

INSPECTION REPORT

THOMAS ESTLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Broughton Astley

LEA area: Leicestershire

Unique reference number: 120275

Headteacher: Mr T Moralee

Reporting inspector: Mr K Davitte
15029

Dates of inspection: 24 – 29 September 2001

Inspection number: 193659

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Middle deemed secondary comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 to 14 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Station Road
Broughton Astley
Leicestershire

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs H Tomlinson

Date of previous inspection: 21 April 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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15029	Mr K Davitte	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils' taught? How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
12775	Ms J Goodchild	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
23393	Mr B Dower	Team inspector	English, Drama	
13619	Mr B Meech	Team inspector	Mathematics	
5241	Ms C Millband	Team inspector	Science	
23880	Ms O Hall	Team inspector	Special educational needs Art and design	
20588	Mr I Hodgkinson	Team inspector	Design and technology Information and communication technology	
13734	Mr H Davies	Team inspector	Geography Religious education	
17732	Mr D Martin	Team inspector	History	
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30297	Mr G Spruce	Team inspector	Music	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Thomas Estley Community College incorporates a co-educational 11-14 school in Broughton Astley in the local educational authority of Leicestershire. There are 683 pupils with 373 boys and 310 girls. The great majority of pupils are white. Only seven pupils speak English as an additional language and all are proficient in English. The school has an above average percentage of pupils with special educational needs (21%) and with statements (4%). Socio-economic circumstances are favourable with the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals well below average (4%). Attainment on entry has been broadly average but the current Year 7 attained just above average results in national tests at primary school. The principal has been in post for one and a half years.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school enabling pupils to make good progress in most subjects and in some subjects progress is very good. Mostly good teaching and a substantial proportion of very good teaching allied to well-motivated pupils are key factors in the progress made. The determination of the principal 'to raise achievement at all levels for all learners' is having a beneficial effect in a school where the well-being of all pupils matters. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Most pupils progress from mainly average standards on entry to above average standards overall by the end of Year 9 and well above in mathematics, science, information and communication technology (ICT) and modern foreign languages.
- A substantial proportion of teaching is very good.
- Pupils' experiences and personal development are enriched by a wide ranging and at times innovative curriculum including a very good range of extra-curricular activities.
- The school cultivates an environment in which pupils are ready to learn and where they benefit from very good levels of care and support including for pupils with special educational needs.
- The community aspects of the school successfully promote the concept of 'lifelong learning' and add an important dimension to pupils' education.
- Senior management is ensuring a clear educational direction for the school with a very sharp focus on teaching and learning in the classroom in order to raise standards further for all.

What could be improved

- * Challenge the most able pupils more consistently so that the very good practice seen with some teachers becomes normal practice for all.
- * Involving middle management and other teachers with the necessary expertise in the systematic evaluation of lessons.
- *Using assessment data in setting more precise individual targets for pupils and measuring progress and reporting against those targets.
- Implementing fully the targets set for improving the management and organisation of physical education following the recent review by senior management.
- Meeting the statutory requirement of providing a daily act of collective worship.

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

* These items are already a part of the school's development plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Overall improvement since the last inspection in 1997 has been good. Standards in most subjects have improved, as has the quality of teaching. There is now a systematic development of reading skills across the school. Personal, social and health education is now well integrated into the total curriculum. Spiritual education has been strengthened but is not co-ordinated well enough across subjects and a regular act of collective worship is still not held. The preparation for pupils to live in a culturally diverse society is now much better. The quantity and quality of the book stock are now adequate and there has been a significant increase in the number of computers. The school now fulfils legal requirements in reporting to parents. Response to the greater emphasis nationally on performance management and monitoring standards has been good.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 9 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
End of Key Stage 3 tests	A	B	A	D

Key

well above A

average B

above average C

average D

below average E

well below average

The combined results in national tests in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were well above average compared with all schools. They were well above average in mathematics and science and above average in English. The best and most consistent results since the last inspection have been in mathematics where they have been mostly well above average. The 'similar schools' grading above is based entirely on comparisons with schools with a similar proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. It takes no account of such factors as the proportion of pupils with special educational needs which is above average at Thomas Estley. A much more accurate measure of the success of the school is the significant value added to pupils' education from Year 7 to Year 9 as pupils started at the school with mainly average standards.

Standards seen at the inspection were above average overall. They were well above average in mathematics, science, information and communication technology (ICT) and modern foreign languages and above average in English, art, geography and history. Standards met national expectations in drama, design and technology, music, physical education and religious education. Achievement is good overall in relation to pupils' earlier attainment including for those with special educational needs. Whilst higher attainers are also making good progress there is scope for raising standards further for such pupils and the school has recognised this. The majority of pupils use extensive vocabulary in English and in their other subjects. In mathematics there is very good continuity from primary school in the development of numeracy skills and investigative skills are fostered successfully. In science Year 7 pupils soon become confident in using new equipment and very good progress continues throughout Years 8 and 9. In ICT pupils have a very good ability to use computers for a variety of purposes. In both French and Spanish progress is rapid within weeks of pupils starting their courses and is rigorously maintained. Standards are very good in music in extra-curricular activities but not as good in lessons. In physical education standards are high in extra-curricular activities but are variable in lessons where standards in boys' games are higher than those of girls. In 2001

targets were mostly met but the school recognises that it still needs to increase the numbers attaining the very highest levels in national tests at the end of Year 9.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Well-motivated pupils take a pride in their school and their attitudes contribute positively to the good progress which they make.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. There is an orderly and productive atmosphere in nearly all lessons and around the school. Pupils confirm that bullying is rare. No permanent exclusions last year and only five fixed-term exclusions.
Personal development and relationships	Very good and at the heart of much of what the school achieves. Pupils value the attention which the school pays to their views, for example a group was involved in interviewing candidates when the current principal was appointed, and they in turn respect the views of others.
Attendance	Very high attendance rate and unauthorised absence well below average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The overall quality of teaching is good and a substantial proportion is very good. All teaching seen was at least satisfactory which is an improvement from the time of the last inspection when teaching was unsatisfactory in one in ten lessons. Teaching is very good in mathematics and modern foreign languages and good in English and science and in the majority of other subjects and in personal, social and health education (PSHE). In music and physical education although teaching is satisfactory overall it is more inconsistent than elsewhere. The main factors which contribute to good teaching and learning are the quality of teachers' planning, their expectations, an appropriate variety of teaching methods and very good classroom management to involve all. Occasionally, time in the latter part of lessons could be used better to reinforce what has been learned. The teaching of literacy, numeracy and ICT through subjects of the curriculum is very good. Teachers and support teachers work together in a genuine partnership and lower attainers and those with special educational needs are enabled to make similarly good progress to that of others. The needs of all pupils are well met overall but there are still areas for improvement. In several subjects there were examples where the highest attainers could have been stretched more. Pupils apply themselves very well to tasks even when there are deficiencies in teaching. The resources of the library are very well used and boys and girls make equally good use of those facilities in their research and general reading.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good and sufficient to ensure equality of access and opportunity but curriculum time for religious education is below average. Suspension of the timetable for four separate weeks allows a wide range of issues to be explored. Extra-curricular activities are very good and the great majority participate. Provision for careers education and the contribution of the community to pupils' education are excellent.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Made possible by the high quality work of the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) and a totally integrated team of teachers and classroom support assistants.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	No special provision is currently required as pupils are equally proficient in English and make good progress. There are specialist staff who can deal with any emerging needs of present or future pupils and who have contacts outside the school to ensure support where required.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Provision for social and moral development is excellent, very good for cultural and satisfactory for spiritual. Provision for spiritual development is not co-ordinated sufficiently across the school and there is no audit of present provision. There is now a good awareness of the richness and diversity of other cultures.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. Strong support for those needing help in academic and personal matters. The recently formulated policy to support the more able has not had time to make a full impact. Increasing use is made of assessment data but not yet used consistently across all subjects in setting targets for improvement.

Partnerships with parents and the quality of communications between school and home are very good.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. A very good senior management team has moved the school on substantially by focusing strongly on improving teaching and learning in the classroom. The principal has provided great drive in this respect. Middle management is mostly good, very good in mathematics and ICT and excellent in modern foreign languages.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good role in shaping the direction of the school, understanding strengths and weaknesses and taking action. The statutory duty of providing a daily act of collective worship is not fulfilled.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good, particularly at whole school level with a well prioritised development plan. Thorough departmental reviews by senior management are not supplemented by the same degree of rigour in self-evaluation by departments but that is planned.

The strategic use of resources	Very good. Weaknesses in resources identified at the last inspection have been successfully addressed and resources are now adequate. Accommodation is well used and has recently been expanded but the gymnasium is too small for numbers in most classes. The school is able to recruit and retain well-qualified staff. Principles of best value are scrupulously applied in making use of a tight budget. A significant contribution is made by a very good college manager and a flexible administrative, support and premises team.
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PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership and quality of teaching • Teachers' expectations and good pupil progress • Standards of behaviour • Variety of experiences including extra-curricular • Help in developing mature and responsible attitudes amongst pupils • Close working relationships with parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A clearer indication in reports of the standards being attained by pupils

Inspectors' judgements support parents' views of 'what pleases them most'. Parents are very happy with the school. Inspectors agree that reports could be even clearer on what standards are being attained but that the main weakness in reports is the failure to give precise information on what pupils need to do to improve further. The vague targets set often detract from otherwise comprehensive reports.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. In 2001 overall results in national tests for 14-year-olds at the end of Year 9 were well above average compared with all schools nationally. In individual subjects results were well above average in mathematics and science and above average in English. These results represent very good achievement and progress by pupils who were mainly of average attainment when they joined the school in Year 7. All three subjects were well above average in the percentage of pupils attaining the level expected of 14-year-olds (Level 5 or better) but results were fairly average at the higher Level 7 or better. Whilst this cannot be viewed as a significant weakness it is an area where the school can improve its performance to be more in line with achievements elsewhere. This is confirmed in inspectors' judgements in several subjects.
2. The best and most consistent results since the last inspection have been in mathematics where they have been mostly well above average. Science results have mostly been above average with the upward trend culminating in the well above average results of 2001. English results have fluctuated and were well above average in 1999, below average in 2000 and above average in 2001.
3. Compared with similar schools, results in national tests in 2001 were below average. This judgement is based entirely on comparisons with schools with a similar proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. It takes no account of such factors as the proportion of pupils with special educational needs which is above average at Thomas Estley. Whilst it gives an indicator that standards could be improved further a much more accurate measure of the success of the school is the significant value added to pupils' education from Years 7-9 and the good progress made overall and very good progress in some subjects.
4. Standards seen at the inspection were above average overall. They were well above average in mathematics and science and above average in English. In other subjects they were well above national expectations in modern foreign languages and ICT and above national expectations in art, geography and history. Standards meet national expectations in drama, design and technology, music, physical education and religious education. In design and technology standards in systems and control technology are high. Religious education has improved from the below average standards at the time of the last inspection with the appointment of a specialist subject teacher making this possible.
5. In English and elsewhere the standard of pupils' writing is good and the majority are able to use extensive vocabulary. The majority also write with accuracy although a minority have difficulty with sentence and paragraph structures, spelling and punctuation. Standards of reading are good and good progress is made in speaking skills as pupils mature in their time at the school. The systematic development of reading was a weakness at the last inspection. Listening skills are very good. In mathematics standards of numeracy and mental arithmetic are good and there is good continuity from primary school as skills are systematically extended. Work with algebraic expressions and equations is also good. In science pupils new to the school quickly become confident in using new equipment and proficiency develops further throughout all years as do standards of presentation and organisation of records, which are nearly always very good.

