

INSPECTION REPORT

CHRISTOPHER WHITEHEAD HIGH SCHOOL

Worcester

LEA area: Worcestershire

Unique reference number: 116978

Headteacher: Allan Foulds

Reporting inspector: Mark Woodward
11049

Dates of inspection: 30th April – 4th May 2001

Inspection number: 193099

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

© Crown copyright 2001

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 to 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Bromwich Road
Worcester
Worcestershire

Postcode: WR2 4AF

Telephone number: 01905 423906

Fax number: 01905 420788

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs Judy Prangnell

Date of previous inspection: 17th March 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
11049	M Woodward	Registered inspector		Information about the school. The school's results and achievements How well pupils are taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
8982	K Berry	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
22685	N Moss	Team inspector	English	
19135	D Ebbage	Team inspector	Mathematics	
27585	K Hounslow	Team inspector	Science	
22491	L Small	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT) Design and technology	
17868	E Metcalfe	Team inspector	Art & design Religious education Equal opportunities	
15462	C Blakemore	Team inspector	Geography History	
11838	D Cronin	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	English as an additional language

19532	E Charlesworth	Team inspector	Music	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
3697	G Bancroft	Team inspector	Physical education	
2597	C Jackson	Team inspector	GNVQ/Vocational education Business studies Provision for pupils with special educational needs	

The inspection contractor was:

Independent School Inspection Services (ISIS)

15 The Birches
Bramhope
LEEDS
LS16 5PB

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Complaints Manager
Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7 - 11
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	12 - 17
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	17 - 19
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	19 - 22
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	22 - 24
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	24 - 25
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	25 - 30
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	31
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	32 - 36
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	37 - 65

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Christopher Whitehead High School is a larger than average comprehensive school, serving 1106 pupils aged 11 to 16; the proportions of girls and boys are broadly equal. Fourteen per cent of the pupils are eligible for free school meals which is broadly in line with the national average. The socio-economic circumstances vary considerably but are average overall. A small proportion of the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, none of whom are at an early stage of acquiring English. Around 16 per cent of the pupils are on the register for pupils with special educational needs which is a little below the national average, and 2.9 per cent of pupils have statements of special educational needs which is broadly in line with the national average. The school houses a unit for pupils with specific learning difficulties which is staffed directly by the local education authority. The standards achieved by the pupils on entry to the school are average in relation to national standards and are rising.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school is effective although the behaviour of a significant minority of the pupils is unsatisfactory. The quality of teaching, leadership and management are satisfactory; the direction of the school is positive and good progress has been made in some areas such as the way that the school reviews its performance and the improvement of the accommodation. Taking into account its lower than average income, the quality of educational provision and the standards achieved by the pupils, the school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils achieve well in English literature, design and technology, history, physical education and communication studies; and in modern foreign languages and art and design between the ages of 11 and 14.
- The quality of teaching is good in English, science, design and technology, history, art and design, physical education, religious education, communication studies, drama and youth award; it is also good in modern foreign languages between the ages of 11 and 14 and geography between the ages of 14 and 16.
- The accommodation has been significantly improved since the last inspection, both in terms of new developments, such as the learning resource centre, and the general level of decoration and maintenance. This has improved the learning environment and the opportunities for pupils to learn.
- The business manager and the non-teaching staff make a substantial contribution to the effective running of the school.
- Careers provision is good.
- The induction of new staff to the school and the support for student teachers is good.
- The information given to parents including pupils' reports is good.

What could be improved

- Achievement in science, information and communication technology, business studies and vocational education is not high enough between the ages of 14 and 16.
- Achievement is not high enough for pupils with special educational needs because the pupils and their learning needs are not accurately identified; the planning of educational provision for them is weak.
- Aspects of the teaching of pupils with special educational needs and in 'middle house' (the facility for disaffected pupils aged 11-14) are unsatisfactory.
- The behaviour of a significant minority of pupils is unsatisfactory as is the implementation of procedures to promote good behaviour.
- Systems to assure the quality of teaching in the school are not sufficiently rigorous.

- The provision for vocational education is unsatisfactory.
- Teachers do not make enough use of assessment information to monitor pupils' progress and to guide their future planning.
- The attendance of the pupils is too low.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in March 1997. Since then it has made unsatisfactory progress overall despite making good progress in areas such as the improvement of the learning environment. GCSE results are similar to those achieved by the pupils in 1996 compared with national results but the behaviour and attitudes of the pupils have declined. There has also been insufficient progress in tackling some of the key issues raised by the last inspection, particularly in improving the provision for pupils with special educational needs. The standards of pupils' reading, spelling and presentation have improved. Assessment practices have improved, but there remain weaknesses in the rigour with which they are applied and therefore the monitoring of progress and target setting. The health and safety issues have all been resolved. Subjects have made generally good progress in developing their educational provision.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 year olds based on average point scores in GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
GCSE examinations	C	C	C	C	well above A average above average B average C below average D well below E average

In 2000, the National Curriculum test results in English, mathematics and science and the GCSE results were broadly average in relation to national results. They were also average in comparison with the results of pupils in similar schools (based on the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals). The trends in National Curriculum test results and GCSE results are broadly in line with national trends. Some higher attaining pupils do not achieve as well at GCSE as they do in the National Curriculum tests at age 14 in mathematics and science. Pupils with special educational needs make unsatisfactory progress because their learning needs are not met effectively. The achievement of a significant minority of pupils is adversely affected by their unsatisfactory attitudes to work.

The most effective subjects are English literature, design and technology, modern foreign languages, history, physical education and communication studies. Pupils make particularly good progress in these subjects mainly due to the strength of the teaching. Weaknesses in pupils' achievements in science, information and communication technology, special educational needs, business studies and vocational education are largely due to curriculum, resourcing or planning issues. The school missed its 5A*-C target in 2000 although it matched its average total points score target. In 1999 it met its 5A*-C target and was slightly lower than its 5A*-G target.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes to the school are satisfactory. The great majority take a positive approach to their work but there is a decline in some pupils' attitudes between the ages of 14 and 16.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The behaviour of a significant minority of pupils is unsatisfactory. In most lessons pupils behave well, but the behaviour of some pupils disrupts learning in some classrooms and creates an unruly atmosphere around some parts of the school.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships in the school are generally satisfactory but pupils' personal development is unsatisfactory because too many do not show appropriate care for each other and for adults in the school.
Attendance	Levels of attendance are unsatisfactory.

The very small number of pupils based in 'middle house' do not behave in an appropriate way. They sometimes come and go as they please and show insufficient respect for the teacher.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years
Lessons seen overall	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

In the 161 lessons observed the quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in 95 per cent, good or better in 59 per cent and very good in 15 per cent. The proportion of lessons graded satisfactory or better is higher than recorded during the last inspection. Compared with schools nationally the proportions of lessons graded good, very good or excellent is lower than average.

The quality of teaching is: very good in communication studies and drama; good in English, science, design and technology, modern foreign languages, history, art, physical education, religious education and youth award; satisfactory in mathematics, information and communication technology, geography, music, performing arts and business studies; and unsatisfactory in special educational needs and in 'middle house'. Teachers' subject knowledge, lesson planning, teaching methods and management of the pupils are strengths.

The teaching of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills is satisfactory although there is uneven practice across the school. Whole-school strategies to ensure that all teachers make appropriate contributions to the development of these core skills are being developed but the pace of their introduction has been too slow.

The learning of the pupils is satisfactory at both key stages, although a little better between the ages of 11 and 14. The reason for the slightly lower performance between the ages of 14 and 16 is the decline in motivation of a small but significant minority of the pupils. In the majority of lessons pupils work at a good pace and sustain their interest and concentration. Their knowledge of how well they are progressing is unsatisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs do not learn appropriately because their learning needs are not effectively identified and more able pupils are not always fully stretched.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Overall the curriculum is satisfactory but there are weaknesses in the provision for vocational courses.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The learning needs of pupils with special education needs are not appropriately identified or fully met.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	All the pupils speak and understand English at a good level; they have full access to the subjects of the curriculum.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Satisfactory overall. The strengths, such as provided by subjects including geography and religious education and the involvement of the pupils in year councils and fundraising, are offset by the evidence of unsatisfactory social behaviour among a minority of the pupils.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Teachers and other staff show care for the pupils but there are weaknesses in the way that good behaviour is promoted and how the school assesses and monitors pupils' progress.

The impact of the lack of planning to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs is that they do not make sufficient progress. Careers education is a strength of the school but the provision for vocational education is weak as too few courses are operating and some of what is available, such as the GNVQ option, run at too low a level, leaving some pupils with little in the way of useful qualifications.

The procedures for improving attendance have recently been improved and are now good. The procedures for ensuring that pupils behave well are unsatisfactory. The setting of learning targets is good but the process is not yet firmly rooted in rigorous assessments of pupils' progress. Parents are kept well informed about their children's progress, the school's educational provision and forthcoming events.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The headteacher has a clear view of the issues facing the school, all of which appear in the school's development plan. Some issues, such as improving the behaviour of the pupils, have not been tackled effectively.

How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Due to the encouragement of the headteacher, the governors have increased their involvement in the school substantially since the last inspection and now play an active role in shaping its future. Statutory curriculum requirements are met except for the use of information and communication technology in music and modern foreign languages, but there is no daily act of collective worship and there are aspects missing from the annual report to parents.
The school's evaluation of its performance	This is not yet satisfactory despite recent improvements that the headteacher has led. Heads of department do not regularly evaluate the work of their teams and they do not have formal links with a member of the senior management team.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are used effectively and efficiently.

The headteacher, together with governors and senior staff, have taken a number of initiatives forward successfully, for example in improving the quality of the accommodation, but not enough action has been taken in other areas, for example, in tackling unsatisfactory behaviour and improving the provision for pupils with special educational needs.

The level and quality of staffing, accommodation and learning resources are all satisfactory. Major improvements have occurred in recent years, a good example being the development of the new learning resource centre. The uncertainty over the future of the school's siting has taken up an inordinate amount of management time in the past two years and its lack of resolution impedes long-term planning. The induction of new staff to the school and the support for student teachers is a strength. The school is effective in ensuring that it secures value for money when making purchases.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils make good progress • The quality of teaching is good • The school is approachable • The school expects pupils to work hard • The school is improving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The behaviour of the pupils • The provision for extra-curricular activities

Inspectors agree with parents that: the behaviour of a significant minority of the pupils is in need of improvement; the school is approachable; aspects of the school are improving; and, that most teachers expect pupils to work hard. Inspectors judge that the pupils make satisfactory progress overall and that the provision for extra-curricular activities is satisfactory.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Standards on entry to the school are broadly average as they are by the end of Years 9 and 11. Overall levels of achievement are therefore satisfactory except for pupils with special educational needs.
2. The most effective subjects are English literature, design and technology, modern foreign languages, history, physical education and communication studies. Pupils make particularly good progress in these subjects mainly due to the strength of the teaching; for example, in English literature because teachers encourage the pupils to take part in purposeful discussion and informed reading and writing through the study of good literature.
3. Weaknesses in pupils' achievements in science, information and communication technology, special educational needs, business studies and vocational education are for more varied reasons. In science the courses offered to the pupils are not always the most suitable for them; in information and communication technology there are too few computers for the pupils in Key Stage 4 and some essential control technology skills are not taught in the GCSE groups. Work is not well enough matched to the learning needs of the pupils in business studies and the vocational curriculum is not well enough developed to offer pupils valuable qualifications
4. The standards achieved by pupils on entry to the school are broadly average in relation to national standards. Pupils' results in the National Curriculum tests at age 11 are close to the national average with an indication of a rising trend. In 2000, significantly more pupils arrived at the school having achieved level 5 in one or more of the tests than in the previous 4 years. Other nationally recognized tests are given to the pupils when they arrive at the school in Year 7. These confirm the attainment profile of the pupils and also indicate a rising trend over the past five years.
5. Taking into account National Curriculum test results and the quality of work shown by pupils in lessons and in their books, standards, compared with national standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are: above average in design and technology, modern foreign languages, art and physical education; average in English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology, history, geography, music and religious education; and below average in performing arts and for pupils with special educational needs.
6. Compared with standards that they achieve on entry to the school, pupils' achievement at the end of Key Stage 3 is: good in design and technology, modern foreign languages, history, art and design and physical education; satisfactory in English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology, geography, music and religious education; and unsatisfactory in performing arts and for pupils with special educational needs.
7. Taking into account examination results and the quality of work shown by pupils in lessons and in their books, standards, compared with national standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are: above average in English literature, design and technology, history, geography, physical education and communication studies; average in English, mathematics, modern foreign languages, music, religious education and drama; and below average in science, information and communication technology, art, vocational education, business studies and special educational needs.

8. Compared with standards that they achieve on entry to the school, pupils' achievement at the end of Key Stage 4 is: good in English literature, design and technology, history, physical education, drama, religious education and communication studies; satisfactory in English, mathematics, modern foreign languages, geography, art and design and music; and unsatisfactory in science, information and communication technology, special educational needs, business studies and vocational education.
9. In the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000, pupils' results were in line with national averages in English, mathematics and science. The rising trend in results is in line with the national trend over the past five years. More pupils gain level 7 in mathematics than in English and science. The results of boys and girls have been similar over the past five years except in 1997 when a particularly high attaining cohort of boys outperformed the girls. The strong performance of these boys was maintained in the GCSE examinations which they took in 1999. Compared with the performance of pupils in similar schools (based on the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals), the National Curriculum test results in 2000 were in line with national averages in English and science and above the national average in mathematics.
10. Using the local education authority's value-added analysis, the school's National Curriculum test results in 2000 were in line with the results gained by pupils in the other local secondary schools for pupils of all levels of attainment.
11. Teacher assessments in the subjects other than English, mathematics and science at the end of Key Stage 3 were broadly in line with national averages in 2000 which reflects the standards of work seen during the inspection.
12. The average total points scores of the pupils and proportion of pupils gaining 5A*-C grades in the 2000 GCSE examinations were in line with national averages and the performance of pupils in similar schools. The proportions of pupils gaining 5A*-G grades and 1A*-G grades were well below national averages and well below the performance of pupils in similar schools, the main reason for this being that too few pupils are entered for the examinations. In the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, the proportions of pupils entered for GCSE in 2000 were around five percentage points lower than the national average. The rising trend in results over the past five years is above the national trend but this is somewhat skewed by the high results of 1999. Girls' GCSE results over the past five years have been just below girls' results nationally while boys' results have been much more volatile. In 2000, boys' results were nearly three points (in terms of the average total points score) behind the results of boys nationally while in 1999, boys' results were four points higher than the results of boys nationally. (The 1999 cohort of boys were those who achieved particularly well in the National Curriculum tests taken in 1997).
13. The proportion of pupils gaining A* or A grades at GCSE was broadly in line with the national average in 2000. Pupils did particularly well in English literature, graphics, resistant materials, communication studies, geography and music. The proportion of A* and A grades in mathematics and science was low.
14. Over the past two years, pupils have performed relatively better at GCSE in comparison with their results in other subjects in communication studies, English literature, French, German, history and graphics. They have performed relatively worse in mathematics, science, art and design, physical education and business studies. This is largely due to teaching and curriculum issues that are explained in the individual subject sections.

15. Pupils taking certificates of achievement in English and science over the past two years achieved good results, the majority gaining distinctions. This suggests that a significant proportion of these pupils could have gained GCSE passes. Observation of the work of pupils in the current Years 10 and 11 also suggests that a proportion of the pupils entered for certificates of achievement courses could have gained GCSE passes.
16. Comparing the results of pupils in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1997 and 1998 with the same pupils' results at GCSE in 1999 and 2000, pupils achieved less well than pupils nationally. This is largely because of poor attendance among a small minority of pupils and the over-use of certificate of achievement courses.
17. Higher attaining pupils do not make sufficient progress between the ages of 14 and 16 in mathematics and science. The majority of the pupils who gained level 7 in the National Curriculum tests in 1997 and 1998 gained B or C GCSE grades when A or A* grades would be expected. Standards observed in mathematics during the inspection suggest that pupils are now making better progress than the GCSE results indicate.
18. The school missed its 5A*-C target in 2000 although it matched its average total points score target. In 1999 it met its 5A*-C target and was slightly lower than its 5A*-G target.
19. There are, in most subjects, good examples of writing for a variety of purposes across the curriculum. Good, substantial writing is evident at all levels in English, the humanities and science subjects, particularly throughout Key Stage 4. Written work is increasingly characterised throughout the school by improved spelling, sentence structure and grammar. Between the ages of 11 and 14, many pupils already present work well and write at length. Between the ages of 14 and 16, the significant majority of pupils can read for research and gist, and summarise points well. However, there is a substantial minority of pupils whose literacy skills are underdeveloped, particularly those with special educational needs and lower attainers, whose needs are frequently insufficiently catered for.
20. Speaking and listening skills are the least well-developed aspects of English. Not all teachers work at providing good role models for formal register and appropriate styles of speech. Too few pupils are able to argue and debate in an articulate fashion. There are examples across some subjects of pupils listening to and engaging in technical language when in classroom situations, such as in science, design and technology and English. Many pupils learn to express their ideas thoughtfully in their writing, using an increasingly wider vocabulary. Skills are, however, inconsistently stressed throughout the school, so that there are few areas in which pupils demonstrate high levels of competence in them. Although the development of policies to improve pupils' abilities in the key skills of literacy was a key issue at the time of the previous inspection, it is only recently that a working party, led by the head of department for English, has been initiated, and its work is still at an early stage of development.
21. Reading in lessons is often good, though many pupils read aloud with too little expression, thus inhibiting full comprehension. Pupils overall read well for comprehension and are able to note and understand different styles employed for different purposes. Scanning skills are well developed within English lessons and the skills of reading for understanding are generally satisfactory.
22. Led by the mathematics department, the school is beginning to consider a whole school approach to numeracy. A school policy is in place, but the development of practices is in its infancy. The mathematics department is starting to build on work completed during the numeracy hour in primary schools, and pupils are becoming

more interested and more confident in handling number problems. A good example of the use of numeracy work is seen when pupils concentrate on estimation of answers, before moving on to different mathematics work. In lessons generally, pupils' knowledge of tables and other basic skills sometimes inhibits learning.

