

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **IRLAM AND CADISHEAD COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL**

Irlam, Manchester

LEA area: SALFORD

Unique reference number: 105976

Headteacher: Mr A. Lamb

Reporting inspector: Mrs J. Tracey  
20270

Dates of inspection: 14<sup>th</sup> –18<sup>th</sup> May 2001

Inspection number: 194237

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Macdonald Road Irlam Manchester
Postcode:	M44 5LH
Telephone number:	0161 775 5525
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr J.E. Waddell
Date of previous inspection:	May 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
20270	June Tracey	Registered inspector		<p>The school's results and achievements</p> <p>How well are pupils taught?</p> <p>How well the school is led and managed</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
9504	Sheila Gurney	Lay inspector		<p>Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well the school cares for its pupils</p> <p>How well the school works in partnership with parents</p>
27803	Joseph Clark	Team inspector	<p>Equal opportunities</p> <p>Special educational needs</p>	
11966	John Clay	Team inspector	<p>Design and technology</p> <p>Information and communication technology</p>	
4105	Clive Kendrick	Team inspector	Geography	
2959	Brian Leek	Team inspector		
20192	Terence McDermott	Team inspector	Physical education	
11975	Thelma McIntosh-Clark	Team inspector	Music	
118676	Roy Meakin	Team inspector	Mathematics	
19452	Anthony Pearson	Team inspector	Religious education	How good are curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
15678	Jennifer Radford	Team inspector	<p>English</p> <p>English as an additional language</p>	
3793	John Ratcliffe	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
5851	Miles Robottom	Team inspector	History	
24887	Yvonne Salmons	Team inspector		
30901	Susan Schofield	Team inspector	Art	
21866	David Tracey	Team inspector	Science	



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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Irlam and Cadishead High School is an average size school with 918 pupils on roll. Numbers have steadily increased since the previous inspection. Pupils come from the vicinity and other parts of Salford. A significant minority of pupils transfer to and from the school throughout the year. The proportion of pupils continuing in further education at post-16 is increasing year-on-year. A small number of pupils come from ethnic minority groups; none are at an early stage of language learning. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is above average, a substantial number of these have behavioural difficulties. The proportion of pupils with formal statements of needs is below average. Attainment on entry is below average. It is higher, although still below average, in the current Year 7.

### HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school is effective in providing for the welfare and personal development of its pupils. Standards of work are below average but pupils achieve satisfactorily from their starting points. Teaching is satisfactory overall and good in Years 10 and 11. The improvement in teaching since the previous inspection is a significant factor in the rising standards. The leadership and management are satisfactory but vacancies in the senior management team currently limit the full impact of some of the school's policies. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

#### What the school does well

- National test and examination results are improving, particularly in Years 7 to 9 where standards in English are above average
- Teaching is good throughout the school in English and science
- Shows sensitive care and concern for the welfare of individual pupils
- Good relationships between pupils and teachers
- Makes good use of contacts with the community

#### What could be improved

- The quality of provision in mathematics to match that in English and science
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs
- The monitoring of procedures for promoting attendance, punctuality and behaviour outside the classrooms
- The promotion and celebration of pupils' achievements, both in school and in the wider community

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

### HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection in 1997. Pupils' results in national tests and examinations at the ages of 14 and 16 have improved, particularly in English and science. The quality of teaching has improved: the amount of unsatisfactory teaching has significantly reduced and the proportion of good teaching has risen. Provision for ICT has improved and information technology skills are used more extensively across the curriculum. The curriculum has been reorganised to provide for better progression in learning, particularly in English and mathematics, and there are more opportunities for pupils to take up vocational courses in Years 10 and 11. Assessment data is used more effectively to track pupils' progress but there is scope for further development to provide pupils with more self-knowledge of how to improve. Procedures for monitoring day-to-day aspects of the school's work, especially teaching, have improved but need stricter implementation with respect to attendance, punctuality and behaviour outside the classrooms.

### STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with				<b>Key</b>
	All schools			Similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
GCSE examinations	D	E	E	D	Well above average A Above average B average C Below average D well below average E



Pupils achieve satisfactorily in Years 7 to 9 in relation to their starting points on entry to the school. By Year 9, standards are above average in English and below average in mathematics and science, confirmed by pupils' results in national tests in 2000. These were well above average in English and average in mathematics and science when compared to schools of similar background. The improvement in results over the past four years is broadly similar to the national trend, but, in 2000, the rates of progress in English and science exceeded this, dramatically so in English. Standards of work are average in art, history and physical education. They are below average in all other subjects apart from ICT, music and design and technology where they are well below average. Standards of literacy, including speaking and listening, reading and writing are average. Numerical skills are below average.

Standards of work are below average at the end of Year 11 but pupils continue to achieve satisfactorily. In GCSE in 2000, the proportion gaining five or more grades A\*-C increased by 11 per cent from 1999. Results at five or more grades A\*-C and A\*-G, and one or more grades A\*-G, were below the national average but were average compared to similar schools. More significantly, they were well above average in the first two categories, and above average in the third, when compared to pupils' prior attainment in Year 9. This reflects recent improvements in standards in Years 10 and 11. The best results were achieved in English literature, science, business studies, history and drama. Pupils' average point score is well below the national average because the proportion of higher-attaining pupils in the school is smaller than in most schools. Consequently, the school achieves fewer of the higher grades A\* - B. The trend in the school's average point score over the last four years is below that found nationally. Overall, although girls' performance is better than boys, girls have lower aspirations and sometimes do not achieve as well as they could.

The governors set realistic targets for national tests and examinations. All targets were met in 2000.

#### **PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Attitudes to the school	Most pupils have satisfactory attitudes towards school although a small number do not value education. The vast majority make the most of the opportunities on offer and show a determination to succeed.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Overall, behaviour is satisfactory but a small minority of pupils exhibit challenging behaviour both in and out of the classrooms. The consistent application of the disciplinary system leads to a relatively high number of short-term exclusions. This is successful in improving the behaviour of a significant number of pupils at an early stage.
Personal development and relationships	Satisfactory overall but pupils' skills as independent learners could be developed further.
Attendance	Attendance is below average. Punctuality is a cause for concern because a significant number of pupils are late at the start of the school day.

#### **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

<b>Teaching of pupils:</b>	<b>Aged 11-14 years</b>	<b>aged 14-16 years</b>	<b>Aged over 16 years</b>
Lessons seen overall	Satisfactory	Good	Not applicable

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

Overall, teaching is satisfactory. Teaching, and pupils' learning, is good in Years 10 and 11 and satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 because there is a higher proportion of good and very good teaching in the later years. 142 lessons were observed. Of these, 23 per cent were very good, 37 per cent good and 33 per cent satisfactory. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection, especially in relation to the amount of very good teaching, which has doubled. The amount of unsatisfactory teaching observed reduced from 20 per cent to seven per cent. This was predominantly in Years 7 to 9.

The improvement in teaching is contributing to the rising standards. It satisfactorily meets the needs of the vast majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs. Strengths in the teaching lie in the teachers' good subject knowledge, high expectations of pupils, and good classroom management. Where weaknesses occur, particularly in the case of temporary teachers, the challenging behaviour of a small minority of pupils slows the pace

of the lesson and diminishes the overall achievement. Learning could be further improved through the provision of more opportunities for pupils to work independently and initiate their own research. In addition, the marking of work could sometimes be more constructive to assist pupils' understanding of how to improve. Teaching is good throughout the school in English, science, art and physical education. This is the most significant factor in the improvement of results in tests and examinations in two of the core subjects, English and science. Teaching is satisfactory in mathematics. It fluctuates between satisfactory and good in other subjects, except in ICT in Years 7 to 9 where it is unsatisfactory. This is because the work is not sufficiently well matched to pupils' individual needs. Literacy skills are taught well reflecting teachers' awareness of language needs. The teaching of numerical skills is less consistent.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum provides satisfactory learning opportunities for pupils in all years. There are weaknesses in the provision for modern foreign languages and in the co-ordination of the otherwise satisfactory course in personal, social and health education. The provision of a vocational / work-related curriculum for some pupils in Years 10 and 11 is good. The contribution of the community to pupils' learning is also good. Provision for extra-curricular activities is satisfactory overall but particularly good for sport.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision for pupils with learning difficulties is unsatisfactory because there are insufficient opportunities for these pupils to develop basic skills, particularly reading, through work on an individual basis, or in small groups, with a specialist teacher. Too often their specific needs are not met because they work in larger groups of lower-attaining pupils.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	There are no pupils at an early stage of language learning.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory overall. The school's published aims give due weight to these aspects of pupils' development. Provision for social development is good, and for spiritual, moral, and cultural development is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Pupils are valued as individuals and cared for satisfactorily. Procedures for assessing attainment and effort are satisfactory. They are providing increasingly more reliable data through which the school can monitor progress, identify under-achievement and take effective action.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory. Senior managers work closely together but are over-stretched because two key posts are vacant. Consequently some of the school's procedures, such as attendance, punctuality and behaviour outside lessons are not monitored as thoroughly as is necessary.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body satisfactorily fulfils its responsibilities except for the provision of a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. Governors are aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have been mindful of the need to minimise the effect of contracting finances on pupils' learning and achievement.
The school's evaluation of its	The school's analysis of performance data is thorough and self-critical. It has

performance	been instrumental in raising standards but needs extending to provide for consistent progress for all pupils in all subjects.
The strategic use of resources	The buildings and surroundings are in poor condition and have a negative impact on morale. They are in urgent need of attention. Some internal improvements, such as the new learning resource centre, are effective and inspire pupils to higher achievement. Staffing is currently inadequate, especially in mathematics, because of difficulty in recruiting specialist teachers. This results in discontinuity of teaching, and hence learning, in a considerable number of classes. The school understands, and satisfactorily applies, the principles of best practice to all aspects of educational provision.

#### **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils make good progress</li> <li>• Teaching is good</li> <li>• The school is approachable</li> <li>• Pupils are expected to work hard</li> <li>• The school helps pupils to become mature</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homework</li> <li>• Behaviour</li> <li>• The range of extra-curricular activities</li> <li>• Communication and better projection of the school's image in the community.</li> <li>• The stability of staffing</li> <li>• The condition of the buildings</li> </ul>

The inspectors agree with the parents' favourable views although the good teaching is more prevalent in the higher year groups. Parents are right that the discontinuity in staffing and succession of temporary teachers is affecting pupils' progress. Inspectors also agree that although there is some misbehaviour the great majority of pupils behave well. However, some of the pupils are very difficult and test the disciplinary system to its limit. The range of extra-curricular activities is satisfactory taking into account the many initiatives in which the school is involved. With regard to homework, the amount set was generally found to be satisfactory but its distribution was sometimes uneven, especially in Years 10 and 11. Pupils' planners are not used consistently to promote good habits in completing homework. The school, governors and inspectors agree that more could be done to celebrate and promote pupils' achievements, both within the school and in the local community.

The condition of the buildings is poor, especially the toilets. Funds have recently become available to bring about some improvements. These are due to begin very shortly.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Pupils' overall attainment on entry to Year 7 is consistently below average as indicated by results of National Curriculum tests at the age of 11 and standardised tests used by the school and local education authority. In the current Year 7, pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are slightly higher than in previous years, but, overall, attainment is still below average. By the time pupils reach the ages of 14 and 16 standards of work are below average overall: this is because of the relatively small proportion of higher-attaining pupils in each year group and the poor achievement of a small minority of pupils whose attendance is irregular. The vast majority of pupils achieve satisfactorily from their starting points at the beginning of Years 7 and 10.

2. In 2000, results of National Curriculum tests for 14 year olds, taken at the end of Year 9, were above average in English and below average in mathematics and science. They were well above average in English and average in mathematics and science when compared to schools in similar circumstances. Pupils' performance at levels exceeding those expected for their age increased significantly from those achieved in 1999 in all three subjects; in English results were similar to the national average. The steady improvement in results over the past four years is broadly similar to the national trend; in 2000, the rates of progress in English and science exceeded the national rates, in English dramatically so. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. The school exceeded the targets set by the governors for English, mathematics and science. Future targets to 2003 are challenging and realistically reflect the ability spread of pupils in Years 7 to 9.

3. Evidence from the inspection, including lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that standards of work are currently above average in English in Year 9. They are average in art, history and physical education, below average in mathematics, science, geography, modern foreign languages and religious education, and well below average in information and communication technology (ICT), music, and design and technology. Pupils' achievement in ICT is unsatisfactory because teaching is not modified sufficiently to enable all pupils to learn at a rate appropriate to their different abilities. Overall, pupils make very good progress from their starting points in Year 7 in English. This is due to good, well-organised teaching which stimulates pupils to have high expectations of themselves. Pupils achieve well in science, art and physical education. They achieve satisfactorily in all other subjects.

