

INSPECTION REPORT

SHARPLES SCHOOL

Bolton

LEA area: Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council

Unique reference number: 105259

Headteacher: Mr Kevin Clarke

Reporting inspector: Mrs Helen Silverstone
1258

Dates of inspection: 15th – 18th October 2001

Inspection number: 193625

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 - 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Hill Cot Road
Sharples
Bolton

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Councillor Mrs Hilary Fairclough JP

Date of previous inspection: April 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
1258	Helen Silverstone	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? (Characteristics) How high are standards? (Interpretation of results) How well are pupils and students taught? How well is the school led and managed? What sort of school is it?
13706	Gillian Marslands	Lay inspector		Attitudes, values & personal development/attendance How well does the school care for its pupils and students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
19874	Joe Fitzpatrick	Team inspector	Religious Education	How good are curricular and other opportunities?
30576	Peter Bannon	Team inspector	Mathematics	
23080	Robert Isaac	Team inspector	English	
10140	Rajinder Johal	Team inspector	Science EAL	
30518	Mike Johnson	Team inspector	Art and Design	
10727	Rhona Humphries	Team inspector	Design and technology	
17857	David Walters	Team inspector	History Geography	
19026	Anil Sinha	Team inspector	Modern Foreign Languages Equal Opportunities	
18670	Peter Tidmarsh	Team inspector	Music	
13217	Malcolm Butterworth	Team inspector	Physical Education	
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2423	Susan Leyden	Team inspector	Special educational needs Hearing Impaired Unit	

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Alexandra House, 33 Kingsway
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Sharples School is a mixed comprehensive school for pupils aged 11 to 16 years. It is located on the northern side of the metropolitan borough of Bolton and draws pupils from the surrounding area. The school is over-subscribed and very few pupils, once at the school, leave and go elsewhere. Twenty per cent of the school's pupils are of ethnic minority background with the largest single group being Indian. This is high in comparison with the national average. There are 221 pupils who have a home language other than English, but only three of these are in the early stages of English language acquisition: the largest language group are Gujarati speakers. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is above the national average. The school has a unit for pupils with hearing impairment with 26 pupils. About 3 in 10 of the pupils are designated as having special educational needs, which is above the national average. Until this year, the profile of Year 7 pupils, on entry, has been below the national average, but in September 2001, it was, for the first time, close to national averages in tests at age 11. The school has achieved a 'Sportsmark' award and is actively seeking "Investors in People" status

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very effective school whose results are improving every year. Teaching and learning are good with some very good and excellent practice and pupils' attitudes to school and to their work are very good. The school is very successful in ensuring the welfare of pupils and links with parents are very good. The leadership by headteacher and other managers is very good and, within the constraints of staffing and accommodation, the school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- The leadership and management of the headteacher, key staff and governors are very good.
- Standards of attainment are improving.
- Teaching is good overall, with a significant number of lessons where it is very good or excellent.
- Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are very good.
- Support for pupils with special educational needs and in the Hearing Impaired Unit is very good.
- Pupils' attitudes to school and their behaviour in lessons are very good.
- The school is a caring and friendly place where the well-being of the pupils is a high priority.

What could be improved

- Improve the match of teachers to the demands of the curriculum.
- Develop further the curriculum for all pupils, including those with particular gifts or talents
- Extend and refurbish accommodation, particularly in areas of the school not yet refurbished.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

- Standards of attainment have risen and compare very well with those in similar schools.
- The percentage of lessons in which teaching was satisfactory or better has risen to 98 per cent.
- Monitoring and evaluation procedures are now very good indeed.
- Staff training is now linked firmly to the new performance management procedures and funds are used effectively.
- Opportunities for pupils to take responsibility are now good and the wide range of learning opportunities enables them to show initiative and take more responsibility for their own learning.
- The range of vocational opportunities has been increased and opportunities for all pupils to gain accreditation are now much better.
- The provision for information and communication technology (ICT) throughout the school is much better and there is further planned expansion, following the articulated vision, as funds allow.
- Quiet places are now provided for pupils to support their spiritual development.
- Measures to promote attendance and punctuality are showing increasing success and the use of time at the beginning of the day is now more effective.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 14 and 16 year olds based on average point scores in Key Stage 3 tests and GCSE

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
End of Key Stage 3 results	D	D	C	A
GCSE examinations	D	D	C	B

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

Over the period from 1996 to 2001, pupils' results over the three National Curriculum subjects at the age of 14 rose in line with the national trend, although pupils at the school attain a bit lower than pupils nationally. The gap in mathematics and English between Sharples pupils and pupils nationally is closing. Sharples pupils are nearest to the national average in science. The percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C is now in line with the national average and above that of similar schools. This is a good achievement given that the ability profile of those pupils on entry to the school was below average. The number of higher grades (A*, A and B) has also increased. At the time when the school set targets for the 2001 cohort, data suggested that a much smaller proportion would achieve this level so the results are particularly pleasing. Work seen during the inspection suggested that pupils are generally attaining at the national expectation with some achieving rather better. This upward trend, therefore, looks set to continue.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils are happy and willing to come to school. In lessons the very positive relationships encourage pupils to participate with enthusiasm.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour in lessons is almost always very good and pupils generally conduct themselves very well around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships throughout the school are very good and everyone is treated with respect. Pupils' personal development is good and is still improving.
Attendance	Attendance has improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory.

The pupils' attitudes to school are very good and have improved since the last inspection in 1997. Parents have confirmed that pupils are proud of their school. Most pupils are enthusiastic and show a real interest in their work. The pupils know the school routines well, understand what is expected of them and most settle down quickly to lessons. They listen to each other during classroom discussions and respect each other and their teachers. Many pupils participate in a wide range of homework clubs and out-of-school activities. Good attitudes to school contribute to successful learning and the standards that the pupils achieve. Behaviour is very good and has improved due, in part, to the work of the In-School Centre. Parents agree that the pupils are generally well behaved and that staff manage behaviour well. Most pupils are courteous and polite to visitors. Behaviour in the classrooms is very good and pupils respond well to the school's behaviour guidelines clearly explained in their pupil organisers.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	N/A

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 overall is good with a large number of very good and excellent lessons. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subjects and courses they are teaching, plan their lessons very well and have very high expectations of what pupils will achieve. The quality and use of ongoing assessment are generally very good. Teachers manage pupils well, use time, support staff and resources well and employ effective teaching methods which ensure that pupils learn well. As a result of this, pupils approach their lessons positively and make good progress. Pupils with learning difficulties learn well and make good progress in line with that made by pupils generally. Pupils for whom English is not the first language make better progress than the average. Girls make good progress and the efforts of the school in recent years to raise the standards of boys is now paying off well. Considerable work is being undertaken across all subject areas to improve pupils' literacy and numeracy skills.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum has been made more relevant for pupils in Years 10 and 11. The school now has a curriculum that encourages high achievement and academic standards in its pupils.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN)	Provision for pupils with SEN is good and they receive a high level of support in lessons. Provision for pupils with hearing impairment is very good leading to very good progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The school provides very effective support and, as a result, pupils progress well.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Overall, provision is good. However, the school still does not provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school is a caring and friendly place where the well-being of pupils is a high priority.

The taught curriculum is enhanced by a wide range of other activities that broaden the range of experiences offered to students. The school has begun to identify pupils with particular gifts or talents and has put certain activities in place for them. Not all subjects identify able pupils' needs clearly. Effective support is offered for pupils whose first language is not English and for those who have learning difficulties or are hearing impaired. As a result, the provision offered is generally good and is very good in the Hearing Impaired Unit. Assessment is very good, which enables the curriculum to be targeted more precisely at many pupils which, in turn, ensures that pupils at most levels of ability attain well.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and other key staff lead the school and departments very effectively and there are very good management systems. Leadership ensures very clear educational direction.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is well-informed, takes the initiative and fulfils its responsibilities well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school monitors all aspects of its provision and performance thoroughly. There are very effective systems and structures in place that provide information which is acted upon extensively.
The strategic use of resources	Within the constraints of current accommodation, the school makes very good use of the teaching areas & resources available to support the curriculum.

The school is very well led and is managed very effectively. The new headteacher and his senior staff of two deputies and three senior teachers are dynamic and hard-working and heads of department and heads of year fulfil their management responsibilities very well. The governors are effectively involved in planning for the development of the school and in monitoring and reviewing progress. Since the last inspection, the school has improved its monitoring and evaluation considerably and it effectively pursues the elements of best value.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Three hundred and six questionnaires were returned and six parents attended the meeting with parents.

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children like school and make good progress. • Behaviour is generally good. • Pupils get the right amount of homework. • Teaching is good and teachers have high expectations. • The school is well managed and led and helps pupils to mature and take responsibility. • Parents are comfortable about approaching the school with questions or problems. • They are generally happy with the range of activities available to pupils outside lessons. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents would like to be better informed about their children's progress. • Some parents would like to work more closely with the school. • There was concern that some able children were not reaching their potential.

The parents' views of behaviour, teaching and management were borne out by the observations of the inspection team. Inspectors also found that pupils' attitudes to school were very good and that they took part very well in lessons. This suggests that they do indeed enjoy coming to school. The school tries very hard to work with parents and carers and are pleased that parents feel able to approach them easily. The school has taken account of the need to improve the quality of reports and all year groups will now have at least two reporting opportunities each year. This year, Years 8 and 10 will have two interim reports as well as the normal reports. There is now a new co-ordinator to look after the needs of gifted and talented children. There is a need for some departments to increase the demands made on more able pupils, but their needs are well served in many departments

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

Standards

- 1 The table below shows the attainments of pupils at the school (sch) in the latest reporting year (2001) compared with attainments quoted in the last inspection report and those achieved by pupils nationally in 2001 (nat).

Subject	Key Stage 3	Key Stage 3		GCSE 1996	GCSE 2001	
	1996	sch	2001 nat		sch	nat
5 GCSE grades A*-C				32	46	49.8
5 GCSE grades A*-G				84	88	88.8
1 or more A* - G				88	96	94.5
English Tests	47	61	64		41	51
Mathematics Tests	45	62	66		34	44
Science Tests	38	64	66		60	44
ICT		61	65		63	56
Art		65	73		76	65
Design Tech		56	67		54	52
Geography		61	64		41	59
History		60	64		65	61
Music		76	63		-	
PE		75	69		74	53
Modern Langs		37	45		64	40

- 2 Standards at the end of Year 9 and at GCSE have risen since the last inspection. In 1996, 32 per cent of pupils in Year 11 achieved five or more passes at GCSE grades A* to C while in 2001 the figure was 46 per cent. This is in line with the national average and above the average for similar schools. The percentage of pupils achieving five or more passes at grades A* to G in 2001 was near the national average and the percentage achieving one pass at grades A* to G was just above the national average. In comparison with similar schools¹, the percentage of pupils attaining five or more A* to G passes was well above average and for pupils attaining one or more passes at A* to G it was well above average too.
- 3 At the end of Year 9, pupils also attained better in 2001 than in 1996 with the percentage of pupils gaining Level 5 or above in mathematics rising from 45 per cent to 62 per cent, in science from 38 per cent to 64 per cent and in English from 47 per cent to 61 per cent. In terms of the average points score, the trend for the school is a rising one and is broadly in line with the rising national trend, although from 1998 to 2001 it is two points below average. In teacher assessments, too, figures were better than at the time of the last report and in music and physical education (PE) standards were well above the national averages.
- 4 Overall girls attain better than boys, which is in line with the national situation. The attainment of girls is as expected from data on prior attainment. In those subjects

¹ Similar school comparisons are made with schools having the same proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals.

which are favoured by boys and where the more active style of learning suits them well, boys achieve beyond that which might be expected. Girls do better than boys in art, design and technology, music and modern languages. Boys outperform girls in mathematics, PE and science where the appeal for male pupils is strongest.

- 5 Overall, attainment in English is average by the age of 14 years. In 2001, pupils at the school did not attain quite as well as pupils nationally. The results were, however, better than the results achieved by pupils in similar schools. Girls did a little better than boys generally and, in particular, in the teacher assessments when compared with the test results. There has been a dramatic improvement in the results attained by pupils aged 14 in the last year, caused mainly by the school's sharper focus upon literacy. The work seen in Years 7 to 9 is now about average, which is an improvement on that seen at the time of the last inspection.
- 6 In 2001, the proportions of pupils attaining Level 5 in mathematics were a little below the national average. Overall, the results were well above those for similar schools. Results for boys were in line with the national average and those for girls slightly below. Standards in lessons in Year 9 are now above national expectations for boys and girls, and broadly in line with those in English and science in the school.
- 7 **In science in 2001 at the end of Year 9, overall attainment has improved to be almost in line with national average. Results are very much better than those of similar schools. Standards in lessons suggest that this upward trend will continue.**
- 8 The attainments of pupils aged 16 in GCSE English in 2001 was below the national average. However, all pupils obtain a GCSE certificate in English by the age of 16 years. The school has set itself challenging but realistic targets for attainment in the future. Pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds achieve their potential and are represented in the higher as well as the lower sets in English classrooms. However, they do not attain as highly in speaking and listening as they do in reading and writing.
- 9 **In mathematics in 2001, the proportion of pupils attaining grades A* to C at GCSE improved from 2000, but was still below the national average. The proportion of pupils attaining grades A* to G was in line with the national average.**
- 10 In science in 2001, the proportion of pupils gaining passes at grades A* to C improved and remained above the national average. The highest set was entered for 3 separate sciences. This involved more boys than girls and significantly more boys than girls achieved A* or A grades. Standards in lessons show that pupils in the current Year 11 are attaining above national expectations.
- 11 In the lessons observed, pupils were achieving well in most subjects. Achievement was satisfactory in science and ICT and was very good in history and in the work in the Hearing Impaired Unit. The standards of attainment seen in the work sample scrutinised were generally average in most subjects and above average in art, history, geography and physical education. Standards in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 9 and in Year 11 are average. Pupils, when questioned, were able to explain what they were learning and how they felt they could do better.
- 12 Pupils with special educational needs make good progress at all ages because of the high level of support they receive in all their lessons. By the end of Year 9, pupils who enter the school with difficulties in literacy and numeracy become more fluent in

their reading, improve the quality and accuracy of their writing and increase their competency in mathematics. This overall improvement contributes to their progress in other subjects. The majority of pupils with a statement of special educational need achieve one or more GCSE grades by age 16 and do well in other externally accredited courses.