6. Some of the best standards seen at the inspection were in modern foreign languages where pupils develop their expertise consistently through all years. In ICT pupils show themselves to be highly proficient in using computers for many purposes. In music and physical education whilst standards are satisfactory overall there is more inconsistency than elsewhere.
7. There are areas where improvements are necessary. In design and technology drawing skills are below expected levels and pupils do not use initial research strongly enough in testing their ideas. In history whilst pupils can extract information from sources their evaluation of that information is relatively weak. In music some technical skills need improving, including in compositional work. The drawing skills of lower attainers are not high enough in art. In physical education girls' skills in games are not as good as those of boys.
8. There are no significant differences between the performance of boys and girls in the great majority of subjects. Although in the past girls have usually outperformed boys in English, boys' and girls' results in 2001 were comparable.
9. Pupils' achievement in relation to their earlier attainment is good overall. It is very good in mathematics, science and modern foreign languages and good in English and most other subjects. In music and physical education achievement is satisfactory.
10. Pupils with special educational needs make similarly good progress to that of other pupils. Whilst higher attainers are also making good progress there is scope for raising standards further for such pupils and the school has recognised this in its continuous quest to improve standards for all.
11. Since the last inspection standards have improved in most subjects. Standards in ICT have improved substantially from being in line with national expectations to being well above with investment in new equipment and very effective co-ordination being key factors in this. Whilst the high standards in extra-curricular activities in music have been maintained the potential for using technology to improve skills in lessons has not been explored.
12. The school met most of its targets in 2001 but recognises that it needs to increase the numbers attaining the very highest levels in national tests at the end of Year 9.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

13. Pupils' attitudes and their behaviour are both very good and there are examples of excellence in lessons. Their interest and involvement in the wide range of extra-curricular activities provided for them are excellent. Pupils' personal development, and the relationships between pupils and teachers, and between pupils themselves, are also very good and at the heart of much of what the school achieves. In the week of the inspection when the school faced a problem with a computer virus pupils were very supportive of teachers and even suggested and used alternative approaches so that they could carry on learning effectively. Relationships between the small number of pupils from minority ethnic groups and other pupils are very good. Parents consider that the school is successful in achieving high standards of both work and behaviour. Attendance is very high in comparison with other schools nationally and unauthorised absence is well below average.
14. Pupils enjoy school and their lessons. They are open, friendly and happy children who communicate freely and easily with adults. They are enthusiastic and ready to learn. This is a strength of the school and is one of the reasons why so many make good progress in their learning. The overwhelming majority of pupils are highly motivated towards their

learning and stimulated in their studies by the consistently good standard of teaching. Most are able to sustain good levels of concentration throughout lessons, respond to the challenges teachers set and settle quickly to written tasks. They work well together in pairs and small groups where they encourage and support each other when encountering difficulties with their work. The maturity which pupils show in approaching their work is more characteristic of much older pupils and this was particularly apparent in practical work in science. There are only isolated examples in subjects where pupils do not address each other or the teacher in a courteous manner. Pupils are confident in talking about their work, are keen to join in debates and make perceptive comments when called upon to do so. The rare instances where pupils were not concentrating well were due to pupils not being clear on what they were meant to achieve in groupwork, or because of pace falling off in the latter stages of a lesson. Pupils with special educational needs have positive attitudes towards their work and are fully integrated.

15. The standard of behaviour within the school is very good and it is an orderly community where pupils are courteous and welcoming towards visitors. The school has clear expectations of good behaviour and the great majority of pupils conform to this. This is due in part to teachers' very good class management skills and mainly interesting lessons that ensure pupils are sufficiently engaged in their work. Pupils fall from the very high standards which they show elsewhere by dropping litter during breaktimes despite receptacles being provided. Bullying is not an issue in this school. There were five fixed-term exclusions involving three pupils during the last academic year which is slightly higher than at the previous inspection. No pupils were permanently excluded.
16. The personal development of pupils is very good. The enrichment programme offers a myriad of opportunities to extend pupils' knowledge and skills beyond the National Curriculum and pupils respond well to the opportunities presented. Pupils value the attention which the school pays to their views, for example a group was involved in interviewing candidates when the current principal was appointed, and they in turn respect the views of others. Similarly they are responsive and responsible in their participation in departmental reviews where their opinions are sought. They are very positive about the impending elections for team councils and the plans for a school council. They engage readily in fundraising, in negotiating with the catering service to provide a wider range of nutritious food and in representing the school on an 'Agenda 21' committee looking at local conservation issues. Pupils volunteer readily to support reading programmes in local primary schools and in such programmes as a literacy project where they performed a dance based on the Jungle Book for primary-aged pupils and parents. Senior citizens have lunch with the pupils once a week and the easy relationships between these two groups, and with other adults using the premises, enhances the community atmosphere and develops an awareness of the responsibilities of citizenship.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

17. Overall the quality of teaching is good and a significant proportion is very good. All teaching seen at the inspection was at least satisfactory. This is an improvement from the time of the last inspection when teaching was unsatisfactory in one in ten lessons. The additional emphasis placed on classroom observation by senior management using standard criteria has helped in raising standards and in doing so they have a good teaching force to work with. Good teaching is matched by good quality learning in most subjects and in mathematics, science, ICT and modern foreign languages the quality of learning is very good. Pupils with special educational needs learn equally well.
18. Teaching is very good in mathematics and modern foreign languages with a third of teaching in modern foreign languages being excellent. Teaching is good in the majority of

other subjects including English and science and personal, social and health education (PSHE). In lessons in music and physical education teaching and learning are satisfactory and more inconsistent than elsewhere but there are some good or very good features.

19. The main factors which contribute to good overall teaching are very good subject knowledge, good planning and expectations, the use of an appropriate variety of teaching methods and very good classroom management.
20. There is very good subject knowledge in all areas resulting from specialists teaching most lessons. A particular strength arising from teachers' good subject knowledge and an understanding of pupils' needs is the quality of question posed. This is a fairly common feature in lessons in recapping on previous learning and in teasing out answers from pupils. Notable examples were seen during the inspection in English, art and design and history.
21. Planning is good overall and very good in a substantial number of lessons. Planning is best when it results in pupils of varying levels of attainment in the same lesson knowing what is expected of them and being challenged to achieve their best. Good examples were seen in all subjects and is one of the reasons for the success of the teaching of ICT across the curriculum. Whilst there were examples of rigorous planning in music this is not consistently so and objectives are not always made clear to pupils. At times in history weaknesses arise as a result of insufficient focus on history learning objectives. Teachers are very well prepared for teaching PSHE.
22. Good expectations were seen in most lessons. In mathematics there is some demanding work in algebra. In modern foreign languages in particular there are suitable challenges for all including for pupils with special educational needs where teachers skilfully modify language to ensure pupils have equality of access in learning the subject and make similar progress to other pupils. Although the needs of all pupils are well met overall there are areas for improvement. In several subjects there were examples where the highest attainers could have been stretched more. In science teachers have very high expectations of effort, behaviour and attainment but higher attainers are not challenged sufficiently. A similar pattern was seen in other subjects including English, design and technology, history, geography, ICT and religious education. Although in mathematics there are many examples of demanding work such as in algebra there is still scope for teachers' expectations of higher attainers to be extended further. In art there are insufficient opportunities at the end of lessons for pupils to reflect on work and extend their techniques, particularly for boys.
23. Teachers also use methods which build well on pupils' knowledge acquired at primary school, and in science pupils quickly become confident in using new equipment and how to operate as young scientists. Pupils make rapid progress in Year 7. A good feature of teaching and learning is that pupils do not slacken off in their learning in Year 8 and momentum is continued into Year 9. This is seen for example in the way pupils develop their literacy and numeracy skills throughout all years and also in the way they progressively develop their independent learning skills. In PSHE interest is stimulated by the nature of exercises devised and the quality of group discussion engendered.
24. The quality of teaching in ICT also allows pupils to capitalise fully on the competent skills which they bring with them into the school in Year 7. Basic skills are well taught and nearly all teachers manage to plan that well into their teaching and take advantages of opportunities as they arise to reinforce key principles. In science for example opportunities for pupils to apply their knowledge of scientific principles to poetry results in some amusing pieces of work on display. Some very good teaching of pupils with special educational needs was observed in numeracy and literacy lessons where teachers use

an effective range of resources and questioning to stimulate and motivate pupils. This helped them understand operations such as doubling, halving and multiplying in mathematics.

25. Teachers and learning support assistants work together in genuine partnership and lower attainers and those with special educational needs are enabled to make similar progress to those of others. Individual education plans are well used. This is helped by their clarity and a focus on what really matters in helping individual pupils to improve. The department of physical education has subject specific individual plans which is good practice.
26. The use of time and resources is good. Occasionally, time in the latter part of lessons could be used better to reinforce what has been learned. Boys and girls make equally good use of the library facilities in their research and general reading. Pupils with hearing and visual impairment make very good progress in lessons with the help of enlarged scripts and laptops so that they keep up with the rest of the class.
27. The quality of ongoing assessment is good. Assessment is helped by thorough marking and there are often helpful comments. This is not matched by the setting of precise targets which are shared with pupils. There is mostly good use of National Curriculum levels but insufficiently so in music.
28. The management of pupils is very good in most lessons. Teaching contributes to and benefits from well motivated and patient pupils who apply themselves very well to tasks set showing interest, concentration and independence. Pupils apply themselves very well to tasks even when there are deficiencies in teaching.

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

29. The school continues to offer a very good curriculum with many strengths and some outstanding features. A wide range of opportunities is offered which meets the needs of pupils in nearly all respects. Despite improvement since the last inspection curriculum time for religious education is below average although the subject is taught in such a way to meet statutory requirements. There are very good strategies for teaching literacy, numeracy and ICT across subjects of the curriculum and the school has responded well to national initiatives to improve teaching in these areas. In addition each pupil has a 50 minute 'discrete' ICT lesson every fortnight which comes from other curriculum areas on a rotational basis. This is well integrated. Equality of opportunity in the curriculum is very good. The quality of the curriculum has been recognised by external national awards.
30. There are very good arrangements to support pupils who have difficulties with literacy and numeracy mainly through very good in-class support but also through some justifiable withdrawal from lessons. In Year 7 for example there are arrangements which allow one group of pupils to learn French on a reduced timetable for two lessons and have additional time for literacy and language work. In Years 7 and 8 pupils with lower level reading and comprehension skills are enabled to make good progress through the tape-assisted reading (TARP), phonics and writing organisation programmes. Extra support is available in lunchtime clubs where pupils are 'invited' to attend sessions run by the committed team of learning support assistants. Additional literacy sessions are arranged during tutorial time. Extra sums of money are profitably invested in Year 9 to create smaller groups for pupils still needing extra support.
31. Arrangements in the curriculum to cater effectively for gifted and talented pupils are in their infancy but a very good start has been made through a good policy statement, introductory training and the compiling of a register of such pupils.

32. Provision for extra-curricular activities is very good and wide ranging with the vast majority of pupils taking part. Most lunchtimes are a hive of activity and on one day during the inspection in excess of 100 pupils participated in inter-school sporting activities. There is a healthy list of fixtures with other schools which has increased in response to measures taken by senior management. Staff are encouraged to make a contribution by knowing that their efforts are recognised. Very good messages are sent out by the principal being present at some matches and by senior staff officiating. Throughout the school there is a higher than average support from staff in organising and supporting events.
33. In music, extra-curricular activities remain very strong and varied with a choir, a band and other groups and concerts such as a recent production of 'West Side Story' encouraging many to participate. Concerts are usually 'sell outs'. Other ambitious provision has been a concert band tour of Spain. Music and sport also provide very good opportunities to extend gifted and talented pupils. Most subjects contribute further to the provision with specific activities including a good range of trips.
34. Provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is very good including for sex education and attention to drug misuse. PSHE makes a major but not exclusive contribution to enriching pupils' experiences. In addition suspension of the normal school timetable for four separate weeks during the year allows a wide range of issues to be explored through modules including Europe and the wider world, sex and health education, design and conservation, money matters, Young Enterprise and different cultures. A considerable strength of the 'enrichment' programme is the way in which activities complement each other in a very well integrated programme. The school carefully considers whether the programme needs a fresh input and the fairly recent addition of a module dealing with 'space' in place of 'earth science' has been given a vote of confidence by pupils. Another effect of raising the profile of the 'enrichment' programme since the last inspection is the increasing awareness amongst staff of what they can also contribute through their subjects.
35. Provision for careers education is excellent and superbly led. The very well thought out programme for careers education succeeds in capturing the attention of pupils whose final career choices are somewhat in the future. This is not an easy task. Provision is backed by an excellent use of resources including ICT, visits, visiting speakers, special events for Year 9 and 'Take Your Son/Daughter to Work' initiatives.
36. The quality of links with the community is excellent and made possible by the school being an integral part of a community college. This shows in additional opportunities on offer after school and in the special ethos cultivated by having adult students on the premises during the day as well as evening. Links with schools in the area are very strong as seen during the week of the inspection in a meeting of representatives of schools where recent test results of each institution were discussed openly. Heads of subjects and other staff have regular meetings with teachers from primary and secondary schools but these are more uniform at primary than secondary level. There is a special relationship with Birkett House Special School with small numbers of pupils benefiting from having lessons and lunch at Thomas Estley on one day a week.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

37. Overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is very good. The aims of the school, the general ethos and daily activities support this aspect of pupils' personal development. Since the last inspection, however, the recommendation to improve co-ordination of spiritual development across the curriculum has not been carried out.

38. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. The absence of a daily act of collective worship is not only a breach of statutory requirement but also limits opportunities to raise spiritual awareness. Very little reflection or discussion of spiritual issues takes place in form periods. Some departments however make an implicit, rather than planned, contribution to raising spiritual awareness. The religious education department enables pupils to consider a range of beliefs and values from major world faiths. Pupils are able to develop an awareness of something greater than the 'here and now' and engage in a search for purpose and meaning in life. In mathematics, pupils reflect upon the elegance of solutions and in modern foreign languages they are able to give expression to individual views on the world. In an information and communication technology lesson, skilful development of empathy was observed, linking work on the Second World War with the recent World Trade Centre attack. Visits to local places of worship within the enrichment programme also continue to have a spiritual dimension. An audit of opportunities within subjects and then inclusion within schemes of work would help to avoid missed opportunities.
39. The provision for moral development is excellent. Teachers and other staff, by their own example and expectations that pupils will behave considerately, act as very good role models for pupils. The school aims to develop values such as honesty and fairness and pupils are mainly made aware of the differences between right and wrong. They are expected to show respect for each other and for accepted codes of behaviour. The personal and social education programme covers a number of topics, which raise pupils' awareness of moral issues. Dilemmas and decisions are explored very well in a majority of subjects. In geography and design and technology, issues of inequality in world trade and conservation and alternative energy are discussed. Pupils also consider complex relationships and humanitarian problems in other lessons, for example racism, prejudice, slavery, group pressure and the ethical use of modern technology. They also benefit from working in orderly classroom environments with accepted and predictable responses, rewards and sanctions. Pupils are encouraged to consider the less fortunate in British and other societies through charitable fundraising.
40. The quality of display in the special needs area effectively enhances pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural learning.
41. The ethos and daily activities of the school provide a very caring and secure environment where relationships are founded on mutual respect and co-operation, between pupils, with teachers and the community. Provision for the development of social skills is excellent. The school provides many opportunities for pupils to show initiative and accept responsibility. These include activities in forms, clubs, sport, involvement in school appointments and discussion with the local authority on bus transport. Opportunities are provided for pupils to work collaboratively in many subjects developing teamwork skills and learning to value the contribution of their peers. All these activities make a very positive contribution to pupils' cultural and social development. Issues such as relationships, friendships and the development of inter-active skills are covered in the personal and social education programme. Social interaction is also promoted through a very good range of extra-curricular activities, field study trips and visits, both in this country and abroad. The modular enrichment, particularly the Young Enterprise programme, provides opportunities at an early age to consider the real world of work.
42. The provision for pupils to develop an understanding of their own and other cultures is now very good. There are visits to places of cultural interest in this country and abroad. Since the last inspection the multicultural dimension, criticised in the last report, has been strengthened by the introduction of a local module within the enrichment programme. British culture is also well covered in this programme. Pupils also have the opportunity to experience Chinese and African traditions and a school link has been established with Kenya. Plans are in hand to develop a link with South America. The resource centre

provides a very good range of multicultural books. Cultural diversity is particularly well developed in religious education through the study of many world faiths and visits and a strong exposure to pupils abroad via the internet in modern foreign languages. In mathematics Arabic numerals and Gujarati counting as well as Greek geometry are considered. There is good attention to displays in the school to ensure that all ethnic groups are represented as role models.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

43. The school cultivates an environment in which pupils want to learn and where they benefit from very good levels of care and support including for pupils with special educational needs. There is strong support for those needing help in academic and personal matters.
44. The procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare and child protection are very good. The college provides a caring, supportive environment. Pupils in Year 7 settle quickly into a school which they see as an extension and an integral part of their community. An effective induction programme helps to create self-confidence and a sense of belonging to a much bigger school community than they are used to.
45. The quality of care and welfare for pupils with special educational needs are very good, resulting from very good leadership and teamwork between the co-ordinator and teaching assistants. There is a very good handbook with guidance for teacher assistants which shares good department practice in supporting pupils. Pupils are identified in Year 6 in the primary schools and induction and reassessment in Year 7 is thorough. The Code of Practice stages are effectively reviewed and progress is monitored regularly throughout all years. Additional assessments of pupils' skills in reading are effective and comments are fed back to pupils and parents. Individual education plans are eminently geared to the needs of the individual and help to ensure the correct support from subject teachers. Annual reviews fully meet requirements and attendance of parents at review meetings is very high. Parents and outside specialists are also involved at all stages of assessment. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution using their knowledge and expertise of behaviour and specific learning difficulties. The quality of support from external agencies is very good. The recently formulated policy to support the more able has not had time to make a full impact but is indicative of the school's aim to maximise opportunities for all.
46. A strength of the pastoral system is the detailed knowledge that tutorial staff have about their pupils because of the vertical grouping system which includes pupils from all year groups. Team tutors are responsible for monitoring and promoting pupils' personal development which they do very well. Recently appointed team co-ordinators oversee their work in a monitoring and supportive capacity. Pupils are well prepared for transfer to the upper schools at the end of Year 9. They are encouraged to consider their potential future careers through an excellent careers education programme that includes visits to places of work. A very effective personal, social and health education course makes a positive contribution to the care of pupils in helping them to come to terms with personal and broader issues.
47. At times the vertical grouping system is appropriately abandoned so that pupils of the same age group and levels of maturity are taught together, for example when dealing with aspects of sex education.
48. The college has a very small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language. Regular analysis of pupils' attainment reveals no differences associated with competence in English. The specialist staff of the college are suitably trained and

qualified to deal with any emergent needs and have the requisite contacts to ensure support where it might be required.

49. The school's procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are satisfactory. Very good data from primary schools and the school's own assessment tests are used to give a baseline to measure pupils' progress over Years 7 to 9. Some departments such as mathematics use this data better than others and the school realises that it has to establish greater consistency across subjects. The data is not yet used well enough by all subject areas to make predictions and set targets for potential levels of attainment by the end of Year 9 but big strides have been made in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. The clear and uncomplicated way in which data is presented in the school helps in encouraging greater use and understanding.
50. The use of assessment data to guide curricular planning and to raise achievement is good and in some subject areas, such as mathematics for example, it is very good. Ongoing assessment in most lessons ensures that teaching staff are aware of the level of understanding pupils have gained and informs future planning. The school is strong in supporting lower attainers who need support and challenge but although the college has identified gifted and talented pupils there is no consistent provision to ensure their academic needs are met in all subjects. Annual reports to parents are satisfactory and very thorough in many respects but the targets set for improvement are often too vague.
51. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are very good and there are effective strategies in place to identify any pupil whose attendance level is a cause for concern. The computerised attendance recording system enables pastoral staff to monitor and take immediate action. Pupils returning to school after an absence are supported by subject staff to catch up on missed work and, if appropriate, work is sent home during the absence.
52. The school's procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and eliminating oppressive behaviour are very good. There are high expectations of good behaviour based on self-discipline and respect for others that are clearly understood by even the youngest pupils. There is an appropriate range of sanctions clearly understood by all pupils. Oppressive behaviour is addressed through the personal and social education programme so that pupils know what action to take if incidents occur. All staff consistently follow the school's procedures for behaviour management and any incidents are effectively dealt with when brought to the attention of staff. Exclusions are only used when all other strategies have failed and procedures appropriately involve the governing body and parents at all stages. The school records any instances of racist comments. There are clear procedures which allow for the involvement of parents particularly if there is any repetition of such behaviour. In recent years two instances have been recorded and dealt with appropriately.
53. The dress code for pupils is mostly adhered to but some older pupils, particularly girls, stretch its boundaries in reflecting the fashion of the day and that is not being picked up strongly enough. In physical education some examples of inadequate footwear in outside areas make some activities potentially dangerous as pupils slip around.
54. The arrangements for child protection are very good. The child protection officer is experienced in the procedures involved and is conversant with recent changes. There are appropriate links with relevant external support agencies. All staff are clear about the procedures to follow if an incident occurs and regularly receive refresher training.
55. Health and safety procedures are very good. There are regular health and safety checks which involve a member of the governing body.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

56. Parents' views of the school are very good. They are particularly pleased with the quality of leadership and teaching. They are happy with standards of behaviour. Parents value the variety of experiences made available for pupils including extra-curricular opportunities. They appreciate that the school is helping pupils to develop mature and responsible attitudes. Parents feel they have a close working relationship with the school. The main area for improvement which they would like to see as part of the assessment system is a clearer indication in reports of the standards being attained by pupils. Inspectors' judgements support parents' views of 'what pleases them most'. Parents are very happy with the school. Inspectors agree that reports could be even clearer on what standards are being attained but that the main weakness in reports is the failure to give precise information on what pupils need to do to improve further. The vague targets set often detract from otherwise comprehensive reports.
57. The contribution of parents to children's learning at school and home is very good. Parents are regularly in the school as part of its community life and act as good role models for pupils. They attend family learning weekends with their children, take part in a range of courses to help support their child's learning, such as use of the internet and developing literacy and numeracy skills. Parents' views are sought on a range of topics. The parent teacher association is active in supporting the college by providing refreshments at college functions including the annual cross-country event. They sponsor the annual Citizenship award and have recently undertaken to produce a Year Book for pupils in Year 9. Parents actively support college teams when taking part in sports competitions.
58. The quality of information provided for parents, particularly about progress, is very good. There are regular, good quality newsletters that contain information about the life of the college but also community news. The homework diary is a daily means of communication between home and school. Parents are actively involved by the college in resolving difficulties if they occur. There are two consultation evenings for parents held each year that give parents the opportunity to discuss progress with teaching staff. Annual reports to parents do not contain sufficient information for parents to assess what their child needs to do to raise their level of attainment and target setting for improvement is weak.
59. The parents of children with special educational needs are kept extremely well informed and in pre-inspection correspondence they stated clearly that they have considerable confidence in the system. All the necessary documentation and information are provided to ensure that when parents attend school to discuss progress and at annual reviews they are able to make a contribution to future plans.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

60. In a comparatively short period of time since the arrival of the new principal a very good senior management team has succeeded in preserving the well established strengths of the school as well as moving on substantially by focusing more sharply on teaching and learning in the classroom. The principal has made it very clear that even though results have been good a priority of the school remains 'to raise achievement at all levels of all learners' and is taking the staff along with him in realising this objective. The aim 'to provide an enriching, excellent quality education service for all learners and the wider community' is fulfilled in nearly all aspects of its work. Equality of opportunity is fostered by the very good professional and personal relations throughout the institution and by a successful whole-school team philosophy.

61. In monitoring its performance and diagnosing strengths and weaknesses the school correctly places a major focus on classroom observation and departmental review. Response to the greater emphasis on performance management now required nationally has been good. The principal has taken a very strong lead in this respect with a 'hands on' approach observing over 100 lessons personally and feeding back to staff on the strengths of their teaching and areas for improvement. There was clear evidence during the inspection that this has helped in raising the quality of teaching and learning and that teachers were very receptive to the feedback of inspectors which was based on similar criteria to that already used in the school. In addition the thorough departmental reviews of six departments so far, whilst recording strengths, do not shrink from highlighting where improvements are necessary. This sharp edge in monitoring and evaluation is a strength and has mostly been matched by positive action in meeting targets set. In the case of physical education, however, despite improvements there has been insufficient action by the department.
62. Plans to involve middle managers more in monitoring lessons and for all staff to make greater use of data on test results is an important part of the strategy to move the school on. Some departments are also more advanced than others and there are already examples of such practices being well employed but it is not a uniform feature of the school. A good start has been made in humanities where the management of that area has moved on enormously since the last inspection.
63. Governors offer very good support and are well informed of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. A wide range of experiences and expertise are blended into a supportive but challenging body which plays a very good role in shaping the direction of the school. Whilst the school has responded well to the key issues posed following the last inspection the statutory duty of providing a daily act of collective worship is still not fulfilled. Very good use is made of the services of the local education authority and the link adviser where relationships are open, frank and constructive.
64. The school is very accurate in identifying its main priorities in seeking to improve and these are well documented in development plans. Amongst these the school has already started to focus more on the needs of gifted and able pupils. This is part of a continuing drive to improve a school which already places much emphasis on including all pupils fully and where equality of opportunity is a strong feature. Making direct budgetary comparisons against other 11-14 schools nationally is difficult because of the lack of comprehensive data available but the income per pupil is about average. Whilst Thomas Estley like other schools has profited from some additional direct funding from central government to finance expenditure on computers, books and staff development the budget is still tight. Additional funding and grants have been used exceptionally well as an integral part of the overall plan to improve teaching and learning.
65. The school does not have too much difficulty in recruiting and retaining well-qualified staff but it was only sterling work by senior management during the summer which eventually succeeded in filling some gaps. The lack of a specialist teacher of religious education at the last inspection has been rectified and standards have risen. There is now a very good match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum. In design and technology teachers have to undertake some tasks which should be done by a technician and teachers are sometimes prevented from giving their full attention to pupils. Despite good teaching drama suffers currently from not having a co-ordinator for the subject.
66. At the last inspection the professional development of staff was judged to be satisfactory but it is now very good and very well logged and analysed for effectiveness. Senior management is aware of the further training necessary for middle managers and all staff to implement the priorities of the development plan. All staff are now appraised which was

not the case in the past. The induction programme remains comprehensive. Gaining the Investor in People award has helped to sharpen practices in training and elsewhere.

