

# INSPECTION DRAFT REPORT

## **THE COSELEY SCHOOL**

Coseley

LEA area: Dudley

Unique reference number: 103857

Headteacher: Mr D Scott

Reporting inspector: Mr A Shield  
3569

Dates of inspection: 12 – 15 February 2001

Inspection number: 194325

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

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 to 16 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Henne Drive  
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West Midlands

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs S Ridley

Date of previous inspection: December 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
3569	Mr A Shield	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?
12775	Ms J Goodchild	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
19913	Mr R Garrett	Team inspector	English	
30699	Mr A Kemp	Team inspector	Mathematics	
18584	Mr M Davis	Team inspector	Science	
23880	Ms O Hall	Team inspector	Art and design Special educational needs	
8552	Mr W Hart	Team inspector	Design and technology Information and communication technology	
20247	Mr R Parry	Team inspector	Geography	
22458	Mr G McGinn	Team inspector	History	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
15396	Mr R Bulman	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages Equal opportunities	
23323	Ms J Harvey	Team inspector	Music	
31821	Mr B McCann	Team inspector	Physical education	
12179	Mr L Moscrop	Team inspector	Religious education English as an additional language	

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The Coseley School is a community mixed comprehensive school for pupils aged 11–16, situated on the borders of Dudley and Wolverhampton. The immediate ward in which the school is situated has above average levels of social deprivation, and pupils are drawn from a wide area including from neighbouring authorities. There are 808 pupils on roll, and the school is over subscribed. There are slightly more boys than girls in the school, although the balance varies from year to year. Attainment on entry is below average in all years. There are 216 pupils on the register of special educational needs; this represents 26 per cent of the school roll, a figure which is above average. Eleven of these have statements of special educational need. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals at around 25 per cent is above average. The majority of pupils are of white UK heritage, with relatively small numbers from other ethnic groups. No pupils have English as an additional language.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

In many respects the school is providing an effective education. GCSE standards are improving and while they remain below the national average, pupils' achievements overall are satisfactory. Many able pupils do well, but some less able pupils, particularly boys, underachieve. This is because the teaching, satisfactory overall and much of it good, is usually more effective with the more able pupils. The headteacher has created a positive ethos in which the support and care for individuals is uppermost, but management systems are insufficiently rigorous to assure a continuing improvement in standards. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Improving standards at GCSE which are well above average when compared with similar schools
- Standards of achievement in physical education, which are high because of consistently good teaching particularly at Key Stage 4
- The school's caring and supportive ethos provides well for pupils' personal development
- Positive attitudes to learning and the good behaviour of most pupils which contribute strongly to their progress
- Offers a comprehensive and coherent programme of careers education and work experience

#### **What could be improved**

- Management systems to ensure more consistency in standards of teaching and the pastoral care of pupils
- Reading standards of some pupils in Key Stage 3
- The teaching of less able pupils to ensure they make good progress
- The balance of the curriculum in order to meet the learning needs of all pupils, particularly lower attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11
- Attendance which remains unsatisfactory
- The consistency with which tutors monitor and support the progress of their pupils

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Overall improvement since the last inspection in December 1996 has been good. The school has made strong improvements in GCSE performance, considerably faster than the national trend. This improvement was particularly marked in 2000. National test results at the end of Key Stage 3 have also improved overall since 1995, but have declined in the last three years, largely because of the performance in English. The quality of teaching has improved and in particular the percentage of very good and better teaching is higher than at the time of the last inspection. Attendance has improved but remains obstinately well below average, and the difference between the school's figures and national figures is widening. Most key issues from the previous inspection have been satisfactorily addressed although this is patchy, and management monitoring in particular remains a weakness.

## STANDARDS

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

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

In 2000, the school's Key Stage 3 test results in English, mathematics and science were well below average. Although recent results in mathematics and science have continued to improve marginally, results in English have declined. As a consequence, although the trend in the school's average points score for all subjects has been above the national trend since 1996, there has been a decline since 1998.

The school's GCSE results of 38 per cent of pupils gaining five or more A\* to C grades in 2000 were below the national average of 47.4 per cent. However this was a considerable improvement on results in previous years and confirms a rising trend, faster than the national trend. The average points score per pupil was well above that achieved by pupils in similar schools. Able pupils made satisfactory progress in relation to their attainment at the age of 14 years, but the progress of less able pupils was not consistently satisfactory. The percentage achieving five or more A\* to G grades in 2000 was also below average, and some of these pupils underachieved during Years 10 and 11. However, pupils taking physical education, information technology, drama and dance did very well, gaining a higher percentage of A\* to C grades than the average nationally. Results in English, mathematics, science, art and design and technology were significantly below average. The targets set by the school for GCSE results in 2000 were too low and were exceeded. Those set for 2001 are both realistic and challenging given the prior attainment of the current Year 11.

In work seen during the inspection, standards are below average at the ages of 14 and 16 years in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, geography, history and religious education. In music, attainment is well below average in Year 9, but average for the small numbers of pupils taking GCSE in Year 11. In art and design and information and communication technology standards are average by the ages of 14 and 16, reflecting good progress and achievements, particularly during Key Stage 3. In both French and German standards are average in Year 9, but remain below average in Year 11. Standards in

physical education are average in Year 9, but above average in Year 11, and pupils achieve well. In religious education, standards are below those expected in the agreed syllabus at the end of both key stages, and pupils' achievements are largely unsatisfactory. Given their attainment on entry, most pupils achieve satisfactorily, but there is some underachievement amongst lower attaining pupils, particularly those whose attendance is poor.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Most pupils' attitudes to learning are good, and pupils are able to work without distraction and with sustained interest at their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Most pupils behave responsibly and sensibly in lessons and around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Many teachers have established trusting and productive relationships with pupils. Senior pupils act with maturity and take seriously their opportunities to take responsibility.
Attendance	Poor. Attendance levels remain well below average and the rate of unauthorised absence is high.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching was judged to be at least satisfactory in over 93 per cent of lessons observed during the inspection. Around 20 per cent of lessons were very good or excellent, but teaching was unsatisfactory in around 7 per cent of lessons. The quality of teaching is similar in both key stages, although the percentage of unsatisfactory lessons observed was higher in Key Stage 3 than in Key Stage 4.

The quality of teaching in English, mathematics and science is satisfactory in both key stages. Teaching in other subjects is mostly good and particularly effective in art, geography, history, information and communication technology, modern foreign languages and physical education. Teaching in art and design is very good in Key Stage 3 and in physical education it is very good in Key Stage 4. However there are weaknesses in the teaching of music, which is unsatisfactory at Key Stage 3.

The teaching of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory, although the focus given in different subjects to literacy ranges widely. In particular there is insufficient attention given to the development of reading.



Strengths of the teaching include classroom management and control particularly when teachers know the pupils well and have developed good relationships with them. In general, teaching is well planned to meet the needs of all pupils, and the teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. However this is not consistently so, and at times less able pupils are not sufficiently challenged, or engaged in the learning. Passive learning leads to underachievement. Much of the quality and use of assessment is good, particularly in Key Stage 4. Teachers assess work frequently and tell the pupils how they are getting on, but pupils themselves often do not have the confidence to ask questions and to know how to improve. The quality of learning is satisfactory overall, but many less able pupils lack confidence in their learning and in their ability to achieve. Although many work hard, the pace of learning is slow. The overall learning of some pupils, particularly those in bottom sets, is affected by poor attendance.

#### **OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall, but the time allocation for some subjects is insufficient and the provision for work-related programmes in Years 10 and 11 is underdeveloped. Extra-curricular opportunities are good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory overall. Pupils are well integrated in mainstream classes and provision for pupils with statements and those on Stage 3 of the special educational needs register is appropriately implemented. However, there is insufficient support for pupils with poor reading skills in Years 7 to 9.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. There are very good opportunities for developing social awareness and taking responsibility. Provision for moral development is good and cultural development satisfactory, although the multicultural dimension is more limited. Opportunities for a greater spiritual awareness are not always taken and are unsatisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The quality of personal support and guidance is good, and pupils' progress is monitored carefully. Assessment data is beginning to be used effectively to set targets, but not consistently by all subjects and tutors.

The school works hard to involve parents and to work in partnership to ensure that all children achieve their potential.

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

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides a clear direction for the school. Management systems are insufficiently rigorous to ensure continuing improvement. Subject leadership is at least satisfactory and in many cases good.

How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are committed and well informed, and are increasingly involved. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Most statutory requirements are met. They are increasingly confident in their ability both to shape the school's direction and to challenge and question the senior management.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Priorities identified in the school development plan are appropriate, but the monitoring of teaching is not rigorous enough and the school's procedures for self-evaluation are not systematic.
The strategic use of resources	The school seeks to apply best value wherever possible, and resources are mostly used satisfactorily. Educational priorities are considered when the budget is being planned.

There are sufficient teaching staff to meet the school's needs, but support staff are limited. Resources are satisfactory, although the library is not well stocked. The quality and number of computers has improved recently, but demand still exceeds supply. Accommodation is satisfactory.

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

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• that their children are expected to work hard and that they are making good progress</li> <li>• that the school is well led and managed</li> <li>• that the school provides an interesting range of activities outside of lessons</li> <li>• the improving reputation of the school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• some concerns were expressed about the lack of information received about their children's progress</li> </ul>

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. Inspectors agree with parents' views. Although reports are satisfactory, comments in some subjects lack detail.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. In 2000, the school's results in English, mathematics and science in national tests at the age of fourteen were well below average. In English results have declined over the last two years, although recent results in mathematics and science have continued to improve marginally. As a consequence, although the trend in the school's average points score for all subjects has been above the national trend since 1996, there has been a decline since 1998. Boys do less well than girls in all three subjects relative to national averages for their age group, and have done so consistently for the last three years.
2. The school's GCSE results in 2000 of 38 per cent of pupils gaining five or more A\* to C grades were below the national average of 47.4 per cent. However, this was a considerable improvement on results in previous years and confirms a rising trend, faster than the national trend. The average points score per pupil was well above that achieved by pupils in schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. The percentage of pupils achieving five or more A\* to G grades in 2000 was also below average, and some of these pupils underachieved during Years 10 and 11. Able pupils made satisfactory progress in relation to their attainment at the age of 14 years, but the progress of less able pupils was not consistently satisfactory. However, pupils taking physical education, information technology, drama and dance did very well, gaining a higher percentage of A\* to C grades than average. Results in English, mathematics, science, art and design and design and technology were significantly below average.
3. The targets set by the school for GCSE results in 2000 were set too low and were exceeded. Those set for 2001 are lower than the results achieved in 2000, but are realistic and challenging given the prior attainment of the current Year 11.
4. Pupils' attainment on entry is below average, and the ability profile of pupils has consistently been skewed towards the lower end. However, the prior attainment of pupils on entry, as shown by test and reading scores, is improving and younger pupils are attaining higher standards for their age in subjects like modern foreign languages than some of the pupils in Years 10 and 11. Overall given their attainment on entry, most pupils achieve satisfactorily in all years, but there is some underachievement amongst lower attaining pupils, particularly those whose attendance is poor. Most of these underachieving pupils are boys, but not exclusively so.
5. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. They join the school with poor reading and comprehension skills and make satisfactory progress towards the targets set, particularly pupils with statements and those on Stage 3 of the special educational needs register. Regular and effective support in class enables these pupils to make progress. At times their progress is good, and examples of rapid progress in lessons were observed in science, history, art and design and design and technology. This was the consequence of opportunities to read in class and a high level of challenge and support enabling lower attaining pupils to understand what they were learning. Younger pupils make satisfactory progress when they are supported on the Successmaker programme to improve word recognition and spelling. However, progress is slower for pupils on the lower stages of the special educational needs and faculty registers at Key Stage 3 because support is limited beyond the class teacher

and there are no planned opportunities for additional reading. Achievement for pupils with special educational needs in Key Stage 4 is generally satisfactory. Where teaching matches resources and pace to pupils' ability levels, as seen in a Year 11 geography lesson, pupils make good strides in learning and their attitudes are positive. However, many pupils experience difficulties with the language and understanding of GCSE papers because they are not confident readers.

