Teacher assessments of pupils by the end of Year 9 were well above the national average in 2001. The standards achieved by pupils in the GCSE examinations in 2001 were well above the national average. All pupils achieved at least a grade G pass. Pupils did better in physical education than they did in all of their other subjects, with boys doing slightly better than girls. Results have been consistently high over the past four years.
- 163 Standards of work seen are good throughout the school, although there is some variation between activities taught. In Year 7, pupils are in the early stages of linking movements together to create a group dance. They demonstrate good timing and co-operate in small groups to produce a dance, indicating good progress in their learning. In Year 9 pupils swim the front crawl with good stroke technique and are able to comment on how a partner can improve. Their leg action in breaststroke is in need of development, with some pupils demonstrating the screw kick. In basketball, pupils in Year 7 made insufficient progress as they have limited knowledge and understanding of the game and lack skill, especially in passing and shooting, to play the game to an acceptable level.
- 164 In Year 11 a small group of pupils work above the expected level in their swimming. They demonstrate above average technique in a range of strokes and understand the technique of breathing and propulsion of legs. Their knowledge is also above average. They all understood the technique of the tumble turn when applied in a competitive situation. In Year 10, pupils are in the first year of trampolining. They make satisfactory progress, and are in the early stages of planning a routine and linking moves together. Most are able to perform a five-bounce routine including seat drop, back drop and front drop. Some more able pupils can link a twist to their work.
- 165 The scrutiny of pupils' work and the lessons observed indicate standards in the GCSE course are above average. Pupils demonstrate a pride in the presentation of their work but much of it is retrieved from the Internet, especially in Year 10. Pupils make good use of word processing but the standard of written work by pupils in Year 11 is lower than that in Year 10. Pupils' work is not marked regularly enough and, as a result, they are unaware of what they need to do to improve.
- 166 In a GCSE theory lesson, pupils in Year 10 understood the need for a balanced diet and knew that certain foods are beneficial to gain energy. They know that carbohydrates, both in simple and complex forms, are a high source of energy along with glucose. Pupils in Year 11 have good knowledge of the game of badminton. They discuss a range of strategies and tactics in a theory lesson and transfer this knowledge into a practical session where attack and defence are analysed and put into practice. Pupils with a special educational need make satisfactory progress and take a full, active part in lessons, but some, including more able pupils, could do better if teachers' planning considered the full range of ability.
- 167 The quality of teaching is good with much being very good in Years 10 and 11. There was only one unsatisfactory lesson, which resulted in pupils in Year 7 making insufficient progress. Teacher expectations were too high and pupils were not able to play a simple basketball game due to a lack of skill. Very good teaching occurred in the GCSE course, where pupils in Year 10 were taught the strategies of defence in basketball. The teacher made good use of demonstration and pupils were challenged to use an active defender to block and protect a player. In swimming, pupils in Year 11 were challenged to produce an eight-beat leg stroke in front crawl. High expectations demanded good technique and pupils were expected to analyse their work with a partner. In the best lessons, learning objectives are clear and teachers possess good



subject knowledge of the activities taught. Their understanding and knowledge of the National Curriculum are less secure and there has been insufficient planning for the recently introduced Curriculum 2000 at both key stages. In all lessons, relationships between teachers and pupils are very good, often excellent and are a strength. Teachers manage their classes well. The enthusiasm of teachers is reflected in the pupils' attitudes, which are always at least good. Pupils studying the GCSE particularly demonstrate mature attitudes to their work and have a thirst for learning.

- 168 Pupils' attitudes to their work are very good, often excellent at GCSE. They concentrate and listen intently to instructions and form very good relationships with their teachers. Pupils arrive enthusiastically to their lessons and enjoy the benefits of the new accommodation of the sports centre, which complements that in the school. They report that they are pleased with the recently acquired sports college status and feel valued. Behaviour in lessons is very good, often excellent. Consideration needs to be given to the involvement of non-participant pupils in lessons.
- 169 A wide range of extra-curricular activities is offered to pupils and many take advantage of them. School teams are successful in football, badminton and netball particularly. A high proportion of pupils have achieved success in a range of sports at regional, county and national level and are a credit to their school.
- 170 The head of department leads the subject enthusiastically and very effectively. He is a very good teacher and a good role model for staff and pupils. Relationships within the department are very good and all staff are committed to raising standards and helping pupils achieve well. The subject has a very high profile in the school and many pupils are developing good habits of taking exercise as a result of the department's work. Since the last inspection, high standards have been maintained in the department and the imbalance of activities between boys and girls has been addressed. However, a number of management issues remain, including matching assessment to National Curriculum requirements and re-balancing the curriculum to give adequate coverage to all aspects of the subject. Procedures for the monitoring of teaching need to be consistent so that all staff benefit from the process. Overall improvement in the subject has been satisfactory, and the department is well placed to move forward in the future. Resources are good but there is a need to increase the range of portable apparatus for gymnastics.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- All pupils have the opportunity to take the short course in GCSE at the end of Year 11. This gives them a clear focus on key elements of the agreed syllabus as well as the opportunity to gain a recognised qualification
- Pupils are taught analytical skills that are useful in their other subjects
- The schemes of work are written in good detail