67. Support, administrative and premises staff continue to make a very significant contribution to the education and welfare of pupils and to the smooth running of the school. They are very much a part of a whole-school team and respond to this recognition with great commitment and flexibility. They are very well led by the college manager.
68. There is very good use of resources matched to the priorities of development plans. Weaknesses in resources identified at the last inspection have been successfully addressed and are now adequate. Most subject areas now have sufficient materials and consumables but there are shortages in design and technology resulting in extra appeals to parents for donations. Whilst the school makes good use of ICT in lessons and in the running of the college the teaching of music makes insufficient use of new technologies. Funding for special educational needs is used for its correct purposes and the school's decision to supplement this further is providing value for money in improved standards for such pupils.
69. Accommodation is good and adequate for most purposes. Access and facilities for the disabled are very good. Accommodation is well used and has recently been expanded but the gymnasium is too small and holds down standards in some activities. In art standards are affected where non-specialist accommodation has to be used. Premises staff keep the interior of the school in immaculate condition but the dropping of litter by pupils in outside areas is an unnecessary irritant.
70. The principles of best value are very well and scrupulously applied in making use of the budget in the purchase of materials and equipment. Close contacts with other educational institutions enables some useful comparisons to be made and helpful advice to be exchanged. A very careful watch is kept on energy costs. Redundant but very good quality computers from the private sector have been snapped up by the school and are put to good use including by senior managers.
71. The library and resources area is welcoming and well used in lesson time and at other times. The facility is very well managed and the elimination of out-dated books and the purchase of new stock has raised its profile in the school.
72. Taking into consideration the effectiveness of the school in relation to its costs the school provides good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

73. In order to improve standards further the governors and senior managers should:

- Ensure that the most able pupils are challenged more consistently so that the very good practice seen with some teachers becomes normal practice for all by:
 - continuing to implement the whole-school policy already devised;
 - identifying good practice and disseminating to all staff;
 - setting more precise targets for those pupils identified as the more able;
 - monitoring progress rigorously.

(para nos: 10, 22, 45, 50, 64, 101, 104, 108, 115, 122, 126, 135, 140, 148)

- Involve middle management and other teachers with expertise in the systematic evaluation of lessons as already identified in the school's development plan by:
 - training staff for the task using common criteria;
 - making sufficient time available for the performance of such tasks;
 - ensuring that the senior management team continues to have a prominent role in monitoring to help to ensure rigour and consistency.

(para nos: 62, 66, 93, 118, 131, 135, 160)

- Using assessment data in setting more precise individual targets for pupils and measuring progress and reporting against those targets by:
 - making more extensive use of existing good data;
 - using current good practice in some departments as an example of what can be achieved;
 - matching assessment systems in music more closely to National Curriculum levels;
 - all subjects reporting to parents against targets set;
 - senior and middle management monitoring effectiveness.

(para nos: 27, 49, 130, 135, 155, 162, 166, 171)

- Improve further the management and organisation of physical education to implement fully the targets set following a recent review by senior management by:
 - an accurate evaluation of issues which are outstanding;
 - agreeing on action plans and review sessions within definite timescales;
 - senior staff continuing to offer positive and constructive support and monitoring progress.

(para nos: 61, 167)

- Meet statutory requirements in providing a daily act of collective worship.
(para nos: 38, 63)

74. In addition to the above the following less important issues should be considered for inclusion in the action plan: the co-ordination of spiritual education across the curriculum *(para nos: 37, 38)*; increasing further the teaching time for religious education *(para nos: 29, 126)*; introducing modern technology into the teaching of music *(para nos: 11, 68, 149, 162)*; and more precise information in reports on what pupils need to do to improve further *(para nos: 50, 56, 58)*.

COMMUNITY ASPECTS OF THE COLLEGE

75. The community aspects of the school make an excellent contribution to pupils' education and add an important dimension to pupils' education. As the school only caters for pupils aged 11-14 their experience would be much narrower without being an integral part of a community college which seeks to provide an enriching, excellent education service for all learners and the wider community.
76. Pupils relate very well to adults as well as to each other and that is influenced in part by being used to mingling with the local adult population. They see nothing unusual in communicating with people much older than themselves and were almost surprised when questioned on this by inspectors. When asked to mix with adults they do so as a matter of course and not with trepidation.
77. There are other 'spin offs' which cannot be attributed exclusively to the influence of community education but which has an important bearing. Pupils are not phased when asked to contribute to the deliberations of the management of the school whether taking part in departmental reviews or when forming one of the panels to interview candidates for the post of college principal. They assume that taking part in the selection of a new principal is quite a normal event when it is far from normal. Pupils from the special school of Birkett House are integrated into activities as normal community activity.
78. The concept of 'lifelong learning' is promoted strongly and makes an indelible impression on pupils' experiences. As well as seeing some classes taking place during the day pupils are made aware of the full range of opportunities offered through frequent references and adverts in the regular school newsletters. Even before starting secondary school pupils may well have attended the onsite creche, a point made by parents who attended the pre-inspection meeting. Such parents are proud of the whole provision of a community college and just not the 11-14 element. The informative annual governors' report to parents reflects this and the community aspects are well covered.
79. On entry to the college's site one is immediately aware of its community function and its inviting atmosphere. It is a very welcoming institution. Signs for disabled access are prominently displayed at the main entrance. In the reception area posters advertising community classes and directions for the community lounge and baby changing facilities sit comfortably alongside plaques proudly displayed for a Young Enterprise award, Investor in People and National Curriculum awards. Administrative staff give calm, efficient and patient help to all age groups, and participants from the local community are made to feel that they have a stake in what goes on. The numbers attending inter-school sporting fixtures is much higher than average as being on the school site is seen as a natural occurrence rather than a special occasion.
80. The provision of classes and activities for community education are extensive. The college provides a wide range of opportunities not only for individual age groups but also for families in activities such as sailing and canoeing. Amongst the activities which pupils of the school can benefit from are a music workshop, computer club, outdoor pursuits, a Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme and a Youth Theatre. Family learning weekends are very good opportunities for pupils and relatives to work side by side and send out important messages in reinforcing the concept of continuing education. Many of the ideas are innovative and are linked to national initiatives. For example as part of the national literacy drive the librarian ran a course showing parents how to read effectively with their child. The local press helps local clubs and institutions to set up websites using college facilities. The sharing of equipment by pupils and adults is mutually beneficial. Extra pottery and sporting equipment is available for the pupils and the community have access to computers, library resources and other facilities. The lack of a sports hall not only

affects the education of pupils adversely but also limits the range of adult classes and use by local clubs.

81. The work of the youth tutor ensures very good links with local agencies and in particular organises programmes that constructively engage pupils who might otherwise be involved in less positive behaviour. For example, a few of these pupils have decided to plant a herb garden in one of the new quadrangles and others have written college newsletters. Pupils are encouraged to join in local activities by notice boards around the college advertising local events, clubs and contact numbers.
82. The direction and leadership of the community provision is very good. The range and need for the provision is systematically analysed. Users' opinions and requests are constantly sought both formally and informally. New ideas are suggested and tried. For example, digital photography is a new initiative to replace the now less popular basic computer courses. A great importance is placed on quality control to ensure customer satisfaction. The response of the college to a thorough annual survey helps to ensure this quality.
83. The governors are well able to champion community interests and co-opt additional representatives where necessary to ensure the views of the whole area are heard.
84. The successful translation of the college's equal opportunities policy from principle into practice is evident in its daily life as local users ranging from nursery-age children to senior citizens learn alongside pupils.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	125
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	37

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	8	43	45	29	0	0	0
Percentage	6.4	34.4	36	23.2	0	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 – Y9
Number of pupils on the school's roll	683
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	31

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y9
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	29
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	146

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	7

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	13
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	11

Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	4.7	School data	0.0
National comparative data	7.7	National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage (Year 9)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	119	100	219

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	87	106	110
	Girls	84	84	81
	Total	171	190	191
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	78 (60)	87 (82)	88 (70)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	35 (17)	60 (54)	48 (32)
	National	32 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	79	100	102
	Girls	86	83	82
	Total	165	183	184
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	75 (81)	84 (81)	84 (77)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	22 (28)	55 (51)	45 (39)
	National	31 (31)	41 (39)	32 (29)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	0
Indian	3
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	621
Any other minority ethnic group	44

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	4	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y9

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	39.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.4

Education support staff: Y7 – Y9

Total number of education support staff	28
Total aggregate hours worked per week	472

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y9

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75.9
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y9

Key Stage 3	22.9
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001-2
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	£
Total income	1,518,875
Total expenditure	1,536,068
Expenditure per pupil	2,249
Balance brought forward from previous year	52,757
Balance carried forward to next year	35,864

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	10.7
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	8.6

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	2
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.2
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	683
Number of questionnaires returned	176

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	41	50	7	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	38	51	3	0	8
Behaviour in the school is good.	30	59	2	1	9
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	21	63	11	1	5
The teaching is good.	33	60	3	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	26	57	8	1	8
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	55	40	2	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	56	43	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	28	59	6	1	6
The school is well led and managed.	39	55	1	0	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	40	51	3	0	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	30	53	7	1	9

Other issues raised by parents:

Parents would like to see a clearer indication in reports of the standards being attained by pupils.

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

ENGLISH

Overall, the quality of provision in English is good.

Strengths

- Aspects of teaching are very good particularly the use of questioning to give rigour to lessons.
- The quality of the relationships which teachers build are very good and enable them to make good progress.
- The provision made for the development of pupils' literacy skills is good.
- The use of ICT to improve the standard and presentation of pupils' work is good.

Areas for improvement

- Extend the use of pupil performance data for target setting and curriculum planning.
- Monitor teaching and learning by the department in line with the proposals contained in the school improvement plan.
- Increase the number of pupils who are achieving at the highest National Curriculum levels.
- Increase the rigour in review and self-evaluation by the department.

85. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were above average. This reversed the decline in results of 2000 which were below average following the well above average results of 1999. Results in 2001 saw a significant increase in the percentage attaining the level expected of 14-year-olds (Level 5 or above) and Level 6 but comparatively few attain the very highest Levels 7 or 8. The best indicator of the success of the subject is the progress made by pupils from average standards on entry to above average by the end of Year 9 which represents good achievement and progress. Results in 2001 were an improvement from the time of the last inspection but were not as good as those in mathematics and science and there is room for improvement.
86. Although girls usually outperform boys the latter usually attain results which are above average compared with boys nationally and in 2001 boys' results were comparable with those of girls. The results of 2001 represent good achievement and progress by pupils in their three years at the school and were better than the average results at the time of the last inspection.
87. Standards seen at the inspection were above average overall. Achievement and progress are good. Standards of writing are good. Progress in this skill was judged to be satisfactory at the time of the last inspection and so good progress has been made in raising standards in this area. The majority of pupils write with accuracy although a minority has difficulty with sentence and paragraph structures, spelling and punctuation. A wide range of writing is attempted for varied audiences and standards of extended writing are good as a result of pupils' ability to draft and revise their work. Examples of this were seen in the commentaries on the set texts where pupils wrote with insight on the work of Shakespeare and supported their analysis with textual references. Pupils understand how written forms can vary and can adapt their writing to a particular audience. In a Year 9 lesson pupils used paragraphing well to sequence events and present them logically and effectively in clearly written reports designed for a newspaper readership. Very good additional support is made available to pupils who need help to improve their basic writing skills. A group of younger pupils were able to write complex sentences through the use of connective words and so made very good progress. Pupils are using computers well to present their work in a variety of forms, including the use of illustrative designs and pictures as well as print. The provision of computer resources is

very good and pupils are encouraged to take full advantage of the facilities to improve the standard and presentation of their work.

88. Standards of reading are good as a result of the effective schemes which are in place to help those who need support with this skill. At the time of the last inspection reading skills were insufficiently developed and a key issue for the school was to achieve a more systematic approach to raising standards, especially in English. Significant progress has been made and pupils now read from a range of texts which present increasing levels of difficulty. They read these with understanding and when asked to read aloud they do so with appropriate emphasis and expression. In a Year 8 lesson pupils were able to discriminate between various genres when reading selected passages from a range of books and could identify the key phrases and words which characterised a particular style of writing. The subject has received effective support from the librarian in achieving these improvements in reading.
89. In speaking pupils are increasingly fluent as they mature and so make good progress. Listening was very good in almost all the lessons seen. In the best lessons pupils were able to explain their thinking clearly and concentrate and reflect on the points made by others. Their learning is enhanced by their attentiveness when explanations are given and questions asked. In a Year 8 lesson pupils of low prior attainment sustained their concentration throughout a lesson of an hour and forty minutes and so made good progress in understanding the characteristic features of the horror story.
90. Pupils achieve well because of the quality of the teaching which is consistently good. This represents an improvement since the last inspection when teaching was satisfactory overall. Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of their subject and teaching techniques and have contributed to the development of national strategies. Their planning takes account of the needs of individuals and groups of pupils, especially those with special educational needs who make good progress in English lessons. Such pupils are well supported by the teaching staff and the classroom assistants. Clear learning objectives are set and pupils know what is expected of them.
91. Varied teaching techniques are deployed and pupils are encouraged to work collaboratively. A particular strength of the teaching is the use of questioning to consolidate understanding of previous work and extend learning. In a Year 9 lesson pupils were reading about crime and the challenging questions posed by the teacher focused their attention and clarified their thoughts on difficult moral and social issues. They found the work demanding but their interest was so effectively engaged they were talking about the issues as they left the room. Such pace and rigour was seen in many lessons but time management in a few of the lessons was not as effective as it could have been and insufficient time was allowed at the end to consolidate and evaluate the work covered.
92. Pupils are informed on a regular basis of their performance in relation to the National Curriculum levels and so understand the progress they are making. Another strength of the work in the subject is the very good working relationships which the teachers establish with the pupils. They have their trust and confidence and as a result a positive working atmosphere prevails in all lessons. Good steps are taken to improve the working environment through the attractive display of pupils' work. The subject could improve pupils' basic skills by identifying ways in which it could contribute to their numeracy development. A review and audit is also needed of the subject's contribution to pupils' spiritual development so that teaching is better informed of the further possibilities within the subject.
93. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The subject co-ordinator is a committed and supportive colleague who has the interests of the pupils to the fore.