4. Results in GCSE examinations have fluctuated year-on-year. In 2000, 34 per cent of pupils gained five or more grades A\*-C compared to 23 per cent in 1999. The proportions gaining 5+ A\*-C, 5+ A\*-G and 1+ A\*-G were below the national average but in each of these categories results were average when compared to schools of similar background. More significantly, however, they were well above average at 5+A\*-C and 5+A\*-G, and above average at 1+ A\*-G, when compared to pupils' prior attainment in Year 9. This reflects improvement in Years 10 and 11, mainly due to the high focus the school has placed on improving teaching and learning since the previous inspection. The school is also putting considerable emphasis on encouraging pupils to be ambitious in targeting the optimum grades for their ability. Pupils' average point score in GCSE examinations was well below the national average, and below average compared to similar schools, reflecting the relatively small proportion of higher grades achieved. The best results were achieved in English literature, science, business studies, history and drama. In general, although girls achieve more highly than boys, as is the national picture, they have lower aspirations. Boys tend to be more forward looking in considering the impact their results will have on their future lives. The school's overall performance at GCSE is depressed by the small but significant proportion of results that are ungraded, particularly in English and mathematics. These are mainly due to uncompleted course work and poor attendance of lower-attaining pupils. Another factor is the school's policy of entering all pupils for English and mathematics, as opposed to some other form of examination where accreditation can be gained in incremental stages. This is demotivating for some pupils, for instance those with special

educational needs, who might benefit from a more continuous form of assessment. In 2000, the school exceeded the realistic targets for 5+A\*-C grades and the average point score set by the governors. Higher and challenging targets have been set for 2001 and 2002.

5. Standards of work of Year 11 pupils seen during the inspection are average in English, business studies, ICT, history, physical education and religious education. They are well below average in design and technology and below average in all other subjects. These standards are broadly compatible with GCSE results. Pupils achieve well from their starting points at the beginning of Year 10 in science, drama, art, business studies, physical education and religious education. They also achieve well in GCSE/GNVQ courses in ICT and modern foreign languages. Achievement is satisfactorily in English, mathematics, design and technology, geography, history and the non-examination ICT course.

6. Pupils with special educational needs often make good, sometimes very good, progress in lessons, for example in English and art. Overall, however, their progress is unsatisfactory because they do not have sufficient teaching in basic skills, either through individual work or in small groups, to reach their optimum potential. Insufficient help in the development of reading skills affects progress in other subjects where pupils' ability to access information for themselves is a crucial element in the learning process.

7. Pupils' literacy skills are below average on entry to the school. They progressively improve as a direct result of the school's literacy policy and the incorporation of appropriate strategies in most teachers' lesson plans. There has been a significant improvement in pupils' oral skills since the previous inspection. The majority of pupils express themselves confidently and with reasonable fluency in discussion. Reading skills are average and the new learning resource centre is enticing pupils to have greater interest in books. Writing skills are also developing well. This is due to the high quality of provision in English and its impact on work in other subjects.

8. Overall, pupils' numerical skills are below average on entry to the school. They improve, but not at the same rate as their literacy skills. Weaknesses in arithmetic and lack of mental agility in handling numbers inhibit the progress of lower-attaining pupils in particular. This is because significant staff changes in the mathematics department have resulted in a temporary loss in momentum in establishing a co-ordinated approach to the teaching of numeracy across the whole curriculum. Most subject departments satisfactorily promote proficiency with computational and mathematical skills to the extent that they are needed to progress work in the subject.

9. There are no pupils in the school at an early stage of learning English.

10. Standards in English, mathematics and science have improved since the previous inspection, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Currently, progress throughout the school is better in English and science than in mathematics because of good leadership and the close team work of teachers in these two areas. Difficulties in recruiting specialist teachers of mathematics have resulted in the employment of temporary teachers. This is adversely affecting the continuity of some pupils' work, and hence their progress, in mathematics.

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

11. Most pupils have satisfactory attitudes to the school and to their learning. The majority of parents who returned the questionnaire agreed that their children liked school and, particularly the older ones, have a high degree of loyalty to it. Overall, behaviour is satisfactory. Where the teaching is good, often for example in English and science, pupils enjoy their lessons, work hard and show a determination to succeed. They are attentive and show interest and enthusiasm. They sustain concentration and co-operate well. In Years 10 and 11 boys tend to have higher aspirations than girls because they give more thought to the influence that education will have on their future lives.

12. Behaviour in lessons is satisfactory overall. However, where teaching is less interesting and teachers' expectations are lower, a minority of pupils exhibit quite challenging behaviour. They can become rude and

disruptive and affect the learning of others. Some parents expressed concern about behaviour. Inspectors found this to be justified in respect to a small minority of pupils, mainly in Years 7 to 9. There is evidence that this more challenging behaviour starts at an earlier stage than it used to. Bullying does sometimes occur but pupils feel confident that it is well dealt with. The breakfast club is very well supported and behaviour there is good with little adult supervision. Examples of unsatisfactory behaviour were observed outside lessons. Pupils were seen smoking outside the buildings when they should have been in lessons. The poor condition of the buildings does little to heighten pupils' pride in their surroundings and the outside environment. Litter is casually dropped even though plenty of bins are provided. The number of fixed-term exclusions, which result from strict adherence to the school's disciplinary procedures, is high and well above the national average. Behaviour tends to improve and exclusions decrease as pupils get older and their attitudes become more mature. However, attendance is not as good at this stage.

13. Although most pupils with special educational needs generally show a willingness to learn and respond well in lessons, a significant minority of them are disruptive and prevent other pupils from learning. This minority has immature attitudes, for example, they cannot work quietly on their own even when the work is within their capability. They are sometimes confrontational with their teachers. In some subjects, for example, history, this inhibits their progress. Outside classrooms, pupils with special educational needs mix well with other pupils and are fully integrated into the day-to-day life of the school.

14. Pupils' relationships with their teachers are generally good. Most pupils interviewed said they find their teachers helpful and friendly. Pupils are supportive and tolerant of each other. Parents are pleased at the way the school helps their children to become mature and responsible. Opportunities for pupils to work independently and to undertake personal research have improved since the previous inspection but still need to be developed further. Older pupils undertake a range of duties, for example by becoming prefects in Year 11. In Year 10 pupils help with the school's induction programme for primary schools by organising an Action Challenge for them. Pupils also help in the car park, book parents in and serve refreshments at parents' evenings. Activities outside lessons are keenly supported by those involved. Clubs, such as the chess club, gain more enthusiastic support from the younger pupils. Sporting activities are well supported and the school is very successful in inter-school sporting activities. Pupils are generous in their support of people less fortunate than themselves and raise money for charity. The school council, which offered good opportunities for the personal development of students of all ages, has currently lapsed due to staff shortages. Pupils are not always fully aware of the school's achievements and so do not promote them with sufficient esteem. This is partly due to the fact that there is no central focus for displays because of the separate nature of the buildings. The school could do more to encourage pupils to share in each other's achievement and successes.

15. Attendance is below the national average and shows little improvement since the previous inspection. A small, but not insignificant, number of pupils are habitual non-attenders, particularly in Year 11. Their learning is poor because work is frequently missed or incomplete. Punctuality is also a cause for concern. During the inspection over four per cent of pupils arrived after the morning registration period. Lessons often do not start promptly because pupils have to move considerable distances between teaching rooms and no time is allocated for movement. There are also cases of internal truanting. This unsatisfactory attendance and punctuality badly affects the learning of those involved. Procedures for monitoring behaviour, attendance and punctuality are not applied consistently. They need to be followed up more rigorously.

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

16. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory. It is good in Years 10 and 11 and satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. As at the time of the previous inspection, the quality of teaching is better in Years 10 and 11 because more of the good and very good, and less of the unsatisfactory, teaching occurs in the older year groups. 142 lessons were observed during the inspection, of which 23 per cent were very good, 37 per cent good and 33 per cent satisfactory. Seven per cent were unsatisfactory. The quality of teaching has

improved since the previous inspection, especially in respect to the amount of very good teaching which has doubled. The amount of unsatisfactory teaching has been reduced from the 20 per cent seen at that time.

17. The improvement in teaching is a contributory factor to the rising standards throughout the school. From below average attainment at the start of Year 7 the majority of pupils achieve satisfactorily and acquire new knowledge and skills in Years 7 to 9. These are progressively used to advance pupils' learning. In some subjects, for example English and science, teachers provide exemplary guidance leading to good development of pupils' independent learning. In other subjects learning is more structured and there are fewer opportunities for pupils to make personal decisions. The learning of a small minority of pupils is not as good as it could be at this stage because of their unco-operative behaviour in lessons. In Years 10 and 11 the pace of learning increases as pupils' attitudes become more focused on the extent to which GCSE results will affect their future careers. The majority of pupils work hard and know what they need to do to improve standards.

18. The major strengths in the teaching, particularly in Years 10 and 11, are the teachers' good subject knowledge, high expectations and well-prepared lessons with clear objectives. In the good lessons, firm discipline promotes a positive climate for learning in which pupils are secure and motivated to learn. ICT is often well used in these lessons to add quality to the teachers' exposition and to demonstrate how technology skills can illuminate learning. For example, in an excellent lesson in Spanish, the powerful use of an interactive whiteboard enabled all pupils to engage in the work. The constant use of Spanish, spoken rapidly, reinforced pupils' listening skills and provided direct access to well-modelled language. This raised pupils' confidence when practising the language for themselves. A common feature of the good lessons was the teachers' use of praise and encouragement to raise pupils' self-esteem. The few unsatisfactory lessons, mainly those of temporary teachers, did not engage pupils' interest or provide sufficient challenge. Discipline was often not rigorous enough so pupils' behaviour deteriorated and constrained learning for the whole class. The main weaknesses in teaching, albeit in otherwise satisfactory lessons, are the lack of opportunities for pupils to work independently and initiate their own research, and of an appropriate range of activities to meet the needs of all pupils. In addition, the marking of pupils' work does not always lead to a clear indication of how the work can be improved.

19. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. Where the management and discipline skills of the teacher are very good, as in English, pupils make good learning gains both in knowledge and understanding. Where they are weak, pupils do not settle, disrupt the work of others and generally learn little that is new. In the best lessons teachers have a detailed knowledge of each pupil's needs and work is planned to take into account the targets set in individual educational plans. Good examples of this were seen in English, physical education and science lessons. Teachers generally make effective use of support assistants, involving them in lesson planning and in team-teaching situations. There are, however, many classes that have a high proportion of pupils with a variety of special educational needs, including learning and behavioural difficulties, where there is no additional help. In these circumstances, it is difficult for teachers to meet the varied needs of all pupils.

20. The school has developed an effective strategy for literacy that is improving standards throughout the school. Teachers have a good awareness of language needs and incorporate strategies for the improvement of writing and oral skills in their lesson planning. The promotion of numeracy skills is not as highly developed because there is no co-ordinated approach across the whole school. However, teachers satisfactorily include the teaching of mathematical skills in lesson plans where such skills are needed to underpin and advance learning in their subjects.

21. Teaching is good throughout the school in English, science, art and physical education. This is a significant factor in the improvement of results in external examinations in the core subjects of English and science. Teaching is satisfactory overall in Years 7 to 11 in design and technology, geography and mathematics. It is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11 in history, modern foreign languages and religious education. Teaching is also good in the examination classes for business studies,

drama and ICT in Years 10 and 11. Currently there is no music in these year groups but teaching is satisfactory in the earlier years. The teaching of ICT to non-examination candidates in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. It is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9 because the work is not suitably matched to pupils' different abilities, nor do pupils have printed records of their work.

22. In 2000, the high quality of teaching in English contributed well to pupils' results in national tests at the age of 14 which were above the national average, and well above average compared to similar schools.

23. The parents' questionnaire indicated that parents were satisfied with the quality of teaching. Inspectors endorse this view. Concern was expressed about homework, particularly in respect to the unevenness of its distribution in Years 10 and 11. The amount of homework set was generally found to be satisfactory, and to complement classwork, but the school could give more thought and guidance to its distribution and the checking of its completion.

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

24. At the time of the previous inspection statutory requirements for geography, music and physical education were not fully met. There were also weaknesses in curriculum organisation in English, mathematics, drama, religious education and personal and social education, all of which affected the continuity and progression of pupils' learning. These issues have been successfully resolved as part of the action plan which followed the inspection.

25. The quality and range of learning activities are satisfactory overall and broadly reflect the school's published aims and philosophy. Provision is good in English, history and physical education. It is unsatisfactory in modern foreign languages and for pupils who have special educational needs. The community makes a good contribution to pupils' learning and the school's relationships with its associated primary schools is good and ensures the continuity of pupils' education.

26. The curriculum provides equally for pupils of all abilities and backgrounds. It includes the full range of National Curriculum subjects as well as religious education, and personal, social and health education. In Years 7 to 9 all pupils also take drama. Insufficient time is provided to teach modern foreign languages and there is no opportunity for pupils to learn a second language. The school has arranged for the majority of the pupils in Year 10 to be disapplied from the requirement to take a modern foreign language in order to follow a work-related curriculum or to allow them to concentrate on their chosen specialist interests. Whilst this benefits the pupils involved it is unsatisfactory in relation to the promotion of modern foreign languages and restricts the breadth and balance of the curriculum as a whole in Years 10 and 11. The work-related element of the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is good and represents an improvement since the previous inspection. The range of subjects offered to pupils as options in Years 10 and 11 is further increased by the inclusion of sociology, and childcare. Arrangements for developing pupils' literacy skills are implemented well through English and other subjects. The promotion of numeracy across the curriculum is not as far advanced, mostly, but not wholly, due to temporary staffing difficulties in mathematics.

