

INSPECTION REPORT

LAKELANDS SCHOOL

Ellesmere

LEA area: Shropshire

Unique reference number: 123566

Head teacher: Mr R. Jervis

Reporting inspector: Mr R. Palmer
31198

Dates of inspection: 30th April – 3rd May 2001

Inspection number: 194290
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: Oswestry Road
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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr. R Byrne

Date of previous inspection: 14th April 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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31198	R Palmer	Registered inspector	Equality of opportunity	Information about the school The school's results and achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
13786	S Walsh	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
22528	A Bird	Team inspector	Mathematics	
3435	A Braithwaite	Team inspector	Physical education Provision for pupils in Key Stage 4	
4773	P Gilliat	Team inspector	History Religious education	
10209	V Gormally	Team inspector	Art and design	
18967	B Loydell	Team inspector	Geography Provision for pupils with special educational needs	
10385	K Hopkins	Team inspector	Design and technology Information and communication technology	

12276	T Payne	Team inspector	Music	
19214	G Price	Team inspector	English Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
4829	I Waters	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
22691	R Woodhouse	Team inspector	Science	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Lakelands School is a co-educational, community comprehensive school for pupils aged 11 to 16 years, serving the Ellesmere area of North West Shropshire. It is much smaller than most other secondary schools. There are 471 pupils on roll, compared with 307 at the time of the previous inspection in April 1997. In all Years 7 to 10, numbers exceed the school's annual admission number of 86 pupils. The school is part of an 'Educational Action Zone' that supports the education of pupils some of whom are from deprived and disadvantaged areas. Overall, pupils' levels of attainment on entry to the school are average as are their socio-economic circumstances. An average proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils speaking English as an additional language is low. A well above average proportion of pupils, around 37 per cent, has special educational needs. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs, over six per cent, is also well above average and are identified for moderate learning difficulties or for dyslexia. A small number of pupils, two per cent, are of ethnic minority origin.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school provides a good quality of education. Standards continue to be generally above, and in some cases well above, the national average, even though pupils' overall attainment is average when they enter the school at the age of 11. The very good leadership of the head teacher, well supported by the good management of senior staff and the governing body, are important contributory factors in the school's development and its deservedly good local reputation. The attitudes of pupils to their work, and their relationships with one another and with their teachers, are all very good. Within a very caring and positive environment, pupils respond well to the high expectations set for them, work well, achieve well and enjoy their learning. The large number of pupils with special educational needs achieve well. The quality of teaching is good and the pupils learn well. The school has many more strengths than weaknesses, manages its resources well and continues to provide good value for money. It has the capacity and the commitment to make further improvements.

What the school does well

- Pupils' attainment overall is well above the national average in English, mathematics and science at the age of 14 and represents very good achievement.
- GCSE results at grades A*-C were above the national average in most subjects in 2000. A high proportion of pupils gained A* or A grades in English.
- The large number of pupils with special educational needs receive very good care and support and achieve well throughout the school.
- The school is well managed. The leadership of the head teacher is very good.
- Good teaching leads to good standards.
- Pupils make good progress because they behave very well and work hard and enthusiastically.
- The school provides good care for all pupils.

What could be improved

- The attainment of boys. The school works hard to improve this and, because of the dip in their GCSE results in 2000, recognises the need to intensify its efforts to raise the standards of boys.
- Monitoring of teaching does not ensure the sharing of good practice within all departments.
- Procedures for assessing pupils' progress in Years 7 to 9 do not help pupils sufficiently

in many subjects to understand how their work relates to the criteria of different levels of the National Curriculum or to know what they need to do to improve their work.

- There is insufficient use of information and communication technology to enhance pupils' learning in most subjects.
- Curricular provision for physical education is inconsistent, and in religious education it is insufficient in Years 10 and 11.
- The poor accommodation and insufficient resources for learning slightly hinder progress in a few subjects such as science, design and technology and music.

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 good overall improvement since its previous inspection in 1997 and has maintained its previous strengths. Progress has been good in the important aspect of maintaining good standards and good achievement, especially in Years 7 to 9. The quality of teaching has improved and pupils learn well. Some of the buildings have been upgraded. In respect of the five key issues identified in the previous report, progress is satisfactory overall. Satisfactory progress has been made in improving the provision of learning resources. The quality of teaching in art and design and in design and technology is much better and is now generally good so that pupils' learning has improved. The provision for pupils' spiritual and cultural development has improved considerably and is now good. Very good and prompt action was taken to deal effectively with the identified health and safety problems. However, unsatisfactory progress is evident on the other key issue because there is still insufficient provision of religious education in Years 10 and 11 and the school does not provide an act of collective worship for pupils every day.

STANDARDS

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

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

Results in the national tests for 14 year olds in English, mathematics and science have been above the national average in recent years. They indicate very good achievement when compared with pupils' previous attainment in the national tests taken at the age of 11. In 2000, results were well above the national average in science and above average in English and mathematics. Compared with similar schools, results were well above average in science, above average in mathematics and average in English. Girls gained well above average results in all three subjects. Boys obtained above average results in mathematics and science and slightly below average results in English. Pupils of above average attainment performed well in the national tests in 2000. In the last three years, the trend in the school's results has been broadly in line with the national trend and represents good achievement, because in all three years the overall results were above the national average. By the end of Year 9, standards of work in lessons are currently well above average in

science and above average in English, mathematics, art and design, history and religious education. Standards are below average in music, and average in all other subjects.

GCSE results are usually above and sometimes well above the national average, although in 2000 they were average overall. However, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSE grades A*-C was above the national and similar schools' averages. The proportion achieving at least one grade A*-G was very high. Taking into account the large proportion of pupils who have special educational needs, results in GCSE examinations represent good achievement, particularly when compared with pupils' average levels of attainment when they entered the school. A high proportion of pupils obtained GCSE grades A* and A in English in 2000. The attainment of boys was much lower than that of girls in the GCSE examinations in 2000, particularly in English literature. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in GCSE examinations. By the end of Year 11, standards seen in class are above average in English, mathematics, science, geography, history, information and communication technology (ICT), drama and modern foreign languages, and average in all other subjects. Pupils achieve well because they have positive attitudes to their work and receive good teaching and support. The school sets appropriately challenging and achievable targets for pupils and subject departments. It reached most of its targets for external examination performance in 2000 but fell short of its target for average total GCSE points scored per pupil.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils enjoy school, are eager to learn and have positive attitudes to learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour in lessons and around the school is very good. Pupils are very polite and friendly. The management of pupils with behavioural difficulties is generally very effective.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils of all levels of attainment and backgrounds mix well and respect each other's views. Relationships among pupils and between teachers and pupils are very good.
Attendance	Good. Attendance is above average. The rate of unauthorised absence is low.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching is good and pupils learn well in both key stages. The teaching was satisfactory or better in 99 per cent of the lessons seen. It was good or better in 73 per cent and was very good or better in 27 per cent of all lessons seen. Teaching was unsatisfactory in one per cent of lessons. Pupils made good progress in the large majority of lessons observed because the teaching was effective in meeting the needs of all pupils. The very good relationships between pupils and teachers assist learning. The most evident strength in teaching is the very good way that teachers manage their classes. The quality of teaching is good overall throughout the school in English and mathematics. In science it is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Teaching in religious education was consistently

very good and occasionally excellent. Teaching was good overall in both key stages in all other National Curriculum subjects, except that it was satisfactory in music in Years 7 to 9 and in physical education and art and design in Years 10 and 11.

Learning is good in most lessons because the good planning of lessons leads to purposeful starts. Pupils enjoy the pace and challenge of the work which are generally appropriate throughout and they have an interesting variety of tasks to complete. They enjoy working independently and co-operate well with each other when working in pairs and groups. They have a satisfactory knowledge of their progress and of what they need to do to improve.

The teaching of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory in most subjects. In most subjects, teachers make insufficient use of ICT to enable pupils to use their skills in computing to enhance their learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Unsatisfactory. The curriculum meets statutory requirements except that there is insufficient provision for religious education in Years 10 and 11. Provision for physical education is inconsistent. There is insufficient provision for the teaching of ICT in many subjects.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. An effective team of well-qualified and caring teachers and support assistants helps these pupils to achieve well. The individual education plans are very detailed, informative and are used well to support pupils' learning.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. The few pupils who speak English as an additional language achieve well because teachers prepare work of appropriate difficulty for them. Pupils improve their skills in English through additional sessions once or twice weekly during form tutor times.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Good overall. A strong school ethos, characterised by very good relationships and mutual respect, provides a supportive context for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The quality of pastoral care is very good. All pupils receive very good support. Procedures for monitoring pupils' progress in subjects are satisfactory. Pupils are not sufficiently clear about what levels they are currently working at or towards.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	The school has a very good partnership with parents and communicates regularly and effectively with them. Parents appreciate the particularly good links with the senior and pastoral staff.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	The head teacher provides very good leadership and effective management. Teachers who have responsibility for subjects provide good leadership and keep a careful eye on the quality of teaching and standards of work.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors work closely with the head teacher and set a clear direction for the school's educational aspirations. They are supportive, active and effective. They review the school's performance regularly.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. The school knows its strengths and weaknesses well and sets appropriate targets for improvements.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes generally good use of its staffing, accommodation and learning resources although there are deficiencies in the level of resources and in the quality of accommodation in some subjects. The school gives careful consideration to all its spending options when purchasing resources.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong and caring team of teachers provide a high quality of pastoral care. Examination results are good. Pupils with special educational needs are well looked after and achieve well. The school is approachable about any problems. Pupils are expected to work hard. Leadership of the head teacher is a strength. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The quality of homework is inconsistent. Some feel that the school does not work closely enough with parents. Some say that they are not well informed about pupils' progress.

Inspection findings support parents' positive views about the school. In respect of the areas for improvement suggested by some parents, inspectors found inconsistencies in the setting of homework. For the most part, teachers use homework effectively to enhance pupils' learning. Occasionally, however, not enough homework is set, whereas on some nights pupils find themselves overloaded with work because teachers have not followed the homework timetable closely. The pastoral staff work very closely with parents, and teachers, including the head teacher and senior staff, are easy to approach. The quality of the annual reports to parents about pupils' progress is satisfactory, but could be improved. The school does not report National Curriculum levels until the end of Year 9; it is sometimes difficult for parents to get a clear picture of how well pupils are attaining and progressing. In Years 10 and 11, the information is not precise enough when teachers report the tier of GCSE examination being studied instead of an estimated grade.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. When they join the school at the age of 11, pupils' overall attainment is average. The attainment of boys is usually below that of girls. In the current Year 7, the proportion of pupils who achieved the national expectation of level 4 or above in the National Curriculum tests taken at the age of 11 was below average in English and mathematics and average in science.
2. Results in the GCSE examinations taken at the age of 16 are usually above and sometimes well above the national average, although in 2000 the results were average. Taking into account the large proportion of pupils who have special educational needs, the school's results in GCSE examinations represent good achievement, particularly when compared with pupils' levels of attainment when they entered the school. Pupils achieve well because they have positive attitudes to their work and receive good teaching and support.
3. The results obtained by boys in the GCSE examinations in 2000 were much lower than those of girls. These differences in results were mainly due to the generally higher levels of prior attainment of the girls and because a larger proportion of boys than girls had special educational needs. In most lessons, boys and girls made progress that at least matched expectations based on their capabilities and previous attainment. However, in English, boys do not organise and present their work as well as girls. In design and technology, girls tend to take greater care and show more pride in their work than boys and are more conscientious in carrying out research and work in design.

National curriculum assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 at age 14

4. By the end of Key Stage 3, at the age of 14, pupils' overall results in the National Curriculum tests for English, mathematics and science have been above the national average in recent years. They indicate very good achievement when compared with pupils' previous attainment in the national tests taken at the age of 11 and are the result of good teaching.
5. In 2000, the school's results in these tests were above the national average overall. They were well above the national average in science and above average in English and mathematics. When compared with the results achieved by similar schools, as defined by the proportion of pupils entitled to claim free school meals, the school's results were well above average overall in science, above average in mathematics and average in English. Girls achieved well above average results in all three subjects. Boys achieved above average results in mathematics and science and slightly below average results in English.
6. The improvement in the school's results for 14 year olds in the national tests since 1996 is below the national trend. This not only reflects the fluctuating attainment levels within successive intakes but also that the school started from a well above average position in 1996. In the last three years, the trend in the school's results has been broadly in line with the national trend and represents good achievement, because in all three years the overall results were above the national average.

7. Pupils of above average attainment performed well in the national tests in 2000. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher standards of level 6 and above was well above average in mathematics and science and above average in English.
8. In 2000, teachers' assessments showed that the proportion of pupils achieving the expected National Curriculum level or higher was above average in history, below average in design and technology and broadly average in other National Curriculum subjects.

GCSE and GNVQ results at the end of Key Stage 4

9. Results in GCSE examinations vary from year to year in line with the different levels of attainment within successive year groups. The results indicate that, overall, pupils achieve higher grades in GCSE than expected from their levels of attainment when they entered the school at the age of 11. The good achievement is a direct result of good teaching and pupils' positive attitudes to their work.
10. In the last four years, GCSE results have been well above the national average in two years and above average in one year. Overall, results in 2000 were in line with the national average and with the results achieved by similar schools. The proportion of pupils achieving five or more GCSE grades A*-C was above the national and similar schools' averages. The proportion achieving at least one grade A*-G was very high. The dip in the school's overall performance in 2000 was caused by the average results achieved by boys and by a sharp decline in the number of grades A*-C in English literature.
11. In 2000, the GCSE results at grades A*-C were above the national average in most subjects. They were well above average in mathematics and geography and close to the average in art and design and French. In English literature, the results were below average because boys' performance was poor. Overall, girls' GCSE results were well above, and those of boys were close to, the national average.
12. Compared with their attainment in the national tests taken at the age of 14, the proportion of pupils gaining the higher GCSE grades A*-C in 2000 was above expectations in mathematics and in line with expectations in English and science.
13. The average points scored by pupils in GCSE examinations in 2000 was well below expectations based on their prior attainment. Usually, pupils' progress during Year 10 and Year 11 as measured by performance in GCSE examinations is satisfactory or better. However, pupils do not make the same very good progress by the end of Year 11 that they make by the end of Year 9. This is understandable because the standards that most pupils reach by the age of 14 have improved so much, particularly in English, mathematics and science, that the scope for further improvement has diminished. The results in 2000 were further affected because two pupils of Year 11 age were in Year 10 and only sat a few GCSE examinations. The overall points scored in the GCSE examinations are also kept down because many pupils with special educational needs appropriately do not sit a large number of GCSE examinations.
14. The trend in the school's GCSE results since the last inspection has been below the national trend, partly because the school started from a much higher position than most schools and partly because of differences within the capabilities of successive year groups. Over the last three years, the results both of boys and girls have been above the respective national averages.

15. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in GCSE examinations. In 2000, all pupils gained at least one pass at A*-G.
16. Higher attaining pupils obtained very good GCSE results in English language in 2000, when 30 per cent of pupils gained A* or A grades.

Achievements in classes observed during the inspection

17. By the end of Year 9, standards of work seen in lessons and in the pupils' books are well above average in science and above average in English, mathematics, art and design, history and religious education. Standards are below average in music and average in all other subjects.
18. Pupils' achievements by the age of 14 and the progress they make, relative to their prior attainment, are very good in science and religious education, good in English, mathematics, art and design, design and technology, geography, history and physical education, and satisfactory in the other National Curriculum subjects.
19. By the end of Year 11, standards of work are above average in English, mathematics, science, geography, history, ICT and modern foreign languages, and average in all other subjects.
20. Pupils' achievement by the age of 16, relative to their prior attainment is good in mathematics, design and technology, geography, history, ICT, modern foreign languages, music, drama and religious education, and satisfactory in all other subjects.
21. Teachers provide valuable, additional support for about a dozen pupils who have good academic potential but who appear to be underachieving. Pupils make good progress in the GNVQ course in ICT and in design and technology as a result of this additional support.

Pupils with special educational needs

22. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in most subjects, whatever the type or extent of their difficulty. Those entering the school with very low standards in reading and writing make very good progress, following intensive courses to improve their reading, spelling, speaking and writing skills. They greatly improve their understanding of grammar and make correct use of it in written and oral work. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 with low reading ages benefit from regular lunchtime reading sessions. Extra spelling and numeracy sessions also help pupils to progress well. In physical education they achieve well because they are well helped by individual coaching and modified equipment. In mathematics, they make good progress because the individual education programmes negotiated with the special educational needs department are detailed and carefully monitored.
23. Suitable targets are set for pupils with special educational needs in their individual education plans. Most teachers take careful note of these targets in planning their lessons and accordingly pupils improve their learning at a suitable rate.
24. The small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language achieve well and make good progress throughout the school in most subjects because teachers prepare work of appropriate levels of difficulty and provide good support for them during lessons. The additional support sessions that they receive once or twice a week in form time help to meet their individual language needs.

