

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **WELLACRE HIGH SCHOOL**

Flixton

LEA area: Trafford

Unique reference number: 106366

Headteacher: Mr Ray Howell

Reporting inspector: Terence Parish  
15465

Dates of inspection: 15 - 18 April 2002

Inspection number: 193387

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Modern
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16 years
Gender of pupils:	Male
School address:	Irlam road Flixton Urmston Manchester
Postcode:	M41 6AP
Telephone number:	0161 748 5011
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Martin Tanner
Date of previous inspection:	25 November 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
15465	Terence Parish	Registered inspector		<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>How high are standards?</p> <p>a) The school's results and achievements</p> <p>How well are pupils taught?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
10329	Brian Sampson	Lay inspector		<p>How high are standards?</p> <p>b) Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well does the school care for its pupils?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>
15396	Ronald Bulman	Team inspector	<p>English as an additional language</p> <p>Modern foreign languages</p>	How well is the school led and managed?
12356	Richard Dickason	Team inspector	Science	
21971	John Glennon	Team inspector	<p>Special educational needs</p> <p>English</p>	
23323	Janet Harvey	Team inspector	Music	
22906	Barry Hodgson	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
12885	John Hunt	Team inspector	Mathematics	
20165	Alan Lemon	Team inspector	Art	
30427	Felicity Shuffle-Botham	Team inspector	<p>Equal opportunities</p> <p>Religious education</p>	
27407	Bill Stoneham	Team inspector	History	
21806	Patricia Swinnerton	Team inspector	Design and technology	

18755	Roger Whittaker	Team inspector	Physical education	
20497	Vernon Williams	Team inspector	Geography	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Wellacre High School is a smaller than average school with 826 boys on roll. It is a secondary modern school. It will become a Technology College in September 2002. Most pupils are white and from the locality; socio-economically they are broadly average. Around six per cent of pupils are from a range of ethnic minorities; none of these pupils have significant difficulties with the English language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and with Statements of Educational Need is about average. The range of pupils' needs is diverse and a few with emotional and behavioural problems are supported in an internal pupil referral unit. The school is part of a small local education authority with a high proportion of academically selective grammar schools. This skews the overall academic standards of pupils who start at this school; the current Year 7 had standards that were below average when they started. Older pupils started with well below average standards. This improvement in entry standards is due, in part, to the increasing popularity of the school.

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

This is a successful school with many very good or better aspects. Excellent leadership, very good management and hard work by many good teachers, enable pupils to achieve well at GCSE. Standards at GCSE are, overall, above those found in similar schools, well above in the proportion of pupils who obtain A\*-C grades. Teaching is good across the school and teachers also provide many extra opportunities, outside lessons, for pupils to have support and tuition. Pupils respond well to these opportunities, as their attitudes are very good. Their behaviour is good and their attendance is satisfactory. The school costs a little more than average to run but provides good value for money. It is well set to rapidly improve further when it becomes a Technology College.

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

- GCSE results are improving rapidly, much faster than national trends of improvement. Pupils in most subjects achieve well.
- Standards in mathematics, science, art and design, design and technology and information and communication technology (ICT) rise to average by Year 9 and a higher proportion attain A\*-B grades at GCSE in these subjects than in others.
- Teaching in history and in drama is very good overall; some teachers are inspirational.
- Pupils' moral development and social development are both very good.
- The school looks after, cares for, pupils very well.
- Careers education and guidance are excellent.
- The leadership and management of mathematics, science, design and technology, history, geography and modern languages are very good.
- Provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is very good.

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

- The small proportion of unsatisfactory teaching.
- Leadership and management of physical education.
- Recognition given to gifted and talented pupils, particularly to raise the proportion of pupils attaining A\*-B grades at GCSE in most subjects.

*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 1996. Improvement since then has been very good; standards at GCSE have risen quickly; science, design and technology and ICT have improved, although there is a need to improve ICT further. Investors In People status has been attained.



## STANDARDS

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

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

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

NOTE: The all schools comparison above is misleading; boys' GCSE results are below those of girls'. The proportion of boys at Wellacre, who obtained 5 or more A\*-C grades, was below average but within the limits of what might be expected in an average school. The proportions of boys who attained 5 or more A\* -G passes was well above average, and 1 or more A\*-G passes very high, in the highest 5 per cent nationally. A similar pattern is found if Wellacre is compared to similar schools, although the proportion gaining 5 or more A\*-C is then well above average. The average points score is just below an 'A', well above average rating, and is held down by the relatively low proportion of pupils who obtain A\*-B grades; these grades carry the most points. The proportion of pupils attaining 5 or more A\*-C grades has been rising faster than the national trend of improvement for four years. The school's statutory target for improvement in these, A\*-C, results, was well exceeded in 2001, whilst other targets were met.

End of Year 9 test results in 2001 were average overall and average for mathematics and science; English results were below average. Compared to similar schools, overall results were very high; mathematics and science results were very high, English results were well above average. The trend in results, over the last four years, is in line with the national trend of improvement.

Pupils, who left in 2001, achieved very well at GCSE in all but the highest grades of A\*- B. Current pupils are, overall, achieving well in lessons, in all years. Many teachers also provide time at lunchtimes, after school and in holidays to help pupils, particularly older ones, do better in examinations. Pupils appreciate this and many attend; results indicate this extra provision makes a difference. Standards of work seen by the end of Year 9 are most often below average but are average in mathematics, science, art and design, design and technology and ICT. Pupils achieve well in almost all subjects, but unsatisfactorily in physical education in Years 7-9. In Year 11, standards are below average in rather more subjects, but average in art and design, ICT and GCSE religious education. Rising standards in Years 7-9 are partly due to the better standards pupils now have when they start at the school. Pupils achieve well in English, science, art and design, design and technology, geography, history, ICT, and French.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are generally proud of their school and respect it.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Many pupils are much better than this and most are very courteous and helpful. Weaker teaching encourages a small number to disturb classes.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils grow more confident as they get older. Relationships with each other and with teachers are mostly positive.
Attendance	Last year it was average. Recent figures indicate it is a little better.



## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is good in English, mathematics and science in all years. Teaching is good in most other subjects and very good in history and drama in all years. It is satisfactory, in Years 10 and 11, in music, physical education, and religious education. Teaching is unsatisfactory, overall, in physical education in Years 7 - 9. A few unsatisfactory lessons were also seen in a range of subjects. The skills of literacy are taught well and of numeracy satisfactorily. Teaching of pupils with special educational needs is variable and depends on the quality of teaching of the whole class. Overall, it is good, often better when classroom support is provided or pupils are withdrawn from lessons, and is effectively helping to raise standards. Gifted and talented pupils are only just being identified and little extra provision is currently made for them. Teaching has many strengths. Particularly significant, in a handful of subjects, are teachers' own knowledge and understanding, planning, management of pupils and assessment. History teachers are very good at helping pupils acquire the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. Both history and science teachers have particularly high expectations of pupils. Significant weaknesses in planning, expectations, management and assessment occur in physical education teaching; music teaching has weaknesses in planning and assessment. Pupils' learning reflects the quality of their teaching. There are many strengths in history; productivity and pace of learning is also very good in mathematics and science. Pupils in mathematics also clearly understand where their strengths and weaknesses lie, which is not the case in ICT, music, and physical education.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. There is very good PSHE provision but limited work related or vocational courses. Careers advice is excellent. An otherwise good range of extra opportunities, sport, academic pursuits and visits, lacks regular musical provision such as bands and choirs.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision within school is good. A small number of pupils with behavioural problems and/or at risk of exclusion have satisfactory provision.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Both the local education authority and the school screen pupils who might have language difficulties so extra provision can be made available as and when necessary. It is not necessary at present.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Very good moral and social development; pupils have a strong sense of right and wrong and a sense of belonging to the school which encourages them to try and do well. Spiritual development and cultural development are both satisfactory; some opportunities are missed.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Care of pupils is very good. Academic assessment and support is good overall but varies between unsatisfactory and very good across subjects. The school works well with parents and this contributes to the support pupils receive.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides excellent leadership and, with very good senior managers, is moving the school rapidly onwards and upwards towards the next phase of its development as a Technology College. All subjects except physical education are at least satisfactorily led and managed.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors do a very good job of fostering the school's improvement. Statutory responsibilities are well met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. Academic targets have been met and teachers' performance management is being used to help address pupils' weaknesses in literacy. Weaknesses and strengths in teaching are well understood and weaknesses are being gradually addressed.
The strategic use of resources	Financial resources have been very well husbanded to enable the school to improve accommodation and resources and keep a generally full staff whilst moving towards a healthy financial position. Intelligent use of site staff produces income. Best Value principles are well applied as indicated by the successful performance of this school compared to similar schools.

Staffing, accommodation and resources are satisfactory overall. Accommodation is well maintained but the increasing numbers of pupils in the school are squeezing already tight space.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils make good progress and are expected to do their best. Teaching and behaviour are good.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed and they are comfortable about approaching school with problems.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homework is not always set or is set on the wrong day.</li> <li>• Information about how well pupils are doing.</li> </ul>

The inspection team generally agrees with parents' views although annual reports to parents are satisfactory and homework is often good though not always on the right day.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. This section should be read in conjunction with the section on standards in the summary, as what is reported there is not necessarily repeated here. Details about standards will also be found at the beginning of each subject report and also through examples given in those reports.
2. Wellacre is a secondary modern school for boys within a small authority with a high proportion of selective grammar schools. Selection is based on tests at the end of Year 6 and, unless parents of boys who pass the tests choose to send them to Wellacre, most attend grammar schools. Some boys are not entered for tests and parents make their choice of non-selective schools. Consequently, due to selection and supported by end of Year 6 national test results (SATs), boys who start at Wellacre in Year 7 are generally below average academically. Prior to September 2001, boys' standards were well below average; it appears increasing numbers of parents are choosing Wellacre to send their sons to and this is lifting the academic profile on entry – there are more relatively able boys than there used to be. When comparing Wellacre with other schools, many sets of data do not 'fit'. It is a boys' school and girls do better at GCSE; consequently this school will not do as well as it would if it was a mixed school. This can be taken into account, but unfortunately Wellacre still gets an E, well below average, rating when compared to all boys' results. Such comparisons are made on 'average points scores' at GCSE; each grade gets points ranging from 8 for an A\* to 1 for a G. Consequently, the number of A\*-B grades pupils attain has a very significant impact on average points. The pupils most likely to attain such grades are more able pupils; most of those, as explained above, have, through selection, gone to grammar schools. This school can be compared to other secondary modern schools and the fact that it has only boys taken into account. The school average points score is then above average, in fact just below well above average; it misses being well above average by just over half a point.
3. Selection in Trafford is more intense than in most other authorities with a selective system and this may edge Wellacre's potential results down further than most other secondary modern schools. Against this hypothesis is the unknown number of pupils who choose to come to this school, rather than enter the selective system, and the broadly average social nature of the school's intake; most boys enjoy positive support from their parents. It is also unclear how selection consistently affects standards on entry; even if all boys attained 100 per cent in selective tests they could not all attend grammar schools. Mathematics and design and technology, which enter all pupils for GCSE, are also relatively successful in the proportions of pupils who attain A\*-B grades, certainly B grades, and the same is true of art and design, information technology and French; the entry numbers are significant minorities of all pupils and similar to most other optional subjects. Subsequently, it is not unreasonable to expect other subjects to 'do better' at these higher grades and consequently lift 'average points' significantly further.
4. The school certainly does well at increasing the proportion of pupils who attain A\*-C grades. The school has focussed on the C-D borderline and pupils who are deemed capable of a C, but appear to be underachieving, receive mentoring. Teachers also give freely of their time and older pupils have many opportunities to receive extra support after school, in the Easter holidays, and occasionally Saturday mornings. This has certainly contributed to the much more rapid improvement at GCSE than occurs nationally. The 'push' for C grades has also supported the high numbers of pupils who attain five or more A\*-G grades and very high numbers who attain one or more A\*-G grades. The school's performance at GCSE is also compared to predicted performance based on end of Year 9 tests taken by pupils two years previously. Those pupils, deemed to be in the five or more and one or more A\*-G ranges, achieved very well. Pupils more likely to get five or more grades at A\*-C, on this analysis, did not, although the proportion

attaining those grades was well above average for similar schools. Overall, pupils achieve well between the end of Year 9 and the end of Year 11.

5. Pupils' achievement between starting at the school and the end of Year 9 is good overall. End of Year 9 national test results show pupils achieve very well in mathematics and science and well in English. Weak literacy skills when pupils start at the school make improvements in English harder. English and science are also the most significant subjects where an increase in A\*- B grades is needed and in which pupils perform, at GCSE, less well than they might. Science is addressing the issue through a change in syllabus; the current Year 10 is following a modular course where they are assessed at regular intervals rather than just at the end of two years and results in these regular tests are very good. Most comprehensive schools follow such courses. English should benefit as work on raising literacy standards has time to have a positive effect on standards overall; standards in history, and to an extent geography, are adversely affected by weak literacy standards too. As actions are already being taken to improve GCSE performance in English and in science, and standards of literacy, they are continuing areas for development rather than new ones.
6. Only in one area of work do pupils achieve unsatisfactorily. This is physical education in Years 7 – 9. This is because of unsatisfactory teaching and management. A significant minority of pupils do not participate and sometimes disrupt others. A few parents commented that pupils seemed able to avoid physical education by not taking kit; this was observed during the inspection.
7. Standards of literacy are below average. Pupils generally listen well although they lose concentration if teaching is not good. They listen carefully to music. Standards of speaking are below average. Generally pupils do not have a wide vocabulary and do not speak in complete sentences. However, there were good examples of speech in history where pupils gave good accounts of the Peterloo massacre and why electoral reform was needed. Although reading attainment is below average, in many subjects this is not sufficiently serious to affect standards. In geography and history, however, there are occasions when pupils are handicapped by lack of reading skills. Writing standards are below average but pupils use appropriate technical language as required in most subjects. Most pupils have weaknesses in sentence construction, spelling and punctuation. Standards in numeracy are satisfactory overall. Increased emphasis on the development of numeracy skills in feeder primary schools means pupils are entering the school in Year 7 with improved skills and confidence. Continued emphasis on numeracy by this school leads to satisfactory progress in pupils acquiring numeracy skills.
8. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress overall. They make good progress in all subjects except history, where progress is very good; and design and technology, music, science and physical education, where it is satisfactory. In art, those pupils in the Year 10 lower attaining set, who do not receive specialist teaching, make unsatisfactory progress. Those pupils with special educational needs who reached the statutory leaving age in 2001 nearly all attained grades A\* to G in five or more GCSE subjects. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 who are in withdrawal groups for literacy make good progress in reading and spelling.