23. Provision for the development of numeracy in design and technology is good. Pupils work to scale and use graph paper to support drawings; this is also produced on computers. There is a use of measurement for materials and the weighing of ingredients. Handling data is covered in the use of questionnaires, tally charts and graphs. Nets are used in the design of packaging. Good liaison has taken place between mathematics and science to co-ordinate the ways in which they teach formulae and the plotting of graphs. This is a positive development which is helping to improve pupils' numeracy skills. In science and geography, pupils interpret data successfully.
24. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is enhanced by an effective, well-resourced unit for 20 pupils with severe and complex specific learning difficulties, staffed by a highly competent, skilled teacher from the local education authority's Learning and Behaviour Support Service. Pupils also benefit from some effective in-class support, and as a result of both the specialist and the support provision they make good progress. However, pupils with special educational needs who are not part of the specialist unit do not make sufficient progress because they are not identified appropriately, their progress is not monitored and suitable records are not maintained. Pupils with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress.
25. The special educational needs department has not been proactive in the past in co-operating with colleagues in the production of joint teaching approaches suited to a pupil's special educational needs, and there has been a lack of support for colleagues in offering ideas and techniques for the whole range of pupils with special educational needs (as opposed to the support for those teaching dyslexic pupils where the support has been good). There has been no initiation and facilitation of a whole-school staff development programme concerned with meeting these pupils' needs and insufficient use is made of information and communication technology to promote their learning.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

26. Pupils' attitudes to their learning are mainly positive, though less positive between the ages of 14 and 16. In the best lessons pupils are enthusiastic, answer questions to the best of their ability and are keen to do well. Where relationships within a class are good, pupils respond well to the challenges set by the teachers, for example in physical education.
27. Many pupils take pride in their work, showing that they want to learn and extend their skills. Where pupils have to work together in pairs or groups, as in modern foreign languages and science, they collaborate well, follow instructions and work safely. When engaging in practical work or moving around the science laboratory to collect materials, pupils act very responsibly. There are some negative attitudes among a small but significant proportion of the pupils, more often in sets containing lower attaining pupils. These pupils attach little value to their academic work and their motivation is low; teachers do not always challenge the negative attitudes of these pupils effectively. There has been a deterioration in the behaviour of this minority of pupils since the last inspection.
28. Overall, behaviour is unsatisfactory notwithstanding the good, and sometimes very good, behaviour displayed by the majority of pupils. This was an issue raised by parents at the pre-inspection meeting and also by some parents in their responses to

the inspection questionnaire. Attitudes and behaviour were judged to be unsatisfactory in 12 per cent of lessons; between the ages of 14 and 16 this rose to 15 per cent. Most pupils are courteous and show a willingness to make a positive contribution to the school community; however, there are too many incidences of disrespectful and selfish behaviour. In a small but significant minority of lessons, particularly between the ages of 14 and 16, pupils work at too slow a pace and show a lack of respect for teachers. This not only has a detrimental affect on their own progress but also adversely affects the progress of others. In the school year 1999 to 2000, there were 46 fixed term exclusions which is broadly average and five permanent exclusions which is above average.

29. The unacceptable behaviour of a significant minority of the pupils, particularly in corridors, is a cause for concern. For these pupils their lack of self-control in the corridor area and lack of respect for others adversely affects the atmosphere in the school. The behaviour of pupils in 'middle house' is unsatisfactory. They sometimes arrive and leave lessons when they choose and disrupt the learning of others around the school. The development of 'middle house' is a strategy aimed at improving the social inclusion provision at the school but it is not a success.
30. There is a mature and cordial relationship between higher attaining pupils, other pupils and teachers. Relationships in sets containing lower attaining pupils are at times brittle. Overall relationships are satisfactory which means that they are not as good as at the time of the last inspection. Bullying occurs, as some parents indicated at the meeting prior to the inspection and on their questionnaire returns. These incidents are not always resolved to everyone's satisfaction. The school's arrangements to tackle bullying are unsatisfactory.
31. The school council, which involves pupil representatives expressing the views of their year group, is well established and used effectively. Pupils use this avenue of communication sensibly to effect change. The recent election of prefects to monitor areas of the school at lunchtime is not having the desired effect. Prefects do not feel they command the respect of other pupils at this time and this is leading to a sense of disillusionment and a lowering of self-esteem.
32. Many pupils show a sense of maturity in their approach to their studies, organising their work well and being able to work independently. In the upper school many pupils apply themselves to their work, improving their exam techniques and producing high quality coursework. For the significant few who find it difficult to work without structured guidance, their lack of personal responsibility and poor concentration skills are affecting their levels of progress.
33. Attendance for the school as a whole is lower than the national average and therefore unsatisfactory. There has been a decline since the last inspection. Attendance in Years 10 and 11 is particularly disappointing, and having an adverse effect on levels of attainment. The level of internal and external truancy is a concern. Many pupils do not attend regularly and on time. A significant number wander in late without apology or reasonable excuse.
34. Pupils attached to the unit for pupils with specific learning difficulties enjoy school and generally behave well. Some pupils with special educational needs have positive attitudes, but overall their attitudes are not satisfactory.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

35. The quality of teaching between the ages of 11 and 14 is: good in English, science, design and technology, modern foreign languages, history, art and design, physical education and religious education; satisfactory in mathematics, information and communication technology, geography, music and performing arts; and unsatisfactory in special educational needs and in 'middle house'.
36. The quality of teaching between the ages of 14 and 16 is: very good in communication studies and drama; good in English, science, design and technology, history, geography, art and design, physical education, religious education and youth award; satisfactory in mathematics, information and communication technology, modern foreign languages, music and business studies; and unsatisfactory in special educational needs.
37. In the 161 lessons observed the quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in 95 per cent, good or better in 59 per cent and very good in 15 per cent. The proportion of lessons graded satisfactory or better is higher than recorded during the last inspection. Parents are positive about the quality of teaching.
38. The learning of the pupils is satisfactory at both key stages, although a little better between the ages of 11 and 14. The reason for the slightly lower performance between the ages of 14 and 16 is due to the decline in motivation of a small but significant minority of the pupils. In the great majority of lessons, pupils show good levels of concentration and work at a good pace. Their intellectual effort is satisfactory overall. As at the time of the last inspection, pupils' knowledge of their own learning is not well enough developed, particularly in music, physical education and special educational needs, although the school's development of learning targets is improving this situation. Pupils with special educational needs do not learn appropriately because their learning needs are not effectively identified.
39. The teaching of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills is satisfactory although there is uneven practice across the school. Whole-school strategies to ensure that all teachers make appropriate contributions to the development of these core skills are being developed but the pace of their introduction has been slower than expected. The introduction of specialist information and communication technology lessons between the ages of 11 and 14 has been very beneficial in improving pupils' learning in this area.
40. Overall, teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of their subjects; they plan well, use effective teaching methods and the majority manage the pupils well in the classroom. In design and technology, for example, the teachers in the five aspects of the subject co-ordinate their work well so that designing and making skills are developed progressively. They plan carefully to meet the learning needs of all the pupils, guiding them in how to organise their writing and ensuring that they develop a good technical vocabulary.
41. Teaching is particularly strong in communication studies and drama. Unfortunately the communication studies course has been deleted from the menu of courses offered by the examination boards from September 2001. Teaching in communication studies is good because pupils are expected to think and refine their understanding about the topics that are covered. This they find stimulating which motivates them to produce high quality work. The whole impression of the teacher's attention to detail is evident through her planning, and the good quality display, of pupils' work and relevant published materials, illustrates to pupils the high quality of work that is expected of them.

42. Pupils make good progress in drama because the teacher ensures that core skills are taught well and pupils are also given opportunities to explore their creativity. Activities challenge higher and lower attaining pupils due to the teacher's skilful direction of their work. Progress is particularly good because the pupils currently in Key Stage 4 have had little experience of drama prior to taking the GCSE course.
43. The teaching of the youth award scheme is good. Teachers have very good relationships with the pupils and plan the curriculum for them very well. Pupils in Year 11 responded very well to a carefully organised session at the Worcester careers service where they learned about the services available to them after leaving school, and used a good computer program to develop a personal profile of their skills. The impact of the session was to raise their self-belief and to give them confidence in tackling the next major decision in their lives. Pupils on the Year 10 course are very well taught in art, where the teacher ensures that a range of suitable activities interest and motivate pupils to produce good quality artwork that reflects their capabilities. Skilful management of the pupils ensured that good behaviour was evident in both the youth award teaching sessions that were observed.
44. The teaching and learning project, funded through a special grant from the Home Office, has been developed and led well. Starting with a pilot involving eight teachers who formally reflected on their success in enhancing the learning of disaffected pupils, the project is being extended throughout the school. This is a very positive programme which encourages teachers to consider their effectiveness in the classroom and to develop ways of improving it. Further work to consider ways of meeting the learning needs of all pupils more effectively would be valuable. Appropriately, another teacher will join the programme in September 2001 which will give more opportunity for the ideas that have emerged to have a wider impact.
45. Opportunities are missed to refine teaching to ensure the optimum progress for all pupils with special educational needs. Individual education plans are not in place for the majority of pupils at stages 2,3 and 4 of the Code of Practice. The limited number of individual education plans in place do not: contain clear targets; set specific targets to be achieved against criteria which acknowledge success and represent achievable goals; set clear monitoring and recording arrangements with dates – and do not set dates for review; have any specific information to increase the learning opportunities for pupils with special educational needs; and indicate current levels of achievement. None indicate how parents and carers can be involved and they do not include contributions from pupils.
46. Pupils with special educational needs are not given the chance to comment on their learning needs and they are not aware of the targets and contents of their individual education plans. The individual education plans therefore lack criteria which acknowledge success and represent achievable goals. They are not working documents which help teachers meet the needs of the pupils neither do they inform the pupils and their parents about pupils' progress. There are no individual education plans in school which clearly outline pupils' individual teaching programmes and therefore targets cannot be re-assessed to enable informed judgements to be made about future learning and teaching needs.
47. The teaching in 'middle house' lacks appropriate expectations of either behaviour or effort; the teaching approaches taken are unsuitable for the pupils and disaffected pupils become even more disaffected.
48. Higher attaining pupils are not always appropriately challenged to achieve examination results that reflect their capabilities; for example, in mathematics pupils who gained

very high results in the National Curriculum tests at age 14 are often entered for the intermediate GCSE examination which means that they cannot achieve a higher grade than a B. They are therefore being taught at too low a level.

49. Special educational needs teachers have very good subject knowledge of the teaching of basic skills and this leads to confident teaching and the respect of pupils. Teaching in the unit for those with specific learning difficulties is particularly good. The teaching of basic skills for all pupils is satisfactory overall when the contribution of all teachers in the school is taken into account. The specialist teachers use effective question and answer techniques and this leads to the engaging of pupils and a deepening of their understanding. They have high expectations of behaviour and effort and this leads to pupils being challenged appropriately. Good classroom management leads to good pace of lessons.
50. Learning support assistants often promote good learning and the quality of their individual work with pupils is at least satisfactory. At lunchtimes they offer informal teaching to those on the special educational needs register and there is limited withdrawal during lesson times. They are well aware of the need to promote pupils' independence in learning and play an active part in contributing to the assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress. However, the overall effectiveness of learning support assistants for pupils with special educational needs across the curriculum lacks consistency. There is a similar inconsistency regarding the deployment of learning support assistants which at times is inappropriate and inefficient.

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

51. Between the ages of 11 and 14 the curriculum is satisfactory and meets statutory requirements except in providing an appropriate use of information and communication technology within music and modern foreign languages. The school plans well for activities that encourage pupils to take a wider interest in their studies. Each year group, for example, has the chance to experience a day of flexible learning; these include performing arts days, a 'Disaster Day' which is run in conjunction with local emergency services, and an Industry Forum. In addition, they have the opportunity to take part in excursions to the Big Pit in South Wales and La Villette Cite de Sciences in Paris.
52. A large proportion of curriculum time is allocated to subjects that promote pupils' personal development, namely personal and social education, tutor periods and performing arts. These have been organised better since the last inspection but the amount of time is too high given that the various elements of the courses often overlap; for example, within performing arts some interesting and useful units of work are taught but the elements of drama, dance and personal development are not coherently combined.
53. The way sets are organised restricts pupils' movement between them, which particularly affects history and geography. Good provision in modern foreign languages means that pupils in upper sets can take a second language. Lower sets are small and include pupils with special educational needs who benefit by being able to work with a greater degree of supervision.
54. Between the ages of 14 and 16 curriculum provision is satisfactory. By offering the GCSE short course in religious education the school has effectively addressed the weakness identified in the previous report. There is an option to take an extra session to convert this to the full GCSE. A strength of the provision in science is the four routes to accreditation ranging from three separate sciences to certificate of achievement.

However, because of setting arrangements, not all pupils are following the most appropriate course for them and they do not always achieve GCSE results that fully reflect their capabilities. The youth award scheme is valuable in helping lower attaining pupils to build their self-confidence and receive additional tutorial support. The weekly session of study skills is not effective. In view of the shortage of time in modern foreign languages, geography and design and technology, this is not the best use of the time. While the English department plans well for the full range of language skills, the emphasis on certificate of achievement rather than Foundation level GCSE leads to disaffection in lower sets. The curriculum for information and communication technology ensures that pupils are given the opportunity to gain a range of skills and understanding that fulfils statutory requirements.

55. Although the school has made efforts to introduce vocational courses, these are not running in enough areas and at the right level to meet the needs of pupils who would most benefit. Project 19, an initiative to enable pupils to gain units towards an NVQ qualification, has given a small number of pupils a limited chance to begin vocational courses. Six Year 11 pupils take National Vocational Qualifications at level 1, and other taster courses are offered throughout the year and in the summer holidays. The school is aware that a reappraisal of its approach is needed with a view to implementing this provision more successfully, because at the present time the qualifications gained are not proportional to the amount of time invested in the course.
56. There is a satisfactory range of extra-curricular provision across the school. The mathematics department offers a summer numeracy school and after-school club every week. Extra-curricular activities in sport and physical education are well developed. The modern foreign languages department arranges exchange and other visits to France and Germany. A production of 'Dazzle' has just been presented collaboratively by the performing arts departments. Other regular musical events which enhance pupils' musical experiences include taking part in the Mencap carol service in Worcester Cathedral, an Easter performers' concert and visits to percussion workshops.
57. As between the ages of 11 and 14, the time devoted to tutor work and personal and social education is high, particularly given the lower than average time allocated to subjects such as design and technology and modern foreign languages. The tutor programme is designed to enable tutors to build up a strong relationship with their group as they move through school. Targets for learning are reviewed individually twice a year, which culminates in a record of achievement being completed in Year 11. Between the ages of 14 and 16 the time for this work is increased from once per fortnight to once per week in order to complete all the administration associated with work experience and careers education and guidance. Pupils in Year 11 find the programme takes too much time away from their academic work, particularly in the latter part of the year. The programme for social education complements that of the tutor period and is taught by a team of specialists. All statutory themes are covered and where possible outside speakers contribute to this. The quality of teaching on both these programmes and of their impact is variable. There is no monitoring of the provision and therefore weaknesses are not identified and rectified.
58. The careers programme which begins in Year 8 with 'The Real Game' is a strength of the school. This is the first year this module has been included in the social education programme and the school is keen to evaluate its impact and the effect it has on subsequent planning. The introduction of 'targets for learning' has improved pupils' awareness of the need to make plans for their future careers. The focus of the Key Stage 4 teaching is on giving pupils opportunities to investigate choices after they leave school and beyond, and matching them to their own interests and achievements. Two

career advisers, who conduct individual interviews as well as taking part in whole lessons, help the school in this.

