

INSPECTION REPORT

STOCKPORT SCHOOL

Stockport

LEA area: Stockport

Unique reference number: 106135

Headteacher: Mr D. Wootton

Reporting inspector: Mrs J. Tracey
20270

Dates of inspection: 29th April - 3rd May, 2002

Inspection number: 193047

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 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Mile End Lane
Stockport

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Telephone number: 0161 483 3622

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr W. Barrett

Date of previous inspection: November, 1996

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12003	Andrew Marfleet	Team inspector	English	
21866	David Tracey	Team inspector	Science	
31779	Vivian Harrison	Team inspector	Design and technology	
27803	Joseph Clark	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Equal opportunities	
23709	Ann Powell	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
19452	Antony Pearson	Team inspector	History	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
23926	Douglas Howorth	Team inspector	Geography	The school's results and pupils' achievements
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2941	Andrew Henderson	Team inspector	Physical education	
15678	Jennifer Radford	Team inspector	Religious education Special educational needs English as an additional language	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Stockport School is a mixed comprehensive school with 1023 pupils of ages 11 to 16. The school is regularly oversubscribed. Most pupils come from the local area, close to the centre of the town. A considerable number of pupils are in public care. Fourteen per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is about average. Very few pupils come from ethnic minorities. Of these, a very small number are at the early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs, 27 per cent, is above average. The majority of these have moderate learning difficulties. The proportion with formal statements of need is below average. Overall, pupils' attainment on entry is average. The school was highlighted as one of the 100 most improved school in 1999 and was again recognised as an improving school in 2000. The school is involved in a number of local and national initiatives. It is the lead school in the local 'Excellence Cluster'. Overall, staffing is stable, but there has been a succession of teachers in French and there is still a vacancy in the department.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Stockport School is a good school that provides an effective education for all its pupils. Overall standards of work are above average in Years 9 and 11. Pupils achieve well because of their positive attitudes to learning in response to good teaching. The school is very well led and managed and gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils achieve well throughout the school. Standards are above average overall and well above average in mathematics and art and design. Standards in the vocational health and social care course are very high.
- Overall, teaching is good throughout the school.
- The leadership and management are very good. They promote a good learning ethos.
- Strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy skills are very effective.
- Pupils are well cared for. Relationships between pupils and staff are good. They underpin all aspects of the school's work and contribute to pupils' good personal development.
- The Learning Point and Behaviour Support Centre are innovative units that enrich the school's provision for pupils of all abilities.

What could be improved

- Pupils' underachievement in French.
- The use of information and communication technology (ICT) should be further developed across the whole curriculum.
- The use of assessment information in Years 7 to 9 should be extended to inform pupils how well they are doing in relation to National Curriculum levels.
- Parents could be provided with more regular and comprehensive information about the school's activities, organisation and performance.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made very good improvement since the previous inspection in November, 1996. It has successfully dealt with key issues raised at that time. Improvement in the management structure has led to greater co-operation between staff and a strong commitment to a unified approach in tackling priorities in the school development plan. The appointment of a senior member of staff with responsibility for school improvement has had a significant impact on teaching, which has improved, and on the quality of pupils' learning. Provision for pupils with special educational needs has improved through complete revision of the department's work and enhanced staffing. Similarly, provision for religious education is better, although still not enough time is allocated to the subject in Years 10 and 11. In addition, two successful support centres have been established, which benefit all pupils. Standards of work have risen significantly as a result of the overall improvements.

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				<i>Key</i>
	All schools			Similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
GCSE examinations	C	C	C	B	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E

Overall, pupils achieve well and make good progress in Years 7 to 9 in relation to their prior attainment. Standards in Year 9 are above average in English, mathematics, science, art and design, design and technology and geography. They are below average in French and ICT and average in other subjects. In 2001, pupils' results in national tests taken in Year 9 were above average in mathematics and science and average in English. Compared with similar schools they were well above average in mathematics and science and above average in English. Targets for 2001 were exceeded and those for the next two years are sufficiently challenging and realistic. The trend in the school's average points score is slightly below the national trend because, although the results in mathematics have consistently been above average, those in English and science have fluctuated. Pupils' communication and numerical skills are above average. The effective introduction of the National Strategies for Literacy (NLS) and Numeracy (NNS) has contributed to the improvement of standards overall.

Overall, pupils achieve well in Years 10 and 11 and standards of work are above average. Standards are well above average in mathematics and art and design. They are above average in English, science, design and technology, geography, history, German and music, and average in physical education. In French, ICT and religious education, standards are below average. Standards are very high in the vocational health and social care course. In 2001, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more A*-C grades was similar to the national average, and well above average compared with similar schools. The proportion obtaining five or more A* - G grades was well above the national average. The targets set by the governors were achieved; some were exceeded. Those set for the next two years are challenging and realistic taking into account the pupils' prior attainment. Overall improvement in the GCSE average points score over recent years is broadly in line with the national trend. Girls achieve better at GCSE than boys, as they do nationally. Pupils with special educational needs, the small number with English as a second language and those from ethnic minority groups make good progress throughout the school. Gifted and talented pupils achieve well.

Throughout the school, pupils do not achieve as well as they should in French.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Most pupils respond well to the many opportunities provided. They generally work with enthusiasm and a determination to success.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. The majority of pupils behave well in lessons and respect the school's disciplinary code. In a few lessons, some pupils, more often boys, are restless and make it difficult for others to learn effectively. The school is an orderly community in which pupils feel safe and secure. The number of permanent exclusions is relatively low for the size of the school.
Personal development and relationships	Good. The school's strategies for teaching personal skills and encouraging self-responsibility are effective. Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds mix together harmoniously to create a lively and welcoming atmosphere in the school.
Attendance	Attendance is above the national average.

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.

Overall, teaching and learning are good throughout the school. They meet the needs of all pupils.

The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection, particularly with respect to the amount of very good teaching. This is because the school has given a great deal of consideration to understanding how children learn most effectively. Most teachers convey their own enthusiasm and demonstrate a willingness to try out, evaluate and modify teaching strategies according to their effect on pupils' attainment and progress. Teachers create a good learning environment in the classrooms that encourages pupils to want to learn and do their best. Common features of the very best lessons were the high demands placed on pupils to take responsibility for their own learning, the use of praise to raise pupils' self-esteem and confidence, and rigorous marking that informed pupils how to improve their work further. The very small amount of unsatisfactory teaching observed was mainly due to poor planning and low expectations. The tasks were not sufficiently challenging. Consequently pupils lost concentration and their behaviour deteriorated.

Strategies for teaching literacy and numerical skills are very effective. They assist pupils of all abilities to make good progress across the whole curriculum. Pupils are given good guidance on how to plan their work, by considering what it is they hope to achieve, and how to express themselves clearly and with conviction. They learn to reason things out logically for themselves. The good focus on teaching pupils study techniques is a contributory factor to the rising standards.

Teaching is very good throughout the school in English; also in art and design, music, German and mathematics in Years 10 and 11. The teaching of vocational subjects is of a high standard. Teaching is unsatisfactory throughout the school in French because it does not promote satisfactory progression in pupils' acquisition of language skills.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum provides good learning opportunities for pupils of all abilities. The quality of the work-related curriculum and vocational courses is high, although opportunities for the latter could be extended. A good range of extra-curricular courses is provided. The curriculum is enriched by a very good programme of personal, social and health education. The school's links with the local community make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning, as do links with partner institutions.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils' specific needs are clearly identified. Most pupils make good progress towards achieving the targets marked out for them. The two support centres, the Learning Point and the Behaviour Support Centre, provide valuable help for any pupil, who, for a variety of reasons, might need extra support for short or longer periods of time.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Those pupils who join the school with little or no knowledge of English make good progress because of the individual tuition they receive and the good support in lessons.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. It is good for moral and cultural development and, for social development, very good. The latter is a major strength in the school's work
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares for its pupils well, nurturing their individual talents and aspirations. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and monitoring progress are good. The use of assessment information could be extended in Years 7 and 9 by informing pupils more clearly about their achievement in relation to National Curriculum levels. This would help them to understand the connection between their effort grades and actual standards of attainment.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The leadership group provides very clear direction and is well supported by a committed team of teaching and non-teaching staff. Staff morale is good.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body satisfactorily fulfils its statutory responsibilities and is effective in ensuring that the school targets its work towards priorities outlined in the long-term strategic plan. Communication about organisational matters and the school's performance could be more regular and systematic.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The school's analysis of its work is thorough and self-evaluative. The sophisticated quality assurance system is a major factor in the school's very good improvement since the previous inspection.
The strategic use of resources	The school understands and satisfactorily applies the principles of best value. Resources are adequate to meet the needs of the curriculum, although more computers would ease the considerable pressure on the ICT network. The accommodation is well used but some subject departments are short of space.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of teaching. • The school expects pupils to work hard and do their best. • The school is well led. • The school recognises pupils' all-round strengths as well as academic achievement. • Most pupils like school. 	<p>A small minority of parents feel that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • homework is not always given according to the homework timetable, • the school does not work closely with them, • the school does not provide an interesting range of extra-curricular activities. <p>In addition, a number of parents feel that communication about whole-school matters could be improved</p>

Inspectors endorse the positive views expressed by parents. With regard to homework, inspectors found the quality and quantity to be appropriate. However, because homework is quite often given to be completed over a period of time, pupils sometimes find it difficult manage the 'peaks and troughs' that tend to occur. The school needs to monitor this situation to achieve more consistency. In considering the working partnership between parents and the school, inspectors found there to be a plentiful amount of information and opportunities for discussion about pupils' progress. However, it was felt that that there was potential for parents to be provided with more regular and comprehensive insight into school life, activities and successes. The range of extra-curricular activities was found to be sufficiently extensive and varied so as to provide something of interest for all pupils who chose to participate.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Overall, pupils' attainment on entry to the school is average. It has risen slightly during the past few years, having been slightly below average for the current Years 10 and 11. Pupils achieve well and make good progress throughout the school. Overall, standards are above average in Year 11. The school has been very successful in raising standards and achievement - a key issue at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils of different abilities make equally good progress as they move through the school. However, pupils underachieve in French throughout the school.

standards in years 7, 8 and 9

2. Currently, pupils' attainment on entry is average and most have an adequate foundation of basic skills. However, the proportion of pupils on the register of special educational need is above average and a fifth of pupils have not reached the expected level for their age in English, mathematics and science prior to joining the school in Year 7.

3. In 2001, pupils' results in national tests taken in Year 9 were above average in mathematics and science and average in English. Compared with similar schools they were well above average in mathematics and science and above average in English. The results in English improved significantly from those in 2000 when they were below average. The proportion of pupils that achieved or exceeded level 5 (the level expected for their age) in mathematics was in the top five per cent of similar schools. Over the past four years the trend in the school's average points score has been slightly below the national trend because, although the results in mathematics have consistently been above average, those in English and science have fluctuated. During the last three years the girls have obtained better results in English than the boys, as they have nationally, but the performance of girls and boys in mathematics and science has been similar. Targets for 2001 were exceeded and those for the next two years are sufficiently challenging and realistic. They are very soundly based on pupils' prior attainment

4. Evidence from the inspection, including lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work, indicates that, overall, standards of work are above average in Year 9. They have improved since the previous inspection and are now above average in English, mathematics, science, art and design, design and technology and geography. Standards are below average in French and ICT and average in other subjects. Overall, pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 9. In history, physical education and ICT, where achievement is satisfactory rather than good, pupils could be challenged more to stretch their potential to its limit. Pupils' achievement in French is unsatisfactory because the work lacks progression and is sometimes repetitive.

Standards in Years 10 and 11

5. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more A* - C grades in GCSE examinations has improved since the previous inspection. In 2001, it was similar to the national average and well above average compared with similar schools. The school has consistently done very well for all pupils. The proportion obtaining five or more A* to G grades in 2001 was well above the national average. The GCSE average points score has gradually improved, broadly in line with the national trend. It was similar to the national average in 2001. Girls achieve better at GCSE than boys but to no greater extent than they do nationally in most subjects. In 2001, the GCSE results were well above average compared to schools with similar attainment in Year 9 two years ago. In subjects the results varied. They were very high in GNVQ health and social care, well above average in art and design and mathematics and above average in drama and geography. They were below average in business studies, French, German and

ICT and average in all other subjects. The targets set by the governors, based on pupils' prior attainment, were either met or exceeded. Those for the next two years are challenging and realistic.

6. Overall, standards of work in Year 11 are above average and pupils achieve well. These pupils began Year 7 with slightly below average attainment and are improving on their average performance in Year 9. Standards of work are very high in GNVQ health and social care and well above average in mathematics and art and design. They are above average in English, science, design and technology, geography, history, German and music. Standards are average in physical education and below average in French, ICT and religious education. Achievement is very good in mathematics and art and design. It is satisfactory in ICT, physical education and religious education. Achievement is good in all other subjects, except French where it is unsatisfactory. The underachievement in French is recognised by the school. It results from the cumulative effect of instability in staffing and lack of progression in the programme of study.

7. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress overall. For example, they make very good progress in art in Years 10 and 11. They make good progress in English, mathematics and science and also in subjects such as design and technology, geography and music. They make satisfactory progress in physical education, and in history and religious education in Years 7 to 11. However, progress is unsatisfactory in French and ICT. Analysis of school documentation on examination results at GCSE in 2001 shows that many of the pupils who were on the special educational needs register achieved well. They made good gains in comparison with their results in national tests at age 14, and most did better than predicted at GCSE.

8. Most pupils make good progress in working towards the targets set for them in their individual education plans. However, pupils with behavioural difficulties often make less consistent progress because of their poor attitudes and periodic absence.

9. Gifted and talented pupils make good progress and achieve well, in common with their peers. Pupils with English as an additional language achieve well. Most of them speak and write English with reasonable fluency when they enter the school, and they progress at the same rate as other groups of pupils. Those pupils who arrive with little or no knowledge of English make good progress because of specialist teaching provided by the local education authority, and also because they are well motivated and are given good support in lessons from their teachers and fellow pupils.

10. The effective introduction of the National Strategies for Literacy (NLS) and Numeracy (NNS) has contributed to the improvement of standards overall. Pupils' reading and writing skills are developing well and, overall, are above average. Pupils are taught to structure their writing for its specific purpose. This enhances the quality of their written work and contributes to the above average standards achieved. Overall, pupils' numerical skills are above average. Most pupils apply them competently and transfer them well to other subject areas.