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

9. Pupils have very good attitudes to their school. These attitudes compare well with those seen at the previous inspection. The enthusiasm that the boys have for their school is very clear when you talk to them. For example, a group of interviewees from Year 11 said that they were proud of the school's sporting achievements and also proud to wear the uniform. There is a sense of pride, politeness, corporateness and team-work amongst most pupils. The interest of many is shown by the way that they become ensconced in school productions, such as the recent performance of 'Jesus Christ Superstar' or on the team of the Police Forum. Within classes, pupils become deeply involved in debate. In one Year 7 lesson on morals, boys discussed animal rights with their teacher. They were so keen that they 'out did' the teacher in revolutionary ideas and when it came to role-play as, for example, farmers and protestors, they appeared quite convincing.

10. Behaviour is good overall, as it was at the time of the last inspection. It is often better in lessons where the teacher's management is strong and the content stimulating. In a minority of lessons, where this is not so, the misdemeanours of a few individuals, left unchecked, spoils the lesson for others. During changeover between lessons, pupils are very disciplined in what is sometimes a bustling and crowded situation. The boys respond well to supervision and keep to left or right of corridors and stairs. At lunchtime, they queue patiently and consume their meals in a very civilised, if somewhat crowded, situation. Outside, in the playground or field, although a few examples of unruly boyishness were observed, the great majority of pupils converse or compete well together. The politeness of boys opening doors ahead of you and asking if you were lost was most noteworthy. No evidence of vandalism or graffiti was seen. Although some of the younger pupils did admit to name-calling, bullying was not witnessed during the inspection and is not a problem. The school has permanently excluded just one pupil in several years and the number of temporary exclusions is also below the national average for this type of school.
11. Personal development is very good, as are relationships amongst most pupils. This is an improvement upon the good standard that existed at the previous inspection. Pupils learn well from the school's very strong personal, social and health education programme. They are very good at realising and understanding the impact of their actions upon others. Pupils know well that if you retaliate this only perpetuates and inflames a situation and also have good respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others. They realise that perhaps not everyone has the same advantages or has been brought up the same as themselves, even amongst their own friends and particularly in other parts of the world. Pupils work very well together at the various responsible tasks given to them whether it be as prefects, in sports teams, on the school council or helping and interacting with each other in class. It is also very noticeable how well pupils respect and get on with their teachers. This respect is also well reciprocated.
12. Attendance is satisfactory, as it was at the previous inspection; it shows some signs of improving. Unauthorised absences are lower than average. Most pupils come to school and get into classes on time so most lessons commence promptly. Pupils' very good attitudes, good behaviour, very good relationships and satisfactory attendance help them learn well.

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

13. This section should be read in conjunction with the teaching section in the summary, as points made there are not necessarily repeated here.
14. Of one hundred and forty-nine lessons seen during the inspection, around a quarter were very good or better (four lessons were excellent) and two thirds good or better. Five per cent, eight lessons, were unsatisfactory or worse (one lesson was poor).
15. Although teaching is good overall across Years 7-11, it is relatively better in Years 10 and 11 compared to Years 7-9. This is because most unsatisfactory teaching is in Years 7-9; seven lessons out eighty-four were unsatisfactory or worse compared to one lesson out of sixty-five being unsatisfactory in Year 11. Judgements on teaching are not just based on lessons seen, pupils' work – the way it is marked, how homework is set, and the quality that is fostered – is also significant evidence. Almost all subjects provide good teaching; history provides, overall, very good teaching, physical education in Years 7-9 provides, overall, unsatisfactory teaching. Unsatisfactory lessons were scattered across a number of subject areas and attributable to rather fewer teachers. Comments and questionnaire returns made by parents are accurate; they think teaching is good, sometimes much better, but a few teachers do not consistently perform at the same good standards as their peers. Pupils' comments, during their interview, were similar and the quality of work and marking in pupils' books confirmed their observations. Parents and pupils were very appreciative of the hard work put in by many teachers, outside of lessons, to help boys do better and provide more opportunities for them through field trips and visits. This additional work helps raise standards, particularly at GCSE.

16. Excellent lessons were observed in science, history, French and religious education. All were very well planned, had great pace and high expectations. The science teacher provided a dynamic, interesting explanation about energy sources to Year 10 boys and then used resource packs to ensure groups were effectively challenged and given timed tasks to do. All pupils were involved in the lesson and were encouraged to participate verbally, improving their literacy skills. Learning was also excellent and standards well above the national average. The history lesson is described as 'stunning' by the inspector; the teacher was very knowledgeable and enthusiastic about 19<sup>th</sup> Century political reform with Year 8 pupils. It was obvious that pupils had learnt key elements on which to build, for example chronology and the Luddites, very well in the previous lesson and this helped them make excellent progress. The teacher also constantly re-inforced literacy skills, recognising these must be raised to improve pupils' standards in history, which were below average in this lesson. The French lesson was with Year 11 pupils and standards were average. The teacher had excellent rapport with the boys who were very keen to learn; excellent use was made of the language assistant and language laboratory to support and re-inforce learning. Ongoing assessment and very thorough preparation meant pupils always knew how well they were doing and how to improve. The Year 11 revision lesson on Judaism launched quickly into a range of tasks and individual pupils were given responsibility for one area; pupils were encouraged to participate in groups and listen to each other, and attitudes to learning were excellent. Expectations are almost always very high in science and history and more able pupils better challenged than in other subjects; such expectations are needed to raise the proportion of A\*-B grades in examinations.
17. A good Year 11 mathematics lesson, about circle theorems, had clear explanations about the work to ensure pupils started well, was followed up by good individual support, when pupils were answering questions in their books, and was underpinned by regular, well marked, homework and good records of pupils' progress. A good Year 8 ICT lesson about Internet searches also began with a very good explanation and clear instructions; pupils knew what the lesson was about and what they had to do. The class was well managed and pupils made good progress in navigating sites, although some, with better prior knowledge and understanding, could have progressed further. A satisfactory Year 10 English lesson about Romeo and Juliet had good planning – a well structured series of work sheets - but opportunities were lost to discuss the language of the play and there were too few opportunities for pupils, particularly the few relatively more able in the class, to answer open ended questions. Both the teacher's management skills and those of the learning support assistant ensured behaviour was good throughout the lesson.
18. An unsatisfactory Year 9 science lesson revealed unsatisfactory teachers' knowledge and understanding of electricity, despite the teacher being a well-qualified science teacher, and the proportion of time talking to pupils was far too long. Consequently, experiments were rushed and attitudes and behaviour became unsatisfactory. The class was designated as relatively more able but a lower 'set' glimpsed later were doing better. An unsatisfactory Year 9 geography lesson again revealed unsatisfactory teacher's knowledge and understanding, this time about geographical regions. The teacher was a non-specialist but regular teacher of geography. There was little variety in or focus to the lesson and the lesson ended with the teacher informing the pupils of what they should have learnt, rather than testing them on what they had learnt. There was no pupil involvement or discussion throughout the lesson.
19. A poor Year 9 physical education lesson involved too much talk and too little doing and this time pupils' attitudes and behaviour also became poor and the teacher was unsuccessful at dealing with this. The teacher's knowledge was good and equipment was managed well but individual pupils' learning needs were insufficiently recognised.
20. The teaching of literacy is good. The national literacy strategy is well led by the English department and other subjects provide good support. Teachers in all subjects except physical education generally pay due attention to improving standards of literacy though there is some inconsistency in science. Key words are displayed in most classrooms and most teachers insist on pupils using the correct terminology for the subject. History makes an excellent contribution to literacy with teachers seeing it as a major way of improving standards in the subject. Most teachers pay more attention to writing than to speaking or reading. Even so, opportunities for



longer pieces of writing are often missed. For example, in religious education, pupils are generally required to provide only short written answers. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 are expected to use form time for private reading. In most cases, however, this period is not used satisfactorily. There is no structure and teachers are not sure how they should organise the time. Administrative matters and notices often limit the amount of reading to a few minutes.

21. The quality of teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good. Teaching in the extra literacy lessons at the start of the school day is good. This is because the teacher and learning support assistants have good relationships with the pupils, know their needs well, and focus closely on improving standards. In addition, literacy for pupils with special educational needs is taught very well in mainstream English lessons. Numeracy is well taught for them in mathematics lessons. Nearly all teachers are aware of the targets on pupils' individual education plans and take them into account in their planning and teaching. Where learning support assistants are available they provide good quality support in the classroom but there are not enough of them to meet pupils' requirements all the time. Teaching in the opportunities centre, for pupils with emotional or behavioural difficulties, is good. The teacher creates a suitably supportive atmosphere and liaison with subject teachers is good, so pupils cover the same work as their peers.

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

22. The quality and range of learning opportunities offered to pupils in all years of the school is good and meets national requirements. The curriculum in Years 7,8 and 9 covers the full range of subjects expected, including two modern foreign languages. However, pupils cannot opt to study both languages and they are only able to pursue one language to GCSE. One interesting feature of the curriculum in Year 9 is that a small number of pupils are encouraged to study GCSE business studies as an 'enrichment' option, the classes are held after school, and this helps to broaden the provision. Another strength of the curriculum is that attention has been paid to the needs of a range of pupils; the timetable is divided into two blocks, with one block having additional time for English and mathematics. This has been a deliberate and successful ploy to help improve the literacy and numeracy skills of a number of pupils.
23. In Years 10 and 11 the curriculum tends to follow a rather traditional pattern, though some developments have been made to help lower attaining pupils. Some certificated, non-GCSE, courses are available in French and humanities for those boys unlikely to reach GCSE standard and some work-related learning courses have been pioneered for a small group of boys in both Years 10 and 11. These developments mean the school takes steps to ensure that its curriculum is socially inclusive. Vocational options are underdeveloped and a minority of pupils may find an alternative qualification to GCSE more suitable for them, for example in design and technology. The school is aware of this shortcoming and their curriculum planning shows that this issue is being addressed. The school has recently gained Technology College status and, as part of their commitment to this status, plans have been made to broaden curriculum provision. As from next September, the school will be offering vocational optional courses for Years 10 and 11.
24. There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs. They are fully included in the life of the school and all follow the full National Curriculum. A few are withdrawn from their English lessons for small group or individual literacy tuition. Year 7 pupils with particularly weak reading and spelling skills receive extra tuition three mornings per week during form-time. Satisfactory provision is made in the opportunities centre for pupils who are at particular risk of exclusion or long-term truancy. They continue with their full curriculum.
25. There is a whole school literacy policy based on the national strategy and co-ordinated by the head of the English department. All teachers have had recent training. A number of departments do not have written policies about literacy but it features well in the teaching of all subjects except

physical education. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 are expected to use form-time each morning for private reading but this system is not satisfactorily organised.

26. Number forms an integral part of the mathematics curriculum. Greater emphasis is appropriately being placed on the further development and support of pupils' numeracy skills, particularly in the lower school. A numeracy summer school was held in 2001. Some mathematics lessons consist of mental 'starters' that are designed to develop pupils' confidence when handling mental arithmetic calculations. Pupils are also taught when to make appropriate use of calculators as part of their mathematics work. There is good use of numeracy to support aspects of science. Pupils confidently and accurately undertake calculations involving, for example, acceleration or rates of reactions and are able to draw appropriate graphs. Good use of number is also made in history in time-lines, chronology and as part of the work involving production figures. Number is also used well to support work in modern foreign languages: prices, times and lengths of journeys for example. In almost all other subjects, satisfactory use is made of number to support work; physical education makes little contribution to numeracy.
27. Extra-curricular provision is, overall, good but with some very good features. The school's commitment to sporting activities is strong and boys are given opportunities to sample a number of sports with competitive teams fielded in a range of sports including soccer, rugby and basketball. Some sixty pupils pursue instrumental music lessons and the school hosts a major annual drama production that features music. All Year 7 pupils are involved in this venture, which is held at the end of the autumn term. This event helps younger pupils settle into school and to feel part of the school community. Apart from this event, the additional music lessons and the sporting commitments, the range of extra-curricular activities is limited.
28. The school's provision for pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE) is very good. Arrangements for careers education and guidance are excellent. The PSHE programme is very well planned and ensures suitable guidance on sex education and issues relating to the use and abuse of drugs are fully covered. The careers education and guidance programme is comprehensive, extremely well planned and features some very good and effective partnerships with local industry. The programme commences in Year 8. In Year 9, it includes an enterprising 'Science in Industry Day' where pupils work with staff from a whole host of organisations including local engineering firms, a local university and representatives from a food charity. In Years 10 and 11, pupils are given very good quality information about the opportunities that exist post 16, both within further education and in employment. A particularly noteworthy feature of the provision in the upper school is a cross-curricular industry week sponsored by a local firm. This venture is excellently planned, is thorough in its content and is highly successful in offering pupils a valuable insight into the world of work, as well as developing key employment skills. Pupils are fortunate to benefit from such high quality careers education and guidance which is well supported by the local community making such a strong contribution to their learning.
29. The school also maintains very good relationships with partner institutions, including primary feeder schools, local colleges offering post 16 educational opportunities and local higher education institutions who work in partnership with the school on teacher training programmes. These very good relationships ensure pupils' academic and personal attributes are generally well known before they start, they have very good knowledge of how qualifications gained at this school can help them in the future, and the school is helped to ensure it is staffed well.
30. The curriculum, which at the previous inspection was described as 'well balanced and broadly based', has continued to evolve. The key issue from the previous report relating to ICT provision has been addressed and the recent granting of Technology College status to the school will offer further opportunities for the curriculum to be expanded.