Literacy

25. Across the curriculum, levels of literacy are above average. Pupils make satisfactory use of these skills to enhance their work. They cope well with the reading and writing demands in all subjects. Spelling is taught well in science. Pupils develop their grammar, structure and punctuation in geography, although spelling mistakes often remain uncorrected. Lower attaining pupils receive good help to improve their writing in mathematics, history and religious education. Pupils benefit from the good opportunities to write at length in science, history and religious education. The display of key words in subjects such as geography, English and physical education helps pupils to develop confidence in their writing. Pupils' progress in literacy is satisfactory rather than good overall, because many departmental handbooks do not contain specific references to the teaching of literacy.

Information and communication technology (ICT)

26. Pupils' skills in ICT are average at the age of 14 and above average at the age of 16. However, they make generally insufficient use of their computing skills to promote their learning in many subjects because there is no consistent and co-ordinated approach to the teaching and development of ICT across all subjects. Progress is also restricted by a lack of resources.

Numeracy

27. Pupils use their above average skills in numeracy satisfactorily to enhance their work in several subjects. They make good use of these skills in science, ICT and geography. In science, pupils produce neat and accurate graphs from collected data and analyse the results correctly. By the age of 14, they can rearrange simple scientific formulae and substitute given decimal and fractional values. In geography, pupils interpret data correctly and use graphs confidently in work on changes in weather and climate. Pupils make good use of their mathematical vocabulary when measuring and reading scales to a given degree of accuracy. Pupils at the age of 16 make good use of percentages when calculating the growth of populations and economic development. In physical education, pupils' application of number is satisfactory. Pupils measure time to record and compare the results of runs over fixed distances and measure heart rates to determine individual training programmes. In art and design, pupils apply their knowledge of number satisfactorily; they make good use of ratio and proportion when drawing from observation and call on their knowledge and understanding of measuring and spatial relationships when producing work in design.

Targets

28. The school sets appropriately challenging and achievable targets for pupils and subject departments. Targets for examination performance are based on pupils' prior attainment and comparisons with appropriate national data. The school reached most of its suitably challenging targets for external examination performance in 2000 but fell short of its target for average total GCSE points scored per pupil.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

29. Pupils have very good attitudes towards school and their learning. They are eager to come to school. Pupils take a pride in their school and there is a real sense of belonging. There is very little graffiti and vandalism is rare. Pupils take very good care of the fabric of the school and of books and materials. They appreciate the small, friendly nature of the school and wish to uphold its good reputation.
30. Pupils of all ages and capabilities are very interested and involved in lessons. They are keen to learn. Pupils in top groups are very receptive to new concepts. In a Year 10 mathematics lesson that introduced trigonometry, including the use of the sine and cosine, pupils concentrated well on the teacher's explanation. Excellent attitudes and behaviour allowed the pupils to gain a deeper understanding of important mathematical principles. A class of middle attaining pupils in science also had excellent attitudes to their work in a physics lesson, quickly settling down to work on calculations relating to forces and distance. Every pupil was thoroughly involved in the task.
31. Lower attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs have very positive attitudes to their work. When younger pupils with special educational needs were working in small groups in English, they responded very well to the teacher's dynamic and sympathetic approach. A well-planned variety of tasks ensured that pupils remained fully involved. During a lesson in Year 9, pupils were really interested and involved in the murder mystery that they were reading. They were so enthusiastic that they were describing the plot to their friends during break time and seeing if they could guess who the murderer was.
32. Pupils are enthusiastic about activities outside lessons. The majority of pupils are involved in some type of extra curricular sporting activity. Many pupils are involved in drama productions and a significant number of pupils play musical instruments during school activities.
33. Behaviour is very good both in lessons and around the school. There is a calm friendly atmosphere, which promotes good learning. Behaviour in the corridors, at lunchtimes and breaks and during assembly is very good. There is an 'open-school' policy and pupils are allowed into the classroom and other areas during break times. The large majority of pupils are very responsible and need the minimum of supervision. There is an absence of oppressive behaviour and no racial incidents have been reported. Pupils, parents and teachers do not view bullying as a significant problem. Occasionally younger pupils fall out and call each other names. Pupils and parents report that form tutors and heads of school quickly resolve any issues. Rates of fixed-term exclusions are extremely low and there have been no recent permanent exclusions.
34. A very small number of pupils, mainly younger boys, occasionally exhibit unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour in a small number of lessons. The majority of teachers manage these pupils very well and do not allow them to disrupt the lesson. For example, in a Year 8 English class in which pupils were discussing the novel 'Underground to Canada' by Barbara Smucker, the teacher managed the class well and very firmly. In a very small number of personal and social education lessons, constant chatter and interruptions from these pupils had an adverse effect on the learning of the whole class. This happens when the activities in the lesson are not well matched to the pupils' needs, including their lack of self-discipline. For example, several pupils who have behavioural difficulties are allowed to work together, rather than the teacher firmly controlling the structure of the group. The school is well aware that a small number of Year 8 boys can be challenging and has formed a mentoring group to help these pupils

to modify their behaviour. This encourages these pupils to reflect upon their behaviour and learn to develop good attitudes to schoolwork. A science lesson was observed containing a small number of pupils who had attended the group that very morning. The teacher had carefully planned the activities, including practical tasks, to ensure that there was no opportunity for pupils to get bored or to misbehave. The pupils who had been very difficult in previous lessons were determined to do well after their mentoring session. They liked their teacher and wanted to do well for him as well as for themselves. They concentrated well and took a pride in their work; consequently they made considerable progress.

35. Relationships are very good. Pupils respect each other's viewpoints. They have very good attitudes towards their peers who have special educational needs. Pupils do not show any embarrassment about their particular difficulty. This results in pupils feeling confident and taking full advantage of the very good quality of support that is available. It is an important factor in the very good progress made by pupils with special educational needs. Pupils with different medical needs are also respected. During a personal and social education lesson, which involved some noisy pupils in Year 8, a quieter pupil volunteered to stand at the front of the class and tell his fellow pupils about his medical problems. Suddenly the pupils were all listening and paying attention. They broke out into spontaneous applause when he had finished speaking and commented about how brave he had been.
36. Personal development is good. There are good opportunities to develop initiative, such as through the Young Enterprise scheme. Pupils react well to responsibility. They appreciate the School Council. Pupils concentrate on discussing relatively important matters and this brings about positive changes. There are a significant number of pupils in Year 11 who act as prefects and they perform their duties well. For example, they show parents and their children round the school on open nights. A number of parents wrote to the inspection team to say how much they appreciated this. However, there is a strong feeling amongst Year 11 pupils that the role of prefects and the role of head girl and head boy and their deputies could be developed further.
37. Attendance rates are good. They are above the national average. Rates of unauthorised absence are extremely low. Pupils come to school on time and lessons start promptly.
38. Most pupils with special educational needs are keen to come to school. Their attendance is good; they behave well and take part in extra-curricular activities. They appreciate the help they are given and respond well. Other children treat them well, as equals, and all are valued as members of the school community.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

39. The quality of teaching is good throughout the school. The pupils learn well and make good progress in lessons.
40. Teaching was satisfactory or better in 99 per cent of the lessons seen. It was good or better in 73 per cent and was very good in 27 per cent of all lessons seen. Two per cent of the teaching was excellent and one per cent was unsatisfactory.
41. The quality of teaching is good overall throughout the school in English and mathematics. In science it is good in Key Stage 3 and satisfactory in Key Stage 4. In all three subjects there were examples of very good, good and satisfactory teaching. Teaching in religious education was consistently very good and occasionally excellent. Teaching was good overall in both key stages in all other National Curriculum subjects

except that it was satisfactory in music in Key Stage 3 and in physical education and art and design in Key Stage 4. The teaching in personal and social education lessons is generally satisfactory but ranges from good to unsatisfactory.

42. Although teaching is good overall, the quality ranges in most subjects from satisfactory to very good. This is the case in English, for example. About 50 per cent of the teaching seen in English was very good but around 30 per cent of teaching in this subject was satisfactory and lacked the same sparkle. In a very good English lesson in a Year 11 class consisting of pupils of a wide range of attainment, the teacher had a lively approach and constantly encouraged pupils to participate in discussion. Pupils responded well and made many positive oral contributions. They showed a high degree of interest in the follow-up work after watching an excerpt of a video recording of Steinbeck's book 'Of Mice and Men'. The teacher used humour to good effect and pupils appreciated her brisk 'no-nonsense' approach. Her enthusiasm for the subject passed on to the pupils. She praised pupils well for any perceptive or penetrating comments that they made. Her very good knowledge of the subject was apparent from the ease with which she drew parallels between this text and one of Priestley's plays. Throughout the lesson pupils were challenged to think and their learning was enhanced through the teacher's high expectations.
43. However, in the satisfactory lessons seen in English, and in other subjects, pupils play a less active part in the lesson, the work is not always suitably matched to their individual needs, the teacher tends to involve the pupils very quickly in written work and occasionally there is ineffective management of pupils who have behavioural difficulties. In a few of the satisfactory lessons in subjects, such as science in Key Stage 4, the teaching was uninspiring and the good pace of learning owed much to the positive attitudes adopted by the pupils to their work.
44. Some very good teaching occurs in all National Curriculum subjects. The proportion of very good teaching was similar in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. The only unsatisfactory lesson was in Key Stage 3. The proportion of good teaching was higher in Key Stage 3 than in Key Stage 4. The main reason for this difference was that some parts of the curriculum being followed by pupils in Key Stage 4 were not always suitably matched to the needs of all pupils.
45. The teaching has several strengths. The most evident one is the very good way that teachers manage their classes. In a very good history lesson for a class of middle and lower attaining pupils in Year 8, for example, the teacher skilfully used questions to conduct a very lively discussion among pupils about life on the battlefield during the time of the English Civil War. The discussions ensured that all pupils participated and helped their understanding of the weapons that were used, the parts of the body that were at risk and the sounds, smells and sights of the battlefield. Pupils used their textbooks well to consolidate and extend their awareness of the deployment of cavalry and infantry during a battle. Pupils with special educational needs made the same very good progress during this lesson as all other pupils because they received very effective support from the learning support assistant, who worked closely with the class teacher, for example, in helping to build up a list of pupils' points on the blackboard. The teacher used a very appropriate extract from a film about the Battle of Edgehill to build on the knowledge that pupils had acquired in the first part of the lesson. He intervened at suitable times to clarify and highlight important points. The very good teaching led to very good learning. Pupils had very good attitudes towards their work, showed a sense of interest and enjoyment and behaved very sensibly.

46. The very good relationships between teachers and pupils help to create a purposeful and enjoyable learning environment. Most teachers use a good variety of teaching methods that help pupils to maintain their concentration and interest. Lessons usually have a clear introduction, which gives pupils a clear understanding of the aims of the work, and in the good and very good lessons provide a good range of interesting and challenging activities. Towards the end of many lessons, pupils consolidate their understanding of the work through effective plenary sessions that review what has been learned. Teachers have suitably high expectations for pupils' progress and generally match the work to the needs of all pupils.
47. Important features in most of the good or very good lessons were the active participation of pupils, the effective use of the teacher's good knowledge of the subject to inspire the pupils, and use of a variety of interesting and well-planned and carefully timed activities carried out at a suitably brisk pace. For example, in a very good religious education lesson in Year 9 for a class of pupils of high attainment, the teacher made a very persuasive and well-judged oral introduction about the Nazi death camps to enable pupils to understand the awfulness and evil of the Holocaust. She made very effective use of eyewitness accounts of railway journeys to Auschwitz, stone-carrying exercises and the story of the birth and death of a Jewish baby. Pupils then worked in groups to match pictures to written texts; as a result they were able to track the sequence of events that led to the 'Final Solution'. Pupils benefited from the opportunity to reflect on what they had heard and one pupil remarked that "it puts many other things into perspective". Pupils who completed the exercises in groups ahead of time were able to extend their learning through the provision of further and readily available resources of appropriate difficulty. Through their answers to questions, pupils showed that they had gained a good knowledge of Jewish traditions and religious practices in earlier lessons and were building well on their previous knowledge during this lesson. Pupils showed respect for the teacher's good command of her subject and displayed good listening skills. Because the teacher presented them with many opportunities to discuss and debate their work, pupils in this class were well motivated, collaborated well with each other and were confident and fluent when talking, for example about the impact of the account of the death camp. Pupils' learning in this lesson was very good because they were conscientious, co-operative, hard working and concentrated well.
48. Most teachers make effective use of assessment to set targets for pupils' learning and to influence what they teach and how. Marking is usually thorough and encouraging for pupils. Because the assessments of pupils are not clearly linked to the criteria of the National Curriculum, pupils are not sufficiently clear about what levels they are currently working at or what they need to do to reach certain standards. This means that they do not always study aspects of the course in sufficient depth to reach the highest possible level in the national tests or in teachers' assessments of the National Curriculum for pupils at the age of 14.
49. Pupils with special educational needs in all years make good progress in most of their subjects because they receive good teaching, care and support. Pupils achieve well because teachers make generally effective use of the individual educational plans, which contain details of pupils' difficulties and appropriate teaching strategies. The help provided in class by an additional teacher or a support assistant is very beneficial to pupils with special educational needs and helps these pupils to maintain concentration and to develop confidence in tackling work of appropriate difficulty.
50. Gifted and talented pupils make satisfactory progress overall and good progress in a few subjects such as English, art and religious education. These pupils are not always tested to the limits of their capabilities because they have not been formally identified

and few teachers have devised special programmes of work to ensure that these pupils are fully stretched.

51. The few pupils for whom English is an additional language are well taught and make good progress in line with that of the other pupils.
52. The quality of learning is very good in religious education and is good overall in all National Curriculum subjects except music, in which it is satisfactory. Pupils' learning is enhanced in most subjects because the large majority of pupils have very positive attitudes and are eager to do well. They willingly participate in classroom and extra-curricular activities. The relationships among pupils and between teachers and pupils are conducive to a good climate for learning.
53. Pupils satisfactorily improve their work through the use of homework. Pupils generally complete their homework conscientiously but there is inconsistency among teachers in the setting of homework. The school's development plan recognises the need for teachers to provide a more consistent approach to the setting of homework and for the tasks set for homework to be more interesting and of a more investigatory nature.
54. Learning is good in most lessons because the good planning of lessons leads to purposeful starts, pupils enjoy the pace and challenge of the work which are generally appropriate throughout, and they have an interesting variety of tasks to complete. In the best lessons, activities are arranged in short blocks of time with clear targets for pupils within each section. Pupils generally behave well, have positive attitudes, and maintain their concentration and interest throughout lessons. They acquire satisfactory basic skills and a good overall knowledge and understanding of the work in subjects. They enjoy working independently and co-operate well with each other in paired and group work. They have a satisfactory knowledge of their own learning and what they need to do to improve. In mathematics and religious education, pupils always work at a fast pace and produce much work of good quality. In most other subjects, pupils work at a good pace and are productive. Their pace of work and productivity are satisfactory in music.
55. The teaching of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy is not fully developed and is satisfactory rather than good in most subjects. Whole-school policies for literacy and numeracy have yet to be formalised but there is good practice in a few subjects. In science, for example, lower attaining Year 8 pupils received good support to help them to improve their spelling. In science, pupils receive good encouragement to write originally and often do so at length in investigative work. In history, pupils make good use of suggested outlines for written responses that help them to shape their written work. However, subjects such as geography, art and physical education include no reference to the teaching of basic skills in their schemes of work, which highlights the need for the school to develop agreed policies so that pupils can use their basic skills to equally good effect to develop their work in all subjects.
56. Teachers make insufficient use of ICT to enable pupils to use their skills in computing to enhance their learning in most subjects. The teaching of computing skills in ICT lessons is good. Many pupils learn how to use computers independently and appropriately. Because access to the computers is too limited, pupils are rarely able to apply their computing skills to good effect in many subjects.
57. The school has improved the good quality of both teaching and learning identified in the previous inspection report. It has increased the proportions that are good and very good and has reduced the amount of unsatisfactory teaching from five per cent to one per

cent of lessons observed. Teaching remains slightly more effective in Key Stage 3 than in Key Stage 4. The teaching in art and design and in design and technology, which was unsatisfactory previously, has improved and is now good overall.