27. Pupils with special educational needs have full access to the National Curriculum and statutory requirements are mostly met. However, a small number of pupils have statements that require specific teaching programmes to improve literacy in such areas as reading and handwriting. This provision, specified to be met through withdrawal from mainstream classes for support in one-to-one or small group situations, is not being provided. In Years 7 to 9 there are insufficient opportunities for these pupils to develop their basic skills, particularly reading, through an extended curriculum of individual or small group work with specialist teachers. The vast majority of pupils with special educational needs are taught in groups of lower-attaining pupils where teachers lack the necessary skills. Groups are too large for booster reading programmes, for example, to be implemented. In Years 10 and 11 pupils lack opportunities for



accreditation other than through GCSE or GNVQ qualifications. Whilst these examinations are within the capability of most pupils with special educational needs, some need other courses in which they can experience success through continuous assessment.

28. The school is involved in a range of local and national initiatives that enhance the curricular provision. These include provision for gifted and talented pupils, through the Excellence in Cities initiative, strategies aimed at prolonging the education of some groups of pupils who may be at risk of abandoning their education, and participation in the national pilot scheme in the promoting the development of literacy and numeracy skills in Years 7 to 9. All of these, together with homework clubs and 'booster groups' to provide highly targeted help for revision purposes, are contributing well to pupils' achievement.

29. The school provides a satisfactory programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE). The course includes education concerning substance abuse, careers education, and sex education, in which personal responsibility is emphasised. Some aspects of sex education are also taught in science and religious education. A team of teachers led by a course co-ordinator teaches PSHE. Co-ordination of the subject requires strengthening, as, for example, there is no means of monitoring the teaching or the quality of the provision.

30. The careers education and guidance programme is satisfactory and effectively supported by the school's link Careers Partnership adviser. All pupils have the opportunity to take part in a work experience programme in Year 10. A small number of pupils, whom the school judges would benefit from the experience, have further opportunities in Year 11. Responsibility for careers education, the careers library and work experience is shared between a number of teachers. This is not as effective as it could be because there is not enough co-ordination between the postholders.

31. The contribution of the community to pupils' learning is good. There are good links with local churches whose ministers lead some assemblies and support the school's involvement with events such as Christian Aid week. Pupils take part in the town's annual Education Sunday service. Pupils visit the nearby training centre for adults with learning disabilities as part of the PSHE programme. Most work experience placements are made available by local firms, often through the support of parents who are employees. A group of pupils is involved in ongoing work in the creation of a "millennium" stained glass window in a local church, and the local Street Dance workshop has supported school extra-curricular dance activities. The school is currently working to establish pupil representation on the local Community Police Forum. A number of local organisations and groups are involved in the annual school "activity day". International players from a local, professional, rugby union club recently spent some time in school, speaking to pupils about the importance of education.

32. The school's relationships with its partner institutions are satisfactory. Links with primary schools are good and a number of initiatives, for example a literacy summer school, and improvements to the transfer of assessment information, promote the progression of pupils' learning. Pupils who are due to transfer from Year 6 spend two days at this school as part of their induction process. The physical education department provides help with primary school sports days and older pupils help in the organisation of an annual "Action Challenge" event for primary school pupils. The distance of their location from the school hampers links with providers of the next phase of education.

33. There is satisfactory provision for extra-curricular activities. These include school productions, and a strong programme of extra-curricular sporting activity. The chess club is popular. A number of subjects provide homework clubs, and at this time of year, revision classes. A large number of teachers have been involved in "booster" classes to raise the achievement of pupils in Year 9 in the core subjects. Learning mentors successfully provide study support for some pupils outside normal lesson time. No consolidating experiences are provided as extra-curricular activities for pupils learning to play musical instruments.

34. The overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. The school's published statement of its aims and educational philosophy gives due weight to these aspects of pupils' development.

35. The provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. Provision through the subjects is patchy but good contributions to pupils' spiritual development are made in religious education, English, history and science. In science, pupils develop their creativity in writing poetry on themes such as magnetism. In religious education, older pupils reflect on what it means to be human and are challenged to contrast and compare scientific and religious views of creation. Good opportunities are provided for imaginative writing in English, and in history, pupils consider religious attitudes to medical developments. The school does not meet the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all its pupils through its planned programme of Year assemblies and classroom reflections on the "thought for the day". In this respect there has been little improvement since the previous inspection. Nevertheless, some assemblies do promote pupils' spiritual, moral and social development. For example, a well-chosen poem provided a good opportunity for Year 7 pupils to reflect on the nature of true friendship and challenged them to consider the impact of their behaviour on each other in school.

36. Provision for pupils' moral development is satisfactory. The school's expectations concerning the behaviour of pupils are clear. There is a well-structured system of rewards and sanctions which are intended to support these expectations but there is some inconsistency in the way in which these are applied by teachers, particularly in the case of temporary teachers. Where the system is applied consistently and expectations are made clear, it provides good support for pupils' moral development and also contributes to the creation of a good learning environment in lessons. Moral development features strongly in the school's PSHE programme. Sex education is taught with an emphasis on responsibility and pupils explore issues concerning substance abuse. The religious education curriculum is rich in opportunities to deal with moral issues, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Responsible behaviour is encouraged in art and physical education lessons, and both geography and science provide good opportunities to discuss moral issues.

37. The provision for pupils' social development is good. There is a well-organised and effective prefect system, which enables older pupils to exercise responsibility. There are regular opportunities for pupils to be involved in charitable activity for both local and national causes. Many pupils are involved in annual events organised in school for local elderly people. They also enjoy contributing to sporting and other activities provided as part of the induction process for pupils transferring from the primary schools. The annual "Activity Days" also provide satisfactory opportunities for pupils to take part in community service. Most subjects provide opportunities for pupils to work together in a variety of ways. For example, joint projects in art encourage team spirit. Teamwork is encouraged in science where social development is also promoted through trips out of school. There are good opportunities for group and pair work in English and drama. In geography and religious education, the positive relationships between teachers and pupils contribute well to social development.

38. Provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. There are opportunities to visit the theatre and watch videos through which pupils learn to make comparisons, for instance about the different styles of performances of Romeo and Juliet. Dance groups visit the school and provide interesting opportunities for pupils to experience cultural differences, for example, through the forthcoming visit of an African dance company. Overall, pupils are provided with a satisfactory range of opportunities to appreciate cultural diversity and this represents an improvement since the previous inspection. A strong contribution is made by religious education in the breadth of its coverage of major world faiths. History and geography effectively provide opportunities for pupils to study past and contemporary societies from around the world.

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

39. Arrangements for pupils' welfare and pastoral care are satisfactory, as are those for child protection. The safety issues raised at the previous inspection have been dealt with apart from the uneven paving stones on walkways around the school. These and other surroundings are about to be replaced and landscaped in an extensive repair programme due to start within a few weeks.

40. Form tutors and heads of year know individual pupils and their background well and are caring and concerned about their welfare. They work hard and show great commitment to linking sensitive pastoral care with the raising of academic standards. Known cases of bullying are satisfactorily dealt with. The current shortage of senior staff is impinging on the good welfare provision because there is insufficient time for the regular tracking of pupils' personal development and behaviour. Teachers tend to rely on their good knowledge of individual pupils and their personal circumstances. The merit system is effective for the younger pupils but the commendations and certificates become less meaningful for the older ones who dislike public recognition.

41. Procedures for identifying pupils with special educational needs are clearly laid out in the school's policy document. Information provided by feeder schools, from national tests at the age of 11 and tests which pupils do on entering the school in Year 7, is well used. Pupils are supported by individual education plans that set suitable targets and which are reviewed at regular intervals. More short-term attainable targets need to be incorporated to give pupils the opportunity to succeed in staged steps. Also, pupils with reading difficulties need more support on an individual basis or in small groups to move them on at a faster pace. The work of the school's four support assistants is of a high quality. They are mostly experienced and well qualified and know the pupils well. Pupils also benefit from an appropriate range of visiting specialists. The attendance of pupils on the register of special educational needs requires tighter monitoring.

42. Satisfactory disciplinary procedures are in place to provide pupils with parameters for good behaviour. The vast majority of teachers use these effectively and the school tries every strategy to prevent pupils' exclusion. On the relatively small number of occasions when staff do not apply the school's code consistently, pupils' behaviour is sometimes challenging and adversely affects the learning of others. A significant minority of the relatively small return of parents' questionnaires mentioned concerns about behaviour. One group of pupils interviewed wished their head of year had to teach less because their lessons were sometimes interrupted when she had to deal with problems in her year group. The large site is difficult to patrol and anti-social behaviour occurs more frequently at breaks and lunchtimes.

43. A number of government initiatives are having a positive effect. The Excellence in Cities scheme enables the school to benefit from the employment of learning mentors. They provide a useful service to a substantial number of pupils. As a result many of these have taken more interest in their own learning and progress, and have taken charge of their own behaviour and improved attendance. External evaluation of the mentors' work indicates that they are having a positive impact.

44. The monitoring of attendance and punctuality could be more rigorous. The education welfare officer provides good support but its impact in improving attendance is limited because the time dedicated to the school has been halved this year. This is frustrating as the school is said to be designated as high priority. Recent spending cuts in external agencies have also resulted in the loss of time of the school nurse. This disadvantages pupils who previously benefited from the weekly 'drop in' sessions.

45. Assessment arrangements for monitoring pupils' academic performance are satisfactory and have improved since the previous inspection. The use of assessment data to guide curricular planning is good in some subjects and, overall, satisfactory. The school is currently extending whole-school procedures so that teachers, heads of year groups and senior management can more readily access central records. There are already some good practices within subject departments but these are not fully consistent throughout the school. In English, design and technology, science and geography the systems assist pupils to know how well they are doing and how to improve. In mathematics the existing assessment scheme needs extending to incorporate the inclusion and sharing of more short-term targets for individual pupils so that

under-achievement can be identified more quickly. In ICT, pupils in Years 7 to 9 would have greater incentive to improve if they had printed records of their work and written targets for improvement.

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

46. Less than ten per cent of parents responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire and 26 attended the Parents' meeting. Of this relatively small sample, a large majority felt the school expected their children to work hard and achieve their best and that they liked school and made good progress. There was some dissent as to whether the right amount of homework was set. Inspectors found that appropriate work was set to complement classwork but agreed that it was not always evenly distributed throughout the week. Also it is difficult for parents and teachers to track pupils' homework when planning booklets are used irregularly.

47. The school tries to strengthen its links with parents but many are reluctant to become involved. For example, only 30 per cent of parents have signed the home/school agreement. When funding was particularly short the headteacher asked for volunteers to help paint one of the corridors but no parents volunteered. All parents were asked to give their views on planned changes to the school day but less than 5 per cent responded. Not all the parents of children with special educational needs attend the annual reviews and, despite repeated invitations, there are parents whom specialist support staff have never met. This lack of involvement sends a message to children that their education is not valued by some parents and has a negative impact on their learning at home. There is a Parents' Guild run by a few committed parents. It is often difficult to get support for social and fund raising functions but parents did help to provide books for the excellent new learning resources unit. The school has good induction procedures for new pupils transferring from primary school to which parents respond positively.

48. A significant minority of parents responding to the questionnaire felt that they needed more information about pupils' progress. Every year group has a specific consultation evening each year, which is relatively well supported, and termly progress reports are sent in addition to the end of year records of achievement. These are helpful in format though not all teachers comment on what students can actually do. Parents are encouraged to use the school's pastoral system where they have concerns. The set up is sound, but, at present, vacancies in senior management positions affects the speed at which the school sometimes responds to individual concerns. New appointments have been made for September which will rectify this position. The school's newsletters, sent regularly, are very readable and informative. The prospectus and the annual report to parents are clear and well presented but they do not fully meet statutory requirements.

49. Stronger links with parents would have a positive effect on pupils' attainment and progress and raise the image of the school within the community. Staff and governors need to search for further means of ensuring that pupils and parents are aware of the school's achievements and many valuable activities.

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

50. The quality of the leadership and management is satisfactory. New initiatives are designed to foster advancement of the school's aims that underpin the work within subject departments. At the time of the inspection the school had experienced difficulty in filling two key posts in the senior management, and the proportion of temporary teachers was high. This has resulted in the over-stretching of responsibilities for key members of staff and discontinuity of teaching in a considerable number of classes. Consequently, some of the school's procedures, for example those relating to attendance, punctuality and behaviour outside lessons, are not monitored closely enough and lead to slackness in some pupils' attitudes. The school is aware of this and plans are in hand to re-delegate responsibilities when the appointments of a second deputy and an assistant headteacher are taken up in September. In the meantime, the school has

the loyalty and commitment of the substantial number of permanent staff, half of whom have been at the school for over 10 years. They do their best to maintain an orderly and caring community.

51. The permanent staff work closely together in support of the school and individual pupil's personal development. Pupils' concerns are dealt with sensitively and many teachers give generously of their time in support of extra-curricular activities. The site manager, administrative and other staff make a significant contribution to the smooth running of the school on a daily basis.