### **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

31. Assemblies make a valuable contribution to the spiritual, moral and social development of pupils. However, they do not fully comply with the national requirement for a daily act of worship. In some registration periods, a prayer is used to encourage reflection and in one class observed it provided a thoughtful atmosphere with which to start the day. The quality of this provision is highly

dependent on the teacher. Many areas of the school help to develop a reflective and calm environment, such as the art displays about the school and the attractive planting in the grounds that lift the spirit and promote spiritual development. In some areas of the curriculum, such as in geography, pupils are given the opportunity to reflect on the world around them and in music pupils demonstrate thoughtful responses to the music they hear. In modern languages and in religious education there is a clear emphasis upon the uniqueness of the individual. The history department's visit to the First World War graves provided an excellent opportunity for spiritual development, as did the school's production of 'Jesus Christ, Superstar'. In other areas however, opportunities are missed and the school has not yet considered the cross-curricular responsibility for this provision that at present is just satisfactory.

32. Provision for the moral development of the pupils is very good. The behaviour of the boys in school and their response to others is good, and the school has a clear code of conduct that is supported by staff and pupils. They have the opportunity to discuss contemporary moral issues in many areas; in science the questions surrounding genetics, pollution and the use of energy are discussed. In geography, pupils consider the morality of poverty and the effects of global warming and acid rain. Issues such as euthanasia and inequality are explored through PSHE lessons and in religious education, and the contribution of such organisations as the Victim Support Group and the local magistrates help pupils to consider the effects of crime on the individual. A theatre group presentation of 'Prison? Me? No way!' is a graphic reminder to pupils of the consequences of crime. Pupils are encouraged to consider the needs of others, and the support of children in the Gambia is indicative of their willingness to help.
33. The provision for social development is very good. The school curriculum provides many opportunities for pupils to develop social understanding, particularly in PHSE, where pupils learn about rights and responsibilities, sex education, citizenship and decision-making. Consideration of these issues makes a valuable contribution to the development of positive attitudes and independent thinking of pupils in the school. Participation in school team sports and a number of lunchtime and after school clubs is good and helps pupils' social development. It also contributes to fostering a very good sense of school community. The activities week in the summer term, the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, Young Enterprise, and the Science in Industry Day in Year 9 also make a significant contribution. Many subjects make a very good contribution to the social development of pupils through pair and group work; pupils work collaboratively, safely and responsibly with their teachers. Opportunities for residential experience are good and particularly help many pupils to develop their social skills. These include geography fieldwork courses in North Wales, recreational activities courses at Castle Head, and visits to Europe, such as to Switzerland and the battlefields of Northern France. There are a number of initiatives that develop further pupils' social responsibility to themselves and others, such as their raising considerable amounts of money for local, national and international charities. The schools' ethos of inclusion and the support given to pupils who have serious behavioural problems, in the Opportunities Centre, have been successful in reducing potential exclusions and have had a positive impact on the social development of these pupils as well as that of others.
34. The provision for cultural development is satisfactory overall. Cultural development is not significant in most schemes of work and there are opportunities missed to celebrate the cultures that are represented by the pupils. However, in religious education, good links with outside support, for example the Buddhism Clear Vision Trust, Islamic Centre and the Manchester Jewish Centre enable pupils to develop an understanding of the religions of other cultures. There are occasional visits to museums, art galleries and theatres but, given opportunities in the locality, these are under-used. Pupils are introduced to the work of a range of artists from a number of different cultures. There are opportunities to experience aspects of other cultures also through visits such as the Zulu music and dance group and a graphics project on a film theme about Chinese influence. Books with multi-cultural content have been increased in the English department but are largely missing from the library. In modern foreign languages there are study visits abroad and opportunities to meet French nationals. However, the recognition of the contribution of many cultures to subjects, such as mathematics and to science and technology, is rather limited.

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

35. There are very good procedures for child protection and for ensuring the welfare of pupils. Named child protection staff are very well trained. They have ensured that all other staff are aware of any relevant problems and all new teachers have child protection procedures as part of their induction. There is very good liaison with social services and the school has adapted local authority guidelines as its written policy. Detailed incidents reports are maintained. Well-trained and experienced maintenance staff ensure health and safety procedures are effective. Risk assessments are carried out in design and technology and science but not in physical education. A school nurse, sufficient first-aiders and a medical room ensure health advice; first aid and medication are well provided for. The school makes very good use of specific outside professional help. For example, both the police and fire brigade come in and talk to groups of pupils about drug and alcohol misuse and accidents in the home. The pupils are very well supervised at all times. There are efficient and sensitive procedures to help Year 6 pupils, about to start at the school, to settle in.
36. The school has created an 'opportunities centre' in an attempt to help those pupils who are considered at risk of exclusion or long-term truancy. During the inspection it was catering for five pupils. It makes good academic provision but strategies for modifying pupils' behaviour and attitudes have not been developed. It has not yet been in existence for a year so it is too early to judge its success but it has made a satisfactory beginning.
37. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are very good. Whole school, class and individual pupil attendance levels are constantly monitored and recorded. Registers are well maintained and very good use is made of the educational welfare officer to pursue non-attendance. The school has a tight and effective lateness system and all parents are made very well aware of their responsibilities. The school 'opportunities centre' helps reintegrate any poor attenders, who may have joined the school with a poor record of attendance at their primary school.
38. There are very good and effective procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and eliminating bullying. Rewards and sanctions are used appropriately. Sanctions can lead to litter collection, detentions, internal exclusion or external exclusion. Although bullying is rare pupils are encouraged, through personal, social and health education and at assemblies, to report offenders and staff are expert at nipping potential incidents in the bud.
39. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are very good. Very extensive personal and social health education benefits all pupils enormously and prepares them well for the world outside of school. Each pupil has a personal file of his progress and this is reported to parents on the annual report. Visits and field trips, including residentials, also contribute to pupils' development, as does the annual 'big production' on stage.
40. There are detailed and appropriate school policies for the assessment and recording of individual pupils' progress. Central computer based systems record reading scores on entry to the school, National Curriculum levels achieved at the end of each year up to Year 9 and estimated GCSE grades during Years 10 and 11. Termly grades are also recorded for each pupil in all subjects for attainment, effort and homework. This data enables pupils to be set academic targets for National Curriculum levels at the end of Year 9 and for GCSE grades in Year 11. Collecting the data for groups of pupils together, enables targets to be set for departments and at a school level. Both strategies have led to individual pupils achieving better, as can be seen by rising examination results, and departments to improve overall, for example science. Pupils identified, from the data collected, as needing extra support receive mentoring. Teachers provide much of this, particularly to those Year 11 pupils who have a possibility of achieving a grade C in GCSE; some parents indicated that they would like support for pupils who might get A\*-B grades, and the school has yet to make special provision for the most able pupils. Mentors from outside the school are being attached to some disaffected pupils as part of a recently approved Education Business

Partnership and this supports work in the internal pupil referral unit which means pupils are more likely to do better.

41. Teachers have agreed policies relating to the regular monitoring by heads of faculties and departments of the setting and marking of work. Consequently pupils should receive a similar quality service from all teachers; this has not been secured yet and a few teachers do not follow agreed policies; pupils in their classes wait longer for marks and have inadequate corrections and comments in their books. However, marking is generally good and is accurately carried out across most subjects. Assessment practice is very good in mathematics, science, design and technology and geography. In these departments school policies are followed closely. Collection and recording of data is thorough and accurate. Targets are set at an individual and departmental level and pupils' progress in meeting their targets is regularly reviewed. Pupils in these departments have a good understanding of their targets and teachers use them well. In other subjects, assessment procedures are less rigorous. They are unsatisfactory in English, music and physical education; there is a lack of use of data in these subjects with little reference to levels and grades. There is only limited evidence of the outcomes of assessment guiding planning for schemes of work and the curriculum, although the science department, recognising pupils did better in classwork than examinations, changed to another examination system and pupils are now achieving better as a result.
42. Assessment procedures for pupils with special educational needs are satisfactory. All requirements on statements are fully met. The newly appointed special educational needs co-ordinator has started a computer-assisted system of writing individual education plans (IEPs). This is at present confined to Year 7 but it is planned to expand it gradually to the rest of the school. While some of these IEPs are of good quality, a number have targets that are too vague and need to be revised. The IEPs that exist in other years consist of generic and subject-specific targets. These are cumbersome but work effectively in most cases. Although the special needs co-ordinator keeps accurate and up-to-date records of pupils' spelling and reading ages, there is no use made of the school's database to measure the overall progress of pupils with special needs.

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

43. Most parents think that the school has been a very good choice for their children. A high percentage of parents say that their children like school, are making good progress and are expected to work hard and achieve of their best. They think that both behaviour and teaching are good and they are comfortable about approaching the school with a problem. They believe that the school is well led and managed. The inspection confirms these points. However, a significant minority think that homework is set inconsistently or on the correct days. The inspection found that homework is generally good and well used to help pupils' learn, however, it is sometimes set on the wrong days. Parents would also like to receive clearer information on how well their child is doing and the inspection has some sympathy with this view.
44. The overall information provided by the school is good and compares well with that presented at the previous inspection. New parents receive an updated prospectus and all parents an annual governors' report; both documents comply with statutory requirements. Each year, parents receive a full set of subject reports containing grades for attainment, effort and homework; at the end of Year 9 these include National Curriculum levels achieved, although these are sometimes sent separately. Estimated GCSE grades are included in Years 10 and 11. However, annual pupil reports, as commented on by parents, do lack clarity on standards and targets; their quality varies across subjects. There are regular, well-informed newsletters and most parents are very appreciative of the very detailed home/school diaries in which they readily comment. The school has a good response to home/school agreements. Regular parent evenings are held and private consultations are available during Years 10 and 11 about pupils' progress and careers; parents are particularly well informed about work experience and career opportunities. There is also a very good response from parents of pupils with special educational needs to discuss IEPs and

statements. The headteacher operates an 'open door policy' that allows parents to meet with teachers easily.

45. Parents make a very good contribution to their child's learning. Many parents go to some lengths to help with projects and topics and use school guidance to help with reading at home. Regular annual trips for parents and children to visit, for example, the Belgian battlefields are popular with both.
46. Overall, the impact of parents' involvement on the work of the school is good. The school is very appreciative of its very energetic parent teachers association, which regularly raises very considerable funds to help improve the quality of education.

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

47. The school is very well managed. Its current popularity, strong ethos, and rapid rise in standards of attainment, stem from the headteacher's excellent leadership and very good administration by senior and middle managers. The governing body is committed and active in supporting the school in its work. A sharp focus and a common sense of purpose are evident in school policies and the efficient way in which they are implemented.
48. The headteacher has given additional impetus and clear direction to the improvements achieved since the last inspection. His vision of specialist college status for the school has been realised in a short space of time. A productive blend of strategic planning and close personal attention to the detail and reality of school life have been transmitted to those working in and associated with the school. In consequence the morale of teachers, pupils and parents is high. The headteacher has high expectations of staff, governors and pupils, based on strong personal enthusiasm, loyalty to people and principles, and the development of individuals' talents and capability.
49. Recent judicious shifts in senior management responsibilities have resulted in an enlarged team with better access to the school's middle managers and closer communication with the teaching and support staff. New appointments at middle management level have brought fresh ideas and added enthusiasm to a well-established, largely co-operative team. The leadership and management of mathematics, science, design and technology, history, geography and modern languages are particularly good. Most of the faculties and departments are strong cohesive units, but some room for improvement remains in expressive arts and, significantly, within physical education. A supportive, knowledgeable pastoral team provides a secure social framework for pupils' learning and personal development.
50. The governors meet regularly, and take a strong interest in all aspects of school life. Most come into school frequently, involving themselves as closely with its daily running as in formulating new policies and monitoring their effectiveness. They fulfil their statutory responsibilities well.
51. The headteacher, governors and staff have devised effective systems for evaluating the school's performance relative to the challenging targets it sets itself. The school has exceeded those attainment targets set in consultation with the local education authority. Teachers' performance is subject to regular scrutiny and review. A good programme of professional development has recently evolved, with particular focus on priorities such as literacy and the use of ICT and appropriate teacher targets for their personal improvement have been built into performance management. The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection, since most teachers understand their own strengths and professional needs. A few instances of inadequacy remain where monitoring and self-evaluation have not been stringent enough.
52. The school's aims of raising standards, improving its status and providing a rich, relevant curriculum were explained in detail in a deservedly successful bid for Technology College status. Many staff, governors and other people associated with the school have worked hard for years to bring this aim to fruition. Enthusiasm is much in evidence and teachers are well prepared to bring the school into this latest, significant phase of its development.

53. There is very good use of money and specific grants that the school receives; a significant deficit inherited by the headteacher, when he was appointed around five years ago, has been tackled, improvements have been made to academic standards, the physical structure of the school, resources and staffing, and the financial position is now healthy. A robust approach to dealing with problems has led to healthy self-sufficiency and very good applications of the principles of Best Value; the very good quality of buildings and grounds maintenance is such that several other local schools buy these services from Wellacre in preference to local authority provision. Best Value has also been sought in the way the school seeks staff; the best appointments are made to meet the needs of a developing curriculum and heavy involvement in teacher training helps source new teachers. The school also consults its customers, parents and pupils; the school council is effective for example. It compares itself with other schools and challenges itself to do better; rapidly improving GCSE results and some comparative benchmarks being well above national averages bear testament to policies and procedures being effective. In addition, the office and site management staff are very effective in helping the school to run smoothly and contribute hugely to the efficiency with which resources are used and Best Value sought.
54. The management of provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The newly appointed co-ordinator is reorganising systems effectively, according to an appropriate order of priorities. There are good systems for consulting parents and for exchanging information with subject teachers. The quality of IEPs is being improved. Good records are now kept. The governing body are kept well informed about matters relating to special educational needs through a link governor who assists with the work of the department on one afternoon each week.
55. Staffing is satisfactory. In all subjects there are experienced and effective teachers who are committed to improvement. In music, the school is well served by visiting specialist staff who also organise extra-curricular groups such as the samba and wind bands. In modern languages there is a good match of different language speakers to the demands of the curriculum. In mathematics there are some non-specialist teachers whose teaching is less effective than those who are specialists. In art, a substantial number of non-specialist teachers are used and, as a consequence, some pupils make slower progress than they should. The head of the religious education department has a substantial time commitment to staff development and teachers of religious education spend too little time planning together; these constraints make fulfilling statutory requirements for religious education in Years 10 and 11 harder. The need to use a number of supply teachers in English, in the last year, adversely affected the progress of pupils in some classes and parents raised their concerns about this.
56. The school has a very good induction programme for newly qualified teachers who feel well supported. In collaboration with a local university, a Masters degree programme for teachers has been developed which helps them aspire to management. A 'mentoring' course, for teachers who supervise the work of trainee teachers, is run in conjunction with other schools and has been developed with a local university; this improves the help both trainee and new teachers receive. These, and other parts of the school in-service training programme, are innovative and well managed and contributed to the award of Investors in People status. Trainee teachers who are well looked after are also more likely to consider working in the school and several have taken up posts recently. Care is also taken to ensure that the placements of trainee teachers within the school are well managed so that they do not teach pupils too often. Technicians support the science department very well, which helps teachers to effectively teach, whereas there is no ICT technician and the teacher in charge spends too much time as a technician. Learning support assistants help pupils achieve well and are deployed as effectively as they can be.
57. The quality of accommodation in most subject areas is satisfactory. Subject rooms are grouped for French and Spanish teaching, but this is not common across all subjects. Accommodation has improved since the last inspection with better decoration, carpets and blinds. The decoration of many subject rooms and corridors is now bright and uplifting. Pupils' work is very well displayed, particularly in the impressive entrance that all pupils use; consequently they see their work is valued and can appreciate what are high standards; this contributes to their very good attitudes to work. Many subject areas are now cramped for space because of the increased

number of pupils in the school. Accommodation is unsatisfactory for mathematics, where larger group sizes make it difficult to work in groups or for the teacher to circulate to support individuals, and for geography, where there is only one main specialist room. It is also unsatisfactory for music, where movement between rooms is necessary during lessons to accommodate practical work on keyboards.

