

INSPECTION REPORT

SIR THOMAS BOUGHEY HIGH SCHOOL

Halmer End, Stoke-on-Trent

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 124393

Headteacher: Mr D Boston

Reporting inspector: Philip J H O'Neill
3162

Dates of inspection: 10th – 14th December 2001

Inspection number: 194291

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 - 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Station Road
Halmer End
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Staffordshire

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr S L Lamb

Date of previous inspection: 28th April 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
3162	Mr P J H O'Neill	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements. How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9770	Mr J Baker	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?
31329	Ms K Barratt	Team inspector	History Equal opportunities	
7483	Mr R Donne	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
23880	Ms O Hall	Team inspector	Art and design Special educational needs	
8756	Ms P Hanage	Team inspector	Mathematics	
15606	Ms C Hill	Team inspector	Design and technology	How good are curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
20588	Mr I Hodgkinson	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
3827	Mr J Knight	Team inspector	Geography	
1085	Mr J Laver	Team inspector	English	
12179	Mr L Moscrop	Team inspector	Religious education	
23030	Ms C Runyard	Team inspector	Physical education	
31159	Clive Simmonds	Team inspector	Science	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Sir Thomas Boughey High School is situated in the village of Halmer End, north-west of Newcastle-under-Lyme. It is a mixed comprehensive community school, catering for pupils between the ages of 11 and 16 years. Its catchment comprises some seven villages centred around the largest of these villages: Audley; however, a number of pupils come from primary schools across the town of Newcastle-under-Lyme. The area from which the school mainly draws its pupils is characterised by some social deprivation. Housing is generally local authority or rented terraced houses, with a small proportion of owner-occupied housing. The loss of the local mining industry means that most income-earners commute to nearby Stoke, Crewe or Manchester. Many pupils come from low-income families.

The school has 756 pupils (397 boys and 359 girls) on roll. This is smaller than other secondary schools. There is some significant gender imbalance in different years within the school population. The number on roll has increased by almost 50 per cent since the last inspection. The school is over-subscribed.

At 9.3 per cent, a below average proportion of pupils is eligible for free school meals. This represents a sudden fall over recent years. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs, at 15 per cent, is broadly average. The percentage of pupils with statements of special educational need, at 4.2 per cent, is above average. A very small number of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds and none speaks English as an additional language.

The attainment of pupils on entry has fluctuated from year to year from below average to average. This was also noted at the previous inspection. The school competes with a number of independent grammar schools and two nearby comprehensive schools, all offering 11 – 18 provision.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Sir Thomas Boughey High School is a good and improving school. Very good leadership and direction support good teaching and the steady improvement of standards of attainment. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Overall standards of attainment are improving.
- Pupils learn well as a result of consistently good teaching.
- There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- Relationships are very good and, together with the school's provision for pupils' social development, promote enthusiastic attitudes and encourage good behaviour.
- The school offers a very well-organised and well-taught programme for personal, social and health education.
- The leadership of the school encourages and supports the creativity of the teachers, especially the heads of department and has a very positive impact on achievement and standards achieved.
- The school has very good resources for information and communication technology and uses all resources very efficiently, guided by a clear view of its long-term needs.
- The library is excellently managed and used very well to support learning.

What could be improved

- Standards in design and technology at both key stages, in music at Key Stage 3 and in modern foreign languages and religious education at Key Stage 4 are unsatisfactory.
- Procedures for child protection are unsatisfactory.
- There is not enough provision for vocational education in order to meet the needs of all the pupils.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was previously inspected in April 1997. Since then it has improved very well under the decisive leadership of the headteacher, supported by his deputy and other senior colleagues. Following the previous inspection, the governors drew up a well-defined action plan. Since then there have been significant improvements in the teaching of modern foreign languages; pupils are now more fully involved in learning. The quality of teaching has improved, too, in geography as the school has addressed the weaknesses resulting from the use of unqualified staff. The response to the weaknesses noted in the quality of the library and access to information technology has led to improvements of a very high order. Both these areas are now significant strengths. Weaknesses in planning have been thoroughly addressed. Planning is linked more closely to the work of departments and is costed more accurately. The school has made many other improvements in what it offers the pupils, not least amongst these is the very effective development of the pastoral system and the provision of personal, social and health education. Overall standards have improved, as has the quality of teaching.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
GCSE examinations	C	C	C	B	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E

In the 2001 national tests for 14-year-olds, attainment was average in English and mathematics and above average in science. In relation to schools in similar circumstances, attainment was average in English, below average in mathematics and above average in science. The few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds do as well as the others.

In the GCSE examinations in 2001 overall attainment was average in relation to all schools and above average in relation to similar schools. The trend in attainment is above the national trend. Attainment was above average in art and design, music and physical education; average in combined science, design and technology, English language, English literature, information and communication technology and mathematics; attainment was below average in business studies, geography, history Spanish and religious education. The differences in attainment relate mainly to the quality of teaching.

In lessons and in work inspected in Year 9, the standards achieved are above national expectations in science and information and communication technology, whilst meeting them in English, mathematics, art and design, geography, history, modern foreign languages, physical education and religious education. Standards fall below expectations, at this stage, in design and technology and music. In the work seen in Years 10 and in 11, standards are well above expectations in information and communication technology. They exceed expectations in science, art and design, and physical education. Expectations are met in English, mathematics, geography, history and music. Standards fall below expectations in design and technology, modern foreign languages and religious education.

Standards of literacy across the subjects are good. Pupils speak confidently in discussion and many have a good grasp of the technical language of the subjects they study. The work undertaken by the librarian has created an increasing interest in books and in reading. Standards of numeracy are satisfactory in most subjects. Pupils use their knowledge of number well in some subjects. The school sets and meets challenging targets for improving standards of attainment.

Pupils achieve very well in information and communication technology, and well in English, science, art

and design, geography and physical education across the years. Achievement is also good in design and technology and religious education in Years 7 to 9 and in music in Years 10 to 11. Achievement is satisfactory in mathematics and history across the years and in modern foreign languages and music in Years 7 to 9, and in design and technology in Years 10 and 11. Pupils do not achieve well enough in modern foreign languages and religious education in Years 10 and 11.

Pupils with special educational needs make good progress overall in relation to their prior attainment. Able and talented pupils generally make the progress of which they are capable, through the provision of work that is appropriately challenging, however, they are occasionally given work that is too easy. The most able, notably those pupils achieving A* at GCSE in many subject areas and AS level in art and English at the age of 16, are achieving very well.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils are very positive about what the school offers them. They participate enthusiastically in lessons and activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils generally behave very well in lessons and around the school. They are confident that the school is a safe place. The number of fixed-term exclusions is average.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships among pupils and between staff and pupils are very good. Boys and girls co-operate well and work harmoniously and are supportive of each other. The school makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development.
Attendance	Levels of attendance are above average and there is little unauthorised absence. Punctuality is occasionally affected by the late running of the buses in the morning, but during the day lessons begin promptly.

This is a school where pupils value what the school offers them and respond through their good behaviour and their willingness to work hard.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The overall quality of teaching is good across the years and has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Teaching is very good in English, art and design, history and physical education in Years 10 and 11; in information and communication technology in all years; and in religious education in Years 7 to 9. It is good in mathematics, science, design and technology, geography and music in all years and in English, art and design, history, modern foreign languages and physical education in Years 7 to 9. Teaching is satisfactory in modern foreign languages in Years 10 to 11 and unsatisfactory in religious education in these years.

A key to the success of many lessons lies in the quality of the teachers' planning and the effective way that teachers set out clearly what the pupils are expected to learn. As a result of the encouragement pupils are given by the teachers, they rise to the challenge of even the most demanding work. Teaching is occasionally weakened when teachers do not make enough use of opportunities for pupils to think for themselves. Introductions to lessons that are occasionally too lengthy dampen pupils' enthusiasm.

The quality of teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs is good. Some good additional and appropriately challenging work for the more able pupils was observed in physical education, art and design and geography.

The teaching of literacy is gathering pace. Literacy is generally taught well across the curriculum. The

teaching of numeracy has been slower to take off, but is beginning to have an impact on standards of work and is satisfactory overall. The use of information and communication technology in teaching has been improved significantly and is now generally good.

Pupils are good learners and make effective use of the opportunities provided for independent work. Most pupils have a good knowledge of how well they are achieving. Learning is occasionally impeded when teachers do not allow pupils the opportunity to become genuinely involved in discussion.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school offers pupils a satisfactory range of learning opportunities. The provision for information and communication technology and personal, social and health education is a strength. There is insufficient time allocated for some pupils in Year 9 for physical education and in Years 10 and 11 to cover the full agreed syllabus in religious education, where statutory requirements are not met.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The provision for these pupils is good in Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11 it is weakened by the limited opportunities to achieve nationally recognised vocational qualifications, but is satisfactory overall.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	This is good overall. There are many opportunities for pupils to work together and this makes a very good contribution to pupils' social development. There are missed opportunities to deepen pupils' spiritual awareness.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The monitoring of pupils' academic and personal development is good. The school has not ensured that all staff are appropriately trained in child protection. There is a safety risk in that vehicles are parked outside the school at the beginning and end of the day in such a way that visibility is obscured.

A significant strength is the quality of provision for the personal, social and health education of the pupils. The quality of the relationships with partner schools and colleges is also a strength. The school works well with parents in supporting the pupils' learning. It ensures that pupils are protected against any form of oppressive behaviour. The pupils get good support for their personal development. Procedures relating to child protection are unsatisfactory in that the teachers have not been appropriately trained in the identification of children at risk.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher offers very clear educational direction for the work of the school. He is supported effectively by his deputy and other senior colleagues, who exercise their complementary skills to good effect.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors work well together in supporting the school. They know the school's strengths and the areas for further improvement. They have ensured that most statutory requirements are met apart from those related to the provision for religious education in Years 10 and 11.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school takes effective measures to evaluate the quality of what it provides and generally takes appropriate measures to respond to deficiencies.
The strategic use of resources	A strength of the school is the way it directs resources to ensure that the needs of all pupils are met.

There is a good number of appropriately qualified and experienced teachers and support staff to teach the full range of the National Curriculum and other activities. The accommodation is good, as is the range of learning resources. The library is a particular strength. A striking feature of the management of

the school is the astuteness with which the funds and resources are directed to the advantage of the pupils. The governors ensure that due account is taken of what schools in similar circumstances achieve with similar budgets. Given the standards achieved in relation to pupils' attainment on joining the school, the quality of teaching, the progress pupils make in their work, the quality of leadership and management and the prudent way the budget is spent, the school provides good value for money.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the progress their children are making • the teaching their children experience • that they can approach the school with any problem or concern • that the school expects their children to work hard and do their best 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the work their children are expected to do at home • the information they receive about their children's progress • the way the school works with them to support their children's learning

The inspection confirms the parents' positive views of the school. The inspection looked hard at the amount of homework provided for pupils and judges that, while it is broadly appropriate, there are inconsistencies in the way it is set. The inspection disagrees with parents about the information about progress in that the annual report is of very high quality and that individual meetings with parents are very supportive. The inspection finds that the school works well with parents in supporting the pupils' learning.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Pupils join the school with levels of attainment that are average overall, though the standards of attainment the pupils bring to the school have fluctuated between below average and average over the years. In the 2001 national tests for 14-year-olds, attainment was average in English and mathematics and above average in science. In relation to schools in similar circumstances, namely schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, attainment was average in English, below average in mathematics and above average in science. The relatively lower attainment in mathematics arose as a result of staffing difficulties, which have now been resolved. Boys and girls reach comparable standards. The few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds do as well as the others.
2. The results achieved by 14-year-olds in the tests in English and mathematics are similar to the standards achieved at the time of the last inspection, whilst attainment in science has improved since then. Furthermore, the gap between the attainment of boys and of girls has narrowed since then. These improvements can be traced to developments in teaching and, in particular, the teachers' growing awareness of the learning needs of individual pupils. Pupils in turn have become more sensitive to their responsibility for their own learning. The school has also responded well to concerns about staffing difficulties that were impeding pupils' progress.
3. In the GCSE examinations in 2001 overall attainment was average in relation to all schools and above average in relation to schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. In relation to schools where pupils enter Year 7 with similar levels of attainment, the school's performance at GCSE is also above average. The rising trend in the average points scored by each pupil is above the national trend. Attainment was above average in art and design, music and physical education; average in combined science, English language, English literature, information and communication technology and mathematics; attainment was below average in design and technology, business studies, geography, history, Spanish and religious education. The differences in attainment relate mainly to the quality of teaching. In design and technology the main weakness is in food technology, where there is not enough expertise to teach the subject.
4. In lessons and in work inspected in Year 9, the standards achieved are above national expectations in science and information and communication technology, whilst meeting them in English, mathematics, art and design, geography, history, modern foreign languages, physical education and religious education. Standards fall below expectations, at this stage, in design and technology and music. In the work seen in Years 10 and 11, standards are well above expectations in information and

communication technology. They exceed expectations in science, art and design, and physical education. Expectations are met in English, mathematics, geography, history and music at this stage. Standards fall below expectations in design and technology, modern foreign languages and religious education. These differences across the subjects can be traced to the relatively low levels of attainment of current Key Stage 4 pupils on entry to the school and some difficulties in staffing.