59. There are satisfactory links with partner schools and business. A large number of companies in Worcester offer placements for Year 10 pupils to do a week of work experience, with the careers service giving valuable help in checking health and safety regulations. There are opportunities facilitated by the careers department to link with further education colleges and training providers. The school is always careful to keep local residents informed of large-scale events such as the Fete where local businesses have a stall.
60. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. This is not an area of prime focus for the curriculum, although history, geography and art and design do give pupils opportunities to reflect on the importance of the topics that they cover. The spiritual aspects of the major world religions are taught through religious education. The school does not meet the statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship although assemblies do have a spiritual dimension, such as when Year 11 were invited to reflect on their experiences as they move on from school. The school is joined with the city of Gloucester to support the village of Swanivar in India. Through their fund-raising efforts pupils have been given an insight into the challenging circumstances in which others live.
61. The opportunities, which the school provides to promote the principles which distinguish right from wrong, are satisfactory. The behaviour policy and code of conduct are satisfactory but they are not used consistently by all teachers. Part of the social education programme is given to consideration of bullying and a helpful leaflet has been written. Moral issues are central to the work of Year 9 in history, as they study the Holocaust, and in modern foreign languages. Environmental issues are addressed well in geography.
62. The provision for social education is satisfactory. There is a satisfactory range of day and residential visits which enhance pupils' learning and personal development opportunities. Year council meetings are well established and used effectively. Prefects are given training to help them fulfil their duties but they have little impact on the behaviour around the school, particularly at lunchtime. Opportunities to develop positive relationships are offered in geography and history through field trips and in mathematics in an after-school club. Social situations, which inform art movements, are studied, as are the social aspects of world religions.
63. Cultural provision is satisfactory. Art and design, music and English provide opportunities to study art from a range of different European and worldwide cultures. Drama club and theatre visits, as well as their own school productions, give pupils additional opportunities to develop their cultural horizons.
64. Pupils with reading difficulties are withdrawn during registration time for three sessions each week by the teaching assistants. Groups are changed each term. These early morning reading clubs are of a good quality – but during the week of the inspection they were not well attended.
65. Between the ages of 14 and 16, the main provision for pupils with special educational needs is through the youth award scheme. The emphasis of the course is to improve pupils' motivation by raising their academic and personal skills. The course involves completing a range of projects, which lead to a nationally recognised award. The quality of teaching and learning on the course is good. There are insufficient courses to support the learning of pupils aged 14 to 16 with special educational needs.

66. Pupil support plans produced by 'middle house' are inadequate to improve attitudes, behaviour and learning. The targets set, strategies and monitoring arrangements do not help either pupil or parent to be able to recognise when improvement has taken place.
67. The school identifies pupils for whom English is an additional language prior to entry in Year 7. At present, there are 20 such pupils, almost entirely of Asian origin. As they all speak and understand English at a good level, they have full access to the subjects of the curriculum. The school uses its academic monitoring system to track their performance and has data from previous audits to indicate that they are making satisfactory progress.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

68. Form tutors and heads of year know their pupils well and immediately call upon the pupil support services as soon as a problem occurs. Pupils themselves feel confident to approach a member of staff or anyone from the pastoral support team if they need counselling or academic support. There is a clear lead on child protection issues as they occur, but the day-to-day monitoring of pupils 'at risk' tends to be informal. All health, medical and accident procedures are well established and co-ordinated effectively by the resident matron. Health and safety is monitored and co-ordinated by the very effective business manager. Health and safety issues identified during the inspection in science and design and technology were immediately rectified.
69. The school has recently acquired Home Office funding to reduce truancy and exclusion figures and promote regular attendance, punctuality and social inclusion. The funding has been used to analyse the school's attendance and highlight areas of concern. This has led to the purchase of the full-time services of an educational welfare officer. There are now systems in place to tackle opportunist truants and persistent non-attenders, and to make full use of a range of outside support agencies. The school is now well placed to make a marked improvement in these areas. Initial teething problems with computer software and the co-ordination and use of data need to be overcome before the school can successfully achieve its targets.
70. The procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are not effective in combating the increase in unacceptable behaviour and low-level disruption both in and out of lessons. This is a worse situation than was reported at the time of the last inspection. There is a lack of consistency in the use of the school's behaviour management strategies which means that pupils are not certain about what to expect if they fail to behave appropriately. An unacceptable minority wander around corridors during lesson times and there are too many of them standing outside classrooms having been removed for inappropriate behaviour. Teachers do not take enough responsibility for ensuring that pupils behave well in the areas close to their classrooms.
71. There is a lack of whole-school co-ordination of the behaviour policy, resulting in varying application and inconsistent outcomes. The strategy to support teachers in times of major disruption relies on the immediate availability of appointed staff and the effectiveness of sanctions on the pupils involved. This is not always effective. The use of the 'middle house' facility to support pupils in danger of being excluded is not working because the pupils do not show enough respect for the teacher.
72. A database of bullying incidents is currently being set up and will eventually be useful in monitoring cause and effect within a comprehensive list of target areas. At the moment the school relies on pupil questionnaires and reported incidents. Strategies for dealing with incidents are most successful when victim and bully are brought together in a

group discussion situation. There is no evidence as yet to suggest that incidences of bullying are decreasing.

73. Social education lessons are effective in promoting personal development and the use of older pupils as mentors for younger and new pupils is working well.
74. Arrangements for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are satisfactory, but the use of assessment information to guide planning is unsatisfactory. This was also the situation at the time of the last inspection. Assessment practices are stronger for pupils between the ages of 14 and 16 than for those between the ages of 11 and 14. Assessment practices have improved and there is now a good structure around which pupils' progress can be monitored; however, the assessment information that is available is not used in a systematic way to measure whether pupils are making the progress of which they are capable. For example, the school has not evaluated the progress of different groups of pupils from the National Curriculum tests at age 14 to their performance at GCSE.
75. Assessment procedures are not organised effectively between the ages of 11 and 14, where the use of National Curriculum levels is not consistently applied across all subjects. Instead the school's internal assessment system is used which, because teachers apply it inconsistently, means that pupils' progress across all subjects cannot be monitored accurately. At both key stages the use of National Curriculum levels for assessing pupils' work is more secure in English, mathematics and science than in the other subjects. The best assessment practice is evident in English, history and art, with weaknesses in science, geography, information and communication technology and music.
76. Procedures for assessing the attainment and progress of pupils with special educational needs are unsatisfactory. In many individual education plans for these pupils, targets for their learning are not appropriate to their needs and are not sufficiently precise. Often the content of these plans is not adequately communicated to pupils or to their parents and carers.
77. Subject leaders meet annually with the headteacher to analyse the GCSE results for their subject. This process improved considerably in 2000, heads of department identifying areas in need of improvement following the discussion. The depth of the analyses of results, however, is in need of further improvement to ensure that all subjects are fully aware of how pupils of all attainment levels performed.
78. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress are unsatisfactory. These procedures are clearly documented but some have only just been introduced and others are at an early stage of development and have yet to be refined. Consequently the procedures have yet to have a significant impact on practice. They are not co-ordinated sufficiently well and, as a result are not applied consistently throughout the school and across subjects. There are examples of good practice about which not all subject departments are sufficiently aware and sometimes the information is not shared. For example, the performance of ethnic minority pupils in examinations is sometimes analysed thoroughly. However, this does not happen every year and the outcomes of the analysis are not shared widely. This means key members of staff are not able to respond to the information and make suitable arrangements to enhance the quality of provision.
79. The practice of setting learning targets each term is good and pupils are increasingly benefiting from this process. Practice is variable with some pupils not recording their targets in their notebooks and some subjects not promoting these arrangements as effectively as others. The process would be further strengthened if tutors drew more

heavily on available assessment data in providing their target-setting guidance. At the meeting with parents prior to the inspection, a number commented that the target-setting idea was good but that there was a lack of rigour about the way it was implemented.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

80. The school has maintained clear lines of communication with parents since the last inspection. Most parents remain supportive of the work of the school. There is good quality information regularly provided. Letters are friendly and informative with up-to-date information on school matters given through the termly newsletter. The school brochure is attractive, written well, inclusive and friendly.
81. The governors' annual report to parents is well presented and gives a useful background to subjects. It does not fully meet statutory requirements as it does not have information about the arrangements for the admission of disabled pupils, nor the steps that the school has taken to prevent disabled pupils from being treated less favourably than other pupils, nor the facilities provided to assist access to the school by disabled pupils. General information is available on the school website currently being updated by one of the pupils. Parents have access to school policies, the aims of the school and an insight into classroom practice. Pupils' annual progress reports are well written and give a full overview for each subject area as well as enabling pupils to give a review of their own performance. There are three opportunities a year for parents to find out about their children's progress, which is a higher level of reporting than found in most schools.
82. Where pupils are achieving well in any subject or area of personal development, the head of year informs parents in writing. Parents are also contacted at an early stage when problems arise, and are invited to work with the school on strategies for improvement. This also applies to bullying issues but a significant number of parental comments would suggest their perception of this early communication differs from that of the school.
83. The majority of parents are very co-operative which makes the work of the school that much easier. Where there is little or no parental support then the school's efforts to provide for the welfare and support of pupils are curtailed and the home-school agreement breaks down. This is particularly evident in attendance and behaviour issues.
84. The Friends of the School are pro-active in raising funds for the school as well as promoting community involvement and public interest. They have recently been invaluable in joining with other community groups and organisations in raising the profile of the school within the local and wider community.
85. Arrangements to involve parents in the reviews of the progress of pupils with statements of special educational needs are generally satisfactory. However, there was one instance when an annual review did not take place this year within the prescribed period and a pupil in Year 8 went through four terms at the start of secondary education without the support of regular review. Pupil support plans produced by 'middle house' are inadequate to improve pupils' attitudes, behaviour and learning. Targets set, strategies and monitoring arrangements do not help either pupil or parent to be able to recognise when improvement has taken place. Parents are rarely involved in the identification of their child's needs; they are involved in neither the assessment of their child's needs nor the progress made towards targets on individual education plans. Therefore, the parents of pupils with special educational needs are not able to fully contribute to their child's learning at school and at home.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

86. Uncertainties surrounding the future location of the school have hampered the work of senior management and governors over the past two years and its lack of resolution continues to impede long-term planning. This challenge and opportunity has been faced at a time when the senior management team has been weakened by the loss of a deputy headteacher due to retirement and when industrial action has limited the involvement of teachers in meetings to one per week. These factors explain why the pace of improvement in the school has been variable. It has been fast in some areas, such as the development of the new learning resource centre, but other issues, such as the decline in the behaviour of the pupils and the provision for pupils with special educational needs, have not been tackled with sufficient haste.
87. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The number of pupils on roll is rising and is 20 percent higher than at the time of the last inspection. This reflects parents' growing confidence in the school as well as a rise in the numbers of pupils in the catchment area.
88. The headteacher has a clear view of the issues facing the school, all of which feature in the school development plan. He has been behind the improvement of subjects' analyses of their performance. This was most clearly seen in the review of the 2000 GCSE results in which subject leaders were asked to identify the strengths and weaknesses in their subjects and set improvement targets. The variation in the improvement targets with the same subjects' development targets, set six months earlier, is marked, which shows the improved rigour of the review process. Other key developments driven by the headteacher have been in strengthening the senior management team, the growing involvement of governors in the management of the school and the improvement of the school's accommodation.
89. Governors provide an effective service to the school. They show considerable commitment; for example, through their developing links with subjects and their active support of school events including educational holidays. The chair of governors has a useful weekly information-sharing meeting with the headteacher. Governors bring a wide range of knowledge and experience to the school and this has been particularly valuable during the negotiations about the possible re-siting of the school. The headteacher has successfully and appropriately strengthened the governors' role by sharing more information and decision making with them and by encouraging them to find out more about the school for themselves through direct observation of its work. Governors are not fully aware of some of the issues that the school is facing. The governors ensure that statutory curriculum requirements are met, except for the use of information and communication technology in music and modern foreign languages, but there is no daily act of collective worship and there are some statutory elements missing from the annual report to parents.
90. The management structure, at senior level, will be strengthened by two new members from September 2001, a much needed rise in personnel. At present the headteacher is supported by a deputy headteacher and an acting deputy headteacher, both of whom have a high workload. The deputy headteacher is very well organised. He is the senior manager to whom all subject heads are answerable and has oversight of all aspects of the curriculum. While there is regular informal contact between heads of departments and the deputy headteacher, this is insufficient to ensure that departments are supported or monitored effectively. The planning of aspects of the curriculum needs improving. The acting deputy headteacher has, among other issues, responsibility for pupils' behaviour. Despite an overhaul of the behaviour policy a year ago, the behaviour of the pupils is unsatisfactory. At the time of the review, staff expressed concerns about

procedures to deal with inappropriate behaviour and these remain a concern. She has good relationships with the pupils and liaises effectively with outside agencies.

91. Two senior teachers complete the current senior management team, both of whom are heads of core subjects. Their whole-school management roles are not directly related to teaching and learning and take them away from the management of their own subject areas. Much of the whole-school management work performed by these senior teachers, for example, managing and developing the school's administration system and performing analyses of examination performance, could be performed by non-teaching staff.
92. A very good aspect of the management of the school is the role performed by the business manager who ensures that finances are managed effectively and that the building is well maintained. This is a good example of a non-teaching member of staff reducing the workload of other senior staff and thereby enabling them to concentrate on improving the quality of work in the classroom.
93. Leadership and management are: good in English, design and technology, modern foreign languages, history, art, physical education and religious education; satisfactory in mathematics, science, information and communication technology and geography; and unsatisfactory in music and special educational needs.
94. The school is well administered; the office staff are very efficient and helpful. They use the administration systems effectively and ably support the work of managers and teachers.
95. The school's mission statement, 'educating every individual, with care, for success', was created following much consultation with governors, parents and staff. As with the aims of the school, the values are clear and they are broadly reflected in the running of the school. The encouragement of achievement is too low in the list of aims.
96. The development plan has appropriate targets which broadly accord with the issues identified by the inspection. The school's judgement about the priority of the issues is not the same as that of the inspection team. Good consultation takes place with staff in the formation of the plan, and half-yearly progress reports help to ensure that it is a working document that usefully guides the improvement of the school. Subject sections are closely linked to whole-school priorities which is good, but the action points are often not specific enough in explaining how they will contribute to raising standards or the quality of learning, for example, in mathematics. Another area of weakness is the lack of identification of success criteria by which to measure the effectiveness of the plan's implementation. The plan gives an appropriate emphasis to issues surrounding social inclusion.
97. The information and communication technology administration network has been developed into a reliable and useful resource by a senior teacher; it is used effectively in the running of the school. In some areas it is used well, for example, in timetabling and organising the deployment of temporary teachers. Much data is collected on pupils' levels of attainment and this is building into a valuable resource, but it is not yet used to monitor pupils' progress in a sophisticated way.
98. The school is committed to promoting equal opportunities and has a good policy in operation. All the relevant aspects of equal opportunities are given serious attention. The school meets the requirements of the Sex Discrimination Act and the Race Relations Act and the curriculum recognises cultural diversity and prepares pupils for life in a multi-ethnic society. The needs of higher attaining pupils and those with special

educational needs are not fully met in some subjects. There is access for wheelchairs to all areas of the school.

99. Citizenship and Health Education courses include formal coverage of a wide range of equal opportunities issues to ensure that all pupils are aware of current practice. Displays around the school suggest an awareness of an ethnically diverse society and all groups are presented in non-stereotypical ways. However, there is substantial evidence that pupils are not made aware of, and are not sensitive to, the needs of others within the school. There is a great amount of rough behaviour on the corridors and the playgrounds that is intimidating to the smaller and weaker pupils. Some of this amounts to bullying and is not addressed in a serious way.
100. The profile of the provision for pupils with special educational needs is low, as it was at the time of the last inspection. There is unsatisfactory leadership and management as there is no consistency or continuity of good practice because of the staffing difficulties. As a result of this the school has not had sufficient regard to the requirements of the code of practice and there has been a lack of clear educational direction. The acting co-ordinator for pupils with special educational needs is highly conscientious; she keeps staff up to date on pupils' needs. She effectively reinforces and develops staff expertise and has made a profound impact on staff morale in the department, which was low when she took over early in 2001. The unit for pupils with specific learning difficulties is well led.
101. The last inspection said that there was a need to 'enhance provision for pupils with special educational needs and improve teaching strategies to cater for the needs of pupils of all abilities, across all subjects'. Since then the school has made unsatisfactory progress in meeting this target. Overall, pupils with special educational needs make unsatisfactory progress because their learning needs are not identified and therefore not met. The matching of work to pupils' needs has not been tackled effectively as a whole-school initiative and individual education plans are still not securely in place to support teaching and learning in the classroom. Many planned initiatives have not yet taken place (for example, the Buddy system), or have been discontinued (for example, the use of the computer software package called 'SuccessMaker'). There has been an increase in the learning support assistant provision, both through the local education authority's Learning Behaviour & Support Service and by doubling of the hours funded directly from the school budget. This has been beneficial.
102. Provision has also been developed through the introduction of 'middle house' which is a specifically resourced centre to provide for disaffected pupils in Key Stage 3 who require specific inclusion programmes. The school is in the second year of this two-year Home Office funded project and it is subject to evaluation by Home Office contracted teams of evaluators. Middle house is part of the Crime Reduction in Secondary Schools (CRISS) programme. This provision is unsatisfactory. Pupils generally do not respond to the teaching, ignoring requests to behave, work or co-operate. The impact of the facility has a negative effect on behaviour management throughout the school.
103. Since the last inspection the school has made unsatisfactory progress overall, despite making good progress in areas such as the improvement of the learning environment. GCSE results are similar to those achieved by the pupils in 1996 compared with national results but the behaviour and attitudes of the pupils have declined. There has also been insufficient progress in tackling some of the key issues raised by the last inspection, particularly in improving the provision for pupils with special educational needs. The standards of pupils' reading, spelling and presentation have improved. Assessment practices have improved, but there remain weaknesses in the rigour with

which they are applied and therefore the monitoring of progress and target setting. The health and safety issues have all been resolved. Subjects have made generally good progress in developing their educational provision.