11. The use of ICT across the curriculum is patchy because subject departments sometimes find it difficult to access computers at the relevant point in the teaching. However, where ICT is used, pupils remember what they have learned and apply it satisfactorily. For example, pupils use word processing to draft, redraft and enhance the presentation of course work for GCSE. They successfully interrogate the Internet to search for information in careers and personal and social education.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

12. Pupils have good attitudes towards the school and their learning, which make a positive contribution to their academic and personal progress. In lessons they generally take a pride in their work, try hard and concentrate well. In some lessons, notably in English, geography and mathematics, pupils demonstrate very good and at times excellent attitudes by their enthusiasm and determination to

succeed. In a small minority of lessons some pupils, more often boys, are restless or talk too much. Behaviour in a few French lessons is unacceptable and detracts from the learning of the whole class.

13. Pupils like their school. This is reflected in the attendance levels, which are above the national average. Pupils are punctual to arrive at school and to their lessons.

14. Most pupils with special educational needs respond well to the support that they receive. They have positive attitudes to their work and to school life in general, and usually behave well in lessons. Those pupils with behavioural difficulties often have poor attitudes towards school, but the good support from teachers, classroom assistants and pastoral staff enables the majority of them to make steady progress in developing self-confidence and in establishing constructive relationships with staff and fellow pupils. Pupils in the behaviour support centre make good progress in improving their attitudes to school and in developing a sense of responsibility towards their work. This is because of the positive ethos of the centre and the high quality of the support. Pupils at an early stage of learning English gain confidence because of the individual tuition and the support they receive from staff and fellow pupils.

15. Parents are pleased with standards of behaviour at the school. Overall, behaviour is good. The decline in the rate of permanent exclusions indicates improvements in behaviour over recent years and the effectiveness of the behavioural support procedures. Around the school pupils are friendly and helpful. Relationships are good. Pupils of all backgrounds mix harmoniously. Pupils say that they feel safe in the school and confident in the abilities of their teachers to sort out the few incidences of bullying that allegedly occur.

16. Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils develop good interpersonal skills and respond positively to opportunities to take responsibility. For example, Year 11 prefects help to supervise pupils at lunch times. A group of pupils from Year 9 help with a family learning project to teach basic computing skills to people from the local community. This is a well-structured and beneficial project both for the local community and for the self-confidence of the pupils involved. Pupils make a valuable contribution to the Youth Forum working with the police to discuss issues of importance to young people in the local community. A good number of pupils are keen to take part in the school productions, such as the forthcoming 'Oliver' or in clubs and sporting activities. Several pupils successfully compete in national competitions, for example in the Maths Challenge. Pupils show good initiative, organising inter-form competitions and raising money for charities.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

17. Overall, teaching and learning are good throughout the school. Six per cent of the 146 lessons observed were outstanding, 22 per cent very good, 48 per cent good and 4 per cent unsatisfactory. The remainder were satisfactory. The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the previous inspection, especially with respect to the amount of very good teaching which, based on the lessons seen, has doubled. The amount of unsatisfactory teaching has reduced significantly, from 20 per cent of the lessons observed in the previous inspection. The improvement in the quality of teaching is due to the high priority and commitment of staff to improving teaching and learning strategies. It is the most significant factor in the improved standards of attainment throughout the school.

18. The good standards of teaching result in good learning and achievement for pupils of all ages and abilities. Learning is productive, as is evident from pupils' understanding of their own learning. Most pupils remember what they have learned in previous lessons and apply it to subsequent work. From average standards on entry, pupils achieve well from their starting points in Year 7, and, overall, attainment is above average by the time they are aged 14 and 16.

19. The major factor in the improved quality of teaching, and hence learning, is the high profile given to understanding how children learn effectively. The school is making good use of the principles of

'accelerated learning' that base classroom practices on the preferred style of learning for the particular teacher and the individual pupils in the teaching group. Teachers have contributed to an interesting document entitled 'Teaching and Learning Strategies: a handbook of 100 ideas for colleagues' that clearly demonstrates how thoughtfully teachers analyse their lessons. The purpose of the exercise was defined as 'helping each other to make it work even better in our classrooms'. Suggestions such as 'Sit the naughtiest pupils at the back. They attract less attention and are not seen by others' provide food for thought for other teachers.

20. In the best lessons, teachers' good subject knowledge, combined with planning that takes into account how individual pupils learn best, results in good progress through activities that capture pupils' interest and motivate them to want to do well. For example, in a very good mathematics lesson in Year 10, the teacher effectively made use of pupils' errors in homework to correct misconceptions. The imposition of challenging time limits on subsequent activities kept pupils 'on their toes' and brought about personal satisfaction for them in their learning. Good use is made of praise to raise pupils' self-esteem and confidence. Where marking of written work is particularly good, pupils are given helpful advice that informs them how to improve further. In Years 10 and 11 this is often linked to target grades for GCSE examinations, encouraging pupils to have high aspirations. In Years 7 to 9, pupils are less aware of the extent to which the standard of their work relates to National Curriculum levels.

21. Nine outstanding lessons were observed during the inspection, across a range of subjects. All of them took into consideration the strategies being promoted through the school's teaching and learning initiatives. Common features of these lessons were the high demands placed on pupils to take responsibility for their own learning and open-ended challenges for pupils to pursue aspects of the work independently for its own sake rather than for any credit they might receive. For example, in an exceptionally good geography lesson in Year 8, the teacher's lively introduction to a problem solving exercise on river systems, delivered with a sense of humour, effectively encouraged pupils to apply intellectual effort and to work co-operatively, sharing knowledge and ideas. Pupils gained great satisfaction from learning how to work out the processes for themselves and from explaining them in technical language. The few unsatisfactory lessons observed were mainly due to poor planning and lack of anticipation of what pupils might achieve. The tasks were not sufficiently challenging so pupils lacked interest and concentration and therefore did not achieve as they should. In French, additional factors were low expectations and repetition of work completed at an earlier stage.

22. Pupils with special educational needs and those at an early stage of English language acquisition are well taught in the support centres and in main school classes. The teaching of pupils identified as being gifted and talented is also good. Most teachers have a good understanding of their pupils' needs and know how to tailor the work to suit pupils' different requirements. For example, in a Year 7 English class, the teacher's very good lesson planning and use of carefully chosen resources, together with high expectations of achievement, enabled lower-attaining pupils to make very good gains in learning how to use persuasive language in the preparation of publicity leaflets. A strength of the teaching is the way in which teachers and support staff work together, particularly in the support centres.

23. Strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy skills are creative and very effective. Within English and mathematics lessons, and in separate lessons dedicated to promoting study skills, pupils receive good grounding, which they transfer well to other subjects. The school's literacy co-ordinator works closely with teachers in other subjects to develop pupils' writing skills to a level that enables them to express themselves with clarity and conviction. Pupils are given helpful written guidance indicating how to set out their ideas, for example by using sub-headings, different fonts and writing styles, and by explaining at the start of the exercise what it is they hope to achieve. This is followed up by detailed focus on the writing itself, such as linking paragraphs and using rhetorical questions to engage the reader's interest. Pupils in Year 9 used this advice well in the first of a series of PSHE lessons at the end of which they were to produce a report on Personal Health. The project required pupils to work as a team, to research for and analyse information, and to organise personal visits to seek first hand evidence. Pupils approached the first lesson sensibly, drawing on the expertise of the teacher and the manager of the

Learning Resource Centre. They also demonstrated their ability to use ICT in the search for information. Pupils knew that it was less time-consuming to seek out useful web site addresses first.

24. Teaching is very good throughout the school in English and in art and design, music, German and mathematics in Years 10 and 11. It is good throughout the school in science, design and technology, geography and religious education, and in mathematics, art and design, music and German in Years 7 to 9 and history in Years 10 and 11. Teaching is satisfactory in all year groups in ICT and physical education, and in history in Years 7 to 9. In French, teaching is unsatisfactory overall because it does not promote satisfactory progression in pupils' learning. The teaching of vocational subjects is of a high standard.

25. The good overall quality of teaching reflects the commitment of staff and the enthusiasm with which they try out, evaluate and modify teaching strategies. Their willingness to share expertise and work in teams, for example in art, is making a significant contribution to the rising standards. Teachers are not complacent about their achievements to date and are driven by a desire to improve still further. Parents' response to the questionnaire expressed their belief that teaching was good. Inspectors endorse this view.

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

26. The quality and range of learning activities provided for pupils are good overall and reflect well the school's published aims and philosophy. Overall provision is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. In English, more emphasis needs to be placed on the study of literature to raise standards further.

27. At the time of the previous inspection, the school failed to provide enough time to enable the Local Agreed Syllabus for religious education to be taught in sufficient depth throughout the school. In addition, the time made available for music and personal, social and health education (PSHE) in Years 7 to 9 was barely adequate. In Years 10 and 11, music was only available for pupils outside the taught curriculum. Most of these issues have been successfully resolved as part of the action plan which followed the inspection. However, the time currently provided for religious education in Years 10 and 11 remains low although improvements are planned for the next academic year.

28. Statutory requirements are met. The curriculum provides equally well for boys and girls and pupils of different abilities. It includes the full range of National Curriculum subjects as well as religious education and PSHE. In Years 7 to 9 all pupils also take drama. Other features of the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 are not typical of those found in many other schools and are designed to respond to the school's identification of the particular needs of its own pupils. For example, some of the time made available for English and mathematics in Year 7 is dedicated to the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. This makes a good contribution to their capacity to learn in other curriculum areas where these skills are also required. In Year 9, the higher-attaining pupils in French and German receive an extra lesson in these subjects. In French, pupils are not benefiting from this as much as they should because of the difficulties within the department. During this time, other pupils are provided with further opportunities to develop and reinforce their literacy, numeracy and study skills. This raises pupils' confidence in their ability to tackle national tests towards the end of the year.

29. A very good range of accredited courses is offered in Years 10 and 11. In addition to a typical range of GCSE courses, some pupils have the opportunity to take more directly work-related courses. They reach high standards in the GNVQ, Part One Intermediate course in health and social care where the quality of the curriculum planning is excellent. Unusually for schools, an NVQ Level 1 in basic engineering skills is also offered. This very successful course results from very good long-term liaison with a major national aircraft production company, upon whose apprentice training facilities and

expertise it depends. This course is very popular and is regularly oversubscribed. The school recognises the success of these courses and plans to extend this part of its provision. Another positive and unusual feature of the curriculum for Years 10 and 11 is the provision of a course in key skills which enables pupils to achieve national accreditation previously only available in post-16 education. A small number of pupils are formally disapplied from the requirement to study a modern foreign language in Years 10 and 11. They use this time productively to improve their basic learning skills in the school's Learning Point Centre.

30. The school offers a good range of curricular opportunities for pupils with special educational needs. The provision in the two support centres is very good. The curriculum is fully accessible to all on the register of special educational need. Additional classes and withdrawal sessions provide good opportunities for pupils to improve their literacy and numeracy skills through small, well-focused group tuition and the use of the special computer programmes. Individual education plans provide clear targets for improvement. There are good opportunities for pupils in Years 10 and 11 to achieve success in examinations because they are able to choose from a range of accredited courses as alternatives to GCSE. Additional activities are provided for gifted and talented pupils, both within and outside the curriculum. These spark off interest and satisfactorily present pupils with more open-ended challenge.

31. The school is involved in a wide range of local and national initiatives that further enhance the curriculum provision, or recognise the quality of the school's provision by drawing on its experience and expertise. For example, the school has achieved the prestigious Artsmark Gold award and is applying for Art College status. Leading teachers in the English and mathematics departments have shared their good practice with other local schools and the quality of the school's vocational provision has gained recognition nationally.

32. A good range of extra-curricular activities is provided for pupils. This enables pupils to enhance their learning through music, sport drama, art, visits out of school and abroad, and through a wide range of lunchtime and after-school activities and clubs, including revision sessions. Summer schools are held to promote literacy and numeracy and to enrich experiences for gifted and talented pupils. The school has deliberately targeted many of these activities to match priorities in its development plans. Whilst the range of the provision is good, the school recognises that it needs to do more to evaluate the quality of what is provided, for example by monitoring the numbers of pupils who take advantage of these opportunities.

The Support Centres

33. The school has two support centres, Learning Point, and the Behaviour Support Centre, which were set up in June 2001. Learning Point is an inclusive centre: it is there to serve any pupil, who, for a variety of reasons, might need extra help. Thus, at any one time in the centre, there may be pupils working independently, pupils receiving individual tuition and a small group studying for an examination course.

34. The Behaviour Support Centre caters for pupils whose attitudes are causing concern. It is not a place of punishment but an area where pupils can develop good study habits and a sense of self worth prior to re-integration into main school classes.

35. Provision for pupils is very good. In both centres the emphasis is on creating a well-ordered and harmonious atmosphere in which pupils can learn successfully and feel that they are making steady progress towards the targets which have been set for them. There is a very good match of teaching and support staff to the needs of the pupils and relationships are very good. The managers of the centres have high expectations of the pupils in their care and a strong commitment to helping them to succeed. Daily routines run smoothly because of meticulous planning and pupils are closely monitored. Staff keep detailed records of progress, and assessment procedures are very thorough. The provision is a strength

of the school and an impressive example of its commitment to social inclusion and the welfare of all its pupils.

Personal, social and health education

36. The school's provision for PSHE is very good and has improved substantially since the previous inspection. All relevant aspects are taught within the well-designed programmes of study and resources are good. Major strengths of the provision are the quality of the planning and committed well-qualified teachers. Effective ongoing monitoring of the PSHE curriculum and its relationship with other curriculum areas such as the literacy project, and the very good links which have been established with outside agencies and professionals add credibility to the course and foster pupils' enthusiasm for it. In PSHE lessons observed during the inspection, the teaching was good, sometimes very good, and pupils were achieving well in their programmes of study. The subject is well regarded by both pupils and parents.

Careers education

37. Pupils receive good guidance in preparation for their choice of career and further education. The programme is allocated sufficient curriculum time and is satisfactorily planned and taught. The course makes good use of ICT to reinforce pupils' computing skills, for example by researching information on the Internet and word processing their Record of Achievement. The course is taught in separate modules to each class on a rotational basis. This sometimes results in a module not being covered at the most apt and relevant time for some pupils, for example when preparing for work experience placements. Preparation and debriefing for work experience needs to be more structured for all pupils to gain maximum benefit from it. This was a shortcoming noted in the previous inspection, which has not been resolved.

Community links

38. The school has good links with its primary schools, which enable pupils to make a smooth transfer at the age of eleven. The headteachers meet regularly and there are some developing joint projects, for instance in science and mathematics. Selected pupils from the primary schools visit the school to make use of its facilities. There is a well-run primary liaison day for Year 6 pupils to sample a day of lessons. The school runs literacy, numeracy and 'gifted and talented' summer schools for targeted pupils, which helps to raise their attainment. The close links established with local further education providers enable pupils to make well-informed choices of colleges and courses at post-16.