Leadership is responsive to new initiatives and the drive on improving literacy has raised standards. The subject does not however monitor teaching and learning systematically.

Literacy

94. The effectiveness of the provision for the development of pupils' literacy skills is good. Teachers take account of their literacy needs in their approach to their teaching and many examples were seen of good practice.
95. In a Year 9 history lesson pupils were challenged to think hard about the precise use of words when writing poems that reflected a good understanding of trench warfare in the First World War. There is an encouragement to use poetry in other subjects and in science some make innovative use of scientific terminology and often with an added humour. Pupils' use of technical vocabulary is extended effectively in physical education through question and answer sessions. In science the literacy policy identifies ways of developing appropriate skills and this resulted in the accurate use of scientific terms and opportunities for pupils to discuss their work. There is good use of key words in art and design and technology to help pupils make progress. Good extended writing in investigative work was seen in mathematics and in one Year 9 lesson pupils worked on a comprehension exercise based on postal questionnaire techniques. All humanities subjects make a particularly good contribution to the development of pupils' literacy skills. There was very good analytical reading in a Year 9 lesson in religious education on the moral complexities surrounding the separation of Siamese twins. In history the use of a glossary of words helps understanding and there is good use of note making guidelines. In modern foreign languages the schemes of work contain frequent reference to the literacy policy and its implementation is seen in successful classroom practice.
96. Standards of literacy are good as a result of the effective provision. Pupils make good progress in developing their speaking and listening skills and most are confident and articulate when they reach the end of Year 9. Listening skills are a strength in the school and are a significant factor contributing to how well pupils achieve. Writing standards are good. Pupils use an extensive vocabulary in all curriculum areas and write in a range of styles suited to the subjects being studied. Reading skills are also good and there has been marked progress in developing this skill since the time of the last inspection. The school is committed to continuing the drive to raise literacy standards further.

Drama

97. Pupils progress well in understanding processes and developing skills, and standards in the work observed meet national expectations. Pupils in Year 9 are able to create and sustain convincing roles, firstly through the use of still images to represent a particular group of people and then through the use of improvisation to show how new members are initiated into that group. They are able to use various dramatic techniques to explore the dynamics of the group and so understand how the interests of the individual can at times conflict with those of the majority. Even though they are new to the school pupils in Year 7 are able to use freeze frames effectively to convey such emotions as sadness, disappointment or concern in their work on the deprivations caused by shortages in the Second World War.
98. Teaching and learning are good and there are some very good aspects in most lessons. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and clear lesson objectives. The variety of teaching methods used to promote understanding and develop skills and teachers' effective classroom management engages pupils' interest and enables them to work well in lessons. Pupils are successfully encouraged to evaluate their own work and identify ways to improve. The good relationships between staff and pupils contribute to the positive working atmosphere and there was a sense of enjoyment as well as achievement in the lessons seen.
99. Although at the present time the school does not have a drama specialist co-ordinating the subject, pupils are progressing well because of the commitment and ability of

teachers. Such an appointment is nevertheless essential for the long-term development of the subject and the school will be seeking to fill the post in the near future.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Standards at the end of Year 9 are well above average and pupils achieve well and make very good progress from their time of entry into the school.
- The majority of teaching is very good and some is excellent.
- Leadership and management are very good, with a clear focus on improving standards.
- Relationships between pupils and staff are excellent.
- ICT is well used across the curriculum.

Areas for improvement

- Build further on devising specific tasks to challenge and stretch higher attainers.

100. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were well above the national average, as they have been each year since the last inspection. In the past three years there has also been an increasing percentage of pupils achieving at the higher levels. Mathematics achieved the best school results in national tests in 2001. The success of the subject is best measured by pupils' progression from average attainment on entry to Year 7 to well above average standards at the end of Year 9. In 2001, 19 per cent of pupils increased their National Curriculum achievement by three levels compared with national test results at the age of 11 which is another very positive indicator. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. Results are better than at the time of the last inspection particularly at the higher grades.

101. The evidence from work seen in lessons and from pupils' books confirms very good achievement and progress from Year 7 to Year 9. There is good continuity from primary school in the development of numeracy in Year 7. Pupils' mental arithmetic skills are systematically extended with number puzzles and games and pupils of all abilities are required to work with and without a calculator. In a Year 7 class pupils played card games, based on ordering numbers to two decimal places, with confidence. There is a continuing emphasis on numeracy in Year 8 and pupils of all abilities can handle equivalent fractions and decimal equivalence. Some demanding work in algebra was also seen across the ability range and pupils had no difficulty in explaining an algebraic expression in words. ICT is well used to support work across the curriculum for investigation and to reinforce learning. In a Year 8 class pupils made good use of spreadsheets to explore sequences and the idea of a formula for the 'nth' term. Pupils develop their skills in investigative work and these are systematically extended in Year 9 where there is extended writing to explain patterns or hypotheses, particularly by the more able. Displays of pupils' work in the classrooms show that they routinely use their computing skills in tabulating and displaying data. There is good work in statistics across the ability range and more able pupils have a good understanding of scatter graphs and correlation. Work with algebraic expressions and equations is also good with some challenging work for less able pupils in solving equations. In general the work seen was consistent with the well above average national test results at the end of Year 9 and suggests that further improvement at the very highest National Curriculum levels is still possible.

102. In all three years support for pupils with special educational needs is good, with appropriate well managed in-class support and withdrawal in small groups. As a result these pupils also make very good progress with virtually all pupils improving by at least one National Curriculum level.

103. The schemes of work in mathematics have been completely revised in the last two years to incorporate the National Numeracy Strategy and to take account of the introduction of teaching pupils in groups based on ability in the subject from Year 8 instead of Year 9 this year.
104. The quality of teaching is very good. There has been a good focus on developing teaching strategies in the department and the quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. All of these developments have contributed to sustaining the well above average levels of achievement in mathematics seen in the inspection. Teachers have a detailed understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of their pupils, including those with special educational needs. Lessons are well planned to match pupils' needs in nearly all respects but there are some instances, even when classes are grouped by ability, of teachers finding it difficult to allocate sufficient time to all levels in the class and providing sufficient challenge for the most able. There is therefore further scope for devising different tasks matched to needs, particularly to extend higher attainers. In doing so the department would not be starting from a position of weakness but building further on its strengths.
105. Teachers use a range of strategies and activities to maintain pupils' interest and concentration. Relationships in the classroom are very good and pupils are keen to participate in answering questions or explaining their ideas. In the best lessons the aims of the lesson are shared with pupils at the beginning and their enthusiasm is well used to ensure that effective learning takes place. In a Year 7 class for a small group of higher attaining pupils, excellent relationships enabled the teacher to support and challenge all. This promoted some very effective discussion and understanding on problems related to prime numbers and able pupils were fully extended. In-class support is well organised and well managed, in many cases involving joint teaching. In a lower attaining Year 8 class practical work in probability involved pupils working in small groups throwing two dice and plotting the outcomes on a game board. The effective co-operation of the two teachers in the lesson was critical to the success of the lesson, ensuring that the practical work was both enjoyable and productive.
106. Staff are confident in exploiting ICT in their teaching. A Year 8 group of above average ability pupils worked enthusiastically in the computer room using spreadsheets to investigate rules and formulae for terms of various sequences. The teachers' knowledge of the pupils and confidence with the spreadsheet software ensured that they were all effectively challenged to promote good independent learning.
107. Teachers have good data relating to previous and current attainment of individual pupils in their classes and this is increasingly well used to set targets against which progress is measured.
108. The department is very well led and managed. There is a clear focus on raising achievement through continued development of the curriculum and teaching strategies. A great deal of effort has been involved in incorporating the National Numeracy Strategy into the schemes of work and in developing the whole-school policy for numeracy which has been well co-ordinated by the head of department. Within the department there is a splendid team spirit, ideas and responsibilities are shared and staff work well as a team. Computing and ICT are embedded in the schemes of work and are correctly being reviewed to take advantage of the recent improvements in college provision. Continued development of this work could provide additional strategies for challenging the highest attainers.

Numeracy

109. Standards of numeracy and mental arithmetic are good. The mathematics department has rewritten its schemes of work to incorporate the National Numeracy Strategy and there is a good emphasis on promoting number skills whenever possible. Lessons are often planned to begin with a short number puzzle or number game and these are popular with pupils. Frequently pupils are required to make calculations without using their calculators and as a result most can work without a calculator to a considerable extent with both integers and fractions. There is a well established whole-school policy for numeracy and there is good evidence of pupils applying their mathematical skills in a number of subject areas.
110. There is a clear policy for numeracy in science where the department has identified common areas of difficulty for many pupils and the support for numeracy is very good. There is a good emphasis on graph work from Year 7 onward and pupils can express relationships through simple formulae for variables such as volume and temperature. By Year 9 pupils' abilities to represent data graphically for applications such as cooling curves and acceleration, to find lines of best fit and to work with formulae are well developed. There are good links between mathematics and the teaching and learning of ICT. Numeracy features strongly in the discrete ICT provision with the processing of survey data into graphs and charts and the evaluation of different types of data representation. Many of the problem-solving activities in ICT also reinforce basic numeracy. There is good general promotion of mathematical skills in design and technology where pupils are required to weigh and measure with accuracy and there is some strong investigative work to underpin designs. There is a good emphasis on developing numeracy and graphical skills in geography. A range of graphical representation is used to look at economic indicators and economic development and for problems such as population pyramids and climate changes. Concepts of bearing, scale and grid reference underpin map work. There is insufficient reinforcement of numeracy in physical education where pupils count, score and time activities but opportunities to present results in tables and graphs are limited. There is no formal identification of number in the music curriculum but there are elements of numeracy in work on musical notation and in the composing and performing of rhythms.

SCIENCE

Overall, the quality of provision is very good.

Strengths

- Pupils make very good progress in improving from average standards on entry in Year 7 to well above average by the end of Year 9.
- Pupils produce quality work in response to teachers' high expectations.
- Teachers create a happy environment where pupils are eager to learn about science.
- The subject makes a very good contribution to the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills.

Areas for improvement

- Increase the number of pupils achieving the highest National Curriculum levels.
- Improve those lessons which lack pace and where activities are unimaginative and undemanding for pupils of differing abilities.
- Monitor teaching and learning by the department so that it is in line with the proposals of the school plan.

111. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were well above average compared with all schools and an improvement on the above average results of the previous three years. Results in 2001 were better than those in English but not quite as good as mathematics. The majority of pupils who took these national tests at the age of 14 in 2001 were of average attainment when they joined the school and results therefore represent very good progress. This very positive value added to pupils' education from Year 7 to 9 is the best measure of the success of the subject. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. Results are better than at the time of the last inspection.
112. The standards of work of many current pupils, at the beginning of Year 9, are also well above average again illustrating very good progress and achievement from the time when pupils entered the school in Year 7.
113. Pupils in a Year 9 top set, willingly strive to match their teacher's high, often ambitious, expectations. They know about ionic compounds, apply their knowledge of relative reactivities of metals and have begun to use chemical symbols in equations that summarise reactions. The lowest attaining pupils understand simple feeding relationships between plants and animals and discuss briefly the possible consequences of intervening in natural events by using, for example, slug pellets. The basis of what is achieved in Year 9 is laid much earlier. A strong feature which is illustrated in class books from Year 7 onwards is pupils' eagerness to learn. Their positive attitudes play a major part in raising standards. Pupils thrive in a happy environment created by their teachers which allows them to think and operate as young scientists as they test their predictions. In a Year 7 lesson pupils quickly became confident in using new equipment to measure an electrical current in their electromagnet, when investigating how they are constructed and used as lifting devices. They enthusiastically responded to the task with commitment because of their teacher's high expectations. They were reassured by the teacher of what they were capable of achieving and understanding and praise was given where due. They also deepened their understanding about scientific method as they identified 'input' and 'output' variables. Pupils with special educational needs were included well in the lesson and also made very good progress in learning about the properties of bar magnets. They worked well with other Year 7 pupils and benefited from the skills of their support teacher. Standards of presentation and organisation of records are nearly always very good and the skill of drawing accurate two-dimensional science diagrams develops well from early in Year 7.