- 13 Pupils with hearing impairment make very good progress in all their lessons in the unit and in mainstream classes. This is due to the pupils' willingness to work hard, the quality of teaching, the support they receive in all their lessons and the signing skills of specialist staff. Pupils progressively develop the quality and range of their language and communication, and this is reflected in the progress they make in their written work in all their subjects. At the end of Year 9, whilst the severity of hearing loss limits the attainment of some profoundly deaf pupils, others achieve the levels expected for their age, especially in technical and practical subjects. By the end of Year 11, some pupils achieve GCSE passes at grades A* to C or grades D to G as well as success in other externally accredited examination courses.
- 14 From the school's analysis of data for pupils aged 16, it is clear that pupils of Indian origin attain better and make more progress than other groups. No such analysis has been done for pupils in Year 9. The school also analyses data on the relative attainment of boys and girls and this results in work on teaching and learning styles. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in all areas of the curriculum, as do pupils for whom English is an additional language. This is because of the high level of skilled support they are given and the awareness of teachers, who cater well for their needs. Pupils with special gifts or talents progress well in Years 7, 8 and 9 but in Years 10 and 11, their progress is not as good. The programme that has been planned for them has begun to take effect but not all departments are, as yet, providing sufficiently challenging work for the older pupils. However, challenge is apparent and achievement is good in mathematics, art, religious education, music and physical education.
- 15 Literacy has been introduced into the English curriculum in Year 7 and the focus has been increasingly sharp since September 2000. Standards in literacy in English as well as in other subjects are sound and improving. In mathematics, pupils are able to refer to words such as *parallelogram* and *trapezium*. Teachers use subject-specific words often. Pupils complete literacy exercises in science, completing sentences by inserting the correct terminology. In religious education, pupils develop a good vocabulary associated with faith. In physical education essays, pupils have good written presentation, good spelling and good vocabulary.
- 16 Pupils achieve good standards in numeracy in mathematics where it is well taught. They use numeracy suitably in many subjects. In science, pupils of all ages construct and interpret line graphs. In information and communication technology they write algebraic formulae for use in spreadsheets and in design and technology they measure and use proportions accurately. Pupils in Year 11 calculate the pressure exerted by animals and humans. In geography, bar graphs are used to compare populations in British cities and rank correlation is used to compare a variety of geographic trends. In history, pupils understand the linkage of chronological expressions such as decade and century. Pupils in art apply principles in scaling and proportion and the symmetry involved in the works of Escher.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

- 17 The pupils' attitudes to school are very good and have improved since the last inspection in 1997. Parents have confirmed that the pupils are proud of their school. Most pupils are enthusiastic and show a real interest in their work. A good example of this was seen in a Year 11 history session on the conflict in Northern Ireland, where the pupils maintained high levels of interest, involvement and concentration. The pupils know the school routines well, understand what is expected of them and most settle down quickly to lessons. They listen to each other during classroom discussions. This was evident in a Year 10 physical education lesson on the structure of muscles, where their response to questioning indicated that they had listened well. Many pupils participate in a wide range of homework clubs and out-of-school activities that add to their learning and social development. Good attitudes to school contribute to successful learning and the standards that the pupils achieve.
- 18 Pupils with special educational needs and hearing impairment have very good attitudes to their work. They enjoy coming to school and work hard during their lessons. The great majority are well behaved and settle down quickly at the start of lessons. They listen carefully to the teacher and to one another and concentrate hard when doing written or practical tasks. They are eager to ask and to respond to questions and enjoy taking part in group activities. They take a pride in their work and are confident about their ability to make good progress. Occasionally, a few pupils with emotional or behavioural difficulties lose interest in their work and their behaviour deteriorates. However, support from staff and the culture of mutual respect that exists throughout the school encourages all pupils to recognise their own value and achievements.
- 19 Pupils for whom English is an additional language enjoy their work and value and make good use of the support they are offered. They work well within the class and are keen to do well and thus they make very good progress.
- 20 Behaviour is very good and has improved due, in part, to the work of the In-School Centre. Parents agree that the pupils are generally well behaved and that staff manage behaviour well. Most pupils are courteous and polite to visitors. Behaviour in the classrooms is very good and pupils respond well to the school's behaviour guidelines clearly explained in their pupil organisers. When teaching is good, the pupils respond very well. Where lessons lack challenge and appropriate strategies, the behaviour of some pupils deteriorates. The pupils have a sensible approach to using the school's equipment and can be trusted with any property left in the communal area at lunchtime. The school has suitable behaviour and anti-bullying policies in place and no bullying or racially motivated incidents were seen during the inspection. The pupils clearly understand that they should consult their form tutor or head of year should problems arise. The behaviour policy is reviewed regularly and the school benefits from an anti-racist policy, which recognises the cultural diversity of the pupils. The pupils respect the school rules and understand the impact their actions have on others. During the last reporting year, there was one permanent exclusion from the school due to aggressive and confrontational behaviour and a relatively high number of fixed-term ones. The very good behaviour of most pupils contributes to the welcoming atmosphere in the school.
- 21 Relationships within the school are very good and have improved since the last inspection. All pupils are valued, regardless of ability, gender or race. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff are caring and friendly. Most staff know their pupils, and in some cases their families, very well. Pupils work together well in lessons and talk sociably at breaks and lunchtimes. Very good relationships are a strong feature of the school.

- 22 The school successfully promotes the personal development of the pupils. This was an issue raised at the last inspection that has now improved. As a result, most pupils show respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others. This was evident in a Year 8 assembly on the theme of friendship, where the pupils discussed their opinions without embarrassment. Pupils are reliable and take responsibility for tasks around the school. They act as librarians, team captains and assist in the school reception at lunchtime and at parents meetings held after school. Some Year 11 pupils volunteer to be school leaders and act as role models to support the younger pupils. Year 10 pupils have recently been trained to take on the role of peer listeners during the lunchtime break on two days each week. Some also act as 'buddies' to support the Year 7 pupils on their arrival and settling in period at the school. The pupils also gain an understanding of the needs of others through the school's fund-raising activities to support charitable causes.
- 23 Attendance is satisfactory. For the last reporting year, attendance levels were in line with the national average. Most tutor groups in Years 7, 8, 9 and 10 achieved over 90 per cent attendance over the four days of the inspection. Unauthorised absence is average and in line with national figures. Teachers have worked hard and successfully to give a high profile to attendance matters in form time, pastoral meetings and in displays around the school. This increased vigilance has secured an improvement in attendance figures from the unsatisfactory level evident at the last inspection. Procedures to monitor and promote attendance and punctuality are good and recognised with individual and form awards. The school now has the effective support of a part time attendance officer to monitor absence and support high levels of attendance. Registration is quick and efficient, allowing lessons to start on time.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

- 24 Teaching is good and in a large proportion of lessons it is very good and sometimes excellent. Overall, teaching was satisfactory or better in 98 per cent of lessons, good or better in 79 per cent and very good or excellent in 39 per cent. In Years 7 to 9, teaching is satisfactory or better in 99 per cent of lessons and good or better in 75 per cent. The proportion of very good or excellent teaching is high, too, with 39 per cent of lessons falling into this category. In Years 10 and 11, teaching was satisfactory or better in 97 per cent of lessons. It was good or better in 84 per cent of lessons and was very good or excellent in 41 per cent. This is considerably better than the picture at the time of the previous report when teaching was satisfactory or better in only 85 per cent of lessons and good or better in only half of all lessons observed.
- 25 This good teaching ensured that learning was good overall and that it, too, was satisfactory or better in 98 per cent of lessons seen and was at least good in 74 per cent. One of the clear reasons for the good quality of learning seen was that there were very good relationships between teachers and pupils and between the pupils themselves. This led to good attitudes on the part of pupils and ensured that they tried hard and concentrated well.
- 26 One of the areas where teaching has clearly improved is in the opportunities afforded for pupils to learn independently. Teachers were seen to provide pupils with a challenging task and to drive learning through time-limited activities, such as in the lower ability Year 11 lesson where pupils had to interpret and perform a poem. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are now generally high, as in the Year 9 games lesson where the teacher expected all to reach a Level 5 in badminton and pupils responded accordingly.

- 27 Teaching was always at least satisfactory in most subjects and in science and history it was at least good in all the lessons observed. In history, 83 per cent of lessons showed teaching that was very good or excellent. It was only in ICT, modern languages and personal and social education lessons that less than one third of teaching was very good or excellent. All teaching was at least satisfactory in Years 7 and 9 and 97 per cent of teaching was satisfactory or better in the other years. There were only three lessons altogether which were not satisfactory.
- 28 **In the very best lessons, there was a good emphasis on the learning of specialist vocabulary, expositions were clear, questions used well and pupils were motivated to take part in the activities. Teachers were always able to manage pupils successfully and many lessons were characterised by clear respect, the pupils for the teacher and the teacher for the pupils. In a Year 7 art lesson on colour blending and the concept of composition, the clear introduction to the lesson ensured that pupils were very well aware of what was expected of them. A 'quick-fire' vocabulary review at the start of a geography lesson, with a lower ability Year 8 class, engaged and motivated pupils as well as ensuring a solid base on which to move forward. In a Year 10 history lesson, pupils played a revision game based on survival in ancient Rome. They played with a quiet intensity and their teacher raised their curiosity and managed the class with humour whilst the main ideas of Roman medicine were revised. In a science lesson on the circulatory system with a Year 8 top set, the teacher used questions very effectively to probe understanding and to promote thinking and the drawing of inference. In a lower ability Year 9 French class on the days of the week, the lesson was very well structured with a range of activities that kept pupils interested and involved. Here, too, the potentially difficult pupils were very well managed. In a Year 10 English class, the teacher set the agenda crisply, set time limited tasks and intervened with apposite teaching points. As a result, pupils were able to analyse television schedules. Progress in developing the skills of identification and analysis was good for all the pupils in the class.**
- 29 **Assessment, which is very thorough, is used extensively to plan the next stage of learning for classes, groups and individual pupils.**
- 30 **Suitable homework was set in most lessons with a range of different activities. It was often written clearly on the blackboard so that pupils could copy it at their own pace. The learning of new vocabulary was required in some French lessons, good quality homework was set in an English lesson on celebrity interviews, pupils in a Year 10 mathematics lesson had carried out an investigation, prior to using their findings in class and, in a Year 10 history lesson, pupils were required to revise at home prior to an assessment test.**
- 31 **In the hearing impaired unit, a Year 9 class enjoyed a lesson on endangered species where the teacher used a range of activities which allowed pupils to demonstrate prior learning, to discuss issues and to research new information. Here, the high level of support offered allowed all pupils to receive the individual attention they needed. In a Year 11 middle ability mathematics class, a new topic was introduced, that of translation. Because the teacher's explanation was so clear, pupils were able quickly to translate accurately and success meant that they worked willingly and persevered in what they were doing.**
- 32 The teaching and learning of pupils with special educational needs is good. In most of their lessons pupils are grouped by ability and work is well matched to their

learning needs. Pupils who have a statement of special educational need receive additional support from learning support assistants, who ensure that the pupils understand what they have to do and are given the help they need when they meet a problem. As a result they make good progress. In the majority of lessons, teachers take account of the pupils' learning difficulties and the targets listed in the pupils' individual education plans. They adapt activities and materials to meet the different needs of pupils. This encourages pupils to work independently and take responsibility for their learning. Teachers and learning support assistants have very good relationships with pupils and give constant encouragement and positive feedback. As a result, pupils enjoy their lessons and concentrate well. In the small number of lessons where materials are not well matched to pupils' abilities, pupils have to rely too much on the additional help in order to complete the tasks.

- 33 The teaching and learning for hearing impaired pupils is very good and, at times, excellent. In the Hearing Impaired Unit, pupils make very good progress because lessons are carefully planned and taught with skill and sensitivity. Teachers start each lesson with a clear introduction to the subject and use careful explanations and constant questioning to help pupils explore and understand new concepts and terminology. Practical activities and the effective use of pictures and objects reinforce the pupils' knowledge and understanding. By constantly drawing on pupils' experience and building on their answers, teachers help pupils develop the quality and range of their language and communication. They expect pupils to work hard and to achieve good results, so pupils are kept on task throughout the lesson.
- 34 In mainstream classes, teachers of the deaf and special educational needs communication assistants ensure that hearing impaired pupils take a full part. Highly skilled, signed support during the teachers' introduction and explanations and throughout class discussions means that pupils understand what is being taught and what they need to do during the practical work. As a result, they are able to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the topics and to contribute to class discussions.
- 35 In-class support teachers use appropriate strategies to support language development for pupils with English as an additional language as well as subject understanding. This includes opportunities for speaking and listening, using first language translations to explain key words and concepts and help with writing and recording. For those who need it, there is planned withdrawal support, additional help to catch up, mentoring and a specific focus on certain skills, including the use of ICT.
- 36 The Literacy Management Group, which has been in place now for two years, formulates and promotes ideas on the teaching of literacy. The Literacy Reward scheme, for example, is having an increasingly good effect on pupils' motivation to succeed. The Family Literacy group meets regularly and has strong support from pupils, although it is not supported well by parents as yet. Teachers are guided well by the subject's leaders, and resources are good in both quality and quantity. There are good examples of literacy skills being taught in a number of subjects. They have good opportunities for speaking and listening when they discuss socially or morally contentious issues in Years 10 and 11. In art and design, pupils develop a good vocabulary because teachers use banks of words relevant to their lessons. The promotion of high standards of literacy is more effective in history than geography, although in both subjects teachers place a good emphasis on the appropriate vocabulary.

- 37 Numeracy is well taught in mathematics and, during the inspection, examples were noted of the use of numeracy in a range of lessons, such as where graphs are used in geography and science and use of algebraic formulae in ICT. The learning of different number systems in modern languages reinforces basic numeracy.

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

- 38 **The school provides a curriculum that is broad, balanced and relevant to pupils' needs. In Years 7 to 9, the curriculum complies with the requirements of the National Curriculum, with all pupils, apart from those for whom some subjects are not felt to be suitable, studying the core subjects and all the subjects of the foundation curriculum and religious education. The school has successfully introduced the National Strategies in Literacy and Numeracy in these year groups. Both strategies are supported by good policies, which are becoming increasingly influential in many subjects and are satisfactorily supported by the developments in the school library.**
- 39 **A programme of personal and social education (PSE), delivered by form tutors, is also provided for all pupils and incorporates health education, sex education and citizenship. There is, in addition, a Hearing Impaired Unit for some 26 pupils, who are integrated with mainstream classes as much as possible, on an individual basis; otherwise their curriculum is provided in the unit by a group of specialist teachers. In Years 7 to 11, most pupils study only one modern language; however, in the current Year 9 a relatively small number study two.**
- 40 **The modern languages studied are European. In the recent past the school has also provided courses in Gujarati, the community language most commonly spoken by pupils at home. This year no community languages are provided because of insufficient demand, but the school is ready to provide relevant community languages when the demand warrants it. There are extra instrumental lessons for some pupils in music, but the range of these is limited.**
- 41 **The curriculum provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. Pupils who have a statement of special educational need receive additional help in their lessons from a learning support assistant. This ensures they are able to take a full part in the activities. In Years 7 to 9 the use of information technology, with programmes such as 'Successmaker', provides pupils with additional opportunities to develop their reading, writing and number skills. A specialist teacher from the Learning Support Service provides weekly individual sessions for pupils with specific learning difficulties. Pupils are able to make progress in their lessons because many departments have developed materials and resources to meet the needs of lower attaining pupils. Pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties are able to maintain continuity in their education because of the support they get in the In-School Centre. Since the last inspection the school has extended the range of courses leading to external accreditation at age 16 and this provides more opportunities for lower attaining pupils to receive recognition for their achievements. The Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) programme is especially suitable for pupils who need a more individualised approach to their work.**
- 42 **The curriculum for pupils with hearing impairment is very good and carefully tailored to meet each pupil's individual needs. Flexible arrangements and an appropriate balance between teaching in the unit and integration in mainstream classes means pupils with hearing impairment are provided with a broad and balanced curriculum,**

with access to specialist teaching as well as opportunities to work alongside hearing pupils. Pupils do not learn a modern foreign language and the extra time available is used effectively to review and develop the work done in mainstream lessons and to focus on communication skills. Since the last inspection the school has extended the range of externally accredited courses available to pupils in Years 10 and 11 so that pupils with hearing impairment have more opportunities for their achievements to be recognised. Pupils develop greater independence through the well-planned programme of work experience. This plays a valuable part in extending the pupils' knowledge of the world and introduces them to a wider range of people and situations.