104. In the last inspection report, the school was judged to be careful in its projections of income and expenditure, to have efficient financial control and to have preserved a small surplus, despite the fact that funding was low. The situation is now very similar. Funding is still low by national standards, but the school is prudent in its balance between spending wisely on new resources, such as information and communication technology, and keeping a moderate, but realistic, sum for contingencies.
105. Educational priorities are satisfactorily supported through an effective school development plan, good financial control through the school's business manager and strategic management of key areas of the budget. Specific grants for special educational needs are not always, however, used to best advantage to develop this area fully, though that for social inclusion of disaffected pupils is being used creatively, though not always effectively as in the case of 'middle house'. Financial planning takes effective account of the level of funding that has placed significant constraints on the budget, eased only by the useful income generated by the school's lettings. The business manager helps to ensure that the school operates efficiently and effectively. Overall, taking into account the low level of funding available to the school, the standards of education provided and the progress that pupils make, the school provides satisfactory value for money.
106. Project 24 (a substantial injection of funding from the Home Office to support social inclusion strategies) has enabled a range of developments to occur which have begun to show positive results, for example, the development of the learning resource centre which is now a very good facility and the use of an electronic registration system which is being used to track, and react to, attendance issues more effectively. In general the money has been used well to improve provision in the school. An area of concern is 'middle house' where the pupils show little respect for the teacher and often absent themselves from sessions to wander around the school. This undermines the whole behaviour management strategy.
107. The staff are well qualified and teach mainly within their specialist subjects. A small number of staff teach in other areas, for example in information and communication technology where there is a shortage of specialist teachers but their knowledge and teaching experience equip them well for the task. A permanent appointment for another specialist information and communication technology teacher has been made for the new academic year starting in September. An additional teacher of religious education has also been appointed for September. The school has made appropriate temporary arrangement to cover the work of the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator who is absent. The absence has had an unsatisfactory impact on the progress of her Year 11 English groups who as a result have been taught by both specialist and temporary teachers. There is an effective programme of induction for newly qualified teachers and new teachers to the school which is well supported with a staff mentor system. There is no formal monitoring of the quality of teaching.
108. The school is well served with support staff. There is an adequate number of administrative staff although there is a shortfall of technician support in design and technology. There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs through the deployment of learning support assistants in all areas of the curriculum. The learning support assistants also support higher attaining pupils.
109. The induction of new staff to the school and the support for student teachers is a strength. Newly qualified teachers are supported well by being attached to a mentor

who observes and monitors their teaching in a supportive way. Feedback from student teachers indicates a good level of satisfaction with the support and guidance that they have received from the school.

110. There is a whole-school approach to professional development and this is well linked to the school development plan. The senior management team have oversight of this process to try and ensure that whole school as well as individual needs are met. The school has now adopted the system of performance management, and performance objectives have been set for all staff. There is a good level of pupil performance data produced by the school to support this process but it is not yet being used sufficiently effectively.
111. The accommodation in most subject areas satisfactorily allows the curriculum to be taught effectively. There are subject areas in the school such as English, mathematics, geography, and information and communication technology where the accommodation is good. It is for the teaching of art, dance, and music that the major problems exist. The poor accommodation for art and design shows little improvement since the last inspection. There is a lack of space and an unsatisfactory layout, which all contribute to a poor ethos for the teaching of art. Lack of space causes there to be similar problems for the teaching of music. The acoustics of the room used for dance are poor. Internal and external facilities for physical education are satisfactory but the time wasted to get to and from the games field is still a problem. Several improvements have been made since the last inspection, particularly in respect of the accommodation for history and science. This has had a positive impact on the opportunities for practical work in science and on pupil and teacher morale throughout the school.
112. The future of the school site is not decided and while this situation exists the local education authority will not spend money to provide buildings for the increased number of pupils in the school. Wisely, the senior management team and governing body have taken the decision to continue with a rolling programme of internal redecoration. It is important that this is continued so that the pupils and staff who are present now have the best possible working environment.
113. Resources are sufficient in both quantity and quality in all subjects except science, information and communication technology, art and design and music. In all of these subjects there are weaknesses in the provision for information and communication technology, while in science there are insufficient text books and basic equipment such as power supplies. Teachers manage the resources well which enables pupils to work productively. The ratio of books to pupils is 8:1 compared with the national average of 12:1. The shortfall is most obvious in the learning resource centre and this inhibits the opportunity for pupils to conduct independent research. There are insufficient computers to give the pupils appropriate learning opportunities. This has a detrimental impact on standards in information and communication technology, both in specialist lessons and in other subjects such as music and modern foreign languages.
114. Within the department for pupils with special educational needs there is a good supply of resource material to support learning although it is not always used to its full potential, for example the 'SuccessMaker' computer software. The school has recently purchased a number of small word processors which will help pupils with special educational needs to improve the presentation of their work.

115. The newly opened learning resource centre is a very good facility. It has a range of resources to improve pupils' opportunities for personal study. Information and communication technology facilities are good but the stock of books is relatively low. As this provision is brand new it has not yet had time to make a significant impact on standards.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

116. In order to raise standards in the school, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

1. Take steps to raise achievement by:
 - ensuring that expectations of the quality of work produced by pupils taking vocational courses are high
 - ensuring that pupils take the science courses that are most likely to reward them with good GCSE results
 - increasing the proportion of curriculum time for information and communication technology
 - matching the business studies course more appropriately to the attainment levels of the pupils. (Paragraphs 1-25, 35-39, 54, 150, 154, 187-193, 236-237)
2. Raise the achievement of pupils with special educational needs by:
 - improving the management of the provision for pupils with special educational needs
 - ensuring that all pupils with special educational needs are identified accurately
 - ensuring that the learning needs of all the pupils on the special educational needs register are accurately assessed
 - creating targets within individual education plans that all teachers use to help the pupils with special educational needs make optimum progress
 - developing monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure that pupils with special educational needs receive the support to which they are entitled
 - changing the arrangements in 'middle house' to ensure that the needs of the pupils that it serves are met appropriately
 - reducing the proportion of pupils who are entered only for certificates of achievement instead of GCSEs or vocational courses. (Paragraphs 1, 20-25, 35-50, 64-67, 85, 100-102, 120, 178, 184)
3. Improve the behaviour of the pupils by:
 - establishing higher expectations of pupils' behaviour both in the classroom and around the school
 - developing a common set of behaviour management strategies for use in the classroom so that pupils know what to expect if they do not comply with the school's code of conduct
 - involving all staff in the monitoring of behaviour around the site
 - ensuring that all teachers consistently apply the new strategies to improve attendance. (Paragraphs 26-34, 69-72)
4. Improve the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning by:
 - expecting all heads of department to be responsible for assuring the quality of teaching in their subjects
 - developing a formal line-management system that enables senior managers to support departments in raising standards and monitoring and evaluating their effectiveness in doing so. (Paragraphs 77-78, 86-96, 144)
5. Improve the range of and quality of vocational courses. (Paragraphs 54-55, 236-237).
6. Improve teachers' use of assessment information to monitor pupils' progress accurately and to guide their future teaching plans. (Paragraphs 74-79, 141, 154, 175, 190, 207).

The school should also ensure that statutory requirements are met in the governors' annual report to parents. (Paragraphs 81, 89).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	161
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	68

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	15	44	36	4	1	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1106	
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	157	

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	32	
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	171	

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	20

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	48
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	33

Attendance

Authorised absence	per cent
School data	8.3
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence	per cent
School data	1.1
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	103	106	209

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	52	68	62
	Girls	74	65	58
	Total	126	133	120
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	60 (65)	64 (54)	57 (50)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	24 (30)	38 (31)	21 (21)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	56	73	58
	Girls	76	68	57
	Total	132	141	115
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	63 (57)	68 (66)	56 (50)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	24 (21)	44 (36)	15 (22)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	85	105	190

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	31	70	75
	Girls	47	91	101
	Total	78	161	176
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	41 (47)	85 (87)	93 (97)
	National	47 (47)	91 (88)	96 (94)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	36 (39.4)
	National	38 (37)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	per cent success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	11 72.7
	National	73.2

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	0
Indian	1
Pakistani	17
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	0
White	1082
Any other minority ethnic group	4

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	46	5
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	65
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.4:1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	22
Total aggregate hours worked per week	453

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76.2
---	------

Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	25.9
Key Stage 4	22.5

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
----------------	-----------

	£
Total income	2,159,162
Total expenditure	2,176,307
Expenditure per pupil	2,091
Balance brought forward from previous year	146,084
Balance carried forward to next year	128,939

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1106
Number of questionnaires returned	246

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	36	53	9	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	45	48	6	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	24	50	13	3	9
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	24	52	17	6	2
The teaching is good.	27	63	4	1	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	40	46	11	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	43	49	4	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	51	43	4	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	29	49	14	5	2
The school is well led and managed.	33	50	7	2	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	33	51	8	2	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	23	43	15	5	13

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

ENGLISH

117. Standards in English when pupils enter the school are close to the national average. Standardised tests show that most pupils' attainment in reading and writing is average overall at the start of Year 7, though there is a wide variation in pupils' ability. In English, pupils tend to achieve similar results to those in mathematics and science in end of Year 9 tests, but achieve better than either of these subjects at GCSE and much better than them in English Literature.
118. Standards at the end of Year 9 are average in relation to national standards. In the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 in 2000, results were close to the national average and close to the average compared with those of similar schools. Although results have fluctuated over the last four years, rising in 1997 and 1998 and falling a little in 1999 and 2000, achievement by the age of 14 is generally satisfactory, with some pupils moving up by as much as two National Curriculum levels in their first three years at the school. Over the last four years, there has been a significant improvement in the attainment of boys, so that in the 2000 tests, boys and girls attained equally well.
119. By the end of Year 9, some pupils can speak with confidence and begin to acquire a sense of formal register, though this is the least well developed of the language skills and is a focus for priority in the curriculum planning. Progress in this area was clearly to be seen in a Year 7 lesson, where pupils were developing an interview technique between a narrator and a poet whose poem they had been studying and then performing their interviews. Pupils were eager to participate and many strove to express themselves coherently and forcefully. However, too few pupils can convey ideas orally with relevance and illustration and argue convincingly. Many can read fluently for enjoyment as well as for work. They read with an increasingly high degree of concentration, though seldom with good expression when reading aloud. Pupils' written work is often of a good standard, showing the ability to write thoughtfully and an understanding of many genres. Presentation is generally neat. Pupils write lucidly about views expressed in the media and show understanding of and empathy with Shakespearean characters, as well as being able to form their own coherent judgements. Written work develops well, both in technique and in content. A lesson observed in Year 9, on improving approaches towards writing a director's view of how a key scene in 'Macbeth' should be approached, was a very good example of literature being combined with information retrieval and methods of writing up the results of pupils' own informed critical judgements.
120. There is, however, a significant difference in the attainment and achievement of many pupils of lower attainment or with special educational needs and other pupils, both in Key Stage 3 and at GCSE. From Year 8 onwards, pupils are grouped by their level of attainment for English and the higher and middle sets make satisfactory and often good progress. The needs of lower attaining pupils, however, are not identified effectively by the special educational needs department and the support that some receive from classroom assistants is not always well targeted. This makes it difficult for English teachers to grade work appropriately for them and to give them the extra attention they need, except in Years 10 and 11, where classes are set in smaller groups. These classes allow for those with the greatest need to be taught with individual attention and with full support, as observed in a Year 10 lesson in which pupils were learning basic grammatical and spelling skills through a variety of tasks on the theme of homelessness which was mature enough to provide them with interest and stimulation. Equally importantly, teaching is made difficult in the subject in the lower attaining

groups by the presence of a minority of disruptive pupils, many of whom have emotional or behavioural problems. These pupils often distract other pupils, slow the pace of lessons and generally hinder the progress of the majority of the class.

121. At age 16, standards are also average in relation to national standards. Many pupils show particular commitment and are ready to work hard, with thought and care. Pupils, apart from some lower attaining pupils, achieve at a satisfactory level. GCSE results in English in 2000 were broadly average in comparison with national averages and also in comparison with similar schools. Nearly 52 per cent of pupils achieved grades A*-C and nearly 100 per cent reached grades A*-G. Similar standards have been sustained over the last three years. In English literature in 2000, 71 per cent of those pupils entered attained A*-C grades. English literature results have been consistently high over the last three years, though only two-thirds of the year group are entered for this subject. In English, 12 per cent of the year group are not entered for GCSE, but instead take the certificate of achievement qualification, with a good degree of success. However, from the evidence of the work of lower attaining pupils, more of them are capable of achieving a grade at GCSE if given the opportunity.
122. By the age of 16, most pupils are developing a wider variety of register, though many still find it difficult to choose the mode of speech appropriate for the occasion. They can argue, debate and express opinions on literature and on written styles in media work. They read literature with understanding, as observed in a Year 11 lesson on two poems by Carol Ann Duffy, in which steady progress in both understanding and critical skills were evident. Pupils use good comprehension skills and acquire the ability to see the sub-text of what they read and to understand nuances, as in a lesson on the poem, 'To His Coy Mistress', being studied by Year 11 pupils. They write, for the most part, in a sustained and concentrated manner, though few pupils show initiative in carrying out research for themselves.
123. Standards of attainment seen during the inspection for the majority of pupils were average at the end of both key stages and above average in English literature during Years 10 and 11. Some good examples of work designed by teachers to challenge high attaining pupils were seen in their coursework, showing that they had been carefully guided to reach their full potential, though these pupils are not always encouraged to develop the independent research skills which would stand them in good stead during A-level studies. In general, the achievement of the pupils is satisfactory throughout the school. Pupils with special educational needs and lower attaining pupils often achieve less well than they should, for the reasons already given. Those pupils for whom English is an additional language achieve at a satisfactory level because of the goodwill and effort of their teachers, many of whom take trouble to ensure that their needs are met.
124. The attitudes of pupils differ widely. Higher and average attaining pupils listen to their teachers and fellow pupils well and treat the opinions of others with thought and respect. Levels of concentration and perseverance are good, as is many pupils' motivation to study. Between the ages of 14 and 16, there are many examples of pupils who give significant time and energy in order to produce good results and who take great pride in their work. Relationships with teachers are good, with an ethos of mutual respect permeating many lessons. Pupils are eager to listen to the ideas of teachers and others and to come to thoughtful conclusions. Other pupils, particularly those with emotional and behavioural needs, are often disaffected in lessons, noisy and sometimes disruptive. They fail to extend the courtesy towards teachers which teachers show towards them and do much to distract and disturb other more attentive pupils. Personal development, evident in pupils' enjoyment of the subject, and the way in which they develop good study habits are both good for many pupils, but are unsatisfactory for a significant minority.

125. Teaching is good at both key stages, but not always consistently so. There were no unsatisfactory lessons seen and a high proportion of good and very good teaching, but the management of disruptive pupils is not always satisfactory and the pace of lessons is sometimes allowed to slip. Overall, the quality of teaching is making a marked impact on the achievement of the pupils, especially in Years 10 and 11. The department concentrates on teaching the skills of English through a variety of methods, but primarily through the opportunities for purposeful discussion and informed reading and writing, provided by the study of both factual texts and good literature. This is significantly improving the development of reading skills, the acquisition of a sensitive response to novels, plays and poems and the understanding of the ways in which authors use language to create effects. The results of these improvements have yet to be reflected in GCSE results.
126. The best lessons are those where the teacher has an excellent knowledge of the subject, conveying interest and enthusiasm to the pupils, and where clear targets are set and reinforced by good classroom management. In these lessons, expectations are high, the pupils are constantly being challenged and all receive very good advice, support and attention, illustrated well in a Year 11 revision lesson on the novel 'Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry' in preparation for the GCSE examination. Teachers generally have a very good grasp of the subject. Careful and thorough schemes of work have been devised that help teachers to plan across parallel classes within a year, while keeping some autonomy over their methods and approaches. Lesson plans are usually well focused, with clear objectives. They contain opportunities for practice of all modes of language teaching, including oral work, and good attention is paid to literature. Teaching methods are usually varied and appropriate. The standards of discipline and management are generally satisfactory. When pupils are motivated and pleasant, classes are managed through friendly relations and mutual respect. Time is generally used well, with a good balance maintained between different activities. Formal and informal assessments are made continuously. Homework is used to good effect to consolidate work done in class. All these factors ensure that pupils achieve appropriately.
127. The motivated and energetic head of department, appointed since the last inspection, has skilfully nurtured a successful and committed nucleus of good teachers. Under her good management, teaching is regularly, though informally, monitored and some good classroom practice shared, though weaknesses remain in teaching some lower attaining groups. Professional development of teachers tries to ensure that the present high level of subject expertise is maintained. The curriculum is well planned and appropriate; pupils' progress is rigorously monitored and assessed and the results used to set future targets. The head of department has very ably drawn together a team of teachers with a strong commitment to improving standards and providing pupils with as many enlightening and cultural experiences as possible in their studies. Resources in the department are satisfactory, but by no means generous. There is a range of inviting fiction and a growing supply of reference books in the new learning resource centre, though there is a need for more critical texts and high quality software to extend the higher ability pupils to their full potential. There is also a growing opportunity for pupils to use information and communication technology as an integral part of the subject.
128. The last inspection reported standards of attainment and achievement very similar to those found at this inspection. It did, however, note that there was too little opportunity for speaking and listening at both key stages; this area is now one of good focus in the curriculum. Drafting of work and personal and creative writing were considered to be unsatisfactory. Provision is now good in these areas. Teaching is now good at both key stages, whereas it was only good in Key Stage 4 at the time of the last inspection.