52. A key issue at the time of the previous inspection was the improvement of teaching and learning. Since then this has been given high priority in the school's development. Strategies for improving teaching techniques have been included in the staff development programme and senior staff have regularly monitored and evaluated teaching throughout the school. The overall quality of teaching has significantly improved and the impact is reflected in pupils' improving standards in national and external examinations. A second issue for management was the improvement of arrangements for informing and supervising the work of temporary teachers. Appropriate procedures are now clearly in place and documented, but, in practice, they are not fully effective at present because of the shortage of senior personnel noted above. This is particularly so in mathematics where there are a number of temporary teachers.

53. The school has satisfactorily embarked on a development programme based on self-evaluation. Aspects targeted for improvement incorporate the further raising of standards, especially in Years 10 and 11, improvement in literacy, numeracy and information technology skills, and greater flexibility in the curriculum of older pupils to cater for their wider needs. All these are appropriate and relevant. A weakness in pupils' personal development, noted at the time of the previous inspection, is the use of independent learning skills. In subjects where the leadership and organisation are very good, such English and science, there is evidence of strategic planning to meet such needs. Overall, subject departments are managed satisfactorily, results and outcomes being used as the starting point for subsequent planning. Middle management is currently least effective in music and modern foreign languages: in the former because the recently appointed head of department is just putting new systems into place, and in the latter because inappropriate schemes of work in Years 7 to 9 and inflexible curriculum arrangements do not satisfy the needs of all pupils.

54. The role of the co-ordinator for special educational needs is underdeveloped. Despite being experienced, qualified, and with good management and interpersonal skills, her role is prescribed by a heavy teaching load in English. Because of this she does not have sufficient time to monitor the teaching and learning of pupils with special educational needs, or to support and advise teachers on, for example, effective management strategies. The school needs to devise means of enabling better communication and consultation between all those involved in the education of pupils with special educational needs. The learning support department has recently acquired an excellent suite of new computers that will soon enable pupils to use ICT to improve basic literacy and numeracy skills.

55. The governing body satisfactorily fulfils its responsibilities except in that it has not ensured the provision of a daily act of worship for all pupils and that information in the prospectus and annual report for parents is incomplete. Financial planning, control and day-to-day management of accounts are satisfactory. Pupils' standards of achievement have risen despite severe cutbacks in expenditure in recent years because the budget has been managed appropriately. The school understands the principles of best value and satisfactorily applies them to ensure the pupils make optimum gains from whatever resources are available. The governing body operates effectively through its committees. For many years its actions were guided by the necessity to work within the confines of a contracting budget. This led to low investment in many aspects of the school's educational work and in the maintenance of accommodation. Inspectors judge that the drab and inadequately maintained buildings have a negative effect on pupils' and staff morale, and hence standards. The school needs to raise the awareness of pupils and parents about its achievements to try to overcome the poor visual image created by the dilapidating buildings. The local education authority recognised the poor condition of the older buildings in a recent survey. More funding from separate government sources has now become available and plans are in hand for substantial

improvement to science laboratories, toilets, roofing and flat areas surrounding the school to begin very shortly. Accommodation for physical education, art and design and technology is unsatisfactory and does not enable pupils to develop their skills to their full potential. In contrast, facilities for English and geography are well laid out and used, as are those in the relatively new resources centre, despite the unsatisfactory condition of the basic buildings. Within classrooms, there are suitable resources, a particular strength being the recent provision of new technology to improve the presentation of lessons. In mathematics, art and music resources are inadequate or in poor condition and detract from pupils' ability to progress as well as they could.

56. The management is satisfactorily driving the school towards higher achievement, significant improvement being evident in Years 7 to 9 since the previous inspection. Satisfactory progress has been made in following through the key issues raised at that time, although some, such as extending the use of the assessment system and promoting pupils' independent learning skills, remain ongoing.

57. Taking into account the satisfactory improvement in standards, the level of funding, the socio-economic background of pupils, the below average attainment of pupils on entry and the satisfactory teaching provision, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

58. In order to consolidate and further develop improvements made since the previous inspection, the governors, headteacher and staff should focus on:

- (1) improving the quality of provision in mathematics by:
  - \*seeking to establish more stability in staffing arrangements,
  - \*extending the assessment procedures to provide pupils with shorter-term targets through which they can measure their progress,
  - \*establishing more formal arrangements for monitoring the effectiveness of the department's procedures,
  - \*fully implementing a whole-school approach to the teaching of numerical skills;*Paragraphs 10, 45, 79, 81, and 82*
- (2) improving the provision for pupils with special educational needs by:
  - \*developing the role of the co-ordinator through the provision of sufficient time to regularly monitor the learning and progress of pupils on the register of special educational needs and support and advise other teachers on effective management strategies,
  - \* making provision for these pupils to develop basic skills, particularly reading, through an extended curriculum of work within small groups, or individually, with specialist teachers;*Paragraphs 6, 27, 41, 54, 63 and 72*
- (3) tightening the monitoring of existing procedures for promoting good attendance, punctuality and behaviour by:
  - \*ensuring that policies are applied consistently by all staff,
  - \*more regular checks, and effective follow up, on attendance and punctuality in lessons and behaviour outside the classrooms;*Paragraphs 15, 18, 44, 50 and 59*
- (4) promoting and celebrating pupils' achievements, both in school and the wider community by:
  - \*finding means of raising the school's image and publicising its work to the local community,
  - \*encouraging pupils to acknowledge and take greater interest in each other's achievements,
  - \*making better use of display areas in classrooms, corridors and communal areas to raise pupils' awareness of successes in academic work and all other aspects of school life.*Paragraphs 14, 49 and 55*

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	142
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	51

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	22	37	33	6	1	0

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

### *Information about the school's pupils*

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	918	Na
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	198	Na

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	13	Na
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	185	Na

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	29
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	41

### *Attendance*

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	9.3	School data	1.8
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 3

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2000	92	80	172

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	57	52	49
	Girls	68	49	43
	Total	125	101	92
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	73(60)	59(62)	53(41)
	National	63(63)	65(62)	59(55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	27(10)	29(21)	23(4)
	National	28(28)	42(38)	30(23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	49	51	43
	Girls	60	52	48
	Total	109	103	91
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	64(51)	60(61)	53(51)
	National	64(64)	66(64)	62(60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	30(10)	29(22)	30(30)
	National	31(31)	39(37)	29(28)

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	2000	80	76	156

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	26	69	75
	Girls	27	69	72
	Total	53	138	147
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	34(23)	88(90)	94(99)
	National	47.4(46.6)	90.6(90.9)	95.6(95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	30
	National	38.4

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



***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	
Indian	
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	4
White	899
Any other minority ethnic group	14

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		1
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	111	5
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	48.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.8

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Education support staff: Y7– Y11**

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	342

**Deployment of teachers: Y7– Y11**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77.1
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**Average teaching group size: Y7– Y11**

Key Stage 3	25.1
Key Stage 4	23.9

***Financial information***

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	2590563
Total expenditure	2447762
Expenditure per pupil	2664
Balance brought forward from previous year	28109
Balance carried forward to next year	170910

## ***Results of the survey of parents and carers***

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	915
Number of questionnaires returned	81

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	35	47	7	9	2
My child is making good progress in school.	43	45	7	3	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	22	35	23	7	13
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	14	43	35	6	1
The teaching is good.	27	60	8	1	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	25	49	16	6	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	35	51	11	1.5	1.5
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	52	42	3	1.5	1.5
The school works closely with parents.	11	55	15	10	9
The school is well led and managed.	20	51	11	6	12
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	26	55	11	5	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	11	46	29	5	9

### **NOTE**

Less than ten per cent of the questionnaires were returned by parents and carers

## **CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES**

### **ENGLISH**

59. Standards are above average at the age of 14 and average at the age of 16. This is because the overall quality of teaching is good throughout the school, and also because the majority of pupils have positive attitudes towards their work. Pupils come into Year 7 with standards which are below average, but by the end of Year 9 they are achieving very well. This level of achievement is sustained in Year 10, but progress is hampered in Year 11 by the high rate of absence of some pupils. Overall, pupils achieve satisfactorily in Years 10 and 11. Standards have risen since the previous inspection and pupils' learning is generally good.

60. Pupils' results in national tests for 14 year olds in 2000 were above average when compared to schools nationally. In comparison to similar schools they were well above average and better than the school's results in mathematics and science. The target set by the school was exceeded. Although girls outperformed boys, the boys' results were an improvement on previous attainment. Overall, these results represent very good achievement from the time that pupils joined the school in Year 7. They show rising trends and represent an impressive improvement on the below average results in 1999.

61. At GCSE in 2000 the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C and A\*-G in English and English literature was below average. Attainment in English Literature was higher than in English and both sets of results compared favourably with school results in other subjects. Girls did slightly better than boys in that more of them attained the higher grades. However, more girls than boys were ungraded. The proportion of pupils who were ungraded in English (8 per cent) is a cause for concern as it was much higher than the national figure and reflects the high level of absence in Year 11.

62. In work seen in the inspection, pupils achieve well in speaking and listening, reading and writing, given their attainment on entry to the school. Standards in speaking and listening are average throughout the school and there are instances of above average standards. Drama lessons play an important role in helping pupils to gain confidence in putting forward their ideas. Pupils of all levels of attainment usually listen well to their teachers and to each other. In Year 8, for instance, a group of middle-attaining pupils, who were preparing to write about holidays, showed through their responses that they had listened attentively to the teacher in the introductory session. When asking questions to develop their own ideas they spoke clearly and concisely. In class discussions most pupils can support their viewpoints effectively with reasons, and with references to the novels or plays they have been reading. There were examples of above average attainment in the top group in Year 10 where pupils spoke eloquently and cogently in a debate on censorship in the media.

63. Standards of reading are average. Many pupils enter the school with reading skills which are below average but the department makes good provision to help them improve and by the end of Year 9 most pupils are achieving very well. However, pupils who have special educational needs are not making satisfactory progress in improving their reading skills. Because of recent changes in provision, they do not now receive direct, specialised teaching in reading and there is not enough support for them in the classroom. By the end of Year 11 the majority of pupils understand the deeper meanings of what they read. For example, they can identify complex themes and metaphors from novels and poems and explain them clearly.

64. Standards of writing are above average in Years 7 to 9 and average in Years 10 and 11. Both boys and girls write well for many different purposes. Work displayed in the classrooms and seen during the inspection includes letters to newspapers, scripts, factual brochures, narrative writing and poetry. Most pupils have learnt how to improve the style and accuracy of their writing through redrafting. Handwriting is usually well formed and punctuation and spelling are generally accurate. Pupils also use information technology skills successfully in presenting and illustrating their work. Throughout the school the quality of imaginative and descriptive writing is a strength. The highest-attaining pupils in Year 9 have a very good

grasp of writing in character as shown, for instance, in Macbeth's reaction to the murder of Duncan: 'I felt as though I was watching myself sob, replying that not even Neptune's ocean could wash this blood off my hands.' Higher-attaining pupils in Year 11 produce extended essays which are written in a crisp style and are very well structured, with clear introductions and very good use of quotation. Lower-attaining pupils write in well-constructed sentences, and state facts clearly, as in this succinct account of a fight: 'It was a bloody battle, but despite having two enemies we won.'

65. The quality of teaching is good overall and has a very positive impact on pupils' rate of progress. Because pupils respond well to the effective teaching, learning is also good. Teaching is better in Years 10 and 11 where it is consistently good or very good. The one example of unsatisfactory teaching was in a lesson taken by a temporary member of staff where pupils in Year 8 were unco-operative. A strength in the teaching is the very good knowledge and expertise of the core team of teachers which enables them to develop pupils' understanding of the complexities of themes and language and to prepare pupils well for their examinations. Set texts are covered thoroughly and therefore pupils know them well. For instance, pupils revising "Of Mice and Men" in a top group in Year 11 used their good knowledge of the positive and negative facets of the main characters in the novel to analyse significant incidents which foreshadowed the eventual tragedy. Teachers plan their lessons well, with clear objectives which give a focal point to the lessons and are reviewed in a final summing up. They guide and check pupils' writing very effectively to encourage them to write to the point and to test the speed of their response. Teaching methods are well tailored to pupils' needs so that both lower-attaining and gifted and talented pupils respond well to appropriate challenges. For instance, lower-attaining pupils in Year 9 made very good progress in increasing and improving their vocabulary as a result of knowing exactly what was expected of them when the teacher used open-ended questions to make them think and speak. Another important factor which gives pupils the confidence to achieve well is the good working atmosphere which is created through the positive relationships between teachers and pupils. The strengths of the teaching far outweigh the weaknesses, but the latter occur when the pace of the lesson slackens and as a result pupils tend to lose concentration and talk among themselves. Sometimes class control is not strong enough and so progress is hindered by pupils' misbehaviour. However, behaviour is generally satisfactory, and the positive attitudes which pupils show in their lessons make an important contribution to their achievement.