5. Standards of literacy across the subjects are good. Pupils speak confidently in discussion and are aware of the adjustments to language required for different purposes. Many have a good grasp of the technical language of the subjects they study. Pupils read a limited range of books, but they read well the books they encounter. The work undertaken by the librarian has created an increasing interest in books and in reading. Standards of numeracy are satisfactory in most subjects. Pupils use their knowledge of number well in some subjects, for example in geography in Key Stage 3 they use pie and bar charts to good effect in representing data.
6. The school sets and meets challenging targets for improving standards of attainment. Its faith in being able to fulfil these was justified in the most recent results, where standards were better than in the previous year. This is a further indication of the school's renewed pride in itself and its will to succeed.
7. Pupils achieve very well in information and communication technology, and well in English, science, art and design, geography and physical education across the years. Achievement is also good in design and technology and religious education in Years 7 to 9 and in music in Years 10 to 11. Achievement is satisfactory in mathematics and history across the years; in modern foreign languages and music in Years 7 to 9, and in design and technology in Years 10 and 11. Pupils do not achieve well enough in modern foreign languages and religious education in Years 10 and 11.
8. Pupils with special education needs make good progress overall in relation to their prior attainment. In Years 7 and 8, pupils with lower level reading and comprehension skills make good progress in groups withdrawn from lessons for special help, improving spelling and comprehension skills in well-planned activities that interest, motivate and challenge them. The achievement of pupils with statements of special educational need and those with less serious difficulties is good because they are well supported in class by teaching assistants who share good relationships with them. Able and talented pupils generally make the progress of which they are capable, through the provision of work that is appropriately challenging. The most able, notably those pupils achieving A* at GCSE in many subject areas and AS level in art and English at the age of 16 are achieving very well.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

9. Pupils' attitudes to school are very good. There is a high level of enthusiastic participation in all aspects of school life, including extra-curricular activities, especially sport. Pupils are very keen learners. However, the progress of a few is slowed down by their lack of enthusiasm for their work. Most pupils are attentive, keen to participate in lessons, work hard and enjoy lessons, particularly when they are actively engaged. For example, in a Year 9 French lesson the pupils thoroughly enjoyed the games used by the teacher and learnt well as a consequence.
10. Behaviour is very good in lessons and around the school, including breaks and lunchtime. This is particularly noticeable in the over-crowded corridors where pupils move in an orderly manner and show consideration for others. There is, however, a

small minority whose behaviour in lessons is unsatisfactory. The exclusion rate is in line with the national average for schools of similar size.

11. Personal development is good and pupils mature as they progress through the school, taking considerable responsibility for their own learning and personal development through setting their own targets weekly in their logbooks. Pupils willingly take on responsibilities such as representing their tutor group on the year group forums. These forums have contributed to many changes in the school, including designing feature tiles, which are now incorporated in the tiling of the refurbished toilet facilities. Older pupils take on responsibilities, such as sports and house captaincies and acting as guides to new parents.
12. Relationships between pupils are very good. They play harmoniously together and work very well together in lessons when involved in group activities or working in pairs. The few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds relate well with other pupils. This is particularly noticeable in information and communication technology lessons, where pupils share responsibilities and offer each other advice and support. Pupils are very secure and confident in their relationships with teachers and other adults. Staff, in turn, give a very positive lead in nurturing good relationships, giving praise and encouragement at every opportunity. Pupils show great respect for others' property and feel secure about leaving their bags and coats unattended. Pupils respect the feelings, values and beliefs of others, for example in a Year 10 personal, health and social education lesson on apartheid, pupils showed a clear understanding of the feelings of others.
13. Levels of attendance are above the national average and there is little unauthorised absence. Punctuality is occasionally affected by the late running of the buses in the morning, but lessons begin on time. The majority of pupils come to lessons on time.
14. Since the last inspection attitudes, relationships, personal development and attendance have improved and are now very good. The good standards of behaviour noted then have been maintained.
15. Pupils with special educational needs respond well to the care they receive. In the learning support unit, groups withdrawn for special help are keen to learn and to take responsibility for organising small equipment, with the consequence that most gain confidence in their work.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

16. The overall quality of teaching is good across the years and steadily improving as a result of some sensitive and helpful monitoring and the quality of support for teachers experiencing difficulties. Improvements in teaching, particularly through the greater emphasis on pupils' learning, are having a significant impact on the rate pupils make advances in knowledge and skill.
17. Of the lessons seen, teaching was excellent in one in every 19 lessons; very good in around one in three; good in just under half; satisfactory in one in seven and unsatisfactory in just a few. Teaching is very good in English, art and design, history and physical education in Years 10 and 11; in information and communication technology in all years and in religious education in Years 7 to 9. It is good in mathematics, science, design and technology, geography and music in all years and in English, art and design, history, modern foreign languages and physical education in Years 7 to 9. Teaching is satisfactory in modern foreign languages in Years 10 to 11; it

is unsatisfactory in religious education in these years as a result of insufficient expertise to teach the subject.

18. A key to the success of many lessons lies in the quality of the teachers' planning. Great care is taken to ensure that all pupils are included in the proceedings to the full extent of their capabilities, with the result that pupils at all levels of attainment have a sense of achievement and take pride in their work. A striking feature of many lessons is the effective way that teachers communicate to the pupils the aims of the lesson, setting out very sharply what the pupils are expected to learn. Constant reference to where the lesson is heading keeps pupils aware of how well they are doing.
19. The teachers' high expectations for attainment inform much teaching but are particularly evident in the teaching of English and information and communication technology, where the attainments of pupils, whether modest or striking, are clearly the results of their very best efforts. Pupils themselves thrive in lessons where they know what counts as excellence in their work. They rise to the challenge of even the most demanding work when they realise the teachers believe in them and in their capacity for sustained effort.
20. The skilful use of questioning is another strength. This is particularly evident in the way many teachers use exploratory questions in order to find out what the pupils already know. This leads to the very structured extension of pupils' ideas and skills and ensures that time is used well. In the best lessons, pupils are encouraged to provide extended answers, to clarify the concepts they use and to give reasons for their opinions. Many teachers show considerable skill in testing for understanding through progressively demanding questions. They rephrase and recast their questions in order to ensure that all the pupils are included in discussion. This is in marked contrast to those less helpful lessons where questioning tends to be directed at the more confident and assured pupils.
21. The quality of the relationships between the teachers and the pupils and the stimulating learning environment created in the classrooms are further strengths. Teachers are good at combining serious intentions with a lightness of touch. This encourages the pupils to take risks and give their imaginations free rein. There are a few lessons where the behaviour of some, although not malevolent, would test the patience of the even the most understanding teachers. However, even when tested to the limits, teachers are usually consistent in seeking solutions that are humane and forgiving. Homework is generally used well to support independent study; its quality and use in enriching pupils' learning vary from unsatisfactory in mathematics to very good in English and physical education.
22. Teaching is occasionally weakened when teachers do not trust the pupils enough to think for themselves, despite the fact that the pupils generally thrive on the opportunity to explore ideas in groups or through open discussion. Where the pace of lessons is too slow, pupils are happy to let the teacher do all the work, while they settle for a modest pace to their efforts. Introductions are occasionally too lengthy to fire pupils' enthusiasm, with the consequence that a few pupils are willing to enliven the proceedings with some idle chatter. There are a few lessons, too, where the tasks are set at a level that is too low for the higher-attaining pupils, with the result that they settle for modest achievements.
23. The use of assessment in teaching is very varied across the subjects. It is used excellently in English and very well in science. It is used well in mathematics, geography, history, modern foreign languages, music, physical education and religious

education. In these subjects, teachers know their pupils' levels of attainment well and communicate them clearly to the pupils. Assessment is not used well enough in design and technology.

24. The school's commitment to the inclusion of all pupils to the full extent of their capabilities is revealed in the quality of teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs, which is good overall. Some very good teaching of these pupils was observed in the lower sets in Year 7 geography, Year 9 design and technology and Year 10 mathematics where teachers used an effective range of resources, questioning effectively to stimulate and motivate pupils so they came to understand some fundamental ideas. Activities in these lessons were well matched to pupils' needs through the use of an imaginative range of strategies to engage their interests. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning in lessons and in additional literacy lessons for those pupils withdrawn from lessons for special help. Teaching assistants' attentive, flexible and sensitive handling of difficult pupils is commendable. Teachers and assistants know their pupils well; their very good relationships and careful planning help pupils feel more confident. For example, in a well-organised Year 9 geography lesson, planning between the teacher and teaching assistant was thorough and, as a result, contributed to effective teaching and learning. Pupils with concentration and behaviour difficulties work well in small groups, where, for example, they engage in a range of challenging and enjoyable activities to increase their knowledge of past and present tenses in French. The pace is kept lively so that pupils stay focused on the tasks set and enjoy the experience of success as they achieve their targets. Planning for pupils with individual education plans is good. Targets in lessons are realistic and usefully include those targets that are written into pupils' planners. Some good additional and appropriately challenging work for the more able pupils was observed in physical education, art and design and geography. The school identifies the able pupils and those with particular talents. Teachers allow for their capability of rapid development, with the consequence most of these pupils make good advances in learning.
25. The teaching of literacy is gathering pace. Literacy is generally taught well across the curriculum through, for example, good emphasis on the technical language of subjects and the encouragement of note-taking and reading. The very good use of the library is now becoming a more common feature of teaching. The teaching of numeracy has been slower to take off, but is beginning to have an impact on standards of work and is satisfactory overall. The use of information and communication technology in teaching has been improved significantly and is now generally good. There are a few departments, however, which do not use computers enough, notably mathematics and design and technology. On the other hand, there is very good use of relevant hardware and software in science, geography, history and music.
26. Pupils are good learners and make effective use of the opportunities provided for independent work. They make good strides in the acquisition of knowledge, understanding and skill. Where advances in knowledge are modest, pupils are not given enough encouragement to think for themselves or to extend their ideas by further reflection on their implications. Pupils make a big effort in lessons to produce good work. Where the teacher is sensitive to the different learning needs in the lesson, for example, by asking questions at the right level and by making the task clear, pupils feel more at ease in lessons and are more willing to get productively involved. Pupils tend to work attentively without the constant intervention of the teacher. Most pupils have a good knowledge of how well they are achieving. Learning is occasionally impeded when teachers, often unwittingly, answer their own questions and do not allow pupils the opportunity to become genuinely involved in discussion.

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

27. The curriculum provided by the school for its pupils is satisfactory. It meets all the requirements of the National Curriculum, apart from the statutory provision for religious education for older pupils, where there is insufficient planned time to teach the locally agreed syllabus. The curriculum incorporates appropriate elements of religious education for pupils up to the age of 14, sex and drugs education, careers education and work experience. Pupils up to 14 years of age are taught in groups, in most subjects, based on their prior attainment. These arrangements work well. The time available for Spanish is not sufficient to give pupils enough practice in using the language in paired and group work and this affects their attainment and progress. The time allocated to teaching music to pupils in Year 7 is insufficient, with the consequence that pupils' progress is impeded. There is a clearly worked out equal opportunities policy but, in the current Year 9, there is an inequality of provision for 20 pupils who receive only one hour of physical education a week in order to be able to study a second foreign language. All other pupils in the year receive two hours physical education per week. This was an issue at the last inspection and has not been addressed. Pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated with support in lessons. The school aims to ensure that all pupils, irrespective of talent or temperament, are included in all that is provided to the full extent of their competence. For example, the able and talented pupils are given the opportunity to take GCSE examinations early in art and design and English and successful candidates take AS level examinations when they are 16 years of age.
28. The governors exercise their responsibilities for the curriculum and monitor overall provision well. In order to meet the needs of some older pupils more appropriately, changes are being made to the post-14 curriculum. A new curriculum is being introduced this year, providing pupils with a reduction in the number of GCSEs studied and opportunities to achieve certificates in a range of areas for their national records of achievement. At the moment there is not enough emphasis on vocational education and training and the world of work. Since the last inspection the Youth Award Scheme has been discontinued. There are now insufficient vocational options for pupils. In Year 11 a group of 17 pupils do not take modern foreign languages in order to give more time to developing their basic literacy and numeracy skills. This arrangement is working well.
29. There are effective strategies in place for improving literacy across the curriculum. The recent appointment of a head of the English department has accelerated the development of the literacy policy across the school. The school works well at the development of the pupils' skills in numeracy. Pupils get a good foundation in basic numeracy in mathematics lessons. All departments have a clearly worked out numeracy policy, which is generally implemented consistently.
30. The provision for extra-curricular activities is good, with a programme that takes place at lunchtimes and after school. Lunchtime activities are largely subject based and do much to improve levels of attainment, especially those that are directly linked to revision or preparation for examinations in geography, information and communication technology and science. Sports activities are very popular, with a good range of activities and clubs to extend pupils' interests. A large number of fixtures against other schools involve pupils' participation in local, regional and national competitions. Science and design and technology operate the very successful 'Rocket Club', organise stimulating visits to a good range of museums and a residential trip. In music,

80 pupils have extra instrumental lessons each week with a full range of musical instruments. This has a very positive impact on the development of their enthusiasm for music. There is provision for effective fieldwork in geography and very good links with a local sixth form college, where pupils attend for elements of coursework. There are good links, too, with Manchester Metropolitan University.