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

58. The school provides most pupils with a broad and balanced curriculum but provision is unsatisfactory overall. The range of learning opportunities is good for pupils in Years 7 to 9 and unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11. The curriculum meets statutory requirements except that insufficient time is made available for the agreed religious education syllabus to be fully taught to all pupils in Years 10 and 11. The teaching of ICT cannot take place in all subjects across the curriculum because current resources are limited.
59. The school works hard to ensure that all pupils enjoy full access to the whole range of learning opportunities available in each year. This is evident from the inclusive policies at the heart of special educational needs teaching throughout the school. Pupils of all levels of attainment are encouraged to take a wide spread of GCSE examination subjects. The school's policy on equal opportunities is reflected by the good practice in subjects such as design and technology and ICT, in which teaching shows good awareness of issues surrounding equality of access to resources, and written materials used in lessons promote positive images and are free from stereotyping.
60. The teaching timetable runs over two weeks. In Years 7 to 9 all pupils have appropriate teaching time for the subjects of the National Curriculum apart from the allocation of time for physical education, which is 25 per cent less than the national average. Pupils have two lessons per fortnight of religious education and personal and social development and two lessons of ICT. There is a full programme of creative arts in all three years consisting of a weekly lesson of art, drama and music. However, in Years 8 and 9 pupils have to choose between German or drama and this is contributing to the low numbers taking up this second modern foreign language.
61. The organisers of the curriculum try very hard to minimise the impact that being a small school has on the range of subject choices available to pupils in Years 10 and 11. A course in ICT is offered as a part one or full intermediate GNVQ. Personal and social education is taught for one lesson a week in Year 10 and two lessons a week in Year 11. In addition, pupils choose a further four optional subjects, or two if they choose to follow the GNVQ course. This gives a balanced programme, although there are some disproportionate allocations of time for physical education according to which other optional subjects pupils choose. The numbers of pupils studying a second language are also low, at least in part because of timetabling constraints. In design and technology, though a balanced range of subjects is offered to pupils, the breadth of the programme is restricted, for example not including graphics or textiles, as a result of the limited resources available.
62. The teaching programme for religious education meets the requirements of the Shropshire Agreed Syllabus in Years 7 to 9 and is imaginative and innovative, although the allocation of teaching time is below recommended levels. In Years 10 and 11, the non-examination course in religious education is part of the personal and social education course. However, because limited time is provided in Year 10 and none in Year 11, it is not possible to teach the agreed syllabus in full. The range of learning opportunities in religious education is therefore good for pupils in Years 7 to 9 but unsatisfactory for pupils in Years 10 and 11. The unsatisfactory curricular provision for

religious education in Years 10 and 11 was also recorded as a key issue in the last inspection report, which indicates unsatisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

63. A well-organised and good programme of personal and social education is taught to pupils in Years 7 to 9 through three lessons every two weeks. Topics covered suitably include study skills, careers education and guidance, rights and responsibilities, health education, bullying and citizenship. In Years 10 and 11 pupils follow a programme that includes sex education and careers choices. However, a small number of those pupils who study a second modern foreign language do not have access to this important part of the curriculum. The school is very conscious of this and has taken steps to ensure that the curriculum for 2001-2002 will not repeat this weakness. Pupils value their lessons in personal and social education, especially the careers guidance that includes self-evaluation, analysis of job skills and evaluation of post-16 opportunities. Topics also include discussion of moral issues and the consideration of spiritual values and beliefs in different religions. The co-ordinator for personal and social education is responsible for overseeing the school's policies on drugs and sex education. The good programme for drugs education is taught through personal and social education, in particular the unit of study in Year 9, and through lessons in science, religious education, physical education and design and technology.
64. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good and is carefully linked to the extent and type of difficulties they experience. Those with moderate or specific learning difficulties are given extra time, readers or writers for all internal and external tests or examinations. The nature of their difficulties is clearly detailed in their individual educational plans and teachers have ready access to the details of teaching strategies specific to each pupil. Pupils with physical disabilities and hearing impairment have regular help and advice from the local education authority's visiting specialists and manage well with adapted learning resources and through the help of experienced support assistants. Extra literacy and numeracy sessions are organised in Key Stage 3, often at lunchtimes and in withdrawal sessions from form periods or certain lessons. The lunchtime reading sessions for Year 7 pupils for up to three times per week is good provision. Extraction of small groups from English to work intensively on literacy with the special needs teachers is successful for Years 7 to 9, building confidence as well as improving skills and understanding. In Key Stage 4 those considered weakest follow one less GCSE course, and have extra literacy or curricular support lessons to help their overall achievement. Though good in principle this is not an effective use of teachers' time, with classes of ones or twos. The organisation of this part of the Key Stage 4 curriculum is irrational.
65. The small number of pupils whose first language is not English benefit from the additional support sessions that they receive once or twice a week in form time to meet their individual language needs.
66. The mentoring programme for a few pupils in Year 11 who have good academic potential but who appear to be underachieving has helped these pupils to improve their attainment in subjects such as ICT and design and technology.
67. Provision for the teaching of basic skills across the curriculum is satisfactory. Whole-school policies for literacy and numeracy have yet to be formalised but there is good practice in a few but not all departments.
68. The provision of additional activities for pupils outside of lessons is very good and is a notable strength of the overall curriculum. Pupils make very good use of the learning resource centre by attending homework clubs after school. In creative arts, pupils

enhance their learning through a rich diet of additional activities in the form of frequent productions, displays and performances organised by pupils and staff in the art and design, drama and music departments. All pupils who play instruments are encouraged to join school ensembles, which include a concert band, percussion group, string ensembles and choirs. In addition many pupils play in county ensembles such as the Porthywaen brass band, Welshampton Strings and the North West Shropshire String Orchestra. Many pupils participate in the school musical production that is held every two years. 'The Greatest Show on Earth' is currently in rehearsal. Pupils improve their attainment in physical education through attending a pre-school fitness club, tennis coaching and swimming clubs. Skills in competitive sport are developed through a good programme of sporting fixtures with other schools. The take-up of these activities by pupils is very good and around 66 per cent of pupils take part in at least one weekly extra-curricular activity. The programme of inter-house activities is extensive and successfully involves large numbers of pupils in competitive sport.

69. Careers education and work related provision are very good. The careers work in lessons is well planned as part of the whole programme. This starts with the good support and guidance given when pupils make GCSE choices in Year 9. The work experience programme in Year 11 is used well to help pupils make their plans for further education and work. The school takes great care to ensure that pupils have good information on which to base their decisions about opportunities post-16.
70. There are good links with the local community, especially through the use by the general public of sporting facilities such as the fitness suite, the all-weather pitch and the floodlit tennis courts, which are home to the Lakelands Tennis Club. The links with the creative arts department are also very good. Local arts groups use the Eglantyne Jebb Theatre based in the school hall. Shows such as 'Oliver', 'Jesus Christ Superstar', 'Scrooge' and 'Cider with Rosie' have involved local people of all ages. The strong emphasis on the school as a community clearly promotes pupils' personal and social development. Parents value this aspect of the curriculum.
71. Links with feeder primary schools are satisfactory and in the case of some subjects, such as geography, they are good. They do not generally include the specific curricular links that enable pupils to have continuity and progression in their Year 6 and Year 7 studies, as they move from primary schools. This is an area for further development, particularly with regard to the teaching of literacy and numeracy.
72. The provision for pupils' personal development is good. A strong school ethos, characterised by very good relationships and mutual respect, provides a supportive context for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Spiritual and cultural education, which were key issues at the last inspection, have improved. In-service training for all staff has taken place, a school policy has been developed and most departments now identify ways in which their subject can contribute to pupils' personal development.
73. Overall provision for pupils' spiritual development is good. Most subjects provide some opportunities for pupils to develop spiritual insight. In music, art and religious education, for example, pupils are able to reflect and respond to topics in a personal way. Pupils also have opportunities to explore and extend their thinking about beliefs and values in some of their work in subjects such as English, science, geography and religious education. Assemblies are thoughtful, well-planned occasions, which contribute well to pupils' moral and social education, but in some assemblies pupils are given insufficient time and help to reflect on the chosen theme or topic. The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship, which was an issue identified at the last inspection.

74. Very good provision is made for pupils' moral development. The daily life and routines of the school successfully promote very positive values, and help pupils to distinguish between right and wrong. Valuable discussion on ethical issues and moral dilemmas takes place in a number of subjects, such as personal and social education and religious education. This encourages pupils to consider a range of viewpoints and to think about some of the choices they will need to make in life.
75. Social education is good, with opportunities for pupils to develop social and collaborative skills in many of their lessons. Pupils can also participate in various aspects of school life. The School Council enables them to take initiatives and contribute to decisions about facilities in the school. Year 11 pupils help younger pupils with their reading at lunchtime, and social awareness is encouraged through fund raising for charity.
76. Provision for cultural education is also good. Pupils have opportunities in many of their subjects to develop their knowledge and understanding of their own and other cultures. The school is developing links with a secondary school in Uganda, and pupils learn about cultures beyond Western Europe in subjects such as English, the humanities, design and technology, art and music. Pupils extend their cultural interests and horizons through the school's very good extra-curricular programme of sport, music, drama and other activities. Pupils also receive a wide range of opportunities to go on educational visits and take part in trips abroad.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

77. The quality of care is very high and is one of the strengths of the school. Parents and pupils have been concerned that the standard of care might decline as the school grows in size. There is no evidence of this. The quality of pastoral care has improved since the previous inspection. Pupils' interests are well served by a very strong team of heads of school, who are effectively managed by the deputy responsible for pastoral care. The head of lower school is especially effective. Form tutors are attached to the same form as they move through the school. Over the years, very close relationships develop between the pupils and the form tutor. The form tutors know the pupils extremely well.
78. Arrangements for child protection are very good. The school follows locally agreed procedures for child protection. The deputy head for pastoral matters is the named person and she has received appropriate training. Information in the staff handbook regarding child protection is brief. Heads of school are very involved in any issues of child protection and closely monitor children who give cause for concern. The head of lower school is also the co-ordinator for 'looked after' children and has established good contact with appropriate outside agencies.
79. All pupils are very well supported. Pupils find the vast majority of teachers very approachable and they know where to find help if they have problems with their schoolwork. Many younger pupils attend the after-school homework club. Pupils of all ages value the mathematics 'drop in' sessions and older pupils use the 'drop in' sessions in biology, chemistry and physics to get help with their GCSE work in science. Pupils in Year 7 who need to improve their reading have to attend reading sessions at least three lunchtimes per week. Although pupils appreciate the improvements made to their reading skills, they find that the timing of these sessions interferes with their freedom to attend other lunchtime clubs along with their friends.

80. The school cares very well for pupils with special educational needs. These pupils are valued as members of the school community and are regarded as part of the family. Other pupils as well as staff treat them well and fairly. The school takes special care of the vulnerable pupils, including those with difficult family backgrounds, and who need the support of specialist external agencies. All staff know in detail about the different needs of pupils, from the very effective individual education plans and through regular discussions and information-giving meetings.
81. The programme of personal and social education provides pupils with good quality information and guidance about many aspects of growing up. There is a good quality programme of careers education in Years 10 and 11. Pupils especially appreciate the support they get from the visiting careers officer.
82. The school has a well-established induction procedure. The deputy head teacher responsible for pastoral matters and the special education needs co-ordinator visit feeder primary schools. They obtain detailed information about the needs of each child. This information is then passed on to the head of lower school. Currently this system works well, but there is a minor weakness in that the head of lower school does not have the opportunity to visit primary schools.
83. The monitoring of personal development is good. Pupils are carefully monitored to ensure that they are making enough effort with their work. Those who are not making enough effort in several subjects are identified and heads of school speak to them about this. In Year 8, a mentor group has been formed to encourage a small group of pupils to work harder. A similar method is used to identify those pupils in Year 11 who are having difficulties in managing their work for examinations and who would benefit from having a mentor. Pupils and parents appreciate the mentoring system. Some pupils ask to be mentored. In Year 11, the head teacher speaks to every pupil to ensure that they are on track with work relevant to their examinations and that they are coping with the pressures of GCSE courses. There are pockets of very good practice in supporting pupils. Some form tutors help pupils to examine written reports very carefully and to identify their strengths, weaknesses and how they might improve. These form tutors also take target setting very seriously and help pupils to redraft their targets in order to ensure that they are relevant, suitably challenging and realistic.
84. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are good. Much of the responsibility for monitoring the attendance of individual pupils lies with the form tutor but heads of school also look at registers on an almost daily basis. There is frequent telephone contact with parents regarding any non-attendance. Many aspects of the systems are informal but they work well in a small school in which staff know the pupils very well.
85. The school has very good procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour. The majority of staff apply the school's behavioural policy consistently. Younger pupils value rewards such as credits. Many class teachers have very well-developed, behavioural management skills. The vast majority of teachers have high expectations of behaviour and very good relationships with their pupils. There is an atmosphere of mutual respect. The school has very good measures in place to prevent bullying. Tutors or heads of school deal quickly with incidents. The head of lower school spends a considerable amount of time trying to ensure that fallings out between younger girls are kept to the minimum.
86. There have been significant improvements to health and safety procedures. There is a good policy in place that is implemented by all departments. Risk assessments are

carried out regularly. All departments, except science, now store their risk assessments in centrally held records that are monitored regularly. The school is clean and well maintained. It provides a safe and cheerful environment in which pupils can be happy and learn well.

87. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment are satisfactory. The school has a comprehensive, common policy for the marking, assessment, recording and reporting of pupils' work. The policy is good and provides clear definition and guidance for teachers based upon recognised good practice. The whole-school learning support database, available to all staff, is centred principally on pupils' standardised reading scores together with aggregated national test data for pupils at age 14 and is a valuable resource. This is supplemented with termly effort grades from all subject teachers for pupils in all five year groups. Senior managers analyse the data for areas of underachievement and discuss the significance of their findings with middle managers.
88. Regular assessment takes place in English, mathematics and science either at the end of completed topics or every half term. Work is thoroughly marked and recorded to ensure that pupils are working to capacity. Science and mathematics are developing databases of assessment to maintain individual records centrally for pupils at both key stages. There is an emerging system in design and technology and ICT. However, although all departments frequently gather increasing amounts of assessment data, there is no consistent pattern in the use of this data to promote standards.
89. Procedures for assessing pupils' progress are unsatisfactory, although the school makes good efforts to involve pupils in its reporting system and to identify targets for improvement. However, National Curriculum criteria and information about different levels of attainment are not applied across the curriculum when assessing pupils' achievement across Key Stage 3. As a result, departments have little knowledge and understanding of pupils' strengths and weaknesses or potential to improve over the key stage. Teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment at the age of 14 are generally based on marks awarded through Years 7 to 9, test percentages and teachers' knowledge and experience of the pupils.
90. The use of information about assessment to guide curricular planning is satisfactory. Whole-school initiatives include: the focus on literacy and numeracy to raise the levels of attainment of pupils from Year 7 onwards. Pupils with special educational needs with the lowest level of prior attainment on entry to the school receive a regular programme of support to enhance their basic skills. Vocational education courses for pupils in Key Stage 4 have been successfully introduced. The numbers of pupils entered for GCSE and achieving at least one A*-G grade have increased. The strategic deployment of support staff assists teaching and learning. Analysis of data to help with the grouping of classes by attainment in subjects has, for example, led to departments planning work particularly well for lower attaining pupils in all years. There is no rigorous, systematic analysis of available data to inform ongoing teaching and learning across the curriculum. The school development plan appropriately includes the need to agree a policy for challenging the academically gifted and talented pupils.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

91. The school continues to be held in very high regard by parents and the wider community. Parents appreciate the good examination results, the way their children are cared for and supported and the dedication of the head teacher. They are pleased that their children are expected to work hard and to do their best. Parents of children with

special educational needs report that their children receive support and guidance of very high quality.