- 43 **For pupils for whom English is an additional language, there is good liaison with subject teachers to ensure good provision of in-class support. There is also appropriate withdrawal support for those still adapting to the English education system and who are at early stages of learning English. All the work in the withdrawal setting is firmly placed within the National Curriculum**
- 44 **In Years 10 and 11, pupils follow a core curriculum consisting of English (language and literature), mathematics, science, design and technology, modern languages, physical education, religious education and personal and social education (PSE); the PSE programme includes careers education and citizenship. In addition, pupils can choose from two option blocks offering a suitable range of GCSE courses. There are also courses leading to the vocational ASDAN award or a Royal Society of Arts (RSA) award or an award in Computer Literacy and Information Technology (C.L.A.I.T). Most pupils take double award science. There is a high level of participation by ethnic minority pupils in GCSE religious education but their take-up of GCSE drama is relatively low. In all, pupils can study up to a maximum of nine GCSE courses.**
- 45 **In line with a recommendation made in the last inspection report, the school has sought to make the curriculum match more closely the full range of pupils' needs by widening the provision it makes in vocational courses. In consequence, pupils can now choose from two GNVQ courses, both offered at Intermediate Level. These vocational courses and the new provision made in information and communication technology (ICT) throughout the school represent major improvements in the school's curricular provision since the last inspection. Several departments also offer Certificates of Achievement for pupils for whom GCSE examinations are not suitable.**
- 46 **Opportunities for boys and girls are equal. ICT offers clubs throughout the school and on certain days only girls can attend in order to attempt to equalise opportunity in an area where boys usually dominate. There are separate gender groups in swimming, which encourage participation from ethnic minority girls.**
- 47 **While complying with national requirements, the school has developed a positive, flexible approach towards the curriculum in recent years in order to ensure that the range of educational experiences it offers meets as fully as possible the varied and diverse needs of its pupils. For example, it has drawn up a register of gifted and talented pupils and has sought to ensure that teaching is matched to their needs, that their parents are involved in the task of motivating them to do well and that systems are in place for tracking their progress. It has established contacts with the National Association of Gifted Children. A Youth Enterprise programme is also provided, which is helping pupils to develop their understanding of how business operates.**

- 48 The school also works closely with the Bolton Ethnic Minority Achievement Service (BEMAS) in order to ensure that it provides appropriate curriculum support for the large number of pupils for whom English is an additional language. In addition to celebrating the Christian feasts of Easter and Christmas, other religious festivals, such as Divali and Eid, are celebrated and the school is sensitive to the needs of Muslim pupils during times of fasting. There is also an In-School Centre, specifically designed to meet the needs of pupils in danger of being excluded from school; a member of Her Majesty's Inspectorate recently commended this. A range of adult education courses, which do not involve the school staff, is also offered on Tuesday and Thursday evenings.
- 49 A wide range of extra-curricular visits and experiences enriches the curriculum. There is good provision for sporting activities, including competitive games. The awarding to the school of the Sportsmark Award, recently renewed until 2004, is a mark of the high regard in which its physical education curriculum is held. There is also a wide array of clubs linked to subjects, such as the modern languages club, the ICT club, the music club and a club for the hearing impaired.
- 50 Two study support co-ordinators have recently been appointed to co-ordinate the many additional activities pupils undertake before, during and after school. Many departments now offer booster classes for designated pupils and opportunities for supported revision. The appointment of a new co-ordinator for pupils with particular gifts and talents has revived the programme of extra-curricular activities for these pupils, which enriches the curriculum they are offered and stimulates them well.
- 51 Pupils also make occasional visits to theatres, museums and places of interest and opportunities for fieldwork are provided in geography. The school has an extensive programme of residential visits, curricular weekends and trips to other European countries.
- 52 The school has considerably improved and enriched its curricular provision since the last inspection. Pupils are well prepared for the next phase of their education and there are very good curricular links with feeder primary schools and with the providers of post-16 education. These links have improved since the last inspection. Whilst the pupils are still at primary school, visits and open days are arranged and links with other primary liaison teachers are established. The staff attend the primary school parents' meetings and liaise with their staff regarding the teaching of English, mathematics and science. The school arranges 'taster days' whereby the Year 6 pupils can sample lessons and take part in curriculum projects linking Year 6 and Year 7 pupils. The newly appointed primary liaison teacher has established a termly newsletter to keep the primary schools informed of events and achievements at Sharples School. The local community college, to which some of the pupils transfer, also organises 'taster days' for the pupils. The college liaison officer then visits the school, bringing along former pupils studying at the college. Further links are maintained with other local secondary schools that share residential holidays.
- 53 Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have careers as a timetabled subject, although work begins in Year 9 with a module of work before the point at which pupils choose option subjects. In Year 10 pupils develop ICT skills, research skills and

examine their own goals and targets. In Year 11, they work on their record of achievement and their personal statements. Pupils in Year 10 undertake a period of work experience, which is well structured and supported. The school has good links with local businesses, which provide work experience placements, and also has both a training consultant and a local bank manager on the governing body.

- 54 **Overall, the school makes good provision for the statutory curriculum and provides a good range and quality of learning experiences for its pupils. The complexity of its curricular provision mirrors the complexity of the various client groups of pupils it seeks to serve, and it is ready to adapt and refine its curricular provision further if this will help it to meet pupils' needs more closely.**

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

- 55 The school's procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare are very good. Parents have expressed the view that the school is a friendly place. This view was confirmed by the inspection. The school's policy for pastoral care is based on fairness, compassion and care. The staff know the pupils, and sometimes their families, very well and the pupils have described the school as a 'caring' school. All pupils regardless of ability, gender or race are treated equally and with respect.
- 56 **A suitable new child protection policy has been written and is due to be ratified by the governing body. The head of Year 10 is the newly appointed member of staff responsible for child protection. All teaching staff are aware of procedures and have received regular training. The lunchtime ancillary staff know that they must report any concerns to teaching staff, but they have not yet received any training on child protection issues. The school acknowledges the need to organise appropriate training in the future.**
- 57 A suitable health and safety policy is implemented and care is taken during most practical lessons. Pupils are aware of safety issues and these are emphasised regularly in lessons. Fire precautions, electrical checks and whole-school risk assessment are carried out regularly. However, despite improvements, the cleanliness of the toilets is a health and safety issue. Concerns also arise in the food technology department regarding the storage of food and lack of laundry and separate hand-washing facilities. Pupils leaning over cookers during practical lessons also constitute a safety hazard. The pupils are well supervised by ancillary staff and teachers at breaks and lunchtime. There are good arrangements for dealing with illness and accidents as there are five people trained in first aid in school. The school has a good medical room and the school nurse visits two mornings a week. The nurse provides very good support to the school with additional medical advice and information for pupils.
- 58 Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are very good and attendance is improving. Attendance is monitored daily by form tutors and the attendance officer, who keep the heads of year informed. The educational social worker also maintains regular and frequent contact with the school. The school has adopted a 'first day response' scheme and the office provides very good support by contacting the homes of absent pupils. Parents have confirmed that the school does check absences by telephoning the pupils' homes. The school takes a firm line on attendance and requires parents to fill in one of the absence slips provided by the school if their child cannot attend. Some parents have been given 'pagers' so that

they can be contacted should their child not arrive at school. Attendance is recorded in the pupils' organisers and attendance rates for each tutor group are displayed in communal areas. The school also awards certificates to pupils whose attendance is improving.

- 59 **Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and eliminating oppressive behaviour have improved and are very good. There are suitable behaviour, anti-bullying and anti-racist policies in place. The behaviour policy is reviewed regularly. Parents have confirmed that the staff manage behaviour well. The school's behaviour guidelines are understood by the pupils and consistently implemented by most staff, who have received training on behaviour management. The school has an appropriate scheme of sanctions and badges and certificates are awarded at Achievement Assemblies for good behaviour, effort and achievement. Incidents of challenging behaviour, including bullying or racially motivated incidents, are recorded, monitored and acted upon by the heads of year and senior staff. The In-School Centre for pupils in danger of exclusion provides additional support for pupils until they are ready to return to the classroom.**
- 60 **There are very good procedures in place for monitoring and supporting the pupils' personal development. The form tutors and heads of year maintain a very strong pastoral system based on the very good relationships between the pupils and staff. If possible, Year 7 tutors continue with their class through to Year 11. These arrangements provide continuity for the pupils. Regular heads of year and pastoral meetings are held. Vulnerable pupils and pupils in danger of exclusion are carefully monitored. The school makes good provision for the personal, social and health education of the pupils. The police, social workers and health professionals provide effective support.**
- 61 The school takes good care of pupils with special educational needs. Support assistants know the pupils well and relationships are good, so pupils trust the staff to help them over difficulties. The In-School Centre makes very good provision for vulnerable pupils and those who cannot always control their behaviour in lessons. Pupils who might otherwise be excluded or miss lessons are helped to remain in school and overcome their personal difficulties.
- 62 The school has very good procedures for assessing attainment. Whole-school procedures are very effective, ensuring that all teachers have necessary information about pupils when they arrive in the school and providing a sound basis for future assessments. These original data are supplemented by adding test and examination results and details of progress checks as these all become available. Subject assessments are informed by a comprehensive whole-school policy. Science, history, geography, physical education and art departments and the Hearing Impaired Unit have very good internal procedures. In English, assessment procedures are sound, but occasional difficulties arise because continuity of assessment and standards of marking are affected when supply teachers have to be used. The school analyses attainment by gender and ethnic grouping. Standards of marking in the school are good, although better information is required for pupils, in some subjects, on what they need to do to improve. Pupils are well informed about their progress and about their performances in comparison with national standards, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
- 63 Most departments use assessment information to change curricular planning. Very good use is made in history, religious education, art and in the Hearing Impaired Unit. This use, however, is not as clearly developed in English, modern foreign languages

and music or for pupils with SEN. Procedures for monitoring progress of curriculum subjects against national, local education authority and other subjects are good. Very detailed data, used to help raise standards of attainment, are distributed to all departments and, during autumn each year, promptly updated as new national statistics become available. Details, gathered at the beginning of Key Stage 3, help pupils as they progress from primary into secondary school. Interim reports are produced in Year 10 and attainment targets are carefully set for pupils. This will soon be the case for Year 8 as well. From interim reports corrective solutions are agreed between school and parents. Teachers' personal records are checked regularly by senior management, both for the detail of recording and the quality and punctuality of marking. GCSE results, monitored against predicted grades, are published in booklet form to ensure that all teachers remain fully informed. All Years 10 and 11 pupils are interviewed by their respective form tutors. National Curriculum targets are identified and subject-centred targets agreed.

- 64 Procedures for monitoring and recording pupils' academic progress are good overall. Learning support assistants monitor the progress of pupils with SEN in lessons on a daily basis and keep a daily record of the work done. The new format for individual education plans provides useful information for teachers and reminds them of the pupils' difficulties. The inclusion of a subject specific target for pupils with special educational needs has helped make the targets more relevant, but some targets are still too broad and do not give enough detail for progress to be tracked in the short or mid term. Pupils are still not sufficiently involved in regularly planning and reviewing their own progress.
- 65 Procedures for assessing and monitoring the progress of pupils with hearing impairment are very good. Detailed records are kept of the work done in mainstream lessons and of the pupils' response. Their overall progress is regularly reviewed within the unit. Targets set in pupils' individual education plans are linked to their priority needs. Pupils are supervised at the start and end of days and at break and lunchtimes. Hearing aids and radio aids are checked each day. An audiologist visits twice weekly to check on any difficulties and monitor pupils' needs and close links are maintained with other specialist support agencies. Performance data is appropriately used to review the progress of pupils and to plan allocation of support.
- 66 **Very good support is provided by BEMAS staff for pupils for whom English is an additional language. All pupils are on a register and a detailed profile and relevant contextual information records are kept. This enables pupils to be targeted and appropriate support to be provided. However, this information is not shared with subject teachers so they cannot always target additional support in class. There is a lunchtime 'open house' support for homework, which provides mentoring and is also a social opportunity. A welcoming environment and a good range of culturally relevant visual resources are available within the unit.**

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- 67 The overall quality of the school's partnership with parents is good. Views expressed at the parents' meeting and in the responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire indicate that the majority of parents are very supportive. They have found the school newsletters very useful and the headteacher and staff accessible if problems arise. However, some parents were concerned about the school's relationship with parents and information regarding their children's progress. The inspection confirmed that

the school's partnership with parents is a strong feature of the school and that parents are well informed about the pupils' progress.

- 68 The school maintains very good links with parents. Frequent newsletters keep the parents informed about forthcoming events and the pupils' achievements. Parents feel comfortable when approaching the school in order to seek information or resolve problems. A suitable home/school agreement has been distributed within the Year 7 parents' booklet. Parents' meetings, presentation evenings and school productions are well attended. There is a translation service available for homes where English is not the first language and home visits can be arranged.
- 69 The level of parental involvement with the school is good. The Sharples Association organises social and fund-raising events. Dances, car boot sales and fairs are organised, which raise approximately £5,000 each year for the school. These funds have been used to benefit the pupils by purchasing additional resources such as books, display cabinets, outdoor seating and funding the school mini-bus. Parents have responded well to the school's questionnaires and many of their suggestions have been adopted.
- 70 The quality of information for parents is very good and has improved since the last inspection. Information about what the pupils will be learning in the coming year is explained in a letter from the relevant head of year to the parents. There is an information booklet for the parents of Year 7 pupils, which clearly explains the need for punctuality and good attendance. The 'How can I help?' booklet contains further curriculum information, explains tutorial sessions and suggests how parents can help their children to learn. The governors' report and school brochure are informative and contain all the required information. Parents' evenings are held annually for each year group, allowing parents to consult the teachers about their children's progress. Additional meetings are held for the parents of Year 7 pupils to discuss pastoral issues. Parents are also welcome to attend careers evenings, drugs awareness sessions and the Year 9 options evening. The annual progress reports have improved and are of good quality. They inform parents about the pupils' attainment and progress in all subjects of the curriculum and indicate targets for improvement, as well as providing the results of school and national tests where required. Years 10 and 11 receive interim reports prior to their GCSE examinations. However, the school still does not report on information and communication technology at the end of Year 11. This was raised as an issue at the last inspection. The school acknowledges this and plans to resolve the issue in the 2002 reports.
- 71 Parents of pupils with a statement of special educational need are satisfactorily informed. They are given copies of their child's individual education plan and invited to the annual review meetings. However, some opportunities are missed for involving parents in planning and target setting in order to help pupils.
- 72 There is good liaison with parents of pupils from language backgrounds other than English and the home language is used to facilitate and improve communication. There are good links with the local community, social opportunities are provided for Bosnian parents and there is regular contact with Muslim community leaders.
- 73 Overall parents make a satisfactory contribution to their children's learning at school and at home. The school has issued clear guidelines for parents regarding homework and most parents are supportive. The pupil organisers are a useful opportunity for home-school liaison to support learning. However, only approximately 50 per cent of parents use the organiser well.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- 74 The school is very well led and is managed very effectively. The ethos of the school aims at encouraging pupils to succeed as well as they can academically and personally whilst providing them with a stimulating and caring environment in which to do this. The mission statement, aims and values of the school are well reflected in its day-to-day work.
- 75 The new headteacher and his senior staff of two deputies and three senior teachers are dynamic and hard-working. The recent appointment of a business manager for the school has enabled one of the deputy headteachers to pursue a strategic role that relates more closely to pupils and staff. There are three committees which service the school and which address the monitoring of teaching, standards and the curriculum, the welfare and guidance of pupils and management and resources. These are led by members of the senior management team and all have a shared commitment to improvement and the pursuit of excellence. As a result of this focus, standards at GCSE have risen to be in line with the national average.
- 76 The weakness in curriculum management identified in the last report has now been addressed successfully by the appointment to this area of a dynamic deputy headteacher, and most of the areas where the school did not meet statutory requirements have now been addressed. There is still an issue about collective worship and the reporting of ICT standards in Years 10 and 11, but in all other respects the curriculum is now strong and getting even better.
- 77 Middle managers, too, are very effective, with management of academic departments being very good overall and never less than good. Leadership and management in the PE department are excellent and they are very good in science, art, history, design and technology, religious education and in the Hearing Impaired Unit. In the remaining departments, leadership and management are good. Heads of year also provide very good leadership to their year teams.
- 78 Since the last inspection, the school has improved its monitoring and evaluation considerably. Individual pupils, groups of pupils and cohorts receive targets and their progress towards them is monitored constantly. The results of this monitoring are used to inform meetings of curriculum leaders where discussions on the effects of gender and ethnicity on attainment are frequently on the agenda. The sharing of strategies and teaching styles helps to improve practice across the school. Senior and middle managers monitor planning and teaching on a regular basis and pupils who are vulnerable or at risk of exclusion are monitored through being kept on an 'active file'. The result of this has been to reduce exclusion, improve teaching and, consequently, learning and to raise standards for all.
- 79 Governors play an important part in the life of the school. They have a very clear understanding of their responsibilities and they discharge them very effectively. Governors are all able to take an active part in the life of the school through a committee structure, which mirrors the committees of the school. The governing body, as a whole, has a very clear view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and governors fulfil all their statutory duties, except in respect of the daily act of collective worship and the reporting of ICT in Years 10 and 11. They are fully involved in helping to shape the strategic direction of the school, play a full part as critical friends and undertake their evaluative role effectively.