66. The department has made good progress since the previous inspection. The curriculum leader provides very good leadership to a strong department which has a good capacity to succeed. The quality of teaching has improved and standards have risen as a result. Teachers' use of assessment information has also improved and monitoring of pupils' progress is more rigorous. Pupils can now see how well they are achieving and what they need to do to improve. The refined procedures for teaching pupils in ability groups and initiatives such as the progress classes in Year 7 are having a positive impact on pupils' attainment. Future priorities include raising attainment at GCSE, increasing the proportion of higher levels in the national tests at the end of Year 9 and improving the provision for pupils with special educational needs.

## **Drama**

67. Pupils achieve well in drama and the subject continues to make a positive contribution to the development of pupils' social confidence and their speaking and listening skills. All pupils have drama lessons until the end of Year 9 and the subject is a popular option in Years 10 and 11. Although attainment is below average, by the end of Year 11 pupils have acquired a range of skills of presentation, and they know how to evaluate their own work and that of others. This is because of good teaching in the examination groups and pupils' own enthusiasm for the subject.

68. In 2000, 33 pupils, mostly girls, took the GCSE drama examination. The proportion gaining grades A\*-C was below the national average but all the candidates obtained grades A\*-G. Four pupils gained grade A, and almost 90 per cent of pupils achieved grades A\*-D. Examination results have improved since the previous inspection when they were well below average, and compare very well with the school's results in other subjects.

69. Pupils generally make steady progress in learning how to make effective use of space and movement and of gesture, facial expression and language. The majority work constructively in pairs and groups and usually listen considerately to each other as they plan their presentations, such as when Year 7 pupils organised their freeze frames and tableaux on holiday activities. However, although most pupils show a sense of responsibility when working outside the confines of a normal classroom area, a minority of pupils find difficulty in exercising self-control and lose concentration quickly when not in role.

70. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. It ranges from very good to unsatisfactory and learning follows the same pattern. The majority of lessons are taken by a specialist, and a strength of the teaching and learning in the examination classes is the excellent relationship between teacher and pupils which makes a very strong contribution to pupils' confidence and achievement. Pupils in these classes have very mature attitudes towards their work. They take their teachers' advice in a positive way and work very well independently. For example, a Year 10 class organised their group presentations efficiently and were able to evaluate them objectively and usefully. Where teaching was unsatisfactory the lesson objectives were not sufficiently clear so pupils were unsure of what they were aiming for. Pupils took advantage of the fact that the teacher was inexperienced in the management of unco-operative pupils, with the result that behaviour was unsatisfactory. Consequently, too much time was spent in re-establishing classroom routines and not enough progress was made during the lesson. However, in the majority of lessons the teaching is underpinned by clear aims, a good knowledge and understanding of the subject, and well planned opportunities for development of speaking and organisational skills. Pupils of all ages enjoy drama, and several pupils go on to study the performing arts at college. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' social and cultural development through a wide range of activities which include theatre visits, practical stage work, presentations to parents, and school productions.

#### ***Key skills across the curriculum: literacy***

71. The school is part of the national pilot scheme for 'Transforming Key Stage 3' and is working with reasonable success to develop ways of improving pupils' skills in literacy. Teachers have benefited from in-service training and most subject departments have made satisfactory progress in integrating literacy strategies into their lesson planning although there are some gaps in the provision. Progress is particularly notable in the area of oral work, and since the previous inspection there has been an improvement in pupils' listening and speaking skills. Subjects such as English, drama, music and physical education provide good opportunities for pupils to take part in discussions and to acquire the vocabulary to talk knowledgeably about what they are doing. In science, art and religious education there is also a clear focus for developing literacy in the teaching of specialist key words which are clearly displayed in classrooms and emphasised in lessons. The majority of pupils express themselves confidently and reasonably fluently in discussion, and they can adapt their speech to different contexts, especially in role play in drama. However, opportunities for improving pupils' speaking and listening skills are missed in mathematics.

72. Standards of reading are generally about average. Most pupils can read well enough to cope independently with the material they use in their lessons and can successfully carry out research projects. However, the progress of those pupils with special educational needs who have entered the school with very low levels of reading fluency is unsatisfactory because of a lack of direct, specialised teaching. In English and art, pupils have good opportunities for reading aloud, and they respond well, reading with accuracy and expression. Pupils are encouraged to read for pleasure and to develop the habit of reading regularly. A strength of the provision is the newly refurbished learning resource centre where pupils have access to books of a specialist and general nature and where the co-ordinator readily offers advice and help, especially to reluctant readers. For example, an informal collection of books on a table gave boys the confidence to browse and eventually choose books to borrow.

73. Written work is usually well presented and handwriting is generally neat and legible. In English the quality of writing is a strength and pupils of all levels of attainment write in an organised way, with imaginative use of descriptive words, and spelling which is generally accurate. Structured aids to writing are also proving effective in raising standards of literacy in science and history but in religious education

they are not yet being used consistently and spelling is a weakness in Year 7. The history department makes good use of word searches, quizzes and crosswords to encourage the accurate use of key vocabulary.

74. The school is in a sound position to build on its achievements. The English department gives clear educational direction and is currently working on ways of ensuring that pupils make consistent progress in literacy through the transition from primary to secondary education

## **MATHEMATICS**

75. Pupils' standards of work are below average at the ages of 14 and 16. Although standards are gradually improving they are not yet high enough. This is because the continuous revision of schemes of work is just beginning to be positively reflected in better quality teaching by subject specialists. The benefits of these improvements are not yet being fully realised, mainly because of the lack of continuity of teaching following from a number of temporary staffing arrangements. These have resulted in significant variations in the experience of different groups of pupils. Taking account of these factors and the below average attainment on entry to the school, pupils achieve satisfactorily in Years 7, 8 and 9. Most pupils maintain satisfactory levels of achievement in Years 10 and 11, but the learning and progress of some middle and lower-attaining pupils are impeded by incomplete or missing work.

76. In 2000, pupils' results in national tests for 14 year olds were below the national average. They were average compared to schools of similar background. Teacher assessments of pupils' performance corresponded closely with test scores. Pupils' performance in mathematics was not as good as in English and science. Taken over the past four years results have improved at a similar rate to the national trend. In 2000 the results exceeded the school's target. Boys and girls achieve similarly. The most recent results in national tests reflect the standard of work currently seen in Years 8 and 9. Standards of work in Year 7 are closer to average, particularly in the higher-attaining groups. This is because the needs of the increased proportion of higher-attaining pupils joining the school are being met by appropriately higher expectations and suitably challenging work. In addition, all Year 7 pupils have benefited from the National Numeracy Strategy so that, compared with other year groups, learning and progress are less frequently hindered by weaknesses in numerical skills.

77. Pupils' results in GCSE examinations in 2000 were well below the national average at grades A\*-C. Results are gradually improving and the proportion obtaining grades A\*-C has more than doubled in the last two years. The difference between the performance of girls and boys, reported at the previous inspection, remains an issue with girls continuing to achieve less well than boys. As in Years 7 to 9, pupils do not reach as high standards as they do in English and science. The proportion of pupils attaining A\*-G grades was below the national average. Every pupil is entered for GCSE examination, compared with 95 per cent nationally. The proportion of pupils failing to attain the minimum grade reduced from 27 per cent in 1999 to 10 per cent in 2000, aided by the introduction of a new modular GCSE course. The standard of work observed in lessons and in pupils' books is higher than indicated by the 2000 GCSE results. Standards are currently below, rather than well below, average. Assessments in tests taken at the end of units of work show succeeding year groups scoring progressively higher marks.

78. Concerns in the previous report about lack of progression and continuity in learning are being satisfactorily dealt with through the ongoing development of schemes of work. Pupils of different attainment levels, working on common topics, make satisfactory progress through the use of appropriate texts and exercises that are designed to meet their individual needs. For example, groups of higher, average and lower-attaining pupils investigate the relationships observed between sets of information. They all recognise patterns, tabulate their results, recognise rules and then describe a rule with degrees of formal expression appropriate to their attainment levels. However, the quality of subsequent written work often lacks clarity. Learning is then impeded because the lack of structure fails to foster understanding



and retention of knowledge, the latter being a particular weakness in many pupils' capacity for learning. The lack of systematic, rigorous presentation particularly inhibits some pupils' progress in algebra. Pupils with special educational needs are very well integrated in their mathematics groups and generally make similar progress to their peers.

79. Although almost all pupils willingly and confidently make oral contributions in lessons, teachers do not promote mathematical vocabulary by routinely highlighting key words. In all year groups most pupils work well in the lessons taken by regular, specialist teachers. They are well behaved and display a positive attitude to their work. This stems directly from the good relationships between teachers and pupils. Consequently, the atmosphere in these lessons is characterised by co-operation and harmony. Teachers know their pupils well and work effectively with support assistants, when they are available, to meet the requirements of those with special educational needs. A particular strength of the relationships in almost all lessons is the respect and regard shown by pupils to their peers when they are either asking or answering questions in order to clarify their learning; they do so without fear of embarrassment or ridicule within a secure framework. However, these characteristics are often, but not always, seriously lacking in lessons taken by teachers working in a temporary capacity. The department endeavours to minimise the impact of the current staffing difficulties by moving teachers about so that not always the same pupils are disadvantaged. Whilst this enables more pupils to benefit from some teaching from permanent staff it results in almost one in three classes experiencing varying degrees of disruption and discontinuity. This inevitably affects achievement and is a contributory factor to poorer attainment than in English and science.

80. Overall, teaching in mathematics is satisfactory. The teaching by the permanent, full-time mathematics specialists, which accounted for nearly two-thirds of the lessons seen, was good in 40 per cent of the lessons and satisfactory in the remainder. The quality of the temporary teaching provision ranged from poor to satisfactory. The permanent teachers are hard working, have a good command of the subject and a strong commitment to improving standards. The best lessons were structured to build on previous learning. Consolidation of understanding accompanied the acquisition of new knowledge and skills. For example, a higher-attaining group of Year 7 pupils enthusiastically discussed the properties of negative numbers and their application to vector translations. The teacher's command of the subject enabled him to have an immediate grasp and insight into the pupils' thinking when they persisted with a range of perceptive questions. As a result, pupils competently coped with questions at a higher level than generally expected and made good progress. Where teaching was satisfactory there was sometimes too much reliance on textbooks for determining the style and content of the lesson. Pupils were not sufficiently engaged in discussing the work with the teacher. In such lessons, there was sometimes a lack of variety in the tasks and not enough imposition of time limits for their completion. For example, a group of average and above average attaining Year 10 pupils, working on enlargements and scale factors, readily succeeded with routine tasks without being speedily provided with more challenging work. Consequently, despite the fact that the pupils produced a satisfactory quantity and quality of work, their potential for reaching a higher standard was not fulfilled and their sights were not sufficiently raised. The lessons that were poor or unsatisfactory were due to inadequate management of pupils and lack of structured information being provided for the temporary teachers. For instance, a lower-attaining group of Year 7 pupils failed to either consolidate or extend their understanding of fractions because they were not engaged by the teacher and had already done the work.

81. The department has made satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection as reflected in the rising results in national tests and examinations. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory overall but there are significant weaknesses. Leadership is energetic and enthusiastic but there is an over-reliance on informal arrangements. Consequently documentation lacks rigour and cohesion and this results in inconsistent provision that is being exacerbated by the current staffing uncertainties. A good start has been made by the department in using assessment and the database of pupil performance for generating individual targets, but the extent to which pupils are aware of their own targets varies between groups. The use of information technology skills to enrich and support learning in mathematics is not prescribed in departmental documentation. Provision in this aspect is inadequate. In

order to take the department forward, achieve consistency and improve attainment, procedures and development points need to be more sharply focused and monitored for effectiveness.

82. Future priorities are:

- Use of a wider range of teaching strategies, including the systematic inclusion of mental arithmetic
- Integration of ICT into the schemes of work
- Extension of the existing assessment scheme to include the establishment of shorter-term targets for individual pupils so that any under-achievement (particularly of girls preparing for GCSE) is speedily identified.
- Improvement of the structure of written answers.

### ***Key skills across the curriculum: numeracy***

83. Overall, pupils' numeracy skills are below average. Except in Year 7, where pupils' primary school experience of the National Numeracy Strategy has resulted in greater competence with number work, pupils lack fluency with multiplication tables and are hesitant with mental arithmetic. Pupils' weaknesses and carelessness with arithmetic in some mathematics lessons inhibit progress, even though they understand the new work. Pupils' measurement and data handling skills are usually sufficient to support their learning. For example, in food technology pupils accurately weigh ingredients. In geography, data handling skills are effectively used to tabulate data from which illustrative graphs are derived. Mathematical skills are well used in science. When working on potential energy for example, pupils demonstrated that they could manipulate algebraic formulae and carry out appropriate substitutions. The school has embarked on a process of establishing a whole-school approach to numeracy. However, because recent staffing changes have required a change in responsibilities, there has been a temporary loss of momentum. Consequently, a systematic and co-ordinated whole-school approach to developing numeracy skills across the curriculum is not yet in place. Although some departments feature numeracy in their schemes of work, most do not have a strategy for promoting the use of numeracy skills.