Limited extra-curricular activities were reported, but there are now many opportunities, ranging from theatre visits to drama clubs, for pupils to extend their study outside school hours. The major criticism, that of work insufficiently well matched to pupils' level of attainment for pupils with special educational needs and the lack of attention to the needs of lower attainers generally, is still an issue which needs to be addressed by the school as a whole, rather than just by the English department. This is a good department that is committed to improving standards. It is a very real strength in the school.

129. There are, in most subjects, good examples of writing for a variety of purposes across the curriculum. Good, substantial writing is evident at all levels in English, the humanities and science subjects, particularly throughout Key Stage 4. Written work is increasingly characterised throughout the school by improved spelling, sentence structure and grammar. Between the ages of 11 and 14, many pupils already present work well and write at length. Between the ages of 14 and 16, the significant majority of pupils can read for research and gist, and summarise points well. However, there is a substantial minority of pupils whose literacy skills are underdeveloped, particularly those with special educational needs and lower attainers, whose needs are frequently insufficiently catered for.
130. Speaking and listening skills are the least well-developed aspects of English. Not all teachers work at providing good role models for formal register and appropriate styles of speech. Too few pupils are able to argue and debate in an articulate fashion. There are examples across some subjects of pupils listening to and engaging in technical language when in classroom situations, such as science, design and technology and English. Many pupils learn to express their ideas thoughtfully in their writing, using an increasingly wider vocabulary. Skills are, however, inconsistently stressed throughout the school, so that there are few areas in which pupils demonstrate high levels of competence in them. Although the development of policies to improve pupils' abilities in the key skills of literacy was a key issue at the time of the previous inspection, it is only recently that a working party, led by the head of department for English, has been initiated and its work is still at an early stage of development.
131. Reading in lessons is often good, though many pupils read aloud with too little expression, thus inhibiting full comprehension. Pupils overall read well for comprehension and are able to note and understand different styles employed for different purposes. Scanning skills are well developed within English lessons and the skills of reading for understanding are generally satisfactory.

Drama

132. Standards of attainment in drama are average compared with national standards. In 2000, 50 per cent of pupils taking drama as a GCSE option gained A*-C grades and 100 per cent achieved grades A*-G. Numbers of pupils taking the course are low and there are no entrants this year, but the number who have opted for the course in Year 10 is much higher than in the past, forming a dynamic group.
133. Many pupils begin the course with little experience of drama skills, but acquire them quickly during Year 10. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on and evaluate their own and others' work and learn to do so with increasing confidence. Group work is well promoted and pupils learn to organise their work and their energy effectively. They acquire skills in improvisation and performance and learn to understand characters' motivation and behaviour, as seen in a lesson where pupils were working towards performances of Willy Russell's plays, 'Our Day Out' and 'Stags and Hens', where atmosphere and characterisation were successfully established. Pupils develop a valuable sense of self-discipline and control, as well as developing oral skills well. Low

attaining pupils, particularly, make good progress in learning to speak coherently and in a variety of contexts. Pupils become familiar with a range of technical terms and use them with increasing ease and confidence. Pupils of all levels of attainment and of different gender make good progress, work with interest and enjoyment and learn to co-operate well.

134. The quality of teaching is very good, characterised by enthusiasm for the subject, high expectations and a high level of support for all pupils. The drama teacher has very good specialist knowledge and skills and is able to demonstrate with fluency and stimulation of ideas. Lessons are very well managed, so that pupils who have difficulty concentrating invariably try their hardest to achieve well in drama lessons. The teacher offers clear objectives, a high level of encouragement and constructive assessment to pupils. He leads by example and pupils are keen to emulate his skills.
135. Schemes of work are good, carefully planned and executed. Extra-curricular activities include school productions and visits to professional theatre performances. Assessment is well developed, with the emphasis on empowering pupils to evaluate their own progress. Resources are few and accommodation, in an old school hall used as a general thoroughfare, is unsatisfactory. The last inspection report commended the subject, which continues to provide much opportunity for pupils' personal development.

MATHEMATICS

136. Standards in mathematics at age 14 are average in relation to national standards and the achievement of the pupils is satisfactory. In 2000, the percentage of pupils reaching level 5 or above and the percentage reaching level 6 or above in the National Curriculum tests at age 14 were all in line with the national average. When judged on average points scores, boys scored about the same as girls, and over the last few years boys have always performed at about the same level or just above girls compared to the national difference. When the results are compared to schools which have a similar percentage of pupils eligible for free schools meals, the results are above national figures. Pupils throughout the key stage generally show interest in learning mathematics and are keen to make progress. Higher attaining pupils in Year 9 are able to solve simultaneous equations. Middle attaining pupils consider trial and improvement, and learn how to move approximations nearer to a more accurate result, while lower attaining pupils are able to plot points on a co-ordinate graph and reflect special quadrilaterals in lines of symmetry.
137. Standards at age 16 are average in relation to national standards and the achievement of the pupils is satisfactory. Results in the most recent GCSE examinations at the end of Key Stage 4 are slightly below national averages for grades A*-C and slightly above for grades A*-G. When average points are considered, the results are in line with national averages. However, the percentage of pupils entered for the GCSE examinations is well below the national average. The performance of pupils in mathematics was below, but close to their average level of performance in all in 2000. A significant proportion of pupils who gained high scores in the National Curriculum tests at age 14 in 1997 and 1998 were only entered for the intermediate GCSE paper in 1999 and 2000. This prevented them from gaining GCSE A* or A grades of which their earlier levels of achievement suggested they were capable. Higher attaining pupils in Year 11 study showed good understanding of the concepts involved in solving simultaneous equations, indicating appropriate levels of performance. Middle and lower attaining pupils show appropriate levels of understanding within lessons but also show that they have difficulties retaining information from one lesson to the next.
138. The school provides a suitably wide curriculum, work being well matched to pupils' levels of attainment. This enables them to make satisfactory progress. Pupils' progress

is often hindered by weak number skills, but the department is in the very early stages of addressing it through the use of ideas from the National Numeracy Strategy. When pupils have the same teacher for the whole of an academic year, progress is enhanced. Unfortunately, the department has had to survive several changes of staff due to absences of teachers and this has adversely affected pupils' learning. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress and are given sympathetic help by support assistants. There is insufficient continuity provided in the allocation of support assistants and this limits pupils' progress because the assistants do not know the pupils' learning needs well enough.

139. The quality of teaching is satisfactory at both key stages. Teachers are committed to enhancing pupils' learning and organise lessons which are effective and of interest to the pupils. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of mathematics are very good and they use effective teaching methods. Teaching of basic skills is satisfactory, but further work on developing numeracy skills is still necessary. Planning is detailed and teachers generally set high standards except for some higher attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 who are entered for the intermediate GCSE paper. In the best lessons, teachers push forward pupils' learning at a fast pace; on other occasions, the pace is only satisfactory. Teachers break lessons into smaller parts to help pupils' learning; for example, they provide direct teaching at points throughout the lesson and check on pupils' understanding. Not all teachers insist that all pupils stop working to listen and when this is the case the value to some of the pupils of this useful technique is lost.
140. Lessons are mainly instructive in nature, and therefore pupils have less opportunity to develop investigative skills. Management of pupils is generally satisfactory, and caring and sympathetic assistance is given to pupils to help them understand their mathematics. Key words used in mathematics are displayed in classrooms but they are not referred to sufficiently to make best use of them. The use of teaching resources is limited, and information and communication technology is used rarely, with opportunities being missed to use new technology for demonstration purposes.
141. Marking is variable in quality; the best enhances the learning of pupils effectively by including helpful comments about what pupils need to do to improve. Long-term assessment is detailed and well planned. Homework is not always routinely set and this reduces pupils' progress. Summaries of what has been learnt in a lesson are shared with pupils at the end of lessons in a few cases; this is good practice. Overall, pupils show interest in their mathematical studies, respect their teachers and concentrate well, especially when the teaching is good.
142. Pupils' attitudes in mathematics lessons are satisfactory overall. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have more mature attitudes to studying. Pupils generally settle quickly, organise themselves under good direction from the teachers and look forward to their lessons. Pupils give good attention to teachers, listening carefully and concentrating well in most lessons. There is very little distraction to other pupils' learning, although a few boys try to attract attention to themselves when control by the teachers is not strong enough. In question and answer sessions, pupils respond well, although answers to questions are not usually extended to the highest levels of thinking. Pupils understand the rules in mathematics lessons, and behave sensibly. They are generally committed to learning mathematics and their self-discipline is satisfactory.
143. Setting generally enables work to be appropriately matched to the attainment levels of the pupils. However, groups in Year 7 are mixed in ability and whole-class teaching is not always a successful strategy. The use of unequal bands in Years 10 and 11 leads to more refined setting, and work that is more closely matched to the attainment levels of the classes. Schemes of work are appropriately undergoing revision as more detail is required to help with the planning of lessons, which would be especially useful when

supply teachers need to be employed. A mathematics club meets after school on one day per week in which exciting and stimulating mathematical ideas are explored. Within the department, teachers invite pupils to consult with them outside lesson times.

144. The leadership and management of the subject is sound with identifiable strengths; in particular, he leads by example in the quality of his own teaching. In recent years he has been central to the establishment and management of whole-school systems connected with the introduction of new technologies. This takes a lot of management time away from mathematics which is why the level of monitoring and evaluation of teaching quality is not well enough established. This also explains why there is a lack of standardisation about working practices in the department. The support of new teachers has been good. The accommodation for the teaching of mathematics is good, with very new furniture and satisfactory display in the rooms, which have a positive impact on pupils' attitudes to work. Resources for learning are satisfactory, as there has been a corresponding increase in funding to match the huge increase in pupil numbers. Staffing of the department is a strength; seven out of nine teachers have qualifications in mathematics, and the teachers whose first commitment to the school is not the teaching of mathematics have sufficient knowledge and understanding for the levels at which they teach. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection.
145. The school must now concentrate on incorporating information and communication technology into its schemes of work, introduce a more rigid timetable for issuing and checking on homework, and begin to monitor and evaluate the work of the department in all its areas.
146. Led by the mathematics department, the school is beginning to consider a more systematic approach to developing pupils' numeracy skills. A satisfactory policy is in place, but the development of practices is in its infancy. Some mathematics lessons begin with practice in numeracy skills; this provides a good stimulus to learning, ensures that the pupils are quickly involved in the lesson, provides an opportunity for competition in the speed of answering and develops the pupils' basic skills. The department is beginning to build on work covered during the daily lesson in mathematics in primary schools, and pupils are becoming more interested and more confident in handling number problems. A few teachers have attended courses run by the county mathematics team on the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy. The ideas learnt for the structuring of lessons is beginning to be shared to improve the quality of numeracy teaching throughout the department. In lessons generally, pupils' knowledge of tables and other basic skills sometimes inhibits learning.
147. Discussion with other departments has taken place to promote numeracy across the subjects. In science, for example, the two departments are developing common ways of teaching skills such as methods of creating graphs. The provision for the development of numeracy in design and technology is good. In technology, pupils work to scale and use graph paper to support drawings; this is also produced on computers. There is a use of measurement for materials and the weighing of ingredients. Handling data is covered in the use of questionnaires, tally charts and graphs. Nets are used in the design of packaging. In information and communication technology, numeracy is satisfactory and mainly linked to spreadsheets and databases. In geography, pupils use computers to draw graphs alongside manual drawing. Measurement in physical education is carried out satisfactorily, and good opportunities are provided for pupils to practise their skills of estimation.

SCIENCE

148. Standards at age 14 are average in relation to national standards and the achievement of the pupils is satisfactory. In the 2000 National Curriculum tests, pupils' results were average when compared both with similar and all schools. Over the last two years, pupils' average point score in Key Stage 3 tests very nearly followed the national trend for science. Results in science were broadly similar to those in English and mathematics in 2000. Over the last three years there has been no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls, with both groups close to the national average. Overall pupils achieve satisfactorily between the ages of 11 and 14.
149. Highest attaining Year 9 pupils have a satisfactory understanding of previous work on light. They are aware that light travels in straight in various directions from an object. They find it very difficult to apply their newly acquired knowledge to new examples. The majority of pupils have low levels of recall and understanding of previous work. Expected levels of numeracy allow pupils to interpret data successfully. Pupils' understanding of the principles of fair testing is satisfactory but at a very basic level. They can state that variables must be controlled but cannot explain properly what the implications are if variables are not controlled.
150. Standards at age 16 are below average in relation to national standards. GCSE A*-C results over the past two years were below the national average. The department enters pupils for three different GCSE courses. Highest attaining pupils who take the three separate sciences obtain above the national average in terms of A*-C grades. However, the percentage of pupils obtaining the A* or A GCSE grades from the separate science course is below the national average. Detailed analysis of the results of pupils who obtained the highest levels in the National Curriculum tests that they took at age 14 in 1997 and 1998 shows that the pupils underachieve in the separate science course. The middle and lower attaining pupils who take the double award examination achieve below the national average A*-C grades. Very few pupils obtain the highest GCSE grades from this course. The lowest attaining pupils achieve very low results in comparison with the national average in terms of A*-C grades. These pupils rarely achieve a grade C. Whether pupils' performance in science at GCSE is compared with similar schools, or based on pupils' attainment between the ages of 11 and 14, it is slightly below that for English and mathematics. GCSE results over the last two years have been fairly steady. Between the ages of 11 and 14 there is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls in the GCSE. Achievement between the ages of 14 and 16 is unsatisfactory since pupils who are at the national average at the end of Key Stage 3 now obtain below the national average GCSE results. The reasons for this are mostly due to the type of GCSE courses which the department offers, which are not the most appropriate to maximise the results of individual pupils.
151. In Year 11 the highest attaining pupils' knowledge and understanding of amplitude, wavelength, and frequency is at best inconsistent. Better understood are the factors which alter the rate of chemical reactions. Lowest attaining Year 11 pupils have low levels of recall and understanding of the structure and function of the parts of the body. The inability to recall previous work quickly, which in turn prevents pupils from applying knowledge well, is the reason why so few pupils obtain the highest GCSE grades. Pupils' investigative skills are satisfactory. Average numerical skills enable pupils to obtain satisfactory marks for their course-work.
152. Overall the quality of teaching is good for pupils irrespective of their age. Teachers set high standards for discipline, which are achieved. They have good subject knowledge and understanding. Expectations of pupils are appropriate. Often teachers use a wide range of resources and methods, which helps to maintain the interest of their pupils. Because the setting arrangements are accurate, work is generally well matched to the needs of pupils in any particular set. Sometimes teachers do not provide sufficient work suitable for different attaining pupils, particularly those in the mixed ability Year 7

groups. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs receive good support from the class teacher. In those lessons where a learning support assistant supports pupils, the designated pupil receives good support but sometimes other pupils on the register of special educational needs are not given the help they need. Overall, however, pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress along with other lower attaining pupils. It is difficult for the department to fully monitor the progress of special needs pupils because only a few of them have individual education plans. The quality of marking is satisfactory but generally scientific supportive comments are not used sufficiently. The quality of reports to parents is satisfactory. Teachers have developed many work sheets to support pupils' learning through the regular setting of homework. However, insufficient textbooks restrict the range of homework assignments.