39. The school has very good links with the its community and local industry, which help to broaden pupils' horizons. Representatives from industry work as mentors on a one-to-one basis with a group of pupils from Year 11. This is successfully helping to increase these pupils' self-confidence and organisational skills.

40. The links in vocational education are strong and make the courses relevant with practical examples for pupils to apply their learning. The education aerospace partnership is excellent. Pupils with an interest in engineering are able to get hands-on industrial experience whilst completing their GCSE in design and technology. A group of pupils in Year 10 spend a morning a week at the factory applying engineering and electrical skills leading to an NVQ accreditation. In the GNVQ health and social care course there are plentiful visits to local health and social care centres, which enrich pupils' learning. A local youth health and advice centre is directly involved with a Year 9 project to raise pupils' literacy standards.

Pupils' personal development

41. At the time of the previous inspection, the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development was unsatisfactory. Since that time substantial improvements have taken place and the overall quality of the school's provision for pupils' personal development is now good.

42. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory and has improved since the previous inspection when it was found to be poor. The school still does not provide a daily act of collective worship for all of its pupils. Assemblies make a good contribution to spiritual development through opportunities to reflect on issues such as individual responsibility or the human need to rely on others, particularly in times of misfortune. These themes also contribute well to social and moral development. In one assembly, Year 11 pupils were congratulated on their thought for others demonstrated by charitable activity during their school career. Local clergy contribute to assemblies from time to time and members of a Christian music group helpfully work with pupils, reflecting upon their beliefs and values. Other contributions to pupils' spiritual development come through subjects. For example, in English, one lesson dealt with issues concerning the human condition, including the moral dilemmas, arising from a study of Macbeth. In history, Year 8 pupils wrote movingly, expressing the feelings of members of the same family on different sides in the English Civil War. Pupils' ideas and opinions are valued in PSHE lessons. In music, some profound and moving writing, particularly from boys, emerged from work on protest songs and in response to the music inspired by the events of September 11th in the USA.

43. Concern for the development of the whole person, including the moral dimension, underpins the school's philosophy and ethos characterised by the themes of creativity, diversity and success. Consequently the provision for pupils' moral development has improved since the previous inspection and is now good. The school's expectations concerning moral behaviour are clearly set out for pupils through the code of conduct and are reinforced well in the classroom. Teachers are good role models for their pupils and older pupils are successfully encouraged to act in the same way to those younger than themselves, for example in working with them as reading 'buddies'. Consideration of moral issues is a prominent feature of the very successful PHSE programme. Sex education is taught within a framework of personal responsibility and confronts difficult issues squarely, expecting, and getting, a mature approach from pupils. The school makes good use of local agencies and professionals in providing resources and expertise when dealing with moral issues. A wealth of these, such as the impact of industrial change on peoples lives, the changing role of women in society, and the reasons for the holocaust are dealt with in the history curriculum. In geography, pupils examine moral issues raised by deforestation and conflicts over land use in the developing countries. In design and technology, pupils are taught to listen to other people's views, to appreciate environmental issues and investigate how technology affects people's lives.

44. Provision for pupils' social development is very good and a strength of the school. This again represents an improvement since the previous inspection. It results from the school's reassessment of the way it seeks to live out its mission statement. There is now a wealth of opportunity for pupils to take responsibility and show initiative. Pupils exercise responsibility as prefects and a School Council has recently come into being. All pupils in Years 7 and 8 have taken part in a 'leadership challenge' activity sponsored by the local business and education partnership. In Year 8, all pupils benefit from spending a day helping the school's administrative staff. Pupils also participate as representatives on the local Police Youth Forum. Impressive sums of money are raised annually through activities such as concerts, in support of a wide range of local and national charities chosen by the pupils themselves. Year 11 pupils successfully organise their own annual formal social function. There is an active 'Young Enterprise' group, members of which have, in addition to their 'business' activity, been involved in trips to trade fairs and attended workshops at the Manchester Business School. The range of opportunities that pupils have for cultural visits and field trips also contributes to social development, as do the experiences of working with adults such as the artist in residence and the training staff at the aerospace company. Pupils with special educational needs have good opportunities for involvement in activities that develop their social skills. They are actively encouraged to have a positive view of their individual potential, to take responsibility for their own behaviour and to achieve success in the different areas of school life.

45. The provision for pupils' cultural development is good. The aspect that deals with pupil's appreciation of cultural and ethnic diversity has improved since the previous inspection when it was judged to be unsatisfactory. However, this is still an area in which the school, rightly, recognises that it could do more. Opportunities for pupils to appreciate and take part in cultural activity are widespread. There are good and expanding opportunities for pupils to take part in a variety of musical experiences including performing in the band and choir as well as visits to opera and concerts. The school offers pupils a good range of opportunities to take part in field trips and educational visits at home and abroad. In both religious education and history, there are opportunities to experience and appreciate the contribution of different cultural influences, for example through the Afro- American contribution to jazz and popular music. Art uses source material from a very good range of cultures. Science draws well on different cultures for its examples. In geography, pupils gained good insights into the diverse nature of British society in a lesson that examined internal migration within England.

46. The schools commitment to pupils' personal development is very well illustrated in the high quality displays of work and achievement that are widespread throughout the school. These include photographs of pupils receiving awards for their efforts in local and national competitions in mathematics and science, and the impressive results of pupils' collaboration with the 'artist in residence'. Within the displays, which feature all curriculum areas, the contribution from art is particularly strong. There are many positive images of minority groups, for example, ethnic minority groups and the disabled in sport. The school has very few pupils from ethnic minorities but it consciously provides opportunities for pupils to reflect on the importance of racial equality and harmony.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

47. Pupils are taught in an orderly and caring environment. The school cares for its pupils well and there are effective procedures to ensure their welfare. Child protection procedures, which fulfil legal requirements, are securely in place. Teachers understand the procedures clearly and thorough records are maintained. The heads of year give very good support to those children at the school who are in public care. The health and safety issues noted at the previous inspection have received satisfactory attention. However, risk assessment of potential hazards needs to be more rigorous and systematically documented.

48. Pupils' personal development is monitored very well. Form tutors and heads of year keep close and effective oversight of their pupils. The staff responsible for pupils' pastoral care work closely together to share good practice and information about pupils. They are kept well informed, on a termly basis, of pupils' efforts in individual subjects. This highlights those who may be experiencing difficulties, possibly for a variety of reasons, and they are then given effective support. Where appropriate, the school brings in external counsellors to help pupils. In addition, some pupils receive mentoring to help them reach higher levels in academic work. A recent and successful initiative is the introduction of 'industrial mentors'. This is a joint project with local employers designed to engage employees in close contact and discussion with pupils who are on the threshold of planning for their future careers through training, further education or employment. The scheme promoted better understanding of concerns at the interface of education and employment and is proving to be of mutual benefit to all those involved. The school operates a breakfast club that also provides pupils with extra support and opportunities for personal discussion. In addition, pupils who would benefit from a quiet area at lunch times are given access to the seclusion of the 'Learning Point' centre. Relationships throughout the school are co-operative and supportive.

49. The school effectively monitors the performance of pupils with special educational needs. Pupils using the two support centres are very well monitored. The systems for identifying and supporting pupils in need of extra help are good; individual education plans are written in such a way that pupils clearly understand their targets. However, the means of measuring pupils' success in meeting some of the targets for personal development are not yet sufficiently well defined. The omission of information on

current standards of attainment, for example in reading and spelling, limits teachers' efforts to evaluate progress. Pupils' progress in improving standards of work, behaviour and attendance is monitored on a regular basis by teaching, pastoral and support staff. The quality of the learning support is very good. Support staff have a strong commitment to promoting the welfare of their pupils and they work hard to achieve positive relationships, based on understanding and trust, which give pupils the confidence to succeed. The school's very effective partnerships with the local education authority and specialist agencies ensure access to a wide range of support services that cater well for pupils' different needs.

50. Procedures for monitoring attendance are effective. Members of staff consistently follow up the reasons for any absence. The educational welfare officer, who is conveniently based in the school, also gives good support. The school does not however, automatically inform parents on the first day of their children's absence, which could help to raise the profile of attendance even further. Pupils returning to school after long term absence through illness or other reasons are very well supported with special arrangements in the 'Learning Point' until they are ready and fully prepared to benefit from the resumption of normal lessons.

51. A calm environment is created in the school, which enables pupils to learn effectively. Disciplinary procedures, including measures to deal with bullying, are appropriate and manageable. They work well. Parents are generally pleased with the efficiency with which any cases of alleged bullying are followed up and sorted out. The system of rewards is effective and relevant to the differing ages of the pupils. Pupils can talk with confidence to the teachers or senior management about any concerns.

52. The procedures for monitoring and assessing pupils' academic progress are good. The information collected is well used by the senior management and staff to analyse pupils' performance and determine where pupils need support and guidance to achieve their full potential. This leads to effective individual mentoring for some pupils in Years 10 and 11. In these year groups pupils know their predicted grades for GCSE and teachers design the curriculum to culminate in focused activities to meet pupils' specific and immediate needs. Pupils throughout the school are regularly informed of their effort grades so they and their parents have an ongoing measure of motivation and commitment. Individual review sessions with form tutors, for pupils and parents, provide good opportunities for discussion and the setting of pupils' personal targets for improvement. However, in Years 7 to 9, pupils are not sufficiently aware of the standard they are working at in relation to National Curriculum levels, although the criteria for each level are well displayed in most subject areas. The school is aware of this and has plans to extend the use of its assessment procedures to provide pupils with more precise information about the standards they are achieving.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

53. Parents have positive views about the school, which is an increasingly popular first choice of school in the local area. Parents believe the school expects their children to work hard, provides good teaching and is well led. They have noticed considerable improvements since the previous inspection. They say that the teaching is more enthusiastic, standards have risen and that there is more recognition of children's all round strengths, as well as their academic achievements.

54. The main concern expressed by parents through the questionnaire and the pre-inspection meeting is that homework is inconsistent with the timetable and that there is not enough communication from the school on whole-school matters.

55. Inspectors agree with parents' positive views and investigated their concerns. The quality and quantity of homework was generally found to be satisfactory, although it was not always given strictly according to the homework timetable. Consequently, 'peaks and troughs' occurred which some pupils felt put undue pressure on them at times. Whilst the inspectors consider that the overall quality of written information sent to parents is satisfactory, parental concern about communication is justified.

Ongoing communication about individual children's progress is good, but the more general information, such as school examination results, news, school plans and routines needs to be more systematic and frequent. The governors' report to parents for the current year is overdue, the last one having been sent out in October 2000. Inspectors agree with parents that the gap is too long. There is potential for the school to provide parents with more comprehensive and regular insight into school life, activities and successes.

56. The school has a good partnership with parents of pupils with special educational needs. Parents are invited to contribute towards their children's annual and transitional reviews and staff often contact parents by phone to discuss pupils' progress. Parents are usually supportive of their efforts in improving academic work and behaviour and are pleased with the progress made.

57. Parents are pleased with the annual written reports on their children's progress. These are much improved since the previous inspection and now give a clear picture of attainment and progress. In addition the school has introduced a termly snapshot of children's effort in each subject, which provides parents with an early indication of progress from the start of the school year. The redesigned school planners, which all pupils are expected to use, are proving effective as an additional channel of communication between school and home. They are checked regularly by form tutors.

58. The school is receptive to parents' views. It has established a School Improvement Partnership that involves individual parents in informal meetings to seek out their opinions. Changes have been made as a result, for example in the organisation of parents' consultation evenings. Most parents take a keen and supportive interest in their children's education. Annual consultation meetings with the teachers are well attended. Parents generally give good support to their children's work at home, for example by checking and signing the homework schedule. The Parents Association organises social events and gives welcome financial support for school improvements, recently helping with the refurbishment of the school hall and picnic tables for the outside courtyard.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

59. The school is very well led and managed. The headteacher and leadership group are new since the previous inspection. They work harmoniously together as a team, acting as catalysts for developments across all aspects of the school's provision. The management structure links all staff into the network of school activities and successfully underpins the work of teaching and non-teaching staff. It enables staff to understand how their work contributes to whole school issues and is a significant factor in the good morale within the school. Overall, the hard work and unified effort have resulted in the fostering of an effective learning environment in which all pupils, whatever their ability, background, race or creed feel safe and valued.

60. The leadership team is strong and has been successful in meeting its self-imposed targets since the previous inspection. At that time there were serious issues of concern about the management system and the team ethos amongst staff. Indications were that staff did not work well enough together to raise the standard of pupils' work. The school tackled the issues vigorously by appointing senior personnel with specific responsibility for school improvement. The sophisticated quality assurance system that was set in place, and is now working so effectively, has been a major factor in the school's very good improvement. Of prime importance has been the involvement of all staff in the promotion, monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning. Teachers have become more self-critical and willing to try out new strategies. As a result, teaching in almost every subject has been revitalised and become more exciting. The local education authority has recognised this by involving some staff in consultative and advisory work.

61. A particularly good feature of the school, credited to all staff, is the willingness with which they embrace new initiatives and see them through to conclusion. They are not daunted by challenge and are prepared to modify the original ideas after fair trial and evaluation.

62. The school's middle management team, consisting of heads of subject departments and other personnel with responsibility, is heavily involved in planning and preparation of school development plans. There is a clear expectation, evident in practice, that departmental improvement plans reflect priorities in whole school plans. Understanding of restrictions due to relatively low funding, and the willingness to 'give and take', were very positive features of a major planning meeting during the inspection and indicative of the change in attitudes since the previous inspection. Almost all departments have undergone fundamental changes in staffing and approach and have 'moved on'. Heads of department are now much more aware of their responsibilities and accountability. The school's management of French within the context of modern foreign languages is the least effective at present. Results in this subject have not improved since the previous inspection and standards are currently below average. Instability in staffing has contributed to this situation but other factors, such as inadequate planning for progression in pupils' learning, are also contributing to the problems and need to be tackled as a matter of some urgency. The school has been much more successful in improving results in other subjects. Realistic targets are being set and met. In GCSE, in 2001, two of the targets, for five or more A*-C grades and the average point score, were exceeded.