114. Where lesson planning is imaginative standards are raised and progress accelerates. For example pupils in Year 8 were left entirely to discover for themselves what happens when iron is dropped into copper sulphate. They were allowed to grapple with ideas. Deftly building upon their suggestions, their teacher's highly skilled questioning purposefully nurtured them to consider more deeply the nature of chemical reactions. From this they learned that displacement reactions take place between metals and solutions of salts of other metals and why this happened.
115. The overall quality of teaching is good with some examples of very good teaching which is reflected in the quality of pupils' learning. Teaching is never less than satisfactory. Teachers have very good understanding of the information they need to teach. Good teaching makes work interesting and stimulating through a good choice of activities, enjoyable experiments and demonstrations. Good humour contributes substantially to the purposeful working atmosphere of several lessons and supports progress, as in Year 7, when pupils used their own chemical indicators, made from bananas and holly berries, to successfully identify acids and alkalis. Analyses of work shows that highest attainers record investigations to a very good standard and the majority of others to consistently good standards. Planning skills are developing well and many pupils are beginning to extend their conclusions from closer examination of results. Some very good teaching leads them to suggest where improvements can be made but the majority has difficulty in spotting anomalous results. With the exception of the highest attainers, who are not sufficiently rigorously challenged, teachers have very high expectations of effort, behaviour and attainment.
116. The best teaching is imaginative. It makes work demanding yet tantalising and interesting and through speedy, skilled questioning, clearly encourages pupils to relate their observations to new ideas. Marking is consistent. The best practice gives pupils clear indications about how well they are progressing. In encouraging further progress teachers give pupils 'cause for thought' and check that comments have been acted upon. In lessons where teaching was judged to be only satisfactory insufficient attention was given to planning of activities which became progressively more challenging and as a result the early pace of the lesson was not kept up. This also led to rather rushed conclusions at the end of the lesson when insufficient time was left to think about what had been learned.
117. The use of numeracy and the development of pupils' number skills is very good. Pupils quickly develop and build on their mathematical skills because of the many opportunities they have to practise calculations and use formulae. The development of computer skills has improved since the last inspection, for instance pupils in Year 8 use sensors to explore different rates of conductivity in metals and non-metals and in advancing their learning about Kinetic Theory.
118. The department continues to be well managed; teachers feel valued and support each other. There is a clear commitment to high standards, which has a positive effect upon progress and levels of attainment. Teachers work hard, using their skills and talents to good effect in supporting pupils. The technician makes a strong contribution to the quality of science education and is highly valued. Provision of textbooks has improved considerably since the last inspection. The development plan continues to be well prioritised but lacks specific timescales and deadlines. Regular classroom observations by departmental staff are not yet taking place. The curriculum is greatly enriched through several visits to places of scientific interest, for example the Challenger Learning Centre, strong links with the astronomy department of the local university and by visitors who, for example, share their experience of active volcanoes.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths:

- Pupils' interest and enthusiasm for art and the high participation in art clubs.
- Standards in painting are well above average by the end of Year 9.
- The standard of enquiry-based skills in pupils' sketchbooks.
- Three-dimensional skills of lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs.
- Teachers' very good relationships with pupils.
- The good focus on the teaching of literacy skills and the contribution to whole school policy.

Areas for improvement:

- Extend opportunities for pupils to explain and reflect on their own work and that of others at the end of lessons to extend higher attainers.
- Improve drawing skills for the lower attaining pupils.
- Improve the quality of targets set for pupils by linking them to key skills in art.

119. Current standards by the end of Year 9 are above national expectations. Standards in painting are well above average for 14-year-olds. In work seen, girls are performing slightly better than boys at the higher levels. Pupils enjoy art and their enthusiasm helps them in making good progress and achieving well across the key stage. Skills build slowly and systematically at Year 7 and clear progress is evident in drawing throughout Years 8 and 9. Lower attainers have basic drawing skills and although they work through well-planned worksheet exercises in Year 7, pupils have inconsistent opportunities to have the process explained and demonstrated. More effective compositional drawing using line, shape, pattern and colour is emerging in Year 8, for example in the Dreamtime project where pupils show good levels of attainment in planning, enlarging and transferring a pattern to fabric. Most pupils show a good understanding of the design process in creating a textile print based on Aboriginal patterns.
120. By the end of Year 9, pupils' colour-handling skills have matured considerably. One higher attainer for example has expressed some very individual ideas through a range of materials, including sgraffito in the rainforest project. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of artists and their techniques are developing well, albeit at a simple level of analysis and evaluation. The majority of pupils use artists' motifs, colour and composition in their own work. For example, pupils in Year 9 use references to Kandinsky and Matisse in their lettering and designs as a starting point for a jazz project. Innovative use of ICT to develop new images in poster design extends the range of materials in art which is an improvement since the last inspection. Lower attainers and pupils with special educational needs express inventive ideas through clay and multi-media sculpture designs using card, torn tissue paper and wire. Work on masks, animals and picture-frames shows a good level of competence in modelling whilst pupils with weaker drawing skills make good progress in this area.
121. Sketchbooks are effectively used in lessons by the majority of pupils to plan, research and record from direct observation. Most pupils have good levels of enquiry-based skills by the end of Year 9 and displays in specialist art rooms demonstrate well how sketchbook drawings feed into ongoing work. However, where pupils are taught in non-specialist art rooms, resource displays are inevitably limited and this affects younger pupils' awareness of a range of media and standards. This results from school timetabling arrangements rather than from any departmental deficiency. Achievement in relation to earlier attainment is good, including for pupils with special needs who benefit from the level of teacher support and explanations and demonstrations given.

122. The quality of teaching and learning are good overall. At the inspection teaching and learning in one in three lessons were very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Teachers have very good relationships with pupils who in turn make good progress because of the teachers' high expectations and good subject knowledge. Teachers provide a good focus on literacy and numeracy in art through the use of key words, writing frames and enlarging areas of drawing. In the most inspiring lessons, planning includes good use of picture, vocabulary, resources and artefacts, for example in the Year 8 lesson on masks from Sri Lanka and Africa, so that pupils have the experience of touching and looking closely to learn about textures and pattern. Pupils are helped to extend their techniques through skilful questioning, demonstration and explanation and the best teaching and learning methods make reference to resource boards where artists' and pupils' work, together with artefacts, are used effectively to improve their design skills. Pupils with special educational needs receive very good support because planning between teacher and assistant is thorough and the range of activities is enjoyable and challenging. Teachers regularly discuss work with individuals throughout the lesson; however, end-of-lesson summaries are often brief and insufficiently challenge pupils to explain and reflect on their own or the rest of the group's work so that they can develop their speaking skills. In some lessons there are missed opportunities to extend the skills and techniques of higher attainers because of the lack of class discussion. Homework is set on an informal basis and pupils receive written comments; however, there are inconsistencies across teaching groups in the frequency and quality of work set.
123. The quality of leadership and management in the department are good. Guidelines for staff are clear and schemes of work and pupil self-assessment procedures are improving pupils' knowledge of attainment levels. Targets are set but are insufficiently linked to key skills in art. Improvement overall has been good since the last inspection. Above average standards have been maintained and there is a high participation rate in extra-curricular art clubs. Curriculum time has been increased with an additional drawing period so that continuity is maintained between rotational blocks of teaching with design and technology. The range of materials on offer has been significantly increased to include three-dimensional studies, textiles, painting, drawing and printing.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Pupils' research of initial design ideas across all years is very good.
- Creative instincts are stimulated in the early stages of design work by very effective teaching about the work of particular designers.
- The use of computers for research, design and now manufacture is very good.
- Teaching and learning in electronics, systems and control are very good.
- The curriculum is enriched considerably by exploring the applications of design and technology in industry and in the wider contexts of conservation and alternative technologies.

Areas for development

- Encourage pupils to use initial research more strongly in testing ideas against specifications in order to make design decisions and improve standards, particularly for higher attainers.
- Develop standards of drawing which although improving are below expected levels.
- Set targets for pupils so that they are always related specifically to levels of attainment and indicate how pupils can reach higher levels.
- Monitor teaching within the department to allow teachers to share good practice.

124. Overall standards of attainment by the age of 14 meet national expectations and some aspects of work, especially in Years 7 and 8, are rising well above expected levels. Since pupils start in Year 7 with levels of skill and understanding which are generally below expectation pupils' achieve well and make good progress in their time at the school.
125. Across all years, pupils' research and development of initial design ideas is a real strength. Their creative instincts are stimulated in the early stages of design work by very effective teaching about the work of particular designers. Pupils in Year 8 were very clear about the way in which the work of William Warren had influenced their designs of ornamental items and utensils. Such awareness of the work of designers marks a significant improvement since the last inspection. Pupils' knowledge, understanding and skill in electronics rises to high levels very quickly in Year 7, as they develop a clear understanding of the function of components in an electronic circuit, and are able to predict what will happen when the arrangement of components changes. Standards of work in systems and control technology are high throughout, and pupils have a good general ability to use computers in the design and manufacture of products. They have good practical skills, and they listen well to guidance given on technique by their teachers, so that they achieve accuracy in making models and products in resistant and graphic materials, in textiles and in food.
126. The key general weakness of pupils' work lies in the degree to which pupils link all aspects of their design work together. They tend to treat phases of the design process in isolation, not drawing sufficiently on their high quality investigative work when developing specifications for products or when evaluating how their work is progressing. In particular, when designing and making products there is a lack of testing of design ideas or practical work against specifications, and of evidence that pupils are prepared to modify their work in the light of these tests. Pupils' decision-making skills are therefore not as high as they could be, and this particularly constrains the standards achieved by higher attainers. A further weakness evident across a sample of pupil work was in their ability to draw in different views and perspectives. This weakness is currently being addressed by new teaching programmes.

127. Teaching and learning are good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen on inspection and a significant proportion of teaching is very good. There is a particular strength in the teaching of basic skills and of knowledge of materials and design and manufacturing processes. In electronics in Year 7 some excellent workbooks and kits and very clear explanations by the teacher, along with a strong emphasis on the development of pupils' confidence with a technical vocabulary through the use of 'key words' on display, helped pupils master some very complex ideas. When developing ideas for quilted self-portraits in Year 7, drawing skills were enhanced by enjoyable activities which secured technique while encouraging creativity.
128. Pupils can be relied upon to complete thorough investigations into topics, drawing on a variety of sources of information. They show good independent study skills, and they work well together, offering each other helpful and constructive advice. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported in the classroom by teachers and assistants who offer help and guidance but who do not take over the work of the pupils.
129. Teachers' planning is thorough and their organisation and management of pupils is mostly good. Giving pupils responsibility for cupboard areas in food technology is an effective means of making sure that they tidy up and know where to find particular utensils. The amount of technician time available to support the department is low and where a teacher is involved in cutting large amounts of material during lesson time the pace of pupils' learning slows as a result.
130. Teachers record pupils' progress clearly as they move from one assignment to another, although assessment of levels being attained by pupils are too high given their weaknesses in developing designs through to manufacture. Targets set for pupils are not always related specifically enough to levels of attainment and to how pupils can reach higher levels.
131. Leadership and management are good, and the department has been active in reviewing its practices to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Changes which have been introduced recently are bringing about improvements in standards which overall are similar to those at the last inspection. This is especially so in the development of a strong programme of teaching of systems, control and electronics, and in the emphasis given to the development of drawing skills and to the use of computer applications of many kinds. The curriculum is very broad and rich. It offers pupils the opportunities to work in many contexts and with many processes, and to explore the applications of the subject in industry and in the wider contexts of conservation and alternative technologies. While standards of teaching have improved since the last inspection, there is insufficient formal monitoring of teaching within the subject department to share good practice and to develop more consistent approaches to design work.

GEOGRAPHY

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is good.

Strengths

- Pupils make good progress from Year 7 to Year 9 to achieve above average standards.
- Pupils' enquiry and independent learning skills are good.
- The subject makes a good contribution to the development of pupils' computer skills.
- Classroom management is good and creates an effective learning environment in lessons.

Areas for improvement

- Build upon good beginnings recently made by the department in the monitoring of teaching and learning to raise standards even further.
- Make more frequent use of sharp and precise targets for pupils to help in raising standards.
- Challenge higher attainers more effectively.

132. By the end of Year 9, overall standards are above the national expectations and better than at the time of the last inspection when they were average. This represents good achievement by most and for some very good achievement when account is taken of their geographical attainment on entry to the school in Year 7. There is no significant variation in attainment between boys and girls or in the good progress made.
133. By the age of 14, pupils show good research and independent learning skills. Good examples were seen in work on factors affecting the location of industry and the indicators differentiating more and less economically developed countries. Pupils use computers well to gather information and analyse and present data. Most pupils are well aware of the important relationships between human and physical phenomena. Mapping, graphical and numerical skills are well developed by the end of Year 9 and are used effectively to develop knowledge and understanding of the themes covered. Scrutiny of work indicates a good understanding of the idea of sustainable development and the interdependence of states within a global economy.
134. Teaching and learning are good. All teaching was at least satisfactory during the inspection and a high percentage was good or better. Lessons are well planned and enthusiastically taught helped by teachers' secure subject knowledge. Teachers' expectations are generally high which, combined with the hard working attitudes of most pupils, results in good gains in knowledge and learning. Pupils are effectively encouraged to think about current issues. A very good example was seen in the lesson on 'fair trade' between less economically developed countries and the more economically developed world. Resources are good and are used effectively to increase pupils' knowledge and understanding. Good classroom management further encourages pupils to learn.
135. The co-ordination and teaching of the subject have improved considerably since the time of the last inspection and standards have risen as a result. All the weaknesses identified in the 1997 report have been tackled and rectified. Leadership is now good. The curriculum is inclusive in that it meets individual needs well. Learning support assistants are integrated well into the work of the classroom and pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Standards could be raised further by building on the good foundations already in monitoring teaching and learning with a more regular and formalised system. Assessment procedures are good and effective use is made of data to plan lessons and judge pupils' progress but targets set are not sharp or precise enough in assisting pupils to improve. While achievement is currently good, strategies to increase the challenge for higher attainers need to be widened in order to increase numbers attaining the very highest National Curriculum levels.