6. English standards are below average at the end of both key stages, although most pupils achieve satisfactorily, particularly the more able pupils. The literacy skills of most pupils are just satisfactory to cope with the demands made in other subjects, although lower attaining pupils do struggle with reading and speaking at length. Reading standards in particular are too low for some pupils to cope adequately. Many pupils also lack confidence when speaking aloud, and are hesitant when answering questions and expressing ideas or opinions. Standards of written presentation, handwriting, spelling and punctuation are satisfactory for most pupils, but once again lower attaining pupils lack accuracy and fluency.
7. Standards in mathematics are below average at the end of both key stages. Achievement is satisfactory and most pupils, especially the more able, make satisfactory progress through the school. Standards have been improving in recent years. Numeracy skills are just satisfactory and despite the lack of a co-ordinated policy across the school, most pupils can manipulate numbers and apply numerical skills in a variety of subject contexts. Most pupils were reasonably confident in using graphs and formulae in science, collecting data and analysing them in geography, measuring accurately in design and technology and using spreadsheets in information and communication technology.
8. At the end of both key stages, standards in science are below average, but improving particularly at GCSE level. Able pupils achieve well and their progress is good while for others progress is only satisfactory. Some of the investigative work in Key Stage 4 is of a good quality, but on the whole standards are similar across each of the science strands.
9. Standards of attainment in art and design are average at the end of both key stages, reflecting good achievement in relation to pupils' prior attainment. Drawing and painting standards are particularly good. Good progress is the consequence of very effective teaching of basic drawing skills combined with good attitudes to the subject from most pupils.
10. In design and technology, standards are below average at the end of both key stages, although pupils' achievements are satisfactory. Pupils' skills in both designing and making improve steadily, and increasing use is being made of computers to help the design process. Standards across all subjects, including resistant materials, food technology and textiles are similar.
11. Standards in geography are below average at the end of both key stages. Overall achievements are satisfactory, although there is some underachievement amongst pupils in the lower ability groups. These pupils often struggle with reading and writing skills and are unable to consolidate their learning. In addition, there is insufficient curriculum time, particularly in Key Stage 3, to reinforce learning in depth.
12. Attainment in history at the end of both key stages is below average. Most girls achieve satisfactorily, but there is some underachievement amongst the boys, particularly the less able. Insufficient curriculum time in Years 7 to 9 means that

middle and lower attaining pupils have less opportunity to develop analytical and interpretative skills.

13. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are average at the end of both key stages. Pupils' achievements are good, the consequence of confident and effective teaching which guides pupils to be increasingly independent in their learning.
14. In both French and German standards are average in Year 9 as a consequence of consistently good teaching and learning, but remain below average in Year 11. However standards are improving in German and are approaching average levels in GCSE classes. Improving standards are the result of consistently good teaching and improving resources.
15. In music, standards are well below average in Year 9, but in line with expected levels for the small number of pupils taking GCSE. Temporary staffing difficulties are contributing to unsatisfactory achievement in Key Stage 3, but teaching in Years 10 and 11 is appropriately geared to examination requirements and progress is consequently good.
16. Standards in physical education (PE) are average in Year 9, but above average in Year 11. Pupils in PE achieve well and make good progress through the school as a consequence of consistently good teaching and positive attitudes to learning. Pupils demonstrate confidence and enthusiasm across a range of disciplines, including dance, individual and team games. Standards in PE are a strength of the school.
17. In religious education (RE), standards are below those expected in the agreed syllabus at the end of both key stages. Pupils' achievements are unsatisfactory as a consequence of insufficient time for the subject, particularly in Key Stage 4, staffing problems and inadequate planning within the scheme of work.

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

18. Pupils' attitudes towards school and their work are good and in a few lessons excellent. Only in a small number of lessons were pupils' attitudes and behaviour judged unsatisfactory. The variation in some pupils' attitudes and behaviour is directly related to the quality of the teaching they experience during lessons. In most lessons when teachers have clear expectations of both work and behaviour and the teaching is sufficiently challenging to engage and sustain their interest, pupils demonstrate a very positive and enthusiastic attitude. However, inappropriate lesson content leads to poor levels of concentration and unsatisfactory behaviour. On occasions teachers have to work hard to stimulate pupils' interest, motivate them to learn and encourage them to undertake challenging tasks. Relationships between pupils and with staff are good. The majority of pupils work well together in pairs and small groups where they encourage and support each other when encountering difficulties with their work. In the best lessons pupils are confident in talking about their work, readily answer questions and participate fully in discussions. Pupils with special educational needs are interested in their work and fully integrated into the school community.
19. The standard of behaviour within the school is good both in lessons and when moving around the school; a marked improvement on the standards of movement reported at the time of the last inspection. The minority of pupils who exhibit challenging behaviour occasionally creates difficulties for teachers but generally good class management skills ensure that the flow of the lesson is not disrupted and the rate of pupils' learning is unaffected. Infrequent incidents of bullying occur but when brought

to the attention of staff, these incidents are taken seriously and effectively dealt with. The instances and number of pupils excluded has fallen since the previous inspection. The governing body is appropriately involved at all stages of the exclusion process which is reserved for those pupils who fail to respond to the school's supportive measures.

20. The personal development of pupils is good, and many senior pupils act responsibly and with maturity. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their initiative and personal responsibility. School and house council representatives are elected by their peers, and pupils help organise fund-raising events and are currently involved with the Year 11 Prom evening. Pupils carry out a range of responsibilities conscientiously. The school takes pupils' views seriously and several suggestions have been taken up, such as placing clocks in all classrooms. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and the recently introduced review and guidance sessions with their tutor is aimed at making pupils aware of how to organise their time and what they can do to improve the general standard of their work.
21. Levels of attendance have improved since the previous inspection but remain obstinately well below average. Unauthorised absence was above the national average at 4.1 per cent. Currently 40 per cent of pupils have attendance levels below 90 per cent. This is well above average. The school places great emphasis on punctuality and the majority of pupils are punctual arriving at school at the start of the day. The school complies with the statutory requirements for the registration of pupils.

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

22. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in both key stages. Teaching was judged to be at least satisfactory in over 93 per cent of lessons observed during the inspection. One in five lessons was very good or excellent. Teaching was unsatisfactory in around 7 per cent of lessons. While the proportions of satisfactory and good teaching are similar in both key stages, the number of unsatisfactory lessons observed was higher in Key Stage 3 than in Key Stage 4. The overall quality of teaching has improved significantly since the time of the previous inspection.
23. The quality of teaching in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science is satisfactory in both key stages. Much good teaching was observed in each of these subjects, but this was more usually in the top sets with more able pupils. Teaching of less able pupils is of a less consistently good quality and weaknesses in the quality of teaching are more often associated with classes in lower sets. Although the teaching of core subjects has improved since the last inspection, some unsatisfactory teaching remains and teaching is not as consistently good as in most other subjects. As a consequence progress for able pupils is at least satisfactory, but is less consistently satisfactory for less able pupils.
24. In other subjects the quality of teaching varies. It is good and particularly effective in art and design, geography, history, ICT, modern foreign languages and PE. Teaching in art and design is very good in Key Stage 3 and in PE it is very good in Key Stage 4. However there are weaknesses in the teaching of music, which is unsatisfactory at Key Stage 3.
25. The teaching of literacy is satisfactory overall, but the contribution of other subjects to standards of literacy is variable. A consistent strength is the encouragement of and opportunities for the development of pupils' listening skills. This is particularly the case in art and design and science, where very good listening occurs except among some

boys. Speaking skills are developed to a good extent in design and technology and art and design. On the other hand, there are few opportunities for speaking in history, and in other subjects pupils' standards of speaking are given limited focus. Pupils' writing skills are developed by effective use of key words, dictionaries and a framework for writing in history, and higher attainers in particular in science and geography practise their writing skills. In other subjects, opportunities for writing are limited.

26. Insufficient attention is given to the development of pupils' reading. It is encouraged in geography by the good use of glossaries and displays, in modern foreign languages by giving time for extended reading and good teaching of reading skills, and in science by the use of key words and vocabulary tests. In history teachers try to encourage reading aloud, but opportunities are missed largely because of pupils' reluctance to contribute in this way. This reluctance is widespread across all subjects because the development of reading is not sufficiently emphasised. This is a significant deficiency when a substantial minority of pupils has reading difficulties. The library's reading resources are similarly inadequate. These inconsistencies in approach to the development of literacy and the variation in emphasis given to different skills by subjects make their contribution just about satisfactory overall. All areas of the school are aware of the language policy but lack of a co-ordinated and consistent approach prevent the strategies it recommends being any more than satisfactorily effective at present.
27. The teaching of numeracy is also satisfactory, despite the lack of a whole-school policy. Appropriate emphasis is given to the skills of measurement, tabulation and graphical work in science. In geography, the collection and interpretation of data are effectively taught in Year 11, and basic skills in manipulating percentages are used in Year 9. Design and technology and art and design also make sound use of numeracy and measuring skills. Spreadsheets are used in ICT in designing for a purpose.
28. The quality of teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs overall is good. Strengths lie in classroom management where pupils are successfully engaged in effective oral evaluations within the lesson which help them remember and consolidate what they are learning. Good practice was observed in science, English, history and art and design where teachers display very good relationships and their enthusiasm holds pupils' interest and attention so that they are involved in learning through experimentation and exploration. For example, in a Year 7 science lesson observed, pupils learnt about the diaphragm muscles as they explored deep breathing first hand, and in art and design they looked closely at Cubist painters' techniques in good quality print resources and used these to learn how to blend and mix colour. Teachers and learning support assistants in many subjects help pupils to record key words relating to the topic and teachers' explanation and demonstration of tasks are a key factor in improving basic literacy skills overall. Learning support assistants keep detailed notes on pupils who receive one-to-one support in class and make an effective contribution in increasing pupils' overall confidence and self-esteem. Planning between teachers and support staff is satisfactory in the majority of lessons. However the day-to-day progress of pupils is not always recorded by learning support assistants. Teachers do not make consistent use of individual education plans to plan work and set subject targets to meet the needs of some lower attaining pupils.
29. Strengths of the teaching include classroom management particularly when teachers know the pupils well and have developed good relationships with them. In most lessons the attitudes and behaviour of pupils were good, and in nearly two out of three lessons good attitudes contributed positively to the learning. However, pupils' attitudes and learning suffer when teachers do not know individual pupils well. Most teachers

set high standards and their expectations are appropriate. Good planning and management leads to high levels of concentration. However, some pupils, particularly a minority of boys in Years 10 and 11, demonstrate challenging and unco-operative attitudes and are reluctant to settle to work. These situations are frequently well managed by teachers, engaging the pupils with good humour, and making clear the levels of acceptable work and behaviour. In one such science lesson, a small group of Year 11 boys were handled with considerable patience and an insistence on acceptable standards of conduct. However, learning was adversely affected and progress was limited during the lesson. In another Year 11 French lesson, the teacher worked hard to drive the lesson at a brisk pace and dealt skilfully with occasional inattention.