63. Management of pupils with special educational needs is good. The co-ordinator manages her responsibilities in an efficient way and gives good educational direction. Staff in the department work closely together as a team. Complex daily routines run smoothly. Since the previous inspection the school has made good progress in improving all areas of provision. The number of support staff has been increased and learning and behaviour support centres have been very successfully established. The school recognises that pupils with special educational needs are the responsibility of all staff, not just those in the special needs department. The flexibility in the organisation of classroom support ensures that the available hours are used to maximum effect. However, there are areas of the curriculum, such as geography, ICT and modern foreign languages where the lack of support sometimes has an adverse effect on pupils' learning. Statutory requirements in respect of pupils with statements of special educational needs are met and the specific grant is used effectively for its designated purposes. The department now plays a strategic role in ensuring social inclusion and the raising of attainment across the whole school. Future priorities, including monitoring of learning materials across the subject departments and helping to extend their range, are relevant and achievable.

64. The governing body satisfactorily fulfils its responsibilities, except in providing for a daily act of collective worship. Governors know where the school's strengths and weaknesses lie and ensure that strategic planning takes account of them. Since the previous inspection governors have regularly monitored progress on action taken to eliminate the issues. Governors gave good support to the headteacher and leadership group at times when difficult decisions had to be taken. Parents' concern about not being fully informed of whole school issues emanates from the lateness of the governors' annual report for the current year.

65. Financial planning, control and day-to-day management of accounts are good. Funding and expenditure per pupil are relatively low compared to schools nationally but prudent planning ensures that funds are directed to priorities identified in the school's strategic development plan. Since the previous inspection the school has been adventurous and very successful in providing for modification of existing accommodation to create the learning and support centres, which benefit pupils of all abilities. The school is innovative and ambitious in seeking out support for targeted aims. For example, it is currently putting together plans and looking for sponsorship to support its bid for recognition as a specialist school for art. Staff at all levels are conscious of the need to seek advice, make comparisons and take account of value for money when planning new initiatives or purchasing resources. These practices are evident across the spectrum of school activities, for example in the current extension of resources for ICT.

66. Overall, staffing is adequate although there are pockets of difficulty. Instability in staffing has seriously affected standards in modern foreign languages over a number of years; the situation is still not resolved with regard to French. Other subjects too have had problems but these have been handled well and progressively resolved over time. Arrangements for the induction of new teachers, and teachers' professional development are good. The latter is critically aligned to areas identified through the school's good performance management system. Since the previous inspection the thrust has been towards improving strategies for teaching and learning. The level of success is clearly evident in the pupils' improved standards of work. Technical, administrative and support staff make optimum use of the hours available to them and contribute to the smooth running of the school.

67. The school buildings are extensive, but space is at a premium because of the large number of pupils on roll. The school has worked hard to minimise the effect of the limited space but recognises that there are still difficulties. Some of these will soon be overcome when the new sports hall is complete and other accommodation released for alternative use. At present, social areas for pupils to use at breaks and lunchtime are very limited and overcrowded. The school community takes pride in the appearance of the buildings and, despite the above pressures, their appearance is welcoming and interesting. High quality and informative displays engage the viewer's interest and reinforce the school's mission statement. They signal the school's ethos and reflect the good learning environment found in most classrooms. The Learning Resource Centre is a central feature of the school's provision. It is well used for independent study and as an extended classroom resource. The book stock is well chosen and relevant, although not as extensive as some schools. The stock of computers is currently being upgraded to incorporate the latest advances in new technology. Overall, the school's learning resources are satisfactory.

68. The management team has successfully led the school through a period of change that has involved decisive action and some difficult decisions. The successful introduction of the Learning point and Behaviour Support Centre is indicative of the school's commitment to providing for the whole spectrum of pupils' needs. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good and is underpinned by the good team spirit that now exists within the school. There is good capacity and the will for further improvement.

69. Taking into account the level of improvement, the rising standards, the school's environment and the good quality of provision, the school provides good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

70. In order to consolidate the school's work and improve further standards, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

- (1) raise standards in French and eradicate underachievement by;
 - improving the quality of teaching and the marking and assessment of pupils' work,
 - focusing more sharply on planning for progression so that pupils build up their knowledge of the language and develop an understanding of how it works,
 - providing regular opportunities for pupils to develop the productive skills of speaking and writing,
 - adopting strategies and teaching methods that increase motivation, improve attitudes and enable pupils to make effective use of each skill,
 - providing more challenging work and raising expectations of higher-attaining pupils.

(Paragraphs 1, 4, 5, 21, 24, 28, 147-152)

- (2) further develop the use of the new ICT resources across all subjects in the curriculum.

(Paragraphs 11, 77, 88, 107, 117, 120, 131, 140, 158, 167, 182)

- (3) extend the use of the assessment system so that subject departments make full use of information to inform pupils in Years 7 to 9 how well they are doing in relation to National Curriculum levels.

(Paragraphs 52, 117, 135, 143, 150)

- (4) provide parents with more regular and comprehensive information about the school's performance, activities and achievements.

(Paragraphs 55, 64)

In addition, the school should provide sufficient time for the teaching of religious education in Years 10 and 11.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

146

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

51

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	9	32	70	30	4	1	0
Percentage	6	22	48	21	3	1	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. [When the total number is substantially less than 100, add] Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one [two, three, etc] percentage point[s]. [Where the total is close to or greater than 100, use only the first sentence.]

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

Y7 – Y11

Number of pupils on the school's roll

1023

Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals

142

Special educational needs

Y7– Y11

Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	19
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	278

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	14

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	20
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	25

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.5
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.7
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage (Year 9)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	95	93	188

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	65	77	74
	Girls	81	70	72
	Total	146	147	146
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	78(54)	78(74)	78(63)
	National	64(63)	66(65)	66(59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	29(15)	45(46)	36(24)
	National	31(28)	43(42)	34(30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	52	79	77
	Girls	73	78	81
	Total	125	157	158
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	66(62)	84(81)	84(73)
	National	65(64)	68(66)	64(62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	24(18)	47(38)	34(35)
	National	31(31)	42(39)	33(29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	87	99	186

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	32	82	86
	Girls	63	94	95
	Total	95	176	181
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	51(55)	95(90)	97(94)
	National	48(47)	91(91)	96(96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	39.5
	National	39.0

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	33	91
	National		Na

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	2
Indian	1
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	2
Chinese	7
White	1004
Any other minority ethnic group	4

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	1	
Black – African heritage	2	
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi	3	
Chinese		
White	44	2
Other minority ethnic groups		

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)	60.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.6

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	89

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	72.6
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	25.3
Key Stage 4	21.7

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	12
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	15
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1

Financial information

Financial year	2000/01
	£
Total income	2546810
Total expenditure	2541745
Expenditure per pupil	2540
Balance brought forward from previous year	33225
Balance carried forward to next year	38290

Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1023
Number of questionnaires returned	392

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	31	60	7	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	36	55	9	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	29	53	10	1	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	43	22	8	2
The teaching is good.	32	61	6	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	32	54	12	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	40	53	5	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	41	57	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	31	50	15	3	1
The school is well led and managed.	36	54	4	2	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	39	53	4	3	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	29	54	11	3	3

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Standards are above average throughout the school and pupils achieve well.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Teaching and learning are very good. The monitoring, evaluation and development of them are excellent.
- Very good use is made of assessment.
- Pupils' attitudes to the subject are very positive.

Areas for improvement

- Literary texts could be used more extensively.
- The standards of boys' work could be raised.
- More use could be made of ICT.

72. Pupils' results in national tests taken at the end of Year 9 were average in 2001, having been below average in 2000. The significant improvement in results in 2001, which were above average compared to similar schools, reversed the downward trend of the two previous years. Girls performed better than boys in these tests, but the difference was broadly in line with that found nationally; girls did better than boys in reaching the higher levels.

73. GCSE results have fluctuated considerably in recent years. Pupils' results at grades A* - C were just above the national average, although this masks the fact that girls did very much better than boys. Three quarters of the girls gained at least a grade C whereas less than half the boys reached this level. Results in English literature were below the national average. They were disappointing, after being well above the national average in 2000. In 2001, the proportion of girls gaining grades A*-C was just above the national average. A large proportion of boys did not achieve higher than a grade D, which brought down the overall performance. The English literature results failed to match the school's expectations.

74. Standards of work are currently higher than recent test results would suggest. The overall standard of work in Year 9 is above average; pupils are achieving well from the average level of attainment on entry in Year 7. Writing skills are particularly well developed. Speaking and listening skills are good, although there are indications that too many pupils do not read widely enough. Evidence from the inspection, including scrutiny of pupils' GCSE coursework, indicates that, overall, standards of work are above average in Year 11. This represents good progress and achievement considering pupils' prior attainment. Girls are still performing better than boys, but the gap is narrowing. This is because the teaching strategies are engaging boys' interest more and improving their attitudes towards English. Pupils taught in 'extension' groups, including gifted pupils, make good progress, as do those with special educational needs. There is a very small minority of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds, and they also make good progress; those with limited English on their arrival at the school make very good progress.

75. The main reason for the better progress now being made by almost all pupils is that the teaching is very good. There have been many changes in staff since the previous inspection, all the current teachers having joined the school since then. Pupils are now learning very well because of high quality teaching. Four teachers are recognised by the local education authority as 'lead teachers' and their

lessons are used for demonstration purposes. Other teachers, from within the school and beyond, are encouraged to watch their lessons and emulate successful strategies. The best lessons are very well structured and move at a fast pace. Teachers use resources very effectively, for example, by providing pupils with individual white boards to record their work for quick visual analysis. Background music is sometimes used to create atmosphere and set the tone for the lesson. There are high expectations of pupils, who are managed very well. Pupils are expected to participate very actively in class, whether in whole class discussions or group or paired work. They have ample opportunities to develop writing skills in lessons. Teachers clearly show them how to plan and structure their writing, which helps them to organise their work more logically. Appropriate learning tasks are set. During the inspection, many of these were related to the needs of imminent tests or examinations. Classroom assistants were not involved in any of the lessons observed during the inspection but effective discipline made it possible for class teachers to give support to pupils with particular needs whilst others were getting on with their work.

76. The pupils respond very well to the high quality teaching. Behaviour was very good in all the lessons observed, and there is ample evidence of real commitment to learning. Classes settle quickly at the start of lessons, and relationships are good: pupils work well in pairs and in groups, and have a good rapport with their teachers. Their attitudes to the subject are very positive.

77. The subject is very well led and managed. The department is identified by the local education authority as the leading English department. Assessment procedures are very good. They are used well to keep pupils informed of their progress and to stretch their potential to its limit. There is excellent monitoring and evaluation of teaching, which contributes to its continuous development. The 'lead teachers' are making a significant impact on standards by setting good examples within their own classes. The organisation of the curriculum is very detailed, and incorporates many good features of the National Literacy Strategy. However, the increased emphasis on non-literary texts has led to an imbalance, and too few works of literature are studied. Wider reading and the use of longer texts would benefit pupils more, and would provide a more secure base for GCSE literature work. Resources are generally used well, apart from computers. A greater emphasis on ICT would make the provision in English even more effective. Drama is taught as a separate subject, although speaking and listening skills developed in drama contribute well to the English provision. The recent introduction of GCSE media studies represents a real enrichment of the curriculum; it is very well taught and pupils are enthusiastic about the subject.

78. There has been good improvement in English since the previous inspection, when not all teaching was satisfactory and some lessons were too confrontational. There is now a strong team of teachers who are ensuring very good learning. The fact that this better learning is only just beginning to impact on standards is because of the relatively short time some of these teachers have been in post. There is good capacity for further improvement.

Drama

79. Drama results in 2001 were above the national average, an improvement on 2000 when they were below average. Current standards indicate that drama in the school is indeed of a high quality and that pupils are well on course to achieve the challenging targets set for them.

80. The quality of teaching in drama is good. Most of the teaching is shared between two experienced teachers, with a specialist taking Years 9,10 and 11. All pupils receive one lesson a week in Years 7 and 8, and ten lessons a year in Year 9. Although the course they undertake in Year 9 is stimulating and worthwhile, it is a pity that the curriculum time for drama is reduced in this way: wrong messages are sent about the importance of the subject, possibly leading to a smaller uptake for the GCSE option.

81. Pupils clearly enjoy the subject: it gives scope to those less able to excel in written work, and contributes very well to the personal development of all pupils, as they explore moral issues and work co-operatively in lessons. Self-evaluation is a strong feature of the work. Many pupils take advantage of the drama clubs each week; school productions also involve many pupils, and staff from several departments. Although the current accommodation is rather limited, drama is likely to benefit from the latest building development. A larger teaching area and better storage facilities can only enhance the provision.

Key skills across the curriculum - Literacy

82. The provision for the teaching of literacy is very good. It is having a real impact on standards across the curriculum.

83. The school has been committed to the National Literacy Strategy from the very start, and receives very good support from the local authority. There has been in-service training for staff and a continuing awareness of the need to develop the strategy across departments. The literacy co-ordinator has only been in post since January 2002, but his enthusiasm is clearly evident. The rationale is to support heads of department and other subject teachers without increasing their workload, in the belief that good literacy provision will improve results across subjects as pupils' writing improves. Some subject departments, for instance business studies, have reported an improvement in behaviour, too, as pupils find themselves better equipped to succeed.

84. The main school focus has been on writing. Sequenced lessons and the use of structured writing plans are encouraged, so that greater precision can be achieved. Resources are made available and advice given, for instance, the art department was helped to modify a plan that had initially proved too difficult. A range of strategies is used: key words, word books and a strong emphasis on word and sentence work. Successful summer schools are held. These help pupils joining the school in September who would otherwise be disadvantaged by their weaker literacy skills. Some pupils in Year 7 are helped with their reading by 'buddies' from Year 10. The weekly reading session helps them to gain confidence. The 'buddies' participate in the evaluation of the reading and are committed and enthusiastic in their support for younger pupils. Staff in the Learning Resource Centre foster pupils' interest in books and literature, but more could be done across the curriculum to encourage reluctant readers. There are plans to involve parents more. Literacy classes are provided for all Year 7 pupils, as separate lessons, but the school's aim is to ensure that good practices are incorporated into all lessons. The school is now focusing on getting pupils to consider the language they use at sentence level and in longer pieces of writing. In areas where this is being done effectively, for instance in English and geography, it is enabling pupils to achieve well.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Standards of work are well above average in Year 11. Pupils achieve very well from their starting point in Year 7.
- High expectations of attainment and behaviour.
- Leadership and management are very good and are reflected in a shared commitment to succeed.

Areas for improvement

- Assessment procedures could be developed further so that pupils become more aware of their level of performance and what they need to do to improve.

- ICT could be used more consistently to enrich and support learning.

86. Pupils' results in national tests taken in Year 9 in 2001 were above the national average. They were well above average compared with similar schools. Results have improved since the previous inspection; they have been consistently above the national average over the last four years. The proportion of pupils who attained or exceeded the standard expected for their age (level 5) in the tests was in the top five per cent of similar schools nationally. There was little difference in the performance of boys and girls. Overall, results were similar to those in science and higher than in English.