31. Good links with the local community are continuously fostered. The school has successful links with a local primary school, whose pupils visit weekly, to be taught by the department and for primary teachers to be given support in their teaching. The impact of this arrangement is evident in the quality of the pupils' work in gymnastics and dance.
32. Productive links with local industry have been established. Year 10 pupils benefit from the period of work experience that widens their horizons and provides contacts with the local community.
33. Curriculum provision for pupils with special educational needs, overall, is satisfactory. The development of a structured programme of literacy to raise reading and spelling ages of those pupils with very low scores has been improved since the last inspection. Pupils with special educational needs are entered for GCSE examinations whenever possible, achieving in the lower grades. The range of opportunities to prepare for work-related study is limited. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated in mainstream lessons in lower-ability set groups; work is planned appropriately towards their targets. The quality of pupils' individual education and behaviour support plans are good and all have appropriate individual literacy and behaviour targets. Provision for able and talented pupils is satisfactory. These pupils have not yet been identified on a register; however, initiatives to support the right level of work are planned appropriately in many subjects.
34. The school caters very well for the personal development of pupils. The pastoral system is a strength. The personal, social and health education programme does much to introduce pupils to a range of topics that are central to their personal development. It makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development as well as preparing them well for life beyond school. The curriculum is broad and balanced and includes citizenship, study skills, health education and careers education. This is well delivered by the form tutors and through the general curriculum, which results in good learning by the pupils. Learning is also well supported by talks from outside agencies such as the careers service and the police. Curricular provision has improved overall since the previous inspection.
35. The school's overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development is good. This represents an improvement since the previous inspection. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. Pupils experience a daily act of worship in accordance with statutory requirements. Religious education offers very good insights into values and religious beliefs. In physical education pupils celebrate and recognise each other's achievements. In history pupils are required to reflect on the holocaust, and several other subjects provide opportunities for reflection.
36. Moral education is good. Expectations about standards of behaviour are clear. Teachers are good role models and pupils are fully aware of the difference between right and wrong. In information and communication technology pupils explore moral issues surrounding the use of computers. The moral codes of different faiths are explored in religious education. Geography lessons provide opportunities for pupils to consider such ethical issues as concern for the environment and differences in wealth

between different countries. In most subjects teachers emphasise the need for respect for others' opinions. Year 9 pupils' awareness of racism is developed in English lessons.

37. The provision for social development is very good. The ethos of the school promotes a caring attitude and good personal relationships. Pupils take part in team games and sports and a wide range of activities in music. Co-operative working also promotes the social development of pupils in such subjects as design and technology, geography, history, modern foreign languages and personal, social and health education. In art and design, a project on Land Art allows pupils to explore social aspects of the local environment. The social consequences of smoking and alcohol are studied in science lessons. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility through such initiatives as the school forum. In several subjects they take a measure of responsibility for their own learning, as seen in the way they organise their coursework. There are very good opportunities in art and design for pupils to take responsibility for the organisation of equipment and for independent learning development in sketchbooks, when pupils organise their own personal space effectively.
38. Provision for pupils' cultural development is good. The school organises a comprehensive programme of visits that are curriculum linked. For example, the history department organises visits to Styal museum near Manchester. The school is the only one that is using pupils' projects to add information to the museum's website. In GCSE physical education pupils explore cultural differences in sport. The library has a good range of reference books in art on multicultural themes. Religious education places emphasis on the study of world religions, while geography offers several opportunities for the study of such diverse societies as Japan, Kenya and Brazil. In the past the modern foreign language department has organised visits to France, but there are none organised currently. In information and communication technology pupils begin to develop a sense of audience in designing presentations, but a sharper focus on this would raise the quality of the work of higher-attaining pupils. The previous inspection report suggested that the school concentrated too much on western culture. The study of other cultures now receives more prominence. Pupils are taught well about cultural diversity in British society today.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

39. Procedures for monitoring pupils' academic performance and personal development are good. They have improved since the previous inspection. The educational and personal support and guidance pupils receive is satisfactory.
40. Full use is made of all available data in monitoring pupils' academic performance. At the beginning of Year 10 past test results and teachers' assessments are used effectively to predict pupils' GCSE grades in each subject. Attainment measured by internal examinations continues to be compared against predictions and any underachievement is followed up using academic progress check sheets. Also, following the mock examinations in Year 11, underachievers are well supported by mentors who help pupils to manage their time, particularly in respect of meeting coursework deadlines.
41. The quality of care and welfare for pupils with special educational needs is good. Pupils are identified in Year 6 in the primary schools. Reassessment in Year 7 is thorough. The pupils' progress is monitored regularly. Additional assessments in reading are used well to help pupils and parents to understand the levels of attainment reached. Support for pupils requiring physiotherapy, and for pupils with hearing or

visual impairment is good. Annual reviews fully meet requirements. Attendance by parents at review meetings is good.

42. Pupils receive good personal support and guidance, which makes a significant contribution to their personal development. The arrangement by which pupils normally stay with their tutor group for five years works well. Tutors know their pupils very well, are sensitive to their needs and thus able to provide good personal support and guidance. Further support is provided by heads of year and more senior members of the pastoral care team, who work closely together addressing whole-school issues as well as the needs of individual pupils. The very good relationships between pupils and staff gives pupils confidence to raise any concerns they may have, knowing that they will be dealt with sympathetically.
43. Pupils' personal development is well monitored through their individual logbooks. These logbooks monitor effectively attendance, punctuality, attitudes, behaviour, achievement inside and outside school and progress against personal targets. The arrangement by which the group tutors monitor academic and personal progress helps pupils and teachers to keep a sharp eye on the progress made by individual pupils.
44. Child protection procedures are unsatisfactory. Whilst these procedures meet most of the requirements, the school has not ensured that all staff are appropriately trained in child protection.
45. Whilst procedures for preserving a safe environment are satisfactory and the premises are checked very frequently, there remains a safety risk in that vehicles are parked on the road outside the school at the beginning and the end of the day in such a way that visibility is obscured. First aid arrangements meet local authority requirements, but the medical room is unsuitable to be used as such. The school is aware of this and plans are well in hand for this to be rectified.
46. Procedures for promoting good behaviour and eliminating oppressive behaviour are very good. The policy provides clear guidance on promoting good behaviour, for example the awarding of merit marks. Unacceptable behaviour is categorised into seven stages together with their associated sanctions. The discipline sub-committee of the governing body is also involved when exclusion is envisaged. Pupils, form representatives and members of the school forum were involved in the preparation of the behaviour policy and as a consequence conform willingly to the high standards expected.
47. Procedures for monitoring and promoting regular attendance are excellent. Attendance is carefully monitored using a computerised system and absence is followed up appropriately, with very good support provided by the education welfare officer and local police. The importance of regular attendance is promoted very strongly through announcing achievements weekly in assembly and through awarding certificates for good attendance. Pupils also record their weekly attendance in their logbooks.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

48. There is a good partnership with parents, which makes a positive contribution to pupils' successful learning. This partnership has developed well since the previous inspection. Parents are very satisfied with all aspects of the school, except the provision of homework, information on children's progress and the way the school works with parents. Most parents feel comfortable about approaching the school with problems and feel that the school expects their children to work hard and achieve their

best. They believe, too, that their children make good progress and that teaching is good. The inspection team fully endorses these positive views. However, the team considers that the provision of homework is satisfactory, that information on pupils' progress is very good and that the school does work closely with parents.

49. Parents are satisfactorily informed about the school through the prospectus, the governors' annual report, termly newsletters and letters about specific events. Also they are satisfactorily informed about the curriculum through the prospectus and leaflets in the homework diary. Parents of Key Stage 4 pupils receive clear information on coursework including deadlines for submission of work.
50. Information to parents about their children's progress is very good. Annual consultation evenings for parents are supported by excellent annual reports, which tell parents everything they need to know. These reports include grades for attainment and effort, National Curriculum levels, results of recent internal tests and what pupils need to do to improve. This gives parents a clear picture of how well their children are doing and where they need support.
51. Parent of pupils with special needs receive very good information from annual reviews and pupils' individual education plans. The learning support unit keeps good records of communication between parents and relevant professionals. Parents and outside specialists are effectively involved at all stages of assessment. The quality of support from external agencies is very good.
52. The school works closely with parents at all stages of their children's education and very closely at the crucial stages. For example, when deciding GCSE options, parents attend a general meeting, which is followed up later with individual interviews. If a unanimous view is not reached then a further interview is arranged. This procedure is very successful and there are virtually no changes in options.
53. Parents provide good support for their children's learning through high attendance at parents' meetings and very good attendance at events in which their children are involved. Parents also help at fund-raising events organised by the school, and the very good support for supermarket voucher schemes has resulted in the acquisition of a considerable amount of computer equipment.
54. Parents are involved in their children's homework through signing homework diaries and through the home/school Intranet link. In the New Year, trials will take place on connecting the school's interactive white board to home computers, which will further involve parents in their children's learning.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

55. The school is well led and managed. The headteacher, ably supported by his deputy and other members of the senior management group, provides very clear and inspirational direction to the work of the school. He has an imaginative grasp of what is needed to continue to strengthen the school's work and communicates to the staff his infectious enthusiasm for innovation that works. His style of leadership encourages the involvement of all the staff in working out the best way forward, with the consequence that the school is driven by a sense of common purpose. The senior management group combines a good mixture of talents and temperaments where earnestness is balanced by reflection on practical implications of change and dreams and wishes are translated into concrete things to be done. The school moves forward at a pace that ensures that teachers are liberated by change and not burdened by it. A key to the

current smooth running of the school is the clarity with which key management tasks have been defined and the way in which the school's aims are reflected in all that it does. The performance review group and the pastoral group relate clearly to the senior management group, with the consequence that policies and procedures are generally implemented consistently across the school.

56. Delegation of responsibilities works well as care is taken to ensure that those who are given additional responsibilities have the skills and support to carry them out. This is very evident, for example, in the case of the two key stage co-ordinators, who do sterling work in the development and implementation of key policies. Good delegation is also revealed in the generally good leadership and management of departments. English is excellently led and managed. The leadership and management of science, art and design, information and communication technology, music and religious education are very good. Geography, history, modern foreign languages and physical education are well led and managed, whilst the leadership and management of mathematics and design and technology are satisfactory.
57. The quality of leadership and management of the special needs department is good. The work of this department bears eloquent witness to the school's aim to ensure that all pupils, irrespective of talent or temperament, are included in all that is offered to the full extent of their competence. The commitment and organisation of the acting head of unit and teaching assistants, during a period of recruitment for a new co-ordinator, is effective in maintaining a caring and positive environment where pupils feel secure. Of note is the commendable contribution made by teaching assistants to pupils' learning in the break, lunch and after school clubs. All share a strong commitment to integrating pupils with special educational needs into mainstream groups and have considerable success in doing so. Accommodation and resources are good and additional funding is well used to support special needs development in the school.
58. The governors have steadily formed themselves into a cohesive team and are well led in carrying out their key responsibilities. They have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and of the areas where improvement is needed. They have been closely involved in the formulation of policies and procedures and in establishing the school's priorities for development. There is evidence in the minutes of their meetings of considerable debate on matters of significance. Their committee structure is well organised. The proceedings of their meetings are appropriately recorded. The governors have ensured that all statutory requirements are met, apart from those relating to the provision of religious education to pupils aged 14 to 16, where there is inadequate coverage of the agreed syllabus for the provision of religious education. The governors keep a sharp eye on the management of the budget through the clear information they receive from the school.
59. The monitoring of teaching is carried out with rigour and sensitivity. Teachers who need support are given it. Good practice is identified and every attempt is made to spread it across the school. The system of performance management works to the advantage of all the teachers and has done much to encourage excellence. The support given to teachers acknowledges the fact that they have lives beyond school that also need to be acknowledged and supported. Overall, the school exhibits in its life and relationships what it seeks to engender in the pupils, namely a deep respect for one another and an appreciation of their own and others' talents.
60. The governors and the staff work hard to ensure that the right priorities are identified for development and that these directly influence the work of departments. The development plan is clear and precise, revealing a strong sense of what is desirable,

but also possible. Spending is closely linked to planning. This represents a considerable improvement on what existed at the time of the previous inspection when departmental plans were not connected to overall school planning and the financial implications of planning were not addressed adequately. The action required to meet the school's targets for development is worked out in detail and rooted in a realistic estimate of the timescales required. The school thrives on the staff's shared commitment to succeed and move forward.

61. The school's finances are managed very well by a very efficient finance office. Clear accounts of current expenditure are readily available. The governors are provided with very good levels of financial information to support them in their responsibility to hold the school to account for how it spends the budget. A key strength in the school's drive towards greater efficiency is the very effective way it conducts its own tendering arrangements. This arrangement has led to considerable savings and improvements in the quality of services. Information and communication technology is used to very good effect in the administration of the school and in supporting the pupils' learning. Grants received by the school for specific purposes are carefully directed towards the purposes they were intended to serve.
62. There is a good level of qualified and experience staff to support the teaching of the full range of the curriculum, apart from food technology where expertise is limited. The expertise of staff in some key areas has been improved significantly over the last few years. Accommodation is good, as is the level of resources to support learning. There are very good resources for teaching information and communication technology. The resources are used efficiently and clearly serve the interests of all the pupils. In this respect, the management of the library is excellent. The librarian is very skilled in developing imaginative ways of encouraging greater use of books and other resources. Her work has a pivotal role in improving literacy across the school.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to take the school further forward in its development and build on its strengths the governors and staff should:

1) Raise standards in design and technology at both key stages by:

- strengthening the expertise of the department in the teaching of food technology;
- ensuring that teachers meet the learning needs of all pupils;
- using information gathered from assessment to identify more accurately the progress pupils make.
(paragraphs 107, 108)

2) Raise standards in modern foreign languages by:

- placing greater emphasis on the development of listening and speaking skills in Years 10 and 11;
- making greater use of paired and group work.
(paragraphs 134, 135, 137)

3) Raise standards in music at Key Stage 3 by:

- seeking to improve practice facilities that allow pupils to work undisturbed;
- increasing the time allocated for music lessons in Year 7;
(paragraphs 141, 143,)

4) Raise standards in religious education at Key Stage 4 by:

- meeting fully the requirements of the agreed syllabus for the provision of religious education in Years 10 and 11;
- seeking to improve the expertise of teachers who teach the subject.
(paragraphs 154, 155)

5) Address weaknesses in procedures for child protection by:

- ensuring that all staff are appropriately trained in child protection so that they are all in a strong position to identify children at risk.
(paragraphs 38, 43)

6) Extend the range of provision for vocational education.