30. While expectations are usually high, where teaching has shortcomings, it is often because of the lack of challenge set. In a Year 10 science lesson observed, for example, the work failed to build on pupils' prior knowledge and able pupils were repeating work they had previously learnt in Year 7. Some planned work with lower ability pupils has high expectations of handwriting and presentation, but only a limited challenge in the tasks themselves. Pupils are often given the answers rather than being made to seek them out, and as a consequence the pace of learning is laboured. The most effective teaching ensured pupils were engaged and involved in the learning, did not accept passive learning from the pupils and required the pupils themselves to solve problems and seek answers. This was a problem in lessons with less able pupils in particular.
31. Where teachers know their pupils well, they often build up trusting and productive relationships. They know the progress of individual pupils and are able to plan and adapt the work effectively to meet their needs. In general, teaching is planned to meet the needs of all pupils, although the needs of the more able are sometimes better met than those of less able pupils. However, the quality of planning is dependent on the teacher's knowledge of the pupils in the class. In one excellent Year 9 art lesson observed, the planning effectively ensured all pupils worked at their own level and were challenged and engaged throughout. The pupils had a very good understanding of the criteria used for assessing their work and therefore a clear sense of how to improve. Homework was planned as part of the lesson and used to extend and enhance the coursework. In most lessons the aims of the lesson are shared with pupils at the beginning. This usually leads to an increased focus on learning, as in the case of a Year 8 history lesson observed about the execution of Charles I so that the pupils knew exactly what to do and settled to work quickly. A review of progress at the end of the lesson enabled learning to be consolidated and the next lesson planned. This technique works less effectively when the lesson aims which are shared with the pupils, are just a list of activities to be done rather than precise skills or knowledge to be acquired. This was the case in one Year 9 English lesson observed, when lower ability pupils made steady but unspectacular progress in consolidating their understanding of Twelfth Night.
32. In some lessons, planning does not consistently meet the needs of all pupils. This is sometimes the case even within teaching groups which are set by ability in English and mathematics, where the spread of attainment remains wide. In one unsatisfactory Year 8 lesson in English with a lower attaining group, the planning failed to engage all of the pupils in appropriately challenging activities. While the pupils were compliant, they were not challenged and learning was unsatisfactory. In some lessons, such as a Year 11 geography lesson on the Red Indians at war, pupils are over-dependent on the teacher and do not take sufficient responsibility for their own learning.



33. Much of the quality and use of assessment is good, particularly in Key Stage 4. Teachers assess work frequently and tell the pupils how they are getting on. However, in some subjects, pupils have a reasonable idea of their progress but do not have the confidence to ask questions and the self-awareness to know how to improve and what they need to do next. Some marking in science, for example, is exemplary; rewarding, challenging and offering clear guidance on how to improve. Good faculty assessment systems are enabling the teachers to be much more aware of pupils' progress and the standards they should be aiming at. Pupils themselves are also aware of their targets, although they are not as aware of what is needed to be done in order to achieve the target. As a result, pupils' own self-knowledge of their learning, while satisfactory, is not as good as it might be, particularly in Key Stage 3.
34. Many of the less able pupils lack confidence in their learning and in their ability to achieve. Although many work hard, the pace of learning is slow. While pupils in Years 10 and 11 have a growing self-awareness of their progress, this is a weakness in Key Stage 3. The most effective teaching offers encouragement but also raises expectations of what might be achieved. Consistent praise and encouragement ensure pupils keep on task and promote self-esteem. A particularly good example of this was observed in a Year 9 English lesson in which pupils' efforts were always recognised, but at the same time, expectations remained high and the pupils constantly challenged to think more deeply and use a wider range of vocabulary.
35. Pupils' learning overall in lessons is satisfactory and as a consequence most pupils make at least satisfactory progress through both key stages. However, unsatisfactory learning was observed. Usually this was because of the poor attitudes of a small minority of boys which affected the pace and productivity of work, and an acceptance of passive and compliant learning by the teacher.
36. The overall learning of some pupils, particularly those in bottom sets, is affected by poor attendance. This lack of continuity in their education is a major factor in their underachievement.

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

37. The quality and range of learning opportunities in both key stages are satisfactory. A wide range of subjects is provided at both key stages and good opportunities exist beyond the academic curriculum for pupils to widen their learning and experiences. The school has made positive efforts to address the issues raised in the last inspection: the provision for pupils with special educational needs has been improved; religious education is now taught to all years; pupils in Key Stage 4 are no longer burdened by an excessive number of GCSE subjects and ICT is now well organised and used. However, there is still an imbalance of time given to subjects at both key stages and a lack of a work-related curriculum at Key Stage 4. Effective strategies for teaching numeracy, while satisfactory, lack co-ordination and there is still non-compliance with the legal requirement for a daily act of collective worship.
38. At Key Stage 3, all subjects of the National Curriculum plus religious education and personal, social and health education are satisfactorily provided, and overall breadth is satisfactory. All subjects meet statutory requirements, including ICT which is taught as a separate lesson. Subjects also often make a good contribution to ICT so that pupils receive their full entitlement. An additional hour is devoted to improving literacy and numeracy in Years 7 and 8. Pupils can choose between French and German in Year 7, but no second foreign language is offered. Pupils are grouped according to their

prior attainment in the first term in English, mathematics and science. This organisation enables smaller teaching groups of lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs to receive learning support in class relevant to their needs.

39. Although the overall teaching time of 25 hours a week is above the recommended level at Key Stage 3, not all subjects have sufficient time. Music, which alternates with drama and dance, is only provided for in two out of three terms and is consequently well below the recommended time. This is having an adverse effect on the pupils' standards and progress. Both geography and history also have an allocation well below the average for secondary schools. Consequently, there is inadequate time for middle and lower attaining pupils to reinforce and practise key skills, especially of evaluation and writing at length.
40. The curriculum at Key Stage 4 is broad and balanced, although the time available for RE is insufficient to enable full coverage of the syllabus. For some pupils, the curriculum lacks relevance. All pupils study a common group of subjects, which includes ICT and personal and health education as discrete subjects, and either history or geography. Options are made within faculties which enable a good balance of subjects to be studied. Since the previous inspection, pupils are no longer required to study too many subjects and religious education is now offered, albeit with too little time. For pupils for whom a full GCSE course is unsuitable, the Certificate of Educational Achievement is offered in nine subjects. Many pupils also study for the Junior Sports Leadership Award in physical education. There is no work-related curriculum in place which would be more relevant to the needs of less academic pupils. The current curriculum review is exploring GNVQ courses, and alternative work-related programmes for disaffected pupils in Years 10 and 11 are being planned.
41. The quality and range of learning opportunities for pupils with special educational needs are satisfactory overall. A few pupils are withdrawn from lessons for specific learning and behaviour support; however, the majority are well integrated into mainstream classes and provision for pupils with statements and those on Stage 3 of the special educational needs register is appropriately implemented. Special needs pupils are grouped in the lower bands in Years 7, 8 and 9 and in appropriate option groups at Key Stage 4. The ability to access a broad and balanced curriculum is reduced somewhat for a significant number of pupils on Stages 1 and 2 of the special educational needs register at Key Stage 3 because of poor reading skills. The lack of a co-ordinated programme to improve reading skills and confidence in reading is a significant weakness, although the use of a computer program to support overall literacy skills is working effectively. In addition, there is no co-ordinated programme to support the improvement of numeracy skills.
42. The curriculum is enriched by a good provision of extra-curricular activities that extend the educational opportunities for the pupils. Many subjects run lunchtime and after-school clubs with high participation rates, notably drama, art, French and design and technology. Physical education has very good take-up of its many sporting activities, with half of the pupils in the school involved. English organises theatre trips to Stratford, while geography and history have well-organised fieldwork trips to Dudley and Goodrich Castle for Key Stage 4 pupils, although no provision for those at Key Stage 3. There are annual ski trips and a continental camping trip. Annual productions involve pupils in music and drama, while pupils have participated in a variety of activities at the Arts Festival organised by the expressive arts faculty. There are close links with a school in Finland. Pupils are involved in numerous events to raise money for charity, including Year 8 girls organising a disco.

43. The school has strong links with the community which contribute to the pupils' learning, as well as strengthening links with local people and agencies. Outside speakers from the police and health services contribute to the personal, social and health programme; local sports clubs, including local professional football clubs, work closely with the pupils, especially in the Summer School. This extensive programme of sporting links has contributed to the school being awarded Sportsmark status. New Opportunities Funding is effectively used to provide well-supported Saturday clubs for the pupils in pottery, football and trampolining. The school's facilities are well used by local people through a programme of adult education courses. Pupils also actively participate in local events such as the Dudley Arts Festival and Year 10 pupils demonstrate dance in local primary schools. There are good links with local business through the work experience programme.
44. There are satisfactory links between the school and its partner schools, which contribute to making a reasonably smooth transition. Year 6 pupils from the main feeder primaries attend a well-organised week's induction programme in the summer. The headteacher attends the Curriculum Development Group for primary and secondary schools and the co-ordinator of special educational needs liaises closely with local primary schools. The flow and quality of data from the primary schools is generally good, although the information on pupils who live out of borough is variable. Curricular links between the expressive arts faculty and primary schools are good, but in other areas of the curriculum they are undeveloped and often weak. There are plans for both a literacy and numeracy summer school involving pupils about to come to the school in Year 7. Links with further education institutions are stronger through careers guidance and subject links with universities and schools, such as to Dudley College in science for pupils in Years 10 and 11.
45. The school's long-standing policy on equality of opportunity has been reviewed in the light of recent legislation. It expresses the school's sense of natural justice as well as its sensitivity to individual needs. The school believes in the value and worth of diverse cultural backgrounds and the contribution made by pupils of all abilities. Most subjects consciously adhere to this policy and can demonstrate that all pupils have access to the whole of the curriculum they offer. However, the lack of systematic monitoring of the progress of pupils from ethnic minorities means that a clear picture of progress is not available, and possible support not targeted precisely.
46. All pupils, including those from ethnic backgrounds, with special educational needs or physical disabilities, are included in all aspects of school life. All pupils have their entitlement to a European language for five years. Organised travel abroad and Internet links foster an international perspective. Boys and girls participate equally in the activities provided by physical education. The work done in design and technology avoids gender stereotyping.
47. Courses leading to Certificates of Achievement are successfully taught and allow lower attaining pupils, including some with special educational needs, to be included in the whole curriculum. The school's provision for gifted and talented pupils is less well developed and is largely made through extra-curricular enrichment in art and design, languages, physical education and music.
48. Pupils with special needs feel that they receive the support that they need. They are fully integrated in class, have few problems with bullying or harassment and have privacy and space when they need it. Many use specially adapted materials to overcome their difficulties with reading and writing in English, geography, history and

languages. A minority would like more help, so that they can complete the work they are set.