92. Parents value the school and their children's education. They ensure that their children have the right equipment for lessons and many pupils have access to computers at home. There is an active parents and friends association which has raised substantial sums of money for the school.
93. Parents find the school very approachable, but a sizeable minority thought that the school could develop an even closer partnership with parents. Inspectors could find no evidence to support this viewpoint. Evidence from parents and the school indicated that parental viewpoints are carefully considered and that pastoral staff are in regular contact with parents. The head teacher and other senior members of staff are on duty outside school at the beginning and end of the school day. It is very easy for parents to make contact with them.
94. Parents receive good information about the work of the school. There are regular, good and informative newsletters and a prospectus of good quality. The prospectus is very attractive and contains clear information about the day-to-day working of the school. However, the information about how GCSE options work is extremely difficult to understand. The option booklet given to Year 9 pupils gives much clearer information.
95. A sizeable number of parents were concerned about the quality of information that they received about their children's progress. The inspection team agreed with these concerns and found the quality of the written reports to be inconsistent. The quality of the reports is very dependent upon the author. Some teachers write clearly about pupils' strengths and weaknesses and what they can do to improve, but other reports are less informative. National Curriculum levels are rarely referred to in Years 7 and 8; it is difficult for parents to judge what their children's level of attainment is compared with national standards. Reports on English refer only to pupils' reading and spelling ages and do not refer to pupils' skills in speaking and listening, reading and writing. There is insufficient focus on progress. Reports at the end of Year 9 meet statutory requirements. In Years 10 and 11, reports often include reference to the tier of examination that a pupil has been entered for, rather than a specific, predicted, grade at GCSE. The previous inspection's report suggested that introducing a system that ensured that attainment and progress were reported in all subjects would help parents' understanding. There is little to suggest that this has happened.
96. Parents have expressed concerns about the use of homework. Some parents report that their children have too much homework and other parents feel that their children do not get enough homework. Inspectors found the amount of homework to be generally appropriate to pupils' ages and capabilities. However, there are occasions when the homework timetable is not properly adhered to and this can result in pupils having too little or too much homework. This particular situation has not improved much since the previous inspection.
97. The special needs department works very closely with parents in the identification, assessment and monitoring of pupils with special educational needs. There is regular contact, particularly at the time of review of individual education plans or statements. Parents have a high regard for the school's provision for pupils with special educational needs.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

98. The overall quality of leadership and management in the school is good. The very good leadership of the head teacher sets a very good personal example to pupils and staff and provides very clear and firm direction for the school's work. The head teacher is respected and liked by the pupils, parents and staff. Governors hold the head teacher in high regard and call him to account for the school's performance. They also act as a brake on the head teacher's enthusiasm at times, for example, to ensure that the funding for initiatives is in place before commitments are made. The deputy head teachers and senior staff provide effective support. The morale of staff and pupils is high. There is a shared commitment among staff to raise standards further. Pupils enjoy coming to school, work well and participate willingly in all aspects of school life. In this small school, teachers know their pupils well and there is a familial, positive and purposeful atmosphere within which good learning takes place. A large number of parents returned the pre-inspection questionnaire and indicated their confidence in the school. Around 95 per cent of parents said that the school is well led and managed and a high proportion (67 per cent) strongly agreed with this view.
99. The school is effectively managed and achieved the status of 'Investor in People' in October 2000. It is making good progress towards achieving its main aims and is particularly successful in making all pupils feel equally welcome and valued. This feeling of inclusion is a major contributory factor towards the good achievements made by the large number of pupils who have special educational needs, the few pupils of ethnic minority background and the few who speak English as an additional language. The school meets its aims of creating 'a happy and supportive atmosphere, in which there is a firm commitment to the policy of equal opportunities' and creating 'a well-ordered, happy and successful school, which pupils enjoy attending, and which is well regarded within the community'.
100. The school has made much progress in recent years. The threat of closure that existed a few years ago has disappeared. The numbers on roll have increased considerably, from 307 at the time of the previous inspection in 1997 to 471 currently. The very good quality of care and the school's success in helping pupils, particularly those with special educational needs, to achieve well have provided the school with a good and deserved local reputation. Parents who live several miles away from the school are pleased with their decision to send their children to this school. Parents welcome the opportunity to have informal discussions with the head teacher and other senior staff at the school gates at the end of the day as pupils make their way home.
101. The governors are very supportive of the work of the school and carry out their duties effectively and responsibly. They are well informed, capable and experienced and contain a good range of expertise. They keep a close eye on the school's performance and have a very good knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses. They take effective action to make improvements, as shown by the recent provision of a good learning resource centre, which contains very good computing equipment and which is used frequently and well by pupils to improve their research skills and to enhance their learning. One of the governors who was linked to a subject department became aware of the need for such a resource centre to help pupils to raise standards. He worked hard to persuade the rest of the governing body to support this initiative. Governors use their links with different departments effectively to provide support to the subject areas, to increase their awareness of curricular and staffing issues and to identify what works well and what can be improved. The nominated governor for special educational needs keeps the governing body aware of the arrangements and provision made for this successful aspect of the school's work.

102. Procedures for monitoring and evaluating the school's performance are satisfactory. The programme for review and evaluation provides the senior management team with a good insight into the areas that need to be improved. The governors' review committee regularly and effectively monitors various aspects of the school's performance and its findings are acted upon appropriately. Good systems for checking the progress of pupils and of subject departments by the senior management team are in place. However, there is not always a thorough follow-up by senior managers of the results of these checking exercises to ensure the sharing of good practice. This explains, for example, the inconsistency in the quality of teaching and learning in departments such as English.
103. The quality of leadership and management in subject areas is good overall. It is very good in religious education and good in all other subjects except English, history, music and physical education in which it is satisfactory. Heads of department have improved their managerial skills through the school's programme of in-service training.
104. The co-ordinator for special educational needs, who has a high profile in the school, being the overall co-ordinator for assessment and an assistant head, leads and manages the department very well. The number of teachers of special educational needs and support staff is appropriate for the number and type of pupils with special educational needs. Books and other learning resources are used well to assist pupils' progress. As the department has grown, the accommodation is no longer sufficient; using small, and often inaccessible rooms all over the school is not satisfactory.
105. Arrangements for monitoring the classroom work of the department and taking effective action to make improvements are satisfactory overall. They are good in a few subjects such as mathematics and ICT. In science, there is insufficient emphasis on the monitoring of lessons to consider how to improve teaching skills. Other members of the department rarely observe science teachers teaching.
106. The school has a considerable amount of very useful and informative data relating to pupils' assessment. The data is analysed carefully and the results are shared with staff so that meaningful targets for improvement are made. However, such information is not always communicated effectively to pupils so that they know clearly enough how well they are doing and what their short-term goals should be. This is particularly evident in Key Stage 3 in which many pupils are unsure of the levels at which they are working or of the criteria to determine how well they are doing and how to improve.
107. The school fulfils its statutory requirements, including those for special educational needs, apart from the provision of a daily act of collective worship and for teaching religious education to all pupils in Key Stage 4.
108. Following extensive consultation, the governing body has prepared a comprehensive school development plan that sets out the school's priorities for the next three years. Fuller details are included of targets for the immediate year ahead. The identified educational priorities are entirely appropriate and the plan includes a clear rationale for all of these targets, and also includes timescales for their implementation. However, the cost implications of each of the priorities are not estimated, so that it is difficult for members of the finance committee to calculate the total investment required for the school to tackle its immediate needs. There are also detailed developmental plans for every department in the school and these clearly relate to school priorities. The plans provide effective direction for the school's further improvement. They suitably include targets to improve the overall academic standards of boys. They also seek improvements to the buildings, increased use of ICT across all areas of the curriculum,

implementation of strategies to improve pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and the development of a policy to ensure that pupils who are gifted or talented maximise their potential. Governors also hope to enhance pupils' experiences in physical education through obtaining the status of a specialist sports college. Senior managers are aware of the current deficiencies in the curricular provision for some pupils in Key Stage 4 and are devising suitable programmes for improvement.

109. The school sets appropriate and achievable targets for pupils' achievements in the end of Key Stage 3 national tests and for GCSE examinations. Most pupils are well aware of what their realistic capabilities are in the GCSE examinations but are less sure about their attainment in many subjects in Key Stage 3. The good assessment data is increasingly used to make pupils and teachers more aware of what progress pupils could reasonably be expected to make. The head teacher and senior staff use this information to help raise expectations both of pupils and teachers.
110. The school's annual budget reflects the priorities identified in the development plan. Additional funding has been allocated recently, for instance, for the provision of computing hardware. There is limited flexibility for the governors at this stage in the school's expansion because of the overall budget deficit. With the school's number on roll increasing, and the corresponding increase in the annual allocation of funds from the local authority lagging behind, the governing body has been forced to approve a larger budget deficit in each of the last two financial years. This increase in expenditure has been used largely to employ the additional staff required to provide for the extra pupils in the school. The governors have a detailed plan showing how they expect to overcome this deficit by 2003/04, based upon the anticipated initial growth, and then the levelling off, in the number on roll. There are effective and well-established procedures in place that ensure that the budget can be adjusted to meet changing needs. For instance, the chair of the finance committee meets regularly with the head teacher and the school bursar to review expenditure against budget. The full finance committee meets at least termly to consider any recommendations to be made to the full governing body.
111. Financial administration is detailed and thorough. The school has up-to-date computer systems for the processing of accounts, for the production of regular financial statements for governors and heads of department, and for the recording of cash received from pupils for school activities. Specific grants for areas such as staff development, special educational needs, and computing are all spent as intended. Careful consideration is being given to the recommendations in the recent auditor's report for improving the security of transactions. The school's private fund is audited regularly.
112. The finance committee undertakes a full evaluation of the quality and cost of existing services such as cleaning and payroll before these are renewed. This ensures that as far as possible the school receives value for money. Furthermore, tenders are invited whenever the school intends to make a major financial commitment. Heads of department seek out best buys when ordering new books and equipment. In general, therefore, the school is an efficient organisation. During the inspection, a few instances were noted of the ineffective use of resources. There is a small number of classes, particularly in Key Stage 4, which have a very low number of pupils. This is partly due to the difficulty of organising the curriculum in a small school, but these classes do have a relatively high cost. Overall, the cost of administration is above average, but it does provide good support for the head teacher and senior staff, and releases time for them to concentrate on educational strategies for improving the school.

113. The socio-economic background of the pupils is broadly average. Standards in the school continue to be generally above, and in some cases well above, the national average. The attitudes of pupils to their work, and their relationships with one another, and with their teachers are all very good. Teaching overall is also good, with pupils entering the school with standards broadly in line with the national average, and leaving with standards generally above. The leadership and management of the school continue to provide clear direction for the future, and are also good. There have been a number of improvements since the last inspection, with good progress in the quality of the accommodation, in administration, and in the effectiveness of a number of departments. The school's overall effectiveness in its educational provision is therefore good. The school continues to provide good value for money.
114. The number, qualifications and experience of the teachers satisfactorily match the demands of the curriculum and are a contributory factor to the good quality of teaching. There is an appropriate level of support staff, including that for pupils with special educational needs. Overall, the staffing, accommodation and learning resources allocated for pupils with special educational needs are satisfactory and are well managed in addressing their identified needs. Procedures for the induction of new and newly qualified teachers are good.
115. Accommodation is just adequate overall. There have been significant, recent improvements in physical education, ICT and English. Unsatisfactory accommodation remains in music in which there are very limited facilities for individual tuition, which restrict pupils' progress in the subject. The accommodation in design and technology is unsatisfactory despite some improvement, because almost 50 per cent of all lessons are taught outside specialist areas and restrict the range of learning experiences for pupils. The lack of a central base for the teaching of pupils with special educational needs slightly hinders the progress of these pupils. The school has benefited from a recent building programme to accommodate increased numbers and provide some improvement in specialist facilities. Governors have carefully identified the need for further improvements as funds become available. The building is well maintained and the entrance is attractive and welcoming to pupils and the community, who use the school's and sports centre's facilities. The learning resource centre is an attractive area and is used well by pupils at lunchtime and after school, but use during lessons is limited because the area is used as a teaching base for ICT.
116. Despite improvements in a few subjects, resources remain unsatisfactory overall and have a slightly adverse effect on pupils' learning. This was a key issue at the last inspection. The school has allocated more funding for resources at the same time as it is tackling a deficit budget. However, the overall budget allocation remains below the average for similar schools. The stock of ICT equipment has been improved and the learning resource centre is a well-used and attractive area. Nevertheless, the ratio of computers to pupils remains low and particularly affects the ability of the school to provide opportunities for pupils to apply their ICT skills across the curriculum. This is particularly the case in design and technology and in art and design. Resources in science remain unsatisfactory as at the last inspection. In those subjects whose resources are satisfactory overall there are still some deficiencies of resources. In mathematics the available but limited resources are used well. There are shortages of textbooks in modern foreign languages in Key Stage 4 and some limitation of resources in geography, history and religious education. These deficiencies limit the range and richness of experiences that are offered to pupils. The school makes effective use of the local school library service, but under-funding adversely influences the overall level of stocks of books.

117. The school has made good overall improvement since its previous inspection in 1997 and has maintained its previous strengths. Progress has been good in the important aspect of maintaining good standards and good achievement, especially in Key Stage 3. The quality of teaching and learning has improved. The numbers on roll have increased considerably. Some of the buildings have been upgraded.
118. In respect of the five key issues identified in the previous report, progress is good overall. Satisfactory progress has been made in improving the resource base of the school. Good progress has occurred on the second issue; the quality of teaching and learning in art design and in design and technology is much better and is generally good. On the third key issue, good progress has also taken place and the provision for pupils' spiritual and cultural development is now good. Unsatisfactory progress is evident on the fourth key issue because there is insufficient provision of religious education in Key Stage 4 and the school does not provide an act of collective worship for pupils every day. Very good and prompt action was taken to deal effectively with the fifth issue that referred to some health and safety and audit procedures. The school has the capacity and the commitment to make further improvements.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

119. The school has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. In order to raise its good standards further the school should address the following issues in its action plan, most of which are already in the school's current plans for improvement.

- (1) Intensify efforts to raise the attainment of boys in public examinations. (Paragraphs 10, 11, 121, 122, 131, 159, 160).
- (2) Develop more effective procedures to ensure that the monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning lead to more sharing of good practice so that the teaching and learning are consistently good or better within all subjects. (Paragraphs 90, 102, 105, 147, 173).
- (3) Improve the arrangements for assessing pupils' progress in Years 7 to 9 so that they help pupils to understand how well they are doing and how to improve. (Paragraphs 48, 89, 90, 106, 138, 147, 175, 181, 182, 196, 220).
- (4) Improve the curriculum by:
 - planning a better balance of activities for all pupils in physical education;
 - ensuring that all pupils are taught religious education in Years 10 and 11 in line with the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus.(Paragraphs 58, 61, 62, 107, 118, 213).
- (5) Further develop the use of ICT to extend and enhance pupils' learning in all subjects. (Paragraphs 26, 56, 58, 116, 118, 135, 143, 146, 151, 152, 161, 174, 175, 183, 186, 189, 198, 201, 212, 220).
- (6) Improve the quality of the accommodation and provision of learning resources in science, design and technology and music in order to raise standards further in these subjects. (Paragraphs 115, 116, 147, 164, 203, 204).

In addition to the key issues above, the following, less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the post-inspection action plan.