58. The provision of learning resources is just satisfactory. Resource provision is good in religious education, where there is a good range of texts and artefacts for faith studies, which effectively supports learning. Across subjects resources are varied. They are good in music, where the purchase of samba instruments extends percussion provision. In design technology, there are good textbooks in all areas and the quality and number of tools have recently increased significantly. However, in most subjects, textbooks are limited and some need replacing. There is a need to further develop resources in science, geography, design technology, physical education and religious education to enable ICT to be taught successfully across the whole curriculum. The library was out of use during the inspection due to refurbishment. This is nearly complete and, together with the new, adjacent, ICT room, should prove a modern learning resource centre.



## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

59. To further raise educational standards and the quality of education that pupils receive the headteacher and governors need to

(1) Ensure the small proportion of unsatisfactory teaching is eliminated quickly by adopting whatever strategies are needed, including

- rigorous monitoring of teachers' planning where weaknesses exist
- more frequent monitoring of weaker teachers' lessons
- ensuring targets for improvement in teaching are clear
- providing appropriate support, training and development to weaker teachers
- reviewing improvement in teaching at regular intervals
- ensuring best practice in this and other schools is well known to all teachers

*Paragraphs 14, 15, 19, 87, 99, 131, 136, 153, 155, 161*

(2) Ensure the leadership and management of physical education improves through any process considered necessary and including

- Setting clear improvement targets for physical education
- Providing a mentor to the head of physical education from amongst the very good exemplars of subject leadership and management in the school
- Rigorously monitoring developments within physical education
- Ensuring other members of the department are enabled to contribute to targets for improvement

*Paragraphs 6, 15, 41, 49, 153, 154, 155*

(3) Raise the standards attained by academically more able and more talented pupils by using the best practice illustrated in the national 'Excellence in Cities' programme to identify such pupils within the context of the school and then

- ensuring all teachers know who the designated 'gifted and talented' pupils are
- ensuring work in classes provides well for these pupils
- rigorously monitoring pupils' progress towards 'targets' agreed with them and, where possible, their parents
- providing 'extension' or challenging work outside of lessons, linked to ICT where appropriate
- when financially possible, providing specific mentoring to these pupils, particularly in Years 10 and 11, with the aim to increase the proportion of pupils achieving A\*-B grades at GCSE
- setting departments annual targets for the proportion of pupils who should achieve A\*-B grades, alongside their current A\*-C and A\*-G targets, and monitoring departments' success at reaching all of them.

*Paragraphs 3, 64, 83, 94, 106, 117, 122, 124, 129, 139, 155, 156*

In addition to the significant areas for development above, the headteacher and governors may feel it appropriate to include the following areas for development in their action plan

(1) ICT is not used well enough for teaching and learning in many subjects, neither do pupils who do not follow GCSE ICT in Years 10 and 11 receive their full entitlement. Although Technology College status should begin addressing these shortfalls from September 2002 the situation should be kept under close and regular scrutiny. *Paragraph 138 and many references in subject paragraphs*

(2) Assessment procedures are not good enough in English, music and physical education. *Paragraphs 41, 75, 136, 148, 150*

(3) Although the school annual drama and musical production is undoubtedly very good, there is scope for more regular musical activities. *Paragraph 151*

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	149
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	35

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	4	35	58	44	7	1	0
Percentage	2.7	23.5	39.0	29.5	4.7	0.7	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

#### Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	826
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	109

#### Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	13
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	178

#### English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	21

#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	26
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	26

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.4
National comparative data	8.1

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.0
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	165		165

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	92	115	122
	Girls			
	Total	92	115	122
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	56 (55)	70 (71)	74 (61)
	National	64(63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	19(17)	41 (46)	28 (27)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	110	124	116
	Girls			
	Total	110	124	116
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	67 (64)	76 (60)	71 (51)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	29 (17)	40 (33)	38 (17)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

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

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	56	144	150
	Girls			
	Total	56	144	150
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	37 (32)	94 (96)	97 (100)
	National	48 (47)	91(91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score	School	31.6 (32.6)

per pupil	National	39.0 (38.4)
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*Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.*

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	16
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	3
Indian	8
Pakistani	7
Bangladeshi	5
Chinese	3
White	775
Any other minority ethnic group	7

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	1	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	1	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	34	1
Other minority ethnic groups	1	0

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	47
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.2

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

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	104.75

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

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	79.1
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	24.1
Key Stage 4	18.6

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2000-01
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	£
Total income	2,074,586
Total expenditure	2,036,027
Expenditure per pupil	N/a
Balance brought forward from previous year	63,153
Balance carried forward to next year	101,712

### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	7
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	11
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	4

Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	826
Number of questionnaires returned	184

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	30	60	6	3	1
My child is making good progress in school.	35	57	5	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	28	53	9	2	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	21	56	15	7	2
The teaching is good.	28	62	5	1	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	21	51	20	4	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	48	44	5	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	55	41	3	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	22	57	12	5	4
The school is well led and managed.	40	55	2	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	34	52	4	1	8
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	34	53	5	1	7

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

### ENGLISH

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

#### Strengths

- Standards are above the average for boys' secondary modern schools.
- Pupils achieve well right through the school.
- Teaching overall is good and is often very good.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good.

#### Areas for improvement

- The use of assessment data is unsatisfactory.
- Pupils are not given precise enough information about how to improve.

60. Results in the end of Year 9 tests in 2001 were below the national average. However, they were in line with the national average for boys, as they have been over the last three years. As nearly all the highest attaining boys in the area accept places in grammar schools at the beginning of Year 7 this represents good achievement.
61. In work seen during the inspection standards are below the national average in Years 7 to 9, thus matching the test results. Most pupils are willing to answer questions orally and join in discussions. Low attaining pupils struggle to express complex ideas in a coherent way because their range of vocabulary is limited and they are poor at structuring their thoughts. Nevertheless they are able to express relatively simple ideas quite clearly. Higher attaining pupils are confident and articulate. For example, a Year 7 pupil explained accurately the meaning of "logical sequencing". Sometimes teachers are too ready to accept indistinct or vaguely expressed oral contributions.
62. Standards of reading in Years 7 to 9 are below average. The weakest readers in Year 7 read simple texts a word at a time so that they do not have full understanding. They understand basic phonetic rules but tend to guess at unfamiliar words. For example, "despite" was read as "desperate". They benefit from the emphasis that is put on reading in withdrawal groups and in the lowest ability sets so that by Year 9 they cope, with suitable help, with the language of "Macbeth". The most able readers read aloud expressively and with very little hesitation. In literature they make sound judgements about characters and plot.
63. Pupils' written work in Years 7 to 9 is rarely more than competent. In Year 7 even the best pupils make too many errors as in this example: "The writer uses the headline to capture peoples attention by saying it interesting and weird so that people don't fully understand the headline..."(sic). Skills improve as pupils reach Year 9. In particular they use a greater range of vocabulary and structure their sentences more accurately. Even so many pupils do not control their sentences well, often trying to include too many ideas in the one sentence. Most pupils spell common words accurately but even the best make errors.
64. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A\* to C in GCSE English in 2001 was below the national average and of A\*-B grades well below. However, the average points score, which takes into account the achievement of pupils of all abilities, shows that results are above the average for similar boys' secondary modern schools. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A\* to G was close to the national average. Results have been improving over the last four years with a particularly good year in 2000. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A\* to C in English literature in 2001 was well above the national average but it should be noted that only the highest attaining pupils were entered.



65. Standards of work seen in Years 10 and 11 match the examination results and show that the good achievement of the younger pupils is maintained. Most pupils speak well enough to make themselves easily understood but are limited by a narrow range of vocabulary. The highest attainers speak confidently and give coherent explanations of fairly complex ideas such as the difference between “plot” and “theme”. Generally, however, pupils’ speech lacks sophistication. All pupils read simple texts with understanding although many are careless, for example reading “fantastic” for “frantic”. The highest attainers show a good understanding of literature. They understand how writers use language to achieve their effects and, in a study of “An Inspector Calls”, show they are aware of the importance of the social context.
66. Most pupils write well enough to make their ideas clear to the reader. However, much of their written work lacks precision, particularly in the way they construct sentences. There is faulty expression even in the work of the most able pupils. Most know how to expand their writing by adding details which add to the interest or clarify meaning. There are some good examples of pupils showing genuine interest in producing well-turned phrases; for example, “brown textured leather” or “(one hand) started rooting through the blackness of the rubbish”. In general, however, high attainers make too many mistakes while the lowest attainers mis-spell even common words.
67. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. They benefit from being taught in relatively small groups. In addition teachers and learning support assistants have close knowledge of their needs. They make particularly good improvement in reading because of the good teaching by teachers and learning support assistants in the extra sessions provided.
68. The quality of teaching and learning overall is good. A number of very good lessons were seen and there was no unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers have good subject knowledge which helps them to plan their lessons very well. At the beginning of each lesson they assist pupils by focusing them immediately on what they are to learn. In the best lessons they consolidate learning with a final review.
69. In Years 7 to 9 there are examples of untidy or unfinished work. This is much less common in Years 10 and 11 where there is a clear drive to raise pupils’ standards. Consequently at this stage work is usually at the right level of challenge for pupils of all abilities. For example, the teacher of a low ability set rightly expected the class to have a detailed knowledge of the plot of “Romeo and Juliet”.
70. Pupils’ attitudes and behaviour are good. This is a reflection of teachers’ very good management skills, which are based on a very good relationship with pupils. The brisk pace at which lessons are conducted means that pupils are generally kept busy. In many lessons teachers maintain the interest of pupils by providing them with a number of different activities. For example, in a very successful lesson on alliteration, the teacher required pupils to revise what they already knew and to provide oral examples, before moving on to a short written exercise. She emphasised the value of alliteration and how it contributes to creating the atmosphere that the writer wants. All the class then had to read aloud what they considered to be their best answer before moving quickly to producing their own alliterative newspaper headlines. This last exercise caught their imagination and they enjoyed sharing their work with their friends. At the end pupils were able to explain with certainty to the inspector what they had learned.
71. Teachers are also successful in showing pupils how to produce good written work by starting with a draft which they then can refine. In doing this they often make use of computers and there are examples of attractively presented word-processed work, although more use could be made of ICT.
72. Teachers mark work conscientiously and most of the comments they write on pupils’ books are aimed at showing them how to improve. The department, however, does not make use of National Curriculum levels or the descriptions of what is required to obtain particular GCSE grades. There is, therefore, no systematic way of ensuring that pupils know precisely what they have to do to

move from one level or grade to the next. Consequently most pupils do not have a sufficiently clear idea of how they are progressing.

73. The leadership and management of the department are good. Earlier in this school year the department had staffing problems which led to some pupils not receiving the teaching that they should have had. These problems have now been largely resolved because of the support that the head of department gives to newly appointed and supply teachers. Teachers in the department follow a common policy, for example, in the standards of behaviour they expect from pupils and the methods of ensuring those standards. Above all, teachers share a firm commitment to raise standards further. However, the department does not yet make satisfactory use of assessment data. It does not track pupils' progress systematically in order to set targets or to identify pupils who are not performing to their potential.
74. The department has made good improvement since the previous inspection. Teaching has improved; there is no longer a mis-match between pupils' abilities and what they are taught. The schemes of work have improved and are no longer over-complicated. More use is made of ICT and there is no longer a shortage of reading materials from other cultures. However, the department is still not making use of National Curriculum levels.

## DRAMA

75. Drama is taught as a discrete subject in Years 7 to 9 and is an option in Years 10 and 11. The proportion of pupils attaining grades A\* to C in GCSE in 2001 was below the national average. On limited evidence, standards of work seen during the inspection were higher than this and were at average levels. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 show satisfactory drama skills and work well when role-playing. In class they watch others perform with close attention and make detailed and perceptive comments. In their written work they show understanding of basic drama conventions and reflect upon their own performance. In the only lesson seen on the GCSE course most pupils performed at the national level with some above average. They develop a script well through improvisation and have good drama skills. They support each other well in performance. Their written work shows good powers of evaluation and an understanding of theories such as "emotional memory".
76. Teaching and learning are very good. Pupils respond very well to the teacher's enthusiasm and high expectations. During lessons the drama studio is a busy and happy place in which pupils are nearly all doing their very best. Teaching is helped by the very detailed schemes of work, which are not confined to drama but also place proper emphasis on building personal and social skills. The annual school productions are of an above average standard and provide an excellent social and cultural experience.

## MATHEMATICS

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

### Strengths

- Pupils achieve well between starting at the school and the end of Year 9 and national test results are well above average when compared to secondary modern schools.
- Teaching is mainly of good quality.
- The attitudes and behaviour of most pupils are good.
- Management of the department is very good and so are assessment procedures.

### Areas for improvement

- The small amount of unsatisfactory teaching needs improving.