49. The school pays insufficient attention to the analysis of attainment by gender and ethnicity. The increasing availability of detailed evidence has generated a general awareness that boys achieve less than girls, but has not resulted in a common strategy for overcoming this inequality. The school has a small minority of pupils from traveller and ethnic backgrounds who are included in all aspects of the school's life and work. Their unselfconscious and largely successful inclusion has resulted in there being little emphasis on separate analysis of their needs and attainment. Music and religious education have insufficient time to develop the multi-cultural aspects of their work, so that many pupils leave school without the full range of skills and knowledge needed to appreciate the diversity of our own and other societies.
50. Careers guidance is part of the personal education programme. Pupils have training in personal development from the age of eleven, begin formal careers planning at 13 and have two weeks of work experience in the first year of their GCSE courses. In the autumn term of pupils' final year at school, all local schools give presentations, and other training providers visit in the spring. Pupils also visit two universities. Potential employment opportunities are fully explored, for example recently the local radio roadshow visited the school to give 13- and 14-year-olds information about careers available in a commercial radio station. Every effort is made to encourage pupils to continue with some form of education or on-the-job training when they leave school. Parents are fully informed about the careers programme and work experience. Twenty-five per cent of work experience placements come through pupils' families. An external careers advisor visits regularly, and promotes a well-managed programme. There are effective systems for checking health and safety at work placements and for communicating with employers about work experience, including post-employment debriefing. Teachers taking careers lessons within the personal, social and health programme have all received relevant training and the co-ordinator has undertaken further study which led to improved provision of materials for evaluating work experience. Recent pruning of outdated materials in the careers library means it is up-to-date but poorly stocked. Careers education has improved since the last inspection. The programme is now monitored and constantly reviewed.
51. Overall, provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Some aspects of it, however, are stronger than others. Provision for spiritual development is unsatisfactory. Elements of it are evident in assemblies where pupils can reflect on the themes introduced by members of staff and these assemblies often include a bible reading, a prayer and a short time of reflection. There are some opportunities too in individual subjects such as in art where pupils can reflect on issues such as conflict and where they can engage in quite deep levels of sensitive thought. Modern foreign languages also has some elements of spirituality planned into the scheme of work and in English and science opportunities sometimes arise that make the pupils stop and think. These opportunities however are not very frequent and other opportunities are not always exploited to their full advantage. Overall there are not many opportunities provided for pupils to be quiet and to think about their own experiences and to develop a knowledge and insight into many of the mysteries of life which surround them. The quality of personal relationships is a very good aspect of the school's spiritual provision but there is a lack of a systematic input to the wider aspect of spirituality both across subjects and in tutor time. As at the time of the last inspection, there is still scope for further development in this area. The school is not fulfilling the statutory requirements of a daily act of collective worship.

52. Provision for moral development is good. Pupils are expected to behave well and have a clear sense of right and wrong. Pupils are given clear direction through the various rules and school policies, including the behaviour code, classroom rules and the rewards and sanctions policy. Individual subjects also set clear standards of behaviour and unambiguously indicate that high standards of behaviour are expected. Topics within the personal, social and health programme help strengthen this provision. These include the study of issues like handling conflict and behaviour. The school aims include caring, honesty and fairness as qualities to be aspired to. Religious education looks at a wide variety of moral codes and issues and physical education emphasises the necessity of playing by the rules. Rewards play an important part in the provision of the school, giving pupils a positive attitude to moral guidance. The good examples set by the staff are also an important part of this aspect of the school's provision.
53. Provision for social development is very good. Positive relationships are fostered through the many extra-curricular activities in the school. These include the many sporting and music clubs and theatre trips. All help the pupils develop skills of personal interaction. Pupils learn to take responsibility through the school council, by being house captains, by working on the reception desk and by helping out in the library and on parents' evenings. The pupils can also be active in the community. There are many charity activities and the pupils have links with many local schools. Pupils also visit and help out in local day centres, and some have helped out at the local church. These activities foster the development of citizenship. Most individual subjects encourage collaborative work, helping to develop a sense of teamwork. There are some study topics in the personal, social and health programme which help with the pupils' social development. These include the topics of confidence, effort and persistence, making friends and self-esteem
54. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory. The pupils can participate in theatre visits, visits to places of special interest such as Goodrich Castle and visits to art galleries. There are many clubs and school activities which have strong cultural elements. These include drama productions and various musical activities such as the choir, recorder and brass groups. The development of multicultural awareness is less strong, despite the strong links with various European countries. Many individual subjects also include an element of multicultural study in their work such as in religious education, geography and history. Art and design in particular has an important input to this provision as pupils study the work of non-western artists as well as looking at aboriginal and Islamic art. An acknowledgement however, of the different cultures represented in Great Britain itself is not a strength of the school and there is still some way to go in familiarising pupils with these traditions as well as indicating where they can learn from them. This was mentioned at the last inspection and there is still scope for additional development.

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

55. The procedures for monitoring pupils' academic performance and personal development are satisfactory. Tutors generally know their pupils well because they are responsible for the same pupils throughout their time at the school. The allocation of pupils into mixed-age tutor groups has the effect of establishing a 'family' ethos that is supportive towards younger pupils and develops within older pupils a sense of responsibility for the well being of the group as a whole. Pupils entering the school in Year 7 settle quickly, having already attended an induction week that familiarised them with the school and its routines.

56. The review and guidance sessions that tutors undertake twice yearly with each pupil provide good opportunities for tutors to monitor and support progress. Sessions are based on assessment of individual pupil's progress and effort, and are used to make the pupils themselves aware of their progress and of what they should be aiming at. One session observed was well managed and provided the pupils with both support and challenge in their work. However, the quality of these sessions varies and is not consistently of a high quality. A curriculum enhancement group is held twice weekly for pupils in Year 11 who are willing to undertake extra study to raise their grades in GCSE examinations. Pupils are well prepared for post-16 choices through an effective careers education programme and, together with the advice that pupils receive from the careers service, are able to make informed choices about their future. The school employs a counsellor who provides confidential one-to-one sessions for pupils. The personal, social and health education programme effectively supports pupils' personal development.
57. The school regards full attendance as a priority and has worked hard with individual pupils and at a whole-school level to promote good attendance. However, although attendance has improved since the last inspection, it remains well below average, and the gap between the school's attendance figures and the national average has been widening. As a result, the impact of the school's strategies has been limited and its procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are judged unsatisfactory. Heads of house meet weekly with the education welfare service to discuss individual pupils causing concern, but the current time allocated to the school is too low to cope adequately. Form tutors, who have prime responsibility, are inconsistent in their approach to monitoring and following up absence. Awards for pupils with attendance levels over 95 per cent are given, but there are no incentives for pupils who struggle to achieve 90 per cent attendance, or whose attendance is improving. The school's electronic recording system is used to monitor overall levels of attendance and records of individual pupils, but has not been used effectively to identify specific groups of pupils who are, or are likely to become, poor attenders. Manual analysis has been undertaken and this has provided the school with information about patterns and trends. However, the impact of more proactive strategies has been limited. The appointment of a first day contact officer is beginning to have an impact, but currently his role is limited to checking un-notified absences rather than to work more extensively with parents and pupils with poor attendance records.
58. The school's procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and eliminating bullying are satisfactory. Expectations are appropriate and the policy is based on self-discipline and respect towards others. A number of pupils whose challenging behaviour makes it difficult for them to settle to learning are generally well managed and supportive procedures enable teachers to work within an atmosphere of trust. The personal, social and health programme provides good opportunities for pupils to reflect on their behaviour and their attitudes towards others. The range of sanctions for unsatisfactory behaviour is appropriate and clearly understood by the majority of pupils, and senior staff have an important role. Emphasis is placed on retaining pupils within the school rather than excluding them. Appropriate procedures are in place for the exclusion of those pupils who fail to respond to the school's sanctions.
59. The arrangements for child protection are very good. The child protection officer is very experienced and records are kept appropriately. Liaison with support agencies is good. Recent staff training has ensured that all teachers are aware of the procedures to be followed.

60. Health and safety procedures are satisfactory. The local education authority has recently undertaken an audit of the school's procedures.
61. There are good procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress, and these have improved since the previous report. Assessment of units of work, using National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades, is a common practice in the school. Teachers are beginning to benefit from the use of computers for recording assessment data, and all assessments are now linked to a central database. This provides a good overview of each pupil's assessment record, including national test results, so that progress may be tracked. Some subjects, such as science, use a spreadsheet program to highlight in colour different aspects, for example where a pupil is underachieving. However, this is not common practice across the school, and not all subjects and form tutors are using the data with the same effectiveness.
62. The use of assessment to guide planning and improve achievement is satisfactory. However, assessment information is not used widely to set targets. In a number of subjects, National Curriculum levels, written in language accessible to pupils, are displayed in classrooms. Despite this information pupils show variable understanding of their current level, and any targets they may be working towards. Assessment is not always sufficiently used for providing achievable next steps for pupils, especially the less able. Academic targets agreed at review and guidance sessions with tutors are not fully informed by assessment data or targets set by subject teachers. Form tutors give caring support, but the review and guidance time lacks a sharp focus on the use of assessment to set targets. Those expressed in annual reports to parents are not uniformly clear. The school has only recently begun to monitor the achievement of different ethnic groups. Pupils' effort and achievement receive appropriate acknowledgement, for example by awarding certificates, house points and trophies. National Records of Achievement, presented at the end of Year 11, collate pupils' achievements gained at school.
63. Pupils on the special educational needs register are appropriately identified and effective assessment procedures are in place for pupils with statements and those on Stage 3 of the register. Statutory requirements for these pupils are fully met. External agencies and parents are appropriately involved in interim and annual reviews. The level of behaviour management counselling from outside agencies is limited and as a result pupils with behavioural difficulties have insufficient support. Assessment of pupils on the lower stages of the register is less rigorously monitored, particularly those pupils who are identified and whose details are held on faculty databases. The use of assessment is inconsistent for this group and information on the progress of pupils on the lower stages of the register is limited.

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

64. Parents' views of the quality and effectiveness of the school are positive, although the response to both the questionnaire circulated prior to the inspection and the pre-inspection meeting for parents was low. In particular parents felt that their children were expected to work hard and that they were making good progress. They felt that the school was well led and managed and that an interesting range of activities was available for pupils outside of lessons. The reputation of the school, within the local community, had risen consistently over the last few years and the school is now oversubscribed. Some concerns were expressed about the lack of information received about their children's progress.

65. Overall the effectiveness of the school's links with its parents is satisfactory. The school works hard to involve parents in all aspects of their child's education and to work in partnership to ensure that all children achieve their potential. However it lacks the support of some parents who fail to ensure their child attends school regularly.
66. Annual reports on pupils' progress are satisfactory overall. In some subjects, such as PE, the detail of reporting is good and targets set are precise and achievable. However in other subjects, written comments are vague and too general to be helpful. Parents value their consultation meeting with teachers. Letters celebrating achievement are sent home to parents regularly. Pupils do not always complete homework diaries, designed to be a record of homework set and for communication between home and school. As a result parents' concerns about the information they receive about their child's progress are to some extent justified. Annual celebration of achievement evening, social events and performances are well attended.