87. Evidence from the inspection indicates that standards of work are above average in Year 9. Pupils achieve well from their average starting points on entry to the school in Year 7. This reflects the positive impact of the National Numeracy Strategy, evolving schemes of work and the good teaching. Pupils' standards in written and mental arithmetic are good and underpin their work in problem solving, algebra, geometry and data handling.

88. Results in GCSE examinations have improved significantly since the previous inspection. In 2001, the proportion of pupils who achieved grades A*-C was well above the national average; almost every pupil obtained grades within the A*-G range. Performance exceeded the predictions and targets based on prior attainment levels. Hence, the results signify a very good level of achievement. Most boys and girls achieved at least as well in mathematics as they did in their other subjects and, although a higher proportion of girls than boys obtained grades A*-C, their overall points scores were similar. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 11 are provided with the opportunity to study statistics as an additional GCSE subject. Provision is in the form of a weekly extra-curricular activity. In 2001, all 15 pupils obtained grades A*-C, the majority achieving the highest grades.

89. Standards of work are well above average in Year 11. They are compatible with GCSE results. Teaching is effective in enabling pupils to fully master the GCSE topics they study. Good standards of arithmetic and algebra support the pupils' work in trigonometry, statistics and investigative studies. Higher-attaining pupils transfer mathematical skills well across the different areas of learning although there is sometimes a lack of emphasis on rigorous, logical and sequential setting out of more complex algebraic solutions. Average-attaining pupils' work is consistent with the middle range of GCSE grades. Lower-attaining pupils sometimes find difficulty with retention and application of previous knowledge but their basic mathematical skills are usually adequate to meet the requirements of the lower GCSE grades.

90. Pupils produce a greater volume of work than typically seen, including homework, and this ensures that there is an appropriate balance between consolidating understanding and acquiring new knowledge and skills. Pupils respond positively to teachers' high expectations. Consequently, their progress is enhanced as they move from year to year and achievement is consolidated. The written solutions in a minority of pupils' exercise books lack structure and this has implications for the quality of their learning. The use of ICT to enrich and support learning is satisfactory, but, because of limited resources, the provision is currently inconsistent. However, the department has made a successful bid to resource its own ICT room and this will be in place for the next academic year.

91. In lessons there is no discernible difference in the attainment or involvement of boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs achieve similarly to their peers. A positive feature is how well they are integrated into the teaching groups. A characteristic of the provision is that every pupil, irrespective of teaching group and individual needs, is subjected to the same level of high teacher expectations. This is an essential element in their integration and helps raise aspirations.

92. In all lessons the very good behaviour and positive attitude displayed by the great majority of pupils results in a purposeful, working atmosphere in which learning can take place. When given the opportunity to work in pairs, pupils do so in a co-operative and collaborative manner. They relate very well to their teachers, as is shown by the confident manner in which they readily make oral contributions

during discussions. A feature of these exchanges is the due respect shown by pupils to one another when making their contributions. These positive characteristics apply throughout the year groups and are a consequence of teachers' very good management of pupils.

93. Teaching and learning are good overall. They range from satisfactory to excellent. Teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. All teachers have a very good command of the subject that enables them to confidently engage pupils with challenging work that reflects their high expectations. Vitality and enthusiasm for the subject are added features in very good and excellent lessons. In an excellent Year 11 GCSE revision lesson, the teacher's infectious enthusiasm, command of the subject and high expectations combined to produce a brisk pace that raised pupils' sights and enhanced their understanding of a range of topics from circle properties to simultaneous equations. Pupils sustained high levels of concentration and interest as they were fully engaged by the teacher during rapid question and answer sessions. Similar characteristics were displayed in a Year 7 lesson on geometrical reflections and symmetry. The teacher's skilful match of materials to the needs of lower-attaining pupils resulted in them being absorbed with their work and enjoying success. In satisfactory lessons pupils are not as involved in their learning because the teachers' skills in questioning techniques are less well developed. Consequently the learning of some pupils is passive and there is a corresponding loss of engagement and pace.

94. Leadership and management are very good and there is a strong sense of team spirit and capacity to succeed. The very good improvement since the previous inspection, particularly in the quality of teaching, standards of work and levels of achievement, reflect the quality of leadership since that time. Planning, monitoring and evaluation reflect a clear sense of educational direction and include the establishment of priorities for development that take account of identified strengths and weaknesses. A good start has been made in establishing a database of pupils' performance that can be used to track individual progress and set targets. Teachers mark work carefully and accurately but assessment of the work varies between teachers. Routine work is not consistently assessed so pupils' awareness of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their skills, knowledge and understanding is not always clear.

Key skills across the curriculum - Numeracy

95. Standards of numeracy across the curriculum are above average. Pupils' numerical skills are used effectively in a range of subjects and in some they are actively promoted. In science, above average algebraic skills are competently applied in the manipulation of various formulae and sound graphical analysis of experimental data impact positively on pupils' attainment. Accuracy of measurement, geometry constructions and the costing of materials are well used in the planning aspects of work in design and technology. Pupils demonstrate good data handling skills in a number of subjects. For example, in geography pupils ably tabulate and analyse data and then use a range of accurately constructed graphs to represent the information. When working on spreadsheets in ICT, pupils show that they are able to apply simple formulae. In all subjects, and particularly mathematics, pupils' fluency with number work and mental arithmetic is being progressively enhanced as a direct result of the National Numeracy Strategy. The school has adopted a positive and proactive approach to national and local numeracy initiatives and developments are well advanced. A numeracy co-ordinator has implemented a planned programme for raising awareness of numeracy across the curriculum and has been successful in giving the issue momentum and a higher profile. For example, there are numeracy display boards around the school and a weekly puzzle on a numeracy theme is given to all pupils via their form tutors.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Teaching is consistently good.
- Pupils achieve well throughout the school and standards are above average.
- Teachers use good strategies to promote the use of literacy and numeracy in science.
- Leadership and management are very good. Good monitoring of teaching and learning is effective in spreading good practice.
- The science curriculum makes a very good contribution to pupils' cultural development.

Areas for improvement

- More of the GCSE lessons could be taught in laboratories.
- Boys' performance in GCSE.
- Marking of pupils' work could be more informative in Years 7 to 9 through reference to National Curriculum levels.

97. Standards are above average in Years 9 and 11. These standards are achieved as the result of consistently good teaching coupled with pupils' positive attitudes. Overall, pupils' achieve well throughout the school taking into account their attainment on joining Year 7.

98. Pupils' results in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were above average. They were well above average compared with similar schools. Over the past three years results have improved steadily. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. Pupils' performance is similar to that in mathematics and better than in English. At the end of their compulsory education all pupils are entered for double award GCSE science. Results in 2001 were similar to the national average at grades A*-C and above average at grades A*-G. However, girls gained a much higher proportion of A*-C grades than boys. Over the past four years results have generally been above average but dipped in 2001.

99. Pupils' attainment on entry is average but their practical and investigative skills are under-developed. For example, although middle-attaining pupils in Year 7 could plan an experiment to compare the energy contained in various types of food, inaccuracies in measuring the heat output made their results inconsistent. However, as the result of teaching that focuses on enquiry science, these skills steadily improve. In Year 9 they are above average. By this stage, pupils' standards and understanding of biology, physics and chemistry are above average. This was well illustrated in physics when higher-attaining pupils explained the bending of light as it passed from air to glass. Lower-attaining pupils demonstrate satisfactory understanding in biology when constructing food chains to show how these are related to food webs in the environment.

100. Standards of work in Year 11 are also above average. Pupils' investigative and practical skills continue to improve in Years 10 and 11 due to the many opportunities they are given to repeat and redraft work. Standards of work in biology, physics and chemistry are similar and above average. There are good examples of pupils' understanding of scientific concepts, and their ability to apply them, in higher-attaining pupils' studies of respiration and photosynthesis. Average-attaining pupils demonstrate good reasoning skills when working out the electronic structure of a variety of elements from their atomic number. The good teaching of numeracy and literacy skills makes an effective contribution to the above average standards, particularly in physics and chemistry. Pupils achieve well considering their attainment at the end of Year 9.

101. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards the targets set for them. Their individual education plans are well used by the classteachers and this results in more effective teaching. Where support assistants are available they collaborate well with teachers, raising the level of pupils' progress. Pupils with English as an additional language and gifted and talented pupils make the same good progress as other pupils in the school.

102. Pupils generally behave well in lessons and have positive attitudes towards science. However, in a few mixed middle to lower ability classes there was some unsatisfactory behaviour, particularly from boys. Pupils became less attentive and their concentration waned towards the end of the long double periods. As a result, pupils in these classes made slower progress than in similar classes where the pupils were more positive in their attitudes.

103. Teaching and learning are good overall. The monitoring of teaching and learning is effective and is helping to raise standards. For example all the lessons observed in the inspection had a clear focus on learning objectives. As a result, pupils made better progress because it was clear to them what it was they were going to learn in the lesson. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of their subject specialisms and explain key concepts clearly. For example, in a Year 11 class more difficult concepts in chemistry such as electrolysis of aqueous solutions were explained very clearly in easily understandable language. This resulted in the pupils making very good progress and they were able to give the reactions occurring at the electrodes and name the products formed. The marking of pupils' work is regular but needs to be informative about attainment by, for example, using National Curriculum levels in Years 7, 8 and 9. Pupils' interest in science is enhanced by the very good contribution the department makes to their cultural education. For example, many Year 7 pupils participate in the weekly science club gaining a wider view of science. Many events are organised to broaden the pupils' horizons in science, such as the appearance of Michael Faraday at the school! Homework is set regularly and makes a good contribution to pupils' learning.

104. Numeracy and literacy skills are well taught, focusing on accuracy and effective communication in oral and written work. Good numeracy skills help pupils to make fast progress in their science lessons. For example, they confidently manipulate formulae and analyse data from their experiments graphically. This improves the evaluation of their practical and investigative work. The provision of ICT has improved considerably since the previous inspection. For example, practical work on heat transfer using of a data-logger enabled more accurate comparisons to be made between dull and shiny surfaces in relation to their emitting power.

105. The subject is very well led. Teachers and technicians work well together as a team. Assessment of pupils' work by means of end of unit tests is good. Good improvement has been made since the previous inspection. Health and safety concerns have been satisfactorily dealt with and teaching has improved considerably. However some GCSE classes are taught in classrooms and this leads to difficulties in sequencing the Year 10 and 11 schemes of work and, more importantly, loss of curriculum time.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Pupils' results in GCSE examinations are well above average.
- Pupils' achievement in Year 11 in relation to their starting point is very good.
- Overall, teaching is very good.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to their work.

Areas for Improvement

- Computers are not used sufficiently for research and the development of ideas.
- Pupils' work in three dimensions.
- The purposes of art and design could be emphasised more in Years 7 to 9.

107. GCSE results in 2001 were well above average and indicate very good improvement from the previous inspection when results were average. Results in art and design are higher than in other subjects. All pupils who took the creative textiles examination in 2001 achieved grades A* to C and a quarter of those taking the general art and design examination achieved grade A* or A. Girls' results are better than those of boys.

108. Overall standards of work are above average in Year 9. Pupils enter the school with variable, but broadly average, standards in art and design. In Year 7 they acquire a good foundation in using elements such as tone and colour, skills in a variety of media and knowledge of the work of different artists and cultures through a well-structured scheme of work which is well taught. During Years 8 and 9 they use this experience to develop and express ideas well. Pupils use observational drawing and secondary sources effectively as a source of images for their own work. However their ability to research ideas independently is more limited. They are able to express ideas in a wide variety of two and three-dimensional media. They show a good understanding of composition and their use of colour is both vibrant and subtle. Pupils' appreciation of the form of three-dimensional objects is not as well developed as their use of colour, pattern and texture. Pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 9. By Year 9, standards are consistently good. There is very little work of a low standard. Lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make particularly good progress as a result of good individual teaching.

109. In Years 10 and 11, pupils build on this secure foundation and develop a more independent approach to both visual research and the development of ideas. Some pupils tend to rely excessively on secondary sources, but, overall, observational drawing is well used. Preparatory work is very thorough and includes well thought out exploration of a wide range of different media. Teachers ensure that pupils have a broad experience in Year 10 and they can seek advice from any teacher in Year 11. Sketchbooks are used well to record ideas, experiments and research into a wide range of cultures and artists. Finished pieces in textiles, painting and three dimensions are executed to consistently very high standards. Pupils make very good use of pattern, colour and tone in well-composed work in textiles and painting. Recent three-dimensional work takes more account of the form of the object as well as the surface decoration and texture. Pupils make little use of computers for research or image manipulation because of a lack of appropriate hardware and software. However, new computers are ready to be installed and teachers have the expertise to ensure that pupils make good use of them. Overall, pupils achieve very well in relation to their standards at the end of Year 9 because they are taught individually and encouraged to work independently. By Year 11, standards of work are well above average.

110. The very positive attitudes of pupils to art and design, fostered by the teachers, is a significant factor in pupils' achievement. There is a purposeful atmosphere in lessons. Most pupils enjoy their art and design lessons and they work hard. When working in groups, pupils co-operate well. In Years 10 and 11 they are able to develop their work independently. The excellent displays of pupils' work around the school, work with artists-in-residence and exhibitions of work outside the school, for instance at Manchester Airport, illustrate and contribute to pupils' enthusiasm for the subject as well as contributing highly to the cultural life of the school.

111. Overall, teaching and learning are very good. They are very good in Years 10 and 11 and good in Years 7 to 9. Teachers' knowledge of the subject and skills with a range of media are very good and well used to encourage pupils. All lessons are well planned to maximise pupils' learning, for instance by setting appropriate tasks and targets for pupils of different abilities. Teachers have high expectations and reinforce these with displays of pupils' work, including a very good display showing standards expected at different National Curriculum levels. Marking is extremely thorough and gives clear areas for improvement as well as praising strengths in each piece of work. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good and the basis of very good management of pupils, which was an area of weakness at the previous inspection. The quality of individual discussions with pupils in Years 10 and 11 is high, as is individual support with techniques throughout all year groups. Discussions in Years 7 to 9 could focus

more highly on the purposes of art and design. Teachers make very good provision for pupils to extend their work after school.

112. Leadership and management of art and design are very good. It is a measure of their quality that the very good improvements in teaching, learning and standards since the previous inspection have been achieved without substantial changes in staffing or resources. There is a clear sense of direction, which is shared by the teachers who work as a team so that their expertise is available to all pupils. Teachers are constantly seeking improvement of both the curriculum and the teaching. For example, they are currently reconsidering how sketchbooks, which are already well used, could be better integrated into pupils' working methods. The subject is well organised, with appropriate procedures in place for assessment. Ensuring that all the teachers are able to contribute to the development of the subject is a significant factor in the high standards that pupils achieve.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Standards of work are above average in food technology and textiles.
- Overall, teaching is good.
- Good leadership is providing clear educational direction.