(paragraph 28)

Other matters for the consideration of governors:

- i) Not all teachers respond well enough to the needs of the higher-attaining pupils.
(paragraphs 22, 70, 83, 117, 129, 144, 155, 157)
- ii) A risk to the safety of the students is created by the way that vehicles are parked on the road outside the school at the beginning and the end of the day, obscuring

visibility.
(paragraph 45)

Additional matters are raised at the beginning of individual subject reports.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

116

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

54

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	6	40	51	17	2	0	0
Percentage	5	34	44	15	2	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

Y7 – Y11

Number of pupils on the school's roll

756

Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals

70

Special educational needs

Y7 – Y11

Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs

32

Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register

116

English as an additional language

No of pupils

Number of pupils with English as an additional language

0

Pupil mobility in the last school year

No of pupils

Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission

25

Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving

28

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.3
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage (Year 9)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2001	83	62

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	39	42	46
	Girls	72	55	62
	Total	111	97	108
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	77 (65)	67 (62)	74 (57)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	26 (26)	41 (31)	39 (22)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	31	42	39
	Girls	61	47	50
	Total	92	89	89
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	63 (50)	61 (64)	61 (50)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	35 (16)	34 (35)	23 (19)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	53	56	109

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	21	51	51
	Girls	32	56	56
	Total	53	107	107
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	49 (40)	98 (97)	98 (98)
	National	49.8 (47.4)	88.8 (90.6)	94.5 (95.6)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	39 (38)
	National	39.1 (38.4)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	0
	National	N/A

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	4
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	746
Any other minority ethnic group	5

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	1	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	39	3
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)	41.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.3

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	597

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77.9
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	25.3
Key Stage 4	21.2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	1,668,395
Total expenditure	1,774,367
Expenditure per pupil	2,625
Balance brought forward from previous year	264,190
Balance carried forward to next year	158,218

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	13
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	21.6

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	756
Number of questionnaires returned	178

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	42	52	4	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	43	53	2	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	34	55	6	2	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	54	15	4	2
The teaching is good.	34	60	3	1	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	28	49	18	3	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	56	41	2	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	61	37	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	22	53	18	3	4
The school is well led and managed.	39	53	3	0	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	39	50	7	2	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	39	51	2	1	7

Other issues raised by parents

There were no other issues raised.

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

ENGLISH

Overall provision in English is **very good**.

Strengths

- Standards are improving well, especially for 16-year-olds
- Much very good and excellent teaching, leads to pupils making good or very good gains in learning
- Excellent leadership and management, and commitment by all teachers leads to smooth implementation of new policies and practices
- There are excellent assessment procedures and use of assessment to analyse strengths and weaknesses and to set pupils targets for improvement
- There is very good monitoring and sharing of good practice in teaching

Areas for improvement

- There are too few visits and limited extra-curricular provision
- In a few lessons, the range of strategies used to meet the needs of higher-attaining pupils is limited

63. In 2001, overall attainment in the GCSE examinations was around average in English language and English literature. The results in English for pupils in Year 11 show a considerable variation in attainment between boys and girls. The proportion of boys achieving an A*-C grade in English language was in line with the national average, but the proportion achieving an A*-C grade in English literature was below the national average. In contrast, the proportion of girls achieving an A*-C grade in English language was above the national average, whilst the proportion achieving an A*-C grade in literature was close to the national average. A high proportion of pupils achieved A*-G grades in both examinations. The school entered all its pupils for the literature examination, which is relatively unusual practice nationally. Boys attained at a similar level in English language in 2000 and 2001, although there was a decline in their literature results between the two years. In contrast, girls' results, whilst consistent in literature, rapidly improved from 2000 to 2001 in English language, raising the overall level of attainment in English. The inspection confirmed that overall standards in English for pupils between the ages of 14 and 16 are in line with national expectations. This represents good achievement for most pupils, including higher-attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs, in relation to their prior attainment at the age of 14 years. Although girls achieve better than boys, the gap in attainment has narrowed considerably.
64. The proportion of Year 9 pupils achieving Level 5 or above in the 2001 national tests in English was close to the national average, and in line with the average for similar schools nationally. This was in line with the results for the previous year and represented good achievement for pupils, many of whom had joined the school in Year 7 with below average skills in literacy. The rise in standards since 1999 has been greater than the national trend. In recent years, boys and girls have done better in English than in the other core subjects of mathematics and science, and although girls have achieved better than boys, the narrowing of the gap in attainment between boys and girls has been at a faster rate than the national trend. The evidence of the

inspection confirmed that overall standards of pupils in English by the end of Year 9 are in line with the expectations of similarly aged pupils nationally, and that the gap in attainment between girls and boys is not significant.

65. Between the ages of 11 and 14, pupils develop good listening skills. They listen well to the teacher and to each other. Higher-attaining pupils in particular develop good speaking skills, and contribute confidently in class, whereas lower-attaining pupils, whilst often keen to participate in debate, have less fluent command of standard English. They tend to respond better directly to the teacher than participate in sustained discussion. Pupils make satisfactory progress in developing their reading skills; whilst most read with reasonable fluency and accuracy, they are less adept at reading with expression. Pupils make good progress in developing the range and quality of their writing. They increasingly use a range of devices such as personification, metaphor and simile to add colour to their imaginative writing, whilst also showing an increasing awareness of the importance of settings and good characterisation to evoke interest in the reader. They improve their skill in critically analysing the media, for example when considering how newspapers cover stories about football violence or terrorism. They learn a range of literary terms when analysing Seamus Heaney's poetry and consider the different criteria they can use when dealing with fiction, factual writing and other genres. The quality of presentation is generally good, and many pupils take pride in their work through drafting and redrafting. The library is used effectively for focused research as well as a resource for reading for pleasure.
66. Lower-attaining pupils make less progress than others in improving the accuracy of their spelling, grammar and punctuation, and this sometimes detracts from the quality of their written work. Overall, however, pupils at all levels of attainment, including those with special educational needs, benefit from high quality teaching and make good progress in developing their English skills.
67. Pupils make good progress in developing their listening, speaking and writing skills between Years 9 and 11. They are particularly adept at learning how to back up their assertions about character, imagery and plot with precise detail when responding to questioning about texts such as 'An Inspector Calls' and Blake's 'Songs of Innocence and Experience'. The majority of pupils make good progress in improving their skills of critical analysis, as evident in the range of coursework completed mainly in Year 10. They learn to develop their capacity to appreciate literary devices and to make a personal response to various texts. Higher-achieving pupils produce some outstanding results, as seen for example in mature analyses of William Blake's poetry. Pupils make good progress in developing informative writing, as when considering the strengths and weaknesses of the judicial system. They also learn to compare texts such as 'Great Expectations' and 'A Christmas Carol', not only in terms of plot and characterisation but also in terms of the author's ability to create effective mood and atmosphere through various literary devices. The pupils' analyses of the relationship between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth show an effective balance between personal and critical response. As with younger pupils, the effectiveness of the critical analysis by lower-attaining pupils is sometimes reduced by frequent technical errors in the writing, although most pupils develop the research skills which enable them to show a good contextual awareness of the texts they study.
68. The overall quality of teaching in English is very good. The teaching of pupils between the ages of 11 and 14 is never less than satisfactory, whilst it is good or better in five out of six lessons, and very good or excellent in two out of three lessons. The teaching of pupils between the ages of 14 and 16 is never less than satisfactory and it is very

good or excellent in three out of every four lessons. The high quality teaching leads to very good gains in knowledge, understanding and basic skills, and the high qualities are seen in lessons in all year groups. A very strong feature of the teaching is the consistently high expectation of pupils' behaviour and attainment that is evident in many lessons. This, combined with very good classroom management, leads to briskly paced lessons in which, from start to finish, teachers maintain a purposeful working atmosphere, involving all pupils in a range of highly focused activities. One of several examples was a Year 10 lesson based around William Blake's 'The Sick Rose'; the teacher's refusal to compromise her high expectations of the pupils' critical abilities, and her relentless questioning and insistence on actively involving all pupils, led them on a voyage of discovery as they considered symbolism, characterisation, purpose and a range of other aspects. At the same time, they developed the confidence to disagree constructively with each other's interpretations.

69. Teachers also use questioning very effectively to reinforce and extend pupils' understanding. This was seen, for example, in a Year 11 lesson in which the teacher continually encouraged pupils to build on their analysis of 'An Inspector Calls' with specific examples and arguments, with the result that the precision of their analysis rapidly improved. Teachers use a good range of strategies to fulfil the objectives of their lessons, and are unafraid to adapt these strategies when beneficial. For example, in a Year 9 lesson focusing on a biographical account of a journey in Africa, an activity which raised sensitive issues such as racism, the teacher sensed the difficulty which some lower-attaining pupils had with the concepts and cleverly related the issues to more personal experiences of bullying and inter-cultural differences. This interested the pupils and deepened their understanding of the text. Another very strong feature of the teaching is the excellent assessment. Teachers mark work thoroughly, making it clear to pupils how well they have done and setting targets for improvement. One of the best examples was in a Year 7 lesson in which the teacher made the pupils focus on their personal targets, tested the pupils on their understanding of them, and showed them clearly how these targets could be used to improve their essay writing skills in a unit on Charles Dickens. The quality of the teaching is rewarded by very positive attitudes by the great majority of pupils. They want to do well, usually concentrate very well and are keen to participate in lessons. The result is often very good learning and a sense of personal achievement.
70. In a few lessons in which teaching is less effective, there is an occasional lack of challenge for the more able. For example, in a Year 9 lesson pupils were all taken through the structured stages of writing a letter, when more able pupils in the group would have benefited from fewer constraints on their writing. Occasionally discussions are very teacher-centred, and pupils are given insufficient opportunity to widen their discussions, even though pupils of all levels of ability are keen to venture their opinions and show considerable maturity when they have the opportunity to debate.
71. Leadership and management in English are excellent. In a short space of time, the relatively new head of department has transformed several features, making the department one of the strengths of the school. Policies and the scheme of work have been radically revised, effectively taking account of initiatives such as the National Literacy Strategy and providing a good framework for a relatively inexperienced but committed department to adopt co-ordinated approaches to the raising of standards. This is particularly evident in the excellent use of assessment to set challenging but realistic targets for pupils to improve; the auditing of past performance; detailed developmental planning; and the implementation of specific strategies, for example to improve the attainment of boys. Teaching is now effectively monitored and good teaching practice shared. Also commendable are the efforts to provide more

opportunities for able and talented pupils, for example by moving pupils between sets and entering some Year 11 pupils for the Advanced Supplementary examination. Overall the English department is acting as a vibrant force in the school, although it currently has a restricted range of trips and other extra-curricular activities, other than revision clubs, for pupils.

72. Overall standards in English continue to be in line with national averages at the ages of 14 and 16, as they were in 1997, although standards in English literature have improved. The overall quality of learning has improved, along with the degree of challenge for higher-attaining pupils, the quality and use of assessment, the quality of developmental planning and the quality of leadership and management. Therefore, overall, there has been good progress in English since the previous inspection.

Literacy

73. The whole-school literacy strategy is co-ordinated effectively and different departments have incorporated relevant policies within their own planning. During the inspection there were several examples of teachers encouraging the development of basic literacy skills. In English, art and design and history, teachers ask probing questions and emphasise to pupils the importance of clarity of language. Good speaking and listening skills are encouraged in lessons in personal, social and moral education. Teachers reinforce technical vocabulary in physical education and science lessons. Writing frames are used in geography to support lower-attaining pupils in their writing skills. Although many teachers encourage pupils to read aloud, the development of reading skills is more variable: whilst many pupils read fluently, as observed in geography, other opportunities were missed to encourage reading in history and mathematics lessons. Overall the implementation of a literacy policy, following the training of teachers, is beginning to have a positive effect upon raising standards, particularly in speaking, listening and writing.