- Meet statutory requirements for the provision of a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. (Paragraphs 107, 118).
- Improve the quality of reports to parents about pupils' progress. (Paragraph 95).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	133
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	47

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	25	46	26	1	0	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
Number of pupils on the school's roll	471
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	49

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	30
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	175

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	14

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	24
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	6

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.8
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
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	49	36	85

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	25	34	36
	Girls	31	26	27
	Total	56	60	63
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	66 (81)	71 (63)	74 (53)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	29 (53)	53 (44)	40 (34)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	36	36	31
	Girls	33	26	25
	Total	69	62	56
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	81 (78)	73 (56)	66 (59)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	44 (47)	54 (37)	35 (41)
	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	31	39	70

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	10	28	31
	Girls	28	37	39
	Total	38	65	70
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	54 (63)	93 (95)	100 (98)
	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	40
	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	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	469
Any other minority ethnic group	2

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	12	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	27.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	266

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78.1
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	22.0
Key Stage 4	18.2

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	1 220 780
Total expenditure	1 258 417
Expenditure per pupil	2671
Balance brought forward from previous year	-37 633
Balance carried forward to next year	-75 270

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	471
Number of questionnaires returned	302

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	41	49	6	3	1
My child is making good progress in school.	45	51	1	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	38	51	4	1	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	59	13	2	1
The teaching is good.	47	48	3	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	32	43	17	5	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	63	31	4	0	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	73	25	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	39	44	10	4	3
The school is well led and managed.	67	28	2	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	48	44	3	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	46	43	5	1	5

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

ENGLISH

120. Attainment in English is above average for pupils at the ages of 14 and 16. Considering their levels of attainment when they entered the school, pupils' achievement is good at the end of Year 9. Achievement is satisfactory at the end of Year 11 when set against levels of attainment when they entered Year 10. This achievement is the result of good teaching and positive attitudes from pupils.
121. Results in the National Curriculum tests in 2000 for pupils at the age of 14 were above national averages and matched those of schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. Girls performed better than boys and were further ahead than is the case nationally. Boys' results were just below the national average, whereas the results of girls were well above average. The results for 2000 were below those of the previous year and below teachers' assessments, but over the last three years the overall trend has been in line with the national pattern. The results in English are similar to those in mathematics but not as good as the results in science.
122. GCSE results for 2000 in English were above the national average for the proportion of pupils achieving grades A*-C. Particularly notable were the very high numbers of pupils who achieved either grade A* or A, which amounted to over 30 per cent of the total entry. Girls' performance here was significantly above the national average. Compared with other subjects, pupils performed well in English. However, results in English literature were less impressive, principally because of the poor showing by boys, whose performance was significantly below the national average. In previous years there has been no significant disparity between the results for the two English examinations. Overall, pupils' attainment in English matched that for science but was less good than that for mathematics.
123. Standards of work in lessons are above the national average for pupils in all years. By the age of 14, pupils of all levels of attainment talk in a confident way and are able to discuss their work effectively together in small groups. They read a range of literary and non-fiction texts with a good grasp of meaning and some appreciation of the writers' use of language. Responses to their study of Shakespeare showed this particularly well. Written work is generally organised and presented well, although there are too many instances in which pupils, and especially boys, allow standards to fall. Use of ICT for the preparation and presentation of pupils' written work is less evident than usual. There are good examples, such as the word-processed letters produced by Year 9 pupils as characters from Roald Dahl's story, 'Lamb to the Slaughter'. Pupils write for a variety of purposes to good effect, producing a range of pieces including letters, diaries, transcripts of interviews, discursive essays and literary appraisals. At the age of 16, pupils have good speaking and listening skills and are able to participate successfully in more formal and demanding oral work. The quality of debate in class is often high, as seen when Year 11 pupils discussed John Steinbeck's 'Of Mice and Men' and drew parallels between this story and J B Priestley's play, 'An Inspector Calls'. One pupil talked perceptively about the characters' apparent possession, surrender and regaining of power. Work on texts in literature such as 'Macbeth' often shows detailed analysis of character, plot and themes. Pupils' work in poetry is often of a good standard even when they tackle the poems of very demanding pre-twentieth century poets such as John Donne. Higher attaining pupils produce responses that are fully developed to explore all aspects of a question. They carry out effective drafting and re-drafting of their work, sometimes making good use of ICT. Pupils at all levels of

attainment write very well when constructing their own stories. However, the assignments for coursework of some middle attaining pupils are undeveloped, suggesting that they struggle at times to motivate themselves. Behaviour in lessons is generally good and the large majority of pupils are positive about their English work.

124. Pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 9. They enter the school with average levels of attainment and by the end of Year 9 gain above average levels in National Curriculum tests, which indicate good achievement across the three years. At the age of 16, although they continue to perform at above national average levels in GCSE English examinations, with an outstanding number of the highest grades, results in English literature are well below the national average. Taking these two contrasting outcomes together, achievement in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. This is supported by the numbers of pupils who succeed in converting level 5 grades in National Curriculum tests two years previously into GCSE grades C and above, which again are satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make progress in line with other pupils. Over the five years, girls generally achieve better than boys, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
125. Teaching and learning across the department are good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. In over 50 per cent of the lessons observed teaching was very good, in around 15 per cent it was good and in just over 30 per cent of lessons it was satisfactory. Teachers have good knowledge and are confident in the subject, which helps them to motivate their pupils. There is good emphasis on the teaching of basic skills in spelling, grammar and punctuation but not much on ICT skills. Teachers manage their classes well and deal effectively with the small number of less co-operative and potentially disruptive pupils. As a result, the pace of lessons is usually brisk and pupils learn quickly. Relationships between teachers and pupils are mutually respectful and form a good foundation for effective learning. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and are quick to praise good achievement. Where teaching is rather less successful, insufficient thought is given to how best to involve the lowest attaining pupils fully in the lesson's activities, for example by introducing additional or alternative materials to support their learning. Planning lessons in advance with special needs support assistants is occasionally neglected. In a few cases, teachers are inclined to focus on activities when considering the lesson's objectives rather than on the learning steps that pupils need to make. This means that learning is less effective. Learning across the department is also affected by inconsistent marking. Some teachers clearly indicate in their written comments how pupils can improve their writing but others do not.
126. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Teachers have addressed the problem of class activities persisting too long to retain pupils' motivation. Improvement has been made in developing the schemes of work for pupils in Years 7 to 9 which take full account of the National Curriculum and the National Literacy Strategy. Still more remains to be done to ensure that pupils in each year follow an agreed, balanced and progressive programme of study. Teachers in the department work well together but areas of responsibility are not always clearly stated. Good work outside the classroom is evident in teachers' involvement with the homework clubs that take place after school. Accommodation in demountable classrooms is good. English rooms are together and there is a central office and ample space for storage. This is a successful department achieving good results. Better display of pupils' work and an increase in extra-curricular activities would help to give pupils higher levels of motivation and raise standards still further. Opportunities also exist for strengthening departmental curriculum links with the feeder primary schools.

127. Across the curriculum levels of literacy are high and pupils are able to cope well with the reading and writing demands in all subject areas. There is at present no formalised school policy on the teaching of literacy skills but the first steps have been taken to audit the current situation with a view to establishing and implementing such a policy in the near future. Good practice in the teaching of spelling occurs in science. Work takes place on improving pupils' grammar, structure and punctuation in geography, although spelling mistakes often remain uncorrected. Writing prompts are used well to help lower attaining pupils to improve their writing in mathematics, history and religious education. Pupils benefit from the good opportunities for extended writing in science, history and religious education. Key words are displayed in geography, English and physical education and technical terms are discussed in art. Pupils' progress in literacy is satisfactory rather than good overall because departmental handbooks do not generally contain specific references to the teaching of literacy.

Drama

128. Attainment in drama is above average. Teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment at the age of 14 and the 2000 GCSE results for pupils at the age of 16 were above the national average and have been consistently so in recent years. In work seen during the inspection, standards were also above average. All pupils in Years 7 to 9 take drama as a separate subject within the creative arts provision, apart from those who choose, in Year 8, to take a second language. Teaching is enthusiastic and pupils are well motivated. Pupils achieve well in drama. They are encouraged to work independently in small groups and they collaborate effectively, showing responsibility and resourcefulness. Written work is well organised and shows good evaluative skills. Pupils develop as competent performers of scripted and improvised drama. They learn how to construct and stage dramatic scenes effectively. Lessons are based in the school hall, which has very good sound and lighting facilities. Pupils' progress in drama is slightly restricted because the hall is also used for assemblies and external examinations. The GCSE course in drama is well established and regularly chosen by around 15 pupils. Pupils enhance their work and experiences through regular school productions and strong links with local dramatic groups. Visits to theatres and in-school workshops are organised regularly in order to broaden the programmes of study. The work of the creative arts department has an important impact on the school as a whole, especially through the annual drama festival. Many pupils benefit from their involvement in regular school productions.

MATHEMATICS

129. Standards of attainment in mathematics are above the national average for pupils at the age of 14 and at the age of 16. Attainment on entry to the school is broadly in line with the national average, but with a higher proportion of lower attaining pupils than expected. Pupils' achievements in relation to their prior attainment are good. This is because the quality of teaching overall is good and in some lessons very good.
130. In 2000, results overall in the National Curriculum tests in mathematics for pupils at the age of 14 were above the national average. The proportion of pupils achieving level 5 or above was broadly in line with the national average and the average when compared to similar schools. The proportion of pupils achieving level 6 or above was well above the national and similar schools' averages. Pupils' levels of attainment were broadly in line with teachers' assessments. In comparison with the other core subjects, levels of attainment achieved in mathematics overall are better than English but not as good as science, with girls performing better than boys. In terms of average points scores for 2000, pupils' scores were above average in mathematics in comparison with the

national average and the average for similar schools. In 2000, average points scores in mathematics were better than English but not as good as science. Pupils' achievement by the age of 14 in mathematics is good. Over the last three years the rate of improvement has been broadly in line with the national trend.

131. In 2000, the proportion of pupils at the age of 16 achieving GCSE mathematics grades A*-C were well above the national average. The proportion of pupils achieving GCSE mathematics grades A*-G were broadly in line with the national average. Compared with the national averages, the average points scores for 2000 in mathematics are better than those of English and science. Girls performed significantly better than boys. This was because a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs were boys. Pupils' achievement at the age of 16 in 2000 was good. It was higher than expected, when compared to prior levels of attainment for the same pupils at the age of 14 in 1998. Over the last three years the rate of improvement has been better than that nationally.
132. The standard of the work seen during the inspection, based on observation of lessons, the scrutiny of books and discussion with pupils, is above average compared to the level expected for pupils at the age of 14. Pupils' use and application of mathematics is good. Pupils can extend a concept and articulate their thinking through set tasks. For example, Year 7 pupils investigated 'snookered', identifying the relationship between a snooker ball rebounding and the dimensions of a snooker table, comparing their results against an initial hypothesis. Pupils' numerical skills are satisfactory. Year 7 pupils have an appreciation of equivalent fractions, multiplying and dividing decimals by 10 and 100 and reading scales although a few lower attaining pupils lack confidence and rely heavily on the calculator when confronted with numerical problems. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of the rules of algebra are good. High attaining pupils in Year 9 can simplify complex algebraic expressions and solve simultaneous equations involving fractions and directed numbers. Average attaining pupils use algebra to solve questions on Pythagoras's theorem and construct graphs of linear functions. Lower attaining pupils can construct graphs of simple linear functions, solve simple equations and make use of conversion graphs. Low attaining pupils in Year 8 were observed working in small groups. One group determined the algebraic relationship between the number of sides of a polygon and the number of triangles contained inside, presenting their findings to the rest of the class. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of shape, space and measurement are good. High attaining pupils in Year 9 can calculate the area of a circle and volume of a regular solid, applying the rules for the transformation of formulae well. Neat and accurate diagrams and working support pupils' learning of transformation geometry. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of handling data are good. They can present collected information in the form of a frequency table, calculate various representative values reinforcing their knowledge of number, and illustrate the information in a variety of ways. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make similar progress to that of their peers.
133. Standards of work seen are above average for pupils at the age of 16. Skills, knowledge and application of number by the highest attaining pupils are very good, with examples of surds, standard form and negative indices. The highest attaining pupils can identify and solve quadratic and trigonometrical equations. Average attaining pupils make good use of number and algebra to find term-to-term rules and formulae for sequences of numbers. Lower attaining pupils can identify and use formulae that represent the length, area and volume of compound figures. The level of achievement by pupils is good when handling statistical information, with examples of discrete and continuously grouped data. Cumulative frequency curves including the inter-quartile range, standard deviation and scatter diagrams, are presented both clearly and accurately, supporting

the learning of the highest attaining pupils. Average attaining pupils can compare experimental and theoretical probability, construct simple tree diagrams and calculate the probability of mutually exclusive events in a variety of contexts. Lowest attaining pupils can determine the probability of single events, reinforcing their knowledge of number by reducing answers to their simplest form.

134. Pupils use their literacy and oracy skills satisfactorily to assist their work in mathematics. Investigative approaches involving pupils in developing speaking and listening skills through discussion are evident at both key stages. Pupils' positive attitudes to learning create an ethos in which all feel secure in volunteering answers and opinions, which contribute significantly to how well pupils achieve. Pupils at the age of 16 make good use of writing prompts when completing their open-ended coursework task for the GCSE examination. However, there is no literacy policy included in the mathematics department handbook and opportunities for developing writing skills further for pupils at the age of 14 are at an early stage.
135. Achievement in mathematics is good at both key stages compared with the levels of attainment on entry to the school. This is the case for all pupils, including those with special educational needs of whom there are higher than expected numbers, those of high prior attainment and those for whom English is an additional language. Considerable gains are made in the development of mathematics. Improvement in numeracy is good through the formal application of the National Numeracy Strategy at the start of all lessons for pupils up to the age of 14. Pupils with special educational needs with the lowest level of prior attainment on entry to the school benefit from a regular programme of additional support to improve their basic numeracy skills. However, pupils' estimating skills of the likely outcome of any calculation are not sufficiently well developed to aid pupils' learning. Opportunities for extending the gifted and talented pupils are not evident in the scheme of work. There is a planned programme to use ICT and appropriate software to support learning. However, the existing hardware available in school is in almost constant use elsewhere and therefore access proves difficult.
136. Pupils use their good skills in numeracy satisfactorily to enhance their work in other subjects. There is no reference to numeracy in most departments' schemes of work although pupils do use their mathematical skills to assist their work in many subjects. Information about the teaching of numeracy has been shared with the teaching staff to raise awareness, but no curricular audit has been conducted or lists of keywords established. Learning resources, including books and computer software, to support pupils' development of skills in numeracy are satisfactory. Subjects that make good use of numeracy are science, ICT and geography. In science pupils produce neat and accurate graphs from collected data and analyse the results correctly. At the age of 14, pupils can rearrange simple scientific formula and substitute given decimal and fractional values. In geography pupils at the age of 14 interpret data correctly and use graphs confidently in work on weather and climate. Pupils at the age of 16 make good use of percentages when calculating population growth and economic development. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make good progress in basic numeracy skills and are able to benefit fully from the school's curriculum. Pupils in Year 7 with special educational needs, and with the lowest level of prior attainment on entry to the school, benefit from a regular programme of additional support to improve their basic numeracy skills. The calculator is used constructively in mathematics lessons to aid learning by all but the lowest attaining pupils, who lack confidence and rely on it for basic calculations when solving problems.

137. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall at both key stages. Specialist teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject are very good and a strength of the department. Teaching of basic skills is satisfactory. Teacher's planning is effective. The objectives of the lesson are often shared with pupils, providing a clear purpose to lessons. Opportunities for extending the gifted and talented pupils in the higher order skills are not evident across both key stages. Teacher's expectations of the pupils are very high. They make good use of open and closed questions that challenge pupils to think, involve conceptual development and deepen their understanding. Teachers encourage intellectual effort but opportunities for pupils to work at the whiteboard in groups, or to take part in a plenary session to enhance their personal development, are limited. Pupils achieve well because there are clear expectations of high standards and good behaviour and the focus is on work for the duration of lessons. Relationships between the pupils themselves and with the teachers are very good. Teachers use time effectively to promote good behaviour and learning. For example, work for the lowest attaining pupils is broken down into 'bite' size activities to take account of their capacity to concentrate. Resources that are available are used well, but there is still an over-emphasis on the use of published worksheets as referred to in the previous report. Learning support assistants are employed well to support the learning of pupils with special educational needs. Homework of an appropriate standard is issued regularly but lacks imagination and rigour to challenge the gifted and talented pupils. Procedures for the assessment of pupils are satisfactory, but pupils up to the age of 14 are not always clear about how they can progress in terms of the next National Curriculum level. Work marked by pupils in lessons is not monitored and the marking of homework lacks diagnostic and evaluative comment to support pupils' learning. Teachers challenge poorly presented work and pupils are expected to complete corrections.
138. Leadership and management in the subject are good, with clear educational direction evident in the departmental development plan. The department has made good progress in dealing with the issues raised in the last report. Teachers work well together and there is a clear commitment to raising standards. The drop-in extra-curricular support provided by subject staff is used well by pupils. The departmental handbook needs revising and bringing up to date to support the ambition of improvement. Evaluation of the department's performance through analysis of national data is good. Accommodation is often cramped when full classes are in attendance. This restricts the variety of teaching methods that can be employed to promote learning more effectively. Posters and displays of pupils' work in classrooms and adjacent corridors are excellent. The department has the capacity to build on its present success because the teachers are receptive to change and new initiatives, and review their work critically.

SCIENCE

139. Standards across the year group in science are broadly average on entry, well above the national average by the age of 14, and above average at the age of 16. Pupils' achievements compared with their capability and previous attainment are therefore very good in Key Stage 3, and satisfactory in Key Stage 4. This is the result of good teaching in Key Stage 3, satisfactory teaching in Key Stage 4, and the pupils' very good behaviour and good attitudes to their work.
140. In the national tests in 2000 at the age of 14, the average points score for the whole year group was well above the national average. The proportions of pupils gaining at least level 5, and at least level 6, are also both well above the national figures. They are also well above those obtained by pupils in similar schools. Teachers' assessments of

pupils' standards are broadly in line with test scores. Girls obtained better results than the boys, but there is not a consistent pattern during the last five years. Pupils' standards in science are higher than they are in mathematics, and well above those they obtain in English. Pupils' overall achievements during Key Stage 3 are very good when comparing their standards at the end of Year 9 with those on entry to the school. Results have stayed at a consistently high level in the last five years.