77. Standards of attainment at the end of Year 9 are at the national average. The proportion of pupils achieving national expectations in end of Year 9 tests has been in line with the national figure for the last three years. The test results are above the average of all similar schools and well above those for secondary modern schools. Mathematics test results are similar to those in science but better than those for English.
78. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is rising and the current Year 7 entered with broadly average standards of attainment in mathematics. Previous intakes entered with below, sometimes well below, average attainment in mathematics. Pupils achieve well between the beginning of Year 7 and the end of Year 9.
79. Standards of attainment at the end of Year 11 are below the national average. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A\* to C at GCSE has been gradually rising over the last few years but fell significantly below the national average in 2001; it remained at the average for all secondary modern schools and well above the national average for similar secondary modern schools. The proportion of pupils attaining A\* - B grades was 16 per cent in 2001, much higher than in English or science. Pupils achieve satisfactorily between the end of Year 9 and the end of Year 11. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in all years.
80. Standards of work are average at the end of Year 9 and below average at the end of Year 11. However, pupils' attainment covers a wide range and a few pupils in the highest ability classes attain well above the national average. For example, high attaining pupils in a Year 9 class were working on examples concerning the solution of right-angled triangles using trigonometrical formulae. After an initial introduction by the teacher, pupils quickly grasped the basic principles and were able to solve given triangles using the appropriate trigonometrical relationships. Many made good progress in accurately finding unknown angles and sides of the given triangles. On the other hand, many pupils in a lower attaining Year 11 class were having difficulties in recalling aspects relating to the angle properties of a circle and to use these in solving given problems involving circles, chords and tangents. Many could not recall the basic properties and were unable to make progress with the examples without significant further support from the teacher. Several pupils lacked confidence in dealing with the questions. Pupils, particularly in the earlier years in the school, have opportunities to further develop their numerical skills. Year 7 lessons frequently involve mental 'starters' activities and these are successful in developing pupil's confidence when dealing with problems involving number. Overall numeracy skills for many pupils are now satisfactory and support work involving number in other subjects across the curriculum. Increasing use of ICT is being made to support aspects of mathematics work and this is leading to higher level of skills and confidence amongst many pupils. Overall, standards of coursework are satisfactory, with some pupils in Year 11 producing high quality work involving investigations.
81. Teaching is mainly good and sometimes very good. There is a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching. All lessons are well planned and contain clear learning objectives that are shared with pupils. Clear explanations are given during group work so that pupils know what is expected of them; good use is made of questioning so that teachers know how well pupils understand. Pace in lessons is usually brisk and well matched to pupils' needs. Teachers develop good relationships with pupils and provide good support to them; pupils respond well. Their behaviour and attitudes are good; just a few pupils lose interest and make insufficient progress. Homework is regularly set, marked and returned promptly to pupils. In an unsatisfactory lesson, pupils struggled with the task set and failed to make satisfactory progress; many had to wait a significant time before they received help. Attitudes and behaviour were unsatisfactory.
82. Leadership and management are very good. Effective monitoring and evaluation procedures are in place including lesson observations and checks on the setting and marking of homework. Teachers work well as a team. Detailed schemes of work have been developed and regular written reviews of the work of the department are undertaken. An appropriate departmental development plan is in place. The main mathematics teachers are well qualified and have a secure knowledge of the subject. Resources available support the subject well. Accommodation is satisfactory overall but several rooms are too small for the larger classes they have to contain; this makes it difficult to teach in different ways and makes it harder to manage pupils.

83. Overall the curriculum is good. Increasing use is made of ICT, which now forms an integral part of schemes of work. Emphasis is being made, particularly in Year 7, to further developing pupils' numeracy skills. Assessment procedures are very good. Regular testing and marking of work are used to monitor pupil's progress. Pupils have a good understanding of how well they are doing and what progress they are making towards meeting their targets.
  
84. There has been good progress since the last inspection. End of Year 9 test results have improved and achievement of pupils in Years 7-9 is good. The proportion of good and very good teaching has increased. More use is now made of ICT.

## SCIENCE

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

### Strengths

- Sustained and significant improvement in results in Year 9 and in the GCSE examinations.
- Very good management of the department.
- The system for recording pupils' progress and for target setting.
- The quality of much of the teaching.
- The high degree of interest of many pupils.

### Areas for improvement

- The very small amount of unsatisfactory teaching.
- Increasing the use of ICT.
- Increasing the range of strategies used to improve pupils' literacy.

85. In tests at the end of Year 9 in 2001 the proportion of pupils gaining level 5 and level 6 was well above average in comparison with secondary modern schools. At level 5 it was above the national average for all schools and at level 6 it was close to the average. Since 1998, the school's results have been improving faster than the national results and the standards reached by pupils in science are similar to those they reach in English and mathematics. In tests taken before the pupils come to the school, their performance in science was well below average for the current Year 11 and below average for the current Year 7; pupils achieve well between Years 7 and 9.
86. In GCSE examinations, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\* to C is above the average gained in similar schools but below the national average for all schools. A small proportion of pupils gain an A\*, A or B grade. A comparison of these results with the results gained by the pupils in Year 9 shows that their GCSE grades are close to those predicted on the basis of the Year 9 tests, although they are a little below the grades obtained by the pupils in their other subjects. Almost every pupil gains an A\* - G grade. There has been a sustained and significant improvement in GCSE results for science during the last five years and results obtained by pupils in GCSE module tests in Years 10 and 11 show that this improvement is continuing; results in Year 10 are particularly good. Standards are rising and the rate of improvement is much better than the national pattern. Between the time that they enter the school and their GCSE examinations pupils achieve well.
87. The standard of work seen in lessons and in pupils' books is about average in Year 9. The work of higher attaining pupils is above average. Pupils understand difficult ideas about forces, chemical reactions and the relationship between the numbers of predator and prey animals. Practical skills are often above average; pupils in Year 9 used differences in reactions to identify metals and they planned a sequence of practical tests that they carried out carefully and successfully. Other pupils' work is below average, for example in a lesson about inheritance in which they learned that some features of human bodies are inherited and the environment causes others.
88. Pupils' literacy skills are about average. Some written work, such as an account of the work of Alexander Fleming, is fluent and accurate and above average but the work of lower attaining pupils in an account of eclipses was below average, it is less fluent and scientific terms are not always used. Pupils are very willing to talk about science and to answer questions about it but they do not always use scientific language to do so. Numeracy skills are good; graphs about the reactions of acids or the results of work about burning candles are above average. Calculations of turning forces are done well.
89. In Years 10 and 11 the standard of pupils' work is below average. In lessons about chemical reactions the best work is well above average, pupils can confidently explain how and why heat energy and other factors can change the speed of a reaction and their books show a good understanding of ideas about genetics and inheritance. In Year 11, pupils' understanding of the effect of plant hormones is above average. In a lesson about how the kidney works, pupils'

knowledge of urine formation was well below average, and the same was true in a lesson about chemical elements. Practical work about electricity is done well. In a Year 11 class, pupils successfully designed a recording system for their results and carried out a demanding range of chemical tests successfully. Investigative skills are about average except for pupils' capacity to evaluate their work, which is below average.

90. The literacy skills of some pupils are below average, for example some written work is well below average. Other pupils write accurate and fluent accounts about how the body absorbs food. Higher attaining pupils explain their work clearly and articulately making good use of scientific language to do so, other pupils are more hesitant and do not use scientific language. Good graphing skills are shown when pupils plot graphs showing how the rates of two chemical reactions change and pupils make accurate calculations of speed and acceleration.
91. Teaching throughout the school is good, much of it is very good, some is excellent and in only one lesson was it unsatisfactory. In lessons overall, pupils make good progress and they learn well. The best teaching is well prepared and contains interesting and demanding activities including, in Year 9, problem solving practical activities or, in Year 10, group preparations for short talks about renewable energy sources; in these lessons pupils' literacy skills improve and they achieve a high degree of understanding. In a lesson about the energy changes that take place during chemical reactions, questioning was challenging, pupils were expected to give clear explanations of difficult ideas with the result that their learning was very good. Time limits are set so that lessons proceed at a good pace and relationships are very good; teachers encourage pupils, listen to them carefully and give them credit for their work. As a consequence, pupils work hard and are willing to offer tentative answers to demanding questions. Teachers have a good command of their subject and of the means of teaching it. In lessons about the kidney and chemical elements good use was made of models to ensure that pupils, many of whom had special educational needs, made good progress. Overall, work for pupils with special educational needs is well matched to their needs and they achieve well. Expectations of pupils' behaviour and of hard work are high and teachers are very insistent that they remain high. Teachers are consistent in their teaching methods and expectations so that pupils are confident in them and behave very well. Pupils from ethnic minorities achieve as well as the majority, they are fully integrated into their lessons both by other pupils and by their teachers.
92. In a small number of lessons, opportunities to ensure that pupils learn successfully are missed and one lesson was unsatisfactory, this was largely due to inadequate subject knowledge so that pupils were given incorrect information and their learning was unsatisfactory. Sometimes too much of a lesson is led by the teacher and pupils are not provided with sufficient opportunities to investigate an aspect of science. In one lesson there was insufficient insistence that pupils should listen and they made less progress than they should. Opportunities for pupils to discuss their work and sometimes to write about it were used very well at times, but in other lessons more use of these methods is needed to improve pupils' literacy skills. In a lesson about the solar system an opportunity to appreciate the magnitude of the system was missed.
93. Pupils' social skills are very good; they are trustworthy, careful, co-operative and work safely in laboratories. They listen to each other carefully and collaboration during group work is very good. Their behaviour is very good and they are very willing to answer questions because teachers foster very positive attitudes to learning. They are willing to take responsibility for their learning during group and practical tasks and do so because teachers encourage this. A very small minority of pupils are uninterested in learning about science but the majority show a lot of interest, they work hard and enthusiastically.
94. The curriculum is well planned, it provides a wide range of activities including many that contribute to pupils' moral development, examples include lessons about the environmental impact of power stations or wind farms. Pupils learn about pollution and its effects, energy conservation is studied and pupils learn about inherited diseases. Pupils' development in this area is very good.
95. Management of the department is very good; the head of the department has led a sustained and significant rise in standards. New and very effective methods of assessing pupils' work and

recording their progress have been introduced. Effective leadership has improved teaching, introduced a wider range of teaching methods, particularly the use of investigation, but some examples of ineffective teaching remain to be addressed. Providing ICT equipment and refurbishment of fume cupboards is an essential improvement that Technology College status will enable. There are enough books and other equipment.

96. Improvement since the last inspection is good overall. At that time the percentage of pupils gaining a grade A\* - C was below the average for similar schools, it is now above average for similar boys' schools and standards continue to rise; in this aspect of the schools' work improvement has been very good. Standards of literacy are less variable and number and graphical work have improved. Insufficient use is made of ICT but the school's new Technology College status will provide the equipment needed to remedy this situation. This new status will also allow the much-needed refurbishment of the laboratories. Teaching is much improved, there is no longer a large number of unsatisfactory lessons, teachers' explanations are clear, good use is made of homework and lessons are well matched to the needs of the pupils. Achievement has improved and assessment of pupils' progress is now done very well.

## ART AND DESIGN

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

### Strengths

- The good standards achieved by higher attaining pupils.
- The good teaching by the two specialist art teachers.
- The breadth of learning opportunities offered to pupils.
- The displays of pupils' work in art rooms and around the school.

### Areas for improvement

- The rate of progress made by some pupils because of non-specialist teachers and inadequate accommodation.
- The use of assessment and evaluation of provision in the department to inform the best courses of study for average and lower attaining pupils.
- The use of ICT.

97. By the end of Year 9, most pupils reach average standards. This represents good progress from Year 7 as most pupils enter the school with below average standards. Pupils with special educational needs and those from ethnic minorities are fully included in learning and achieve similar standards.
98. By the end of Year 11, standards attained are average overall. In 2001, overall GCSE results were below average in the proportion of A\* - C grades and A\* - G grades, compared to the performance of boys in all maintained secondary schools. However, comparisons with standards of art and design in similar schools, if data was available, would likely reveal these results are average or above. The proportion of pupils with A\* and A grades was well above the national average and this reflects the positive response of higher attaining pupils to good teaching. The number of pupils gaining the top grades in GCSE photography was high and, in all art courses, pupils perform better than in many of their other GCSE subjects. There is a larger than usual number of pupils opting for GCSE art courses all of who are entered for the examination. A small proportion, not completing course requirements in 2001, lowered the overall performance in A\* - G grades. In a straight comparison with all maintained secondary schools, GCSE results in previous years were above average in relation to both higher grades and the pass rate.
99. Most pupils are achieving well by the end of Year 9. In drawing from observation, the highest attaining pupils use line and tone very effectively to show the form and reflections in glass objects. Most understand proportion and create a sense of space. In one Year 9 lesson, for example, all pupils, several of whom had special educational needs, used what they had been shown on

perspective to sketch buildings from observation and achieve effectively a sense of depth. A higher attaining pupil described perspective as *"the illusion of depth and space"*. Pupils have experimented effectively by combining different materials and techniques, exploring their visual possibilities and creating strong portrait imagery. The best progress occurs in lessons taught by either of the two art specialists and all pupils have these teachers at some point between Year 7 and 9. Otherwise they are taught by teachers with less expertise in art and this slows their rate of progress in acquiring technical skills; for example, in Year 8, most pupils were not able to achieve the flat smooth colour and hard-edged black outlines typical of many Pop Art images.