- 80 Plans for the development and improvement of the school continue to be good. It is soundly based on the key issues from the last inspection and is rigorously monitored. There are both short-term plans, covering one year, and a longer term plan, dealing with three years. These are supported by departmental plans, which identify the ways in which departments translate whole-school targets into their own work.
- 81 Financial management in the school is good and is developing further as a result of the appointment of the new business manager, who has a strong background in schools' finance. The development plan has appropriate spending plans to support it and these are regularly monitored. Departments are given capitation allowances and also have the opportunity to bid into funds for development. However, not all departmental development plans always identify funding against the development headings. Governors are involved in setting priorities for the work of the school and in developing specifications and in scrutinising tenders for major works. Specific grants such as that for the provision of the new ICT facility are effectively used for their specific purpose. The school effectively pursues the elements of best value and is actively seeking to improve still further on its consultation.
- 82 The school now has important new facilities for ICT in the curriculum and is making it possible for the wider community to use them. However, facilities for the use of ICT for the purposes of administration were less effective at the time of the inspection. The installation of new cabling and the link to the curriculum system was imminent and the school was considering the use of an electronic system of registration. Given the energy and commitment that the management of the school bring to new developments, the system is likely to be installed quickly. The general administration, which supports the teaching, is good.
- 83 The school is, in most respects, well staffed with experienced teachers. The deployment of teachers and assistants to support pupils with special educational needs, particularly those with hearing impairment, is very good. The school has, however, in common with many other schools, experienced some difficulties in recruiting sufficient numbers of good quality permanent staff and has made use of temporary teachers in some subjects. The headteacher is unwilling to appoint permanent staff whom he considers inadequate. In English, the use of supply teachers to cover staff absences has impaired the raising of standards. The governors are aware of these problems and have approved plans to increase the staffing for English. The headteacher provides opportunities for able staff to gain promotion, which helps to ensure that they remain at the school.
- 84 The staffing for pupils with special educational needs is good overall, but with some weaknesses. Thirteen learning support assistants provide a high level of skilled support for pupils with significant learning, behavioural or physical difficulties. All have undergone further training and work effectively alongside class teachers. The special educational needs co-ordinator is experienced and manages her duties well. However, as the sole teacher in the department she has insufficient time to provide the range of small group support that some pupils need, contribute to develop work in departments, or monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the support arrangements. The school has recognised this and has provided additional support for administration.
- 85 The staffing for pupils with hearing impairment is excellent. Five well-qualified teachers of the deaf and five specialist communication assistants from the local education authority's sensory support service form the core team in school, with support from other specialist agencies. This provides the high level of support that the pupils need.

- 86 **Support for the teaching of English as an additional language is well managed by an experienced teacher who is, in turn, managed by the deputy headteacher, ensuring a strategic input for this area of work at senior management meetings. There is a clear development plan for the department that is due for annual review with the senior manager.**
- 87 There are very good procedures for inducting and looking after the needs of staff new to the school. All those consulted during the inspection confirmed how supportive the school had been to them. Effective arrangements are also in place to support trainee teachers. Since the previous inspection, the school has established very good procedures for the career development of its teachers. Teacher training days are used effectively. For example, a day on gender issues resulted in the successful raising of boys' attainment through more active styles of teaching and learning. A senior member of staff is responsible for co-ordinating all areas of professional development and the first round of performance management has been successfully completed.
- 88 **There have been good improvements in the accommodation since the previous inspection, but accommodation overall is unsatisfactory. The multi-media centre is well stocked and is an asset to the school. It is larger and more accessible than previously reported. Equally effective are the information and communication technology facilities and the impact of money to train teachers in using them in every subject. The quality of sports facilities remains high. Movement around the school has been eased by the creation of a new corridor. However, space is at a premium. On occasions, this restricts what teachers can do in their lessons. For example, in the small room for geography and in the Hearing Impaired Unit activities requiring pupils to move around can be difficult to organise.**
- 89 However, some facilities are still unsatisfactory in spite of refurbishment. Facilities in art and music remain poor, as noted in the previous report, and the theatre facility is under-used for drama. In planning the development of the building, the school should consider those areas which, hitherto, have not been refurbished. Whilst acknowledging the refurbishment project for one suite of toilets, there remains a question as to whether the accessibility of toilets and level of maintenance and cleaning are sufficient to meet expectations. Parts of the school show signs of wear and tear and require redecoration and refurbishment.
- 90 Learning resources have improved since the last inspection. The school now has good resources overall which support effectively the work being done in the majority of subject areas. The school has made a significant investment in information and communication technology and the ratio of pupils to computers is better than the national average. Learning resources are very good in mathematics, history and in the Hearing Impaired Unit. In particular, mathematics makes good use of a range of very good resources to support the numeracy strategy and in history good quality videos and CD-ROMs are used to support the curriculum. However, learning resources are still inadequate in music. One of the two teaching rooms is still not equipped with keyboards and there are insufficient resources to enable more than one class to use the same kind of resource at any one time. There are also not enough materials to support GCSE teaching, inadequate recording equipment and software.
- 91 The library has been improved since the last inspection and is now a good support for pupils' learning. It has been relocated, which has increased its size, a little. The

library is well used by all pupils at lunchtimes and before school and the library staff still have to limit the numbers at very busy times. There are plans to develop more space in the future. Since the last inspection, there has been improvement in relation to the quality and range of stock and IT resources. Its stock of around 7,000 books is below the minimum recommended by the School Library Association, but reflects a policy of clearing out older books as appropriate. The stock includes a good supply of both fiction and non-fiction, plus books to support literacy and SEN, for example books in Braille and large print. The library staff continues to work positively and effectively with departments to improve the resources. Pupil librarians carry out their roles proficiently.

- 92 Overall, the school is very effective. The ability profile of students entering the school in Year 7 has been rising since the last inspection, but only this September is it around the national average in relation to results in national tests for pupils aged 11 years. In 2000 and 2001, GCSE results almost match national averages, which means that the school offers good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

1. Senior managers and all staff should continue to develop the curriculum for all pupils, including those with particular gifts or talents, by:

- continuing to address the area of vocational qualification,
- continuing to provide opportunities for pupils to gain GCSE qualifications in their home languages,
- continuing the excellent out-of-school provision for gifted and talented pupils,
- requiring all departments to make stated provision for pupils with particular gifts and talents and for higher-attaining pupils, and
- ensuring that this latter is a regular item on the school and governors' curriculum committees.

2. The governors and senior managers should continue to improve the match of teachers to the demands of the curriculum by:

- continuing with the plan to provide additional specialist teaching of English in order to free up drama expertise,
- executing the plan to appoint a permanent teacher of special educational needs and English, and
- attempting once more to fill all the vacancies, which are currently covered by temporary staff and by non-specialist staff.

In addition, the school should consider the following:

- addressing the issue of the use of the theatre for drama,
- making appropriate provision, where possible, for art and music facilities,
- continuing the improvement of toilet facilities, and
- bringing the decorative order of the building throughout up to the level of the best.

THE HEARING IMPAIRED UNIT

The provision for pupils with hearing impairment is very good and all pupils receive a high level of support. As a result they make very good progress in both key stages.

Strengths

- The quality of teaching in the unit is very good and ensures all pupils make progress.
- The level and quality of support in mainstream lessons is very good.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced for all pupils and tailored to meet individual needs.
- High expectations of pupils, which result in pupils working hard and achieving well in all their lessons.
- Assessment and monitoring procedures and practice are very effective.
- The care, supervision and support for pupils are excellent.

Areas for improvement

- Setting targets for pupils for their work in mainstream classes.
- Involving pupils more closely in identifying their own targets and in reviewing their progress on a more regular basis.

93 Pupils with hearing impairment make very good progress in all their lessons in the unit and in mainstream classes. This is due to the pupils' willingness to work hard, the quality of teaching and support they receive in all their lessons and the signing skills of specialist staff. Pupils progressively develop the quality and range of their language and communication and this is reflected in the progress they make in their written work in all their subjects. At the end of Key Stage 3, some pupils with hearing impairment achieve results that are in line with the attainment expected for their age, especially in technical and practical subjects. However, the severity of hearing loss limits the attainment of some profoundly deaf pupils. By the end of Key Stage 4 some pupils achieve GCSE grades A* to C and A* to G as well as success in other externally accredited examination courses.

94 The attitude of pupils with hearing impairment towards school and to their work is very good. They behave well in and out of lessons and develop good relationships with specialist staff and other pupils. The great majority of pupils is attentive in class and work hard throughout the day. They respond well to the constant encouragement that they receive from their teachers and special educational needs communication assistants, even when they are challenged and find the work difficult. They take a pride in their work and are confident about their ability to make good progress. The pupils are well integrated into the life of the school and pupils with more moderate hearing loss form friendships with other, hearing pupils in their year group. Pupils with profound hearing loss tend to make friends with others who communicate through signing. The culture of mutual respect and appreciation of differences that exists throughout the school encourages the pupils to recognise their own value and achievements.

95 The teaching and learning of hearing impaired pupils is very good and, at times, excellent. In the Hearing Impaired Unit, pupils make very good progress because lessons are carefully planned and taught with skill and sensitivity. Teachers start each lesson with a clear introduction to the subject and use careful explanations and constant questioning to help pupils explore and understand new concepts and terminology. For instance, in one lesson pupils were helped, through the skilful use

of signing, to explain 'acid, 'alkali' and the PH scale. In another, they explored differences in the meaning of words that appear similar such as 'confident' and 'confidentiality'. Practical activities and the effective use of pictures and objects reinforce the pupils' knowledge and understanding. By constantly drawing on pupils' experience and building on their answers, teachers help pupils develop the quality and range of their language and communication. They expect pupils to work hard and to achieve good results, so pupils are kept on task throughout the lesson. Attractive displays in the unit classrooms and a wide range of good-quality resources enhance the pupils' learning.

- 96 In mainstream classes, teachers of the deaf and special educational needs communication assistants ensure that hearing impaired pupils take a full part in the lesson. Highly skilled, signed support during the teachers' introduction and explanations and throughout class discussions means that pupils understand what is being taught and what they need to do during the practical work. As a result, they are able to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the topics and to contribute to class discussions.
- 97 The curriculum for pupils with hearing impairment is very good and carefully tailored to meet each pupil's individual needs. Flexible arrangements and an appropriate balance between unit teaching and integration in mainstream classes means pupils with hearing impairment are provided with a broad and balanced curriculum with access to specialist teaching as well as opportunities to work alongside hearing pupils. Pupils do not study a modern foreign language and the extra time available is used effectively to review and develop the work done in mainstream lessons and to focus on communication skills. Additional support for signing skills given by a deaf instructor from the deaf community makes an important contribution to the curriculum for pupils with profound hearing loss. As a result, pupils become confident and proficient signers. Since the last inspection, the school has extended the range of externally accredited courses available to pupils in Key Stage 4 so pupils with hearing impairment have more opportunities for their achievements to be recognised. Pupils develop greater independence through the well-planned programme of work experience. This plays a valuable part in extending the pupils' knowledge of the world and introduces them to a wider range of people and situations.
- 98 There are very good procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' academic progress and welfare. Detailed records are kept of the work done in mainstream classes and the pupils' response. In the unit their progress is regularly reviewed. Targets set in pupils' individual education plans are linked to their priority needs. Pupils are supervised at the start and end of days and at break and lunchtimes. Hearing aids and radio aids are checked each day. An audiologist visits twice weekly to check on any difficulties and monitor pupils' needs and close links are maintained with other specialist support agencies. Performance data is appropriately used to review the progress of pupils and to plan allocation of support.
- 99 The staffing for pupils with hearing impairment is excellent. Five well-qualified teachers of the deaf and five specialist communication assistants from the local education authority's sensory support service form the core team in school, with support from other specialist agencies. Good relationships, a strong team spirit and a shared commitment to the pupils amongst the specialist support staff all contribute to the high quality of the provision and the very good progress of pupils.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	186
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	63

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	14	59	73	36	3	0	0
Percentage	7	32	40	19	2	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1019
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	218

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	66
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	302

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	221

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	9
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	16

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 (Year 9)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	102	96	198

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	61	66	70
	Girls	60	57	57
	Total	121	123	127
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	61 (48)	62 (54)	64 (55)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	38 (12)	36 (28)	34 (23)
	National	31 (23)	43 (28)	34 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	57	65	73
	Girls	60	52	62
	Total	117	117	135
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	59 (51)	59 (50)	68 (55)
	National	64 (64)	66 (66)	66 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	29 (24)	35 (21)	34 (27)
	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	95	91	186

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	40	80	90
	Girls	46	83	88
	Total	86	163	178
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	46 (41)	88 (82)	96 (96)
	National	49.8 (49.2)	86.6 (86.8)	94.5 (94.4)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	33 (31)
	National	39.1 (38.4)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	54	100
	National		

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	3
Black – other	2
Indian	189
Pakistani	16
Bangladeshi	2
Chinese	6
White	793
Any other minority ethnic group	6

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	64.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.1

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	13
Total aggregate hours worked per week	312.5

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76.5
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	21.3
Key Stage 4	20.3

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	14
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	20

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	4
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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	3	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	56	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Financial information

Financial year	2001/02
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	£
Total income	2,807,259
Total expenditure	2,776,309
Expenditure per pupil	2,714
Balance brought forward from previous year	8,693.00
Balance carried forward to next year	39,643.00

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1019
Number of questionnaires returned	306

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	43	50	5	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	36	54	3	1	6
Behaviour in the school is good.	34	46	10	2	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	38	47	8	3	4
The teaching is good.	42	48	3	0	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	26	51	11	3	9
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	49	43	4	1	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	62	35	1	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	28	51	10	2	9
The school is well led and managed.	37	50	4	1	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	33	57	4	1	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	38	44	6	1	11

It is important to note that this questionnaire was circulated when Year 7 pupils had been in school for just 3 weeks. Many parents who returned a “don't know” answer to certain questions were parents of pupils in Year 7.

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

Children like school and they make good progress. Behaviour is generally good. Pupils get the right amount of homework to do. Teaching is felt to be good and parents believe that teachers have high expectations. The school is perceived as being well managed and led. It helps pupils to mature and to take responsibility. Parents are comfortable about approaching the school with questions or problems, although some parents would like to be better informed about their children's progress and some parents would like to work more closely with the school. Parents are generally happy with the range of activities available to pupils outside lessons.

Other issues raised by parents

Nineteen parents made additional comments on the questionnaire forms or wrote additional letters. Of these, six parents emphasised positive views, particularly in relation to the personal support they and their children had received from the school. Five parents presented negative views but again, there was a great deal of repetition of what was on the questionnaire. Two parents were concerned that able pupils were not being stretched. Eight parents took the opportunity to point out that they had problems completing the form as their children had only been at school for a very short time. Only six parents attended the meeting with parents.

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

ENGLISH

The overall quality of provision in English is good.

Strengths

- Standards have improved recently and are now average in both key stages.
- Almost all teaching is satisfactory or better, and teaching is very good or better in more than four in ten lessons.
- The department is led and managed well.
- Literacy teaching has been introduced effectively and is having an increasingly good impact on learning.