HISTORY

Overall, the quality of provision in history is good.

Strengths

- Pupils make good progress from Year 7 to Year 9 to achieve above average standards by the age of 14.
- The use of ICT is very good.
- The quality of relationships in lessons and the use of questioning by teachers are very good.
- The effective contribution of the subject to the development of pupils' literacy skills.

Areas for improvement

- Improve pupils' skills in the evaluation of information drawn from historical sources.
- Focus more carefully upon explicit history learning objectives based on key elements in the subject.
- Raise pupil attainment at higher levels.

136. The standards of work pupils achieve by the end of Year 9 are above national expectations. Given their attainment on entry, in particular the lack of depth to their historical knowledge, achievement and progress are good including for pupils with special educational needs. Boys are doing well, and the gap between their performance and that of the girls is narrower in this school than it is nationally. Pupils produce very good extended writing in answer to such questions as, 'Did Field Marshall Haig deserve the name "Butcher of the Somme"?' They demonstrate good factual knowledge and understanding and can give accurate descriptions of features of past societies such as the importance of the Church in the lives of medieval people. The pupils' historical understanding is much more secure in Year 9 where they follow fewer enquiries in much greater depth. Pupils demonstrate their developing understanding of interpretations of history in areas such as the conflicting views of Oliver Cromwell and whether he was a tyrant or the protector of the people. Their enquiry skills are good, as is the information they extract from sources, but the subsequent evaluation of that information is relatively weak. They are all developing a sound chronological framework of the past.
137. The quality of teaching and learning in history are good with some very strong features. The relationships between teachers and pupils are very good and this is achieved through giving well-planned and interesting lessons and through very skilful classroom management. Pupils clearly enjoy their history lessons and the vast majority are committed to their studies and answer questions and offer their ideas in whole class work. In a Year 8 lesson the pupils were able to work on a superb collection of sources about Oliver Cromwell that had been set up on the school intranet. The sources themselves aroused the pupils' interest and the carefully prepared questions helped them to draw information from them about Cromwell that went beyond simple observations.
138. The quality of teacher questioning is also very good. For example in a Year 9 lesson the teacher's precise questions drew out what the pupils had actually understood in two sources on the role of women during the First World War. Pupils were challenged to think carefully about what impression the writers of the sources were actually trying to give and this then helped them answer the key question, 'How did the war change the life of women?' The effective teaching of literacy using glossary words, note-making devices and writing frames is a feature of history teaching in all years. In an excellent lesson on the poetry of the First World War the lower set Year 9 pupils had to write a poem of their own. In order to make this as challenging a task as possible the teacher skilfully

demonstrated how to write poetry, first by looking at actual examples in the textbook by war poets such as Wilfrid Owen and Siegfried Sassoon and then by composing a poem together with them on the board. By sharing with pupils the decisions being made the teacher stimulated their enthusiasm and gave them confidence. The end result was that they all wrote very good poems with a convincing empathy for the experience of soldiers in the trenches.

139. The needs of all pupils are carefully considered in the planning of lessons and in the use of staffing. Two examples are the support given by teaching assistants in lessons and the use of extra staffing in Year 9 to produce smaller sets. In both cases the learning needs of individual pupils are more effectively met. The relative weakness in teaching is where, in some lessons, there is insufficient focus on explicit history learning objectives based upon the key elements of the subject.
140. Leadership of history, within the humanities faculty, is good and there has been good improvement in standards since the last inspection. The schemes of work give good guidance to all those teaching history and emphasise the use of a good range of teaching and learning activities. Expectations for pupil attainment at each level of ability are not specified clearly enough to be used to consistently challenge higher attainers. The co-ordinator has begun to formally monitor the teaching of the subject and this is helping to promote good quality history teaching. This is very good preparation for the delegation of this function to departments which is a priority in the school development plan. An effective system of assessment has been developed which will be invaluable in setting targets for pupils' learning. This assessment includes a good variety of different types of activity and incorporates such good practice as making clear to pupils what they need to do to succeed. The resources for history are now satisfactory with a suitably wide selection of textbooks available. Very good use is made of ICT with a range of applications used in each area of study. An important part of the development plan for history is to raise pupil attainment at the higher levels and this, together with the work beginning on identifying gifted and talented pupils, is a very appropriate objective.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

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

Strengths

- High standards of work and a very good ability to use computers for many purposes.
- Teachers in most subjects across the curriculum are very committed to the use of computers to help pupils learn.
- The management of ICT has been highly effective in developing resources and the skills and confidence of teachers across subjects.
- Significant improvement has been made in the subject and especially in standards in data handling since the last inspection.

Areas for improvement

- Develop skills and understanding of the use of computers to measure and monitor changes in events and record this more strongly in assessment.
- Set targets for higher attainers that are always sufficiently challenging.

141. Standards of attainment by age 14 are well above national expectations and have improved considerably from the time of the last inspection when they only met expectations. Particular improvements are evident in pupils' understanding and skill in data handling and computer control. Pupils enter the school in Year 7 with a good general ability in the use of computers but by the end of Year 9 have gained a great deal of understanding in how to use computers for a much greater variety of tasks. Achievement and progress are good. The main strength of pupils' work is the way in which they use computers as a matter of course to help them improve their work in a wide range of subjects. They are helped in this firstly by good and well-managed ICT lessons, which emphasise the development of basic computer skills and develop the pupils' familiarity with the key programmes and research material available to them on the school systems. Secondly, they are assisted by a teaching staff across the school which has shown an exceptional willingness and determination to incorporate computer-aided work into the teaching and learning in their subjects. These teachers have in turn been very well supported by the management of ICT in the school in providing high quality support to them in the form of guidance, training and better computer hardware and software.
142. As a consequence of such high quality provision, pupils' work in most subjects demonstrates a strong capability in using computers. In English, science, humanities, modern foreign languages and design and technology in particular, pupils research for information from a broad range of sources and, although the internet was out of action because of a virus during inspection week, they were able to seek information on the college system independently of the teachers' instructions.
143. Pupils organise and present information very effectively, using appropriate programs to create the right impact and to appeal to specific audiences. Literacy is good – pupils read and understand material and synthesise it well.
144. In mathematics and to a large extent in ICT lessons, pupils use computers very effectively to develop problem-solving skills, and they construct computer models which clearly demonstrate the relationships between variables. Lower attainers in particular achieve good standards in this regard, such as in the 'Trial on the Nile' where the rectangular arrangement of a rope of a certain length to mark the perimeter of a piece of land was shown to have an effect on the area of the land enclosed. In many subjects, survey data is processed into graphs and charts, and pupils show a good awareness of which types of charts suit which purposes. Pupils using a CD-ROM encyclopedia in geography were

careful not to confuse block graphs comparing the growth rates of national income in Kenya and the UK with absolute levels of income in the two countries.

145. In design and technology, pupils in Year 7 develop a high level of understanding of how sensors can be used to control events through electronic systems. Across all years, pupils use computer-aided drawing packages to produce very effective designs of products, and are increasingly able to recognise how such activity can be linked directly to computer-aided manufacture of products.
146. In modern foreign languages, exemplary work has been undertaken in the use of e-mail links with Spain, to develop reading and writing skills of pupils in a foreign language.
147. Pupils' understanding of the use of computers to measure changes in variables is satisfactory, and developed by using 'cooling curves' to measure and monitor temperature changes in science, but standards in this regard are not as strong as in other aspects of their work with computers.
148. Teaching and learning are good. Materials in ICT lessons are cleverly constructed by co-ordinators of these lessons to link in to pupils' work in other subjects, and to allow non-specialist teachers to teach with fluency. In these ICT lessons and in work in other subjects, higher attainers are not given sufficiently clear targets to move them forward from basic to more complex tasks. The ICT lessons would also benefit from linking more closely to the subject specialism of the teacher taking the lesson so that the teachers can be more fully involved. In ICT lessons, pupils with special educational needs are well supported by teachers and support assistants, and they make good progress independently through most of the material.
149. For all pupils, the ICT lessons secure the skills and confidence which pupils take so effectively with them into other subjects. When planned lessons had to be adapted during inspection week because of a computer virus, pupils admirably suggested and used alternative approaches which meant that learning could be carried on effectively. Pupils are also frequently to be seen following up work independently, such as when Year 9 pupils went into lunchtime computer club to use careers packages on the college intranet following a careers lesson. In music, however, pupils have insufficient opportunities to work with computers, especially in the use of programmable keyboards and composition software.
150. The leadership and management of the subject are very good, and have been highly effective in developing computer hardware resources. There are now few problems in accessing decent machines and this helps in improving the skills and confidence of teachers. Government funded initiatives have been used to the fullest extent in support of these developments, which have been achieved with the minimum of technical support and which represent a major improvement since the last inspection. Further developments in computer systems can build on current successes, for example in making greater use of the web-site, introducing video conferencing and using ICT in music. Reports on pupils' progress now meet statutory requirements; they reflect pupils' work in using computers in many subjects and set specific targets for improvement. Assessments, however, do not take a sufficiently balanced account of all of the skills that pupils are expected to develop at this age and do not highlight some weaknesses sufficiently. For example pupils' understanding and skills in the use of computers for measuring and monitoring events is less well developed than some other areas of their work.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- The attainment of boys and girls is well above national expectations by the end of Year 9.
- Teaching and learning are very good overall and a significant proportion is excellent.
- Teachers make skilled use of resources, including ICT.
- Pupils of all abilities have rich, varied and stimulating experiences.
- The leadership of the department is excellent.

Areas for improvement

- Make greater use of performance data and the setting of individual targets for pupils.

151. The attainment of boys and girls in French at the end of Year 9 is well above national expectations and typifies a continuous upward trend from the above average standards at the last inspection. In reaching these standards the achievement and progress of pupils are very good.

152. Attainment in French lessons and in samples of written work is well above national expectation. Most pupils with special educational needs achieve well in French reaching satisfactory levels by the age of 14. Although higher attaining pupils do not start Spanish until Year 8 they meet national expectations by the end of Year 9. Pupils have excellent listening skills, following lessons taught entirely in authentic French or Spanish. Lower attainers and pupils with special educational needs stay involved with judicious repetition and additional support by their teachers. Within weeks of starting French in Year 7 or Spanish in Year 8, pupils exchange everyday greetings and courtesies, make requests and answer questions with single words or short phrases. They conduct brief conversations giving personal information about who they are and how they feel. Pupils' learning of vocabulary and idiomatic French and Spanish is mostly rapid and thorough. Pupils soon write short descriptions, longer dialogues and adapt their style to postcards, informal letters, posters and CVs. Their skill in using computers is evident in the colourful, informative wall displays in the languages suite. Pupils adapt their speaking to role-play, simulating situations relevant to teenagers such as shopping and college life. They use different tenses and structures from Year 7 on, saying what they have learned, or what they want to do. By the age of 14 pupils can express their opinions on various topics in speech and writing, justifying their preferences of college subjects and leisure activities. Their use of past and future tenses is sufficient to describe recent holidays or make arrangements to go out. Many pupils apply their knowledge practically in European links or on study visits to France and Spain.

153. The quality of teaching is very good overall and a significant proportion is excellent. Teaching is never less than good. Teachers are well qualified, experienced and fluent in French and Spanish. They judiciously modify challenge or accessibility to suit their pupils' ability. Teachers and learning assistants simplify their language when teaching pupils with special educational needs. They use clear, familiar terms that help them to stay involved. Teachers plan their lessons very well. They state their aims clearly, expecting pupils to summarise later what they have learned. They teach grammar in French and Spanish, in discrete sections of their lessons, often through illustration and example. Pupils acquire a strong sense of the rhythm and pattern of infinitive and question forms. Teachers use time intensively, using registration to practise vocabulary or writing time for assessment and support. Teaching methods are very good with a productive blend of presentations and independent, paired or small group work exercising different skills. Teachers effectively develop the content of previous lessons about friends' appearance or life at

home into long conversations or creative writing. They move smoothly from introducing or explaining new language to managing pupils' independent learning.