MATHEMATICS

The quality of provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teaching is good, based on effective class management and secure subject knowledge
- The National Numeracy Strategy has had a strong impact on planning and teaching of the mathematics curriculum in Years 7, 8 and 9
- Pupils' very good behaviour and positive attitudes towards mathematics help them to learn effectively and to enjoy the subject
- There are good relationships between teachers and pupils; the quality of discussion in lessons is good and pupils feel they are encouraged to do their best

Areas for improvement

- The planning of the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is not clear enough, especially the planning for the highest-attaining pupils
- The amount of homework set is not enough to make sure that pupils confidently recall previously covered work; it also does not help them to develop independent study skills
- Not all teachers provide enough challenging work for higher-attaining pupils

74. Standards on entry to the school are improving. Pupils currently in Years 10 and 11 entered the school with below average skills and knowledge in mathematics. Those in Years 7, 8 and 9 entered with average standards for their ages; Year 7 being better than Years 8 and 9.
75. In Year 9, attainment is in line with national expectations. The National Curriculum Key Stage 3 test results in 2001 are in line with national averages, and below those of similar schools. In 2000, the results were below national averages, and well below those of similar schools. The improvements in 2001 are particularly strong in the increased proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels. The standards of work seen during the inspection are in line with national expectations and confirm the picture given by the test results. In 1997, standards reached in external tests fell sharply, but have improved steadily since then.
76. In Year 11, the standards of the work seen during the inspection are in line with national expectations. In 2001, all pupils were entered for the General Certificate of Secondary Education examination and all received a pass grade. The proportion getting a grade in the A*-C range was in line with national averages. Only a small proportion got A*, A or B grades. The great majority were grade Cs. Comparison of the 2001 GCSE results with those of schools with similar prior attainment at Key Stage 3 (i.e. similar 1998 Key Stage 3 test results) shows that overall results were in line with the average. Results in 2001 are better than those in 2000, as a result of the higher proportion gaining D grades, as opposed to grades F and G.
77. The comparative attainment of boys and girls in external assessments fluctuates, although not significantly. In 2001, boys performed better than girls. During the inspection, no significant difference was seen in attainment or achievement by gender in written work. However, in many classes, boys asked or answered questions more often than girls. Girls tend to answer correctly if asked, but are not as likely as the boys are to volunteer answers. There are no pupils who need support in acquiring fluency in English. Teachers know their pupils well, and plan carefully to meet any special educational needs. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is similar to others in the class.
78. In Years 7, 8, 9 and 10, pupils reach average standards across all aspects of mathematics. Pupils are good at explaining what methods they are using and why. This helps to consolidate their learning and shows if there are any areas of difficulties. No Year 11 lessons took place during the inspection, due to examinations. The scrutiny of the written work of Year 11 pupils showed that many of the higher-attaining pupils did not have sufficient algebraic skills to match their skills in other aspects of mathematics, making it more difficult for them to reach the higher grades in external examinations.
79. Achievement over time is satisfactory throughout the school for pupils at all levels of attainment. Teachers set homework regularly, in accordance with school and departmental policy, to help pupils consolidate classwork. However, this homework is frequently too brief, as pupils do not have textbooks to take home. Homework tasks often consist of a worksheet or examples copied down from the board. This restricts the range and amount of work available to pupils, and does not develop their independent learning and revision skills.
80. Progress in lessons for nearly all pupils, including those with special educational needs, is generally good throughout the school. Good teaching, pupils' positive

attitudes and very good behaviour are all key factors in this good learning. The standards of presentation of nearly all written work are good; showing pupils work hard in class and want to succeed. The organisation of pupils into sets based on prior attainment usually works well, but some of these groups are too large. Classes for pupils with special educational needs are smaller. During the inspection a class of 37 was observed in Year 8. This made it more difficult for the teacher to pay attention to the progress of all pupils.

81. The quality of teaching and learning is good. It is very good in around one-third of lessons, good in another five lessons out of 14, and satisfactory in the remaining four out of 14. Good lesson planning, based on the National Numeracy Strategy in Years 7, 8 and 9, helps teachers to prepare an appropriate sequence of activities. This, and their secure knowledge of mathematics, helps them target work at the correct level for a particular group. Teachers know their pupils well. Pupils are not given work that is too difficult, and so enjoy learning and make good progress. Occasionally, the work planned is too easy for some higher-attaining pupils, so they do not make as much progress as they should. All teachers make sure that pupils understand, use and spell key mathematical words.
82. All teachers use short 'starter activities' well to get pupils thinking mathematically and to prepare them for the main focus of the lesson. This, combined with well-established classroom routines, helps the pupils to learn. Teachers are able to make the most of the time available. In one lower-attaining class in Year 9, where teaching and learning were very good, the teacher asked pupils to place counters in given positions on a prepared overhead projector grid. The teacher could quickly see what pupils did, or did not, understand about positive and negative co-ordinates. The pupils enjoyed showing their friends what they could do well, and were ready to try something harder. Both these factors increased the rate of learning.
83. Teachers use questions and discussions to help pupils explore different aspects of mathematics. In one Year 10 class, searching questions on probability really made pupils think about what the concept meant. Because of the teacher's skill, pupils were able to attempt tasks that initially appeared to be too difficult. This helped them to make very good progress. When teaching is satisfactory, rather than good or very good, the higher-attaining pupils in the class are not given sufficiently difficult work quickly enough. Sometimes the amount of time the teacher spends helping individuals slows progress for the rest of the class. The lack of textbooks also means that teachers sometimes find it difficult to have sufficiently challenging work ready quickly for those pupils who make more rapid progress than expected.
84. Pupils' work is marked regularly, according to school policy. Pupils understand what they are doing well, but are not always sure what they have to do to reach the next level. Teachers provide good support outside lessons, for example through revision clubs. Analysis of external test and examination results is used well to identify areas for improvement. Improving the standard of coursework by higher-attaining pupils is one such area that has been tackled. The head of department regularly observes others' teaching. However, the information gained is not used sufficiently to identify the most effective strategies in raising standards.
85. The management of the department is satisfactory. The mathematics staff are appropriately qualified and work co-operatively. After a period of some change, staffing has stabilised, and a new full-time mathematics teacher was appointed this year. The mathematics curriculum meets statutory requirements.

86. The National Numeracy Strategy is used effectively to manage change in Years 7, 8 and 9. However, not enough has yet been done to improve curriculum planning in Years 10 and 11, particularly for the highest-attaining pupils. There is only one class in Year 11 following a course aiming for the highest tier of entry at GCSE. It is unlikely that more than half will eventually take this paper; the rest taking a different one. The planning for this diverse group needs improving, so those aiming for A* and A grades are thoroughly prepared over both Years 10 and 11.
87. The department makes satisfactory use of information and communication technology, for example using spreadsheets in Year 7 to generate number sequences. Satisfactory progress has been made in tackling the issues raised at the last inspection. Teaching has improved, especially the proportion of very good teaching. The new accommodation provides a good atmosphere for learning mathematics.

Numeracy

88. Standards of numeracy across the curriculum are satisfactory. Pupils receive a good foundation of skills and knowledge in mathematics lessons. All departments have a numeracy policy and pupils' skills help them to make progress in other subjects. Pupils develop formulae for use in spreadsheets in information and communication technology. Pupils in geography in Key Stage 3 use graphical techniques, such as pie and bar charts, to represent data. Higher-attaining pupils at Key Stage 4 use correlation techniques, such as scatter graphs and lines of best fit, when analysing their fieldwork data in geography.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- The improvements since the previous inspection and particularly the rise in standards seen in the results of the National Curriculum assessment tests and in GCSE
- A strong staff who communicate well and share good practice to improve their teaching
- The improved resources in information and communication technology and their regular use to enhance learning

Areas for improvement

- There is a need for more laboratory space; teaching science in classrooms reduces practical opportunities
- Technical support is insufficient in a science department of this size

89. GCSE examination results in 2001 were above the national average with 58 per cent of pupils gaining an A*-C grade compared with 52 per cent nationally. The percentage of pupils achieving the higher grades of A* and A is in line with the national average. The girls' attainment was significantly better than the boys with 61.8 per cent gaining an A*-C grade against 52.9 per cent of the boys. All pupils achieved an A*-G grade, an achievement maintained over several years. These results are above the national average. The results are above those of similar schools and have improved significantly since the previous inspection.
90. The 2001 results in the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9 were above

the national average. The boys' results were higher than those of the girls with 76.6 per cent reaching Level 5 and above compared with the girl's attainment of 70.9 per cent. At Level 6 or above the difference was more pronounced with 46.6 per cent of the boys reaching above average levels compared to 32.1 per cent of the girls. Four pupils reached Level 8, which is exceptional achievement.

91. In work seen during the inspection, standards were above national expectations by the end of Year 11. As their knowledge increases and their practical skills improve, Year 11 pupils deal confidently with a range of activities. Their strength lies in coursework based on practical investigative activities. The examination board has praised the moderation of the coursework and its overall quality on several occasions. In a Year 10 class of average and below average prior attainment, average-attaining pupils had a secure grasp of the names of the parts of an ignition system and explained appropriately their operation. Pupils with below average attainment gave creditable explanations of erosion in rocks caused by water in crevices. Pupils in a Year 10 class of above average prior attainment could work out the properties of different groups of elements in the periodic table.
92. By the end of Year 11, pupils consolidate their GCSE coursework well. Planning and observation are good, but analysis and evaluation less so. Scrutiny of the experimental investigations shows them to be well presented with good spelling. Graphs are accurately drawn and results are neatly tabulated. The amount of independent investigative work the pupils do has improved since the previous inspection, but opportunities need to be increased to extend this further.
93. In work seen during the inspection, standards are above the national expectation by the end of Year 9. Pupils have well-developed literacy skills, reading and writing with confidence. They have good listening skills, but too often their speaking skills are undermined by the incorrect use of grammar. They produce good quality extended writing and generally pay attention to spelling and punctuation. Pupils in Year 7 show enthusiasm when testing substances to see if they are acids or alkalis. A Year 8 class of mainly average prior attainment knows that nicotine in tobacco smoke is addictive.
94. All pupils make good progress from Year 7 to Year 11. In a Year 7 class, pupils with special educational needs make good progress in classifying elements into various groups because of the clear explanations of the teacher and their own determination to succeed. In a Year 8 class, pupils of above average prior attainment have good understanding of the vocabulary of genetics because the teacher uses the words regularly and assesses the pupils' knowledge with frequent questions.
95. Above average attaining pupils in a Year 10 class have a very clear understanding of the rate at which lithium, sodium and potassium react with water because of the very effective use of resources by the teacher. The reactions are displayed on to a screen through an overhead projector. The small number of pupils who achieved a Level 8 at the end of Year 9 make good progress, but there is insufficient extension material to challenge them further. In a Year 11 class, average prior attaining pupils give answers on change of state at a level well above their prior attainment because of the perceptive way the teacher draws out these answers from them.
96. Concentration, keenness and interest are strong features in the best learning. Pupils work well together and respect each other's opinions. They are similarly confident when working on their own. The department's attention to improving literacy is paying dividends and the majority of pupils are comfortable in reading the science textbooks used in class.

97. Teaching is good throughout the school and is a major strength of the department despite some instability of staffing since the previous inspection. The good resources and laboratories support the teachers' organisation and management, but some lessons are taught in two rooms where there is no gas or water supply and this prevents class practicals and effective demonstrations. This has a negative impact on pupils' learning by reducing opportunities for practical work. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of their subject. Their expectations of the pupils are high and the good behaviour and attitudes of the pupils are praised. Lesson objectives are shared with pupils as a matter of course and the very clear explanations allow all pupils to make good progress. Pupils respond positively to challenge and persevere with the difficult tasks because the teachers monitor their progress to ensure they do not fall behind.
98. The department is well supported by a full-time technician, but there is a need for additional support to allow the technician to devote more time to preparation and repair rather than cleaning and stock checks. The learning support assistants give valuable support to the pupils with special educational needs and are involved in some basic planning of the lessons. Individual education plans are well used and the literacy and numeracy targets are reinforced with subject specific targets. These plans are used to modify the teaching methods to meet the specific needs of these pupils. Homework is given regularly throughout the school. It is well marked and comments are crisp and clear. Procedures for assessing the attainment of pupils are very good. They are well used to inform curricular planning, particularly adding to the flexibility of setting where pupils can be moved according to their progress. Pupils' individual progress can be accurately tracked. There is a comprehensive analysis of gender attainment at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 and the results contribute to identifying ways in which boys and girls may improve. These analyses are based on percentages and average point scores. The schemes of work offer many opportunities for mapping spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues, but there were few references to cultural issues in the lessons observed.
99. The quality of leadership and the management of the department are very good. The head of department has welded together relatively inexperienced teachers into a strong and effective team. As a result of this, teaching has improved throughout the department. Resources for information and communication technology have improved considerably since the previous inspection and are used well. The two interactive white boards add an exciting new dimension to learning. Each laboratory has several computers and allows four sites for data-logging activities. Years 10 and 11 pupils regularly use word processing to enhance the presentation of their GCSE coursework, while younger pupils are actively encouraged to research on the Internet.
100. Improvements since the previous inspection include better classroom management, particularly in Years 10 and 11 by using a greater variety of teaching strategies. This has led to improved concentration and more rapid progress by the pupils. The rise in standards in externally assessed examinations has taken the departmental results above the national averages. There has been extensive investment in new textbooks and the four laboratories were refurbished in 2000 making them ideal places to teach and learn science. This renewed provision has a clear impact on the pupils' learning.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- There has been very good improvement in standards since the last inspection
- Higher-attaining pupils achieve well at GCSE and AS level
- The subject is well led
- The range and quality of learning opportunities for all pupils are very good
- Good teaching supports pupils' independent learning

Areas for improvement

- Day-to-day evaluation of pupils' own and others' work to check what they have learned does not always extend speaking skills and reinforce the use of art vocabulary
- Standards of homework lack consistency across all groups
- Insufficient analysis of gender assessment data to improve boys' attainment in the higher grades at GCSE

101. GCSE results have improved significantly since the last inspection. In the past three years they have been consistently above the national average for all maintained secondary schools. Pupils achieved well in relation to their attainment on joining their courses and better in art and design than in other subjects. The results in 2001 were slightly down on the year before when they were significantly above average. Results exceeded the target set by the department on the basis of pupils' previous work. In both years, girls did much better than boys in the higher GCSE grades. All pupils attained A*-G grades. More able girls achieved excellent results in GCSE, A* grades and AS level. One pupil entered for AS level in 2001 attained a grade A.
102. In lessons and work observed in Year 9, pupils attain average standards overall. Standards in painting and three-dimensional studies are above national expectations. In 2001, the results of teachers' assessments on 14-year-olds show that all pupils achieved well below the expected standard (Level 5 or above). These results, however, do not reflect the average and above average standards of work seen during the inspection. The majority of pupils make good use of a range of materials such as paint, mixed media and collage, and by the end of Year 9 show good levels of competence in using these to investigate, explore and develop ideas. Portraits in charcoal and paint show confident handling of materials and expressive skills. In Year 9, pupils use a digital photograph to develop a distorted self-portrait as a starting point for painting, showing sensitive brushwork and a good standard of mixing and controlling to achieve gradations of colour. They compare and contrast well artists' techniques using details recorded of artists' techniques in their own personal glossary. Three-dimensional boxes based on the work of contemporary artists are inventive and imaginative showing an understanding of texture, colour and design. Drawing for most pupils is average although a few lower-attaining pupils have insufficiently developed skills. Good use is made of information technology to scan and distort images for further development. This has improved the graphic contribution in pupils' work since the last inspection.
103. By the age of 16, pupils attain above national expectations. In lessons pupils revisit themes based on the natural and man-made environment drawing from direct

observation with increasing fluency and accuracy. Most develop their own ideas and feelings in bold three-dimensional studies, paintings and drawings and produce work that is technically sound. There are some exciting above average large-scale sculptures and mobile structures based on artists' work. Sketchbook research is a strength for higher-attaining pupils with critical and contextual studies being effectively developed. Pupils in Year 10 are achieving well because of the effective range of materials made available to extend their learning through investigation. The level of competence in using reference material has been extended since the last inspection. Higher-attaining pupils are extended very well with the opportunity to take an AS level art course in Year 11.