141. In the GCSE examinations in 2000, the proportions of pupils in the whole year group gaining grades in the range A*-C, and in the range A*-G, are both above the national averages and the averages for pupils in similar schools. Girls' results were well above those obtained by boys, but there is not a consistent pattern over the years. When these results are compared with those that this year group obtained at the age of 14, achievements are satisfactory, and are broadly in line with national expectations in science. Pupils in this year group obtained better results in science at the age of 14 than they did in English and mathematics when compared with national figures. However, their overall standards now match those in English, but are below those in mathematics. On the other hand, results in double-award science broadly match those which these pupils obtained in all their other subjects, and the number of pupils gaining grades A* and A is increasing. Results have been consistently above national figures over the last five years, apart from a dip in 1999.
142. The standards of work seen during the inspection reflect the results that pupils obtain in the national tests. Scrutiny of written work in exercise books indicates that pupils' ability to express their ideas improves significantly during Key Stage 3. Pupils learn to take a pride in their written work and they develop good habits in their presentation. They date the work, state the objectives clearly and usually draw conclusions. Occasionally, the presentation of written work is stressed more than the importance of thinking, or of asking questions. Pupils learn to use diagrams to convey information, and graphical work is good, including their analysis of what the graphs indicate. Pupils use histograms for variation, such as eye colour and shoe size, and to compare the difference in distribution. They use line graphs when studying how the length of a spring depends on the load. Work is mainly descriptive, but pupils begin to use simple formulae towards the end of the key stage, such as those relating to speed, distance and time.
143. More extensive use of formulae occurs in Key Stage 4. Pupils often use formulae in practical work, as in a Year 10 class calculating the work done in joules by measuring force and distance. Pupils learn the importance of using the correct units of newtons and metres for their calculations; a few are initially uncertain when changing, for example, 86 cm to metres, but by taking a number of readings they gain more confidence. Pupils continue to present their work clearly in Key Stage 4. There are some excellent examples of individual investigations and research by Year 11 pupils. These include studying the reaction rate of hydrogen peroxide with potato when the size of the potato pieces is varied, and work about 'Earth and Space'. These assignments are very useful in providing pupils at all levels of attainment with the opportunity to use their initiative. In biology, helpful booklets are provided for a number of topics. These are particularly beneficial for lower attaining pupils. There is little sign of the use of ICT in pupils' books, but there is increasing use of word processing for investigations, and of web sites for research, for instance about food and elements. Pupils learn the importance of summarising their findings, and not just copying somebody else's ideas. Because pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into lessons, and well known to their teachers, their progress is very good in Key Stage 3, and good in Key Stage 4. The work of support assistants is unobtrusive but very effective in helping pupils to develop confidence and to improve their work.

144. Teaching is good and pupils learn well in Years 7 to 9. Teaching is satisfactory and pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 10 and 11. All teaching is at least satisfactory. There are examples of very good teaching in both key stages. Teachers plan the lessons well, but often give more attention to the content of the lesson than to devising methods of getting pupils to use their initiative. There are a few occasions when teachers' knowledge and understanding appear insecure. In most lessons, there is a variety of activities to maintain interest. In a Year 9 lesson on plant and animal cells, the teacher used a video recording effectively to enhance the revision schedule. The teacher's skilled interventions increased pupils' understanding by posing additional questions. The thoroughness of the teaching is particularly beneficial in Key Stage 3 in getting pupils into good working habits and in consolidating their knowledge and understanding. Pupils' learning is enhanced by their very good listening skills and their powers of concentration. Teachers are adept at recalling the work covered in the previous lesson, and repeating the important facts before moving on to new work. In a Year 7 lesson, the teacher used a number of good examples to reinforce the meaning of the word diffusion, including correct use of the word when writing sentences. Question and answer sessions were effective, particularly in attempting to involve all pupils in the lesson. Most teachers use praise effectively to encourage pupils' involvement.
145. There are not enough opportunities, however, other than in practical work, for pupils to use their initiative, or encouragement for them to ask questions. Pupils therefore become over-dependant on their teachers. As a result, their learning in Key Stage 4 is restricted. On occasions, teachers spend too much time on minor details; this reduces the pace of the lesson. In a Year 10 lesson on the functioning of the heart, the teacher tended to dominate the lesson, even reading through the worksheet. This left insufficient time for the pupils to learn by doing, or to work at their own pace. In another Year 10 lesson on the reflection of light, instructions for the high attaining group for their written work were far too detailed, taking up valuable time and leaving little opportunity for pupils to use their own methods to demonstrate how far they understood the work.
146. Teaching of the key skills of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory. In literacy, there are good opportunities for pupils to use original writing when undertaking investigations, and the department is beginning to display key words effectively. Pupils often use numeracy to enhance their work, particularly in physics lessons, and their graphical skills are high. However, there has been insufficient development in the integration of ICT into the curriculum of each pupil in each year group. A lack of access to computers, and a shortage of appropriate hardware and other resources have restricted progress in this important area. More training is scheduled, and there are plans for further improvements.
147. The leadership and management of the science department are good. There is a good sense of teamwork and very effective liaison between the technician and teaching staff. Lessons proceed smoothly as a result. The curriculum ensures good progression in learning, especially in Key Stage 3. The departmental development plan has appropriate priorities, but the cost of implementing these targets is not always clear. The assessment of pupils' work is made regularly at the end of topics, and teachers use National Curriculum levels in their grading of work. Pupils are not always made aware, however, of these levels, or their target grades, and, furthermore, these are not always included in reports for parents. The department sets targets for each year group, and monitors the school's results in national tests against these targets, and also against the figures for other schools in the local authority, and against national averages. This provides information about how well the department is performing, and

contributes to the debate about strategies for improvement. The monitoring of teaching, and in particular teaching skills, is less well developed. The level of staffing is good, as is the range of expertise. Two of the four laboratories require refurbishment. The level of resources is unsatisfactory, and affects pupils' learning in the subject. For instance, there is a shortage of textbooks, so that only higher attaining pupils can be provided with their own books in Key Stage 4. There is also a lack of equipment to allow the department to implement the recommendations of the National Curriculum in the use of ICT in the teaching of science.

148. Overall, the department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Results in national tests have been maintained at broadly the same level, that is, above or well above the national average. Pupils continue to listen well, and present their work carefully. Relationships between teachers and pupils are particularly good. The pace is still too slow, however, in some of the lessons, particularly in Key Stage 4. Teaching continues to be consistently satisfactory or better, and there is still effective provision for pupils with special educational needs. The arrangements for the health and safety of staff and pupils have improved. Resources are now unsatisfactory, however, and the department requires major investment.

ART AND DESIGN

149. Attainment in art and design is slightly above average overall at the age of 14 and in line with the national average at the age of 16. Achievement is good at age 14, with good progress being made from an average level of general attainment on entry. Achievement is satisfactory at age 16 in relation to pupils' prior attainment.
150. Pupils' attainment as measured by teachers' assessments for pupils aged 14 shows that most pupils are reaching the nationally expected level, with girls attaining higher than boys. The GCSE results in 2000 at grades A*-C were in line with the national average. However, pupils' GCSE grades in art and design are lower than the average grades obtained by the same pupils in other subjects. Girls gained significantly better results than boys.
151. Standards of work seen at the age of 14 are higher than the average expected nationally. Pupils' work is lively and adventurous and based upon good skills in the subject. Drawing, for example, shows good technique in the representations of form and space with keen observation and accurate recording. Observed work develops imaginatively into pictorial composition. Landscapes, for example, derived from studies of folded material show confidence and vigour. Colour is used with good control, particularly in pastel work, but does not show the level of knowledge and understanding evident in drawing. Three-dimensional work is limited at this stage; it is largely confined to relief modelling rather than work in the round. Studies of rocks observed in streams on field trips, for instance, show skill in observation rather than in modelling. Pupils do not develop any significant skill in art-related computer work.
152. At the age of 16, pupils display satisfactory knowledge, skill and understanding of their work in art. Drawing is good and experimental work, using waste materials in three-dimensional work, is a strength. Pupils show imagination and expressive skill in the construction of portraits using card and adhesives. In their use of colour, however, pupils still show a comparative lack of knowledge of its function in, for example, landscape and design. Work in graphics is comparatively weak, with poor standards of lettering and layout. At this stage also, pupils rarely use computers to any significant extent as a medium to enhance their work in art and design.

153. Achievement at the age of 14 is good and represents a significant advance in most areas of the curriculum for art and design. Drawing skills develop particularly strongly at this stage and the capacity to work independently develops effectively. Pupils make little progress in the application of computer skills to their work in art and design. They improve their basic skills in literacy through the analysis of the subject's vocabulary. They use their skills in numeracy to good effect in measuring in design and in the study of proportion.
154. At the age of 16, achievement is satisfactory. Pupils continue to show a capacity for independent working but the teaching they receive is less focused on basic art skills than at the earlier stage. As a result, pupils' ideas often outstrip their technical skills, and projects fail to consolidate their initial promise. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs at the age of 14 and at the age of 16 is good. This results from the nature of the subject, which allows success at a very wide range of attainment, and from the sensitive quality of individual teaching that provides pupils with plenty of encouragement.
155. The quality of teaching to pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 is good. The basic skill of drawing is taught thoroughly, with an emphasis on good technique and keen imagination. Individual help and tuition are vigorous and lead to good pace in learning. All lessons are well prepared and introduced with clarity. In Years 10 and 11, the teaching is satisfactory. A strength continues to be the sensitive quality of individual tuition and the clear introduction of lessons together with good pace. A comparative weakness is the tendency to grant too much scope to pupils in deciding the direction and emphasis of their projects. This results in ill-advised choices in a number of cases, with intervals in which, though work is proceeding, little learning is taking place. At both key stages assessment is thorough and used effectively to assist pupils' learning.
156. One teacher carries out the leadership and teaching in the department. Leadership is good with a high degree of commitment and effective deployment of resources. Documentation is succinct and informative and illuminates all aspects of the work in the department. Though art is part of a wider creative and performing arts area, this affords little relief to the sole teacher of art and design whose work is handicapped further by cramped accommodation and the lack of any significant non-teaching technical assistance. Despite this, the art area maintains a strong presence, with very rich displays of work around the school.
157. There has been a significant improvement since the school was last inspected. This is evident in the improvement in attainment at both age 14 and age 16. The absence of rigour noted at the last inspection is no longer evident. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed this time. The curriculum is now as broad as can be reasonably expected given the constraints of staffing and accommodation.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

158. On entry into Year 7, pupils' prior knowledge, understanding, skills and experience of work in design and technology is variable, with the attainment of the great majority being below the average expectation for pupils at the age of 11. By the age of 14, pupils' attainment overall in design and technology is close to the national average expectation and at the age of 16 it is broadly in line with the national average. However in resistant materials at age 16 the attainment of a mostly boys' group is below the average. In food technology, a mostly girls' group, it is above the average expectation at age 16. Achievement at the age of 14 and 16, when compared with pupils' capability, their

variable experiences in design and technology and previous attainment is satisfactory in resistant materials and good in food technology.

159. In 2000, the teachers' National Curriculum assessments of standards at age 14 showed that the number of pupils achieving at the expected level 5 was broadly in line with the national average. More girls attained level 5 or above than boys. The girls attained in line with girls nationally, whilst boys attained below the national average for boys. At Key Stage 4, pupils opt for two design and technology subjects, namely resistant materials and food technology. Since the last inspection, the proportion of pupils attaining an A*-C grade across all material areas of the subject shows a rising trend and was broadly in line with the national average in 2000. When technology subjects are judged separately the proportion of A*-C grades was well above the national average in food technology but below it in resistant materials. Girls also achieved slightly above the national average expectation for girls and considerably outperformed boys, who achieved below the national average for boys. GCSE results at grades A*-G were slightly better than the average in all material areas. The school's average points scores for each subject shows that pupils do not achieve as well in design and technology as they do in most other subjects at GCSE.
160. From the work seen in lessons, the scrutiny of work in pupils' exercise books and through discussion with pupils, the great majority show a satisfactory understanding of the design process and principles and make satisfactory finished products. The standards seen reflect the teachers' own assessment of attainment. Attainment in resistant materials is below average but is above average in food technology and textiles. Higher attainers, of whom a significant majority are girls, show good graphical communication skills and present their design ideas well. Girls tend to take greater care and show more pride in their work, with a more meticulous approach to research and design work than is shown by boys. Average attaining pupils have weaker skills in graphical communication and are unsure of the correct terminology when explaining their ideas and in describing the processes involved. In practical lessons, for example in a Year 7 'puppet project', pupils show good levels of creative imagination and good skills in using basic tools and materials. Similarly, in Year 9 textiles, most pupils show good skills in enhancing their fabric designs using different techniques. Pupils' experiences of mechanisms, pneumatics and the use of computer aided manufacturing equipment are insufficient. Pupils with special educational needs show much interest in their work and make good progress, achieving appropriate standards for their capabilities, especially when supported by specialist staff and the technician.
161. In Year 11, the attainment of the great majority of pupils is average, with a significant proportion attaining above average standards in food technology. The design process is understood well and firmly embedded in all design projects. Graphical communication skills are generally good in the work of the higher attainers, and girls in particular, but remain weak in the work of average and lower attaining pupils. Pupils' finished products show good levels of creativity especially in the best work seen. Literacy skills have improved over earlier years although they remain unsatisfactory in the work of a significant proportion of average and lower attaining pupils. Higher attainers are able to explain their ideas confidently using the correct terminology whilst lower attainers do not readily use the correct technical terms. In Year 10 food technology, pupils showed good practical skills in making a 'shepherd's pie' to their own design specifications. They showed good sensory analytical skills when evaluating their product outcomes and comparing their products with commercially produced ones. Pupils make good use of the computer to produce some elements of coursework. However, they make insufficient use of the computer to design and make products.

162. The quality of teaching is good. It was never less than satisfactory and in the great majority of lessons it was good. The teaching methods and styles adopted by teachers are generally successful in enabling most pupils to improve and to develop their design and realisation skills in lessons and over time. Teachers produce design worksheets that provide pupils with clear guidelines for their design tasks although some worksheets are not always sufficiently modified to meet the needs of all levels of attainment. The development of pupils' literacy skills, particularly the technical language of the subject, is not universally implemented across all design areas. There are also missed opportunities to develop numeracy skills: teachers have yet to identify clearly where these opportunities should exist. However, teachers provide pupils with high levels of individual support and guidance which ensure that most pupils are clearly aware of what they are required to do in lessons. As a result, they make good progress in the great majority of lessons and build effectively on their prior skills and knowledge. In many lessons good humour prevails and an atmosphere conducive to positive learning is established. Almost all pupils respond well to the teaching methods adopted and show very good behaviour and a good attitude to learning in nearly every lesson.
163. Procedures for assessment enable teachers to monitor and support pupils' progress effectively towards their predicted attainment targets in Years 10 and 11. Most work is consistently marked to a good standard and teachers write constructive comments to explain to pupils what they need to do to improve their work. However, pupils are not aware of what National Curriculum level they are working towards in Years 7 to 9. A good feature is a homework workbook, which sets out the required homework for a term or more and effectively extends the curricular time with appropriate research and design tasks. In some classes, unusually large numbers of pupils for a practical subject reduce the amount of individual support and attention teachers are able to provide. This affects standards and raises some concern about safety. Nevertheless, teachers seek and promote safe working practices and ensure that pupils' safety is a principal factor in all lessons. The technician and the learning support staff provide invaluable contributions to pupils' learning by helping them whenever possible with their tasks, guiding and supporting pupils' progress in their work at the individual level.
164. Since the previous inspection, a new head of department has been appointed and the management and structure of the department has improved and are now good. The educational direction for design and technology is more clearly set out. All teachers have a specific role and the head of department has successfully begun to put systems in place to improve the results in examinations and to raise the profile of the department. Pupils in Key Stage 3 experience work in a reasonably wide range of materials but extension into, for example, textiles at GCSE is limited by the lack of sufficient accommodation and the structure of the options system. Design and make projects in the Key Stage 3 course in resistant materials are not sufficiently challenging at the intellectual and creative levels because pupils have very little opportunity to experience work in mechanisms and pneumatics. The spending allowance for consumables for the department is barely adequate and limits work in some of these key areas. Standards are also affected, not only by the lack of sufficient specialist accommodation but also by the poor quality of the accommodation overall.
165. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 has improved since the last inspection, especially in food technology. Teaching has improved and is now of a generally good standard throughout both key stages. Achievement overall at both key stages is a result of good teaching which promotes a very positive attitude to learning by the great majority of pupils.