Areas for improvement

- Standards achieved by ethnic minority pupils are below average in speaking.
- The skills of some key staff are not used to best advantage.
- A very small amount of teaching remains unsatisfactory.
- The theatre is under-used for drama.

100 Overall, standards are approaching average by the age of 14 and also by the age of 16 years. Half of the work in Years 10 and 11 now is above the national average. This is the result of very good teaching and learning in many classes. Those pupils for whom English is an additional language achieve well over time because of both the school's good provision and their own good attitudes to learning. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in relation to what they have done before, but those who are gifted or talented do no better than the average nationally because of the lack of opportunities for them to achieve their full potential. Given their prior attainment, most pupils usually achieve at least as well as can be expected. Almost a half achieves more than this.

101 Many pupils enter the school with slightly below average attainments in speaking and listening. In Year 7, a significant minority of pupils still has poor skills in speaking and listening, reading and writing. However, pupils have good attitudes to their learning and when pupils speak, other pupils listen carefully. In an excellent lesson on journalism in Year 9, pupils were able to ask a number of searching questions of the teacher and took notes for their reports. Many picked up quickly the vocabulary of journalism, talking fluently of *headlines* and *mastheads*, *by-lines* and *jump-lines*. Pupils achieve a significant improvement in standards over time and, by the time they are 14, they listen with care and are articulate in their verbal analysis of, for example, televised interviews. In improvisation, pupils work co-operatively in groups, creating carefully observed characterisations. Because of the teacher's expertise, pupils explore the motives of their characters more deeply and improve their use of timing to good effect. They often show flair in performance, dropping into role convincingly, using facial expressions well for cameo tableaux. Pupils from ethnic-minority backgrounds take a full part when the opportunities present themselves, but there are not enough.

102 Standards in reading are average throughout the school. Pupils in Year 7 are usually able to read fluently, but not often with good emphasis. Sometimes, pupils are able to show understanding of the poetry read to them by the teacher and take it on further. They are able to give good examples of words that sound the same but are

spelt differently, such as *their* and *they're*. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in learning to read through using a rigorous software program, which assesses how well they are learning as they work. By Year 11, pupils read monologues with good expression; this represents good progress.

- 103 Pupils' written work shows a clear improvement over time, although imaginative work is not strong in Years 7 to 9. They show a good knowledge of the formal and informal conventions of language. Year 7 pupils are able to define the rules governing the type of plural to end a word. The poetry on display in some Year 7 and Year 8 classes is sometimes compelling, when pupils write of "*The fly ... Covered in a blanket of silk, Its legs are like splinters when it moves.*" Pupils' writing in Year 8 is often lively, sometimes dramatic, and gives a good sense of the described object or event, but can lack good punctuation. Year 9 pupils occasionally write arrestingly: '*Now the light filled the air all around me and I could see a strange object hanging just above the grass. "A spaceship!" I shouted.*' In Year 10, pupils have created good examples of personification such as "*The pen yawned as I finished writing with it.*" Occasionally, standards in writing in Years 10 and 11 are too low.
- 104 Pupils' handwriting improves during the time they are at the school. The handwriting of pupils in Year 7 is often untidy with many examples of printed rather than joined script. Here their presentation is only adequate. In later years, pupils' handwriting is improved, often being neat and well formed, which shows good progress. Pupils improve their writing through a structured process of drafting and redrafting. In the best Year 11 writing, pupils handle and communicate ideas fluently and are able to support hypotheses with well-chosen quotations from the text. Most pupils use information technology to a limited degree in their writing. Standards in punctuation, sentence construction and spelling are average.
- 105 Attitudes to learning and behaviour are very good in a half of lessons observed, good in four in ten lessons and never less than satisfactory. They are equally good in both key stages. In lessons where pupils behaved particularly well and were well motivated, the teacher showed a high degree of skill and knowledge, and presented interesting and practical lessons. Pupils show maturity in evaluating their attainments, as well as the work of their peers.
- 106 The quality of teaching is satisfactory or better in well over nine out of ten lessons and is very good or better in more than four in ten. Teaching is unsatisfactory in fewer than one in ten lessons. Teaching overall is good in both key stages. This illustrates the good progress made over the last five years, since a fifth of teaching was unsatisfactory in 1996. When teaching is very effective, it is characterised by very good subject knowledge, good relationships, first-class discipline, confidence, a determination to focus on the task, thorough planning and effective use of resources. Pupils are confident to learn from their mistakes and enjoy discussions of high quality because the teachers know and make clear exactly what they want their classes to understand. Most teachers draw attention to spelling mistakes judiciously and spelling tests are conducted regularly to improve standards further. Many teachers show a consistent approach to developing pupils' knowledge through skilful questioning. Teachers also make lesson objectives explicit and focus pupils on short-term goals. However, there still remain some lessons that are at best satisfactory. In these lessons, pupils learn less effectively because of mediocre planning and teaching. The small number of lessons where teaching is unsatisfactory are characterised by weak planning, low expectations and unexciting material.

- 107 Classes are usually managed effectively, and most lessons are well paced and well timed. Teachers usually use plenary sessions well to draw explicit conclusions or to establish what has been learned. The match of work to the needs of individuals is usually good. Pupils are grouped in sets based on their ability, and this enables work to be targeted more precisely to their needs. Pupils learn well in three-fifths of lessons, and very well in more than three in ten. In drama, due to the teacher's sharp, observational skills, the pupils learn effectively about portraying the human condition, such as how age affects facial expression, movement and posture. A number of teachers use humour to good effect and, as a result, their pupils enjoy their lessons and learn more quickly.
- 108 The English curriculum is satisfactory and planning is good. The department ensures that pupils develop their skills in and knowledge of English progressively. The schemes of work prepare pupils adequately for GCSE courses Teachers cater well for the needs of pupils who come from a broad range of backgrounds, including those of the ethnic minorities. The English curriculum, however, does not make sufficiently explicit references to the pupils' diversity of cultures. Good teaching and good support enable pupils whose first language is not English to learn well and to make good progress. Drama is not taught in Key Stage 3 and pupils aged 14 have no previous experience on which to base a choice of whether or not to undertake a GCSE drama course. Virtually no pupils with an ethnic-minority background choose the GCSE drama option. There are good resources for drama, including a 500-seat theatre.
- 109 The English department is well led and managed and has a clear sense of direction. However the deployment of staff in the department would be more effective if the drama graduate were to teach more of the drama. The teaching of some supply staff is consistently good, but this is not always the case. The school's senior managers and governors have expressed a determination to address this situation urgently. English teaching and learning are also affected by the variable accommodation provided. About a third of English teaching takes place in classrooms belonging to other departments. In these lessons, teachers find it much harder to provide the resources necessary for literacy or GCSE courses. The scattered nature of English accommodation makes it more difficult for the permanent staff to support temporary teachers.
- 110 Good progress has been made since the 1996 inspection, although work clearly remains to be done. Standards have improved in literacy in Key Stage 3 and in national tests at 14 years. The quality of English teaching has improved in many classrooms.

MATHEMATICS

The quality of the provision for mathematics is **good**.

Strengths

- Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 are broadly in line with national averages and well above those for similar schools.
- Results in GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11 are steadily improving.
- Standards in Years 7 to 9 are above national expectations. They are best in Year 7. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are improving and are broadly in line with national expectations. Standards of numeracy are good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11.
- Teaching is always at least satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and is often very good or excellent. The teaching of numeracy is often outstanding. Teaching in the department is at least satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. It is often good or very good.
- Pupils usually have a very good attitude to mathematics. They are keen to learn and respond with enthusiasm in lessons and extra-curricular mathematical activities.
- Management is good. The head of department receives outstanding support, particularly from other teachers with responsibility posts. Together, they have created a stimulating learning environment.

Areas for improvement

- Results in GCSE examinations are below national averages.
- Standards of the most able pupils in Year 11 are not high enough.

111 In 2001, the results of pupils at the end of Year 9 in National Curriculum tests were below national averages, but better than similar schools. Results for boys were in line with the national average and those for girls slightly below. Standards in lessons in Year 9 are now above national expectations for boys and girls and broadly in line with those in English and science in the school.

112 In 2001, in GCSE examinations, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C was below the national average, whilst the proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to G, was above the national average. Results in GCSE examinations have been below those in the majority of departments in the school in recent years. Standards in lessons are now broadly in line with national expectation, but there are insufficient higher attaining pupils.

113 By the end of Year 9, the highest attaining pupils solve simultaneous linear equations and use trigonometric ratios to calculate sides and angles in right-angled triangles. In an excellent lesson on the solution of linear equations, volunteer pupils in Year 9 held large cards with numbers, the equals sign and the letter x, then moved around in front of the class to illustrate how to solve equations. This followed a starter activity where all pupils wrote answers to questions requiring formulae for the areas of different quadrilaterals. This enjoyable activity not only allowed for revision of work in shape, but also helped refine algebraic skills. The pace of the lesson, the variety of teaching methods and the teacher's skilful and demanding questioning gave pupils the opportunity to become confident and proficient in solving difficult linear equations.

114 Pupils of broadly average ability in Year 9 exceed expectation. In an excellent lesson, they used a spreadsheet to enhance their experience of the trial and improvement method of solving cubic equations. After a speedy starter activity on angle terminology and sizes, pupils followed clearly written instructions to program a

spreadsheet to find a solution to a cubic equation. Having used a calculator to do this in a previous lesson, they appreciated the importance of planning and recognised that once their planning was done, they only had to type in starter values. They also had a printout from which to revise. Clearly planned progression, a variety of teaching methods and high expectations from the teacher meant that pupils achieved well.

- 115 Lower attaining pupils in Year 9 show competence in changing mixed numbers to improper fractions and vice-versa. They also calculate equivalent decimals and percentages for all but the most difficult fractions. The very lowest attaining pupils, most of whom have special educational needs, are well supported in lessons to show a good understanding of angles at a point and angles in a triangle. Pupils have learned well, through the well-taught application of the numeracy strategy. Standards of numeracy are good because these teachers of mathematics make a significant attempt to teach literacy skills to pupils. They spell words out, give pupils opportunities to explain answers and define mathematical terms with care. They also encourage pupils to use accurate definitions of the properties of four-sided plane shapes. Overall, pupils in Year 9 are working at attainment levels at least in line with national expectations and often above.
- 116 Minority ethnic boys achieve well and they value mathematics highly because they value its importance in their lives and for future employment. The proportion in the highest sets in Years 7 to 9 is higher than the overall proportion in all groups throughout these years. They are usually very confident and enthusiastic in class. There are very few pupils who need support because of English as a second language. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well. Support assistants are knowledgeable about their pupils and liaise effectively with teachers to help pupils make good progress.
- 117 Most pupils in Years 7 to 9 have a very good attitude to mathematics. They bring at least the basic equipment to school. When challenged to think at levels that stretch their attainment, they respond enthusiastically and learn well. Most pupils enjoy mathematics and work well together when required. Boys and girls are usually seated next to each other. Often they are of different ethnic origin, yet almost always they work in harmony. In a very good lesson, average attaining pupils in Year 8 shared mathematical ideas in learning to solve linear equations. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and teachers are usually very good. In these years, pupils of all abilities, both genders and from different backgrounds all learn well.
- 118 Teaching is often very good or excellent in Years 7 to 9. Teachers use starter activities skilfully to sharpen pupils' thinking in line with the numeracy strategy. They teach numeracy very effectively. Activities are planned well, with clear learning objectives. The good timing of activities motivates pupils to work hard and think purposefully. Teachers and pupils have very high expectations. Teachers assess pupils very thoroughly and regularly refer to the levels at which pupils are working. As a result, pupils know their current working levels and their targets. Homework is given regularly and marked promptly. Clear advice for improvement is often written into exercise books. Investigative homework, such as 'find a number with exactly thirteen factors' is an excellent example of how these pupils are stretched to achieve their potential.
- 119 The highest attaining pupils in Year 11 learn that the angle made at the centre of a circle from two points on the circumference is twice that made at the circumference from the same two points. They use and apply this and another circle theorem

accurately. They are not, however, given the opportunity in lessons to attempt to prove these facts. Average attaining pupils in Year 11 accurately translate points by a given vector. In a very good lesson, they used attractive and well-differentiated worksheets to consolidate their understanding and reach their potential. The teacher clearly explained the difference in denoting co-ordinates and vectors. The good use of diagrams was very beneficial in helping pupils to understand the implications of the negative sign in vectors. Most lower attaining pupils understand the difference in the use of mean, median and mode as a type of average, but only the best pupils can give instances of when it is most appropriate to use a particular one. In a lesson with the lowest attaining group, the teacher and support assistant gave good help to pupils on an individual basis so that the majority of pupils enhanced their ability to draw and estimate angles using computer software. Standards of numeracy are satisfactory in Years 10 and 11.

- 120 The majority of pupils have a good attitude to mathematics in Years 10 and 11. They have not had the opportunities of learning through the same intensive numeracy strategy techniques as their younger colleagues. However, whilst some enthusiasm is lacking, most pupils work very hard, come to school prepared with equipment and respond to work when suitably challenged. They know their attainment levels, work well together and are almost always well behaved.
- 121 Teaching is always at least satisfactory. It is often good or very good and sometimes excellent. Teachers plan well, timing activities to motivate pupils to achieve their potential. Lessons are well structured to consolidate previous learning, but the highest attaining pupils are not pushed to explore mathematics sufficiently for themselves in normal lessons. Teachers assess very well and use homework effectively.
- 122 Management of the department is good. The effects of long-term sickness and difficulties in recruitment have been kept to a minimum because of the support the head of department gives to supply teachers. The fact that the classrooms are close together and the departmental office nearby have helped this. Some supply teachers have become effective and have established good working relationships with classes. The numeracy strategy is taught in a most stimulating and successful manner with outstanding support from staff with responsibilities, and extra-curricular clubs flourish. Displays are good, with pupils' work of good quality displayed alongside pictures and articles about mathematics and mathematicians. Resources are very effectively used. All pupils, including older pupils, are given the opportunity to take an active part in starter activities using whiteboards, pens and cloths. Information and communication technology is skilfully used to enhance the learning of mathematics.
- 123 Overall, standards, teaching, the use of assessment and numeracy represent a significant improvement on the previous report.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Standards of attainment are at least satisfactory throughout the school and are good in higher sets by the end of Year 9 and Year 11.

- Results in the National Curriculum tests in Year 9 are steadily improving and results for 2001 are almost in line with the national average
- Over the last three years GCSE examination results have been above the national average for science as well as above the school's results.
- Teaching is consistently good or very good. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are exceptionally good. There is good support for the pupils who have special educational needs and hearing impairment.
- Pupils who have English as an additional language make good progress in their understanding of science concepts and developing practical skills.
- Procedures for assessment are well established and consistently used to monitor progress. The majority of pupils have a good knowledge of their attainment and progress.
- Leadership and management of the department are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Use data obtained from monitoring and evaluating to set targets to extend the more able to get higher grades and to improve girls' achievement in the subject.
- Further implement the literacy strategy to provide support for writing open-ended work such as evaluations and explanations, particularly for girls and pupils whose first language is not English.
- Extend the use and provision of ICT resources to support independent work and learning.
- Continue to adapt the curriculum provision to take account of the improving standards of the new intake in Year 7 and standards in Year 10.

124 In 2001, overall attainment at the end of Year 9 has improved to be almost in line with national average. Results are better than both mathematics and English. Standards in lessons reflect attainment in the National Curriculum tests. However, boys do better than girls, and boys' performance compared to girls continues to show a significant difference, whereas in most other subjects in the school, girls do better than boys. This is the direct result of a subject which appeals to boys and where material is interesting to them and there is good teaching. Overall, there is a considerable improvement in standards since the previous report.