### Areas for improvement

- In many lessons the behaviour of pupils needs to be managed more effectively
- There is too much reliance on the textbooks in some lessons
- Marking needs to be more thorough and point out how pupils can improve on their work
- Pupils who choose not to do the GCSE examination must be required to work harder so that they meet the requirements of the agreed syllabus

- 171 In the GCSE short course examinations in recent years over half of the pupils entered gained the higher grades of A\*-C. The vast majority gained a pass grade. There are no national comparisons but these results represent satisfactory achievement in meeting the requirements of the agreed syllabus. Approximately 80 per cent of the pupils are entered for this examination. A small number of pupils, approximately six to twelve, do the full course GCSE by doing an extra lesson outside the school day. These results vary from 50 to 90 per cent attaining the higher grades and represent good achievement for these pupils.
- 172 In work seen during the inspection, pupils in Year 11 are attaining below the standards expected. Their study of war and peace is hindered by poor general knowledge. They work at a slow pace and do not make enough effort to find the required information from the textbook. They copy answers from the book rather than seek to understand the ethical and moral aspects associated with war, including the definitions of a 'just war'. They need more information from the teacher to extend their knowledge and understanding. Standards in Year 10 are at least average. In their study of euthanasia pupils can be perceptive and see the complexities of the arguments for and against euthanasia. They think for themselves and can appreciate most of the moral and ethical points.
- 173 Standards reached in Year 9 are broadly average in meeting the requirements of the agreed syllabus. Pupils in Year 9 know and understand the significance of the various practices of the Hajj pilgrimage. They have good thinking skills and can initiate discussion on the great universal questions such as the concepts of good and evil and life after death. They understand the use and meaning of symbolism. In Year 8, pupils enjoy study on the purpose of life and the concepts of heaven and hell. They show a good awareness of human instincts when responding to how one might compensate for wrongdoing. In Year 7, pupils learn the biblical accounts relating to Easter and gain a satisfactory knowledge of the Last Supper. In their writing they can relate details of the story but they do not appreciate the significance of the events for Christians. In all year groups there is some very good written work done by high attaining pupils. This work is well researched and is in good depth and length and includes interesting personal opinion and analysis of the topics. In all years a significant amount of writing is weak with regard to the ability to express opinions. Spelling is particularly poor. There is not enough emphasis on writing correctly in the majority of lessons. As reported in the previous inspection, pupils understand the distinctive features and symbolism of several faiths but have inadequate knowledge of the reasons for their existence.
- 174 Pupils' attitudes range from good to unsatisfactory according to the teachers' skill in maintaining a working climate. Their standards and achievement are directly related to their attitudes and willingness to work. There are many instances when the poor behaviour of a few pupils hinders the learning of the majority.
- 175 The majority of pupils make satisfactory progress. Some of the high attaining pupils make good and often very good progress largely because they work hard and follow the teachers' guidance, totally ignoring any disruption by others. However, in many lessons a significant number of the pupils do not make satisfactory progress because they make little real effort. They disturb their own learning and that of others by constant idle chattering and inattention. They are not made to amend their ways by the application of the school's sanctions for misbehaviour. Some pupils on the special educational needs register do not make satisfactory progress because they cannot read the textbooks sufficiently well and do not understand the teaching. In a few cases

they copy aimlessly from the textbook without understanding what they write. They need specially prepared information at a level that they can understand.

- 176 Religious education is taught within the humanities faculty that includes history and geography. There is an overall head of faculty in charge of religious education. There is a part-time specialist teacher in charge of the subject in a temporary capacity. Some of the religious education teaching is done by the humanities teachers. This wider provision serves to strengthen the provision for religious education in some areas. Teaching is satisfactory overall. There is some good teaching but there is also some unsatisfactory teaching. The unsatisfactory teaching stems primarily from the fact that some pupils are allowed to ignore the teacher's request to pay attention to their work. They waste their own time in idle chattering and so disturb others. All the teachers have satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the subject and in specific aspects they have very good expertise. In some cases there is too much reliance on the textbooks to provide pupils with information. These books are well written and attractive but the content is inadequate for high attaining pupils because there is not enough depth. On the other hand they are too difficult for pupils who have poor literacy skills and they too need extra provision. Marking varies but in general it does not point out how pupils can improve on their work. There are not enough opportunities for pupils to reflect on philosophical and ethical issues to do with topics such as war and peace and human rights. In almost all lessons there is a good analytical approach to the subject and pupils look at arguments for and against a range of opinions held by people with regard to religious beliefs. The teachers give good guidance on how to present this information in ways that supports pupils' general learning skills.
- 177 Overall management of the subject is good with regard to the schemes of work and the allocation of time to ensure that religious education gets parity with history and geography. The temporary teacher in charge of the subject has worked hard to revise the schemes of work. These are good. There are well-planned worksheets, designed to enable pupils to analyse and evaluate information.
- 178 As at the time of the previous inspection, writing and spelling are poor among average and below average pupils. There is no specific promotion of pupils' literacy skills. There is some deterioration since the previous inspection. Behaviour has deteriorated from good to satisfactory and in a significant number of instances to poor. Teaching was reported to be very good in four fifths of lessons and never less than good; it is now satisfactory with some unsatisfactory teaching. The subject makes some contribution to pupils' spiritual and cultural development as these aspects are studied in the major world faiths. However, the contribution is not as strong in moral and social development as reported at the last inspection.