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

67. The headteacher's vision is clear and well communicated through the school's work. This is a school where pupils are valued and cared for as individuals and where the pastoral and academic structures support the personal development of the whole person. Staff, parents and governors support this vision, and the commitment of all staff to the personal care and development of pupils is widely recognised.
68. The headteacher is effectively supported by an experienced deputy who is well respected and provides a reassuring and confident presence around the school. The school is currently short of one deputy and as a result the senior management team is unbalanced. The good focus on pastoral issues is not matched by an equal focus on the curriculum. As a consequence, some important management issues, in particular the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, are not followed through.
69. The senior management team has a visible and high profile around the school, but line management procedures are not rigorous enough. Senior managers meet informally with all staff and are aware of faculty, individual subject and pastoral developments and concerns. But this is no substitute for a formal system of regular meetings in which a common agenda enables the work of the school to be monitored and middle managers held to account for the work of their teams. More systematic procedures are now needed if there is to be continuing improvement.
70. Monitoring of teaching is also insufficiently rigorous, and action taken to address weaknesses or provide support is not always well focused. The headteacher has observed all members of staff in the classroom, but the feedback has not led to more consistently good teaching. Heads of faculty monitor aspects of their team's work, and have on occasions observed teaching in lessons. The exercise was considered valuable in identifying and promoting more consistent practice as well as identifying areas of weakness. However the process has not been continued, and is currently in abeyance.
71. As a consequence the school's procedures for self-evaluation and review are not systematic and do not enable senior managers to review the school's progress with confidence and plan for improvements based on reliable information of what needs to be done. However, priorities identified in the school development plan are appropriate and progress in improving assessment and the use of data has been made. Some priorities, however, are not sharply focused on the action needed to secure improvements. For example, improvements in standards of literacy are more likely to



be assured if the agreed focus is sharper than merely monitoring to ensure faculties have implemented recent initiatives.

72. The school's management board which consists of heads of faculty and heads of house is used effectively to discuss whole-school initiatives and enables all managers to feel involved and committed to school improvement. Other groups of staff are convened for consultation and discussion of particular aspects of the school's work. Management at faculty and subject level is generally of a good quality, and individuals have worked effectively to raise standards and secure improvements within their subjects.
73. Governors are committed and well informed. Many are new and there has been a recent change of chair and vice chair. This has brought an increased sense of involvement and rigour. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are increasingly confident in their ability both to shape the school's direction and to challenge and question the senior management. Relationships between the governors and staff are good. Most statutory requirements are met, although the requirement to hold a daily act of collective worship and procedures for ensuring the school meets all health and safety legislation are not met.
74. Leadership and management of special educational needs are satisfactory overall. Improvement since the last inspection is broadly satisfactory and is due mainly to the effective organisation of the recently appointed co-ordinator who has worked hard to produce a prioritised development plan to improve the range of learning opportunities for special needs pupils. Learning support assistants are appropriately used in both core and foundation subjects to support those on the higher stages of the register but there is insufficient support for the many pupils with poor reading. Individual education plans have been revised and assessment data are more readily available to teaching and learning support staff on the network which is helping to improve the profile of special needs pupils overall. However, the co-ordinator does not take full responsibility for identifying and monitoring pupils on Stage 2 of the register and their individual education plans are not sufficiently and rigorously monitored towards targets set.
75. The school seeks to apply best value principles wherever possible. Finance committee meetings discuss the cost effectiveness of decisions and seek the best value for money in all transactions. External contracts are reviewed annually. The business manager is a member of the senior management team, and both she and the chair of the finance committee have a good grip of budgetary and educational issues. Financial planning and control are good, and the most recent audit (October 2000) reported that financial systems and operations were good.
76. The school has responded to criticisms made at the time of the last inspection in relation to ensuring a clearer link between budget planning and development planning. School priorities are costed within the constraints of the budget and ongoing educational priorities are considered when the budget is being planned. The finance committee has a firm grasp of financial issues, and is kept informed through regular financial reports from the business manager.
77. Funds for specific projects, including special educational needs, are mostly used appropriately. However, some remain unallocated at the time of the inspection. In particular a review of the funds available for inclusion should be made in order to ensure they are used more effectively to impact on attendance.

78. The match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum is satisfactory. Most teachers are well qualified and deployed but there are exceptions in English and RE. The use of non-specialists in both these subjects, particularly in Key Stage 3, has a detrimental impact on standards. Support staff make a positive contribution to the work of the school but they are insufficient in number to provide adequate support in classrooms. There is a shortage of technical support for some departments. Administrative staff make a significant contribution to the smooth running of the school. The systems and procedures for induction, mentoring and teacher development have contributed much to the improved quality of teaching since the previous inspection. Training needs are identified in a number of ways, through management initiatives linked to school development, departmental needs and through individual career needs.
79. There is sufficient classroom and specialist accommodation to enable the National Curriculum to be taught effectively. Most rooms are attractive teaching spaces and many are grouped together by subjects. Dance is not well served by being taught in the dining room. In parts of the school, particularly the corridors and stairs, the walls are badly marked giving them a very shabby appearance. There are good displays of work in some subject areas notably history, geography, modern foreign languages and science. Since the last inspection one room has been completely refurbished as a science laboratory and the new astro-turf pitch has added significantly to the outdoor facilities available for physical education.
80. The school's resources are satisfactory overall and in many subjects are good. There has been a significant improvement in the number and use of computers, although in a number of subjects the demand for their use still exceeds supply. In particular the use of computers in science in both key stages and in maths in Key Stage 3 has improved. The library's book provision is poor in both quality and quantity, although the school has plans to upgrade these resources. There has been an improvement in the quality of multicultural books but mathematics books are out of date. The music department is under-resourced, lacking among other things good quality percussion instruments. Resources for pupils with special educational needs are satisfactory. The school makes effective use of external resources within the work experience programme and visits and trips which contribute to and enhance the curriculum.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

81. In order to sustain improvements in standards and the quality of provision, the headteacher, governors and staff should:
- (1) Impose more rigorous management systems, in particular the monitoring of lessons and line management procedures, to ensure:
- that all managers are held to account for the standards within their teams;
  - more consistent practice and implementation of policies;
  - greater consistency in the quality of teaching and learning;
  - the sharing of good practice;
  - assessment data is monitored by gender and ethnicity.
- (Paragraph nos: 26, 49, 57, 61, 62, 63, 68, 69, 70)

- (2) Improve the standards of reading of lower attaining pupils in Key Stage 3 by:
- regularly promoting opportunities to read in all subjects;
  - monitoring their progress and providing additional support when necessary;
  - improving the resources available in the library.
- (Paragraph nos: 6, 26, 41, 63, 74, 80, 85, 86)
- (3) Improve the quality of teaching and learning, particularly of the less able pupils by:
- ensuring the teaching fully engages pupils in active learning, that pupils themselves have a greater awareness of their progress and take more responsibility for their learning;
  - planning to meet their needs with more precision and that learning outcomes are evaluated at the end of the lesson;
  - using assessment data to set individual pupil targets and plan the next learning step;
  - planning to take account of individual education plans with more consistency for those pupils with special educational needs and ensure they have subject specific targets.
- (Paragraph nos: 23, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34)
- (4) Improve the curriculum to ensure:
- time available for geography, history, music at Key Stage 3 and religious education at Key Stage 4 is sufficient to cover the course requirements adequately;
  - opportunities for vocational courses and the work-related curriculum are provided in Key Stage 4;
  - subjects plan for the spiritual development of pupils in their schemes of work.
- (Paragraph nos: 37, 39, 40, 51)
- (5) Improve attendance by:
- continuing to work closely with pupils, parents and the local education authority in challenging poor attendance;
  - exploring how inclusion strategies can be effective in encouraging higher rates of attendance;
  - reviewing the procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance;
  - ensuring greater consistency in the approach and work of form tutors;
  - analysing attendance data more rigorously to identify patterns and groups of poor attenders.
- (Paragraph nos: 57, 65)
- (6) Improve the effectiveness with which tutors monitor and support the progress of pupils by:
- ensuring greater consistency in the review and guidance sessions with individuals;
  - making more effective use of tutor time;
  - using assessment data more consistently to set targets and monitor individual progress.
- (Paragraph nos: 28, 57, 61, 62, 63)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	148
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	38

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1.4	18.9	35.1	37.8	6.8	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	808
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	209

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	11
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	216

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	15
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	41

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	11.9
National comparative data	6.3

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	4.1
National comparative data	0.4

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	74	81	155

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	10	43	32
	Girls	40	42	37
	Total	50	85	69
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	32 (54)	55 (48)	45 (40)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	5 (17)	29 (20)	17 (11)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	21	37	37
	Girls	49	41	50
	Total	70	78	87
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	45 (42)	51 (51)	56 (53)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	16 (11)	25 (24)	15 (8)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	71	72	143

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	58	66
	Girls	33	68	69
	Total	54	126	135
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	38 (26)	88 (86)	94 (93)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	35
	National	38.4

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	31
Any other minority ethnic group	1

### ***Teachers and classes***

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	49.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.1

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	124

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	21.9
Key Stage 4	21.6

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	3	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	37	1
Other minority ethnic groups	1	0

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

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	2,012,326
Total expenditure	1,989,884
Expenditure per pupil	2,512
Balance brought forward from previous year	837
Balance carried forward to next year	23,279

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

Number of questionnaires sent out:

808

Number of questionnaires returned:

66

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strong disagree	Don't know
My child likes school	27	61	8	3	2
My child is making good progress in school	36	55	5	2	3
Behaviour in the school is good	26	59	6	2	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home	29	55	14	2	2
The teaching is good	29	59	6	0	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on	29	42	20	2	8
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem	58	33	8	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best	53	45	2	0	0
The school works closely with parents	32	52	9	2	6
The school is well led and managed	42	48	3	2	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible	30	64	5	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons	55	39	3	0	3

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

### **ENGLISH**

82. Standards of attainment in English are below those expected nationally at the ages of 14 and 16. These standards do, however, represent satisfactory achievement by most pupils in Years 7 to 9 given their attainment on entry and by most pupils in Years 10 and 11 given their prior attainment in national tests. This level of achievement stems from teaching that is satisfactory overall with some good features, characterised by good relationships between teachers and pupils, supportive feedback and the effective use of resources in lessons. However, higher attaining pupils make more substantial progress than those of lower attainment.
83. In national tests in 2000, the percentage of pupils reaching Level 5 or above at the age of 14 was well below the national average. Similarly, the results are well below average when comparing average points scores with both national averages and similar schools. Results have declined in the last two years after reaching a peak in 1998, when results were in line with national averages. Boys have consistently performed less well than girls.
84. 2000 results for A\* to C grades in GCSE were significantly below the national average, and boys' results were much worse than girls'. Pupils' performance in the grade range A\* to G were slightly above national averages for both boys and girls, though not all pupils were entered for this examination, and the percentage entered for the examination in 2000 was significantly below average, and lower than the percentage entered for mathematics. Seven pupils obtained grades in the Certificate of Achievement course. Given their attainment in Key Stage 3 national tests, a number of pupils in this year underachieved. Results for A\* to C grades in GCSE English literature were below the national average. Although only 65 per cent of pupils were entered for this examination, all gained a grade in the range A\* to G, slightly higher than the national average.
85. The relatively weak recent performance in English arises in part from low prior attainment, in particular the reading difficulties experienced by a substantial minority of pupils, in part from the underachievement of boys, but particularly from serious staffing problems that disrupted learning and affected the attainment standards of a significant number of pupils.
86. In work seen during the inspection, the standard of attainment at age 14 is below average standards nationally. This is what might be expected given the pupils' below average attainment on entry, the above average proportion of pupils with special educational needs and the substantial minority of pupils who have reading difficulties. The standard represents satisfactory achievement by many pupils. Those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in well-structured lessons with support from classroom assistants and additional resources such as 'Success Maker'. All younger pupils now receive additional literacy lessons once a fortnight, but the reading standard of lower and middle attainers is still cause for concern. Reading aloud (when it occurs) is often hesitant and unexpressive, and even pupils whose reading comprehension is adequate lack confidence in this area. Many pupils also lack confidence when speaking aloud, and replies to questions are often brief and use a limited vocabulary. Most middle or higher attaining pupils present written work reasonably well, but lower attaining boys in particular have difficulties with handwriting, spelling and the punctuation of sentences.