125 **In 2001, the proportion obtaining grades A* to C at GCSE were above the national average. In 2001, this represents a significant improvement since the previous report. The highest set was entered for three separate sciences. More boys than girls were entered for three separate sciences and significantly more boys than girls attained A* and A grades. In double science, no-one attained an A* grade and only a few girls attained A grades. Standards in lessons show that currently pupils in Year 11 are attaining above national expectations.**

126 **Pupils currently in Year 9 show confidence and ask questions and remain interested and engaged with their work. By the end of Year 9, the highest attaining pupils are able to give examples of different types of joints and the role of antagonistic muscles in the movement of the body. They know that reflex action forms part of the body's defence and is an automatic reaction. The average attaining pupils can name the main bones in the body and are familiar with the reflex action and give examples where it happens in the body. In a lesson with average attaining pupils, on the role of the kidney in the control of water in the body, whilst introducing new facts and information, the teacher skilfully used questions, ensuring pupils' participation and**

- involvement. During the lesson, pupils willingly talked about the colour of their own urine and this led to a discussion about the change in urine colour being linked to fluid intake and being unwell. Pupils enthusiastically ask questions and share experiences.
- 127 A lesson with Year 8 pupils started by the teacher giving flash cards to six pupils with one key word from the photosynthesis process. By using questions and by giving them step-by-step facts, she helped to build on the understanding of the class about how plants make food. The class directed the six pupils to arrange themselves to represent the word equation of photosynthesis. Pupils enjoyed being actively involved in the flash card activity and this helped them to focus on the key words used in this process.
- 128 In a mixed ability Year 7 class, the class teacher and a specialist teacher worked well in harmony in supporting pupils who are at early stages of learning English as an additional language (EAL). It was evident from both teachers' lesson plans that there is good liaison and collaboration between the department and the support staff. The additional support involved more opportunities for talking and listening, simple instructions translated in pupils' first languages, purposeful prompts and writing frame for recording prompts. With this good support, EAL pupils successfully followed the activity and made good progress in their science and in developing English language.
- 129 In Years 10 and 11, scrutiny of pupils' work indicates a good range of varied activities helping to build good understanding of concepts. For example, pupils are able to explain movement of water particles by osmosis to account for loss or gain of weight. In the higher sets of Year 10, evidence in books indicates a good understanding of the effect of total leaf area on the uptake of water by plants.
- 130 Pupils in middle and lower sets are often doing better than might be expected. As a direct impact of good teaching, their achievement is consistently good. For example, pupils in the lowest set of Year 11 made appropriate observations and asked questions about how waves travel following a demonstration of a 'slinky' spring. In a middle set, pupils develop and use their numeracy skills to work out pressure caused by their own shoes. In a lesson for a middle ability set, the teacher created healthy competition where pupils enthusiastically responded to questions.
- 131 Teaching in science is consistently good, with half of it being very good or excellent. The strength of the department is the very good subject specialist knowledge of the teachers. They use this to good effect in their planning and teaching. By adapting both content and strategies to match the abilities of pupils, they promote pupils' interest and enthusiasm for the subject. Pupils work well together with genuine sense of excitement and remain engaged in learning. For example, pupils in Year 7 excitedly used data-logging equipment to record a fall in temperature. Teachers have very high expectations of behaviour and work. They mark work regularly, correct science-related spellings and link feedback to presentation, effort and understanding. However, teachers' marking rarely directs pupils on how to extend their work. Pupils regularly do topic related homework and end of unit tests. Individual and class topic results are charted and displayed in the laboratories and used to monitor each set's progress as well as being used for individual tracking. Letters of praise are sent home when pupils consistently attain high marks in topic tests.

- 132 Teaching is also characterised by having clear learning objectives, teaching methods that are well adapted to pupils' abilities and an effective use of a range of questioning techniques to develop and consolidate understanding of science concepts. Pupils respond well and their engagement and enjoyment of science are a noticeable feature in science lessons, particularly when they are involved in practical activities.
- 133 **Available resources, including support staff, are used to good effect to make learning fun by involving pupils in visual models, practical and interactive activities. There are sufficient books and other complementary materials, such as worksheets with models and diagrams to label, exercises where pupils have to fill in missing words, frameworks for writing and questions related to the topic. All lessons run smoothly with swift pace and challenge. However, work in pupils' books indicates that teachers need to pay further attention to pupils' ability to write responses to open-ended questions as well as accounts, explanations and evaluations. The department makes good use of experiments and investigative work to introduce and consolidate pupils' learning. It makes heavy demands on practical equipment and is very well served by hard-working technicians.**
- 134 **Leadership and management are very good. Strong leadership has ensured there are clear policies, procedures and supportive guidance, which are consistently implemented. For example, the department puts pupils into teaching groups linked to their prior attainment. There is the flexibility to move up or down a set depending on progress. Organisation of classes into sets is done well so that lower sets have fewer pupils and targeted support from additional staff. Staffing in the department is good, with a clear division of roles and responsibilities. They work as a strong team maintaining and extending effective practice. This team approach has brought about a very effective system of ongoing assessment and target setting, which is appropriately linked to pupils' prior attainment and ability. The department has secure procedures in place to monitor and evaluate effectiveness and the impact of provision on all pupils' learning and progress. The department is in a good position to extend this further. They could, for example, carry out more detailed analysis by gender and ethnic background and use the outcomes to support further improvements in pupils' attainment, particularly at higher A and A* grades.**
- 135 **Accommodation is adequate and a rolling programme of improving laboratories has already started. The department has a shared vision for its direction with a clear and realistic action plan that includes whole-school initiatives, such as target setting and the implementation of the literacy strategy. Following the review after the first cycle of performance management, the head of department has a clearer view of the department's strengths, including the quality of teaching, professional development needs and the lead provided by individuals for various aspects of the subject. Overall, the department has made significant improvements since the previous inspection.**

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is always good; it is well planned, and integrates theory and practical work well.
- Assessment is very good. Homework is used effectively and teachers give clear guidance for improvement.
- The use of sketchbooks for research and development in Key Stage 4 is very good.

Areas for improvement

- Further development of three-dimensional skills.
- The implementation and use of information and communication technology throughout the department.
- Accommodation is poor. Improved facilities are needed to increase the range of media opportunities.

136 Teacher assessment shows that pupils' standards of attainment at the age of 14 are below the national average. The proportion of pupils at the age of 16 gaining grades A* to C in GCSE examinations in 2001 was above the national average. Over the past year, the trend in results has been rising with girls' results being significantly better than boys', as is the case nationally.

137 In the work seen during the inspection, the standards of attainment by the time pupils are 14 are in line with expectations for pupils of the same age nationally. At this level, too, girls attain better than boys. Year 9 pupils are able to use line, tone and texture effectively in their drawings. They work well from direct observation and understand three-dimensional concepts. They are able to explore ideas and assess visual information, including images from different historical and cultural contexts.

138 In a Year 9 lesson using architectural references from a variety of cultures, the pupils showed the ability to arrange shapes well for composition and had a good understanding of spatial layout. They experimented with line and showed the ability to simplify images and consider symmetrical patterns and textural surfaces. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well for their ability and benefit from individual attention. The work seen in Years 10 and 11 is at the standard expected. By the time pupils are 16 they can develop and sustain a chosen theme in their work. They study a wide range of well-known artists and put a lot of creative and intellectual effort into researching and following their styles. Sketchbooks are used effectively and there is consideration for the development of language and vocabulary in lessons. In a Year 10 lesson, pupils were able to speak confidently about their work and demonstrated good knowledge and understanding. Work from architectural research was being developed well, using mono-printing for line and pattern interpretation.

139 Pupils' attitudes and behaviour throughout the department are good in all years. This is a direct result of the high expectations and enthusiasm that the subject specialist teachers bring to their work and the high standards they set. Pupils enjoy their art lessons and apply themselves purposefully to their work. There is an effective working ethos within the department and pupils are expected to behave and do their best. They want to improve and do well and are eager to explain their work to classmates and visitors alike. They work well in paired and group work, sometimes with very good results. For instance, a group recently produced a large mosaic panel

for the school. Such work does much to provide for the very good personal and social development of pupils.

- 140 The quality of teaching is good overall and is now more closely linked to learning. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject and use it effectively to demonstrate skills when explaining techniques, processes or works of art to the pupils. They know pupils well and plan their lessons to meet individual requirements. The preparation and delivery of individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs is most effective. Teachers' time management is very good, pupils are kept on-task and there is good use of open ended questioning techniques to develop positive thinking skills. They have very good presentation skills and vary their strategies to meet learning requirements. Well-constructed assessment procedures make a significant contribution to the development and progress of pupils' work. Homework in all years is good and appropriate in subject matter and is used to support ongoing project work. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are aware of their levels of work.
- 141 Lessons start with the teacher identifying what the class will learn and revising previous learning. Careful, clear explanations and good intervention at key points in pupils' learning enable good progress to be made in both key stages. Pupils with English as an additional language and from minority ethnic groups respond well to the subject and make good progress at both key stages. In a Year 7 lesson on composition, the teacher showed the class how to use a viewfinder to select an area for enlargement. Good use was made of insect studies and colour blending was understood. Pupils with special educational needs and impaired hearing achieved good progress as a result of individual attention from support assistants and from the teacher, all of whom showed awareness of the needs of particular pupils. In a Year 11 lesson on coursework for the GCSE examinations, pupils were developing ideas from various resources and making personal choices. They demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of the connection made with artists who had influenced their work.
- 142 The head of department shows very good leadership and management skills. She has carefully analysed examination results over the past few years and is developing strategies that will keep the department focused on the need to maintain high standards. Teaching schemes and departmental policies are now clear and provide good guidance for staff. The head of department monitors the work of the department through classroom observations and work sampling. Assessment procedures across both key stages are effective and inform curriculum planning well.
- 143 There is very limited access to computers within the department. Information and communication technology has not yet been developed sufficiently. The open-plan accommodation has a detrimental effect on the quality of education provided because of the amount of noise generated. Technical help, storage and preparation spaces are still inadequate. The teaching of clay-work would benefit the department's approach to three-dimensional study. Extra-curricular activities and visits to galleries and museums have a positive effect upon the quality and range of pupils' work. The library provision for good quality reference books is very good and meets fully the elements of knowledge and understanding needed for a subject with such a wide cultural base.
- 144 Improvements since the last inspection have been very good. Teaching strategies now give pupils a chance to show initiative and take more responsibility for their own learning. Assessment procedures have been refined in order to ensure pupils have systematic opportunities to discuss their achievement and to set targets for future

development more effectively. Art history connections and research have moved forward. Written aims and objectives that link programmes of study and teaching approaches are now established. Accommodation remains an issue.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- The leadership and management of the department are very good.
- The quality of teaching is good overall; teachers' planning is thorough and challenges pupils' creative talents.
- Examination results are good and reflect the teachers' and pupils' high commitment to learning.

Areas for improvement

- The accommodation and storage facilities, particularly in food technology, are insufficient for the numbers of pupils being taught in the area.
- Information and communication technology skills acquired through design and technology are not as yet used to contribute towards pupils' ICT assessment at the end of Year 9.

145 **In 2001, the standard of attainment in the teacher assessments was below the national average at the age of 14 years. The department's results in 2001 were in line with the national average. Inspection evidence shows that attainment overall in lessons in Years 9, 10 and 11 is in line with what is found nationally with pupils of a similar age. Results over the past few years have improved in all material areas.**

146 **The GCSE graphics products results in 2000 were well above the national average; textiles and resistant materials were in line and the few candidates who took food technology were well below the national average. The department's results are above the school's A* to C average and above those schools with a similar intake in the area. Girls do better than boys in all years and often pupils from different ethnic backgrounds do better than other pupils in the subject, particularly in graphics and textiles. Pupils with a hearing impairment are making very good progress and their attainment is good, especially in practical areas of the subject. Their achievement is a result of the very good support they receive from the class teacher, specialist teachers and their assistants. The pupils' confidence and knowledge is increased and their delight in being successful and creative is very evident. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, especially when ably supported by support assistants.**

147 **When pupils first enter the school, their attainment is below the national average. Pupils make good progress during their first three years in the school because careful and detailed planning ensures good progression of skills, knowledge and understanding through interesting and exciting activities. The development of good literacy skills is given high priority with key technical vocabulary being emphasised and great importance given to the presentation of work.**

- 148 Higher attaining pupils in Year 7 have a good understanding of how a simple electronic circuit will operate in the badge they are designing and making. A group of Year 9 middle ability pupils are developing good basic skills in sketching and annotating their design ideas of hats. In a food technology group, lower ability pupils in Year 8 can successfully plan and make savoury rice dishes and assess the hazards they might encounter in that process. Year 9 pupils can successfully develop and make a burger and salad, meeting the needs of different dietary requirements and recognising ethnic and religious priorities.
- 149 Pupils following GCSE courses often attain higher grades because their designing and making skills are of such a high standard. The teachers have high expectations and concentrate their efforts on teaching basic skills accurately and providing a wide range of quality resource materials. Pupils' work in all year groups is assessed very regularly, emphasising areas that could be improved and showing pupils how this can be achieved. In a graphics products lesson, the teacher used very effectively a piece of current Year 11 work with a group to explain what constitutes a C, B, A or A* grade in a design folder. The quality, content and presentation of the folder was very high and the pupils were absorbed by the teacher's delivery and its impact reflected on the efforts made during the rest of the lesson. The standards in basic skills in food technology are gradually improving, although lower ability pupils' understanding of basic nutrition is weak. Craft skills in resistant materials are given a high priority and the quality of the designing for toys and rocking horses is very good. All pupils have the opportunity to attend lunchtime and after-school design technology clubs.
- 150 Pupils' attitudes and behaviour throughout the department are very good. Pupils are keen to learn and the majority are positive about their achievements and value the assessment, which often guides their future developments and ideas. They are enthusiastic, ask searching questions and listen attentively to the class teacher's demonstrations, explanations or instructions. The majority have good powers of concentration, especially when developing their design ideas. In a Year 10 textile lesson, there was a very good example of pupils helping and encouraging each other, which benefited and reinforced the learning of the helper and the helped. Pupils recognise and appreciate the differences in the diverse cultures within the school, especially through food and fashion.
- 151 The pupils' positive approach to learning is as a direct result of good and very good teaching. Teachers know their pupils very well and plan their lessons to meet individual requirements. The banding of groups in abilities is effective in supporting the lower ability pupils whilst challenging the more able. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 overall is very good. Teachers use the individual education plans for pupils very effectively, often planning and working with several support teachers and assistants in one lesson. The structure, pace and time management of the lessons are very good and the use of open-ended questions helps to develop pupils creative ideas. Homework is set and marked regularly. Deadline dates for completion of coursework are emphasised. The teachers, with the technicians' valued help, make very good use of the limited money available and are enterprising in their acquisition of consumable materials.
- 152 The very good leadership of the department and the dedication of the teachers contribute greatly to the success of the department. The policy of shared

groups in Years 10 and 11 is successful in introducing new staff to the department and in maintaining good examination results. The head and second in the department effectively monitor the work of the department through classroom observation, moderation of work and shared teaching. Extra-curricular opportunities are used to develop understanding of industrial practices and the library has a wide range of resource information, particularly for Years 10 and 11 pupils.