100. By the end of Year 11, most pupils achieve well. A minority, who are likely to gain the highest GCSE grades, have refined their technique in drawing and painting using the visual elements of line, tone, colour and texture to good effect. One captured in tones of red the highlights and shadows in the intricate folds of draped fabric. The development of ideas supported by research and experiment is particularly pronounced among higher attaining pupils studying textiles and photography. They analyse and respond well to the work of artists or photographers and in consequence make a very good range of preparatory studies. They annotate their sketches well and write knowledgeably about their ideas. Other pupils have acquired sound techniques in making work but have not achieved the skills and understanding needed for analysis or to refine their ideas.
101. Pupils' attitudes in art lessons are good. They all enjoy making art and many are sufficiently interested to seek a deeper knowledge, using their initiative to find out more from books or the Internet. A minority of lower attaining pupils lack the motivation and commitment to pursue ideas in sufficient depth. All behave well and show respect for their teachers and each other.
102. Teaching is good overall. The two specialist teachers, who teach the large majority of lessons, have between them much expertise and provide a broad range of activities through drawing and painting, textiles and photography. This, to a large extent, suits the different abilities and interests of pupils, although some pupils, certainly by the time they are in Years 10 and 11, need directing towards the best approaches for them. In relation to what individual pupils are good at, this could be a choice, for example, between concentrating on developing skills in observational drawing and painting or imaginative exploration of media and materials, which is the strength in textiles. In this respect, the assessments of what pupils have learnt, pupils' performance, particularly in GCSE and evaluation of the art curriculum, should contribute more to deciding pupils' options in art. Lessons are planned effectively and, when taught by the specialist teachers, pupils build their knowledge, understanding and skills in a well-organised way. Both teachers work to clear learning objectives and explain these well to their groups, showing good exemplars of the work intended and giving effective demonstrations of the skills to be used. Year 9 pupils, for example, having been shown how to use two vanishing points to create perspective, succeeded in making good observational drawings of their school buildings. Likewise they were able to translate experimental drawings of fish into three-dimensional forms. The strong emphasis on pupils' learning and using the words and terms associated with art both in lessons and homework makes a good contribution to promoting their literacy skills. However, ICT is not promoted sufficiently.
103. The lessons taught by non-specialist teachers, mainly in Years 7 to 9, are satisfactory. They are based on good plans and these teachers are supported well by the more experienced art teachers. While pupils increase their knowledge of art, learning skills and the ways of imaginative exploration are not as good as expected. Year 7 pupils, working on ideas based on African masks, learnt about the symbolic value of colours, for example, that black or white were used to fend off evil spirits, but most did not move as far as this on discovering good techniques for making their own images.
104. Leadership and management in art are good. There are well-founded art educational aims informing much of the practice and the department's success is clearly reflected in the large number of pupils choosing art courses in Years 10 and 11. Displays of pupils' work in the department and around the school are impressive and stimulating, reflecting the high value attached to the subject. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. A reduction in the



numbers making up some over-large groups has occurred. The department is contributing actively to the school improvement plan, for example, by successfully promoting literacy. However, the development planning process is not so well informed on priorities for the department, which should emerge from a more detailed evaluation of pupils' performance and departmental provision. The use of non-specialist teachers is unsatisfactory because it slows the rate of some pupils' progress. In some instances this is worsened by teaching having to take place outside the art department in an unsuitable room where the good resources usually available are not readily to hand. Similarly, placing a group of lower attaining Year 10 pupils with a non-specialist teacher does not contribute well to raising the standards they achieve.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- The leadership is having a very positive effect on raising standards and on improving the image of the department within the school.
- Good teaching and learning.
- Examination results have improved significantly in the last three years.
- Pupils have a good attitude to the subject and this is having a positive effect on standards.

### Areas for improvement

- Variation exists in pupils' performance between the different material areas.
- Develop the teaching of computer assisted design and manufacture (CAD/CAM) and systems and control in order to be fully compliant with National Curriculum requirements.
- The range of option choices in Years 10 and 11 could be broader.

105. Pupils in the current Year 7 entered school with below average attainment. This is higher than in previous years. By the end of Year 9, in 2001, teacher assessments show pupils were attaining above average. The head of faculty acknowledges that this assessment is slightly over generous and a more realistic assessment would show pupils achieving the national average. Current standards are average and this represents good achievement. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are below average and this shows good achievement for these pupils who entered school with well below average attainment. The school was part of a local education authority project to raise standards in design technology and emerged as the most improved school in the pilot.
106. Pupils' GCSE results at the end of Year 11 in 2001, when compared nationally with all schools, are below average for the proportion of pupils achieving grades A\*-C but above average for the proportion achieving A\*-G. When compared with boys' schools, results are above average for grades A\*-C and about average for grades A\*-G. Results have shown significant year on year improvement over the past three years. There is a difference in the performance of pupils between the material areas, with those taking electronic products and graphic products outperforming those taking resistant materials and food technology. Results show pupils achieving a higher than average number of D grades. Pupils' performance, overall, is marginally better in this subject than in pupils' average performance in all subjects.
107. Standards of work in Years 7 - 9 are about average. By the end of Year 9, pupils have a good understanding of the design process. Pupils of all abilities are achieving well and make good progress. In the attainment target of designing and making there is a better balance between the two aspects than was seen at the previous inspection. Pupils use tools and a range of materials confidently and safely. They develop good planning skills by devising time plans in food technology, preparing materials lists in resistant materials and by using flow charts to record a proposed order of work in all areas. Pupils have numeracy and literacy skills that are adequate to cope with the demands of the subject. Practical work is at least satisfactory and a number of good products were seen in all material areas. Most pupils, however, do not display a great deal of imagination or innovation when generating design ideas, particularly in resistant materials.

Pupils are not fully confident when producing freehand, annotated sketches to explain their design ideas. Pupils are using ICT but opportunities exist to further develop this aspect of the work particularly with regard to CAD/CAM and the use of mechanical and electronic systems and control. The successful bid for Technology College status, to be implemented in September 2002, will provide the necessary resources to make this possible.

108. Work in Year 11 shows pupils achieving well and making good progress by building on their knowledge and understanding acquired in previous years, and by employing some good independent learning skills to good effect when undertaking coursework. Standards are below the national average but continue the general trend of improvement within the subject. Differences in GCSE results between the material areas are explained mainly by variations in the quality of design folios. The best examples are very well presented and most often seen in graphic products. They contain detailed research, which leads to the generation of a range of design ideas, which are then developed and modified. In the weaker examples, which are most often in resistant materials, pupils have a fixed idea about what they are going to make too early in the process. They engineer research and design proposals to fit this initial idea rather than adopting a more open-minded approach that would lead to the generation of a wider range of ideas. Overall, pupils work well from a given brief to solve design problems. Some more able pupils find their own design problems to solve. Generally pupils display good research skills and use a variety of sources including the Internet. By the end of Year 11 pupils have developed very good planning skills, which are used as a tool when organising coursework and to ensure that deadlines are met. Pupils use ICT to enhance their work but opportunities exist to use it more as a tool for designing and making. The most able pupils are able to adapt their designs as they are working and can explain the reasoning behind the changes. Some quality products are produced in all areas. In resistant materials, products are made which show good practical skills and pupils achieve a quality finish, but there is a lack of variety in the use of materials and wood is used almost exclusively. Some good examples of group work were observed in a revision lesson when pupils supported the learning of others in a brainstorming session. A few pupils lack good oral communication skills and this creates difficulty when they are asked to explain things verbally. Generally literacy and numeracy skills meet the needs of the subject. Pupils who have special educational needs are well supported by teachers and make good progress.
109. Teaching and learning is good overall throughout the subject although one unsatisfactory lesson was seen in Year 11. This was due to the teacher talking too long and a lack of variety of activities in the lesson so that pupils learnt little. In Years 7 to 9 a third of teaching is very good whereas in Years 10 and 11 there are only marginally more good lessons than satisfactory ones. Teachers are all subject specialists who communicate subject knowledge well to pupils and who are willing to share their subject expertise, in different material areas, with each other to help pupils learn. Teachers plan lessons well and share the lesson objectives with pupils so that pupils understand what they are expected to learn. Pupils are well managed in a variety of classroom situations, including teams and groups, so that they learn to work co-operatively with different individuals. Any instances of inappropriate behaviour are dealt with promptly so that learning proceeds at a good pace and without interruption. Assessment procedures are very good but there remains some inconsistency in marking pupils' work. Pupils receive good feedback on their work that includes detailed notes in Years 10 and 11. Pupils understand their current level of attainment and what they need to do to improve. Displays of work are used to celebrate pupils' achievement and to raise pupils' expectations of themselves. Pupils respond to the good teaching they receive by being interested in the work and making a good effort; they enjoy what they do. Pupils' acquire industrial awareness via an 'Industry Week', which also makes a valuable contribution to pupils' social development.
110. Leadership and management are very good. The head of faculty has correctly identified what needed to be done in the department by monitoring teaching and learning. He has been instrumental in the successful achievement of Technology College status. A realistic development plan, linked to whole school initiatives, is moving the department forward rapidly. A number of health and safety issues were identified during this inspection which the school is addressing. Since the last inspection, examination results have improved dramatically. Resources and accommodation have been improved and this is ongoing. Plans exist for further development, particularly regarding GCSE vocational and systems and control options in Years 10 and 11 and better provision for delivering CAD/CAM. Improvement since the last inspection is very good.

## GEOGRAPHY

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

### Strengths

- Standards of work have improved steadily as seen in recent GCSE examination results.
- Pupils achieve well.
- Teaching is good, sometimes very good.
- Fieldwork greatly enriches the curriculum.
- Teachers are committed, supportive and caring of their pupils.
- Relationships between pupils and teachers and between each other are very good.

### Areas for improvement

- The small amount of unsatisfactory teaching.
- The use of ICT.
- The work and resources provided for higher and lower attainers.

111. Standards of work are below the national average at the end of Year 9. Pupil achievement over Years 7 to 9, in relation to the well below national standards at entry in Year 7, is good. Variation in the standards exists between work produced in classes taught by specialist and non-specialist teachers. By the end of Year 9 pupils have a sound grounding in geographical skills. Map work is generally satisfactory but there is need of much more practice in the presentation and analyses of statistical data graphically. Knowledge of location is satisfactory except for low attainers where it is less secure. Pupils of all attainment levels have an inadequate understanding of spatial patterns. More able pupils are not given hard enough work. Average pupils progress well and make up lost ground as appropriate emphasis is placed on written work in lessons. Low attainers also progress well, but some are deterred from making more progress by literacy problems; standards of numeracy are satisfactory for the work in hand. Pupils with special educational needs, when they have support from a learning assistant, progress very well.
112. Standards of work at the end of Year 11 are below the national average. However, given the pupils' level of work at the end of Year 9, achievement for most pupils over Years 10 and 11 is good. While most pupils are achieving in line with expectations in Year 11, work seen in Year 10 shows good or very good progress made by most pupils. If this progress continues, standards of their work at the end of Year 11 will be close to the national standards for boys. This progress is due to pupils being more involved in their own learning and having a very positive approach to their studies. By the end of Year 11, higher attaining pupils produce very detailed, thorough work. They are able to describe and explain a range of physical and human processes well. Average attaining pupils are able to describe the processes satisfactorily but do not always fully understand the linkages involved. Low attainers have a sound basic knowledge of some processes but their understanding is often insecure. The best individual GCSE project work based on fieldwork is of very high quality and most pupils produce work appropriate to their abilities. While revision and examination skills are adequately covered, the range of model answers is narrow and pupils would benefit from more detailed guidance.
113. The proportions of pupils attaining GCSE A\*-C results in 2001 was below the national average but well above the average for similar schools. GCSE A\*-G results were in line with the national average.
114. Results are improving faster than average. The proportion of pupils attaining the highest grades of A\*-B is low. The subject is much more popular as a GCSE option than is the case nationally. When compared with other GCSE subjects within the school, geography results have been better than many in most years.
115. Pupils' attitudes to learning are mostly positive and many display a real interest in their work. Most boys are attentive, work conscientiously and are keen to learn. Pupils' behaviour is always good and often very good. Most teachers deal with potentially difficult pupils extremely skilfully.

Very good constructive and effective relationships exist with teachers and pupils trust and co-operate very well with them. Pupils also relate very well to each other when working in groups. In most lessons, pupils learn well because they are active contributors but in others they are given limited opportunities to participate and learning is not so good.

116. Teaching overall is good and there is some very good teaching. Teaching by a non-specialist was unsatisfactory. Subject specialist teachers are committed, caring and supportive of pupils within their charge. Classroom management and control is usually very good and built on very good relationships with pupils. This provides a good base for learning. Lessons are generally well planned and built on a secure knowledge foundation. Some lessons, although of sound quality, are too teacher led, but in most lessons there are good opportunities for pupils to investigate situations and raise issues for themselves. Lesson objectives are usually shared with pupils at the beginning and tested for effectiveness at the end of the lesson; however, objectives need to focus more consistently on what pupils should know, understand and be able to do by the end of the lesson. Best learning occurs in lessons that have a variety of practical activities that require pupils to involve themselves in their own learning. Similarly when visual aids such as video extracts, maps, diagrams, and graphs are used, learning is noticeably better. Where there is good dialogue between the teacher and pupils that extends the pupils' knowledge, there is a greater understanding of the topic taught. In many lessons there are very skilful and effective interventions by the teacher to re-inforce learning. In the best lessons, the teacher's presentation was lively, enthusiastic and interesting. Tasks and materials used in lessons need to be matched more closely to the learning needs of higher attainers in Years 7 to 9, and in some lessons simplified to meet the needs of lower attaining pupils. Standards of pupils' literacy are generally satisfactory and key words, pupils reading aloud in class and the use of writing frames are very well used by teachers in some lessons but not consistently so.
117. When teaching was unsatisfactory it was due to the teacher having an inadequate grasp of geographical knowledge and understanding of the topic taught. Presentation lacked focus and lesson materials needed simplification to meet the specific needs of pupils. Pupils' progress was severely hampered and underachievement resulted.
118. Fieldwork undertaken in Years 8-10 on the river Mersey, in the Peak District and North Wales, is of very high quality. It greatly enriches study and stimulates boys' interest in the subject. It results in most effective learning in Years 10 and 11 and has a considerable positive impact on GCSE results. It is insufficient, however, in Year 7 where there is need to integrate fieldwork into the study of the local area. ICT has seen some development since the last inspection but access to computers has been difficult and more needs to be done.
119. Leadership of the subject is very good. Day-to-day management is very competent and the head of department provides good professional direction. Strategic and curriculum planning is of good quality and the work of the department carefully monitored. The assessment policy is very good overall and day-to-day marking generally good; there are inconsistencies, with some pupils' work marked more thoroughly than others and not all pupils are given comments in their books as to how they can further improve their work. Staff work very well as a team but many have major responsibilities outside the department that restricts the administrative support they can give the head of subject. The newly qualified teacher has been given excellent support by the head of department and the appointment is a very good one. There is need to rationalize staffing with a second full-time teacher of geography replacing the present arrangement where a number of teachers provide relatively small teaching inputs in Years 7 to 9. Teaching accommodation is restricted to one specialist subject room and subject teaching takes place in some ten different classrooms. This is clearly unsatisfactory as specialist equipment is often not always available, the range and variety of teaching methods that can be used are curtailed and pupils' learning opportunities suffer. Some colourful and attractive wall displays provide for a good learning environment. Learning resources are good overall; better access to computers is needed and more maps would be useful.
120. There has been good progress since the last inspection, with the improvement in standards of work in GCSE particularly significant. The points raised in the previous report have been

appropriately addressed. The department has a very good capacity to improve standards of learning further and meet the points raised in this report.