87. In work seen during the inspection, the standard of attainment is below the level expected nationally at the age of 16. The standard is, however, what might be expected given pupils' Key Stage 3 performance in 1999 and represents satisfactory progress over the key stage. Higher attainers have appropriate knowledge and understanding of set texts. Their extended writing is often thorough and conscientious, but these pupils lack a wide vocabulary and a range of linking words and phrases that would clarify and enrich what they want to say. Lower attainers (more often boys than girls) are able to write at some length and structure their work appropriately provided that they have a strong framework to work within. They can, however, lapse into an inappropriate narrative or conversational style and have problems with spelling and the correct use of full stops. Speaking skills remain relatively undeveloped across the ability range: replies to questions are often brief. Apart from a small minority of boys, pupils have above average listening skills and use these to acquire and consolidate their knowledge and understanding of English.
88. In English, pupils' attitudes to learning are satisfactory overall, being good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. The difference arises from the fact that some pupils in these year groups are reluctant, uninvolved or passive, and teachers have difficulty in breaking down these barriers to learning. Standards of behaviour are good apart from a small minority of disruptive boys in Year 10. Pupils usually listen with interest and work hard apart from some average attaining boys in Year 10 and some lower attaining boys in Year 11 who are not as productive as they could be. Pupils respond particularly well when teachers provide opportunities for them to contribute actively to the lesson, use stimulating resources and expect greater than normal effort. This was the case, for example, in a lower attaining Year 10 class when pupils worked well in pairs to sort printed cards to establish plot sequence and character features in their study of 'Macbeth'. A higher attaining Year 11 class worked with serious concentration on a film after the teacher had provided video commentary on special effects used in the film and an essay structure with bullet points to guide pupils through their work. The same teacher set a challenge for lower attaining pupils in another Year 11 class ('Impress me with a good piece of writing') and encouraged them to use dictionaries and thesauruses to vary or enrich their expression ('I want you to take it further because I think you've got more to offer'). As a result pupils worked hard and constructively throughout the lesson. Pupils with reading difficulties and other special educational needs in a Year 8 literacy class responded very well to the challenge set by the teacher to complete tasks and to the praise, encouragement and rewards given throughout the lesson for personal achievement.
89. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, with some good features. As a result, most pupils make satisfactory progress. Teachers manage their pupils well, cultivating good relationships through their knowledge of individuals, particularly lower attainers and those with special educational needs. As a result, pupils respond attentively and co-operate in the classroom. Teachers' feedback to individuals or groups of pupils effectively establishes what pupils know and understand, and supports and extends their learning. In one Year 9 lesson observed, the teacher helped Year 9 pupils cope with a practice test paper by effective questioning and support for individuals and his approach produced a good working atmosphere and sense of achievement among the pupils. Teachers prepare lessons carefully, provide helpful frameworks for writing and, in very good lessons, use stimulating resources to encourage a thoughtful response. For example, one teacher's effective use of music and her well-prepared worksheet encouraged her Year 11 pupils to think carefully about choice of words and develop their ability to convey a sense of atmosphere in their writing. The best teaching challenges the pupils and involves them in their learning through lively and interesting

activities. However some teaching, often with lower ability sets, is unsatisfactory, and inconsistencies in the quality of teaching remain a problem to be addressed. Shortcomings in the use of resources, a lack of a clear purpose, poor organisation or difficulties with classroom management result in desultory, sluggish or interrupted learning. As a consequence pupils are unclear about what they have to do or become awkward and disruptive while doing it. As a result some lower ability pupils, particularly boys, underachieve.

90. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. English teachers have come through a period of substantial upheaval which has disrupted learning and affected recent examination results. The quality of teaching overall has nevertheless been sustained and weaknesses are being addressed. Serious attempts are being made to tackle boys' underachievement and observation indicates that the strategies now in place are having a positive effect. The head of English leads the faculty satisfactorily and has put in place other reforms and planned developments. Her capacity to improve the department's work further is restricted by her dual role as head of the communications faculty and the consequent difficulty of delegating work in an area which has so few posts of responsibility. Although colleagues are supportive, she also lacks time for monitoring and co-ordination of the teaching within the faculty, particularly that of inexperienced and non-specialist teachers.

## **MATHEMATICS**

91. Standards are below average, but pupils' achievements are satisfactory given their prior attainment on entry to the school. Satisfactory progress is the consequence of sound teaching and a strong commitment to improve. The progress and achievement of more able pupils is better than that of less able pupils.
92. In the year 2000, pupils' results in the National Curriculum tests for 14-year-olds overall, were below the national average. However, when compared with similar schools, results overall were average and at Level 6 or above, they were above average. Results have steadily improved since the last inspection; this improvement is broadly in line with the national trend. The pupils are overall about three terms behind the national average, with boys doing less well than girls. Taking the results overall in comparison to similar schools, pupils do better in mathematics than in either science or English.
93. GCSE results at higher grades A\* to C in 2000 were well below the national average but average when compared with similar schools. Since the last inspection results have improved steadily. The percentage entry for all pupils has also improved and is now in line with the national average. The percentage achieving A\* to G grades in 2000 was above average; girls' results being better than boys.
94. Attainment levels in work seen during the inspection at both age 14 and 16 were below average, consistent with the below average standards on entry to the school. By the end of Year 11 only a small minority of pupils take GCSE at the highest level of entry. In many cases, the work is below the standard expected. Basic skills in using numbers are just satisfactory, and have improved since the last inspection, but remains below average. Most pupils are able to add, subtract and multiply whole numbers with reasonable accuracy. They manipulate numbers, apply numerical skills and use formulae in different contexts and subjects. In design and technology, pupils can derive dimensions from existing sets well. Most pupils are reasonably confident in using graphs and analysing data. Measuring work is generally accurate, although

lower attaining boys find this aspect difficult. Some more able pupils are able to solve problems in designing spreadsheets for a purpose in ICT.

95. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, and much teaching observed in the inspection was good. Effective teaching is characterised by good planning and interesting introductions, effective pupil teacher interaction, varied use of resources including computers and a summary and review of learning at the end of the lesson. In one Year 11 lesson observed, the worksheet dealing with probability was very thorough to the point of indicating the required examination levels for each question together with relevant marks; the teacher made reference to this during a lively introduction to the lesson. The pupils worked accurately and understood the idea of sample space and tree diagrams. When questioned they were aware of the results of their recent mock GCSE and their predicted grades. The attitude of the pupils was positive and the lesson was a useful example of examination preparation. As a consequence of good teaching, pupils made good progress and consolidated their learning. Where teaching and learning is good the introduction to the lesson frequently reflects the quality of rapport the teacher has with the pupils. In one particular instance, pupils could not fail to be involved, the pace was lively, relevant questions on all aspects of mathematics were asked in quick succession, prior knowledge was interrogated, opinions were valued, misconceptions sensitively dealt with, the lesson flowed and was laced with good humour, it was an event rather than an exercise. Pupils understood the work, which focused upon simultaneous equations, and they could identify and apply the range of techniques to be employed in solving this aspect of algebraic mathematics.
96. Where the teaching has shortcomings, the lessons begin with weak introductions and therefore falter from the start. In a Year 9 lesson observed with above average ability pupils working on the conversion of metric units, the activities lacked challenge and were narrowly developed by reference to a worksheet. Opportunities for engaging the pupils in discussion and testing their prior knowledge and understanding were lost. This lack of challenge and involvement led to inattentiveness, lack of enthusiasm and an inefficient use of teaching time. As a consequence, progress was limited. In a Year 11 class observed, a worksheet covered a range of work on percentages. The pupils produced, in many instances, accurate basic work, designed to reinforce previously taught skills but the work did not extend them sufficiently. In one particular Year 8 class, of below average ability, the work focused upon multiplying and dividing numbers by multiples of ten. Progress was reduced when the work developed onto dealing with multiplying with more complex numbers. Pupils had a poor grasp of these topics, which had been covered earlier.
97. The department effectively provides for pupils with special educational needs in Key Stage 3, utilising computer software specifically designed for below average pupils. In one particular Year 7 lesson observed the focus was on the reinforcement and development of subtraction. The lesson was divided into two activities, one centred upon written work (the text books being very good examples of stimulating material) and the other on the interactive computer software. The lesson was efficiently planned; pupils understood the routines and enjoyed the lesson. They worked hard, with interest and understood the work. This was because of the appropriateness of material, which was creatively designed to make the pupils think on how best to apply previously acquired skills. Written work and use of the computer were effectively balanced. The software system was used to diagnose areas of weakness, record progress and recognise achievement through the award of certificates. It also can support the further development of individual education plans, which could strengthen this link in becoming a common feature of the teaching process.

98. Marking has improved since the last inspection but fails to provide pupils with guidance on what they need to do next. Assessment generally is rigorous with detailed data retained on computers. Target setting fails to indicate how the targets may best be realised. There is little insistence on detailed note taking in exercise books which would assist when revising for examinations.
99. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The department is well led and is committed to improvement. Teachers are encouraged to initiate fresh ideas, the school's involvement in the 'Maths Alive' project being one example. Although in its infancy, the enthusiastic way it has been implemented suggests a rich potential for further improvement. Pupils are encouraged, in the drive for improvement, to support their studies by the purchase of their own workbooks, which provide excellent examples for the revision of National Curriculum tests and GCSE. Schemes of work are both comprehensive and yet simple to use together with effective provision for investigative work, which supports preparation for GCSE coursework. Leadership has overseen a steady improvement compared with national standards since the last inspection. However, raising the attainment of boys at GCSE, in particular lower attaining pupils, remains an urgent priority. Others include the implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy and the continuing development of ICT into Years 10 and 11. The analysis of data from the national tests at age 14 is not well used to identify weaknesses in pupils' attainment and provide information about the most effective approach to teaching particular topics.