104. Pupils achieve well over time and at all levels of attainment. They join the school with knowledge, skills and understanding that show a wide range of achievement in Year 7. They make good progress in understanding the different elements of art, such as, line, pattern and texture in using different mark-making materials. They show initiative in organising equipment, for example to paint or construct mobiles. By the end of Year 9 they have increasingly built on their skills and have gained a basic understanding of composition and three-dimensional form. Written work on artists' ideas are increasingly analytical in Year 8, where, for example, they develop a day-to-day log of their own study of 'Land Art' in the style of Andrew Goldsworthy. Pupils show an increased awareness of art vocabulary, planning and research skills in sketchbooks at all levels of attainment. Pupils with special educational needs and less able pupils are given support and advice on how to improve through teacher explanation and demonstration.
105. The quality of teaching and learning is good across the age range. Teachers' expertise and confidence are good. They use examples from artists' and their own work to demonstrate techniques, for example to increase pupils' awareness of how to use a sketchbook as a studio tool. Teachers have good relationships with pupils. Lessons are well planned and organised, providing enjoyable and challenging activities that motivate pupils to tackle problems, reinforce constructive relationships, improve basic skills and prepare them well for examinations. In the best lessons, pupils are encouraged to elaborate their ideas through effective teacher questioning which helps them extend their thinking. For example, in the mixed media assignments in Years 8 and 10, pupils show a breadth of understanding of different materials as a result of one-to-one discussion with teachers who encourage a wide range of experimentation. A good balance of choice and teacher direction to encourage independent learning is a regular feature of teaching, learning and management of pupils' behaviour. As a result, pupils' attitudes and behaviour in lessons are very good.
106. The quality of leadership and management is very effective and reflects the very good improvement since the last inspection. Information and communication technology is developing well for all pupils with the recent addition of an art and design department computer suite. Procedures for assessment are very effective for older pupils, however, the new assessment levels are not yet linked to programmes of study for younger pupils. The use of assessment in curriculum planning is satisfactory, however, the use of data to analyse boys' and girls' attainment lacks rigour. The department makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This extends their development through collaborative group projects on environmental themes, multicultural events and autobiographical studies across the age range. Accommodation is good; however, one art room is cramped and lacks adequate storage for pupils' work. Working surfaces are limited for large classes and this has a detrimental impact on the scale of work possible, particularly at Year 9. Chairs and stools often do not match the work surface height. Art and design is

enriched with lively displays around the school, however, younger pupils have limited opportunity to visit galleries to see original art.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Good leadership is securing good progress in lessons for pupils of all ages including pupils with special educational needs
- Teaching is good at both key stages
- Accommodation is good

Areas for improvement

- Standards attained by 14- and 16-year-olds are too low
- The teaching of food technology is weakened by inadequate expertise in the subject
- Assessment information is not used well enough to identify the progress pupils make

107. In the 2001 GCSE examinations standards were below results nationally. There is a significant difference in the results across all materials, with pupils taking the food examination gaining the highest scores but with very few entries. Graphics entered the largest number of pupils and gained the next highest scores. The lowest scores were in resistant materials. Girls attain slightly higher results than boys do in all three material areas. Standards for pupils taking the short course are low and have remained the same for the last three years. Overall there has been a drop in standards from the last inspection when pupils' attainment was in line with national averages.

108. Standards in the work seen during the inspection match the examination results. In the current Years 10 and 11, standards are below average and they do not improve from the end of Year 10 to the end of Year 11. Pupils do not have sufficient knowledge of materials, skills and processes to design and make at the level expected for their age. They do not check developing work as it progresses or adapt their approach. Overall pupils make good progress in lessons from low levels of prior attainment. For example, in an electronics lesson pupils make very good progress, on a basic components lesson, soldering simple circuits, identifying individual components and describing their function. By the age of 16, pupils use a range of suitable information sources to inform their design work but there is insufficient evidence of their understanding of the working of familiar products. The quantity of work produced is small and development work is often teacher led, with very little evidence of pupils taking enough responsibility for their work. Drawing skills are basic, lacking in detail and refinement. Higher-attaining pupils are not identified by the department. There is no significant difference in standards between boys and girls. In some lessons seen, standards are improving. In a lesson for 15-year-olds, using brazing techniques, pupils have the skills to join the different components together and are clear about the sequence of tasks. When questioned they know how to shape and finish metal and in their practical work they know how to use tools accurately. Drawing skills used are limited, lacking sufficient detail and annotation.

109. Standards for 14-year-olds are below average overall but show some improvement

from pupils' low level on entry to the school. There is some improvement in drawing skills from the age of 12 and pupils have opportunities to work across a good range of materials. They do not have enough opportunities for practical work to develop their making skills and so they are not sufficiently accurate when working with materials and components. Pupils do not sufficiently understand the links between designing and making to further develop their ideas. However, in some lessons standards are improving as a result of better teaching and planning for practical work. In these lessons pupils make good and sometimes very good progress because they have a better understanding of the design process and use materials effectively with confidence to realise their designs. Using textiles, they refine and develop their original designs. Skills are learned as techniques are tried out and the results, if necessary, used to modify their designs. Pupils aged 14 sequence different processes and are pleased when they learn to do something well. They take pride in their work. When they see how successful they are, working with tools and materials, their confidence increases and they try harder. Most pupils achieve satisfactorily in relation to their attainment on joining the school.

110. The overall quality of teaching is good. This represents an improvement since the previous inspection when teaching was judged to be satisfactory. Teachers encourage pupils to design and draw their ideas and produce outline plans that are realistic. In a lesson using paper to make structures, pupils first drew their ideas and then realised them with paper-folding techniques that made the different parts of the bridges stronger. Working in pairs, pupils took responsibility for their own project and the teacher monitored their progress and questioned them to make sure they understood how to strengthen the paper and join it together. Pupils make good use of their measuring skills. In a lesson where pupils, all of whom had special educational needs, made very good progress, the teacher encouraged pupils to model their ideas, modifying and refining them to produce the best design. Making skills were good because the teacher set high standards for measuring, marking and cutting materials. Learning support is well used and supports the teacher in encouraging pupils to talk about their work and describe what they are doing. Assessment is an integral part of all teachers' planning but it is not yet used effectively to analyse pupils' progress over time.
111. Pupils' attitudes to design and technology are good. They enjoy designing and making and respond well to challenging tasks. Working with electronics, a new area for this group of pupils, they feel confident in soldering the components and ask for support from the teacher if they are unsure how to proceed with the disassembly of the processing unit. With their success came a real sense of achievement at learning something new.
112. At the previous inspection, staffing was an issue especially the leadership of the subject. There is a new head of department this term leading a team of subject specialists who generally teach to their strengths. The leadership is already having a significant impact on the quality of teaching across all areas of the department and the progress pupils make in lessons. Documentation has been reviewed and all policies are in place. There is a clear development plan with appropriate targets for developing the subject's role on the school's curriculum. The need for greater emphasis on developing basic skills has been identified and schemes of work are being modified to better meet the needs of all pupils. The department benefits from good accommodation, a big improvement since the previous inspection.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Leadership and management of the subject are much improved
- Schemes of work are detailed and well-written
- The quality of teaching is much improved, especially in the area of developing pupils' literacy

Areas for development

- Tasks are not always matched to the needs of individuals, especially higher-attaining pupils

113. Standards of work seen during the inspection are in line with age related national expectations for most pupils in all year groups, with small minorities below and above. This represents good progress for 14-year-old pupils, a substantial minority of whom entered the school with below average standards. Progress of 16-year-old pupils is also good in relation to their standards at the end of Year 9. Overall, there has been satisfactory improvement in standards of attainment since the previous inspection. This progress is attributable in part to an improvement in the quality of teaching, especially over the last two years.
114. Results of the assessments conducted by the teachers at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were in line with national expectations, an improvement on previous years. GCSE results have fluctuated over the last four years. There was a sharp decline in the two years following the previous inspection, to a level well below the national average. There has been a marked improvement over the last two years, and in 2001 overall results recovered to a level just below the national average in terms of the proportion of pupils achieving grades A*-C. The gap between the performance of boys and girls in 2001 was much wider than the national gender difference. Girls performed in line with the national average, but boys were well below.
115. By the age of 14 most pupils attain in line with national expectations, with small minorities above and below. Higher-attaining pupils compile good annotated maps and diagrams and make clear notes when extracting relevant information from a range of sources. Lower-attaining pupils have more difficulty with any requirement to write at length, although the department is making great strides in helping pupils to improve in this area, and some particularly pleasing written work by lower ability pupils in Year 8 was seen. Lower-attaining Year 9 pupils describe geographical patterns orally, but have difficulty in explaining them, as seen in lessons on life styles in Japan. Some very good enquiry work on display in classrooms shows evidence of the skill of all pupils in the use of the Internet for research.
116. By the age of 16, attainment levels for most pupils remain at the national expectation. Improvements in teaching are largely responsible for the fact that this level of attainment is higher than that indicated by the most recent examination results. Because Year 11 pupils were engaged in trial examinations, evidence of their standards was derived mostly from samples of their work rather than from direct lesson observations. Higher-attaining pupils make accurate notes and, for example, have a good grasp of geographical models, such as those of urban structure. They make good use of this knowledge in their coursework, which is based on local fieldwork. In it they employ hypothesis testing and statistical analysis of their gathered data, often using computers to enhance the quality of text and graphs. As in Years 7 to

9, some lower-attaining pupils are hampered by weak writing skills. In their coursework they present their fieldwork data neatly, but carry out only superficial analysis. There is no appreciable difference in the observed attainment levels of boys and girls in any year group.

117. Overall, teaching is good. None is unsatisfactory, four-fifths is at least good and almost half is very good. This represents a marked improvement since the previous inspection now that teaching is carried out entirely by subject specialists. The best teaching is characterised by enthusiasm for and secure command of the subject, challenging content, sensible time allocation to a variety of activities and good classroom management and control. These qualities were seen in a Year 10 lesson when the teacher used available resources, including an interactive whiteboard, to good effect to engage pupils' interest and then challenged them to think through the relative advantages of 'Intermediate Technology' and the 'Green Revolution' in meeting the needs of less economically developed societies. Pupils' response to good teaching is overwhelmingly positive. In only one lesson was their behaviour less than exemplary. On this one occasion the immature behaviour of a small minority interrupted the learning of the whole class. Pupils work collaboratively when required and stay on task. Their concentration is assisted by the calm atmosphere in classrooms and clear guidance from teachers in the use of learning resources. Good inclusive questioning ensures that all pupils are actively involved. Most lessons begin with a clear statement of aims and a review of recent lessons, enabling pupils to recall and consolidate their prior learning. In comparatively less successful lessons there is insufficient matching of tasks to the capabilities of individual pupils and too much time devoted to teachers talking, leaving insufficient time for pupils' activity. In these lessons higher-attaining pupils are not challenged sufficiently. Pupils with special educational needs make the same good progress as the remainder. Teachers know them well; they make particularly good progress when learning support assistants are available. Homework is set regularly and provides valuable reinforcement to classroom teaching. Work is marked regularly, with helpful comments, and in such a way that pupils are kept well informed of their progress in relation to National Curriculum and examination standards.
118. Overall improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Examination results first of all declined seriously, but have now recovered to a level just below that at the previous inspection. The key issue raised in that inspection about the need to ensure that the subject knowledge of staff should be improved has been addressed fully with a consequent marked improvement in the quality of teaching. The department has also responded well to the suggestions made in the local authority review of 1999. Leadership and management of the department are good. Documentation is detailed and well written. Schemes of work have been reviewed and now provide a very good guide for new teachers. The subject makes a good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils and to the development of their literacy, numeracy and computer skills. The department recognises that higher-attaining pupils are not always stretched sufficiently and that the examination performance of boys needs to be raised.

HISTORY

The overall provision for history is **good**.