## HISTORY

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

### Strengths

- Learning is enhanced by the very good quality of teaching.
- A very good contribution is made to developing the literacy skills of all pupils.
- Assessment data is used very well to identify pupils who need specific help, support and encouragement.
- Very good procedures are in place to enhance examination results.

### Areas for improvement

- Planning teaching and learning to challenge higher attaining pupils more.
- The use of ICT to support teaching and learning needs to improve.
- The quality of marking is inconsistent.

121. Standards recorded by pupils in National Curriculum teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were in line with national average expectations when compared to all schools. GCSE results in 2001 were well below average for the proportion of pupils attaining grades A\* - C and for average points scored. For grades A\* - G, however, results were above average. GCSE results at grades A\* - C in 2001 were below those recorded in 2000 and reversed a trend of improving results that had been apparent over recent years. The department has undertaken a detailed analysis of this and has evidence to show that some candidates who were expected to gain C grades actually recorded grade D. Although the numbers involved were small, they were sufficient to have a marked impact on the standard of results. This analysis has produced a positive response from the department who have further developed their monitoring procedures of all pupils, but especially those who are on the C/D borderline. Though the results were not as predicted, most pupils achieved at least satisfactorily during the course with many gaining a better grade than that predicted at the start of Year 10.
122. Standards of work in Years 7-9 are below average, though pupils have widely varying abilities; while some are working at below national expectations, a significant minority is above this level. Work seen shows all pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well, especially in terms of their ability to provide oral accounts of historical events. A very good contribution is being made to developing literacy skills of all pupils and this is leading to improving standards. For a minority of pupils, however, their limited writing skills impedes their progress. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are similarly recording standards of work that are below average though a significant minority are recording standards that are above, or even well above, average. In lessons, many pupils impress with their oral knowledge and their ability to offer lucid and detailed accounts of historical events. For example, many Year 11 pupils have developed a very good factual knowledge of Hitler's foreign policy and they can talk well about key features, but their written work does not always contain the same level of detail and accuracy. Nevertheless, the work of all pupils is benefiting from the emphasis that history teachers place on developing literacy skills. Most pupils are making good progress, but higher attainers are improving at an even quicker rate. Their written work is especially strong. It is detailed, interesting to read, accurate and balanced in terms of the views expressed. The emphasis that is placed on interpreting source material is significant and this too is helping higher attaining pupils, in particular, to reach very high standards in their work.
123. A key strength of the department is the very good teaching that is offered and the very positive impact this has on learning. All lessons seen were at least satisfactory, with almost all being either very good or excellent. Many strengths are identifiable. Staff plan their lessons well and, where teaching is especially effective, the lessons are challenging and proceed at a very good pace. A strong feature of many lessons is the contribution made to developing key skills, especially literacy and numeracy, though more use of ICT could be made in lessons. At present opportunities for pupils to use ICT in their history work are not planned for sufficiently. Pupils' learning is further enhanced by the very good marking of work undertaken by most members of

the department. Most work is marked in detail with incorrect spellings corrected and factual errors highlighted. The well-marked work also includes comments identifying what the pupils have done well and how further improvements might be secured. The monitoring of marking needs to be more frequent, in order to ensure that all teachers of history are working to the same exacting standard.

124. During the inspection many very good lessons were seen and such careful and dedicated teaching results in very good learning and pupils enjoying their history lessons. For example, in a very good Year 11 lesson on the background to the Cold War, all pupils showed a very good understanding of the historical background. During the lesson the pupils developed their knowledge and understanding of the Berlin Airlift and made references to other key events such as the Cuban Missile Crisis. While all pupils made at least good progress in this lesson because of the lively, enthusiastic and challenging teaching, a small number of particularly able pupils reached very high standards. A particularly impressive aspect of their work was the explanations offered on the meaning of 'appeasement'. Excellent learning stemming from outstanding teaching was a feature of a Year 8 lesson on nineteenth century political reform in England. The lesson featured significant developments of the pupils' literacy skills with key words such as 'democracy', 'reform' and 'radical' being discussed. The pupils showed evidence of high quality prior learning through references to the Peterloo Massacre, Luddites and the Chartist Movement. The teaching was very inclusive with all pupils participating in the question and answer session. The teacher skilfully ensured that pupils with special educational needs and those from minority ethnic backgrounds were fully involved in the lesson. The lesson had pace and challenge and expectations were very high. By the end of the lesson, all pupils were reflecting on a range of moral and social issues associated with democracies. Learning was then further encouraged by a homework task that was suitably planned to extend learning further. All pupils clearly benefited from such enthusiastic and inspirational teaching.
125. The leadership and management of the department are very good. The present head of department has been appointed since the previous inspection and has been in office for a comparatively short period of time. Nevertheless a number of changes have been made. Assessment data is being used well to inform planning and to target pupils who need additional help and attention. Schemes of work are thorough and contain the right amount of detail and, though the present library facilities are limited, plans are afoot to improve this provision and suitable resources have been ordered. The department has responded effectively to the dip in A\*-C GCSE results experienced in 2001 by identifying where additional support is needed but, at present, insufficient support is offered to the most able pupils and this is reflected in the comparative paucity of the highest grades at GCSE. Suitable efforts have been made to enliven the taught curriculum, including an annual visit to the battlefields of Belgium and Northern France.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall the quality of provision for ICT is **good**.

### Strengths

- Teaching is good; teachers have good subject knowledge and give clear explanations.
- Teachers have good relationships with pupils.
- Pupils are very interested in the subject and they behave well in lessons.
- There is good management of the department.
- Standards are rising and pupils are achieving well.

### Areas for improvement

- Better use of National Curriculum attainment levels in Years 7 - 9 to help pupils to set their own targets for improvement.
- Ensure that planning of lessons for mixed ability classes takes into account pupils' prior attainment.
- The time available for ICT for pupils not taking GCSE courses in Years 10 and 11.



- The use of ICT in all subjects, by improving the access to resources such as computers, data projectors and interactive white boards.

126. The proportion of pupils attaining A\*-C grades at GCSE in 2001 were in line with the national average. Teachers' assessments of pupils at the end of Year 9 in 2001 indicate that pupils were then working at national expectations.
127. Standards of work in Year 9 and in GCSE classes in Year 11 are at nationally expected levels; older pupils not taking GCSE are working at levels below national expectations. In Year 7 pupils understand cell location in spreadsheets and can insert simple formulae. They have learned how to use desktop publishing software and can write a simple programme in Control Logo. Pupils in Year 8 have learned how to make short slide shows using Power Point and make effective use of a range of fonts, clip art and images as they create slides. Pupils make good use of spreadsheets to produce a range of graphs. In Year 9, pupils have a satisfactory understanding of building a web site using Hyper Text Markup Language (HTML) commands. Pupils extend their use of spreadsheets using more complex formulae, and make increasing use of desktop publishing skills. In Year 10, there is a wide range of attainment. Pupils taking GCSE are working on an examination task based on a 'Sports Day'. For this project pupils are making use of a range of skills such as word-processing, desktop publishing and importing images as they create a sports day programme. Pupils not taking GCSE courses are working below expected levels for their age and take Key Skills ICT Level 1. Pupils in Year 11 are making more advanced use of data bases and spreadsheets, desk top publishing and word-processing skills as they complete their final project for their GCSE course. Standards of students' work are reflected in their files. Average and above attainers have well organised files, showing evidence of work being redrafted to improve its quality, and have a good understanding of evaluation. Lower attainers, however, have less well-structured files, with less depth in their work indicating some lack of knowledge, and weaker skills in evaluation of their work.
128. Teaching is good. Teachers make effective use of their good subject knowledge to give clear explanations, which helps pupils learn. In examination classes, teachers have good knowledge about the requirements for examinations, which helps students prepare well for these. There are good relationships between pupils and teachers and pupils respond well to teachers' instructions, which helps them learn better and faster. There is usually good lesson planning and appropriate tasks selected that make good use of prepared information sheets, which allow pupils of different attainment levels to work at their own rate. Sometimes work planned is not always appropriate to pupils' capabilities and planning of work for mixed ability classes does not always take into account what pupils already know. Higher attaining pupils are not always sufficiently challenged. Objectives are shared with pupils at the start of lessons, which helps them understand what is expected of them, and teachers recap at the end of lessons to help consolidate learning. In Years 7 – 9, no use is made of National Curriculum levels to help pupils set their own targets for improvement. In all lessons, pupils' behaviour is good; they work at tasks set and show both interest and enthusiasm.
129. In all lessons, pupils make some progress as they learn new skills and reinforce existing ones. In Year 7, pupils enter the school with a wide range of experiences in ICT, and much of the work done during this year is focussed on bringing pupils up to the levels expected for their age. They make good progress through Years 7 - 9 to reach national standards by the end of Year 9. In Years 10 and 11 pupils taking GCSE courses make good progress and achieve well to reach national standards. Pupils who do not take GCSE show satisfactory achievement whilst working towards Key Skills.
130. There is good leadership and management, with an appropriate development plan. Standards are rising and ICT courses in Years 10 and 11 are becoming increasingly popular. However, pupils not taking GCSE courses in Years 10 and 11 have insufficient lessons to ensure their full entitlement of ICT and many subjects need to increase their use of ICT. There has been good progress since the last inspection with improved schemes of work and ICT for all pupils in Years 10 and 11. The ongoing New Opportunities Funded training in ICT is helping teachers to become more confident in their use of computers. All departments have some planned use of computers in their schemes

of work, but access to computer rooms is limited at the present time. Mathematics, English and design and technology make good use of computers. Technology College status in September 2002 is enabling a planned increase in the number of computers in departments and a new computer room. Technology College development plans should ensure that shortcomings in the cross-curricular provision for ICT be addressed.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall the quality of provision for modern languages is **good**.

### Strengths

- All pupils study one or two languages throughout their five years in school.
- GCSE results in French in recent years have been well above the national average.
- Teachers' subject knowledge and class management are very good, so pupils learn well.
- The languages faculty is well managed with very good leadership.

### Areas for improvement

- There is little use of ICT.
- Few pupils gain the highest GCSE grades A\*-B.
- Some pupils capable of GCSE entry are not included in appropriate courses.

131. In 2001, the proportion of pupils attaining A\*-C grades at GCSE, was well above the national average for all schools, although few of them attained the highest grades A\*-B. These results were slightly lower than those attained in 2000. In both years, all pupils gained grades between A\* and E. In recent years the grades pupils attained in GCSE French have been well above those they attained in other school subjects. The numbers entered for French are relatively small.
132. Pupils enter the school with lower than average overall attainment and little or no knowledge of French. They soon learn to follow those lessons that are taught largely in the language, and most understand simple tape recordings of native French speakers. In Years 7-9 most pupils, including those with special educational needs, learn to talk and write about various aspects of life in school and at home. Pupils adapt their writing to various styles including posters, postcards and short informal letters. Since the last inspection, more pupils have learnt to express themselves clearly and simply, although many are more comfortable in whole class spoken responses. Many pupils read short texts independently and with good understanding, using dictionaries and selected vocabularies. They mostly acquire a satisfactory knowledge of elementary grammar and idioms such as those used for time and the weather. By the end of Year 9 a minority of higher attainers have started using different tenses confidently to write about past events such as holidays and for making arrangements for an evening out. These pupils attain levels equivalent to the national expectation. Many others come close to that standard, using prompts displayed in class to compose short dialogues and descriptive statements.
133. All pupils continue with a language in Years 10 and 11 and a minority enter successfully for GCSE French. Overall the standard in languages remains below the national expectation. The majority, studying either French or Spanish, concentrate on the simple language required for living and working abroad. They obtain an alternative certificate that is recognised nationally but of limited worth. The most able linguists attain higher than average levels in their GCSE courses, speaking confidently and at length from memory or reading authentic texts on a variety of teenage interests. Many pupils, including some with special educational needs, converse confidently with partners or the foreign language assistant, simulating everyday situations such as finding the way or booking accommodation. Those entering for GCSE extend the range and quality of their writing to create lengthy persuasive and descriptive pieces of coursework about ideal school uniform, Christmas celebrations or holiday experiences. As in Years 7-9, pupils have insufficient access to computers in school so their use of ICT for researching and presenting work is unsatisfactory.
134. The quality of teaching is never less than satisfactory and overall it is good. Pupils of all ages and abilities benefit from the clarity and challenge of the French and Spanish spoken by their

teachers. When pupils speak, whether briefly or at length, it is usually with good accent and intonation. Teachers know the requirements of the National Curriculum and external examinations well, using conventional, relevant materials to sustain interest and promote success for many pupils. They produce additional worksheets and helpful wall prompts to support the learning of lower attainers. Teachers use the language laboratory well to foster independent learning. Too little use is made of the rich resources available on the Internet and using computer software, so the stimulation of talented or less confident linguists is limited. Teachers' relations with their pupils are mainly positive and lessons are firmly managed, so a steady work rhythm and strong sense of common purpose prevails in many of them. When teachers give freer rein to pupils' imagination, creativity or to their competitive nature, the atmosphere is lively and entertaining, while productivity remains good. Pupils are keen to contribute to the development of lessons, usually responding briefly but accurately to their teachers' questions. Teachers and their assistants focus attention of all pupils equally well, including those from ethnic backgrounds, giving extra assistance to slower learners when they request it. Lower attainers learn well from the model of their more confident classmates. All pupils benefit from gaining merit points or seeing their brightly illustrated written work, such as descriptions of their families and famous people, on display. They appreciate and gain from the opportunities they get to work in pairs or use their language practically for playing games or conducting surveys. Typically, there is much enthusiasm for annual trips to France with the faculty. A few lessons are rigorous or predictable, so less motivated pupils find the work hard or too dull to make much progress. Teachers assess their pupils well. They check their speaking skills through continuous questioning and keep careful records of the results of tests and exercises. Teachers help pupils to trace and predict their own performance in coursework leading to GCSE and NPRA qualifications. Homework provides regular opportunities for most pupils to prepare or extend their work in class. Many pupils are conscientious and diligent, although not all are sufficiently organised to benefit fully from the tasks set.