## **SCIENCE**

84. Standards of work are slightly below average at the ages of 14 and 16. These standards are achieved from a low start because of consistently good teaching throughout the school. Since the previous inspection standards have improved across all age ranges. Pupils' achievements in relation to standards on entry to the school are good; in relation to standards at the start of Year 10 achievement is also good by the time pupils leave the school. Pupils' positive attitudes in lessons contribute to the good quality of learning in science. Pupils make good progress as they move through the school.

85. In 2000, the pupils' results in national tests for 14 year olds were below the national average but average when compared with schools of similar backgrounds. Results have improved at a rapid rate since the previous inspection with a significantly greater proportion of pupils achieving higher levels. Pupils' attainment as measured by these tests is better than in mathematics but lower than in English. Girls do better than boys. In Year 11, all pupils are entered for GCSE double award science examinations. In 2000 the proportion of pupils achieving grades A\*-C was below the national average but has increased significantly in recent years. The proportion of pupils gaining at least a grade G was similar to the national average. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls at this stage. In 2000 pupils did relatively better in science than in English and mathematics.

86. Standards of work are steadily improving. For example, by Year 11, higher-attaining pupils can use a variety of physical formulae to calculate quantities such as work and energy. They can write and balance chemical equations with a good degree of success. Lower-attaining pupils can name the important safety features of cars and explain why these are effective in terms of scientific principles. By the end of Year 9,

pupils have built well on their previous knowledge and understanding. They have positive attitudes to science and this, coupled with effective teaching, aids their learning. Higher-attaining pupils have good scientific inquiry skills and use these well to find out the conditions necessary to produce a specific time for the “iodine clock” experiment. Good teaching in this Year 9 lesson allied to the pupils’ interest and enthusiasm enabled the pupils to progress well. Lower-attaining pupils start with weak practical skills but these improve as they get older. They were, for example, able to make a prediction about the body’s reaction time and test this experimentally. Very good teaching of this topic in Year 9 ensured that the pupils worked with confidence and made very good progress.

87. Pupils enter the school with attainment that is below average for their age. By the age of 14 the most recent tests indicate that although they are still below average they have made up most of the lost ground in terms of attainment. In this age range new schemes of work are being introduced which are very effective in delivering the science curriculum. Key skills are well taught. Particular attention is paid to literacy. The department emphasises key words and focuses on improving pupils’ writing skills. Pupils are encouraged to read aloud from worksheets developing their reading skills. Pupils’ attitudes are good and they show particular interest in practical activities. Scientific inquiry skills continue to improve in Years 10 and 11 as a result of the teachers’ expertise in this area of the science curriculum. Higher mathematical skills are developed well so pupils analyse scientific problems with suitable rigour. Pupils have good relationships with their teachers which help them grow in confidence in their abilities in science. However in some lower-attaining classes punctuality and attendance is unsatisfactory resulting in some pupils making slower progress than they ought. Throughout the school pupils use ICT well in their science lessons to input data into spreadsheets and revise material for tests and examinations. Teachers satisfactorily use ICT to enhance the delivery and effectiveness of their teaching. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards the targets set for them due to effective teaching and suitably planned work.

88. Teaching is good overall across all age ranges in the school. It was good or better in ten of the twelve lessons observed, and very good in five of them. Other lessons were satisfactory. Teachers have good subject knowledge and convey this knowledge with clarity to pupils. Lessons, particularly practical ones, are very well planned in terms of objectives and learning outcomes. Pupils get a wide variety of learning experiences in science that is very effective in helping raise their attainment. Teachers have established good working relationships with pupils that enhance the learning ethos in the department. They have very high expectations of pupils both in terms of achievement and behaviour. They endeavour through their teaching to build up the pupils’ confidence in science so that achievement and motivation increase. For example, in one very good lesson, a Year 10 lower-attaining class was given a series of exercises which step-by-step enabled them to answer GCSE examination questions with a good degree of success. Marking of books is thorough and competent. In the lessons where teaching was satisfactory, the pace was misjudged so that outcomes were not fully achieved; pupils did not get enough opportunity to contribute to their own learning. Teaching in the department is very competent and well directed and this is having a positive impact on standards.

89. Management of the department is very good and highly effective in promoting higher standards. There is a good system of monitoring teaching and learning by direct lesson observation. Teachers share their teaching styles and methodology. Homework and marking is monitored very effectively. The department has good systems in place for assessing pupils’ capabilities and these are well used to ensure that pupils experience a suitable science curriculum appropriate to their needs. The department benefits from well-qualified and very committed teachers who work well together as a team. Accommodation is unsatisfactory but teachers and pupils have worked together to improve the environment through eye-catching displays.

90. Since the previous inspection the department has made very good improvement. The curriculum and teaching have significantly improved. Test and examination results are also improving. The provision of the ICT science component has improved and it is taught more effectively. To further improve the department needs to continue with its programme of monitoring and evaluating teaching. It should fully implement its

planned improvement of marking pupils' work by focusing on pupils' strengths and weaknesses and showing them how to improve further.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

91. Pupils' standards of work at the age of 14 are average. They achieve well from their below average starting point at the start of Year 7. At the age of 16 standards are below average but achievement is good in relation to the ability of the pupils taking up the option in art for GCSE studies. Good achievement throughout the school is a reflection of the good teaching. Pupils respond positively to the subject and their predominantly sensible behaviour within lessons causes the quality of learning to be good.

92. Pupils start Year 7 with a wide range of experience and skills. In Years 7 to 9, they are given the opportunity to draw from observation, express ideas and feelings and use art terms appropriately. Their analytical and observational skills are soundly developed and progress is good. By Year 9, pupils can explore ideas and select information competently. For example, pupils working on a project on 'Graffiti' explored different forms of lettering and selected appropriate colourways for the final composition. Pupils satisfactorily gain experience of the formal elements such as pattern, texture and tone and develop skills in a wide range of two-dimensional media. Opportunities for three-dimensional work, textiles, printing and the research of artists are limited due to a lack of resources. Consequently, pupils' skills in these areas are less well developed.

93. By the age of 16 the pupils' work reflects a very wide range of ability. At this stage pupils interpret whole class themes. Analytical and observational skills are average but, apart from the highest-attaining pupils, the quality of research and investigation is weak. In coursework many pupils show a lack of understanding of how to develop a project and fail to sufficiently investigate artists' styles or techniques. The appointment of a new head of art has raised standards and the work completed in this academic year shows a definite improvement. The projects completed have been of a higher level and will assist in raising the pupils' final grades. However despite good teaching and the good progress made, there has been insufficient time to rework last year's projects to bring standards to an appropriate level. Since the previous inspection, GCSE results at grades A\*- C have been inconsistent. In 1998 they rose to above the national average but in the last two years they have fallen to well below average. The relatively small number of pupils taking GCSE examinations makes comparisons from year-to-year less valid. Other factors affecting results are the instability in staffing and the higher proportion of lower-attaining pupils entered for the examination.

94. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. It was very good in a quarter of the lessons observed. Within the department the teachers positively encourage good behaviour and attitudes and have developed clear procedures in managing pupils that result in good use being made of time and resources. In the very best lessons, the staff give very clear explanations, demonstrate techniques and build in an element of humour to maintain pupils' interest. For example, in Year 8, the teacher challenged and motivated pupils by cultivating a sense of discovery in the use of media and techniques when looking at the work of Van Gogh. Higher-attaining pupils referred back to previous work on mark making and described how to create depth by changing the size of the stroke. Lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs used whirlwind movements to create atmosphere. The teachers have good relationships with pupils and offer a high level of individual support, which raises self-esteem and creates a good learning environment. Pupils respond well to the effective teaching and this contributes to the good progress and achievement in all years. Most pupils are lively and their enthusiasm and energy is channelled constructively into learning. At the beginning of all lessons teachers review the previous week's work and positively encourage discussion. Higher-attaining pupils respond well to challenging questions; others are given the support and encouragement to answer confidently.

95. Schemes of work in the GCSE course are now structured to ensure continuity and progression. In Year 10 the pupils' work reflects a growing use of the ability to modify work and sustain a chosen study

from conception to realisation. Pupils working on a project on 'Dreams ' modified their work after looking at the work of artists such as Salvador Dali and Hieronymus Bosch to produce imaginative results. In the classroom the good teaching promotes problem solving in practical activities. Planning should now build on the good practice, by structuring the individual research of techniques and artists directly into projects, particularly in the lower years. The artists presently used are mainly European; the range could be widened to extend to wider world cultures. Homework is mainly used to consolidate analytical skills.

96. The department is well led and the teachers are committed to improving standards. Good documentation is in place and the department is beginning to thrive after a number of years of instability. Policies and practice are beginning to take effect. There are new assessment systems in place and these need to be developed to include target setting to encourage pupils to take more responsibility for their own learning. Some issues remain from the previous inspection. Inadequate learning resources limit the department's capability to fully fulfil the requirements of the National Curriculum in Years 7 to 9. The use of ICT has been built into planning but the lack of computers and appropriate software has restricted its development. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory, much of it having occurred in the current year. Accommodation is spacious but run down and in need of renovation. The curriculum leader has a challenging task ahead and needs strong support from the school in its commitment to better resources for the subject.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

97. Standards at the ages of 14 and 16 are well below average. Pupils achieve satisfactorily in Years 7 to 9 in relation to their well below average standard in this subject when they enter the school. This is due to consistently satisfactory teaching. Some pupils achieve well in relation to their starting points by the time they leave school. Others do not fully complete their work, hence, overall, achievement is satisfactory. Standards have improved considerably since the previous inspection when they were very low.

98. Teacher assessment of pupils' work at age 14 indicates the proportion achieving the standard expected for their age to be below average with few achieving higher standards. Pupils study the full range of knowledge contained in the National Curriculum programmes of study, but their understanding and ability to select and use this knowledge is limited. Designing in most projects only requires pupils to consider the appearance of the product, with functional and technical decisions having been previously determined. Pupils' ability to select approaches and develop designs in the light of clear objectives is weak. Pupils' standards in the production of food are sound. They use materials and equipment responsibly and are mostly able to follow recipes independently and successfully. When using resistant materials some pupils work accurately but many do not. Selection and use of a wider range of finishes would help to raise the quality of the final product.

99. Although GCSE and GNVQ manufacturing results are well below average, they have risen substantially since the time of the previous inspection. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A\* - C doubled between 1998 and 2000. Standards are continuing to improve. Significant numbers of pupils are achieving better results in design and technology than in their other subjects. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve satisfactorily because teachers provide suitable help for each individual. Pupils' ability to develop designs in relation to clear objectives is weak except in the best work. Research is routine and rarely evaluative. The range of media that pupils use for graphics and designing is limited largely to pencil and pencil crayon. Nevertheless most pupils present adequate design folders and make their products sufficiently well to be used. In the GNVQ groups, those pupils who attend regularly achieve well but there is a significant proportion that does not complete the requisite units of work. Many pupils make satisfactory use of computers for analysis, presentation and drawing although this needs to be extended, particularly into computer-aided manufacture which has just been installed for work in graphics and resistant materials.

100. Teaching is satisfactory and more consistent than at the previous inspection. This contributes to satisfactory learning throughout the school. No unsatisfactory lessons were observed and two-fifths of lessons were good or better. Lessons are thoroughly planned with extensive material available to support pupils, although the worksheets are not adapted to meet the needs of pupils of different abilities. Help for individuals is targeted well but clearer design objectives in many projects would enable discussions to be more focused and pupils' decision making to be more effective. Marking is thorough in all areas. Homework is well integrated with coursework. Teachers manage classes well and ensure that pupils do not disrupt each other's work. The best lessons are effective in interesting pupils in designing and making individual products, for example when the video of "Chicken Run" was used to revise manufacturing systems. Other lessons, although satisfactory, are less inspirational.

101. The subject is satisfactorily managed and appropriate systems are in place to monitor and improve teaching and to encourage pupils' learning. Assessment procedures ensure that pupils have clear written targets for improvement. The scheme of work is detailed but needs to give more attention to the progressive development, across all areas of the subject, of pupils' ability to make decisions and understand the practical consequences. Four teachers contributing to the subject, including the curriculum leader, do not have an initial qualification in the subject and whilst they contribute satisfactorily and keep up to date with developments in the subject, they lack the depth of understanding to help to prioritise areas for development. The accommodation for the subject is in very poor condition with some machines unable to be used because water is leaking on to them. Displays are destroyed by water running down them. This is a totally unsuitable environment in which to teach the subject and seriously affects motivation of pupils and the standards of their work. The rooms are widely separated across three buildings, which makes it difficult to achieve a coherent identity in which each area contributes to a whole.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

102. Pupils' standards of work at the ages of 14 and 16 are below average, but balanced programmes of study help them to improve their geographical knowledge and skills in the subject. Pupils are provided with appropriate opportunities to develop their understanding of places and environments throughout the world. Overall, pupils' achievement is satisfactory from Year 7 to Year 11 considering their weaknesses in basic skills on entry. In the first three years a varied range of tasks and assignments is provided which is designed to improve pupils' understanding of geographical patterns, processes and relationships. Work and lessons confirm that the quality of pupils' learning is satisfactory as they move through the school.