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers have very good subject knowledge • Teachers manage pupils very well
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers make very good use of new technology to help pupils to learn <p>Areas for improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To raise the attainment of pupils at GCSE

119. Overall standards attained by the end of Years 9 and 11 are average. GCSE results in history are well below the national average, which has been over 60 per cent in the last two years. In 2000 the A*-C pass rate was 20 per cent and in 2001 it was 28 per cent. However, there has been a continuing rise in the average point score achieved by GCSE candidates in relation to their other examination subjects since 1999 and the point scores of pupils in 2001 are very close to the county average for the subject. Standards of work seen during the inspection week show that, across the ability range, pupils meet national expectations in their understanding of historical events and in their acquisition of historical skills.
120. The quality of teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Teaching is a significant strength of the department. Just over half of the lessons seen were very good or excellent and the remainder were good. All lessons have a brisk pace and the best lessons both consolidated prior learning and extended the pupils' awareness of the nature of the evidence studied. The teaching seen in two lessons in Year 10 allowed time for reflection and analysis which enabled pupils to use their prior knowledge of the rise of the Nazi party to evaluate the use of propaganda and its appeal to a variety of social groups in the early 1930s. The use of pair work as well as whole group discussion ensured that all pupils were able to develop their understanding of the topics studied. Year 7 pupils have a sound knowledge of aspects of the Roman Empire and they can satisfactorily tackle issues of possible bias in historical sources relating to the Norman Conquest. Teaching strategies could be widened in this year to include more tasks that involve pupils in the issues faced by historical characters. There is good progression in the Year 8 curriculum which enables pupils to identify types of causes for an historical event, for example the English Civil Wars of the 1640s, and satisfactorily to examine the evidence relating to the Gunpowder Plot of 1605.
121. Within the first term of Year 9 pupils are able to make good use of historical evidence and they can analyse the attitudes and motivation of a range of historical characters, for example Josephine Butler, whose crusade for the rights of women is used to deepen pupils' awareness of social attitudes in the late nineteenth century. Indeed, the development of the curriculum in Year 9 has enabled teachers to lift the understanding of pupils with regard to historical issues to a very good level. Lower-attaining pupils are able to use their knowledge of a site visit to develop their understanding of the experience of nineteenth century orphans in a nearby factory. Higher-attaining pupils are able, through a series of adept questions by staff, to form reasoned opinions about the morality of business entrepreneurs who used available child labour. Pupils in a middle ability group are able to evaluate evidence about the role of women in the late nineteenth century because the choice of historical sources is well matched to their interests and level of literacy. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress and all pupils concentrate very well, persevering to complete set tasks and working co-operatively with each other. Most pupils achieve satisfactorily, building up their knowledge and skills steadily as they move through the years.
122. Leadership and management of history is good overall and have several very good features. The head of department has worked hard and successfully to raise the profile of the subject. History makes a good contribution to the spiritual development of pupils,

particularly through the teaching of the holocaust, in Year 9, which is based upon a visit to the Beth Shalom Centre in Newark and a specialist speaker visit to the school. All Year 9 pupils visit the Styal Factory, near Manchester, and contribute to this museum's website in role as orphan factory workers, thus developing very well their cultural awareness of the region's industrial heritage. The department is also making inventive use of other new technologies: an inter-active whiteboard was used to very good effect, for example, in a Year 10 lesson where pupils' analysis of a Nazi propaganda poster was recorded by the teacher in bullet points on the board and then could be accessed by the pupils via the school intranet to support their homework task.

123. All issues raised at the last inspection have been addressed efficiently. The then minimal use of information and communication technology has clearly been replaced by a commitment to develop best use of current technology to enhance pupils' learning. Assessment and tracking of pupils' progress is now satisfactorily making use of school-generated data, and recently designed tests in Key Stage 3 are based upon National Curriculum levels of knowledge and understanding. Analysis of GCSE results is very thorough and has also led to a change in a chosen GCSE topic, which now better matches pupils' interests. The department fully supports the subject teaching of non-specialist staff.
124. The key area of improvement is the need to raise examination results at GCSE and the department is working well to ensure this. The enhancement of the Year 9 curriculum offers a model of development for Years 7 and 8 which should also enable non-specialists in the subject to offer their skills in, for example, the landscape faced by Roman armies and urban orphans in the first and nineteenth centuries. A mapping of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural input of the subject to pupils' learning would build upon current good curricular practice.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Pupils achieve very well, and attain very high standards by the end of Year 11; all students are entered for the GCSE examinations and the pass rate is high
- Very good management has ensured that there are plenty of computers and computer-aided equipment available for teachers and pupils to use
- Teaching and learning are very good
- A very well-balanced curriculum strongly promotes pupils' skills in information and communication technology lessons and gives them many opportunities to apply those skills in other subjects

Areas for improvement

- Higher-attaining pupils in Years 7 to 9 are not given enough opportunities to raise their standards of attainment by working on more challenging problems

- The system for assessing the standards of pupils' attainment does not make clear enough, to teachers or to pupils, the level of understanding and skills which pupils are expected to show in their work in Years 7, 8 and 9.

125. Overall attainment at GCSE is well above average. The school's policy of entering all its Year 11 pupils for either the long or short course GCSE in this subject has produced outstanding pass rates: in 2001, all pupils in the year group passed. Results at grades A*-C and A*-A on the long course in 2001 were broadly in line with the national averages. These national averages have, however, been derived mostly from schools where an information and communication technology GCSE is taken as an option by a small proportion of pupils, so comparisons must be treated with caution. No pupils attained grades A*-C on the short course in 2001, but this reflects the department's policy of encouraging higher-attaining pupils on the short course to enter for the long course exam. Girls and boys do relatively well in this subject at GCSE in relation to their performance in other subjects. Year 9 pupils perform consistently well in the Initial Text Processing qualification, where the great majority of pupils get distinctions.
126. In lessons and work seen, overall standards of attainment by the end of Year 9 are above levels expected for pupils of that age. By the end of Year 11, overall attainment is well above expected levels. Pupils therefore achieve very well during their time in the school because they enter the school in Year 7 with attainment which is below the level expected nationally, with a limited understanding of how to use computers to organise their work effectively.
127. By the end of Year 9, pupils have a strong understanding of computer systems and software, and of the way in which computers are used to solve problems in a variety of situations. They are able to make informed and well-reasoned choices between different types of computer programs for completing given tasks, which reflect the substantial breadth and depth of their experience in using computers. The taught programme of information and communication technology lessons secures pupils' understanding of computer technology, and their skills are enhanced by many opportunities to use computers to help their learning in other subjects. For example, pupils use the school Intranet, the Internet and CD-Rom facilities extensively for research purposes in most subjects, and demonstrate good literacy skills in the appropriate selection and use of materials. While all pupils have good, broad-based skills, much of the work of higher-attaining pupils from Years 7 to 9 lacks the high quality to set it clearly apart from that of others, particularly in the refinement of work to meet the needs of particular audiences or users.
128. On the GCSE courses in Years 10 and 11, coursework assignments are thoroughly well prepared and well structured, incorporating the pupils' very good technical knowledge and good evaluations of their approaches. Pupils write well, and handle number with confidence, especially in the design of spreadsheets. Higher-attaining pupils produce detailed, and very well presented solutions to problems at this stage. On the short course in Year 10, attainment is currently below expectation, although achievement is sound given the overall standards of attainment of the pupils concerned when starting the course. In other subjects in Years 10 and 11, pupils produce very good and sometimes outstanding work using computers, working with speed and accuracy; the quality of newspaper-style articles and leaflets researched and produced in one hour on bricklayers' wages in business studies and on ante-natal care in child development was professional in standard and particularly impressive.
129. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Nearly all lessons seen were at least satisfactory, and half were very good. The key strength of teaching is the high expectations which teachers have for pupils' achievement. From Year 7, information and communication technology lessons adopt a rigorous approach, so that pupils learn

the technical vocabulary of the subject and how computer systems work, as well as how to use computers in a variety of ways. Homework is appropriate and work is regularly marked and corrected, ensuring that pupils work with accuracy. High quality guidance and support is offered to pupils in their GCSE coursework, so that pupils make the best of the opportunities presented by the marks available. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are well aware of their target GCSE grades, how their current work standards measure up to those targets, and what they need to do to keep on track to meet their targets. The system for assessing the standards of pupils' attainment between Years 7 and 9, however, does not make clear enough, to teachers or to pupils, the level of understanding and skills which pupils are expected to show in their work, so that opportunities to extend the learning and skill of higher-attaining pupils are missed. Pupils' information and communication technology skills are not assessed in the important work they do in other subjects.

130. Teaching and learning using computers in other subjects has been considerably improved by the very good access to computers for teachers and pupils in all areas of the school. The extensive use of interactive whiteboards and digital projectors by teachers in many subjects has made a substantial improvement to the quality of their presentations. In the open learning centre, computers are used very effectively by individuals and whole classes, with very good support from the centre manager. Computers make a strong contribution to learning in many subjects. For example, in music, computer programs help pupils through the complexities of composition. In modern languages, lower-attaining pupils in particular are well supported by programs which help them learn translation, spelling and grammar. Pupils in science use a microscope linked to a computer to produce digital images to improve what they learn from dissection. In art and design, the use of computers to display and manipulate images is very good. Pupils enjoy their work with computers and many highlight the school's information and communication technology programme as a strength of the school. Computer facilities are well used at lunchtimes.
131. Pupils with special educational needs make generally good progress in developing their computer competence and in using computers to help them to develop literacy, numeracy and other skills. Occasionally, however, they make unsatisfactory progress as, for example, in a Year 10 lesson where they could not get through over-lengthy data-entry tasks to learn new skills in using databases.
132. The subject is very well led and managed. There has been very skilful planning of finance to bring resources into the subject, and these resources have been particularly well deployed to ensure that all subjects have good access to computer equipment. Teachers are well supported in developing their teaching programmes to make use of the technology available. The heads of the core subject programme and of information and communication technology across the school work hard, with little non-teaching time, to produce the very effective curriculum that leads to high standards. They now have the technical support lacking at the last inspection.
133. There has been very strong improvement since the last inspection, particularly in terms of standards of attainment, the quality of teaching, and the quality and use of resources.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good
- Assessment is used very well
- Good leadership ensures that the department's work is monitored very well

Areas for development

134. Serious staffing problems between 1998 and 2000, resulting in the disruption of teaching, caused standards to plummet. It led to inadequate coverage of the syllabus, leaving large gaps in pupils' knowledge and to a total disenchantment with languages. It was not until September 2000 that a new team of young teachers under a new head of languages took on the considerable task of rebuilding the department. Attainment in GCSE examinations at higher grades A*-C has improved considerably over the last two years although it is still well below national averages.
135. Attainment near the end of Year 11 is below average for the majority of pupils with listening and speaking being the least developed skills. This is a direct result of poor teaching when these pupils started learning languages, leaving them with a weak foundation from which to progress. Written work is generally of a higher standard and the new team has worked effectively on pupils' grammatical accuracy. This makes a valuable contribution to standards of literacy in the school. Considerable progress has been made lower down the school where pupils have benefited from the new regime in languages. Consequently, attainment near the end of Year 9 is now average. Listening and speaking skills are developing well and pupils are confident in reading and writing. Above all, from the very outset, they are learning to manipulate the patterns and structures of the foreign language, which provides them with a secure platform on which to build later. They really enjoy their learning and have absolutely no inhibitions about speaking the foreign language. They are clearly pleased at the end of lessons when they see what they have learnt. Pupils with special educational needs make commensurate progress in listening and speaking but require classroom support in reading and writing which is not always available.
136. Most teaching at both key stages is good and sometimes very good. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Staff are suitably qualified. Three of them are in only the second year of their professional career but they are making good headway and are keen to do well. They are all competent linguists. Two are native speakers. Pupils learn well and enjoy their lessons when serious learning is facilitated by fun-filled, competitive learning games. The department possesses a good number of computers. Lower-attaining pupils in particular respond well to specialist software on these computers, which is designed to provide interesting activities in lessons or for independent study. Pupils also value the clarity of learning materials attractively presented on the interactive whiteboards. The pace of lessons is usually rapid, which means that ample ground is covered and good progress is made. Staff and pupil rapport is good. It is enhanced by the sharing of objectives at the start of lessons and a mutually agreed summary at the end to confirm learning. Good classroom management of pupils is usually sufficient to deal successfully with a few troublesome pupils. A good variety of tasks and activities sustains the momentum of lessons and helps maintain pupils' concentration levels. New learning in lessons is often consolidated by homework, which is regularly and accurately marked. Where appropriate, comments are added below the mark or grade to show pupils where and how they can do better.

137. Teachers sometimes miss opportunities to include paired and group work. Pupils therefore miss out on additional listening and speaking practice. However, when it does take place, pupils interact well and are mutually supportive. Occasionally English is overused to the detriment of the foreign language. Pupils rarely ask a question on their own initiative in French or Spanish. More reading aloud in class would help build confidence in speaking and improve pronunciation.
138. The department is well led. Most of the considerable improvements achieved within a comparatively short time are attributable to the hard work and commitment of the new head of languages. Assessment, which was formerly weak, is now a considerable strength. Pupils know their levels and how to improve. Teachers keep a very detailed mark and grade profile that is supplemented by additional useful information such as the levels reached in the teachers' assessments and predicted grades for GCSE examinations. This enables them to track pupils' progress with accuracy and to identify any underachievement. Team spirit is good which promotes the sharing of good practice. This means that all teachers work to an agreed methodology and pursue the same aims and objectives.
139. The curriculum has been strengthened by making French the leading foreign language, with Spanish available as a second language. This reflects current staffing and the profile of the pupils. However, one lesson per week for Spanish in Years 8 and 9 is inadequate.
140. Many of the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection report have been fully addressed. Attainment in Years 7 to 9 is no longer below national expectations, pupils make at least satisfactory progress in lessons, behaviour has improved and attitudes are now mostly positive. Accommodation and resources have improved considerably. Former weaknesses which have been partially rectified to date include poor listening and speaking skills in Years 10 and 11, inadequate use of reading and the unnecessary use of English in lessons. The department has come a long way in the last 18 months. It is now well placed to continue improving in all aspects of its work.