## **SCIENCE**

100. Standards in science are below average overall, reflecting pupils' understanding which is below average when they enter the school aged eleven. During their time at the school able pupils make good progress while for others progress is satisfactory. Pupils' achievements are satisfactory in Key Stage 3, but good in Key Stage 4. GCSE science results for 16-year-olds are below the national average. However, compared with schools drawing pupils from similar social and economic backgrounds, the results are above average. Since the last inspection there has been a marked rise in the GCSE examination results because teaching and planning for lessons have improved. Overall the improvement since the last inspection, in many aspects of the work of the faculty, has been good.
101. Attainment in the national tests for 14-year-olds is below the national average, with boys and girls performing equally. Compared with similar schools the 2000 results are below average, but the proportion reaching the expected Level 5 or higher is average. There has been a small improvement in the test results since the 1996 inspection.
102. GCSE results have improved significantly, on average one grade better than at the last inspection. The number of A\* to C grade passes has doubled over the period. Around one-third of pupils gained a pass in this range compared with a half of all pupils, nationally in 2000. Girls have improved more than boys and now out-perform them. The proportion of pupils passing with at least a grade G has improved and is now above average.
103. The standard of work seen during the inspection is below average and mirrors the picture from the examination results. The work in eleven-year-old pupils' exercise books near the start of Year 7 is below average. During the next three years teachers endeavour to raise pupils' achievement in science, but because the planned course does not distinguish well between the way different groups of pupils learn, including

those with special educational needs, pupils' attainment overall remains below average at the age of 14. The standard of pupils' work as they approach their GCSE examinations is also below average, but the more able pupils achieve above average standards across the physics, chemistry and biology sections of the science course. Some of these pupils produce very good accounts of their scientific investigations, drawing favourable comments from the examination board. Pupils of middle and lower ability have below average literacy limiting their ability to write and speak accurately. The science faculty has endeavoured to raise pupils' command of English by providing opportunities for creative writing, including story telling, in science. The meaning of scientific words are regularly checked. These strategies are raising the standards of literacy but they remain below average. Pupils' ability to use numbers in measuring, tabulating, calculating and graph work has improved, but also remains below average. Pupils do not get enough practice using the equations they meet in lessons. The science faculty has acquired new computer equipment and this is enabling pupils to reach good standards in the use of computers in science.

104. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in both key stages. The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection. Where learning was unsatisfactory, poor attitudes by some pupils, below average literacy skills and tasks that were too easy for some pupils limited what they were able to learn. A top set Year 10 class marked time in an unchallenging task to measure the pressure under their feet. In some other lessons learning was particularly good because pupils were challenged to think about their work. For example, in a Year 10 lower ability group lesson, pupils were encouraged to think carefully about how temperature and concentration of an acid would affect the time taken for a chemical reaction to take place. In a Year 8 class very good use was made of computers enabling pupils to make good progress studying the effects of insulation on controlling heat loss. In most lessons pupils' learning was well managed. In a few lessons a minority of pupils were indifferent to learning and their poor concentration and effort impaired the learning of many other pupils in the class. Lesson plans and teaching methods were better in Year 10 and 11 lessons because they distinguished more effectively between the learning needs of pupils of different ability. Although many teachers assess pupils' progress very well in lessons, the information is not used effectively in the marking of home and class work to inform pupils how to improve their understanding or meet their targets.
105. Learning by pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. Some teachers are more aware of pupils' needs than others; for example developing their reading using carefully selected texts. Additional in-class support in the earlier years is effective in promoting learning, as in a Year 9 class, where a number of special needs pupils made good progress in their understanding of static electricity. In many other lessons, particularly in Years 7 and 8, the programme of study in science does not distinguish sufficiently between pupils of different ability, limiting what these pupils achieve.
106. Standards of teaching and learning have risen because good leadership of the science faculty has set clear educational aims and, although there is no regular monitoring of teaching, overall evaluation and development of teaching has been satisfactory. The staff show a commitment to improve further by meeting frequently to discuss matters relating to planning, teaching and learning. The faculty has developed very good procedures for assessing pupils' progress. These are well used in reviewing and revising the plans for the topics taught and for setting pupils their individual attainment target marks for future tests. The faculty does not use its assessment of each pupil's progress to the age of 14 in terms of National Curriculum levels to guide pupils towards their next target. As a result pupils are not sufficiently

aware of their progress. In Years 10 and 11 the number of lessons per week is significantly below that recommended. Although this is partly offset by starting the Year 10 course during the final term of Year 9, the lower frequency of lessons in the upper two years adversely affects learning. The quality of laboratory and preparation accommodation has improved enabling the two hard-working technicians to provide good support for teachers. There is sufficient general laboratory equipment to enhance learning. Good new textbooks have been carefully selected but there are not enough for pupils to use at home, limiting the effectiveness of homework tasks.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

107. Standards at the age of 14 in lessons seen are in line with national averages. Pupils' achievement in relation to their prior attainment is good. Key factors that contribute to their good progress are the systematic teaching of skills in drawing from direct observation, pupils' enthusiasm for art and their increasing awareness of painting techniques that helps to improve the quality of their work. Teacher assessment tests for 14-year-olds are just under average with 70 per cent of pupils achieving expectations or above, compared with a national average of 77 per cent.
108. Standards in art observed at the age of 16 are average overall with above average attainment in drawing and painting in the higher attaining band. Achievement is good for the majority of pupils, however, progress is slower than expected for low attaining pupils where the quality of coursework is thin and pupils' absence has an unfavourable impact on the progression and pace of work. Overall GCSE results in 2000 were well below the national average at 42 per cent, for the proportion of pupils attaining A\* to C grades compared with 63 per cent; however, results for the drawing and painting option are broadly in line, with 59 per cent achieving A\* to C grades. The textile and graphics options introduced in 1998 produced poor results in 2000 because of staffing disruption; however, standards in graphics seen in lessons during the inspection are above average and the opportunity to combine ICT with an art/graphics component is helping to raise boys' achievement overall. All pupils entered for GCSE in the past three years have achieved A\* to G grades in line with national averages. Girls are performing better than boys overall, although all pupils in the drawing and painting option achieve well compared to their performance in other subjects. Pupils with special educational needs are making good progress because teachers explain and demonstrate tasks clearly and give them good support to improve their written, visual and oral skills through group evaluations.
109. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall at both key stages. Introductions to lessons are of a high quality where homework and class-work evaluation and assessment by pupils and teachers set high expectations. Teachers' planning is inspiring in that it links the work of artists to pupils' investigative approach to study. This focuses pupils to look closely and improve their drawing and painting techniques. A good range of multicultural reference material and the study of male and female artists are evident in the work. This is an improvement from the time of the last inspection. In Year 8, pupils studying the painting techniques of the Cubist artists show a well-developed understanding of blending pastels and paint because teachers give them time to reflect on the artists' work so that they increase their awareness of how to build up a flat surface of colour. Teachers' expertise is very good and their flexible and attentive style promotes the very good relationships with pupils seen in all lessons. This approach helps the less able feel confident to volunteer thoughts and ideas and the more able to explore and deepen their understanding through questioning and research. Teaching is organised effectively to give a good balance between directed activities and the opportunity for pupils to learn independently. For

example, pupils in a Year 10 lesson explored the theme of growth and showed competence in the skills of planning a large-scale composition based on a shared starting point, drawing from direct observation. Subsequently, they developed their individual ideas using Surrealist artists as a source of inspiration with increasing independence and confidence. Where teaching is only satisfactory, inconsistencies in linking contextual and critical issues results in the overuse of secondary source material, such as drawing from magazines, which reduces the ability to represent form overall. Teachers prepare pupils well for examinations, for example in using sketchbooks effectively to present preparation and research. This motivates higher attainers to produce a high standard of work. However, some lower attaining pupils do not use a sketchbook and this reflects on their slower progress and attainment overall.

110. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, in particular the development of critical and contextual studies and additional courses for older pupils. Organisation and leadership are effective and the department shares the commitment to raise standards outlined in the departmental development plan to target D grades at GCSE through more rigorous monitoring of boys' attainment. Pupils' progress is recorded against National Curriculum levels and the range of materials and small equipment resources have improved. However, non-teaching time for the shared roles of department and faculty management is low and as a result, monitoring and evaluation of teaching is limited. The lack of a regular technician has a detrimental impact on the quality of three-dimensional studies offered at Key Stage 3. Displays of art around the school are impressive. Art clubs and artist residencies enhance the curriculum for many pupils, although opportunities to see original art are limited.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

111. Standards of attainment, by the time pupils reach the ages of both 14 and 16, are below the national average. However, the progress the pupils make over the whole time in the school is satisfactory. Progress is good in Years 8 and 10. The unevenness of the progress between year groups is linked to changes in staffing but also to the fact that new systems for planning and marking are only just beginning to have an impact. In 2000, GCSE results, closer to the average standard than ever before, reflected the good progress made by the department in the last two years. All of the design and technology subjects except textiles did well and boys' results in resistant materials matched the national average. In addition to the full GCSE courses, many pupils take the Certificate of Achievement in design and technology and make good progress.
112. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory with some good features in both key stages, and in all aspects of the subject. Teaching is particularly effective when the work is made more relevant to pupils by illustrating the lesson with products familiar to the pupils. In addition effective teaching is characterised by good demonstrations of techniques, and an insistence on accurate measuring, marking out and cutting associated with quality commercial products. However, in other lessons some pupils waste time and show less enthusiasm for theoretical work than they do for practical activities.
113. Pupils learn skills and techniques and then apply them effectively to their projects. They are able to explain what they have done and how their products would be used. Computers are effectively used to design products.
114. Pupils generally respond well and use the teachers' explanations, both written and spoken, to make better products more efficiently. In a Year 11 lesson observed pupils

used the teacher's sketches to work out internal and external dimensions of a wooden box and how to save time by accurately cutting a batch of parts at the same time rather than singly. Other pupils explained enthusiastically and precisely the function of electrical, plastic and metallic components in the good quality clocks they had designed and made. However, this is not always the case and in some lessons learning, though satisfactory, is affected by unsatisfactory attitudes.

115. Marking of pupils' work is satisfactory but too frequently the teachers' written comments on this work do not specify exactly what must be done next to enable the pupil to improve. In addition teachers do not always assess progress at the end of the lesson to ensure that all pupils have understood.
116. Standards of literacy affect standards and GCSE coursework is sometimes characterised by too many spelling and grammatical errors. Many pupils are better at explaining their work orally than writing about it.
117. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory, and leadership of the subject is satisfactory. Standards are higher and the curriculum is better planned, although opportunities for electronics and pneumatics are unsatisfactory. Technical support has improved and the accommodation has been significantly improved. However, the monitoring of teaching remains unsatisfactory. The time allocation is lower than in most secondary schools.

## **Drama**

118. Based on limited observation, standards are close to national expectations at the ages of 14 and 16.
119. Pupils in Year 8 can work together and explain their individual contribution to a group improvisation. Not all can sustain a role, but those that can speak confidently in an appropriate style. All are developing improvisation skills and learning to reflect on their work and evaluate it. They are interested in the process of 'prepared improvisation' and participate energetically and enthusiastically in practice for this. Several pupils are keen to continue drama into Year 10.
120. Pupils in Year 11 are learning to empathise with characters and understand the historical context of their set text. Girls in particular manage role-play well and can create convincing dialogue with confident, fluent speech. Fewer boys are able to be as articulate, and boys' listening skills are also less well developed. As a result some boys are distracting or resentful of the need to discuss theory in what they perceive to be a practical lesson. On the other hand pupils work reasonably well together and are beginning to adjust to the demands of a newly appointed teacher.
121. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Careful preparation of lessons ensures that pupils can see clearly the links between one activity and another. The teacher gives clear explanations so that pupils know what to do and what is expected of them. Her patient approach to immature behaviour is successful in keeping pupils involved and participating in her lessons. She is encouraging the development of important skills, in particular the evaluation of pupils' own and others' work, both in class and in appropriate homework.
122. The drama studio provides a good working space for drama, but acoustically it is unsatisfactory. Noise from the adjacent hall is often intrusive and makes teaching and listening difficult.