153. Pupils' attitudes to learning and to high academic achievement are good. Behaviour is also good so that all pupils have every opportunity to learn. Pupils work well together when carrying out experiments. When moving around the laboratory to collect materials and equipment, pupils act very responsibly. During whole-class discussions pupils answer their teachers' questions in a courteous manner and to the best of their ability. The positive attitudes of pupils together with good teaching do not explain why pupils underachieve between the ages of 14 and 16; the explanation lies in the curriculum provision.
154. The department provides four different courses for pupils in Key Stage 4. More than just the highest attaining pupils take the three separate sciences. Consequently too many pupils find the course too hard and do not obtain as high a grade as they might by taking a different course. The double award GCSE course, which most pupils take, is not the most suitable for pupils who have low levels of recall and understanding. A modular approach would suit the needs of these pupils. A similar approach would also suit the needs of the lower attaining pupils who take the single award. The certificate of achievement course is right for the lowest attaining pupils. However, too many pupils are entered for this course. A modular approach, which gives pupils regular feedback of their performance, would be more motivating thus lowering the number of pupils entered for the certificate of achievement. The department does not make sufficient use of the regular testing carried out in all year groups to give pupils goals to improve in the next stage. Pupils require subject specific targets in order to raise attainment.
155. The newly qualified teacher is well supported on whole-school issues and by the science staff. She is already making a good contribution to the work of the department. An efficient team of technicians supports the department very well. However, the amount of technician time is insufficient to service the number of laboratories, which are spread over two floors. The tidiness and organisation of the preparation area provides evidence of the technicians' hard work and dedication. Overall the quality of resources provided is unsatisfactory. There are some shortages of basic science equipment, computers, and textbooks. The department makes some uses of data-logging equipment but generally there are insufficient sensors for pupils to use in whole-class experiments. The money made available annually is insufficient to address these shortages. Although the department takes health and safety issues seriously, written risk assessments do not exist for all experiments yet. The school has arranged for the electrical testing to be carried out by the person responsible for whole-school maintenance. Some of the equipment has been tested within the last 12 months whilst other equipment was last tested five years ago. The school took immediate action to remedy this deficiency during the inspection week.
156. There is a good team spirit in the science department and the head of department provides satisfactory leadership. Nevertheless there are aspects of management, which require improvement: increase the monitoring of marking, review the curriculum,

and to match learning resources to schemes of work to aid the lesson planning of inexperienced staff.

157. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection and has addressed most of the issues raised. There is now some support for pupils with special educational needs. However, it is difficult for the department to fully monitor their progress because only pupils at stage 5 on the register have individual education plans. The quality of teaching is much improved so that no unsatisfactory lessons were seen during this inspection. The laboratories are now in a good state of decoration and provide an adequate environment in which to work.

ART AND DESIGN

158. At age 14 standards in art and design are above average in relation to national standards. A significant feature of these good standards is that pupils gain a wide experience of different styles of art and design through a lively, modern approach. Pupils do a lot of work in the Surrealist mode and this gives them wide scope for imaginative developments and they respond in a lively, creative manner. In Year 7 pupils' three-dimensional models on the theme of 'Monsters' are of good quality. They are successful in exaggerating posture and features to get the monster effect. In Year 8 pupils are skilled in achieving tone and texture in their observational studies of natural forms. In Year 9 pupils have a good understanding of the Pop Art style. They can create and use modern images, with the best examples using fabrics to create three-dimensional effects. Achievement is good for all pupils throughout the key stage as pupils build on their understanding and skills, and produce work of increasing quality from year to year. Pupils on the special educational needs register make good progress. Many of these pupils are interested in art and have confidence that helps them to attain good standards.
159. Standards at age 16 are below average in relation to national standards. All pupils have gained a pass grade in GCSE art and design over the past three years. There has been a 21 per cent increase in the higher grades A*-C over the past three years from well below the national average to a little below the national average. Half of the pupils achieved these higher grades in 2000, including one in five pupils gaining A* and A grades. Standards in the present Year 11 coursework indicate that GCSE results this year will be at a similar level, a little below the national average. The present Year 11 pupils have had the GCSE examination paper for over two weeks, with the theme 'Inside' presented. However, many pupils have done less than the expected preparation. These pupils show little sense of urgency and do not fully attend lessons to gain the teachers' help and guidance. This is likely to affect their standards in the final ten-hour examination. A significant number of pupils were absent at this critical time when teachers are helping pupils to identify the demands of the question. This will further depress standards in the higher grades. Approximately a third of pupils have excellent studies in coursework and some sketchbooks are at A-level standard in the quality of drawings and the depth of their research. Standards in Year 10 are very much better than in Year 11. There is particularly good work in modelling, for example, on the theme 'Vessels' where the pupils showed an imaginative use of the materials. These pupils are much more confident and are fully committed to achieving the best results possible. Overall, achievement is satisfactory by the age of 16 because standards are rising due to the improvements made by the current teaching team.
160. The majority of pupils have good attitudes to this subject and behave well in lessons. There are, however, a small number of pupils in some classes who are badly behaved and do not observe the common courtesies towards each other. These pupils spoil the tone of the lessons for many others. The teachers maintain a good working atmosphere despite having to deal with these distractions. Some of these pupils,

sitting in friendship groups, seriously affect the concentration and consequently the standard of work of others. This is particularly the case in Year 11. A whole-school approach is needed to rectify this situation which seems to originate outside of the classroom.

161. Teaching is good in both key stages with some examples of very good teaching. Both teachers have good knowledge and expertise and good class management skills. Lessons are well structured, well organised and interesting. Pupils are given experience of a very wide range of art styles and techniques and are helped and encouraged to be imaginative and creative by studying the work of modern expressive artists as well as the classics. Year 11 pupils do not show the commitment to the subject that the teaching quality merits. The teachers have good skills in information and communications technology but have only two very old computers in the department. These often do not work and are therefore of little use to the pupils. This lack of information and communication technology affects standards particularly in Year 11.
162. The department is well led by a lively and energetic head of department who has been in post for almost three years. There are comprehensive schemes of work that are very well illustrated with clear guidance to help pupils to research each topic in depth. The head of department has taken pains to try a wide variety and range of topics and has changed and developed the plans from year to year to enable pupils to benefit from topics that they find interesting and by this means to meet the needs of each individual. There are well-illustrated files of lesson plans for the past three years and a comprehensive photographic record of pupils' work. This is valuable in showing pupils the level of work that they need to produce in order to gain particular GCSE grades. It also shows the pride that the department has in its work. Local artists and art groups and visits to the local art galleries are used to expand pupils' knowledge and experience of art forms.
163. It was reported at the time of the last inspection that the accommodation was in need of refurbishment. This has not been done. Accommodation is poor. The classrooms are too small for the large groups in both key stages. There are inadequate storage facilities. The lack of space and the loss of a room since the last inspection means that there is inadequate space for pupils to view their own work and make links between themes. This affects standards in the subject, particularly in GCSE.
164. There has been significant improvement since the last inspection in GCSE standards and in three-dimensional studies as a result of new approaches taken by the current teaching team.
165. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through studies of a range of art from different cultures, including Egyptian, Inca and Aboriginal art and religious art from the Christian tradition.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

166. Standards at age 14 are above average in relation to national standards. This represents a good level of achievement when compared to the levels pupils attain when they enter the school. Pupils are able to draw meaningful conclusions when they analyse existing products. They gain a good range of basic skills in designing and making products in food, textiles, graphics, resistant materials and electronics. Pupils are at times limited by the range of products they analyse and this restricts their understanding of the diversity of products on the market. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and are well supported to achieve good standards. All pupils make good use of information and communication technology in their work. Pupils use desktop publishing skills, and use computer-aided design to do basic drawings of products they make. They use the Internet well to research information. Information and communication technology is also used to make printed circuit boards using a specialist computer program to help pupils both design and test their circuits. Lower attaining pupils benefit well from the structure that teachers provide in the lessons. In all design and technology specialist areas, pupils are well supported in planning their work using structured worksheets. They use surveys to analyse the views of others and then present the numerical data from their surveys in the form of charts and graphs, and show the use of this information in the development of their own design ideas. Pupils include the analysis of food products, present the results as charts and show how the opinions of others influence their product designs. In graphics, pupils work at a particularly high level throughout Years 7 to 9. They are taught a suitable range of two and three-dimensional drawing skills and are able to apply these well-developed skills to their own design ideas. All pupils extend and refine these skills through practice. The majority of pupils now use their graphics skills effectively in all material areas and teachers focus on developing good presentation skills. This was seen in a Year 7 lesson on resistant materials where pupils were designing key fobs. The pupils designed a range of their own ideas and the teacher focused on developing some specific graphics skills such as use of tone to improve the overall effect of the drawings. The majority of pupils managed the skill well and this increased both their graphics skills as well as the overall presentation of their work. Higher attaining pupils combined these skills with a good range of imaginative drawings and demonstrated a good degree of accuracy. Lower attaining pupils applied the basic skills to improve the overall presentation and quality of their work.
167. Standards at age 16 are above average in relation to national standards. The design and technology GCSE results in 2000 show the proportion of pupils achieving A*-C grades was just above the national average. The proportion of pupils achieving A*-C grades has remained broadly the same since 1999. The 2000 results show that the proportion of girls achieving grades A*-C is significantly higher than the boys. Pupils tend to achieve better results in design and technology than they do in science and mathematics.
168. Achievement over time between the ages of 14 and 16 is good. Attainment remains above the national average despite the low percentage of curriculum time allocated to design and technology compared to the time given to the subject in other schools nationally. All pupils use a wide range of investigation and research skills. They effectively evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their work as they develop their design ideas. Examination coursework is of good quality. Pupils have a good range of making skills and also consider large-scale manufacturing processes. For example, in Year 11 pupils in resistant materials design storage units that demonstrate a wide range of ideas and craft skills. In food pupils design a range of marketable takeaway foods, with those in electronics designing products, for example, using sensors to detect moisture. In graphic products pupils design point of sales displays and activity packs for children, as well as a variety of packaging. Higher attaining pupils produce

good quality products that include advanced making skills and designs supported with accurate, well-developed plans. Folder work includes the testing of processes, materials and finishes as they develop their final designs. All the work reflects a high degree of research to gain such a broad range of ideas and to include the variety of construction techniques, some using computer- aided design. Higher attaining pupils show accuracy and depth to the development of their designs in all material areas. Lower attaining pupils design products well suited to the course and are supported by their teachers to complete a good level of work.

169. The quality of teaching and learning is good at both key stages. In some lessons, teaching and learning was very good. Teachers have high expectations of the pupils. They question pupils effectively to assess their level of knowledge and understanding. In all material areas teachers provide pupils with a good foundation of research methods and so analyse changes in the market demands. This was seen in a Year 9 food lesson where pupils were developing ready-prepared meals. Pupils were encouraged to draw on their experience of travel as well as their knowledge of our rich culture to develop popular ready-prepared meals for a supermarket. This was particularly effective, giving pupils the opportunity to evaluate products and develop new ideas, and also to identify mass production processes and the need for good quality control. Teachers usually plan their lessons well and are generally well prepared for each lesson. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because of the extra support teachers give to individual pupils. Some teachers succeed in challenging pupils of all levels of attainment, but this is not consistent across the department. The school has recognised the need to provide a wider range of differentiated learning resources to meet the needs of the pupils and are working to include this in their planning. Teachers place a good emphasis on developing technical vocabulary when pupils discuss work in class and when they record their findings; this is having a positive effect on the development of the pupils' literacy skills. Pupils form good relationships with their teachers and work hard for them. Pupils behave well because they know what standards are, and are not, acceptable. There is good pace to the lessons. The revision programme for Year 11 pupils, consisting of a good range of tasks to sustain the interest of the pupils and to consolidate their understanding, is particularly effective in preparing pupils for the forthcoming examinations.
170. The head of department provides good leadership. The department is well managed and benefits from a strong team approach. Planning is well linked to the National Curriculum and requirements of the GCSE examinations. There is an appropriate system in place to monitor and record the attainment of pupils and the department is working to link this more closely to the National Curriculum attainment levels. Individual targets are set for all pupils and this is beginning to have a positive effect on standards because it has motivated the pupils. However, the information gathered from this is still underused. Despite the best efforts of the department there are still some outstanding health and safety issues particularly relating to the extraction process of the brazing hearth. Although information and communication technology is well used in the department, there is a shortfall in computer-aided manufacturing resources which has restricted the work of the department in this area. There are good links with industry to enhance the experience of pupils in the activities organised in school.
171. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection. There is now a good level of achievement in all year groups and teaching is good overall.

GEOGRAPHY

172. Standards at age 14 are average in relation to national standards. Teacher assessment of pupils' achievements in 2000 shows attainment is in line with the national average. By the end of the key stage, the majority of pupils are competent in map skills and in observing and recording information. Higher attaining Year 8 pupils, for example, successfully use maps to study the reasons for the siting of industry, whilst average attaining pupils understand about the growth of industry in South Wales. Lower attaining pupils use information from photographs and video film to describe agricultural change in Britain, but poor attitudes to learning reduce standards achieved, when work is incomplete and illustrative work receives insufficient care and accuracy. Pupils know about different places in the world, but many do not use the atlas confidently to research information. Year 9 pupils understand why Japan has developed successfully since 1945 and both boys and girls achieve similar standards both in oral and written work, but for many there is insufficient appreciation about the contribution of Japanese culture to the country's progress. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is unsatisfactory due to the lack of sufficient support to help them overcome their weaknesses in writing, particularly in Year 7.
173. Standards at age 16 are above average in relation to national standards. GCSE results were particularly high in 2000, with the proportion of pupils achieving grades A*-C being well above the national average with girls and boys achieving similar standards. Pupils' achievement is broadly equal to their achievement in other subjects and the results over recent years show a progressive improvement. Between the ages of 14 and 16 pupils continue to consolidate geographical skills and gain knowledge of a range of topics. Attainment in GCSE coursework is good with many pupils organising and presenting work to a high standard. Studies in the Long Mynd area of Shropshire, for example, show many have skills in collecting and presenting data about river valleys, with higher attaining pupils writing full, reasoned accounts to test hypotheses. Many pupils make good use of computers for research and to enhance the presentation. Weakness is evident among average attaining pupils, however, due to insufficient attention to analysis and explanation of findings of the study. Pupils acquire knowledge of technical terms such as in studies about earthquakes and volcanoes. They know about the processes that lead to volcanic activity and understand the reasons for the world distribution of earthquakes. Many pupils express themselves well in written work, writing full accounts with satisfactory attention to grammatical accuracy. Oral skills are insufficiently developed, more so for girls than boys. Lower attaining pupils achieve lower than others due to weaknesses in lesson planning and to the poor attitude to study of a minority of pupils.
174. The pupils' achievement in relation to their earlier work is satisfactory at both key stages, except for pupils with special education needs where it is unsatisfactory, due to weaknesses in lesson planning and in monitoring their progress. The subject attracts higher attaining pupils at GCSE which partly explains the high level of the examination results.
175. The quality of teaching and learning of pupils between the ages of 11 and 14 is satisfactory. Teachers are appropriately qualified and experienced and this has a positive impact on the progress that most pupils make. In a Year 9 lesson for example, the teacher gave clear explanations and engaged pupils well in exchanges about developments in Japan, and resulted in good progress being made in the lesson. In many lessons teachers set strategies to promote improvement in pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils are introduced to a variety of forms of writing and there are opportunities for extended writing. The writing of lower attaining pupils is effectively supported with word lists or statements to guide responses. Pupils' numeracy skills are well developed through data collection such as in weather studies in the school's

environment in Year 7. In a minority of lessons progress is slower than is usually seen due expectations of the pupils being too low. In a Year 7 lesson for example, the pupils spent too long on colouring activities that did not advance their learning, while in a Year 8 lesson for higher attaining pupils, their passive attitudes to learning were not sufficiently challenged. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is unsatisfactory because work is not effectively planned to meet their learning needs. The marking of pupils work is inconsistent and unsatisfactory overall because there are too few comments on pupils' strengths and weaknesses. There is also inconsistency in the regularity of marking across the department and the use of target setting. As a result, pupils are not always well informed as to how well they are doing and how they could improve.

176. Between the ages of 14 and 16 the quality of teaching and learning is good. Lessons are mostly well planned with regular opportunities taken to reinforce learning from previous lessons. Year 11 pupils made good progress in a revision lesson that focused on improving examination techniques and understanding of question requirements. Example answers gave clear guidance on what is expected and pupils then wrote individual accounts that addressed the points made in the lesson. The management of pupils is good. Teachers maintain good discipline and lessons proceed smoothly enabling good progress to be made on most occasions. Year 10 pupils made sound progress in a lesson about employment structures, due to the establishment of a positive learning ethos enabling learning to move forward briskly. Teachers are experienced practitioners and give sound advice and guidance to pupils about the GCSE course and this leads to improving standards. The coursework guidance and setting of appropriate standards results in good achievement evident in the work seen in this aspect of the course.
177. The curriculum is satisfactory and meets national recommendations between the ages of 11 and 14. The curriculum is enhanced by fieldwork provision at both key stages and this adds appreciably to pupil's experience. The use of computers is improving with additional facilities being made available in the subject and is beginning to impact well on learning, particularly in GCSE coursework. The management of the subject is satisfactory. The department has many strengths, such as keeping abreast of changes to the curriculum, support for colleagues and establishing high morale, but there are weaknesses that have not been addressed.
178. The provision for meeting the needs of pupils with special educational needs is unclear and the monitoring of progress is unsatisfactory, partly due to staffing difficulties. The procedures for assessing pupils are broadly satisfactory, but there is insufficient collection and use of data to monitor individual pupils' progress and to feed back into lesson planning; this is unsatisfactory. Good opportunities are presented for pupils to reflect on the earth's forces and to appreciate landforms. Environmental issues are well covered and pupils' learning is also enhanced as a result of the studies on Amazonian Indian and Japanese culture.
179. There has been good progress made in significant areas since the last inspection. The GCSE results at grades A*-C have improved from being at the national average to well above the average in 2000. There has been appreciable improvement in resources, particularly in textbooks at both key stages and in the refurbishment of the department and it now provides a positive learning environment. The quality of marking continues to be a weakness, as does the provision for pupils with special educational needs.