MUSIC

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

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good teaching and learning encourage pupils to enjoy their music making and share it with others • There is very good provision for extra instrumental tuition • The department is well led in improving rapidly <p>Areas for improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards of attainment by the end of Year 9 are not good enough • Practice facilities that allow pupils to work undisturbed are unsatisfactory
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The time allocated for music lessons in Year 7 is inadequate • Methods for assessing pupils' work in terms of the new National Curriculum levels are underdeveloped

141. By the end of Year 9, standards are below average compared with national

expectations. There is no significant difference between those of boys and girls. Pupils achieve satisfactorily from Years 7 to 9 and well across Years 10 and 11. These differences result from several changes of music teachers over the last three years that have had a destabilising effect on pupils' learning. With the advent of an enthusiastic head of department this term, there is evidence that standards in Year 7 are already proportionately higher than in the two succeeding years. Most pupils, after less than one term in the school, understand the basic requirements of musical notation that enable them to perform short tunes on keyboards accurately. In Years 8 and 9, however, standards of performing in class lessons both instrumentally and vocally are generally underdeveloped and lack expressive refinement. Nevertheless, whilst most pupils play only single line melodies, some good examples were heard during the inspection of pupils with above average musical skills composing tunes and combining them with sequenced chords and rhythms. One pupil was heard making full use of the technical facilities of the new digital piano in the department. Others make good use of the department's computer facilities creating multi-tracked sequences from musical cells. Pupils generally describe the music they are studying in the correct musical terms. Those with special educational needs make good progress. They are well supported and take part fully in all the activities. Singing features in lessons mainly as a recreational activity. The vocal quality lacks tonal refinement but is vigorously alert rhythmically.

142. By the end of Year 11, standards are average. Too few pupils were involved in 2001 to make national comparisons meaningful. Over the past two years, however, GCSE results have been good with six of the nine candidates gaining grades in the A*-C range. Performing standards are high and most pupils reach the upper grades in examinations. During the inspection, high standards of part-singing were heard in lessons - well in tune and with clear diction. Pupils compose with individual imagination and make good use of musical structure in their creative work. They are able to discuss the music they hear in the correct musical terms. This was particularly evident in a Year 10 lesson where pupils conversed fluently with their teacher while listening to quite demanding music from the Renaissance and Baroque eras. They develop good levels of musicianship.
143. The quality of teaching and learning is good. It encourages pupils to be actively engaged in creating music and performing it for their own enjoyment and for that of others. Lessons are well planned to develop the basic musical skills that give pupils the opportunity to compose and perform individually. Pupils' behaviour is generally good. They are allowed sufficient freedom to be creative within clearly defined musical limits. They have the use of a good range of instrumental resources and the attractively decorated music room has a well-equipped permanent keyboard area. Pupils respect these good facilities and there are efficient routines for their use. Although a few of them are not able to concentrate for long periods of time, they are always keen to start work quickly. Boys and girls mix well together and frequently share musical ideas. The quality of practising for the large classes in Years 7 to 9 is, however, adversely affected by the cramped conditions in which they work and the lack of suitably sized practice rooms. It is difficult for them to play expressively when they cannot hear what they are trying to achieve. The relative lack of storage spaces only serves to aggravate this problem.
144. Since the previous inspection, new schemes of work have been introduced that include the use of computer technology to provide alternative means of access to enhance all aspects of composing, performing and listening. This is proving of particular interest to those pupils who find the methods of composing with traditional notation too demanding. Tasks are designed to provide different levels of difficulty to suit all pupils

within each group. In the lessons observed, this worked well for all except the most musically talented pupils who were not always sufficiently challenged to incorporate and extend their specialist skills through class activities. Although the assessment of pupils' work follows the school's procedures satisfactorily, pupils have yet to evaluate their achievements in terms of the new National Curriculum levels.

145. Pupils' attitudes to music are good. Increasing numbers are choosing to do GCSE courses. Over 10 per cent of the school, 85 pupils at the time of the inspection, have extra instrumental lessons each week provided by visiting specialists without charge to parents. Inadequate time is allocated, at present, for music lessons in Year 7. Pupils are not receiving their full entitlement to a weekly lesson throughout the year. The practice of time sharing with drama is unsatisfactory.
146. The leadership and management of music are strong. The new head of department has a clear sense of musical direction that supports the raising of standards. Opportunities have been seized to re-establish the musical culture of the school, particularly through an ongoing programme of extra musical activities that are increasingly popular with pupils. During the week of the inspection, rehearsals were underway for both a Christmas concert and the next term's musical production Bugsy Malone.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Pupils reach above average standards in the GCSE examinations
- Assessment is used well to inform teaching
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good
- Good links with primary schools that help to raise the pupils' standards of attainment

Areas for improvement

- Not all pupils in Year 9 have equal access to the curriculum
- The programme of study that occurs during the Year 11 mock examination period is inadequate

147. Standards reached by the majority of pupils in Year 9 are in line with the national expectation for pupils of this age. When the pupils arrive in Year 7 they are below average. By Year 9 a significant number of boys have above average football skills and use advanced tactics. Dance is a strength for all pupils. They have good rhythm and interpret the music well creating dances that are sophisticated and exciting to watch. This represents good achievement through the key stage. Pupils have good evaluative skills and use the information gathered through evaluation to improve their work. For example, in a Year 8 dance lesson the pupils watched each other's sequences and then made comments that then helped them to refine their work. They have a good understanding of why exercise is important for a healthy lifestyle and warm up effectively before their activities. The few pupils working below the expectation have limited ball skills.
148. Standards reached by the majority of the pupils in Year 10 (those who take physical education as a core subject, but not to GCSE) are in line with expectations. A few are working below expectation and a minority are above. The boys' football skills become

more advanced and refined both in performance and in their use of tactics in games. The girls understand the principles of aerobic exercise and have a high work rate when performing routines. Year 11 pupils were not observed during the inspection because of timetabling arrangements. The boys who attend the extra-curricular football club have above average ball skills and are well motivated to improve their performance in practices and games.

149. GCSE results fluctuate from year to year but are always above the national average. Many of the pupils achieve higher grades than in their other subjects. Standards reached by the majority currently studying GCSE are equally above average. This represents very good achievement over time. The course is a popular option and a high proportion of girls choose to study for the exam. A particular strength is the pupils' depth of knowledge in both practical and theoretical aspects and their ability to link them. Their written work is fluent and well researched. Pupils analyse their practical performance and write at length drawing logical conclusions about factors that affect their skills. They have good recall under examination conditions. Those pupils who are working below average have limited knowledge in theoretical modules and their notes are sometimes incomplete.
150. The quality of teaching and its impact on the pupils' learning are very good at GCSE and good for the remaining lessons. Teachers' expectations of high standards of work are consistent and they continually encourage pupils to strive for better performance appropriately related to their current levels of performance. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into lessons and achieve well. Those with behavioural difficulties are well behaved and motivated to improve their skills. The teachers use a variety of methods that are successful in developing practical, evaluative and planning skills. Question and answer sessions are used to assess the pupils' knowledge and to provoke thought. Questions are not always designed to increase the pupils' range of technical language. Tasks always progress logically and with sufficient time to consolidate skills before transferring onto the next stage. The GCSE course is well planned and the teachers make good links between theoretical and practical aspects.
151. Homework assignments are imaginative and give the pupils an opportunity to research independently. Marking is mostly constructive resulting in improved work. There is some inconsistency in approach between teachers and occasionally pupils are not sure of what they need to do to improve further. Notes are checked to pick up on areas of incompleteness or weakness. Assessment procedures are particularly thorough and data is used to track how well pupils achieve relative to their ability from when they arrive at the school through to GCSE. The new requirement to record levels is used effectively and pupils are well informed of what they need to do to reach a certain standard. After each module they assess their own performance and set targets for future improvement in conjunction with the teacher. Some lessons are late to finish leaving insufficient time to recapitulate what has been learned. The teachers have an established code of conduct that is well respected. The mutual respect and shared enthusiasm between the teachers and the pupils makes a considerable impact on the quality of work. This is especially evident in the popular extra-curricular programme where pupils enjoy team and individual success at local, county, regional and national levels in sports such as football, netball and athletics.
152. Leadership of the department is good, promoting a team spirit that contributes strongly to the personal development and achievement of the pupils. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. GCSE has been introduced and results are consistently above average. Team teaching sessions are well structured and focus on

improving teaching styles, assessing pupils' work and raising standards. Valuable links with other sporting clubs add depth to the extra-curricular programme. The new initiative of teaching primary school pupils not only gives these children the opportunity to experience specialist teaching, but also gives them a good introduction to senior school life. There has been some improvement in ensuring that all pupils receive an equal amount of time for physical education, but a minority in Year 9 still receive one instead of two lessons a week. Plans are in hand to resolve this problem. The lack of a permanent base for theoretical lessons creates difficulties in establishing a stimulating environment and also for the transportation of resources. The choice of planned activities during Year 11 mock examinations does not ensure effective teaching of the curriculum especially in Year 9 and pupils do not learn at the rate that could be expected.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- There is some very good teaching
- Displays are excellent

Areas for improvement

- Standards of attainment are too low in Years 10 and 11
- Statutory requirements are not met fully in Years 10 and 11
- There are too few specialist staff teaching the subject

153. At the end of Year 9, the standards of attainment are largely in line with the standards indicated in the locally agreed syllabus. The pupils have a sound knowledge and understanding of Christianity as well as Judaism and Islam. The pupils talk intelligently and with confidence about a range of religious concepts such as authority, myth, parable and prophecy. They also have a good understanding of religious language. Generally the pupils have an appreciation of what it is to be religious and they see how a religious belief has consequences for behaviour, both for the individual and for the community. Their understanding of the intellectual structures that lie behind the religious lifestyles is underdeveloped. Pupils do not make clear connections between belief and practice. They are sensitive to the spiritual dimension and they respond appropriately when religious visitors to the lessons share their experiences and thoughts. Their written work is of a good quality.
154. At the end of Year 11, the standards of attainment in the full course GCSE exam are below the national average. In 2001, about 22 per cent of pupils gained the higher grades A*-C. The standards of attainment in the short course GCSE are well above the national average. About 94 per cent of the pupils gained the higher grades A*-C. They have followed an upward trend in recent years. In both cases the number of pupils entered for the examinations is small. The standard work seen during the inspection of the pupils who are not following the two GCSE examination courses, is below the standards expected by the agreed syllabus. This group of pupils represents the majority of pupils at this key stage. The work in the pupils' books is of a very limited nature, particularly in the amount of work done over the period, in some cases only around four or five sides of written work produced over a year. A significant number of classes offered no written work for scrutiny during the inspection. Often where there is written work, the specifically religious content is not very strong and there is an over emphasis on moral and social issues. The teaching of these groups is the

responsibility of up to 12 non-specialist teachers. The time available to teach the syllabus is of a restricted nature. The standards of work seen of the small group of pupils being prepared for the two GCSE examinations is in line with the standards expected at this time. The work is much more focused and shows clear progression and explicit religious content as well as the moral and social issues. The pupils are able to express themselves well, both verbally and in written work, about a range of religious and contemporary issues. They are particularly good at expressing viewpoints from more than one point of view. The work in their books is of a sound quality and has a much more organised rationale about it.

155. Overall the achievement of pupils in relation to their prior attainment is good in Years 7 to 9 but unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Here the high level of non-specialist teaching and constraints on time mean that progress is very limited. Otherwise in all years the teachers work hard to raise the levels of the pupils and they progress well through their work. Some work matched well to pupils' different levels of attainment enables some pupils with special educational needs to progress well. However, work does not always relate well to the capabilities of the higher- and lower-achieving pupils. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls.
156. The attitude and response of the pupils is consistently very good. Pupils are well behaved and concentrate well on their work. Sustained concentration is sometimes lost when the teachers talk too much and the pupils lose interest. Otherwise the pupils show an interest in their work and are willing to respond on a personal level to many of the spiritual issues raised in the lesson. The pupils are respectful of each other and of the teachers. They are also respectful of other points of view. The pupils are particularly good at thinking through issues and questioning when necessary.
157. During the inspection it was only possible to observe the teaching of the head of department and one other teacher. This teaching is very good overall. The lessons are very well prepared and the objectives of the lesson are clear. The lesson objectives are made clear to the pupils themselves and this gives a firm basis for very positive learning. The materials prepared by the head of department are of a very high calibre and contain clear unambiguous religious content, as well as exercises for the pupils to do, guidance and general observations and illustrations. This gives focus to the pupils' learning and it allows them to get on with their work at their own pace, though this material would benefit from having more demanding work for the more able pupils. Both teachers are particularly good at developing the spiritual dimension in their lessons and at encouraging the pupils to give specifically personal responses to specific issues. Outside speakers also add to this provision. There is inadequate emphasis on teaching about the intellectual structures and world views that lie behind world religions. This would give the pupils a greater understanding of why these religions operate in the way they do and why their teachings are what they are. The expectations in the lessons are generally high. Homework is set on a regular basis and monitoring, assessment and reporting is done systematically.
158. The department is very well managed by a specialist head of department. She is the only specialist in the department. Around 16 teachers from other departments teach religious education, the majority of whom are non-specialist teachers. The work involved in the arranging and providing for such a large number of non-specialists creates an enormous amount of work for the head of department. The teaching in Years 10 and 11 of the personal and religious education course is done almost exclusively by these non-specialist teachers. As such, the staffing situation is unsatisfactory. Statutory requirements are being met at Key Stage 3, but are not met at Key Stage 4 as there is insufficient time to teach the requirements of the agreed

syllabus and the GCSE short course examination syllabus. No particular issues were raised at the last inspection. The departmental documentation is very good and includes schemes of work and very high quality lesson plans and lesson materials. Information and communication technology is in use in the department, both to present lessons and in Intranet work. The department contributes significantly to pupils' literacy in its careful introduction and explanation of new words and phrases as well as in its careful preparation of class materials. The department also makes a significant contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in its study of various moral codes, its study of world religions and its overall appreciation and presentation of the spiritual dimension. The accommodation and resources are good.