GEOGRAPHY

166. Attainment in geography is in line with national expectations at the age of 14 and above the national average at the age of 16. Achievement is good at the age of 14 and at the age of 16, for those choosing to take GCSE courses in the subject.
167. Teachers' assessments in 2000 show that attainment at the age of 16 was in line with national averages, showing little variation over time. GCSE results in 2000 were well above the national average with a high proportion of candidates obtaining A*-C grades and A* and A grades. The very good results reflect consistently good teaching seen during the inspection, as well as teachers' familiarity with the GCSE course and examination requirements. Since the previous inspection there has been an improving trend in GCSE results. Pupils' GCSE grades in geography were higher than their average grades in other subjects. There were no significant differences between the results of boys and girls.
168. Pupils' standards of attainment are in line with national expectations at age 14. Improvement occurs from Year 7, when pupils are taught in classes containing pupils of all levels of attainment. Better standards are evident in the top classes in Year 8 and 9. Pupils with special educational needs improve their work because of the good help they receive to improve their literacy skills. Support assistants provide valuable help to pupils in each Year 7 class and to classes of low attaining pupils in Years 8 and 9, which enables these pupils to improve their work. In lessons in Year 7 using local ordnance survey maps, all pupils knew their compass directions, and most located places using grid references accurately. In a lesson revising settlement, pupils remembered geographical terms, their meaning, and the names of types of settlement such as conurbation. Year 8 pupils produced some excellent projects on erosion and weathering in which they had found their own examples. Higher attainers demonstrated good research skills. The presentation of work was good throughout, especially when pupils used ICT. Although they could recall facts from a video, the Year 9 class of low attaining pupils did not have the required skills of discussion to make the best of an ambitious exercise when they worked in groups, which involved arguing for and against the Carajas project in Brazil. Standards in the Year 9 class of high attainers were good. Pupils knew the basic structure of the earth, the meaning of related terms and were able to follow the teachers' excellent explanation of plate interaction, many asking pertinent questions to extend their understanding.
169. The standards reached by pupils when they are 16 years old are above average. In the Year 10 class of low attainers, many pupils showed good levels of understanding of inter-relationships, helped by working at their own pace through a well-prepared booklet on desert climate and environmental features, using atlases and textbooks. Low attainers in Year 11 improved their understanding through practising examination questions and revising from all their past exercise books. The teacher had begun the lesson using excellent question and answer techniques to check pupils' understanding and proceeded to give helpful hints on how to remember facts and answer 'explain' type questions. The class of high attaining pupils in Year 11 was using web sites on the Internet to research the Holderness Coast as an introduction to an exercise on managing coastal erosion. The facts and pictures that they obtained helped them to consolidate previous learning.
170. At the age of 14, the achievement of most pupils is good. Lessons often consist of quiet, on-task discussion in pairs, although there is a tendency in some classes for idle chatter. In Year 9, higher attainers and faster workers made insufficient progress through lack of suitably difficult work and expectations at too low a level. Pupils with

special educational needs generally achieved well, with varied material and extra help from the teacher or support assistant. The few pupils with English as an additional language made similar progress to others in their class. There was no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls, although boys' standards were generally lower at age 14, having started with lower levels of attainment in Year 7. All pupils make good progress through the course and respond well to the greater demands made of them, especially in the development of enquiry skills and in understanding complex inter-relationships. Annotation of maps and diagrams is particularly well developed. Writing improves through the key stages, and good essay-writing skills are evident at the age of 16.

171. Teaching is good throughout both key stages. The two well-qualified and experienced geography teachers know the pupils well. The teachers are friendly but also rigorous on standards required, with a sympathetic manner and a good sense of humour. They use excellent questioning techniques to develop new learning such as in the Year 9 lesson on the earth's crust's plates, and to review previous learning and consolidate knowledge and understanding, as in a Year 8 lesson on waterfalls. An excellent demonstration of why water flows faster on the outside of river bends involved Year 8 pupils physically moving around the playground in rows, which they will easily remember with enjoyment.
172. The learning of pupils is good, aided by their very good attitudes and behaviour. Pupils in all years, and of all prior attainment, generally show interest in and enthusiasm for geography. They enjoy learning about their locality, contributing a great deal, but are also well motivated to learn about other countries, cultures and ways of life. They are very knowledgeable about economic facts and figures. Varied fieldwork, including residential trips, usually assists the learning of all year groups, but unfortunately it has been hampered this year by the foot and mouth outbreak.
173. Teachers and support assistants provide good advice to pupils about how to improve their work in lessons and circulate well to those needing help. They adapt the approach, language and explanation for each individual. Teachers set homework regularly, but do not always ensure that it matches pupils' capabilities. Marking of exercise books is good, using a four-point scale for attainment and effort, and often contains helpful comments on how to improve. However, in Years 7 to 9, pupils and their parents do not know how pupils are doing compared to national criteria. Target setting for all pupils, to help them know how to improve and take more responsibility for their own learning, is unsatisfactory.
174. Leadership and management of the department are good, with well-structured and detailed schemes of work. Funding for the department is low. Pupils' progress is slowed slightly because atlases and textbooks are in short supply, but well-prepared materials supplement the limited resources. The automatic weather station is not fully in use, through technical difficulties, and there is very limited access to computers at present, which hinders pupils' learning. Display in the two geography rooms is very good, with evidence of recent excellent work by pupils.
175. Improvement since the last Inspection is satisfactory. Standards have improved at GCSE examinations. The good quality of learning of skills, the positive attitudes by pupils and good relationships all remain. Teaching has improved. All the teaching observed in this inspection was good or better. The development of suitable criteria for assessment at Key Stage 3 has still not occurred, resources are limited and the provision of access to ICT has deteriorated.

HISTORY

176. Attainment in history is above average at the age of 14 and also at the age of 16. Achievement compared with pupils' capability and previous attainment in the subject is good at the ages of 14 and 16.
177. Teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 show that pupils' attainment has been above the nationally expected level over the last three years. GCSE results at grades A*-C have also been above national averages for the last three years and, in 2000, around 20 per cent of the candidates obtained A* grades, which was well above the national average. In 2000, pupils' results in history were better than those in most other subjects.
178. At Key Stage 3, standards in work seen during the inspection are above the nationally expected level for 14 year olds. Most pupils have a good understanding of the major events and changes in the periods they have been studying. Pupils work well with historical sources of information, for example when finding out about the religion and beliefs of the Plains Indians. Pupils research and organise information successfully, as in some well-structured and persuasive writing on the Slave Trade produced by Year 9 pupils of average attainment.
179. At Key Stage 4, standards in work seen are also above the standards normally seen for 16 year olds. Pupils master the content of the course well; for example, they have a good understanding of the educational changes in England since 1870 and of the developments in medicine, surgery and health since 1750. They use sources of information confidently and intelligently, and produce well-argued, analytical writing, as in some work on the introduction of the National Health Service in 1948.
180. The achievement of pupils, including those with special educational needs, is good at the end of both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. They extend their knowledge of different periods and topics, and develop relevant skills. They build successfully on earlier work, which helps them to make effective progress. At Key Stage 3, pupils make particularly good progress in developing their structured writing; good teaching enables them to improve their skills in selecting and organising information in answer to historical questions. Pupils' positive attitudes to their work also contribute to their good achievement in history at both key stages.
181. The overall quality of teaching and learning at both key stages is good, and occasionally very good. Teachers use a wide range of teaching methods, which are effective in tackling new topics and consolidating pupils' understanding; for example skilful use of film material helped lower attaining pupils in Year 8 understand aspects of warfare at the time of the English Civil War. The planning of lessons is usually well matched to the learning needs of pupils, although sometimes the tasks given to pupils are insufficiently structured, which slows down their progress, as in a Year 7 lesson on life in a medieval village. Lessons are taken at a good pace and pupils are very well managed, which ensures good behaviour and full participation. Constructive marking helps pupils to identify weaknesses but the lack of explicit, shared subject criteria for assessment at Key Stage 3, sometimes leaves them uncertain about their standard and what they have to do to improve.
182. Effective leadership and management of the subject, and a very experienced team of teachers, ensure that standards remain high. However, at the moment history is taught in different rooms and the absence of a proper base is holding back the development of the subject. In addition, assessment procedures at Key Stage 3 now need to be more

clearly linked to National Curriculum criteria so that pupils understand more clearly how they are progressing in history.

183. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Pupils continue to achieve well and reach standards above national expectations and averages. The department now has more textbooks, although overall provision is only barely adequate. The use of ICT in history is still at an early stage of development and the provision of fieldwork opportunities at Key Stage 3 has yet to be undertaken.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

184. When pupils join the school as 11 year old pupils, their skills, knowledge and understanding in ICT are below average in all aspects of the subject except for communicating information through word processing which is generally average . When they are 14 years old, pupils' attainment in the subject is average and when they are 16 years old it is above average. Attainment is well above average for those taking a full GNVQ course in information technology. Achievement compared with pupils' capability and previous attainment is good when they are 14 years old and also good when they are 16 years old. The good achievement overall at both key stages is the result of the good teaching which successfully promotes a very positive attitude to learning by the great majority of pupils.
185. In 2000, teachers' National Curriculum assessments indicated that attainment at level 5 or above was average for pupils at the age of 14. Girls did slightly better than boys at both levels 5 and 6 but the overall proportion of pupils reaching level 6 or higher was below average. At the age of 16, the proportion of pupils achieving an A*-C grade in GCSE information technology shows a rising trend and was in line with the national average in 2000. The proportion achieving an A*-G grade was well above the average. In 2000, around 98 per cent of the year group achieved a Key Skill accreditation in information technology, which is well above the national average. Pupils attain and achieve as well in ICT as they do in their other most successful subjects at GCSE.
186. Standards of attainment overall at the end of Year 9 match the national average for pupils at age 14. A significant minority attain well above the average. The great majority of the pupils show significant strengths in communicating and handling information through word processing and desktop publishing, but their skills, understanding and knowledge in data logging, measurement and control technology are at a basic level. The lack of sufficient resources to enable the relevant subjects to use and develop these skills restricts pupils' learning. Almost all pupils have developed good skills and confidence in using the hardware, in accessing software and using the Internet for research purposes. Higher attainers are generally more confident and fluent in their use of technical terminology than average attainers when explaining what they are doing. There is no significant difference in the skills shown by boys compared to those shown by girls overall. In a Year 7 lesson, higher and average attaining pupils showed good skills, confidence and levels of competence when sending e-mails to each other. In a Year 8 lesson, pupils researched 'computer simulations' using the Internet to find information, which they selected and pasted into their reports. In a Year 9 lesson, pupils successfully set up a new database programme to handle the control of stock for a video hire business. In most lessons, higher attaining pupils show very good levels of confidence and skill in manipulating software to complete their tasks whilst average and lower attainers are more hesitant and need greater support and guidance from their teacher. Pupils with special educational needs show much interest in their work and make good progress, achieving appropriate standards for their capabilities especially when supported by specialist staff.

187. Standards overall at Key Stage 4 are above average, though in some lessons the skills of a small minority of pupils were below expectations. In the full GNVQ courses, standards are well above the national average. The course is becoming increasingly popular with more pupils keen to gain a nationally recognised qualification in information technology. The basic skills in using word processing, desktop publishing, spreadsheets and databases have been taught well at Key Stage 3. Pupils are able to transfer these skills and use them effectively, for example, in the completion of coursework in several subjects. Pupils are given a fortnight to complete some ICT related tasks so that they can use the computers in the learning resources centre since there are insufficient computers in the school to provide easy access for pupils during lesson time. Pupils use the ICT facilities regularly at lunchtime and after school, to research homework and for their own interest. At Key Stage 4, an increasing number of pupils use ICT competently to find and present information for their project work in a growing number of subjects although the lack of sufficient resources limits developments.
188. Teaching in the lessons observed was never less than satisfactory. It was good or better in the great majority of lessons. Good teaching of basic skills in the specific ICT lessons leads to these skills being used effectively in the GNVQ course at Key Stage 4 and in a minority of subjects. Teachers' planning is thorough, although the worksheets do not always take sufficient account of the different literacy skills and attainment in each group. A few pupils who have very good prior skills do not always receive sufficiently difficult work in a minority of lessons. Marking of pupils' work is detailed, with supportive comments and areas for improvement identified. The marking and recording of pupils attainment and progress in the GNVQ courses is very thorough; it enables pupils to know exactly how well they are progressing and what they need to do to improve. In Years 7 to 9, teachers do not always share or discuss the marked work with pupils and pupils are not aware of what National Curriculum levels they are working towards. The management of pupils is generally good; pupils receive good support and encouragement when and where necessary. The predominantly good teaching assures that almost all pupils are well motivated and clearly aware of what they are required to do in lessons and in the overall completion of their projects, which are well matched to pupils' interests and capabilities. The teaching style adopted ensures good progress and good behaviour in almost every lesson. Discrete schemes of work cover all aspects of the programmes of study, including control work, but insufficient resources restrict their full implementation. Large group sizes, for example 33 pupils in one class, occasionally impede progress because the teacher is unable to provide sufficient support and guidance at the individual level quickly.
189. Good management by the head of department ensures that the requirements of the National Curriculum are fully met through the specific ICT lessons. However, there is an inconsistent and unco-ordinated approach to the teaching of ICT across all subjects so that pupils use ICT well in some subjects, but rarely in others, to enhance their work. A lack of overall resources in ICT restricts the use of computing in some subjects. Nevertheless, the head of department ensures good access for all pupils within the constraints of the available resources. The ICT courses provided at Key Stage 4 ensure that all pupils receive their full entitlement of information technology.
190. Improvements since the last inspection have been good. Staff confidence and capability have improved. Standards have risen at both key stages. Pupils benefit from having access to very good ICT facilities in the learning resource centre and from teachers who have competent ICT skills.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

191. Pupils' overall attainment in French at the age of 14 is average. It is not as high for the pupils who take German in which it is below average, partly because the subject is begun one year later than French and has less curricular time. Pupils' overall attainment in French and German at the age of 16 is above average. Achievement compared with pupils' capability and prior attainment, is satisfactory at the age of 14, and is good at the age of 16 because of good teaching and pupils' positive attitudes.
192. Teachers' assessments at end of Key Stage 3 in 2000 showed that attainment was in line with the national average for the number of pupils reaching both the national expectation of level 4 and above and the higher level 5 and above. Girls' performance was better than that of boys. In the GCSE examinations in French in 2000, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C was close to the national average and was above average for those gaining grades A*-G. Girls performed better than boys. In comparison with the results of other subjects in the school, French was the weakest subject. The departmental policy, however, is to enter few pupils for the Certificate of Achievement examination for low attaining pupils. In 2000, more pupils were entered for the full course in GCSE French than in all other subjects, with the exception of English and mathematics. The GCSE results for a very small group in German at grades A*-C were above the national average.
193. In work seen during the inspection, pupils' understanding of the foreign language in the classroom and their oral skills are satisfactory by the age of 14. Higher attainers in French in a Year 9 class showed a good knowledge of the future tense, in Year 8 of household tasks, and in Year 7 they answered a range of questions confidently and with a good pronunciation. Lower attainers in a Year 9 class worked continuously in pairs to carry out role-play situations in a restaurant and used the foreign language to order many different types of menu confidently and from memory. In the Year 8 German class, pupils linked the appropriate picture correctly to the statement heard on the tape. Writing skills are satisfactory. Pupils complete many exercises to practise different constructions and tenses, which show that they are working at appropriate levels. They have a good knowledge of the vocabulary needed for the topic. In general, however, these exercises are not then developed into paragraphs of continuous writing to match levels of the National Curriculum. There is room for greater accuracy in writing in both languages. Pupils' insufficiently consolidate their learning because they do not always complete corrections to their written work.
194. In work seen during the inspection, pupils' understanding of the foreign languages by the age of 16 is good. Higher and lower attainers in two French classes in Year 11 scored well on listening exercises in class in preparation for their examination. Lower attainers in the Year 10 certificate class in French knew their directions well and could explain them well orally. In their written work, pupils display knowledge of different tenses and vocabulary relevant to the topic. In a few cases, the written work is used to support the oral aspect. However, progress is hindered because pupils do not always act upon the teacher's written comments for improvement.
195. Pupils' achievement by the age of 14 is satisfactory. Teachers' planning ensures that past work is revised, either orally or in tests. Pupils make gains in knowledge in many lessons and these are well consolidated, both orally and aurally. Pupils' achievement by the age of 16 is good. The modular course is well suited to the capabilities of the pupils. Teachers work hard to help pupils to learn the appropriate tenses and vocabulary for each of the four modules. Pupils are well prepared for the tasks on which they are assessed. Higher attainers in French in Year 10 are the only class not to be involved in

the modular course. They show much promise and made good progress in a lesson on lost items, both orally and in understanding. Scrutiny of their coursework showed a marked degree of confidence between the first piece of writing and the second. They have acquired over time a sound and accurate knowledge of the perfect and future tenses, together with the necessary vocabulary to write about healthy eating, for instance. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress throughout each key stage. They are well integrated into classes and support, when available, is very effective. The good liaison between teachers and learning assistants helps pupils with special educational needs to develop confidence. Pupils' attitudes to the subject and their behaviour are good, and in many instances very good. As a result they achieve well. They work well together in pairs, and relationships are good.