HISTORY

180. Standards at age 14 are average in relation to national standards. The pupils' achievement in relation to their earlier work is good at both key stages. When they enter the school the pupils have a range of historical knowledge, understanding and skills. Teacher assessment of pupils' achievements at the end of Key Stage 3 shows that attainment is in line with the national average. By the end of Key Stage 3, the majority of pupils acquire a good range of skills such as using sources of evidence to describe and comment on past events. Year 8 pupils, for example, write good accounts about the contribution of people such as William Wilberforce to the abolition of slavery in nineteenth century, whilst gifted and talented pupils are able to interpret evidence and write explanatory accounts. Lower attaining pupils write good descriptive accounts to a given framework and pupils with special educational needs are able to complete writing tasks because of the individual support received. A minority of pupils, however, are not achieving the level expected because they are not able to explain historical events such as the reasons why slaves were taken to America, or comment on the morality of the trade. Most pupils have a good sense of chronology, being able to sequence events in time and show skills in organising information in a logical form.
181. Standards at age 16 are above average in relation to national standards. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A*-C in the 2000 GCSE examination is close to the national average with girls achieving higher standards than boys. Pupils tend to do as well in history compared to their performance in the other subjects, but the results are a decline on the above average results achieved in 1999. This is due to staffing difficulties in the summer term.
182. By the age of 16 pupils increase the range and depth of the periods of history that they study. In studies about developments in medical science in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries higher and average attaining pupils have knowledge of medical terms and understand the impact of developments in different places such as Egypt and Greece. Lower attaining pupils write plays about peoples' beliefs that the Black Death was a punishment from God. Written work is improved by re-drafting when attention is given to correcting misspelt words though for the minority there is a weakness in understanding about the use of speech marks. Many pupils are aware of the importance of cultural characteristics of countries, such as Moslem belief about the resurrection and the effect on the development of medical science, whilst in Year 10 pupils understand about how the culture of the American Plains Indians influenced their lifestyles and beliefs.
183. The quality of teaching and learning between the ages of 11 and 14 is good. Teachers plan lessons well and this generates interest and results in good progress. Much thought is given to the choice of teaching methods and often leads to enthusiastic response. In Year 7 for example, the organisation of groups to represent villages in medieval times combined with role-play of village personalities enabled pupils to relate to the period and understand problems about the Black Death. As a result pupils developed ideas, shared them with the class and wrote good summary accounts. Higher attaining pupils organise and communicate their ideas well and write detailed explanations on topics, whilst lower attaining pupils gain knowledge of life in Tudor times and understand the reasons for the troubles between Henry VIII and the Catholic church. Teachers make good use of resources to support learning. There are modern texts and much use is made of reprographic materials to meet the needs of lower attaining pupils. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress because their literacy difficulties are supported by good guidance on how to structure their writing and a list of key words. The day-to-day monitoring of the progress they make, however, is inconsistent. The setting of targets for improvement is good.

Occasionally there is insufficient challenge for gifted and talented pupils when more demanding tasks are not incorporated into lesson planning.

184. The quality of teaching and learning between the ages of 14 and 16 is good. Very good progress is made in GCSE coursework because teachers set high standards of presentation and give close guidance about what is expected. Teachers are appropriately qualified and their enthusiasm for the subject impacts well on pupils' attitudes and leads to good progress. Teaching methods are good. Many opportunities are given for pupils to be actively engaged in research activities using books and computers and this results in extended writing about their findings. Teachers mark work regularly with comment on the quality, and set targets for improvement. Year 10 pupils, for instance, are well informed as to how well they are doing and this helps develop their self-confidence and gives incentive to greater effort. As a result standards are rising. Occasionally progress is slower than expected due to the unsatisfactory attitudes to learning of the minority, more so for pupils with special educational needs. They do not co-operate with the adult support provided and without alternate teaching strategies make unsatisfactory progress. In the minority of lessons tasks set are too long and a few pupils do not sustain concentration and insufficient progress is made.
185. The management of the subject is good, as are the arrangements for monitoring the work of the team and supporting newly qualified teachers. The curriculum is enhanced by visits between the ages of 14 and 16, but the absence of visits between the ages of 11 and 14 reduces experience for many pupils. Moral issues are central to studies in Year 9 about the treatment of the Jews during the Holocaust. The procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are good, but the use of assessment to monitor progress is at an early stage of development and not yet fully informing about the progress pupils are making. The quality and effective use of individual education plans for pupils with special education needs is unsatisfactory. The staffing of the department is good and this has a significant bearing on the quality of learning and good progress that most pupils make.
186. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. The curriculum has improved with attention given to developing skills and greater depth of historical study. Pupils' writing experience has been enhanced with more varied and extended writing opportunities provided. The assessment of pupils' progress is developing rapidly and beginning to inform strongly on progress. The arrangement for accommodation has improved with the provision of a suite of three rooms, but the absence of appropriate storage reduces the positive atmosphere for learning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

187. Standards at age 14 are average in relation to national standards. The school has now introduced ICT lessons in Year 7 to 9 and this is having a positive effect on the achievement at this stage. Pupils now develop a suitably broad portfolio of skills, although there is limited curriculum time allocated to the subject across all year groups. GCSE results in 2000 were below the national average but the pupils taking the examination had not had the benefit of studying ICT as a discrete subject in Years 7 to 9. This has not prepared them well enough for the level of work needed at examination level. Pupils use ICT well to enhance their learning in the majority of subjects although it is underdeveloped in a few areas such as music, modern foreign languages and art.
188. The achievement of the pupils is satisfactory between the ages of 11 and 14. Pupils have one lesson of ICT every other week and this limits the range of skills that can be taught and practised in the time allowed. All pupils between the ages of 11 and 14 achieve basic competence in the skills covered in specific ICT lessons using desktop publishing software, spreadsheets, databases, aspects of control technology and

making Internet searches. This was seen in a Year 7 lesson where pupils were engaged in writing sequences of instructions to control a traffic lights system. Pupils were given a challenge. All pupils were given the opportunity to experiment with the process and with the support of the teacher and learning support assistants were able to achieve the right outcomes. However, lower attaining pupils with a lower level of concentration found difficulty in focusing on the task. Higher attaining pupils were able to show more depth and understanding in their application. Pupils developed some foundation skills in using and interrogating the information held on databases. They were able to both enter and retrieve information from a database. Pupils at all levels of attainment benefited from an investigative approach and were able to talk confidently about their findings.

189. Standards at age 16 are below average in relation to national standards. The results for the GCSE short course taken by all pupils in 2000 show that the proportion of pupils attaining grades A*-C was well below the national average, with girls achieving better results than the boys. In the GCSE full course, the A*-C grades are well below the national average with the boys outperforming the girls. There has been a decline in the proportion of pupils achieving grades A*-C since 1999 because pupils have not developed sufficient ICT skills over their time in school.
190. The achievement of the pupils is unsatisfactory between the ages of 14 and 16. This is mainly due to insufficient curriculum time allocated to the subject compared to the time allocated in other schools nationally for GCSE examination courses. Pupils who enter the GCSE examination also find the work difficult as a result of the limited skills they acquired in Years 7 to 9 when they did not have a discrete ICT lesson throughout each year. Attendance to lessons is poor and this has also affected levels of attainment and at times leaving pupils with incomplete coursework with which to enter the examination. In the work seen, pupils applied a range of skills and demonstrated a range of understanding that, had they completed their coursework, would have given them better results. Good application of a database program was seen in a project involving pupils in setting up a database to identify the relevant information needed by an estate agent's office. Pupils entered the details and were able to demonstrate how this information could be retrieved. Higher attaining pupils were able to view and present the information in different formats. They are able to evaluate and comment on their progress and the overall success of their own achievement as well as suggesting improvements.
191. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory at both key stages. Teachers show a high level of planning and preparation, and are well organised for their lessons. In most lessons there are clear objectives that support the pupils in their learning. Teachers plan the development of technical vocabulary as part of lessons and encourage pupils to use it correctly when they explain their work in detail. Pupils with lower than average reading skills benefit well from this opportunity to extend their vocabulary in the subject. Teachers prepare structured worksheets which are helpful in moving the pupils' learning forward when pupils work through projects. Teachers use a good range of learning resources. Teachers demonstrate good knowledge of their subject and in the main use questions and answers effectively to assess how much the pupils learn and understand. This also challenges pupils in their thinking and engages them fully in the lessons. Revision lessons were well structured for Year 11 pupils with a good variety of activities to keep the interest of the pupils. Lessons were well balanced with questions to answer both verbally and on paper. Pupils worked well through the exercises and this effectively identified some of the gaps that pupils had in their learning. The pace of learning is often slowed down by too many pupils sharing computers as a result of large teaching groups. There is an effective system to record pupils' attainment and achievement and this is well linked to the requirements of the National Curriculum and the GCSE examination. Teachers assess work at regular

intervals and individual targets are set for all pupils; however, the information gained from assessments is not used sufficiently to guide teachers' future lesson planning.

192. The use of ICT in other subjects to support the delivery of the National Curriculum and to raise standards of GCSE work is inconsistent. Good use was seen in design and technology where pupils used desktop publishing, spreadsheets, control technology, computer-aided design and the Internet to research information. Pupils also use a specialist programme to design and test printed circuit boards for their work in electronics. In geography pupils use ICT well for their GCSE coursework in Years 10 and 11 and there is evidence of using a range of equipment such as scanners and digital cameras. There is a need, however, to increase the range of software used in the department to incorporate, for example, more work on spreadsheets. In history, pupils research information successfully using the Internet. Use of ICT is satisfactory in English and in mathematics where pupils use spreadsheets and a specialist programme to draw geometrical shapes. In physical education pupils use ICT well with their GCSE coursework. They use CD-ROM to research information, monitor heart rate and use the video camera to record performance. In art and design pupils use the digital camera, scanners and graphics software to manipulate images. In art, pupils in all year groups use both graphics and text to present their work. In science some pupils are given the opportunity to measure and record data but it is not always possible for pupils to gain hands-on experience. The use of ICT in religious education includes the use of computers for research using CD-ROM and the Internet. Pupils also use the digital camera and use graphics, sound and text in presenting their work. In modern foreign languages, there is inconsistent use of ICT but there is an increase of use identified in the planning for September. The use of ICT is underdeveloped in music and there is a lack of resources in design and technology to do sufficient work in computer-aided manufacture. The day-to-day management of the department and co-ordination of schemes of work is effective.
193. There have been satisfactory improvements since the last inspection. The school has increased the number of computers to provide a ratio of approximately 8:1 pupils to each computer. This is a considerable investment and is now much closer to the national average. Computer rooms are well equipped and there is an extensive network which covers a very large site. Recent positive development includes a new learning resource centre.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

194. Pupils study either French or German when they enter the school with four sets of higher attaining pupils studying both languages in Years 8 and 9.
195. Standards at age 14 are above average in relation to national standards. There is a rising trend. Girls do better than boys, though less so than nationally. Pupils make good progress in Years 7 to 9. They acquire vocabulary at a steady rate. A strong emphasis on understanding grammatical rules enables all pupils to experiment in writing in Year 7. In all years, but especially in Year 8, there are good examples of higher and average attaining pupils producing extended written work, in both languages, on familiar topics such as their daily routine. By the end of Year 9, these pupils are familiar with past and future tenses, as they produce descriptions and accounts, and this extends into their oral work. They speak confidently and with good pronunciation, especially in German. They collaborate to produce exchanges in role-play of up to five or six utterances. The breadth of their vocabulary enables them to understand the key details in reasonably long written and spoken messages. Lower attaining pupils follow a specially adapted version of the curriculum in Year 8. This enables them to achieve at a satisfactory level overall, and helps them to sustain their interest and concentration.

However, they do not have regular opportunities for oral work, so that speaking is underdeveloped compared with comprehension skills.

196. Standards at age 16 are average in relation to national standards. GCSE A*-C results in 2000 were in line with the national average in both French and German. Boys and girls achieved their respective national average in German; in French, boys achieved at above the national average for boys, but girls' results were below the national average for girls. Girls did better than boys in German, though both declined from levels achieved in 1999. There was no difference between boys and girls in French, reflecting an improvement by boys. All pupils who were entered – 85 per cent of the year group – gained a grade within the range A*-G, indicating at least satisfactory attainment for pupils with special educational needs. Pupils did well in modern foreign languages compared to their performance in other school subjects.
197. Comparison of 1998 teacher assessments with 2000 GCSE results indicates that pupils in that year group made satisfactory progress in Years 10 and 11. Inspection evidence shows that this is still the case and therefore achievement in these years is satisfactory. Limited curriculum time impedes the opportunities for pupils to make faster progress. Higher attaining pupils continue to extend their vocabulary and their range of structures. They produce some very good written coursework on topics such as personal fitness, holiday plans and accounts, their work experience, and portraits of famous French or German people. Content is always good and, despite some disconcerting errors, language is usually accurate. They speak reasonably well, though many lack the confidence to volunteer answers. Listening and reading skills are well developed. Average attaining pupils also produce creditable coursework on the same range of topics, though errors occur more frequently. This is more noticeable in German, where these pupils have difficulty applying unusual rules of word order, or giving each noun a capital letter. Despite this, they convey information both in written and oral work, and have acceptable comprehension skills. Lower attaining pupils often lack motivation and require considerable support to help them understand short messages. They manage to produce language at a basic level, though again requiring much support.
198. Pupils' attitudes to learning modern foreign languages are largely positive, especially in Years 7 to 9. They show interest in lessons, and collaborate well in pair, group and whole-class oral activities. There is some evidence of independent research which improves the content of written assignments. Work in exercise books is generally well presented. There is little unfinished work, and homework is completed. Behaviour in lessons is generally very good, though occasionally a minority of pupils find it difficult to maintain concentration for a full hour, and a small number of instances of poor behaviour were seen.
199. The quality of teaching and learning is good, overall. It is good between the ages of 11 and 14 and satisfactory between the ages of 14 and 16. Work in exercise books and pupil files shows teaching to be good over time, and to have a positive impact on progress in learning. Teachers have a good knowledge of the languages they teach. They all teach both French and German. In general, they use the foreign language consistently to conduct lessons. This provides a good model; pupils hear a lot of French and German and are stimulated and challenged. Where too much English is used, pupils are not as confident or accurate in their own use of the foreign language, and the pace of learning is slower. In Years 10 and 11, teachers use their very good knowledge of examination requirements to assist pupils to improve their GCSE grades. Planning for most lessons is good. In the best lessons pupils make good progress in learning because teachers provide a range of tasks covering different skills, and conducted at a brisk pace. In a Year 8 German lesson on lost property, pupils experienced an oral revision session using the perfect tense, used a model

conversation in various oral and written tasks, and had their comprehension tested through various listening and reading activities. By the end of the lesson they had extended their knowledge and were confident in using what they had learned. Where teachers make extensive use of the foreign language, and challenge pupils to produce more than the minimum requirement, they have appropriately high expectations. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, the activity is ill matched to pupils' ability or goes on for too long, so that pupils become frustrated and concentration wavers. In such cases, learning is adversely affected.

200. Teaching methods are particularly effective in Years 7 to 9, where teachers harness pupils' enthusiasm and provide more regular opportunities for working in pairs and for class surveys, as well as occasional work with computers. In Years 10 and 11 there is less time available and an inevitable commitment to activities relevant to GCSE preparation, so that pupils' learning experiences are more limited. Teachers enjoy good relationships with pupils in most lessons, especially where the pace of the lesson allows no time for variations in behaviour, and good class management derives naturally from good teaching. Where there is challenging behaviour, teachers manage this sensitively and ensure that the quality of learning of the whole class is not threatened. They make good use of available resources, and employ a German assistant very well. In a Year 7 German lesson, groups of pupils left the room to enjoy a conversation with her about their school subjects. This provided variety within the lesson, as well as an opportunity to meet a native speaker in their early years of language learning. At present, the use of reading resources and regular access to computers are not sufficiently integrated into routine work. There are plans to address these issues. Though there is some inconsistency in marking methods, work is marked thoroughly. Some teachers add good quality comments, which assist future learning. Homework is set regularly, and is usually a challenging addition to work done in class.
201. Curricular provision for modern foreign languages is good in terms of the courses offered to the pupils. They study either French or German in Year 7, and considerable numbers take both in Years 8 and 9, and can continue to take both to GCSE. However, the time allocated to the first language is below the national norm throughout Years 8 to 11. This limits the range of learning experiences, and pupils' comparative success in GCSE. Pupils are given a wide range of opportunities to develop social skills through interactive language work in pairs and small groups.
202. The subject is well managed. Assessment procedures are particularly thorough, and thoughtful planning documents and worksheets derive from analysis of assessment data. This has had a pronounced effect on the improvement in the performance of boys in the subject. Though structured observation of lessons is currently in abeyance, the head of the subject has good knowledge of the work of his department. Minutes of meetings indicate a strong team commitment to raising standards. Accommodation is a problem for the subject, with only four specialist rooms available for eight teachers. They do their best to alleviate the effect of this on pupils' learning. Display in language classrooms is very good and adds to a supportive learning atmosphere. Regular exchanges and residential holidays in France and Germany have a positive effect on the learning of those who participate. The department has maintained many of the positive features mentioned in the previous inspection report. With results rising since then, there has been a satisfactory improvement, overall.