- 153 The use of information technology is given a high priority and an effective use is made of a range of experiences to both enhance pupils' project work and promote basic information and communication technology skills. All teachers are totally committed to providing pupils with the best opportunities possible and strive to overcome the problems of cramped rooms, especially in graphics and textiles, and overcome the difficulties of teaching large groups in the open-plan food technology area. Although health and safety is given a high priority in the planning and delivery of lessons, health hazards may occur, especially with the storage of cooked and uncooked food when large groups are doing practical lessons.
- 154 Not all pupils take an ICT option within the design and technology course in Years 10 and 11. Until the system for reporting IT attainment for all pupils at the end of Year 11 is carried out, as planned for this academic year, the school cannot be certain that all pupils are receiving their entitlement in the subject. Improvements since the last inspection have been good. Information and communication technology facilities have been improved and all schemes of work include quality experiences in their planning. Tasks challenge all abilities and there is great emphasis placed on the presentation of work.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- All teaching is good, with a high proportion of very good teaching.
- There are very good curriculum opportunities, such as visits.
- Excellent marking, assessment and monitoring systems are in place.
- Literacy skills are used very effectively e.g. writing newspaper style reports.
- Vocational courses have been introduced e.g. GNVWQ Leisure and Tourism
- Good use of ability grouping, combined with a very good monitoring system.

Areas for improvement

- More effective contact with primary schools so that teachers have a better idea of what pupils know and can do as they enter secondary school.
- Greater use of information and communication technology for research and presentation in Years 7 to 9.
- More vigorous promotion of geography as an option for GCSE.

- 155 Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 9 is in line with the national average. A significant minority of pupils achieve standards above the national average. Inspection evidence shows that the trend of annual improvement is likely to continue in Years 7 to 9. In 2001, teacher-assessed results showed more girls achieving the level expected for their age at 14 with more boys achieving the higher levels. The school's experience over four years is that gender differences have shown no consistent pattern.

- 156 In the GCSE examination in 2000, attainment at grades A* to C was above the national average, but figures in 2001 are not as good. The number of pupils achieving the grades A* to B, however, increased, with corresponding improvements in grades D to G.
- 157 There are no consistent differences in the attainment of boys and girls in Years 10 and 11. Where difference does occur, it is usually because of the proportions of boys and girls who choose geography as an option. Individual target setting is accurate enough for pupils to make sufficient progress, regardless of gender or ethnicity. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because of high quality support in the classroom and improvements in their standards of literacy, especially in their vocabulary. The very good support of the staff of the Hearing Impaired Unit enable pupils who are hearing impaired to make very good progress.
- 158 All pupils are making good progress in the use of specific vocabulary. Year 9 pupils are secure with landscape terms such as 'Ox-bow Lake', 'deposition' and 'spur'. One lower set Year 9 group showed good application of their knowledge of coastal erosion by identifying features on a diagram correctly. When comparing modern farming methods with those of 50 years ago, higher attaining pupils in Year 8 show a sympathetic understanding of the relationships between human activity and the physical landscape. The coursework for GCSE is of a high standard. Pupils make their key points, supported by diagrams, sketches and maps. It is enhanced, in the very best work, by the excellent use of computers for presentation of text and data. Their conclusions are firmly based on evidence gathered systematically through fieldwork and research. A weakness in the use of enquiry methods identified in the previous inspection has been addressed successfully in Years 10 and 11. Improvement is slower in Years 7 to 9, but inspection evidence shows work from Year 7 that is addressing the issue of enquiry and fieldwork.
- 159 Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is good, with very good features. All teachers are secure with the subject material. Lessons begin with a clear explanation of the objectives and brief recall of earlier lessons. Where this is a brisk question and answer session, pupils are brought into the lesson quickly. This acts as good motivation. Pupils' answers are valued and developed by the teacher, so that more pupils are keen to become involved as the lesson progresses. In some classes, the pace is slower because the teacher does not use consistent strategies to deal with restless behaviour. In Years 10 and 11 teaching is very good, with very good relationships a significant feature. Pupils know that lessons are times for learning and they will be taken seriously if they try out ideas. Consequently, they are making good progress in skills such as cause and effect and reasoning when answering questions. Pupils on the tourism and leisure course show good levels of understanding of social factors in their swimming pool designs. This occurred because of the opportunities given by the teacher to share ideas. All teachers have very good lesson plans and set homework regularly. The use of information and communication technology to research information and present work remains a weak area in Years 7 to 9.
- 160 The leadership of the subject is good. A good curriculum is in place, and monitoring of planning and teaching has highlighted areas for improvement. As a result, action has been taken through the subject development plan; for example, improving the use of fieldwork. The plan also contains the programme for improving the use of information and communication technology. Currently, fewer pupils are choosing geography as an examination course after Year 9. This is raising concerns that recent improvement from year to year may be halted in the future. Evidence gathered during the inspection does not show any strong antipathy to geography by pupils in Years 7 to 9. However, it does appear in only one group of choices that

pupils and parents have at the end of Year 9. Evidence that this is restricting the number of possible candidates is inconclusive. The subject has a good level and quality of resources, such as maps and textbooks. The dimensions of one classroom are too small for classes of 30 pupils, which restricts the range of teaching methods the teacher can use.

- 161 Since the previous inspection the quality of teaching has improved. There has also been good improvement in the way pupils' work is assessed and the quality of fieldwork in Years 10 and 11.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- All teaching is good, with a high proportion of very good teaching.
- There are very good curriculum opportunities, such as visits.
- There are excellent marking, assessment and monitoring systems.
- Literacy skills are used very effectively e.g. writing newspaper style reports.
- Vocational courses have been introduced, such as the Certificate of Achievement.
- There is good use of ability grouping, combined with a very good monitoring system.

Areas for improvement

- More effective contact with the primary schools, so that teachers have a better idea of what pupils know and can do as they arrive at secondary school.

- 162 By the end of Year 9, results in national assessment tests show pupils are slightly below the national average, with a significant minority whose attainment is above the national average. Year 9 work seen during the inspection shows, that in future, a greater proportion of pupils is likely to achieve results above the national average.

- 163 In the GCSE examination, A* to C results in Year 11 were slightly better than the national average in 2000. They have improved again this year, as they have done over recent years since the previous inspection. This mirrors the national trend and is better than other subjects in the school. Work by Years 10 and 11 pupils seen during the inspection shows the trend is likely to continue.

- 164 There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls and pupils from ethnic minorities achieve very well. This is due to the accuracy and effectiveness of their individual improvement targets. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because they are supported by classroom assistants or have specially prepared support materials for their written work. Pupils with hearing impairment are taught history within the unit and make very good progress.

- 165 Inspection evidence shows that the comment in the previous report that written work did not show detailed historical knowledge has been addressed successfully. All teachers expect factual detail in spoken and written answers, with regular reminders given in lessons. Pupils in Year 11, in a very good lesson on modern Ireland, showed that they understood specific historical vocabulary very well. Their files and notes indicate that the understanding of historical vocabulary is very good across a range of topics. Written work by Year 9 pupils shows good progress in analysing the biographical details of industrialists such as Richard Arkwright. Teachers consistently promote literacy skills in lessons. The use of dictionaries and original source material in Year 9 is having a good impact on pupils' study skills.

Consequently, they are making very good progress in assessing sources of historical information for usefulness and reliability. One of the improvements in teaching has been the way in which pupils are more involved in their lessons. At the start of each lesson teachers clearly state the objective and generally check with the class if it has been achieved. This sense of purpose is a significant factor in the interest pupils show towards the subject. They also enjoy having a target to aim for and knowing how to improve their work because the assessment system is applied consistently.

- 166 The quality of teaching is very good. All teachers know their subject well. Pupils' responses in question and answer sessions are rigorously challenged, resulting in a positive effect on their rate and depth of learning. The consistency in approach to planning and the structure of lessons does not detract from the flair or individual characteristics each teacher brings to their lessons. These show in the effective working relationships within classes and the willingness of pupils to participate in lessons. No serious disruption of lesson was observed. Lessons are well paced and make effective use of time limits to move pupils' learning along. Teachers have good knowledge of their pupils and intervene quickly to deal with any inattention before it develops into anything more serious. Higher attaining pupils in Year 8 showed a mature and intelligent response to working in groups. They listened to other points of view without interrupting and applied good subject knowledge in their answers when evaluating contemporary sources. The pace and quality of the challenging activity in that excellent lesson enabled pupils to work at a level well above the usual expectations for their age. All teachers set homework regularly. Homework is well planned as part of the scheme of work and pupils often have to use the results of their homework in future lessons.
- 167 The leadership of the subject is very good. History is a vibrant and popular subject, with a clear sense of purpose and teamwork developed since the previous inspection. Teachers take their responsibility to improve literacy standards seriously. Consequently, literacy strategies feature prominently in their lesson plans and are having a good impact on improving attainment. The department has good plans to make better use of information and communication technology. Teachers have been trained and the new multi-media facility is about to become fully operational. Staff are fully aware of how this can be used for researching and presenting work. The introduction of a vocational course has successfully widened the curricular opportunities and made history more relevant for some pupils. Considering their level of attainment on entry, pupils are making good progress.
- 168 There has been good improvement since the previous inspection in attainment, teaching and curriculum provision.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Rising attainment at both Key Stages.
- Leadership and management of the subject.
- Support of pupils with special educational needs.
- Teachers' knowledge and use of new technology.

Areas for improvement

- Use of reporting procedures to report ICT capability.
- Review of schemes of work to reflect raised levels of achievement.

- 169 Standards of work in Years 7 to 9 are satisfactory. Attainment by the end of Year 9 is close to that in other schools nationally. Results at GCSE have improved dramatically in 2001. In work seen during the inspection, in lessons and in pupils' work files, attainment at Years 7 and 8 is slightly above national expectations. Attainment overall is rising. There has been a marked improvement in attainment since the last inspection as a result of improved resources, the introduction of a range of more appropriate courses in Years 10 and 11 and the development of a strong ICT team.
- 170 By the end of Year 9 pupils can use competently a range of applications, including word-processing, desktop publishing, spreadsheets and database programs. Year 7 pupils understand about using passwords, logging on to the network and accessing material from the school Intranet. They understand the terminology related to the use of the Internet and are developing good skills in its use for learning. During the inspection, Year 7 pupils in a science lesson successfully used data logging equipment to record the cooling temperature of liquids. Pupils in Year 8 show understanding of technical terminology in relation to modern communications technology. They use desktop publishing to present their information, taking account of their intended audience, and use spreadsheets for data manipulation.
- 171 In Years 10 and 11, the school offers a range of ICT courses, both at GCSE and vocational levels. In previous years, results in GCSE ICT have been well below the national average. However, results have improved in 2001 and are better than national averages were last year. Results in GCSE Office Applications are consistently above national levels. Last year the school introduced GNVQ Intermediate ICT and end of Year 10 module results indicate that pupils' levels are in line with national averages. This range of new courses introduced since the last inspection has contributed to the improvement in levels of attainment, with a better match of pupils to course type together with targeted after-school support. Very few girls opt to take GCSE Information Technology but take up for other Key Stage 4 courses in ICT are reasonably even in their ratio of boys to girls.
- 172 Pupils with special educational needs make good progress as a result of focused support and good teaching resources. These include well-planned workbooks, worksheets, online material from the school's Intranet and effective use of projectors for whole-class teaching. Those with hearing impairments play a full part in lessons, both in Years 7 to 9 and in exam classes in Years 10 and 11, and benefit from very good signing support.
- 173 Overall the quality of teaching in information and communication technology is good. In 80 per cent of the lessons seen, teaching was judged to be good or very good. Teachers have good subject knowledge, lessons are well planned with good whole-class teaching starting with a recapitulation of the last session, clear introduction to the topic and instructions, followed by time for pupils to do their own work. During this time they make good progress in their learning as a result of teacher support, intervention by the teacher at appropriate times and resources. The school has made good use of National Grid for Learning (NGFL) funds. As well as having five dedicated ICT teaching rooms, which can be booked, the school has developed smaller suites for ICT use in the mathematics and design and technology departments, which are very well used. Departments do report difficulty in booking rooms and there are plans to create smaller suites of computers within other departments.

- 174 Some departments have completed training, which has given them increased confidence in using ICT in their lessons. Technical help has improved and contributed to the greater use across the curriculum. All departments report use of ICT within their subject area and most have developed links on the school's Intranet to support subject use. The pupils have good access to computers outside lessons. There are computer clubs at lunchtimes, a breakfast club is also held in a computer room and there are computers in the library available for use at lunchtimes. These clubs are well attended, with one lunchtime club reserved for girls only. Pupils were observed completing coursework and using a range of learning resources during these sessions.
- 175 The department is well led and managed and the department works well as a team. Departmental documentation is good. The development plan is well written, includes appropriate national initiatives and is realisable. Significant improvements have been made since the last inspection in relation to attainment, access to resources, leadership and vision for the subject. Reporting at the end of Year 9 is satisfactory, but still needs to be more related to the National Curriculum programs of study in order to ensure complete coverage and enable pupils to progress further in all areas. Reporting at the end of Year 11 is less satisfactory and will only take place for the first time this academic year, although this was highlighted as an area for improvement in the last inspection. The department must review its system to ensure their assessments record ICT capability and not just coverage of aspects of ICT use. In light of the higher attainment of pupils in Years 7 and 8, another area for development is a review of the scheme of work for Years 7 to 9, particularly at Year 9, in order to ensure that the work continues to challenge all the pupils in the future.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths:

- Provision is inclusive: it meets a diversity of needs, aptitudes and abilities.
- Teachers' class management is confident and pupils' attitudes and behaviour are generally satisfactory or better.
- Teaching is generally good and teachers employ a variety of activities, teaching aids and ICT to good effect.
- Teachers are qualified, committed and good models of the languages they teach.
- Marking, assessment and monitoring are good and are beneficially used.

Areas for improvement:

- Review the modern languages curriculum in order to extend choices and provide more vocationally linked courses in Years 10 and 11.
- Further strengthen teaching and ensure more consistent use of the target language by teachers and pupils.
- Raise pupils' enthusiasm for foreign languages through further cultural activities, exchanges and Internet links.
- Build on the whole-school celebration of languages and achievements in languages, including community languages.
- Include more cultural, historical, political and geographical aspects of the target languages in lessons.

- 176 Since the last inspection, there has been a steady improvement in GCSE results generally. In 1997, 22 per cent of pupils gained grades A* to C and all gained a grade A* to G. In 2001, 53 per cent gained a grade A* to C in German, 75 per cent in French and 100 per cent in Spanish. Almost all gained an A* to G. In the teacher assessment tests in 2001, 37 per cent of pupils gained Level 5 or above, which was below the national average.
- 177 Through its modern language provision, the school significantly extends equality of opportunity to all pupils. From age 11, pupils are offered a choice of either French or German, with the possibility for the more able linguists of studying two languages. The inclusion of pupils with special educational needs is a strength of the school's modern language provision. In Years 10 and 11 full GCSE courses are offered along with the Certificate of Achievement, which makes sure all pupils have a chance to study a language until they are 16 years old. There is no significant difference in the attainment of pupils of different ethnic backgrounds and attainment patterns for boys and girls are in line with national trends
- 178 **Standards for pupils aged 11 to 14 in lessons are generally in line with the National Curriculum stipulations, although some examples of limited attainment were noted in a small number of cases. In Years 10 and 11, pupils' work is largely in line with the requirements of examining bodies.**
- 179 In Years 7, 8 and 9 pupils are developing a feel for their chosen language. They understand a range of familiar, simple questions and commands and usually follow simple classroom instructions in the target language. Their knowledge of relevant vocabulary and grammatical structures is progressing satisfactorily. One Year 8 lower ability class recalled reflexive verbs well and were able to respond to questions about daily routine using time. Pupils conduct short dialogues with their teachers and with each other, as in a Year 9 higher ability French group who asked and answered questions describing their bedrooms. At age 14, most pupils can respond to short simple questions in the target language, with many attempting fluency and accuracy in their pronunciation. However, some pupils are reluctant to take risks.
- 180 Their writing is developing well, with many pupils undertaking consistent writing tasks in the languages of their choice. With the exception of one Year 7 German lesson, pupils' awareness of the cultures, geography and politics associated with the language they were learning was not always apparent.
- 181 In Years 10 and 11, pupils are working to the requirements of the examining bodies. Their written work, especially in higher ability groups, is substantial, showing considerable effort and progress. Their written work also demonstrates evidence of homework based on relevant tasks involving short texts and dialogues in the languages they study. Many have developed independent language learning skills, with the use of dictionaries, audio and visual materials, and other extra reading and listening materials. In higher sets, pupils show the skills of language learning, they take ownership of their work and produce consistent and substantial written work to meet the course requirements. Their speaking and responding in the target language is becoming confident. However, many pupils, particularly in lower sets, still find speaking with confidence and fluency a challenge. Their understanding of grammar and their range of vocabulary are both limited.
- 182 **Teaching in modern languages is generally good in all years, with committed and qualified teachers. Teachers employ effectively a variety of activities and techniques to motivate all pupils and to raise their levels of commitment to language learning. ICT could be used further to motivate pupils. Through their**

planning and delivery, including schemes of work and associated activities and resources, teachers strive to challenge all pupils to their best performance in all aspects of language learning. However, vocabulary should be extended further and accurate grammar should be required more consistently, at least from the more able.