154. Pupils with special educational needs receive extra attention in class and intensive teaching in small groups. Hearing or visually impaired pupils benefit from special equipment and expert support. Pupils from ethnic backgrounds are well integrated.
155. Teachers' relations with the pupils are cordial, often humorous but invariably businesslike. A strong sense of common purpose is evident in most classes, as pupils respond to novelty and variety, as well as firmly established routines. Teachers use games, puzzles, quizzes, songs and mime to give scope for creativity and imagination. Pupils illustrate their books well and produce attractive holiday posters and property advertisements for display. Teachers use conventional audio-visual aids effectively, providing a range of stimuli to promote different ways of learning. They produce helpful worksheets, supplementing inadequate texts in the older course books, and provide extra readers with themes appealing to young people. All teachers have well-developed computer skills, and give pupils frequent opportunities to personalise their work using ICT. Teachers set homework regularly to supplement lessons and encourage independent study. They assess pupils' work continuously, eliciting individual and choral responses, or setting short tests to check grammar and vocabulary. Longer assessments give teachers, pupils and parents an accurate picture of attainment related to national expectations. Marking is regular, thorough and reinforced with helpful comments and advice. Pupils are becoming more involved in appraising their own and their partners' achievements, tracing their development on simple charts. Teachers make insufficient use of the predictive statements and target setting required to raise pupils' awareness of their capabilities.
156. The leadership of the department is excellent and inspires the hard work and commitment of teachers and their learning assistants. Effective management is rooted in close co-operation and suitably delegated responsibilities. The languages team is dedicated to providing pupils of all abilities with a rich, varied and stimulating diet of language learning experiences. They are receptive to advice about new ways of presenting and assessing French and Spanish. They share their expertise with colleagues locally and elsewhere. Teachers enrich the curriculum with links and study visits in Europe and further afield. Improvements since the last inspection include an ongoing rise in attainment, particularly that of boys and the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs in more challenging tasks. Additional materials available in classrooms and the resource centre encourage pupils to extend their studies through reading. Pupils are starting to participate in setting realistic targets for themselves, a recent innovation that can be beneficially pursued in the future.

MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision in music is satisfactory (with extra-curricular provision very good).

Strengths:

- The range and quality of extra-curricular activities are very good.
- Relationships between music staff and pupils are positive.
- The quality of support particularly for pupils with special educational needs is good.

Areas for improvement:

- Improve the consistency of lesson planning so that pupils are clear what they are expected to achieve, particularly in group work.
- Relate listening activities more closely to work in composing and performing.
- Introduce music technology into the curriculum to improve standards in composition.
- Match assessment systems more closely to National Curriculum programmes of study and attainment levels.
- Monitor instrumental music lessons.

157. Taking into account work seen both in lessons and in extra-curricular activities, standards attained by most pupils in performing and composing at the end of Year 9 just meet national expectations. Standards vary in instrumental lessons but some pupils achieve standards in performance above national expectations, demonstrating secure technical skills and mature musicianship. Achievement is satisfactory.

158. Overall, teaching is satisfactory. In the lessons seen during the inspection teaching was very good in Year 7 and satisfactory in Years 8 and 9. Teaching is most effective in whole class situations and when lessons have clear learning objectives and group work is well structured and supported. Examples of this were seen in the two Year 7 lessons where the teacher produced work-cards containing rhythmic lines of varying difficulties, carefully matched to pupils' needs. Imaginative and enthusiastic teaching then enabled pupils to perform these rhythms confidently on their own and in combination with other rhythms played by other pupils. The pupils then used these rhythms as the basis for a composing activity in well-planned group work. However, the rigour in planning evident in these lessons is not applied consistently across all classes. In performing and composing lessons in Years 8 and 9 there were more good examples of whole class teaching, but objectives were often unclear and group work was too long and unstructured resulting in insufficient learning taking place. In Year 9 lessons, the failure to support pupils composing with appropriate listening meant that composing activities were mechanistic and not rooted in any specific musical style. This made it very difficult for pupils to know what they were trying to achieve resulting in some pupils losing concentration and interest.

159. All teaching is characterised by the teacher's enthusiasm and desire to provide a worthwhile experience for all pupils. Particular attention is given to those with special educational needs. The teacher and support staff make great efforts to ensure that these pupils are involved in lessons and that their contributions are valued. A strong feature of the department's emphasis on including all pupils is the enthusiasm that most boys retain for music lessons throughout their time in school. For example in two Year 8 classes, boys joined enthusiastically and without embarrassment in a whole class 'jazz' singing session. Released from the technical demands of the keyboard, most pupils improvised freely and imaginatively over a chord sequence played by the teacher.

160. Teaching by visiting instrumental teachers observed during the inspection ranged from satisfactory to very good. However, the department does not sufficiently monitor the quality of teaching and learning in instrumental lessons. A practical diary exists which has the potential to be a useful tool in raising achievement in instrumental performance. However, not all pupils have a diary and those who do, do not always bring it to lessons. Music staff and parents do not check the diary on a regular basis.
161. The department provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities including two choirs, a large concert band, a recorder and string group and keyboard club. These perform to a high standard, are very popular with large numbers of pupils and greatly valued by parents and the community. There are many concerts and arts events throughout the year both in school and at local venues. The concert band recently undertook a highly successful tour to Spain. Most years the arts faculty produces a major stage production involving large numbers of pupils and staff. A recent production of 'West Side Story' attained very high standards across a range of performing skills. The singing was stylish, committed and technically assured and the dancing excitingly evoked the mood of New York street fighting. A choir practice observed during the inspection week resulted not only in very good musical standards but provided opportunities for musical learning and understanding through involving pupils in decisions about how a performance might be improved. All these activities make a very positive contribution to pupils' cultural and social development.
162. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Management is at its best in the organisation of extra-curricular activities and in nurturing high artistic standards across a range of activities. The subject leader gives unstintingly of her time and energy. There are also useful links with primary schools including organising days when large numbers of primary-aged pupils come together to make music. Although leadership is also good in creating an environment within lessons where pupils enjoy music and feel secure in expressing themselves musically there are weaknesses in the management of the curriculum. Schemes of work make insufficient reference to National Curriculum programmes of study. Although the music teacher is aware of the general strengths and needs of pupils, assessment systems are not matched closely enough to National Curriculum levels of attainment. There is therefore insufficient coherent monitoring of pupils' progress in music throughout their time in the college. The consideration of the resourcing and planning for the use of computer-based technology in the music curriculum is a priority. Such technology has the potential to raise standards in composition, particularly for those pupils who do not have instrumental skills, and to provide pupils with music-making opportunities that relate directly to their own experience of music in the outside world. In addition, listening needs are not integrated strongly enough into the curriculum both as a means of supporting pupils' composing and musical understanding and contributing to their aesthetic and spiritual development.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Participation rates by pupils in lessons and extra-curricular activities are high.
- The use of subject specific IEPs for teaching pupils with special educational needs is good.
- Standards reached in extra-curricular activities and in school, county and national events are high.
- Levels of support from other members of staff in running teams and activities are above average.

Areas for improvement

- Meet all targets set by the senior management following the departmental review.
- Improve girls' skills in games to match the standards of boys.
- Achieve greater consistency in teaching methods and expectations to raise standards.
- Continue to increase range and number of extra-curricular activities.
- Put into place a thorough departmental system to monitor teaching and learning.

163. Overall the pupils in Year 9 are meeting the national expectations and overall standards are similar to those at the time of the last inspection. There is a significant minority of pupils who attain above that level. Overall pupils achieve satisfactorily. Pupils with special educational needs and more gifted pupils achieve well. Standards in boys' games are good. The boys have good ball control and some are able to use advanced tactics in football. For example they can outwit their opponent with change of pace and by being able to draw them before passing. The girls understand that different pulse recovery rates indicate various levels of fitness. Leadership and team building skills in outdoor adventure activities are well developed. The pupils' evaluative skills are satisfactory in most lessons but they are not confident in trying to improve each others' performance with these observations. They do not answer questions with extended answers and are generally not confident in the use of technical language.
164. The girls' games skills are less well developed than those of boys and a minority are working below the national expectation. These pupils have poor ball, hand eye co-ordination and find it difficult to transfer new skills into a competitive game. Spatial awareness in games is an area for development for both boys and girls. They tend to crowd around the ball making it difficult to effectively practise their skills. The quality of performance in some lessons is hindered by pupils' unsuitable footwear and kit. Pupils with special educational needs including those with physical disabilities are well integrated into lessons and make good progress. Standards in extra-curricular activities are high. Many pupils enjoy success and reach very good standards at school, county and national levels in sports such as cross-country, football, netball and trampolining.
165. Overall the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and in some lessons there are some good or very good features. The good practice is not shared sufficiently between teachers in order to raise standards. Standards achieved by the pupils are directly related to the quality of teaching. In lessons taught by the temporary replacement teacher for girls during the week of the inspection pupils made good progress in their knowledge of health related factors as a direct result of very good question and answer sessions reinforced by taking part in well-designed fitness programmes. The line of questioning by some teaching however does not always fully extend the pupils' theoretical knowledge of physical education or encourage them to evaluate and improve their performance through their own observations. The focus in these lessons is not sufficiently sharp to achieve the desired outcomes. The following features were found in the best lesson: recap and

consolidation of knowledge at the beginning and end of lessons; high expectation of performance and application of intellectual skills; logical progression of task building to the final activity; a brisk pace that kept the pupils well focused; and tasks that enabled pupils of all levels of ability to make good progress and achieve well. In a minority of lessons the pupils were not sufficiently challenged and were allowed to chat over the teacher's instructions. Pupils unable to participate actively were not always involved in the learning process by being set alternative tasks. On one occasion poor planning led to wasted time in setting up equipment and as a result too little time was left for consolidation of skills in the final activity.

166. A feature of the vast majority of lessons is the mutual respect between teachers and pupils and the clear enjoyment in their activities. This is particularly noticeable in the high participation rates in lessons and the extra-curricular programme. Lack of co-operation was rare and confined to a small minority of girls in Year 8 who demonstrated a slap dash approach to learning and spoke discourteously to each other. The specially designed IEPs for pupils with physical difficulties are used effectively to ensure that they achieve well. The new national requirements for the use of levels in assessment have been introduced but are not used to accurately track pupils' progress across the key stage or to inform teaching of areas of weakness.
167. Whilst there have been improvements in a considerable number of aspects in the department since the last inspection such as quality of teaching, breadth of curriculum and an improved extra-curricular provision, there are clearly some areas of management that are unsatisfactory and require positive action. The last departmental review was rigorous and well focused on areas for development. Too many of the agreed targets have not been met. This is unsatisfactory. There is insufficient focus on how to make departmental policies meet the needs of the pupils and the objectives of the department. The quality of teaching has improved but there is not a consistent approach between teachers. The lack of a central office is a barrier to more frequent discussion and the sharing of good practice. There is insufficient emphasis on rigorous monitoring of teaching styles along with agreement of desired outcomes. The curriculum is now broader although heavily biased towards games. There is above average support by other members of the staff in helping to run school teams and activities. There is further scope for expanding extra-curriculum programmes and using outside clubs to add greater depth. The gymnasium is not an effective teaching space for activities such as badminton and volleyball to large groups of pupils and this affects skill levels adversely.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- The contribution made to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is very good.
- The appointment of a specialist teacher of religious education has had a major impact in improving standards and schemes of work.
- The range and effective use of resources including textbooks and artefacts are good.
- The contribution made by the subject to the development of literacy skills is good.

Areas for improvement

- Increase time allocation for religious education which is below average compared with other humanities subjects and below the recommendations of the agreed syllabus.
- Make greater use of performance data and the setting of individual targets for pupils.
- Set individual targets for pupils and use such targets in assessing progress and reporting to parents.
- Monitor teaching and learning by the department to raise standards further.
- Introduce strategies to provide greater challenge for higher attainers.

168. By the end of Year 9, attainment matches the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. This is an improvement on the situation at the time of the last inspection in 1997 when standards were below expectations. Achievement is good for a significant majority when account is taken of their religious education knowledge on entry to the school.

169. From observations in lessons and scrutiny of books, most pupils are able to carry out enquiry tasks, analyse information and evaluate their findings. A good example was seen in Year 9, where pupils examined the influence of religious beliefs and values on the personal behaviour of individuals such as Nicky Cruz and Muhammad Ali. By the age of 14 they show a satisfactory knowledge of the beliefs, values and traditions of worship of the major world faiths. Understanding of differences between and within religions is sometimes weak, mainly as a result of the time constraints imposed by the timetable. Speaking skills vary but in some classes very perceptive opinions were well expressed on the issue of right and wrong in the recent case of the Siamese twins, Mary and Jodie. Most pupils are able to write in a satisfactory manner in a range of styles, including poetry and extended essays; higher attainers write accurately and well. The contribution made by the subject to the development of literacy skills is good.

170. Teaching and learning are good. All lessons observed were satisfactory with some good and very good teaching. Teachers are aware of pupils' individual needs and plan accordingly. Lessons are well structured to ensure key questions are tackled. Good classroom management and positive attitudes from most pupils creates a good environment for learning. The scheme of work is inclusive and special educational needs pupils receive good support from both class teachers and learning support assistants and this has a positive impact on learning. Pupils are given frequent opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills. The range and effective use of resources including textbooks and artefacts are good. The input into both curriculum organisation and support for non-specialist teachers provided by the appointment of a specialist subject co-ordinator has made a major impact on raising standards.

171. There has been much improvement in the co-ordination and teaching of the subject since the time of the last inspection and leadership is now good. The scheme of work now meets the content requirements of the agreed syllabus and helpful guidance is provided for non-specialist teachers. Planning for continuity from primary school has also been

tackled well. The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Assessment procedures are good and data is used effectively to judge progress but lack focused targets used regularly to help pupils improve their work. There is insufficient consideration of strategies to increase the challenge for the most able pupils. A start has been made to monitor teaching and learning and to share good practice but these procedures are not yet extensive enough or formalised.