MUSIC

203. Standards in music are broadly average in relation to national standards at age 14. Most pupils understand the basic elements of music and how they work together in compositions. A Year 9 class of lower attaining pupils showed how they understood

melodic shape and direction by noting down the opening of 'Eleanor Rigby' as the teacher played it. Pupils are confident in their playing of instruments, girls being more adept than boys at using all their fingers on the keyboard. Practical work is supported by written work, particularly in learning to read and write music. Achievement is good for many pupils who cope well with the many complexities of learning music. However, higher attainers and the musically gifted do not appreciate the open-ended nature of tasks they are given and therefore do not always work to the best of their ability. Although behaviour is generally good there are pupils with special educational needs who need more attention to help them persevere with their work. No learning support assistants were observed in music lessons and as a result the progress of these pupils was unsatisfactory. Overall, the achievement of the pupils between the ages of 11 and 14 is satisfactory.

204. Standards at age 16 are average in relation to national standards. Entries at GCSE are low for the size of school and results fluctuate from year to year. For individual pupils, results in music match the average in their other subjects. Pupils in Year 10 are developing good habits in composition by applying different techniques often modelled by their teacher. All have access to the one computer in the department and by using this to edit their work are able to refine compositions uninhibited, in some cases, by musical literacy. About half the class at this stage is working towards higher grades in this part of the course. In Year 11 about half the class have the appropriate knowledge and understanding for the listening examination. They can recognise different styles of music and its origin and name instruments from different countries when listening. They have worked systematically at composition, working on ideas and crafting them into finished composition. None of the finished coursework in either performance or composition was available for the inspection.
205. Teaching at both key stages is satisfactory with some good features. Good relationships are established and through their patience and understanding teachers bring out the best in pupils' attitudes and behaviour which helps their learning. Clear objectives for lessons, either written on the board or on worksheets, are given to pupils, which help them to follow procedures throughout the lesson. However, teachers do not make the most of this feature by following through with interim assessments or linking with learning which could take place outside lessons. As a result pupils do not know clearly how well they are doing, particularly in relation to levels of the National Curriculum. Tasks are broken down well which enables pupils to understand some difficult concepts, such as the link between sound and symbol and how the various elements in music combine. This was particularly evident in Year 7 where pupils were creating pieces with rhythmic interest and developing them into melodic and poly-rhythmic compositions. The quality of learning is satisfactory for most pupils but higher attainers and those with a gift for music are not given sufficient challenge in lessons. Teachers do not make their expectations clear and as a result pupils complete tasks but do not realise the possibility of going beyond.
206. Regular musical events are organised which enhance pupils' musical and social experiences. These include contributing to the Mencap carol service in Worcester Cathedral and the Easter performers' concert, together with visits to instrumental workshops.
207. The head of department is aware of the strengths and weaknesses within the department but has not addressed the need to plan a more integrated use of singing or the use of information and communication technology, identified as needing development in the last inspection report and a statutory element of the National Curriculum. Information and communication technology resources are insufficient to enable statutory requirements to be fulfilled. Arrangements for assessing pupils' work are unsatisfactory. The department has not yet put in place the necessary mechanism

for reporting attainment against levels of the National Curriculum at the end of Year 9. The value to pupils of having regular appraisal of how they are progressing and what they have to do to improve is not built into the department's routine. There is no requirement for pupils to do homework in music, which would encourage greater independence in their learning. Monitoring of the work of the department in the light of this does not take place. There are good opportunities for pupils, especially those who play an instrument to take part in extra lessons and performances. No extra-curricular activities took place during the inspection week.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

208. Standards at age 14 are above average in relation to national standards and the achievement of the pupils is good. Boys and girls attain similar standards. All groups of pupils, including many lower attainers and those with special educational needs, achieve well. By the time they are 14, the attainment in tennis of boys and girls exceeds that expected for their age. Many show good footwork, moving quickly into the correct position to play shots. They often do this with power but sometimes lack direction and control. Teachers have good subject knowledge in tennis, often providing their pupils with essential teaching points that help them to improve during lessons. Teachers also use effective strategies to keep pupils active and working hard. For example, they divide classes into groups based on the pupil's previous attainment in the activity and carefully match the teaching points and activities to those abilities. Often each group is addressed separately whilst others keep on working. This helps to maintain the good pace of lessons.
209. Boys' attainment in cricket also exceeds that expected for their age by the time they are 14. Most pupils apply their skills well in games, carefully structured by their teachers to meet their needs and abilities. They bowl accurately, bat with appropriate aggression and field competently. Many lower attaining pupils have good co-ordination and skills that are developed well for their age. However, some of these pupils have poor concentration. They are helped considerably by skilful teaching that reinforces their awareness of the essential points of technique. As a result these pupils make good progress.
210. Lower attaining older girls work hard to enhance their tennis skills, making significant improvements during lessons, although their attainment remains below that expected for their age. These pupils are supported well by their teacher's good subject knowledge that enables them to benefit from activities and equipment that is well matched to their needs. These pupils use correct techniques and sustain their effort well during weight training and fitness activities, responding very well to the motivation and support provided by their teacher.
211. Standards at the age of 16 are above average in relation to national standards and the achievement of the pupils is good. Over recent years attainment in GCSE examinations has tended to fluctuate. However, in the most recent examinations, 2000, the proportion of pupils attaining A–C grade passes was well above the national average. Boys and girls in GCSE examination classes show skills that often exceed those expected for their age. In rounders the highest attainers strike the ball with confidence, attaining considerable distances. They also catch and throw very well. In trampoline, many pupils attain high standards, performing sustained sequences with flair and precision. These pupils benefit greatly from the good subject knowledge of their teacher and from access to very good equipment. In theory lessons pupils' progress is supported by the effective use of a good range of teaching strategies, such as discussion, interactive media and structures that enhance the development of their written work.

212. Throughout the school the quality of teaching and learning in physical education is good. All teachers in the department have good knowledge and understanding of the subject. Basic skills are taught well and the management of pupils is very good. As a result pupils acquire skills, knowledge and understanding well. They sustain their physical and creative effort and lessons usually progress at a good pace. Very good relationships between teachers and their pupils are a significant strength and these contribute greatly to the motivation and enthusiasm shown by most pupils. Sometimes pupils behave inappropriately. When this happens teachers respond calmly and effectively, not allowing conflicts to get out of hand to the point where the pace of lessons is affected adversely, and ensuring the majority of pupils keep on working hard.
213. The good relationships between teachers and pupils mean that pupils are well supported and feel valued by their teachers. They are motivated by the recognition and celebration of their efforts and achievements by their teachers and they respond well to this. For example, a class of lower attaining 14 year old girls improved their long jumping performance significantly in a lesson as a result of their teacher's subject knowledge and her skill in motivating them. A very similar pattern of development is evident when these pupils throw the javelin and during boys athletics lessons.
214. Teachers assess the attainment and progress of their pupils accurately and use their findings appropriately to help them decide what to teach next. However, in many lessons there are not enough opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own progress or that of others and to suggest ways in which they might improve further. At the start of most lessons teachers explain to pupils what they are going to do but not always explain what they are expected to learn. As a result pupils sometimes do not have a sufficiently clear view about why they are doing a particular activity or practice.
215. Provision in the subject is enhanced greatly by the strong and effective leadership of the head of department and by the very good support teachers provide for each other. However, there are not sufficient opportunities for the head of department to monitor the quality of provision. Accommodation for the subject has some good features, such as the shared use of the sports centre with its large hall and high quality fitness room. The distance and time pupils have to walk to the school fields significantly reduces the time available for teaching lessons at this venue. This aspect of provision is unsatisfactory and tends not to be used regularly because of the reduction of time.
216. A strong programme of extra-curricular activities enhances provision and pupils have achieved significant successes in district and county competitions in a wide range of sports. During the week of the inspection the Under 12 boys football team won the area cup.
217. Improvement since the previous inspection of the school is good. Overall standards have risen and the good quality of management and leadership has been maintained. Teachers have made significant progress in supporting the needs of all pupils well, including the gifted and talented. Those pupils who are unable to take part in practical activities are now fully involved in lessons. They help with administrative tasks and evaluate the quality of the work of their participating classmates.

DANCE

218. Dance is taught to pupils in Key Stage 3 as part of the programme of performing arts. By the time they are 14 standards are above average in relation to national standards.
219. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teaching is undertaken with great enthusiasm and most pupils respond in a similar fashion. The teacher provides a good role model, especially during warm-up activities, showing movement techniques of high

quality. Most pupils copy these closely and this makes a positive contribution to the quality of their movement. The balance between copying demonstrations and opportunities for pupils to be creative and invent their own movements and sequences is used effectively. Pupils also benefit greatly from the sound advice provided by their teacher that enables them to make progress and improve the quality of their work. Most pupils work hard and apply themselves well in a range of contexts, for example when working individually, in partnerships and in small groups.

220. In one lesson, pupils developed sustained and very polished sequences involving contact with a partner and challenging lifting elements within a structure carefully set by their teacher. This met their needs and challenged their abilities effectively. In this case the teacher successfully encouraged pupils to identify what was good about their sequences and to suggest how they might be improved. This extends pupils' understanding effectively.
221. Accommodation for teaching dance is very poor. The room is bland and austere. This detracts significantly from the good work of the teacher to create a suitable ambience for the activity. The acoustics are very poor to the extent that, at times, it prevents the appropriate use of music as a stimulus to support the pupil's work.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

222. Standards in religious education are in line with the expectation of the locally agreed syllabus for the majority of pupils at ages 14 and 16. Pupils arrive at the school with a range of religious knowledge and understanding. Between the ages of 11 and 14 for pupils of all attainment levels, including those on the register for pupils with special educational needs, the achievement is good. The majority can think for themselves and reason logically, and exercises are arranged to ensure that pupils think independently in both key stages. They gain a good basic knowledge of the four major world faiths. Year 7 pupils understand different types of worship including some essential aspects of worship in the Christian and Islamic faiths. Year 8 pupils can examine the spiritual dimensions of being human and can identify the differences between egotism and healthy self-esteem. They can see some of the conflicts in modern life and can point out false values and ones that lead to human happiness. They can explain the similarities in all the major world religions with regard to caring for and helping each other. In Year 9 pupils can define morality and can identify root causes of some moral dilemmas. They can identify absolute and relative morality in situations such as stealing, lying and deception.
223. There were no pupils entered for GCSE in religious education in 1998 and 1999. In 2000 all but a few pupils were entered for the short course GCSE which was studied in one lesson per week in Years 10 and 11. All but nine pupils achieved a pass grade and 34 per cent achieved the higher grades A*-C. Twenty pupils achieved A* and A grades. This represents good achievement for all pupils including pupils on the special educational needs register. These results compare favourably with other schools in the area. Some of these schools had higher grades but entered fewer of their Year 11 pupils. There are no national figures for comparison as yet. Pupils study Christianity and Islam in greater detail for GCSE and they gain a good knowledge of the beliefs, ceremonies and worship in these two religions. They can identify the teaching, significance and symbolism in the ceremonies of the initiation, marriage and funeral rites and know the practices and significance of the Hajj pilgrimage for Muslims. Pupils continue to study moral issues in greater depth and gain a good awareness of right and wrong in absolute and relative terms.
224. Pupils of all levels of attainment show respect for this subject. They behave very well in class, largely due to the skill, class management and subject expertise of their

teachers. Some pupils lack calm and composure and require attention and support throughout their lessons to enable them to focus on the tasks and think seriously.

225. Teaching is good in both key stages. It is particularly effective at Key Stage 4 in enabling pupils to make good progress in meeting the requirements of the agreed syllabus. Apart from five lessons per week the subject is taught by two specialist teachers. They have impressive skills in being able to create a quiet, reflective atmosphere in all lessons. They do this very quietly and effectively even when pupils arrive for lessons in a boisterous frame of mind. They generate a respect for the subject and for learning that is impressive. The subject is taught in a serious, academic way. It also makes a good contribution to pupils' literacy skills, with good attention to extending subject specific and general vocabulary.
226. Religious education makes good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through the studies of the major world religions and their associated cultural, social and moral teachings and observations
227. There is good leadership in the department. The head of department has been successful in getting religious education accepted as a serious academic subject. There is a full course in GCSE that is well supported. Planning has been done in good detail and there is good support for the non-specialist teachers. There has also been extra funding for good quality books and other resources.
228. There is a very significant improvement in religious education since the last inspection. Standards have improved in both key stages. Presentation of work is now good. Progress is good, particularly with regard to understanding the nature of the subject. At the time of the last inspection there was no specialist teaching in the subject and there was no discrete religious education offered to pupils in Years 10 and 11 apart from a small number of pupils taking GCSE in the subject. A third specialist teacher has been appointed for the next academic year so there will be no non-specialist teaching next year.

COMMUNICATION STUDIES

229. A scheme of work for communications studies at GCSE level, as part of the option system, has proved to be very successful since its inception. In 2000, over 86 per cent of pupils sitting the examination attained A*-C grades and 100 per cent attained grades A*-G. It is a skills-based course focused on practical involvement by pupils. It covers perception in non-verbal and verbal communication and deals with the methods which are used by the media in such areas as television, magazine, newspaper, film and advertising. The work involved stimulates literacy skills well and complements work done in English and information and communication technology.
230. Year 11 pupils will be the last to sit the examination as the syllabus is to be discontinued. It was possible to observe two lessons during the inspection, both of very high quality, taken by the sole member of staff currently teaching the subject. Pupils were engaged in analysing 'unique selling points' in relation to film and video 'trailers', learning much about techniques of filming and audience reaction to images. All were deeply involved with the subject and worked with an assiduity and enthusiasm that is rare. They were inspired by the expertise of their teacher and very willing and eager to follow avenues opened for exploration. The course fulfils a useful purpose in providing a more practically based subject for some pupils at GCSE level, as well as providing an outlet for very real interest and involvement.

PERFORMING ARTS

231. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 and, for the first time this year, Year 9, have regular performing arts lessons in mixed ability form groups. Although these lessons provide much needed opportunities for the practice of oral skills, creative movement through dance and skills of mime and improvisation, they are not always as useful as they should be. A significant minority of pupils sometimes prove very disruptive during these lessons, hindering the attainment of others and making it difficult for teachers to keep up a brisk pace and to encourage knowledge and understanding of topics in hand. Standards and achievement are therefore below average.
232. Although some interesting and useful units of work have been devised and put in place, there is too little of a structured approach to the subject's place in the curriculum, and a need for a recognised leading teacher, so that the elements of drama, dance and personal development can be more coherently combined and implemented.
233. Teaching seen in the subject was at least satisfactory and a very good Year 7 lesson was observed, where pupils had become used to the activities and realised the need for control and application. In older classes, however, too many pupils fail to see the relevance of the lessons and use them as an opportunity to behave in an unacceptable manner.

BUSINESS STUDIES

234. Pupils performed satisfactorily on the core paper, but unsatisfactorily on the optional commerce paper. The disappointing results in business studies are partly the result of a disproportionately large number of lower attaining pupils taking this course in recent years. However, the results of these pupils were around a grade lower than the grades they achieved in their other subjects. Teaching observed during the inspection was satisfactory overall, but work was not always adequately matched to the attainment level of the pupils and many lower attaining pupils struggle in this subject – even though the teacher has secure subject knowledge and has the ability to present the subject well. Pupils in Year 11 take part in a mini-enterprise project on which their coursework is based. The project enables pupils of all levels of attainment to consolidate their learning and allows them to experience business education at a practical and realistic level.

YOUTH AWARD

235. The course has been developed to be literacy based and is designed to help pupils to develop personal, social and academic skills. The emphasis of the course is on raising an individual's profile by rewarding success. It operates at two levels – bronze and silver. The two-year course involves progression through various challenges and projects which are negotiated between pupil and teacher. Pupils achieve an award by external assessment of coursework, and the assessment awarding body, ASDAN, holds three moderations each academic year. The school has become a regional moderation centre, used by ASDAN, twice each year. The quality of teaching and learning on the course is good and the staff have very good interaction with these pupils. However, there is little other alternative, viable accreditation for pupils with special educational needs between the ages of 14 and 16 and some pupils with special educational needs leave school without any form of nationally-recognised accreditation.

VOCATIONAL COURSES

236. Of the nine pupils who began the leisure and tourism course, not all have completed it. At best, those that have done two hours per week for two years will only be able to achieve unit accreditation at pass level (for just one unit) at Foundation level GNVQ. This is an inappropriate outcome given the amount of time invested in the course. The quality of work seen was very poor. It involved much copying of worksheets; work was messy and poorly presented. There was no assessment and verification evident in folders and no evidence of pupils evaluating the quality of their own work. It was not possible to observe teaching during the inspection.
237. Those pupils who began NVQ courses, a total of 11, were following level 1 courses, which is an inappropriate level for a two-year programme. Of the 11 that began at the start of Year 10 only five are still attending college and are completing their NVQ in hairdressing, construction, catering and equine studies.