103. Teacher assessment of pupils' work at the end of Year 9 indicates that although many pupils reach the standard expected for their age fewer pupils than nationally reach higher levels. Over the past three years relatively small numbers of pupils have been entered for GCSE examinations. The proportions obtaining A\*-C grades have fluctuated, a particularly strong set of above average results was achieved in 1998. In 2000, pupils' results at grades A\*-C were significantly below average although a small number of pupils obtained high grades (A/B). Most pupils who are entered for the examination gain accreditation and results at A\*-G are similar to the national average. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress and where additional in-class support is provided, it is effective. Most pupils respond satisfactorily in lessons, and have a positive attitude to their work in geography particularly when they are taught by established and experienced teachers. The department has to rely on temporary and non-specialist teachers in a number of classes in Years 7 to 9. These arrangements, and particularly the splitting of classes between two teachers, need to be reviewed to secure better continuity of learning for pupils.

104. Ten lessons were seen during the inspection. All were satisfactory and 40 per cent good. Overall, teaching is satisfactory in all year groups. There are significant examples of good professional practice. The preparation and planning by specialist teachers is good, as is the class management of pupils and the relationship between teachers and pupils. Teachers call on a range of resources, including video tapes, to add variety and capture pupils' interests. Good use is made of assessment to assist planning and

provide direction for individual pupils. These good practices could be extended further to support the work of other colleagues who make contributions to the work of the department.

105. The assessment system, and monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, have improved since the previous inspection. The curriculum now fully meets National Curriculum and chosen examination requirements. Pupils acquire an adequate knowledge base at both key stages, but if attainment is to be raised, the department needs to look further at ways of improving problem-solving and analytical skills. Consideration also needs to be given to means of consolidating and extending learning throughout the school. The potential to use ICT in the development of pupils' learning is not fully exploited.

106. Leadership of the subject is satisfactory. The priority to raise academic standards is clearly set out and the curriculum issues raised at the previous inspection have been thoughtfully considered and implemented where practicable. There is good provision to explore social, moral and cultural issues, for example when considering the destruction of the rainforest, urban studies and studies of developed and developing countries.

## **HISTORY**

107. Pupils' results in GCSE examinations in 2000 were just below the national average, with boys achieving at a higher level than girls. Teacher assessments of pupils' work at age 14 indicated that girls' attainment was average whilst that of boys was well below average. This trend was seen in lesson observations; boys make slower progress mainly because of poorer behaviour. Overall, pupils' learning made from entry to age 16 is good, because good teaching and well-prepared materials ensure that the acquisition of factual information is used to work out the cause and effect of historical events. Standards achieved are broadly similar to those seen in the previous inspection.

108. Standards of work are average by the age of 14. Most pupils achieve satisfactorily considering the below average standards on entry to Year 7. However, some boys do not achieve as well as they could do. Where progress is good, in most classes, it is the result of a clear approach to literacy, which enables pupils to extract information and to write clear structured reports. One class in Year 7 was able to show good understanding of the reasons for the Peasants' Revolt of 1381, starting with a quiz and building up to a short report where the causes and consequences were put before them. A successful lesson in Year 8 provided pupils with good opportunities to discover important aspects of Islamic culture through independent enquiry. In a small but significant number of classes, some pupils, mostly boys, disrupt classes and impede the learning. Although these pupils have been identified earlier for their behavioural problems, there is insufficient support for teachers to deal with them effectively.

109. Pupils with special educational needs do not make sufficient progress in Years 7 to 9 and, in some lessons, their progress is unsatisfactory. The majority of these pupils are boys. This is the result of relatively large classes of lower-attaining pupils. The range of ability within them is often too wide to enable pupils with special educational needs to be taught effectively. In these circumstances some pupils behave poorly. Materials suited to their needs and additional classroom support are not always provided. In contrast, the teaching of a lower-attaining group in Year 8 was good. This class of 13 pupils was given clear directions, and very well structured materials were used which engaged their interest. Progress of some pupils with special educational needs in the GCSE classes is good. Here they are taught in smaller classes and behaviour is good.

110. By the age of 16, standards of work are average and achievement is satisfactory as a result of good teaching, well-prepared materials and small numbers. Results in GCSE examinations in the past four years have been inconsistent because those pupils who opt for history do not cover the whole ability range. In Year 10, however, pupils are already making good progress. With many higher-attaining pupils in the class some are already achieving very high grades in tests. The curriculum is well chosen to suit their interests, such as the study of local history in examining the cholera epidemic in Manchester in 1832.

They use good enquiry methods, studying many copies of original documents, working well with each other and the teacher to produce mature oral and written work. In Year 11, poor attendance and poor motivation have restricted progress in this small and very mixed class but a few more able pupils are achieving the highest grades.

111. Overall, teaching is good but more predominantly so in Years 10 and 11 where all the lessons seen were good. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. All the lessons observed in these year groups were satisfactory; a half of them were good. Teaching is well planned, with clear objectives. It places great emphasis on literacy in the planning. Teaching methods, however, do not always meet the needs of pupils of lower abilities. For example, there is a need to structure some lessons into smaller parts and to use materials more suited to pupils' needs. Teachers set high standards and challenge pupils to work out solutions, but the behaviour of some pupils in the earlier years is a problem in some classes, requiring a whole school approach to managing poor behaviour. Teachers make some use of ICT in their prepared materials but its use could be extended within lessons. Teachers adopt a consistent approach to marking, which enables pupils and their parents to know their National Curriculum levels and targets. Homework policy has been reviewed since the previous inspection and a good range of appropriate tasks is set.

112. The department is well led and the curriculum is well organised, conforming to new National Curriculum guidelines. Topics chosen contribute to pupils' social, moral and cultural development such as attitudes to death in different cultures and the study of Islam. Teaching is monitored by observation and the moderating of workbooks ensures consistent assessment. Since the previous inspection, resources have been improved. Standards overall have been maintained, but there is scope for the use of ICT to be extended to support pupils' learning.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

113. The overall standard of work by age 14 is well below average for pupils of this age. Pupils with good prior experience of using computers and those with low prior attainment, including those with special educational needs, do not achieve as well as they should because the teaching is not modified sufficiently to enable all pupils to learn at a rate appropriate to their different abilities. Standards are also affected by a lack of sufficient qualified teachers last year. Hence overall, achievement and learning up to the age of 14 are unsatisfactory. By the age of 16, pupils taking the GNVQ Intermediate course achieve average standards. Learning is good. These pupils achieve well because the teaching is well planned and very thorough marking and assessment gives them clear targets for improvement. Other pupils achieve satisfactorily through a key skills course for all pupils. Standards have improved substantially since the previous inspection, particularly with the introduction of the GNVQ course.

114. Teacher assessment of the pupils' work at aged 14 shows that the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standards for their age is below average and that few achieve higher standards. Although the scheme of work shows a planned development of pupils' ability to use information technology skills in Years 7 to 9, recent changes and unsatisfactory staffing last year have led to gaps in pupils' experience. Pupils do not keep a printed record of their previous work and few in Year 9 could recall what they had learned about spreadsheets and databases earlier in their course. However, many are using MS Publisher and Powerpoint effectively now. Few pupils extended their use of ICT because the lessons did not encourage them to undertake more advanced individual work. Other pupils could not keep up with the general pace of the lessons. Consequently many pupils had to wait for individual help and tended to distract others. As a result pupils do not achieve as well as they should in ICT lessons in Years 7 to 9 although some make good use of information technology skills in other subjects.

115. Pupils' results in GNVQ examinations are broadly average. The proportion of pupils gaining a pass grade or better more than doubled in 2000 compared with 1999, and those gaining a merit trebled. Standards have risen substantially since the previous inspection when a few pupils took the foundation level GNVQ. Most pupils complete each unit of the course thoroughly and present their work clearly



although their explanations for carrying out tasks in particular ways are often more descriptive than evaluative. The quality of day-to-day assessment, which gives pupils clear targets to aim at, is a major factor in the good progress that they make. Those pupils who attend consistently and carry out the tasks conscientiously achieve very well but there are a significant number who do not complete their units. Some of these are entered for GCSE and achieve a low grade. Pupils not taking external examinations in ICT follow a suitably structured course in Years 10 and 11 and satisfactorily extend their application of information technology skills.

116. Teaching is good in Years 10 and 11 but unsatisfactory in earlier year groups. This is because in Years 7 to 9 tasks, worksheets and teaching methods are not modified sufficiently to enable all pupils to learn at a rate appropriate to their different abilities. Although lessons are planned in detail and teachers endeavour to provide help for individual pupils, those who are not receiving attention tend to distract others. The cramped conditions, which give no space for pupils to write and seat pupils very close together, sometimes out of the teacher's sight, exacerbate the problem. Pupils have no record of their progress or written targets for improvement, partly because there is no printed record of their work. This tends to reduce the incentives for improvement. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject, which is a significant factor in the good teaching in GNVQ classes and indicates a potential for improvement in Years 7 to 9. Lessons for GNVQ classes are well planned and marking gives pupils clear targets. In total, three out of eight lessons observed were unsatisfactory.

117. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection, standards have improved, statutory requirements have been met, resources have improved substantially and teachers have a better knowledge of the subject. An appropriate direction for the development of the subject has been established. Other subjects now make better use of ICT. Whilst the management of the subject is broadly satisfactory, the teaching and organisation of the years up to age 14 needs to be improved to ensure that pupils learn as well as they should.

### ***Key skills across the curriculum: information technology***

118. The use of ICT in other subjects of the curriculum is generally satisfactory and has improved substantially since the previous inspection. Most areas now have laptop computers that are well used for teaching and with individual pupils. This is a recent development; some subjects are more advanced than others in integrating ICT in their planning for lessons.. Particularly good use is made of ICT in the teaching of modern foreign languages. In English lessons pupils make good use of computers for editing and newspaper layout. There is little use of ICT in mathematics. Both art and music lack the necessary equipment but are planning for its use when available.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

119. The modern languages taught at the school are French, German and Spanish. Overall, standards are below those expected by the time pupils are 14 and slightly below the national average by the time they are 16. Standards in modern languages have been adversely affected by poor curricular provision, inflexible timetabling, and the use of inappropriate schemes of work in Years 7 to 9. In relation to their verbal skills on entry to the school, pupils' achievement is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Current standards in modern languages are broadly similar to those of the previous report, except in Spanish where they have improved due to very good teaching. The quality of pupils' learning is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11.

120. In 2000, GCSE results in French, German and Spanish were well below the national average. The results do not accurately reflect the current standards of the modern languages department, since the majority of those entered in all three languages were disadvantaged through having inadequate time for their language courses. The pupils studying the full GCSE language courses performed close to the national average, but the small numbers involved did not impact significantly on the overall results because

the majority of candidates had studied languages for only one hour per week. In 2000, pupils performed worse in GCSE than in the average of all their other subjects. In the same year, the boys performed below the national average for boys in all three languages, but in French, and against the national trend for modern languages, the boys gained better results than the girls whose results were extremely poor.

121. All modern foreign languages are taught in mixed ability groups which include pupils with a wide range of prior attainment in verbal skills. In Years 7 to 9, standards in writing are satisfactory overall in all languages, and many pupils, including lower-attaining pupils, can successfully use information technology skills to draft written work in French, German and Spanish. By the time they are 14, most pupils can write brief responses accurately with a sound vocabulary. Higher-attaining pupils in all languages can recognise and use the present, past and future tenses confidently in letters, descriptions and narratives. Middle and lower-attaining pupils are often restricted in their personal use of language by the excessive use of structures for guiding writing within the departmental support sheets. Standards in listening and speaking skills are below average overall, because the departmental policy on teachers' use of the foreign language is not consistently implemented and listening tasks are insufficiently exploited to encourage good listening and speaking habits in pupils. For example, in a Year 9 French lesson the teacher delivered the lesson in English, giving few opportunities for pupils to use the foreign language, and most pupils had insufficient time to understand a listening text about a French town. In Spanish, pupils achieve well in listening and speaking because most of the teachers use the language consistently, giving pupils constant practice in listening and enabling them to respond confidently in Spanish with a good accent. The schemes of work support the abler pupils well in all languages; however, in most classes, pupils with special educational needs and the lower-attaining pupils are restricted in their learning because their specific language needs are not sufficiently met. In Years 7 to 9 most pupils have satisfactory attitudes to language learning. Behaviour is satisfactory in most lessons, although a minority of pupils in a Year 7 class were restless despite the presence of two support staff.

122. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are below average overall, but performance in external examination groups in all three languages is close to the national average in speaking, listening, reading and writing. Very good teaching, small groups and very good pupil attitudes contribute to the improved standards at this level. This was seen in three successful Year 11 French, German and Spanish lessons in which good working relationships between pupils and teachers and good lesson planning enabled pupils to gain sound results in a range of examination practice tasks. In the Year 11 German lesson pupils were given particularly good guidance on examination techniques. Standards in literacy are well supported in modern languages, with pupils frequently practising dictionary skills and importance being given by teachers to accurate spelling and copying.