135. The languages faculty is well managed with very good leadership, providing appropriate qualifications for many pupils. The documentation is clear and helpful, with well-considered schemes of work and policy statements corresponding to the school's aims and targets. Teachers and their assistants are mutually supportive, contributing regularly to developments through discussion and judiciously assigned responsibilities. Good relations with senior managers enable regular review of the faculty's performance, adequate provision of resources and access to relevant training. Since the last inspection, standards of teaching, learning and examination results have continued to rise, while the curriculum has offered more choice of languages to pupils. The school's imminent shift to specialist college status will involve greater emphasis on ICT and an earlier introduction of the second European language. The faculty must also make better provision for its talented linguists, giving them access to the highest GCSE grades as well as extending its successful GCSE courses to a wider range of pupils.

## MUSIC

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

### Strengths

- Pupils' attitudes, values and behaviour are very good.
- Achievement in listening in Years 7-9 is very good.
- Rising standards in GCSE.

### Areas for improvement

- Assessment of pupils' work.
- The music curriculum and the extra-curricular activities provided.
- Accommodation for music.

136. Pupils in Year 7 have limited skills; they are well below expected standards, especially in performing and composing, though standards of listening are a little better. By the end of Year 9

- pupils have reached expected standards in listening, though their performing and composing is still below expectation. Pupils can concentrate when they listen, and identify many features of new pieces they hear. When performing, they can explain the effects they want to achieve, although they rarely use technical vocabulary. They can also hear their own mistakes, but few have performing skills strong enough for them to reproduce even short pieces accurately every time they play. Their composing is constrained by their performing skills; most can only compose music to the level that they can actually play. Achievement across Year 7 to Year 9 is very good in listening, and satisfactory in composing and performing.
137. Comparison with national averages cannot be made in Year 11 because only a small number of pupils take GCSE music. However, pupils are attaining in line with expectation based on their prior individual attainment and their achievement is satisfactory. In summer 2001, all GCSE candidates obtained a grade within the range A\*-G and this has been true for several years. Progress from Year 9 to Year 11 is satisfactory. Current Year 11 pupils are working within the GCSE range A\* - G but only a minority are able to perform sufficiently confidently and accurately to play consistently well, either alone or in ensemble. Few pupils read music or use alternative notations accurately. Most compositions are short; more extended compositions are rarely created unless by using substantial repetition.
  138. Pupils with special educational needs and those from minority ethnic groups are fully integrated into all classes and make similar progress to other pupils.
  139. Pupils have positive attitudes to music, music makes a very good contribution to their personal development and behaviour in music lessons is very good. Pupils collaborate helpfully. They applaud effort from others, for example Year 8 pupils spontaneously applauded an imaginative duet performance. In all lessons observed, instruments were treated with respect. Pupils are courteous, offering chairs and opening doors quite naturally. However, not all pupils are confident. Some need much individual encouragement from their teachers before they will attempt more difficult work.
  140. Teaching is good overall; it is good in Years 7 - 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 - 11. Teaching is good for several reasons. Most pupils make very good improvement in listening activities and develop social skills by working together on keyboards. Teachers know pupils' individual capabilities well and give them much one-to-one support. Pupils themselves acknowledge the quality of their teachers' encouragement and they develop enthusiasm for music as a result. From Year 7, pupils are trained to follow routines for listening and performing, which ensures that they settle quickly in lessons and get on with their work effectively. Firm discipline, enforced through clearly expressed expectations, and prompt action if pupils do not respond, means whole classes can work without interruptions. Relevant homework is set regularly and pupils do it properly. Marking is consistent and helpful. Where teaching is less effective it is because lessons are not planned to meet the full range of needs, so the least able pupils struggle and lose interest, and the most able are not consistently challenged. In addition the higher attainers waste time because they repeat work long after they have achieved the required standard and need to move on. Opportunities for pupils to evaluate each other's work are also missed.
  141. The music curriculum is broadly appropriate, with a suitable mix of listening, composing and performing. Music lessons include a good focus on raising pupils' literacy through constant reference to relevant musical words, effective questioning to prompt use of this vocabulary, and suitable opportunities for reading and writing about the subject. However, weaknesses in assessment mean that individual lessons and complete units of work are not always effectively planned to meet specific needs or to offer a steadily increasing level of challenge. The curriculum provides a greater range of cultural experience than at the last inspection, for example through African music in Year 7, a range of High European music in Year 8, Blues in Year 9, and there is a newly-formed extra-curricular samba band, but there is still room for further improvement.
  142. Assessment is unsatisfactory. Pupils' musical skills and competencies are not assessed when they arrive in Year 7. Teachers have no way of measuring pupils' overall progress accurately as they move through the school. Work is not consistently evaluated against National Curriculum levels. Pupils in Year 7 - 9 do not know their National Curriculum levels and pupils in Year 10 do

not know how good their work is in relation to GCSE requirements. This leads to the deficiencies in the curriculum mentioned earlier. It also means that reports to parents do not indicate National Curriculum levels.

143. The school could offer more extra-curricular activities on a regular basis. Its splendid annual productions involve a large and enthusiastic cast in the autumn term, but there are few regular ongoing groups to further promote and develop pupils' performing skills for the rest of the year. Groups that do meet are run by some of the school's skilled visiting instrumental staff, who make a valuable contribution to the school's musical life.
144. Music is managed satisfactorily. Major issues for development, including assessment and further multi-cultural development, have been correctly identified. Both these were mentioned in the last OFSTED report, and there has been some progress on them, but there is room for more. Planning, purchase of resources, and staff development are judiciously linked to the school's objectives, particularly the Technology College bid. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. Only one of the three rooms used for music is large enough for practical work requiring instruments. To allow all pupils access to instruments, teachers often have to swap rooms halfway through lessons, which leads to loss of lesson time. The largest room is quite resonant and pupils have to concentrate very hard to hear what they are playing. Resources are satisfactory, including new keyboards of good quality, but pupils have no access to computers, MIDI and composing software. This hinders them from improving their composing skills, because with these resources they would be able to compose music more difficult than they are able to play themselves.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Extra-curricular provision.
- Improved GCSE results since the last inspection.

### Areas for improvement

- Leadership and management of the department.
- Some unsatisfactory teaching.
- The behaviour and attitudes of a significant minority of pupils in Years 7 - 9.

145. Standards of work seen during the inspection are unsatisfactory. Pupils' achievement at the end of Year 9 is unsatisfactory in relation to their standards on entry to the school. In relation to standards of attainment at the beginning of Year 10, achievement at the end of Year 11 is satisfactory. The proportion of pupils who attain A\*-C grades at GCSE is below average. Many pupils have positive attitudes, which contribute positively to standards. However, there are a significant minority of pupils whose attitudes are unsatisfactory or poor. This is more obvious when teaching is unsatisfactory.
146. By the end of Year 9 pupils make unsatisfactory progress. This means that they have not developed competence in basic rugby, volleyball and gymnastic techniques. A significant minority of pupils, who are unable to remain on task, disrupt the lesson and so restrict development of knowledge and understanding. This behaviour also impacts on paired and small group work where the development of pupils' observation and assessment skills is restricted. By the end of Year 11, pupils make satisfactory progress. Improved behaviour and approach to their work means that they make progress with basic techniques as in Year 10 soccer where they develop good control skills in beating a defender and in Year 11 health and fitness where they work co-operatively in planning a fitness programme. While pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, the progress of higher attainers is restricted by a lack of consistency in the setting of challenging tasks and insufficient attention to their observation and assessment skills.

147. The quality of teaching is unsatisfactory overall but satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. In some lessons teaching is good but in a significant number of lessons teaching is unsatisfactory. The strength of the teacher includes a secure knowledge of the subject, organisational skills, positive interaction with most pupils and a consistency of complying with safety procedures. While some progress has been made with procedures for monitoring pupils' progress there is now a need to make use of this information in both curriculum and lesson planning. Teachers need to be clear about intended outcomes and share them with pupils at the beginning of the lessons. There are no strategies to ensure that pupils develop literacy, numeracy and information communication technology skills. In some lessons, teachers' management of a significant minority of disruptive pupils, non-participants not being included in learning and the loss of time through the lack of strategies to move pupils quickly to learning areas results in a poor response by pupils, a poor pace to the lesson and unsatisfactory progress. Teachers' higher expectations of both behaviour and progress would raise standards.
148. Leadership and management in physical education are unsatisfactory. The department has made some progress in improving GCSE A\*-C results, developing new schemes of work and providing better provision for extra-curricular activities since the last inspection but improvement is unsatisfactory overall. More planned opportunities for pupils to assess their own performance against success criteria, improve teaching of literacy, numeracy and the use of ICT, together with strategies to reduce disruptive behaviour of a significant minority of pupils, are needed to raise standards more quickly. The head of department does not have a clear vision for the future. Nor does he have a secure knowledge of how the curriculum is taught across the department. Priorities for the development of the department, which are focussed on raising standards, are not in place. The department does not consistently report to parents so that they are clear about pupils' level of attainment and how progress can be made. Both indoor and outdoor facilities are adequate. Resources are satisfactory but there is a need to develop them so that they support pupils to make progress at their own level. The department recognises the importance of extra-curricular activities, which enhance learning. There is now good provision, with very good take up by pupils. The good performance of some pupils is recognised by selection to representative teams and squads. A large number of non-specialist teachers help with clubs and teams.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- The head of department provides clear and active leadership.
- Pupils are actively involved in their learning.
- Good relationships between pupils and their teachers support the development of an effective learning atmosphere in most lessons.
- Lesson planning and schemes of work for Years 7-9 provide good support for non-specialist teachers.

### Areas for improvement

- The statutory course in religious education for Years 10 and 11 has not yet been fully implemented and has yet to deliver the pupils' full entitlement.
- The majority of pupils in Years 10 and 11 have no means of identifying their progress or recognising their achievements in religious education.
- ICT has yet to be developed and there are very few opportunities for its use in broadening pupils' learning experiences.
- There is a lack of opportunity for teachers to share good practice and to plan for the development of the subject.

149. Results in the 2001 GCSE examinations are below average for all schools, broadly in line with the national average for similar schools. Results have fluctuated since the last inspection; however, the trend is rising and pupils are achieving well in comparison with their other subjects.
150. Standards of work in Year 9 are below average overall; however, a significant minority are achieving higher standards, particularly in their oral work. Their written work does not always meet this level. Achievement is good and pupils are developing a secure knowledge of the world faiths they study. Understanding is enhanced by the teachers' practice of introducing new concepts through the pupils' own experiences. For example, in a lesson about Hindu 'Samskara', pupils were encouraged to consider the main events of their own life. Pupils build upon work from previous years, re-inforcing their understanding. Pupils in Year 7 learn about the origins of Islam and the life of Muhammad, while in Year 9 they reflect on the beliefs of Muslims today. The achievement of some pupils is affected by missing and unfinished work that results in a lack of continuity. This reduces the development of understanding. Pupils study the key events of the life of Jesus and display empathy with his disciples in an account of the crucifixion through the eyes of St Peter. Higher attaining pupils demonstrate understanding of the effects of belief on believers. However, lower attaining pupils respond briefly, including little reasoning and explanation in their answers. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and the use of active learning methods and much oral work ensures that tasks are accessible to all.
151. Standards of work seen in the one Year 11 GCSE lesson observed, and in the coursework, are broadly average. Responses by pupils present demonstrated a confident grasp of the artefacts and rituals of the Jewish faith and their recall and presentation are very good. Coursework is well organised and clear, higher attaining pupils demonstrating understanding as well as secure knowledge. For example, knowledge of the Jewish Shabbat and the Islamic Hajj is well demonstrated, and higher attaining pupils demonstrate real understanding of their significance to believers. The attainment of some pupils is affected by absence and failure to complete coursework. A minority of boys fail to complete the course. No pupils are following the GCSE course in Year 10.
152. Standards of work in Years 10 and 11 in the non- examined course are below average. Lessons are well planned and the schemes of work in religious education, and in the PSHE course, which includes a proportion of the religious education syllabus, are well laid out. At present there is insufficient time, however, to teach the planned lessons, as other areas of PSHE, particularly citizenship, are being trialled in some of the designated time. The opportunities for boys to investigate contemporary moral issues through the eyes of believers are too restricted to enable them to develop the required depth of understanding. There is insufficient opportunity for individual boys to demonstrate their knowledge of different viewpoints. There is no system of assessment and monitoring of their progress within or across the two curriculum areas so pupils do not know how well they are doing or what they need to do to improve.
153. The quality of teaching is good. Most lessons seen were at least satisfactory and some excellent teaching was also observed. In the best lessons, pupils became enthusiastic learners. Lessons have a clear focus and the active involvement of pupils in work lifts pupils' understanding and thus their recall. Teachers are well prepared, although a lack of specialist knowledge of some teachers reduces their confidence and results in missed opportunities to develop ideas. Where teachers have to concentrate on the delivery of lessons they are less able to note pupils' misunderstanding, or to identify progress. Teachers expect good behaviour and pupils usually respond well. As a result, teachers are able to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills and use methods that require them to work actively in groups. Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to develop their reading skills and vocabulary, although there is limited evidence of the use of substantial writing through projects or presentations. In all cases, teachers treat the views and opinions of their pupils with respect, and the pupils gain confidence. In Year 8, the behaviour of a small number of pupils towards their teacher was inconsiderate, though unsatisfactory teaching accentuated it, and resulted in a failure to achieve. Marking is generally regular. Although encouraging, it is not always helpful and pupils do not feel required to complete or catch up work missed despite some teachers' comments that they should do so.

154. Leadership and management are good. Detailed lesson plans have been developed for Years 7-9 that include assessment opportunities and tasks appropriate for different levels of attainment, and support for non-specialist teachers is strong. The head of department has made good links with other organisations such as the 'Spire Trust' and the pupils benefit from their input. There is a clear structure for monitoring the work of the department. However, the lack of planned departmental time reduces opportunities for development through the sharing of good practice. Resources have been improved since the last inspection and the principal classroom is an inviting and stimulating environment for learning. The department is just exploring opportunities for the use of ICT and at present has few computer resources. Presentation of work by pupils using ICT is optional and few do so.
155. Improvement since the last inspection is good. There is some discrete religious education in Years 10 and 11. The new Trafford Agreed Syllabus has been successfully introduced in the lower school and the marking policy has been refined and adopted by the faculty.