Areas for improvement

- Standards of work in resistant materials.
- Pupils to be better informed of the National Curriculum levels at which they are working.
- Provision of a multi-media design base in the resistant materials area.

114. This is an improving subject area. Overall, standards are above average due to pupils' positive response to good teaching and the recent implementation of new practices and procedures.

115. Teachers' assessments of pupils' work in Year 9 in 2001 were above the national average. Similar standards of work were seen in the present Year 9 during the inspection. For example, in a food technology lesson on bread products, pupils learnt the importance of selecting the correct ingredients, of working to a plan, and, of utmost significance, the necessity to evaluate the product against the initial specification. The latter is a strong feature of the best work. Weaker work is mainly due to poorer presentational skills, drawings and sketches that are not annotated, and unfinished work. Overall, pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 9. They are encouraged to exercise independence in their learning through the provision of good opportunities to explore and develop ideas in arriving at solutions to problems. Hence, practical work is good.

116. Overall, standards of work in Year 11 are above average. In 2001, GCSE results were average. Food technology and textiles are the stronger areas. Standards in resistant materials are below average. A contributory factor is the poorer facilities for this aspect of design and technology. During the inspection, good effort was seen in all areas, for example in a resistant materials project leading to the production of a child's toy. Most pupils gave good thought to the design and attractiveness of the toy as well as its sturdiness. Pupils' experience extends to the importance of quality control in production lines and satisfactory understanding of the use of prototypes before designs are put into full production. Very good research in a corporate images project in graphics, and, in food technology, into vegetarianism for in-flight meal during air travel, made good use of ICT. Pupils used a good range of presentational skills to illustrate and develop ideas and solutions. Poorer learning is characterised by underdeveloped ideas, weak handwriting, poor shading and incomplete work. Progress and achievement are good overall and the standard of practical work is mainly good. Pupils' literacy skills are well promoted and their attention

is regularly drawn to accuracy and good expression. The use of numerical skills and ICT is satisfactory. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls, although girls usually produce a higher standard of work in their design folders. Pupils on the NVQ Electrical Engineering Course in Year 10 achieve well. The pass rate is consistently high from year to year.

117. Pupil attitudes and behaviour are good. They usually come to lessons prepared for work and respond well when suitably challenged. However, there are instances of inattention and distraction and pupils not concentrating on their work. Most pupils, including those with behavioural or learning difficulties make good progress overall and integrate well. Pupils with special educational needs sometimes make even better progress with their written or design work when they have support from learning assistants.

118. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. All the teaching was satisfactory or better, some was very good. In the best lessons, learning was accelerated and good progress made because teachers used their good subject knowledge to develop or expand ideas. This effective teaching incorporated strategies for whole class and group work, good use of time and resources, and good management of pupils. This was seen in a Year 7 lesson where pupils were evaluating different types of lettering styles, a Year 8 lesson where pupils increased their understanding of triangulation in structures, and in a Year 11 lesson when pupils looked at quality control and industrial processes as a revision exercise. Some lessons, although satisfactory, lack real pace; pupils are not sufficiently challenged and previous work is not recalled well enough for pupils to proceed to the next task. The objectives of each lesson are usually shared with the pupils. The sharing of ideas and the evaluation of other pupils' work at the end of the session are valuable and helpful tools for the teacher and the pupils. They enable pupils to modify and improve on their work in subsequent lessons. Teaching has improved since the previous inspection.

119. The leadership of the department has changed very recently. Good leadership is giving clear and effective direction to the subject through the introduction and successful implementation of new policies and practices. Issues from the previous inspection are progressively being dealt with and there is a shared vision for moving the department forward. The information gained from assessment procedures is used well to target pupils' performance. Pupils' work is marked regularly but is not consistent in helping pupils to improve their work. In Years 7 to 9, pupils are unsure of the National Curriculum levels at which they are working. Pupils do not have enough experience of Control and CAD/CAM in the curriculum and there is a shortage of resources for ICT, particularly in food technology and textiles.

120. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. A wider range of materials is used, design skills have improved and there is better monitoring of pupil' progress. Teaching is now more proactive. Staffing in the department has improved. Some of the accommodation has been refurbished but the textiles room is rather small for large classes and the resistant materials area is in need of upgrading to include multi-media work areas and design facilities. The part-time technician gives invaluable support to the department but more time is needed to fully service the subject's needs, especially so because the practical rooms are not in close proximity. Safety lines around machinery in the workshop areas need re-marking.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Pupils achieve well throughout the school and standards are above average.
- Teaching is good.
- Pupils respond very well to the firm, yet friendly, relationships with their teachers and this underpins their good learning and very good personal development.

- Leadership and management are very good.
- The use of information from assessment to set targets for all pupils and check their progress is very good.

Areas for improvement

- The use of new technology for teaching and to support pupils' learning is not extensive enough.

122. The overall standard of pupils' work in Year 9 is above average. This was accurately reflected in the teacher assessments in 2001. Pupils achieve well taking into account their average standards at the start of Year 7. They make good progress in Years 7 to 9. All pupils develop and make good use of the skills of map-reading, photograph interpretation and fieldwork. By Year 9, the higher-attaining pupils reach well above average standards, as demonstrated by their ability to collect, record, present and analyse information on patterns of land use in the Peak District. The work of lower-attaining pupils is less accurate and detailed, but, overall, their work is average. Pupils use their ICT skills very well, for example when researching the cause, effects and human responses to earthquakes. They manipulate the new technology satisfactorily to integrate maps and photographs into text, producing newspaper articles of high quality. However, overall, the use of ICT to support pupils learning in lessons is not extensive enough because of the limitation of resources.

123. The pupils who choose geography in Year 10 are representative of the whole ability range; attainment is average overall at the start of the course. Pupils achieve well and, by Year 11, standards are above average. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. GCSE results have improved too and are now consistently above average. In 2001, the proportion of pupils obtaining the higher A* - B grades was above the national average. The girls attained higher results than the boys, and to a greater extent than found nationally.

124. In Years 10 and 11, pupils continue to increase their knowledge and understanding of the complex relationship between human and physical geography. For instance, when studying migration, higher-attaining pupils used Ordnance Survey maps very competently to provide evidence of the growth of villages in the urban rural fringe. They used detailed case studies to explain the reasons for international migration. The work was of a high standard. That of middle-attaining pupils was average because they did not explain in detail, for example, why standards of living are higher or lower in different countries. The work of lower-attaining pupils is sometimes below average because they do not read questions carefully enough to answer them accurately.

125. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is good, as is that of the few for whom English is not their main language and those from ethnic minority groups. It is very good when there is classroom support but this is restricted to two periods per week in geography. Teachers use very good quality worksheets that are graded in difficulty to ensure these pupils work at a good pace and succeed. The progress of gifted and talented pupils is good because the teachers provide extension work for them in every topic to enable them to reach their full potential. In a Year 8 lesson all the different groups of pupils, with support, made excellent progress learning to use the detailed technical language of a river system accurately and with confidence.

126. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Teachers set high standards. The planning and management of all lessons is very good and pupils respond accordingly. Relationships in lessons are very good. Pupils and teachers listen to each other with respect. Very good methods, for example problem-solving activities and pupil presentations, create high levels of interest and, in some lessons, total concentration.

127. The quality of teaching has improved considerably since the previous inspection. The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed ranged from good to excellent. Evidence from the

inspection, including scrutiny of pupils' work, indicates that teaching and learning are good throughout the school. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject and their expertise includes an understanding of what pupils need to improve to achieve well in examinations. For example, in an excellent lesson, high expectations enabled pupils to work very effectively in pairs on different topics. They worked rapidly in the first part of the lesson, increasing and consolidating their knowledge and understanding of the various topics. In the second part of the lesson they learned very effectively from each other, sharing their notes in presentations. The teacher extended the learning by stressing the main points, particularly reinforcing the distinction between description and explanation and showing pupils how to gain full marks in written answers. Assessments are set and marked at the end of each unit and grades are compared with targets to give pupils a clear understanding of their progress. A very good lesson in Year 7 involved the pupils in role-play about new pupils arriving in a school. Using Bradford as a case study, they learned to appreciate the reasons for movements in the population. The explanation and discussion sensitively explored the misconceptions and prejudices that often occur. The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are well taught in each year and support the pupils' learning. There were no significant weaknesses in teaching. Where it was good, rather than very good or excellent, pupils were given too much time on one task and the pace of learning slowed.

128. Leadership and management of the department are very good. Teaching and pupils' work are monitored and assessment information is used very effectively to track pupils' progress. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good; standards and results are now above average and unsatisfactory teaching, learning and achievement have been eliminated. Curriculum planning is now very good and ensures progressive learning for all groups of pupils.

HISTORY

129. Overall, the quality of provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Standards are above average in Year 11.
- The subject makes a good contribution to the development of pupils' literacy skills.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning history in Years 10 and 11.

Areas for improvement

- The marking of pupils' work throughout the school is inconsistent. Pupils are not kept sufficiently well informed about their achievement and what to do to improve.
- Teaching does not always take sufficient account of the range of pupils' abilities within the class.
- Not enough use is made of ICT to support pupils' learning.

130. Standards of work are average in Year 9 and above average in Year 11. Pupils achieve satisfactorily in Years 7 to 9. They achieve well in Years 10 and 11 because of their positive attitudes in response to good teaching.

131. GCSE results have fluctuated from year to year since the previous inspection. They have generally been below average. In 2001 they were average. The proportion of girls who obtained the higher A*-C grades was above average and substantially higher than that of boys. However, the proportion of pupils choosing to take history in the GCSE is smaller than that found in most schools, and the relatively small numbers involved in the comparison exaggerates the extent of the difference between the performance of girls and boys.

132. Standards of work in the current Year 11 are above average. Pupils are achieving well in relation to their prior attainment in Year 9. Overall, girls reach higher standards than boys but the

difference is not significant. Pupils assimilate detailed knowledge that is used well to interpret the causes and outcomes of historical events. They successfully reason out conclusions for themselves, teasing out evidence from information available to them. In Year 11, for instance, higher and average-attaining pupils have a good understanding of political developments in Germany in the period between the two World Wars. The most able pupils analyse sources of evidence well in order to select the most reliable material to explain why ordinary Germans supported the Nazi party. Lower-attaining pupils are aware of the correct responses but their explanations lack supporting detail and their writing contains weaknesses in grammar and spelling.

133. Standards of work are average in Year 9; few pupils reach the higher levels of the National Curriculum. Pupils have a sound understanding of chronology supported by effective use of time lines in Years 7 and 8. Most pupils can describe and give both the reasons for, and results of, processes and events such as the Industrial Revolution or the First World War. Few express their ideas in any length or make detailed comparisons across periods of time. The majority of pupils can select information readily from a reasonable range of sources but higher-attaining pupils are not sufficiently stretched in their analysis of them. Pupils' capacity to evaluate different interpretations of historical events is limited because they have few opportunities to develop this historical skill. Pupils organise and communicate the results of their investigations satisfactorily but the breadth of opportunities for doing so varies too much between teachers. Some of the work produced by lower-attaining pupils is incomplete. Not enough opportunities are provided for pupils to use computers to assist in the presentation of their work or to research information.

134. The majority of pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. However, learning resources and tasks are not always sufficiently well adapted to meet their needs, and the relatively high proportion of these pupils in some classes means that teachers cannot provide individual attention. Consequently, tasks are sometimes not completed by these pupils. Progress is good in lessons where teachers can provide individual attention for them. This is also the case for those few pupils who are at an early stage of learning English.

135. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in lessons are good overall. They are very good in Years 10 and 11 where pupils have chosen to continue to study history. These pupils are interested and well motivated to learn. In Years 7 to 9, most pupils are well behaved and have good attitudes to learning. Attitudes, and hence learning, tend to be better in classes where teachers have had the time to establish effective working practices based on good relationships with their pupils. However, where these relationships are not fully embedded, attitudes are occasionally unsatisfactory. Pupils allow themselves to be easily distracted from their work, the teacher has to spend time managing this behaviour and, consequently, the pace of learning is slowed.

136. Over the previous two years, the continuity of learning for some pupils has been adversely affected by the absence of staff through long term illness. The situation has recently been resolved. Evidence from the inspection, including scrutiny of a representative sample of pupils' work, indicates that the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. The analysis revealed that in Years 7 to 9, the work is not always sufficiently well adapted to meet the needs of the lower-attaining pupils and those who have special educational needs. In addition, higher-attaining pupils are not being given sufficient opportunities to work towards the higher levels of the National Curriculum. This weakness was also evident in the assessment tasks, which are used to measure pupils' attainment. The quality of the marking of pupils' work throughout the school is inconsistent. Too much work, including that of pupils in Years 10 and 11, is left unmarked and pupils are not given sufficient indication of how they can improve. Pupils are not kept sufficiently well informed of their achievements in relation to National Curriculum levels or, in Years 10 and 11, in relation to examination criteria. In the lessons observed during the inspection, the planning was good and learning activities provided a good level of challenge for the majority of pupils. For example, in a Year 8 lesson investigating developments in public health in the nineteenth century, higher-attaining pupils were expected to analyse the usefulness and reliability of a range of well-selected sources of information. Learning was good in lessons where

teachers had good relationships with their pupils. The teacher's confident and good humoured approach in a Year 10 lesson drew well on pupils' own experiences of medical developments in recent times and resulted in a real interest and commitment to their demanding learning tasks. Most lessons contribute well to pupils' literacy. This was particularly evident in a Year 7 lesson where pupils investigating the growth of towns in the Middle Ages were provided with good practice in skimming text and selecting and recording relevant information.

137. Management of the subject is satisfactory. Strategies for improvement are being developed based on a sound appreciation of the subject's strengths and weaknesses. Teachers have worked hard to minimise the adverse effect on pupils' learning, particularly in examination classes, of long term teacher absence through illness. A good range of history field trips enhances the quality of the curriculum and contributes well to pupils' learning. History contributes well to pupils' moral and social development through the themes they study. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. The quality of teaching has improved. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour, as well as standards and results, are now better than they were. Assessment information is used well in curriculum planning for Years 10 and 11. In Years 7 to 9, the quality of this information is not yet good enough for it to be used effectively in planning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Most pupils have positive attitudes to ICT and are keen to learn.
- Leadership and management are good.
- Strategic planning is good.