- 183 Classroom management is generally confident, and pupils are happy to be involved and to try hard. Assessment, record keeping and the monitoring of pupils' performance are consistent. Teachers frequently include activities to promote independent language learning skills, especially through planned extension of class work and homework and this could be extended. The practice of regularly monitoring pupils' performance in lessons is beneficial, including, in particular, moving them into suitable sets or groups. This should be extended to help teachers focus more precisely on different groups of pupils, such as those with learning difficulties and the more able
- 184 Teachers have a good command of the languages they teach, but they do not, in some cases, use the language they are teaching sufficiently to manage the classroom.
- 185 Pupils' attitudes to languages and their associated cultures are generally positive in all year groups. They pay attention, take care of their work, take part in class activities willingly, and usually have very good relationships with each other and with their teachers. Overall, in 85 per cent of the lessons observed, pupils demonstrated positive attitudes to their subject and their behaviour was satisfactory or better. There was no noticeable difference between boys and girls or between pupils of different ethnic groups in their levels of commitment and motivation. There is a significant difference in pupils' motivation between pupils aged 11 to 14 and those aged 14 to 16 years. The latter group displays less commitment and perseverance. Also, lack of motivation is often more noticeable amongst pupils in lower sets, although good examples of commitment and consistent work were seen in lower sets in both Year 9 and Year 10. The school, therefore, needs to address the issue of motivation and interest for languages amongst all its pupils through a variety of means, including exchange programmes, the use of the Internet link-up with appropriate language communities and the further celebration of community and foreign languages within the school
- 186 The management of the department is good and its stable staffing level is a strength. The department's development plan includes specific targets and ways of achieving them. Accommodation is sometimes a little cramped. The school is aware of the issues around developing a more focused curriculum structure to meet the needs of all its pupils through the introduction of newer types of courses and opportunities, including ICT and vocationally-oriented languages programmes.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Sound standards of musical achievement have been maintained.
- Good relationships exist and pupils enjoy their work.
- An increasing range of extra musical activities is provided.

Areas for improvement

- Accommodation and resources are unsatisfactory and are restricting pupils' progress.
- The appointment of a full-time specialist teacher is required.
- There is not enough provision for extra instrumental tuition.

187 Since the previous inspection sound standards in music have been maintained throughout the school. By the end of Year 9 standards match the requirements of the National Curriculum in most respects and there is no significant difference in attainment between boys and girls or between those from different ethnic backgrounds. Listening skills are average and most pupils can correctly describe what they hear in basic musical terms. They confidently perform short tunes on keyboards and percussion instruments. The more able add other melodic and rhythmic parts to these to make attractive ensembles. Among the best examples heard during the inspection were arrangements pupils had made of tunes like the theme from the film *Titanic* performed by pupils in a Year 9 class. Keyboard skills have improved since the previous inspection. A thriving keyboard club has been established that is extending pupils' performing skills satisfactorily.

188 The pattern of GCSE results has remained variable since the previous inspection. In 2000, the attainment of the 12 pupils involved matched the national subject average for A* to C grades and were above average for A* to G grades. This was a considerable improvement on results in 1999, which were well below this. No valid statistics can be made due to the relatively small numbers involved. Pupils display a wide range of performing skills mainly on classroom instruments. A few have lessons on other instruments and attain up to about Grade 4, occasionally beyond, in nationally recognised examinations. Composing skills are generally above average. Most pupils use computers with confidence and a fair degree of musical inventiveness to combine basically conventional melodic and harmonic ideas within extended musical structures. The resulting computer-produced scores and performances, some of which are over 100 bars in length, are both sophisticated and musically attractive.

189 The quality of teaching and learning is good. In all of the lessons observed it was at least satisfactory and in most it was good. Some outstanding extra instrumental teaching was observed. Pupils are generally helped to achieve well. Good relationships are established between pupils and between pupils and their teachers that help to promote a positive working atmosphere in most lessons. Teachers support groups and individual pupils in their practising and most pupils in turn respond well by concentrating while listening to music or rehearsing their performances. Teachers plan their lessons to focus strongly on musical targets and this is effective in helping pupils to talk and write about their music-making in appropriate musical terms. Most pupils apply themselves productively when preparing and performing. Their teachers support these pupils very well and enable them to learn classroom instruments and take part in the same type of practical activities as others. The rigorous and patient rehearsal of tunes like *Old MacDonald had a Farm* by a group in Year 8 was particularly impressive. At the time of the inspection, plans were being made for a pupil with hearing impairment to start having extra instrumental lessons with a visiting teacher.

190 The department is well managed to include the running of an increasing range of extra musical activities, some of which, like the keyboard club and the school's musical productions, are popular and well supported. Since the previous inspection, some provision has been made to improve pupils' notation skills. Whilst this has been partially successful in helping more pupils to understand written music, their reading of rhythm in particular is still not strong. Relatively few pupils, moreover,

reach high standards in performing, and this is partly due to the restricted range of provision for extra instrumental tuition. This is an area for improvement identified at the time of the previous inspection that has still to be addressed. At present, only a few pupils each year attain the lower grades in instrumental examinations.

- 191 Whilst staffing for music at the time of the inspection was satisfactory, the use of temporary teachers is not conducive to the stability needed to build up and improve musical standards.
- 192 Both the accommodation and resources for music are unsatisfactory. The whole department needs considerable refurbishment. The two practice rooms are too far away to be of any use to support class teaching. One of the two teaching rooms is not equipped for keyboards and both rooms are too small. They do not allow for more than one type of instrument to be used at any one time. Moreover, the siting of the department next to the school's examination area results in the curtailing of practical activities and thus inhibits progress several times each year. There are not enough classroom instruments when two classes have lessons simultaneously. The resulting changing of rooms half way through each lesson is both disruptive and time consuming. Audio equipment in one of the rooms and facilities for recording pupils' work are inadequate. More materials are needed to support teaching and learning at GCSE, and more software is needed to make computer facilities available for pupils in Years 7 to 9.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **very good**.

Strengths:

- Teaching is good.
- GCSE results and teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 are significantly and consistently above national levels.
- Very good relationships exist between teachers and pupils.
- Management of the subject is excellent.

Area needing attention is:

- Aspects of accommodation.

- 193 **By the end of Year 9 teacher assessments show pupils' attainments to be significantly above the national average. Boys attain well in swimming and badminton. Almost all pupils swim major strokes at least to a satisfactory standard, with most swimming well. The most able are excellent and produce the highest standards. In badminton, boys and girls make very good progress with clear improvements both in racket skills and in their abilities to apply them in games. Pupils are influenced by very good teaching and by the high expectations that teachers have of them. Tasks, carefully graded, ensure that pupils of all ability levels succeed. Boys and girls make good progress in gymnastics, producing interesting sequences with movements well linked together. They capably control body weight onto their arms in movements and balances.**
- 194 By the end of Year 11 attainment is very good. GCSE results are considerably above the national average and have been for a number of years. In 2001, 74 per cent of pupils gained A* to C grades and this was well above national averages.

Pupils make very good progress and produce written work that reflects sound understanding of terminology, such as that encountered in anatomical and physiological sections of the course. Effective continuous assessment helps pupils to be well informed about their performances and progress. Attainment in games is good. The majority of boys have a good range of soccer skills. Girls progress very well in hockey and netball, displaying a command of passing and shooting skills and showing good positional sense. All pupils, boys, girls, those from ethnic minorities and those with SEN, attain well and make very good progress in all year groups. However, boys attain a little better than girls in this subject, which holds a high appeal for many of them.

- 195 **Teaching is mostly good or very good. Sometimes it is excellent, but very occasionally it is only satisfactory. Where teaching is excellent, lessons are meticulously planned with particular attention given to developing pupils of all levels of ability. Teaching styles are regularly changed to meet learning objectives. Teachers build very good working relationships and pupils respond very enthusiastically, concentrating throughout lessons, co-operating and collaborating well together. Progress is good and pupils show gains in both skill and understanding of theoretical concepts. Lessons are well planned and mostly proceed with obvious pace and purpose. In a Year 8 badminton lesson, the teacher explained points, gave a demonstration and ensured that all pupils were involved through the use of evaluation sheets. Varying heights of nets were used to accommodate pupils of all sizes and abilities. All teachers have good subject knowledge and demonstrate skills well. In a Year 9 badminton lesson, the teacher and chosen pupils demonstrated shot skills, which clearly motivated the other pupils who made very good attempts to reproduce the shots themselves. In a Year 10 netball lesson, the teacher demonstrated passing and feinting and pupils quickly understood and operated the newly learned skills very effectively in mini-games. Learning support for hearing impaired pupils is excellent. There is an occasional tendency, in theory lessons in Years 10 and 11, for teachers to dominate proceedings too much and when this happens lessons proceed at a slower pace.**
- 196 **Information and communication technology (ICT) is very well used for administration and for the production of teaching materials. Documentation is of the highest order with policies, lesson plans and schemes of work completely up to date and produced in meticulous detail. Procedures for assessing and recording pupils' performances are very good. Lack of a designated room for the subject does, however, restrict the use of ICT in lessons. There is not much evidence of pupils using ICT to produce their written work.**
- 197 Leadership of the physical education department is excellent. Policies are reviewed and adjusted to ensure that practice keeps abreast with current curricular thinking. Meetings are regularly held and recorded. Teachers are deployed to teach in their areas of strength. Documentation of policies, schemes of work and lesson plans are excellent, as are displays within the department, which celebrate pupils' achievements. The department has responded sensitively to the Muslim community's concern about mixed gender swimming classes and there are now girls' only swimming groups where Muslim girls participate freely. The department has achieved the 'Sportsmark' award.
- 198 Lack of risk assessment, reported during the previous inspection, has now been completely addressed.

199 Extra-curricular provision is very good. Many teams and clubs are available for both boys and girls. Pupils play representative sport at district level. There are annual trips to Europe, both for teams and for pupils interested in water sports.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Good teaching.
- The inclusion of all pupils in discussions of religious and moral issues.
- A popular GCSE option with good results.
- A detailed scheme of work supporting well planned lessons.
- Subject is very well led and managed.

Areas for improvement

- Opportunities for pupils to write at length in their own words.
- The planned development of pupils' ICT skills.
- The analysis of results in terms of ethnicity.

200 Standards are in line with expectations both in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11. In Years 7 to 9, pupils acquire a wealth of factual knowledge of the different religions they study; Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism. They develop a sound grasp of the technical terms associated with each of the world faiths, such as 'puja', 'shrine' and 'murti' in Hinduism. They also produce a good volume of well-presented writing on various aspects of world faiths and on occasion they produce more extended pieces based on research, some of which are word-processed. In 2001, the percentage gaining grades A* to C was not as high as in 2000 but was still in line with the national average in 2000. Given the fact that the pupils in Year 9 and in Year 11 entered the school with below-average levels of attainment, the achievement of pupils in both of these years is good. Sensitive and well-judged teaching, together with occasional additional support, also help pupils with special educational needs to achieve well. Those for whom English is an additional language achieve well also.

201 Pupils opting for the GCSE course study Christianity and Islam in some depth. This enables the majority of pupils to learn about and to draw on their own religious and cultural heritages, making the option attractive to pupils from a variety of faith communities. About 40 per cent of those taking the GCSE course are from the ethnic minorities. Indeed, the subject is generally popular and there are now two GCSE groups in each of Years 10 and 11. Group sizes have also increased as the subject has gained in popularity. Pupils taking the course of compulsory religious education in Years 10 and 11, as well as all of those not taking the GCSE course, study a wide range of moral and social issues, such as the use of drugs, care for the environment, abortion, euthanasia and capital punishment. The perspectives of the various world faiths inform these issues. The subject contributes to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils. It also assists the language development of pupils considerably, particularly as much of it is conducted by means of discussion and debate and as there are frequent opportunities for pupils to read and to write. Opportunities for pupils to write at some length in their own words are less frequent, however, and might be provided more regularly.

- 202 While the department analyses examination results in some detail it does not yet do so in terms of pupils' ethnicity. It encourages pupils to develop their ability to use the Intranet and the Internet to support their homework, but it does not yet help them to develop their skills in information and communication technology in a progressive and planned way. In all years, formal assessment takes place at the end of each unit of study and the results help to inform future planning and teaching.
- 203 The quality of teaching is good overall. There is some teaching that is satisfactory and also a good proportion that is very good or excellent. Lessons are invariably well planned and carefully prepared, learning objectives are clear and teaching, including a small amount in Year 7 that is carried out by non-specialists, is well supported and guided by well structured and informative worksheets. Lessons unfold in well-managed stages and the pace of work is usually brisk and business-like. Teachers are sensitive to pupils' language needs, exploring their understanding of words like 'biblical' or 'individual' as well as taking pains to explain the exact meaning of technical terms. Careful attention is given to the needs of pupils for whom English is an additional language.
- 204 As well as learning about religion, pupils also have opportunities to learn from religions, an improvement since the last inspection. For example, in one excellent lesson, lower attaining Year 9 pupils studying Hindu worship developed a strong appreciation of Hindu meditation. The teacher ensured that a soothing and peaceful atmosphere was fostered by creating a small Hindu shrine, complete with burning incense, lighted candles, relaxing music and religious artefacts and posters. The pupils remained perfectly quiet for the 15 minutes it took the teacher to guide them through the meditation and afterwards expressed their satisfaction by describing the experience as "brilliant" and "great" and asking the teacher if they could do it again!
- 205 Pupils' generally positive response to the subject is helped by their positive relationships with their teachers. In one very good lesson, involving a small group of Year 8 hearing impaired pupils, the teacher made very good use of visual aids and sign language to help the pupils come to an understanding of Jewish dietary laws and eating customs. She was careful to test the extent of pupils' understanding towards the end of the lesson and to correct any misunderstandings. The group was not easy to teach, but the teacher's use of a friendly but firm approach ensured that the conditions for learning were established and the majority made good progress. Teachers have good information on the prior academic attainment of the pupils they teach and make use of this in their teaching. In this way, additional support is provided for those with special educational needs while more demanding tasks are set for higher attaining pupils. In lessons where teaching was no better than satisfactory, teachers sometimes had a tendency to talk at the pupils too much. Pupils in consequence failed to be stimulated and were less involved in their learning. Homework is regularly allocated at the end of lessons, including some requiring pupils to carry out their own investigations and research. This is an improvement since the last inspection.
- 206 The subject is well supported by a good range of book resources, video films and artefacts. There is also a good range of books on the various world faiths in the school library and the department has recently established its own website on the school Intranet system. These resources are well used by teachers when assigning homework tasks involving research. The two full-time specialist teachers are well qualified and each has a permanent teaching base well adorned with religious posters and examples of pupils' work. There are more examples of pupils' writing and illustrations on the walls of the corridor adjacent to the rooms, helping to give a specialist flavour to this part of the building. There is a detailed handbook and a

comprehensive scheme of work based on the Bolton Agreed Syllabus. The department is very well led and managed.