196. The quality of teaching in both key stages is good. In two of the lessons observed it was very good. The foreign language is used well in many, but not all, of the lessons. This aids pupils' understanding. In many lessons teachers make very effective use of flash cards to introduce new vocabulary or to consolidate it. Worksheets and the cassette recorder are also used well for this purpose. Teachers' planning ensures that there are different activities and skills in each lesson; this ensures that pupils are productive and have to think hard at times. Paired work is used well in many lessons to develop oracy. Homework is set regularly, but the marking of pupils' work is not consistent across the department. Assessment is used well in class after listening exercises, but in Key Stage 3 pupils are unaware of the levels of the National Curriculum at which they are working. Pupils are well managed in class. Very occasionally, pupils are rather passive in class because they are not sufficiently challenged by the teacher, who does too much. Overall, expectations are high and teachers work hard with their pupils.
197. The department makes a good contribution to pupils' social and cultural development through paired work and visits to France. Displays in both the specialist rooms are very good and provide good areas for learning. The department is not adequately resourced with textbooks for Key Stage 4, and the lack of up-to-date reading material restricts learning in Key Stage 3.
198. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Teaching and teachers' planning have improved. Pupils' oracy has improved. German has been introduced into Year 8 instead of beginning in Year 9. The take-up for the subject at Key Stage 4 remains very low. Girls still outperform boys, although boys did perform well in the GCSE examinations in 1999. Only a few pupils attain the higher grades of A* and A in GCSE examinations. Insufficient use is made of ICT to enhance pupils' learning because of limited availability of computers.

MUSIC

199. When pupils enter the school they have a wide span of attainment determined by the quality of prior teaching, instrumental tuition experience and home support for music. Many pupils enter the school with better than average musical experience but most pupils enter with below average standards and teachers' assessments confirm this. Attainment at the age of 14 is below the national expectation, but at the age of 16 it is average. Attainment in instrumental tuition is above average and in extra-curricular work is well above average.
200. From Year 7, pupils sing regularly but standards do not reach the expected levels at the age of 14. However, one Year 9 class containing many musical pupils sang enthusiastically and with a sense of communication. Pupils' instrumental skills are insufficiently developed. An above average number of pupils receive instrumental tuition from visiting teachers. Almost all pupils have their own instruments but they do not use them regularly in lessons to support instrumental tuition and to strengthen the quality of music making in the classroom. When pupils compose, most show limited understanding of the ways in which pieces can be developed. Pupils who play instruments understand notation from their musical experience but most pupils show a limited or mathematical understanding of notation. Pupils listen respectfully and carefully to recorded extracts and sympathetically to each other's performances. They appraise music using appropriate technical vocabulary.
201. In recent years, GCSE examination results have been variable but broadly in line with the national average. A small but growing number of pupils have taken the examination. Standards in the current Year 11 group are average. Performing skills average about grade 4 (ranging from grade 2 to grade 8 level). A few GCSE pupils sing in the school's choir but pupils sing insufficiently in lessons. High attaining pupils compose competently, showing imagination and technical understanding; some make good use of computers at home to develop and notate their work but pupils' progress is restricted owing to the lack of machines in the department. Pupils have a satisfactory general musical knowledge of well-known pieces, composers, styles, forms, artists and instruments. They appraise using appropriate technical vocabulary. Standards in the very small Year 10 group are just above average.
202. Most pupils in Years 7 to 9 achieve satisfactorily in relation to their prior attainment. Those who play instruments and read music make the best progress, building on their previous knowledge, wider experiences and their personal interests. However, the most gifted and talented pupils are insufficiently challenged most of the time. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress and are well integrated. In GCSE work, pupils achieve well because of the more focused teaching and the support given to them through instrumental tuition and the extensive extra-curricular programme.
203. The teaching is satisfactory. Some of the lessons observed were good, including all the teaching seen at GCSE level. Teaching in instrumental work is of high quality. The teaching of extra-curricular groups is very good. Teachers have good knowledge and competent skills in accompanying, arranging and conducting. Teachers communicate well. They give clear instructions and present information confidently so that pupils know what they have to do. Lessons have a brisk start to make full use of the time. Objectives are clear but are not always shared with the younger pupils. In the best lessons, pupils are engaged in musical activity that develops their skills to enable them to realise their potential and experience the expressive qualities of music. Teaching is energetic and encouraging so that pupils are interested especially when they sing, play or compose. However, expectations of the younger pupils are not high enough. The

management of classes is good and relationships are very good. The small sized room, set up with desks, inhibits practical work and the approach is often too academic. Pupils enjoy practical work but dislike written work. Their positive attitudes and mature behaviour support their learning, but in GCSE work not all pupils take advantage of the opportunities offered in extra-curricular activities. Pupils use equipment sensibly and enjoy taking responsibility for their learning, for example when practising in groups. The lack of small areas for practice inhibits their work. There is good reference to musical terms but visual aids are not used enough to explain or illustrate. Assessment is constructive and questioning skilfully draws out responses from quieter pupils. There is insufficient technical help to show pupils how to improve, for example when singing, playing or composing. This is done well in instrumental tuition. Homework is not used sufficiently with the younger classes.

204. The management of the music department is satisfactory. The system of assessment in use is unsatisfactory. Current schemes of work adopt an academic and theoretical approach. These are suitably being replaced to introduce more practical work with less emphasis on written work and the intention is to link these to assessment. Curricular links with other schools are insufficiently developed to ensure continuity of learning. Pupils' standards are adversely affected by deficiencies in accommodation and resources. The accommodation is unsatisfactory because of the size of the room, lack of practice cells for group work and inadequate storage. Shortages in resourcing include such items as classroom instruments (especially tuned percussion), keyboards and computers for music.
205. Music makes a valuable contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral and especially their social and cultural development. Pupils reflect and experience the joy of music when performing and listening to a piece of medieval church music. They relate well to moral messages, for example in songs such as 'I'll be there for you' (the theme from 'Friends'). They willingly take responsibility for their learning in group work, and appreciate our own cultural traditions and those of other lands including the music of China, India and Africa. Since the last report there have been insufficient improvements, especially in standards in classroom work with the younger classes.
206. Seven visiting teachers provide a range of instrumental lessons involving 36 girls and 18 boys. Standards are above average and achievement is good in instrumental lessons. Pupils' attitudes are very good. Teaching is of good quality. A key feature is the support given by teachers' demonstrations to pupils. Instrumental teaching supports a good range of extra-curricular musical activities. These include the choir, junior band, senior band, jazz group, string orchestra and the percussion ensemble. These groups are well attended and very keen attitudes support the high standards. The groups enjoy performing in community events such as the Oswestry and Ellesmere festivals and the North West Shropshire promenade concert in Shrewsbury, as was seen during the inspection. Regular visits to musical events include trips to Symphony Hall in Birmingham and concerts in Manchester, which broaden pupils' experience. Annual events include school concerts and every two years there are staged productions such as 'The Greatest Show on Earth', which regularly involve large numbers of pupils. The school is justifiably very proud of its extra-curricular groups. These activities reflect the dedication of staff, support of parents and the school and the enthusiasm of the competent and talented musicians whose performances and successes bring credit to the school.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

207. Pupils' attainment in physical education is average at the ages of 14 and 16. Achievement compared with pupils' previous attainment in the subject is good at the age of 14 because of good teaching and the very good attitudes of pupils. Achievement at the age of 16 is satisfactory with consolidation of previous skills and understanding.
208. Teachers' assessments of 14 year old pupils show that the attainment of these pupils is above average. These assessments are not entirely accurate because they focus particularly on skills in performance and do not take sufficient account of the National Curriculum requirements for pupils to plan and evaluate their work for themselves.
209. By the end of Year 9, standards are average overall. Pupils have the skills and knowledge to play a number of games to a satisfactory standard. In athletics they can perform throwing events with a correct action and in tennis show satisfactory control of the basic strokes. They can act as officials and apply the rules fairly in these activities. Pupils know how to prepare for activity and do this conscientiously when guided by the teacher. They do not always readily do this for themselves. When given opportunities they can observe others in the class and comment accurately on a performance. They receive too few opportunities to do this or to talk about their work and so assess the strengths and weaknesses in their own performance. The result is that pupils do not always know what to do to improve and are too dependent upon the teacher.
210. When they are 16 years old, pupils' attainment in lessons is average. Pupils play tennis, cricket and rounders to a satisfactory standard. They know the rules and can act as officials. Pupils prepare carefully before starting activities and take responsibility for this. They do not make sufficient links with their work in lessons, the effect of exercise on the body and a healthy lifestyle. Pupils' ability to evaluate a performance, and identify what to do to improve, remains a weakness because teachers do not consistently use methods that encourage this. In the new GCSE course, folders of written work are well organised and presentation is good. The work is marked regularly but does not always have sufficient advice on how pupils can improve. A GCSE course in physical education started for the first time in September 2000.
211. When they join the school at the age of 11, pupils have a wide and sometimes limited range of experiences in physical education. By the age of 14, most are attaining average standards. This represents good achievement in relation to their prior attainment. By the age of 16 pupils' achievement is average, as skills and understanding are consolidated in a number of activities. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress throughout the school because of teachers' good individual support and good management of their classes. Higher attainers do not make the progress they could because teachers' planning and choice of methods do not give sufficient attention to individual levels of performance. These more able pupils have opportunities through the programme of extra-curricular activities.
212. The quality of teaching is good overall. It is better in Years 7 to 9, in which there is a greater proportion of good teaching. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is satisfactory overall. Pupils gain in skills, knowledge and understanding of activities because teachers have good knowledge of the subject and plan tasks that carefully improve pupils' practical performance. When introducing a new skill, teachers are clear about the key points they want pupils to know and understand. A strength of the teaching is the very good management of pupils and equipment, so lessons always run smoothly. A further strength is the clear expectation for pupils' good behaviour and involvement in lessons. These features ensure good use of the available time in lessons, especially in Years 7

to 9. In a few lessons, pupils are encouraged to observe and evaluate a performance for themselves. They did this successfully in a Year 9 athletics lesson on preparing for a sprint start, when they worked in pairs to observe and coach each other. As a result, pupils had a very clear understanding of the essential points for a good sprint start and how to improve their own performance. Not all lessons show the same careful selection of methods to improve pupils' skills of evaluation. Pupils enjoy physical education and relationships in lessons are very good. They work well together in small groups and teams and respond quickly to instructions. Teachers encourage this and physical education makes a very good contribution to pupils' social skills. Teachers give good support and individual coaching and pupils listen carefully because they want to improve. Teaching does not always build sufficiently on these good attitudes and the positive response of the pupils. In Years 10 and 11, the coaching is more supportive than it is challenging to pupils to improve their skills and understanding. Teachers use questions to check pupils' understanding but opportunities are missed for them to extend their oracy skills through talking about their ideas in greater depth and using the correct technical terms. Pupils have very limited opportunities to apply their skills of ICT in physical education because of shortage of equipment such as a video camera which restricts their work in appraising their own and others' performances.

213. Leadership and management of the subject are effective. Organisation of the subject runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. The staff work well as a team and provide a very good programme of house and extra-curricular activities that is well supported by pupils. The time allocated for physical education across the school is below average. In Years 7 to 9 the classes do not have the same pupils and the same teachers all the time and the operation of the two-week timetable complicates the organisation of the teaching. This makes the continuity and progression of pupils' learning, as well as teachers' assessments of pupils' work and progress, more difficult. The programme of options in Key Stage 4 allows some pupils to have excessive amounts of time for physical education. The school is suitably reviewing this programme.
214. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Standards have been maintained with some improvement in pupils' skills of observation. Greatly improved facilities have enabled a GCSE course to be introduced this year. The quality of teaching has been maintained, together with the positive attitudes of the pupils. The involvement of pupils in extra-curricular activities has increased.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

215. Attainment in religious education in respect of the locally agreed syllabus is above expectations at the age of 14 and matches expectations at the age of 16. Achievement compared with pupils' capability and previous attainment in the subject is very good at the age of 14 and good at the age of 16.
216. GCSE results at grades A*-C have been above or well above national averages for the last three years, and all pupils taking the subject have gained A*-G grades. In 2000, pupils' results in religious education were better than those in some other subjects.
217. By the end of Key Stage 3, standards of work seen during the inspection are above the level expected for 14 year olds by the Shropshire Agreed Syllabus. Pupils understand and appreciate the relevance of religion in today's world, through work which draws both on their own experience and on different religious traditions; for example, work on the Ten Commandments in Year 8 enabled pupils to reflect on their relevance for the 21st century. Pupils are good listeners, and confident readers and speakers, and they produce writing that is suitably detailed, thoughtful and sensitive, as in Year 9 work on

the siege of Masada. At Key Stage 4 standards in work seen are broadly average. This is below the standard of last year's GCSE results, because over 50 per cent of the pupils in the current Year 11 group were from the lowest attaining set when they chose the course at the end of Year 9. However, pupils have mastered the content of the course successfully, and much of their writing is thoughtful and accurate, although lower attaining pupils have difficulty in communicating their evaluations and points of view.

218. The achievement of pupils, including those with special educational needs, is very good at Key Stage 3. They develop a thorough grasp of the beliefs and practices of Christianity and other world religions, and make very clear gains in their understanding of what religion means to individuals and communities. At Key Stage 4, the achievement of pupils is good. They extend their knowledge and understanding of the Christian and Hindu traditions, and become more confident in explaining issues such as the importance of Christmas and Easter to Christians or Hindu attitudes to abortion, euthanasia and suicide. Pupils' very positive attitudes to their work also contribute to their good achievement in religious education at both key stages.
219. The overall quality of teaching and learning at both key stages is very good and sometimes excellent. An exciting and innovative syllabus at Key Stage 3 helps to engage pupils' interests. The teacher's excellent knowledge of the subject, coupled with sustained enthusiasm, means that pupils become absorbed in the lessons. A wide range of teaching methods is used to introduce new topics, as in a lesson on the Holocaust where very well judged use of eyewitnesses' accounts helped Year 9 pupils understand something of the horrors of the death camps. Planning is very thorough, and work is well structured which gives good direction to pupils' learning so that they get the most out of lessons. For example, a fast moving lesson on the synagogue meant that Year 8 pupils made excellent progress in their learning about Judaism and what it means to belong to the Jewish community. Expectations of what pupils can achieve in religious education is very high; pupils are constantly praised and challenged which helps them to make good progress, as in a Year 7 lesson when pupils were investigating arguments for and against the existence of God. The management of pupils, based on excellent relationships and mutual respect, is very good. All work is very carefully marked, and helpful, constructive comments enable pupils to make further progress.
220. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. There is a very clear sense of purpose and direction, and a commitment to raising standards. The religious education classroom, with its displays and artefacts, helps to create a very good learning ethos. The subject also makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. At the moment the use of ICT is still at an early stage of development, and further work is needed on developing subject specific criteria for assessment at Key Stage 3 as new guidance about the agreed syllabus becomes available.
221. Overall there has been good improvement since the last inspection. Standards have improved and religious education is now a very popular choice at GCSE level. The department also has more textbooks, although overall provision is only barely adequate. Statutory requirements are not yet met at Key Stage 4 as there is still insufficient time to teach the agreed syllabus to all pupils. In Year 10, a small amount of religious education is taught as part of the personal and social education course and there is no provision for the subject in Year 11.