Areas for improvement

- Standards of work and achievement are lower than in most other subjects.
- Insufficient use is made of ICT in the teaching of some subjects.
- The number of computers is below average for the size of the school.

139. GCSE results in 2001 were below the national average when compared to all schools. Pupils entered for the GCSE examination in ICT did slightly better in other subjects than they did in ICT. 2001 was only the second year in which the GCSE course was offered. Results were an improvement on the previous year.

140. Standards in Year 9 have been adversely affected by the staffing difficulties experienced during the last academic year, by inadequate resources and because pupils are not given enough opportunities to develop their ICT skills in other subjects. Standards are below average, but rising. Some pupils do not yet have the confidence, fluency and independent learning skills expected of pupils of this age. They have little understanding of how computers can be used to control machines through testing and modifying sets of instructions. Pupils' skills in using computers to convey information are average. All pupils can create simple spreadsheets and databases and higher-attaining pupils can use complex formula and produce charts in graphic form. Internet skills are underdeveloped; pupils who do not have access to a computer at home have little experience in the use of e-mail. Given their attainment on entry to the school, achievement is satisfactory.

141. Standards in Year 11 have been adversely affected in the same way as for Year 9. In addition, a significant minority of pupils who do not take the GCSE option find the alternative key skills course too easy. Standards overall are below average. In Year 11 GCSE groups, few pupils have acquired the independent learning skills needed to acquire the higher GCSE grades. Pupils in Year 10 are beginning

to benefit from new initiatives to promote independent learning. Pupils' skills in the use of computers to control machines are underdeveloped. Their use of technical vocabulary is limited. Pupils' skills in using computers to communicate information are average and, as in Year 9, they have a sound skill-base in the use of data-handling software. Pupils taking the GCSE option have developed average design skills and can apply the use of ICT to real world situations. Given their attainment at the end of Year 9, achievement is satisfactory.

142. Opportunities for pupils to use ICT in other curriculum areas have been hampered by the lack of computers. The next few months will see much greater use of ICT because new computers are already in school and about to be located in classrooms and resource areas about the school. This will make them accessible for regular use in all subjects. Teachers have been trained, or are receiving training, in using the network. Specialist software has been purchased. Some subjects are further on than others. In science, the use of ICT to support learning is good. There is good use of data logging and pupils use PowerPoint for demonstrations, for example, in showing how a photocopier works. In geography, pupils use desk-top publishing to produce newspaper articles on earthquakes and volcanoes, and produce good graphs to illustrate data produced in fieldwork. In physical education, satisfactory use is made of digital cameras and video recording to analyse performance in practical activities. Spreadsheets and databases are well used in mathematics to produce graphs and charts. Word processing is used in most subjects to edit work and present it in interesting format. The Internet is used for research. Overall, however, not enough use is made of ICT in English, mathematics, art, geography, history, modern foreign languages and music.

143. Pupils with special educational needs make insufficient progress and are underachieving. One of the main reasons for this is that the teaching fails to take into account their particular needs; for example, they are usually given the same worksheets as higher-attaining pupils which are often too difficult for them. In one class, for example, two pupils with weak reading skills were unable to read the information handed out by the teacher.

144. Pupils' positive attitudes make a significant contribution to their learning. They come to class ready to do their best and attempt the work they are set willingly and conscientiously. They listen carefully to instructions and work well together when sharing a computer. Computers and other equipment are used sensibly and responsibly.

145. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Good subject knowledge is a common feature of the teaching and enables teachers to make helpful interventions in the classroom, spotting where pupils are going wrong and helping them move on. Where teaching is good, teachers' plan lessons carefully, explain clearly what pupils are expected to learn and manage the pupils firmly but sensitively. In these lessons, expectations of what pupils can achieve are high. In one Year 7 lesson, for example, pupils were using PowerPoint to prepare a multi-media presentation which included the use of digital cameras. In the very small amount of unsatisfactory teaching seen, the management of pupils was not effective enough; pupils failed to listen to instructions and did little work. Teaching could be improved if work was planned specifically to meet the needs of the different groups of pupils in mixed ability classes.. The development of a bank of self-help resources would encourage pupils to become independent learners. Pupils are not always informed about how well they are doing in relation to National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades.

146. The leadership and management of the subject are good. A great deal has been achieved in the short time since the subject has been under new leadership. A comprehensive and well thought out development plan has been drawn up which will guide the school through its next stage of development. Staff training is underway, new networks established and a temporary scheme of work put in place. There is still much to do to raise standards of work and the quality of teaching to those in most other subjects in the school. Monitoring procedures are not yet in place to ensure that ICT is supporting pupils' learning across the whole curriculum. The number of computers available to pupils is below the national average for a school of this size. Since the previous inspection progress has been satisfactory. Teaching is better and there are now GCSE courses for Year 10 and 11 pupils.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

In German:

- Teaching and learning are good
- Standards are rising
- Pupils have good attitudes and achieve well

Areas for improvement

In French:

- Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory.
- Pupils are not doing well enough in relation to their starting points.
- Speaking and writing skills are weak.
- Marking and assessment are unsatisfactory.

In modern languages:

- Monitoring of teaching and learning needs to be more rigorous and analytical.
- The use of ICT is underdeveloped.

148. The school offers diversified provision in modern languages from Year 7 with half the intake beginning French and the other half taking German. Pupils continue with the same language for five years. Serious and chronic staffing difficulties in modern languages since the previous inspection have affected the continuity of pupils' learning in each language and are still ongoing in French.

French

149. In 2001, the GCSE results in French were below average and were similar to the previous two years. Pupils do less well in French than in their other subjects. Boys do significantly less well in French than girls at the school and do significantly less well than boys nationally.

150. Standards of work in Year 9 are below average. Pupils make progress in comprehension skills and can pick out some detail from what they read and hear. However, they do not develop speaking and writing skills well. Opportunities to practise oral work, for example in pairs, are less frequent than is often found and pronunciation is often inaccurate, especially when pupils read aloud. They do not develop confidence in speaking and most do not readily produce more than brief, often one-word answers because teachers' expectations regarding the length and quality of response are not high enough. Pupils learn many nouns but they do not have enough exposure to verbs from early on nor do they progressively build up a secure knowledge of basic grammar structures, which they need in order to produce accurately formed sentences both orally and in writing. Pupils do not pay enough attention to copying and spelling and the level of accuracy in writing is low. Higher-attaining pupils in the Year 9 express class make satisfactory progress in listening and reading because these skills are well practised. However, they do not make enough progress in speaking and writing. Although they have some knowledge of tenses and work through mechanical verb exercises, their ability to manipulate the language and to speak and write freely is not well developed. Their writing lacks fluency and contains frequent basic errors. Pupils with special educational needs do not make satisfactory progress in lessons that are adversely affected by the conduct of some pupils with behavioural or emotional difficulties and where no in-class support is provided. Overall, pupils are not moving quickly enough

towards the expected standard for their age and they are underachieving, but boys are underachieving more significantly than girls.

151. Standards in Year 11 are also below average and reflect GCSE results, which have shown no improvement over the past three years. Pupils continue to make progress in reading and listening but speaking and writing are major weaknesses. In oral work, pupils rely heavily on written support and rarely take part in an exchange of information of any length. Higher-attaining pupils work from teacher-produced written model answers rather than producing their own individual responses to oral questions on topics. There is too much working from English, resulting in written work which lacks fluency, and also repetition of material from earlier years, some of which is more suited to Years 7 or 8. Some higher-attaining pupils make successful references to past and future time in their written accounts, but many pupils still have not mastered tenses or learnt basic structures. Written work lacks attention to detail and is inaccurate. Standards overall are too low and pupils are underachieving.

152. Teaching and learning in French are unsatisfactory overall. Just under half the lessons seen in French were unsatisfactory, which is a high proportion. Weaknesses were identified in the sample of pupils' work and in other lessons. A major weakness is the lack of progression in building up pupils' knowledge of grammar and how to apply it. Planning over time does not take this sufficiently into account. Planning for progression from lesson to lesson is also unsatisfactory when classes taught by different teachers needlessly repeat the same work because of ineffective liaison. The level of work does not always match the differing needs within a class, which slows the pace of learning for some pupils. Higher-attaining pupils are not challenged enough and more could be expected of them. Although management of pupils is generally satisfactory, some classes taught by temporary teachers are poorly managed and pupils fail to make effective progress. Pupils do not hear French spoken often enough by their teachers and there is a need for a consistent approach. The quality of marking is poor. Books are not always marked regularly, errors are not picked up and pupils continue to repeat the same mistakes. They are often praised too highly for mediocre work and so they do not have a true picture of their progress. Assessment is unsatisfactory. More work is needed to ensure that levels assigned reliably reflect the progress the pupils have made over time so that pupils know how well they are doing and what they must do to move up to the next level.

153. The school provides good opportunities for pupils in Years 9 and 10 to visit France and gain personal experience of the language and culture. Pupils' attitudes towards French vary considerably according to the quality of teaching, but they are no better than satisfactory overall. Pupils affected by frequent staff changes feel frustrated and let down, and this is one of the reasons why a significant minority of pupils, mainly lower-attaining boys, behave inappropriately and disrupt the learning of other pupils in the class. Other pupils, among them higher-attaining girls and boys, often find lessons boring because they are not suitably challenged, they do not have enough opportunities to solve problems and work things out for themselves, there is too little variety and teachers sometimes talk too much. Consequently, some pupils do not listen hard enough and too readily stray off task.

154. Improvement since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory because standards and the quality of teaching and learning have worsened. Despite its best efforts to recruit, the school has been without a teacher to lead the subject since January and management of French is unsatisfactory. Teachers need to work together to improve planning, marking and assessment. They also need to widen their horizons regarding teaching methods by observing and learning from best practice in German.

German

155. Standards of work in Year 9 are average and are rising. Boys and girls generally achieve well in relation to their starting points in Year 7. They gradually build up their knowledge of basic grammar and vocabulary and develop each skill through regular practice. They speak with good pronunciation and most pupils answer simple questions readily with a sentence. Average and lower-attaining pupils adapt

models to write sentences of increasing length and they have some knowledge of the past tense. They develop comprehension skills well, picking out factual details from tapes and printed texts in the course materials. Standards of work in the Year 9 express class of higher-attaining pupils, who are preparing to take their GCSE a year early, are well above average and these pupils are achieving well in response to very good teaching. Their clear understanding of assessment criteria is reflected in their confident oral presentations. They edit and re-draft their work and produce extended written pieces on a range of topics with a high level of accuracy, including making appropriate references to both the past and the future. Pupils with special educational needs respond well to praise and encouragement and generally make progress at a similar rate to other pupils in the class.

156. Standards of work are above average in Year 11 and are much higher than the most recent examination results suggest. Pupils achieve well. In 2001, the GCSE results in German were below average. Staffing difficulties throughout the year contributed to the considerable fall in results compared with the broadly average results in the previous two years. Factors contributing to the improvement in current standards are consistently good teaching in all classes, following the appointment of new staff, and the sharper focus on boys' achievement in relation to their potential. Pupils continue to build up their knowledge of grammar and more complex structures and learn to manipulate and vary the language used. By Year 11, the highest attaining pupils write fluent coursework assignments, for example, comparing and contrasting recycling of rubbish in England and Germany, showing appropriate and accurate use of tenses. Average and lower-attaining pupils write shorter and generally more factual pieces, also with good attention to accuracy. Comprehension skills continue to develop well. All pupils pick out information from tapes and texts and higher-attaining pupils deal with longer extracts and often identify different viewpoints and attitudes. Pupils benefit from extra lessons in preparation for the GCSE speaking test. They give oral presentations on subjects of their choosing, such as work experience or hobbies, and the most advanced pupils speak confidently and fluently, expressing and often justifying their opinions on a wide range of topics.

157. Attitudes towards German are good. Pupils generally come prepared to work hard, although a small minority of boys tend to lose concentration easily and waste time. Pupils identified as gifted and talented display an enthusiasm for the subject and a curiosity about how the language works. Pupils enjoy working in pairs and groups and boys usually participate as keenly as girls. Behaviour is good. There was good support for this year's visit to the Rhine valley, which contributed well to pupils' social and cultural development.

158. The quality of teaching and learning in German is good overall and is sometimes very good. Teachers generally manage pupils well and have good working relationships with them. They plan their lessons effectively, preparing activities that involve pupils fully, and use resources that catch their interest and increase their knowledge and understanding. This was clearly demonstrated in an excellent Year 7 lesson on the topic of leisure activities. Through the teacher's skilful use of the overhead projector and visual aids, pupils in this mixed ability class quickly learnt to recognise and pronounce accurately the expressions for the different activities. Various quick-fire oral games helped pupils to commit them rapidly to memory and the more advanced pupils not only began using them confidently but were also able to deduce and apply the new grammar correctly. Lesson objectives are shared with pupils, who are expected and encouraged to do their best, and time is used to good effect. Marking and assessment are good overall, with very good practice in Years 10 and 11. However, in a minority of lessons in Years 7 to 9, there is some inconsistent practice, notably in the use of German and in marking and assessment.

159. Subject management is very good and there has been good improvement since the previous inspection. There is a shared team approach to improving the quality of pupils' experience in the classroom and to raising achievement in German still further through more rigorous monitoring.

160. Leadership and management of modern languages are good. Despite the major staffing problems that have beset the department, much has been achieved in the relatively short time the head

of department has been in post, although much work still remains to be done. The first priority is to tackle unsatisfactory teaching and underachievement in French, even without a leader for the subject in place. Monitoring of teaching and learning needs to be more rigorous and analytical, with clear targets for improvement. The very good practice that exists in German needs to be shared with teachers of French. For example, the strategies to raise boys' achievement that are proving successful in German need to be adopted in French also. The use of ICT to support pupils' learning is not yet in place but the department is poised to move into a new computer suite later this month.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Standards of work are above average in Years 10 and 11.
- Pupils achieve well in all year groups as a result of high quality teaching.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Music makes a very effective contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development.

Areas for improvement

- Provision for the use of ICT is unsatisfactory.
- The range and quality of classroom instruments are unsatisfactory.
- The accommodation does not have separate spaces for group work

162. GCSE results have varied considerably in recent years because of interruptions to the continuity of teaching and a low take-up of music as an option. The current situation is much better. Evidence from the inspection shows that standards of work are now above average in Year 11. There is no significant difference between the attainment of girls and boys.

163. Teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9 indicate that standards match the national average; this was reflected in standards of work seen in Year 9 during the inspection. Standards have been maintained at this level since the previous inspection. The attainment of boys at this stage has improved significantly since the previous inspection.