123. Teaching is satisfactory overall, with half of the teaching seen being good or better, and in one case, excellent. It is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 in German and French, and good in Spanish; in Years 10 and 11 all teaching is either good or very good. In the first three years the teaching objectives and learning tasks are not always suited to the language needs of all pupils; resources are often excessive and sometimes insufficiently exploited to ensure the objectives of the lesson are met. Pupils' awareness of their learning is good in the three languages because of the teachers' frequent reference within lessons to their progress through the National Curriculum levels. In Years 10 and 11, the smaller numbers of motivated pupils taking languages enable teachers to use time efficiently and to consistently achieve their objectives. The growing use of ICT in teaching modern languages is making a significant impact on the motivation and achievement of pupils and contributes well to standards in both ICT and modern languages. In an excellent Year 8 Spanish lesson about holidays, the teacher's skilful use of Spanish to accompany colourful images and text on the interactive whiteboard, enabled pupils to confidently undertake a range of listening, speaking, reading and writing tasks on the topic. All the pupils, and especially the boys, responded well to this stimulating lesson. On this occasion, pupils with special educational needs made substantial gains in their learning due to very good guidance from a learning support assistant.

124. Although overall improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory the leadership within the subject has not been entirely successful in implementing strategies for raising standards. This is

because the wide range of prior attainment in all classes prevents many pupils from achieving the standards of which they are capable, despite the sustained efforts of teachers to provide for their needs. The current schemes of work do not adequately meet the needs of all pupils. The organisation of team teaching within the department is good and teachers share a commitment to extend the effective use of ICT in language teaching. This is particularly evident in Spanish. The unsatisfactory teaching in languages at the time of the previous inspection has been eliminated.

## MUSIC

125. Standards in music for pupils at the age of 14 are well below average. Pupils enter the school with very limited experience in music and because of a series of interruptions to continuity in teaching have not been able to make consistent progress in learning in Years 7,8 and 9. Currently no music is taught in Years 10 and 11. Standards have not altered since the previous inspection.

126. Standards of work seen during the inspection were below or well below the expected levels for pupils in each year group. Pupils have poor general musical knowledge, and their composing and performing skills are at a basic level. Keyboard skills have not been established because much of the equipment has been out of order and only a very few pupils who have instrumental lessons read staff notation. However a marked trend towards improving standards was observed as a result of well-planned and enthusiastic teaching by the very recently appointed head of department, supported by a graduate in training. Pupils in Year 7, many of whom have difficulty in memorising and repeating a short rhythmic phrase and in maintaining a regular pulse, are beginning to establish these important skills, and higher-attaining pupils can invent a series of rhythmic motifs from which they create short pieces. Pupils are developing discrimination by applying their growing understanding of musical elements to their compositions. Listening skills are unsatisfactory; pupils at this stage do not listen closely to the effects of the sounds they create, or control the level of noise to avoid disturbing others. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 8, experimenting with atmospheric sounds, are making good progress in composing, introducing structure and contrast to their pieces, and are improving their listening skills when performing in groups. Pupils of average ability can select and organise their ideas into pieces with convincing beginnings and endings. Pupils in Year 9 are perceptive in discussing music they listen to, and more able pupils at this stage use a good range of descriptive vocabulary, although their knowledge of technical terms is poor. Pupils sing enthusiastically but need to learn to improve the quality of their performance.

127. Pupils have positive attitudes to music and are making rapid progress in acquiring basic skills because they listen well to directions, particularly at the beginnings of lessons, co-operate with one another and generally make good use of time for independent work. However some groups of boys generate a great deal of unnecessary noise before settling to the task set, and as a result of time wasted make unsatisfactory progress. Most pupils are developing discrimination and sensitivity in their work, and many pupils with special educational needs, who are not hampered in music by requirements for reading or writing, make good progress in the subject.

128. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Four of the six lessons seen were satisfactory, two were good. Relationships and classroom control are good and music staff communicate their own enthusiasm with great energy, providing very effective role models. Expectations are high and tasks set are appropriate to most pupils' abilities, although there is not always enough challenge for more able pupils. Occasionally too much time is devoted to a single activity. Time also needs to be used more effectively for reviewing and improving pupils' efforts, and for proper discussion of homework tasks. Although lessons are carefully planned there is not enough consideration given to the systematic development of essential skills, knowledge and understanding.

129. The management of music is, as yet, unsatisfactory. New department management systems and suitable documentation are currently being constructed and noticeable improvements have already been made this term.. The department has poor resources. Although there are now sufficient keyboards for

pupils to share, this arrangement will not permit the development of satisfactory keyboard technique. There are no adequate tuned percussion instruments, and untuned percussion is restricted to small instruments. Because there are no computers in the department the information and communications component of the National Curriculum in music cannot be taught.

130. A few pupils in each year group have instrumental or singing lessons, taught by members of the local education authority's music service. The quality of this teaching varies between satisfactory and good. However, pupils are not encouraged in greater numbers to take up instrumental lessons because of negative and disparaging comments made by other pupils. Both the department and the school should explore ways of eradicating this unhelpful trend and of providing opportunities for the achievements of performers and the credit these bring to the school to be celebrated.

131. Although standards remain similar to those at the previous inspection there have been some improvements in other areas. There is now sufficient time for teaching the National Curriculum, the quality of teaching is currently satisfactory, singing is an established feature and pupils' attitudes are more positive. To improve further the school should continue to monitor the quality of teaching and learning, and increase resources, particularly for ICT. The department should explore ways of re-establishing music as a GCSE course and of increasing pupils' participation in instrumental lessons and extra-curricular activities.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

132. Pupils' results in GCSE examinations in 2000 were well below average. They accurately reflected the ability range of the candidates entered. Standards are expected to rise slightly in 2001. Pupils' standards on entry to the school are below average. They rise uniformly to average in Year 9, and are sustained at this level in Year 11. This is due to good teaching. Overall, standards have risen since the previous inspection.

133. Learning and achievement through the acquisition of skills are good overall throughout the school. They are impeded in some lessons due to pupils' poor behaviour, and in others due to poor accommodation.

134. At age 14 standards are average, with no noticeable difference between boys and girls. In a significant majority of lessons many individual pupils perform at higher levels. In all lessons, pupils demonstrate increasing control and levels of accuracy in a range of skills. Pupils have a sound understanding of health related fitness, and of the effects of exercise on the body, and they are confident to express their views when asked. Pupils with special educational needs are supported in an unobtrusive manner, and are able to make appropriate progress. Pupils could be given greater scope to be more actively involved in their own assessments. Progress in observing and evaluating performance is being developed in lessons, but some opportunities are missed, and this limits recognition of achievement.

135. At age 16, standards are average, with a wide range of quality of performance and engagement. Many pupils achieve significant success both in teams and individually, gaining local, regional and national honours. In lessons the majority of pupils work hard to develop their knowledge and understanding of the principles of games play, they can select and apply appropriate skills, and they are tactically aware. They are able to select roles and activities which suit their interests and abilities, and have sound knowledge of health related fitness. A good range of extra-curricular activities, and fixtures with other schools, provide many opportunities for pupils to extend and develop their skills.

136. Pupils' attitudes to learning are generally good. Most are enthusiastic, well behaved and co-operative, demonstrating a real enjoyment of the subject. They are usually attentive, and their capacity to sustain concentration is good. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good. Pupils are encouraged to work independently and collaboratively, and opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and to

undertake different roles such as coach or official are a common feature of the best lessons. Particularly noteworthy examples include Year 10 pupils conducting the Year 6 induction programme for primary school pupils, and the active participation of the whole school in Sports day.

137. Overall, teaching is good. It was good or better in 11 of the 12 lessons observed, and very good in 4 of them. All teachers have secure knowledge of the subject, pay due regard to all aspects of health and safety, and are enthusiastic in their delivery. They have high expectations of their pupils, maintain a brisk pace throughout lessons, and work hard to raise levels of pupil self esteem. Lessons are well planned and structured, and the use of shared learning objectives, allied with clear explanations and good demonstrations ensure that class management is almost always good. In the one unsatisfactory lesson the strategies employed to moderate and control the challenging behaviour of a few pupils were inadequate.

138. Accommodation is poor and this has a negative effect on learning. The school has extensive playing fields, a very large all weather area, sports hall, gymnasium, squash courts and weight training facilities, all of which are in a very poor state of repair and in dire need of maintenance. In any inclement weather, the outdoor areas rapidly become unusable, and the indoor facilities suffer from serious leakage. This often necessitates timetable adjustments at very short notice, change of location, and the sharing of facilities. The staff and pupils show great patience, understanding and perseverance in very testing circumstances.

139. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. The teaching staff make a well balanced and complementary team who support each other well, have a shared commitment to continuous improvement, and are well deployed to meet the demands of the curriculum. Schemes of work are detailed and extensive, and assessments relate directly to them but do not inform curriculum planning and development. The subject development plan currently lacks clarity. There is insufficient monitoring of teaching within the department to ensure that best practice is shared and implemented. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Issues identified for improvement, and not requiring capital expenditure, have largely been met, and strengths have been maintained.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

140. Standards of work of pupils at the age of 14 are below average in relation to the expectations of the Salford Agreed Syllabus for religious education. This represents satisfactory achievement in comparison with their standards on entry to the school and is due to generally satisfactory teaching and positive attitudes to learning by the majority of pupils. By the time that they leave school, the majority of pupils reach average standards and achieve well because of good teaching and their own positive attitudes. The quality of learning progressively improves as pupils use their knowledge to reflect on its impact on people's everyday lives. Standards have been broadly maintained since the previous inspection.

141. In Year 9 most pupils have a sound knowledge and understanding of key features of Islam and Judaism. and they can make personal responses to issues raised by their study of rites of passage, such as the bar mitzvah in Judaism. Their capacity to compare belief and practice between the faiths and their understanding of what it means to belong to a faith community are underdeveloped because these aspects of their learning have not been sufficiently emphasised in lessons in the past. However, standards of work of pupils in Year 7 are average for their age because recent changes to the schemes of work mean that teachers now provide more opportunities for pupils to appreciate the way that belief influences the lives of the members of the faith communities they study. For example, they can discuss and understand the symbolic meanings for Sikhs contained in a portrait of Guru Nanak and evaluate the personal qualities which it suggests.

142. Standards of work of pupils in Year 11 are average for their age because of good teaching and the generally positive attitudes of the pupils towards their learning. They achieve well. Most pupils can compare scientific theories of creation with creation stories from Christianity and other religions and understand Christian and Muslim attitudes to a range of moral issues. Lower-attaining pupils can express

personal views on these issues but do not evaluate the different religious responses to them. All pupils in Year 10 follow the short GCSE course in Religious Studies and are making good progress. Most pupils have a sound knowledge and understanding of Christian and Muslim beliefs about attitudes to marriage and related issues such as cohabitation and divorce. They reach standards, which are average for their age and this represents good achievement in comparison with attainment at the end of Year 9. There are no significant differences in the attainment of boys and girls.

143. Evidence from the eight lesson observations and a scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that the overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. Teaching was good or very good in over half the lessons, and only one lesson was unsatisfactory. The major strength of the teaching lies in the good relationships which the teachers have with pupils. This results in a climate in the classroom where pupils want to learn and are confident in their involvement. For example, they readily answer or ask questions and are happy to read aloud for the class even when confronted with unfamiliar and difficult religious vocabulary. Teachers know the pupils well and this helps them to ensure that the minority of pupils in most classes, who do not have such positive learning attitudes, are well managed and make appropriate progress in lessons. In the occasional lesson where this does not happen and unsatisfactory attitudes to learning are not challenged, progress is unsatisfactory. Teachers pay good attention to the development of pupils' literacy skills. They insist that pupils listen carefully to the teacher and each other, learn appropriate religious vocabulary, and use sentences when writing. In most of the lessons observed, there was a good variety of learning activities which were well matched to the range of attainment in the mixed ability classes and so maintained pupils' interest and concentration throughout the hour long lesson. For example, a good mixture of explanation from the teacher, class discussion and written work in a Year 7 lesson on Sikhism maintained pupils' interest and involvement throughout and concluded with an imaginative and enjoyable recapitulation activity which consolidated the learning well. Consequently, the pupils made very good progress. These strengths were not as evident in the sample of pupils' written work. Learning tasks are sometimes not adapted to meet the needs of all pupils, particularly those with special educational needs; and there is little opportunity for pupils to develop their ideas at length. Marking is regular and teachers provide supportive comments but, in Years 7 to 9, they do not show pupils how to improve their work. Pupils are not given enough opportunity to extend and consolidate their learning in homework tasks. Teaching is good in Years 10 and 11 where pupils follow accredited courses. Teachers use a variety of learning activities, and fewer pupils lack concentration.

144. Subject management is satisfactory. Standards have been broadly maintained since the previous inspection and the issues that were raised at the time have been dealt with well. Recent curriculum development is beginning to improve standards in relation to the expectations of the Salford Agreed Syllabus and is providing a wider range of learning activities including opportunities for pupils to use computers in their learning and to be involved in personal research. All pupils now have the opportunity to follow a GCSE course in Religious Studies. Curriculum organisation currently restricts pupils' opportunities to learn about Christianity to Year 7. The subject makes a good contribution to all aspects of pupils' personal development. There is a good capacity to improve further, especially through the identification and sharing of good teaching practices to bring all teaching to the level of the best.