164. Pupils achieve well In Years 7 to 9. Although they enter the school with attainment levels below those expected nationally, most pupils quickly develop a good knowledge of simple notation and keyboard repertoire. Pupils in Year 9 have developed good listening skills, are able to maintain independent lines in ensemble work and, using technical terms, correctly identify features of music they hear. By building on these skills throughout Years 7 to 9, pupils are able to use sound to compose and perform pieces in conventional and experimental styles. Pupils in Year 7 created a piece using the polyrhythmic features of West African music. In Year 8, pupils quickly learned to distinguish chord changes in a twelve-bar blues sequence. Standards of work in Year 11 are above average and pupils achieve well. The increase in numbers taking instrumental lessons is reflected in the satisfactory performance abilities of most pupils. A few very able pupils perform at a standard well above the requirements of the examination. However, pupils' confidence in performing is lower than that in either composing or listening because most are relatively late in beginning to learn to play instruments. Pupils' achievement in composition is very good. They know how to organise and develop their ideas and produce well-structured pieces. They experiment widely and confidently with a variety of genres and are successful in maintaining stylistic consistency. Pupils recognise the distinguishing features of different styles of music and use an expressive vocabulary to describe musical effects. However, they are not secure in correctly identifying different historical periods.

165. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is good. Most are able to cope with similar work to that of other pupils because the work set is adapted where necessary to their capabilities. The department makes significant efforts to accumulate information about more able pupils and ensures that those identified as gifted or talented are presented with appropriate challenges and diverse opportunities to develop. As a result, these pupils make good progress.

166. At all stages, pupils enjoy music. They arrive prepared to work purposefully, and are fully co-operative with one another and with their teachers. More able pupils readily support those less able, and when given the opportunity to work independently they use the available time well. They handle equipment responsibly and control levels of noise in a considerate manner.

167. The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 7 to 9; it is very good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers have high levels of musical expertise and a strong commitment to developing the musical potential of every pupil. Their objectives are clear and they communicate knowledge and understanding with energy and enthusiasm. Their expectations of pupils are high. In an excellent lesson in Year 7, as well as learning to maintain a regular pulse and sustain their rhythmic pattern against different parts, pupils were encouraged to appreciate subtle differences in texture, timbre and dynamics. They gained a real sense of excitement and achievement from the intensity of a successful shared experience. The subject makes an important contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development because of the quality, breadth and depth of the experiences provided. More time needs to be allocated to recording pupils' work so that they learn to be discriminating by being critical of their own achievements.

168. The management of the department is very good. Teaching and learning are carefully monitored to ensure consistency. The curriculum is regularly reviewed and adapted to meet pupils' strengths and weaknesses identified by the department's assessment system. The policy of setting and reviewing targets in the light of information gathered from assessments has been highly successful in improving the attainment of boys in Years 7 to 9. In an innovative move, the system for rewarding achievement, in addition to the certificates awarded to pupils, includes letters sent to parents and carers informing them of their child's success. The department's development plan is clearly linked to the school's priorities, although to be fully effective it should include analysis of costs. The department provides a good range of extra-curricular activities that include instrumental and choral groups. In conjunction with the drama department, it is currently involved in a production of 'Oliver'. Concerts and other musical events take place regularly, older pupils visit professional concerts and operatic productions, and the department participates in national musical events.

169. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Numbers learning orchestral and non-orchestral instruments have increased to around seventy. Music at GCSE is now allocated sufficient time during the school day. Improvements to the accommodation, which is still inadequate in terms of practice spaces, are about to take place. However the department remains impoverished of resources. None of the keyboards provides sophisticated technology and the small amount of tuned percussion is restricted both in quality and pitch. Because there is only one computer the department is unable to fulfil the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum for music.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Standards in swimming are above average.
- The monitoring of teaching and learning is good.

Areas for improvement

- More emphasis on the teaching of foundation skills in games activities.

- Increasing girls' participation in lessons in Year 11.
- Planning of lessons, to match the full range of pupils' capabilities.
- Updating teachers' qualifications in lifesaving.

171. Standards in physical education are average overall. They represent satisfactory achievement by both girls and boys. Pupils' positive attitudes in response to consistent teaching ensure that boys and girls make satisfactory progress as they move through the school. Standards in GCSE physical education are above average.

172. The formal teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2001 indicate that standards are below the national expectation, with girls ahead of boys. This is not entirely confirmed by inspection findings, although only a restricted range of activities was seen due to adverse weather conditions. In the lessons seen, standards were generally average with similar levels achieved by both boys and girls – further work in ensuring the accuracy of teachers' assessments is required. Evidence from the inspection shows that, by the end of Year 9, the majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs, are reaching the expected standards for their age across the range of activities. Standards in swimming are above average. In Year 7, girls enjoyed the challenge provided by the use of synchronised swimming techniques. Their progress was generally good, although a few lower-attaining pupils need more support in improving their basic skills. Boys in Year 9 also made good progress in developing their passing and receiving skills in water polo, with above average standards achieved by the higher and middle-attaining pupils who made up the large majority of the group.

173. Pupils' results in GCSE examinations have shown steady improvement since the previous inspection. In 2001, overall results were average. Substantially more boys than girls choose the subject, but girls' results are ahead of boys'. However, both boys and girls did better in physical education than in their other GCSE subjects, and, when compared with expected results based on their prior attainment in the national tests at the end of Year 9, their achievement matched expectation.

174. Overall standards of work are average in Year 11. In basketball, both boys and girls are working at above average levels, and are making good progress in translating their good basic skills into game situations. In boys' volleyball in Year 10, however, this is not the case – although their basic techniques are average in practice they are not secure enough and break down when used in competitive situations. For girls in Year 10, standards in tennis are lower than expected because their basic techniques are not well established. More emphasis is needed in developing basic skills in teaching both tennis and volleyball. For those taking the GCSE course, standards are above average in theoretical aspects of the course, particularly for girls and some of the more motivated boys.

175. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress as they move through the school. They are co-operative in lessons, and their behaviour is good. The majority of pupils are enthusiastic, have positive levels of interest in the subject, and take part fully in lessons, although the high level of non-participation by girls in Year 11 is cause for concern, and slows their progress. For most pupils, however, their commitment and effort are good.

176. The quality of teaching and the learning that it promotes are satisfactory across the school. Teachers enjoy good relationships with their pupils that help to create a co-operative atmosphere for learning in lessons. The management of pupils is a strength of the teaching, and this contributes to the mainly positive attitudes and response from pupils in physical education. Teachers have secure knowledge of the activities they teach and, as a result, pupils learn correct techniques and improve their knowledge and understanding, for example, in swimming in Years 7 to 9. In the most effective lessons, teachers establish clear learning objectives that they share with their pupils, and frequently question them to check on their learning and understanding. This was illustrated well in a successful Year 11 GCSE lesson on skill acquisition, where the teacher's high expectation demanded in-depth responses from pupils of all abilities, and ensured they made good gains in knowledge and understanding.

177. Areas for development within teaching include the need to match both tasks and resources more closely to the requirements of pupils of different levels of attainment to ensure their optimum progress. Greater consistency is needed in setting clear learning objectives for lessons and sharing them with pupils, and also in the alternative activities provided for those boys and girls not taking part in lessons. As at the previous inspection, more emphasis is required on improving basic skills in games activities generally.

178. Leadership and management are good overall. National Curriculum requirements are met in Years 7 to 9, with secure schemes of work linked to good assessment procedures. For pupils in Years 10 and 11, improved opportunities for choice and specialisation should be explored, particularly in light of the benefits that the new sports hall will bring on completion. Notable progress has been made in developing regular monitoring and evaluation of work in the department that will enable good practice to be shared and developed. Elsewhere, there is urgent need for a policy for health, safety, and risk assessment to be confirmed, and for all teachers who are teaching swimming to have up-dated lifesaving qualifications.

179. Since the previous inspection, there has been satisfactory improvement in physical education. Standards of work and the quality of teaching and learning have been sustained. GCSE standards show steady improvement, despite the lack of a dedicated teaching base for theory work. The department's commitment to extra-curricular opportunities has been sustained, and the activities are popular with boys and girls, particularly the inter-form competitions. The good range of activities is helping to raise standards, and is providing good opportunities for pupils to achieve high standards both individually and in their teams.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Good teaching and new programmes of study have transformed pupils' attitudes from disaffection into enjoyment of the subject.
- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 achieve well.
- Good leadership is providing clear educational direction.

Areas for improvement

- The amount of time allocated to the subject in Years 10 and 11 is inadequate for the requirements of the Local Agreed Syllabus.
- The use of ICT is underdeveloped.
- Pupils do not have opportunities to widen their experience by visiting places of religious interest.

181. There have been no formal examination courses at GCSE in recent years, but five pupils opted to take the short course in religious studies in 2001. All the pupils were awarded grades, most of them in the range A*-C. This represents good achievement after a period of time in which pupils of all ages had become disaffected because of the unsatisfactory provision for religious education.

182. Standards of work in Year 9 are average and meet the expectations set out in the Local Agreed Syllabus. Standards have risen dramatically in a short space of time. Pupils' learning is good and they achieve well. This is because teachers make their lessons interesting and challenging and encourage pupils to take an active part in the lesson. Work seen during the inspection shows that most pupils, both boys and girls, have a firm grasp of the main beliefs and practices of Christianity and of other world religions such as Buddhism and Islam. Pupils also learn from religious belief as well as learning about it. For example, pupils in a Year 9 class made thoughtful contributions from their own experiences in a discussion about the purpose of suffering. The majority of pupils of all levels of attainment and those with English as an additional language have a clear recall of what they have learnt in previous lessons and use key religious words and phrases with a reasonable degree of accuracy. They usually make effective use of illustrations in recording information, and they describe their personal responses to life-changing experiences without reticence— a tribute to the confidence which pupils have in their teachers. Spiritual awareness is revealed in such comments as: “my problems are nothing compared with the suffering around the world.” Higher-attaining pupils produce work that is well researched, and they write at considerable length. Middle-attaining pupils express their understanding clearly, for example when explaining the religious symbolism of Islamic patterns. Lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs achieve well when they have clear guidance in the structuring of their responses. However, there is too much written work which is rushed or left unfinished, and pupils' handwriting is often untidy, with basic errors in the spelling of familiar words.

183. Standards of work of the present Year 11 are below average. There are two reasons for this, namely the unsatisfactory teaching that pupils experienced until very recently, and the limited amount of time allotted to the subject in Years 10 and 11. Overall, pupils' learning and achievement are satisfactory. Most pupils have a reasonable understanding of different moral standpoints on issues such as the sanctity of life, although some middle and lower-attaining pupils have difficulty in expressing their ideas clearly in discussion because they do not get enough regular practice. Written assignments are brief, partly because the emphasis is on discussion and sharing of ideas, and partly because of lack of time.

184. Most pupils have positive attitudes towards the subject and behave well in lessons. This is because of the good relationships within the classroom and the interesting lesson activities. There is no

significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs, or for whom English is an additional language, progress at similar rate to other groups of pupils because of the extra help they receive from their teachers and from other pupils. Pupils who have been identified as gifted and talented respond well to homework opportunities for research. However, the use of ICT during lessons is too limited. The subject offers good scope, through the focus on discussions and reflection, for the development of pupils' moral, social and cultural awareness. However there are occasions when the spiritual dimension to a discussion theme is not given enough attention.

185. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. This has a positive impact on pupils' learning. There is a shared commitment on the part of all teachers to high expectations. In the majority of lessons seen the teaching was good and on one occasion it was very good. This represents a significant improvement since the previous inspection when the overall teaching was judged to be unsatisfactory. The strengths lie in well- planned lessons, teaching methods that enable pupils to be active learners rather than passive listeners, and good relationships in the classroom. Teachers also have good subject knowledge and manage their pupils well. In the most effective lessons pupils learn successfully because they know what is required of them and they enjoy the work they are doing. For example, pupils in a Year 11 class achieved well in a discussion on capital punishment because of the good planning and the purposeful pace of the lesson. The learning objectives focused on the quality of oral responses, and all pupils made good progress in making clear and fluent observations because they were well motivated and had plenty of opportunities to contribute both as individuals and as part of a group. Most teachers use the closing moments of the lesson effectively to check on progress and consolidate the main learning points. The very small amount of unsatisfactory teaching was due to a slow pace of working; pupils became inattentive and did not make sufficient effort with their work.

186. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. Almost all aspects of the subject have improved significantly. Management is good because there is clear educational direction. Programmes of study are interesting and challenging, with the result that pupils now enjoy the subject and are well motivated. Provision for pupils in Years 7 to 9 is good. In Years 10 and 11, the provision is still unsatisfactory because the time allocation is insufficient for adequate coverage of the Local Agreed Syllabus and for the introduction of an examination syllabus at GCSE. However, plans are in hand to remedy this shortcoming in the next academic year, and the capacity for further improvement is good. In addition there are appropriate priorities to develop the use of ICT so that all pupils have opportunities for research and independent learning, and to widen their knowledge and understanding of religious practices through visits to different places of worship within the locality.

GNVQ HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

187. Overall, the quality of provision in health and social care is **excellent**.

Strengths

- Results in external examinations are very high.
- The quality of teaching and learning and the organisation of the course are excellent.
- The pupils' response matches their teachers' high expectations and enables them to succeed as independent learners with maturity beyond that expected for their age.
- Leadership and management are outstanding.

Areas for improvement

- Increase the number of vocational GCSE courses in the school.
- Extend the provision of key skills in Years 10 and 11 to include the application of number.

188. This General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) part 1 course was introduced in 1996. It is the only GNVQ course and is a popular choice, particularly with girls. The course operates across

both options blocks and is timetabled for a whole morning to enable the pupils to make use of the local community to support their learning.

189. In 2001, there were 33 pupils on the course in Year 11. Almost all were successful in gaining awards and seven gained distinctions. These results reflect high achievement as most pupils gain grades much higher than expected in relation to their attainment at the start of the course. Many pupils pursue their study of health and social care to higher levels at local colleges.

190. In the Year 11 lesson observed pupils were completing different aspects of their course work and knew exactly what they needed to do to reach their targeted grade. For example, some pupils used their own questionnaire as a basis for an interview with the nurse from a local medical centre. They had prepared the background material well so were able to make optimum use of discussion about community nursing. Overall, learning is of high quality and is underpinned by excellent teaching. It promotes pupils' independent research skills and raises their confidence. Teachers have a thorough knowledge of the subject and very high expectations of standards of work and behaviour, to which the pupils respond well. Leadership and management are exemplary. Reinforcement and application of the key skills of communication and ICT, previously confined to GNVQ courses, have been successfully introduced into the curriculum for all pupils in Years 10 and 11.