## GEOGRAPHY

123. Standards of pupils' work by the time they are 14 are below average, although more able pupils reach average standards. However, pupils achieve satisfactorily given their prior attainment on entry to the school. In Year 9 pupils can pose appropriate geographical questions about Italy, and seek answers through independent enquiries. However, pupils in lower sets suffer from weak reading and writing skills. While teaching is good overall, the time allocated in Key Stage 3 is less than recommended, and lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs do not have enough opportunity to consolidate their learning.
124. By the age of 16 pupils' standards are also below the national average for their age, although achievement is satisfactory and pupils make progress through Key Stage 4. In 2000, 45 per cent of pupils taking GCSE gained A\* to C grades compared to the national average of 54 per cent. Girls perform better than boys, as they did at the time of the previous inspection. Compared with pupils of similar attainment at Key Stage 3, however, they achieved satisfactorily. A number of pupils have good enquiry skills which they use thoughtfully to reach reasoned conclusions about the development of two local settlements. For weaker pupils such independent tasks require more support, but they understand the methods for obtaining evidence and produce limited reports. In this and other work many pupils use computer skills effectively in presentation. Standards in both key stages since the last inspection remain broadly unchanged, and progress for most pupils is satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs in both key stages make satisfactory progress. There are no significant differences in the progress of different ethnic groups.
125. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection, and is now judged to be good at both key stages. However, the quality is more consistently good with higher attaining pupils. This is because appropriate challenges encourage enthusiastic pupil responses. For example, in a Year 7 lesson on river meanders the teacher swung a weighted flex in a circle to demonstrate, by analogy, how water moves faster on the outside bank of a river than on the inside. With this understanding pupils made very good progress and completed a graph of a river cross-section, and correctly labelled where erosion and deposition occur. Teachers have a confident knowledge of the subject and they use it well to ask questions and assess the depth of pupils' understanding. In a Year 11 lesson on factors that influence climate the teacher asked 'Why does New Zealand have a similar climate to Britain?' A pupil confidently explained its similar latitudinal position in the southern hemisphere. As a result, the teacher was able to move on to the next step. In some otherwise satisfactory lessons tasks are not always so well matched to pupils' abilities. In a Year 10 lesson observed, pupils were asked to copy a diagram of the water cycle; a task most found too easy. This lack of challenge led to a slow pace of learning. Occasionally younger, low attaining pupils, with weak reading skills, have difficulty starting work independently, even when the teacher simplifies the text. They do not understand subject words, such as tributary, that they were taught in previous lessons because their learning has not been sufficiently reinforced. This is partly because time is limited in Key Stage 3, but also because the teachers do not give priority to the reading and understanding of the text. Teachers manage pupils effectively so they behave well. Pupils' attitudes are usually good, but they show less interest when given inappropriate tasks.
126. The subject has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection, and subject management is satisfactory, within the humanities faculty. However, monitoring of

teaching is not regularly carried out. Schemes of work show much detail that supports good lesson planning. Use of ICT for suitable topics is included. Assessed GCSE coursework based on local fieldwork gives older pupils opportunities to use their learning in real situations. Younger pupils only experience geography fieldwork in Year 8, and this narrows curriculum provision in Key Stage 3.

## HISTORY

127. Standards are below average at the end of both key stages. At the age of 14, standards in work seen are slightly higher than the assessments made by teachers in 2000. This is because of over-rigid marking and the impact of more varied teaching strategies in the current Year 9. Standards have been improving over the last three years, although boys have consistently performed far worse than girls in the school and boys nationally. Overall progress through Key Stage 3 is satisfactory, but while most girls achieve satisfactorily, there is some underachievement amongst the boys. This was the case at the time of the last inspection.
128. Standards at the age of 16 are below average, but this represents satisfactory achievement and progress through Key Stage 4. The current Year 11 pupils are of a lower ability to those taking the GCSE in 2000, when the proportion of pupils attaining A\* to C grades was in line with the national average. Nearly all pupils passed at A\* to G, as they have done for the last three years. Pupils did better in history than in most of their other subjects and it was one of the best performing subjects in the school. These standards are the same as reported in the last inspection, although there have been fluctuations in the higher grades since then. Consistently over the last five years, girls have attained significantly better at the higher grades than boys, who have always been below or well below the national average, apart from 1998 when they were well above. Pupils taking the Certificate of Educational Achievement at Key Stage 4 are also making satisfactory progress. Nearly all passed in 2000, with far more girls attaining distinctions than boys. Pupils with special educational needs also make satisfactory progress over both key stages.
129. By the age of 14, nearly all pupils have satisfactory knowledge of major historical events and have developed competent basic skills of sequencing and note-making. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are helped in this by the emphasis on key words and appropriate support materials. However, the serious shortage of time allocated to the subject at Key Stage 3 means that more analytical skills of interpretation and evaluation of sources and causes are not being sufficiently developed in middle and lower attaining pupils. Nor is there adequate time to fully develop enquiry and organisational skills, apart from the study of the two world wars in Year 9. The highest attaining pupils produce effective, independent extended writing, often expressing strong feelings of empathy, as in their diaries on the First World War and nineteenth century factory conditions. Despite appropriate support by teachers, skills of extended writing are far less developed in pupils of other abilities, who arrive with weak writing skills in Year 7. By the age of 16, higher attaining pupils have developed skills of enquiry, organisation and analysing different sources, as seen in competent coursework studies on Goodrich Castle. The best pupils can also write critically and analytically at length. However, middle and lower attaining pupils find this quite difficult, although the helpful support materials are structuring such work. These strategies have contributed to the improved examination success at GCSE in grades A\* to G.
130. The quality of teaching is good at both key stages. This is a significant improvement on the situation at the time of the last inspection, when one in five lessons was judged

unsatisfactory. Teachers are now using a wider range of activities that stimulate and maintain interest. They provide tasks that suit the needs of all ability levels and so make the work readily understandable and develop pupils' skills. A particular strength is the improvement of the weak literacy skills of lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs. For instance, a Year 9 class studying trench warfare enthusiastically identified key objects in a film, recorded them in sentences, then paragraphs and finally as a piece of empathetic writing using all the senses. Teachers plan their lessons well, with clear objectives shared with the pupils so that they know exactly what to do and settle quickly to the task. They also set high expectations of all ability groups with a strong emphasis on developing history skills of interpretation and source work, though time constraints at Key Stage 3 limit their reinforcement. Classroom management is very good, with high expectations of good behaviour and good relationships with pupils. This creates a good working atmosphere where productive learning takes place. Pupils' achievements are celebrated well with good displays of their work. Regular and informative marking tells the pupils of their progress, which they record themselves on tracking sheets. However, incomplete work is not always followed up.

131. As a consequence of good teaching, pupils make good progress in their learning in lessons at both key stages. Most pupils work productively, including those with special educational needs, as the teachers provide work to suit and stimulate them. Good attitudes to work are also promoting effective learning. Nearly all pupils work hard and readily take on the responsibility of working by themselves. Pupils listen, concentrate well and readily co-operate with the teachers in tackling the challenging and varied tasks. Behaviour is good and frequently very good. However, many pupils tend to be rather passive in their response, unless their oral skills are positively encouraged, for instance when Year 10 pupils eagerly summarised in their own words the readings by others of Florence Nightingale's life. Concentration only falters when they are not actively involved or the lesson lacks pace and variety of activities, but this is rare.
132. The improvements in teaching and the recent GCSE results reflect the commitment, good organisation and clear educational direction provided by the head of department. The whole-school aims of raising standards and improving literacy are to be clearly seen in the department's aims and practice. There are good schemes of work and resources and facilities continue to be efficiently organised. The well-organised assessment procedures with central recording and collection of samples of pupils' work provide close monitoring of pupils' progress at both key stages. However, only Key Stage 4 pupils have individual targets set. Teachers diligently record National Curriculum levels after assessments, but pupils do not properly understand them. Nor are the results being adequately used to inform teaching and curriculum planning at Key Stage 3. The monitoring of teaching by formal observations is not regularly carried out. The department is encouraging the use of information and communication technology, though this requires more systematic development as access to the school's computer facilities improve.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

133. Standards at the end of both key stages are average. Given their below average attainment on entry to the school, pupils make good progress and their achievements in both key stages are good. This is because effective teaching on new equipment is ensuring the involvement and commitment of pupils to learning.
134. In 2000 results at GCSE were above the national average. Most pupils take a short course and achievements in this and the Certificate of Achievement course are good.

By the end of Year 9 teacher assessments indicate attainment to be below average but in work observed during the inspection standards were average. Year 9 pupils not only use spreadsheets but they are able to design spreadsheets for a specific purpose and understand why electronic methods are more effective, for example when pupils are designing attendance registers for teachers. Pupils had also, in their work samples, thoughtfully produced slides and posters electronically. The difference in the assessment scores is partially due to the fact that the pupils' practical skills are higher than they show in written tests. Pupils in Year 7 were observed making good progress and attaining average standards when using information to collect and analyse data in the context of a science investigation into types of materials and sound insulation. In most subjects in both key stages, attainment in the application of ICT skills is average or above. Year 11 pupils doing the Certificate of Achievement course were seen to be concentrating hard and making satisfactory progress in getting information from a database about Kings and Queens of England.

135. Good progress is the result of confident and knowledgeable teaching. The quality of teaching is good at both key stages, and no unsatisfactory lessons were seen. The confidence in teachers' use of computers extends across all subjects thus giving pupils the opportunity to consolidate and reinforce their learning and skills in other contexts.
136. Effective use of interactive projection screens enables the teachers to instil sufficient confidence in the pupils that they were able to programme a computer to draw two-dimensional shapes or to interpret graphs. With these and more direct teaching methods pupils are taught that accuracy in entering data or instructions is very important. Drinking straws, it was argued, would be difficult to use if the computer had been programmed to cut them to a two centimetre rather than twenty centimetre lengths.
137. In most lessons pupils were asked to think carefully about the task before attempting it so that by the time they started work they knew exactly how to approach it and the sequence of things they needed to do. Several good examples were observed. Year 7 pupils were asked to write a set of instructions on paper showing line length and angle of rotation before attempting to programme the computer to draw a regular shape of the type that might be fed into a vinyl cutter. Year 11 pupils were asked to work from textbooks before extracting information from an electronic database. In all of the lessons seen these methods gave the pupils sufficient confidence to succeed and therefore a good level of enjoyment and satisfaction. The quality of Year 11 coursework reflects the effective teaching of both databases and spreadsheets.
138. Teaching is less effective when pupils' concentration and listening skills were unsatisfactory. Some are reluctant to solve problems for themselves and waste time waiting for the teacher to give them support.
139. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Standards and resources have improved. The provision for ICT across different subjects is now at least satisfactory. Leadership and management of the department are good although there needs to be more systematic monitoring of teaching and learning in the classroom.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

### French and German

140. Standards in both French and German are average at the end of Key Stage 3, and below average at the end of Key Stage 4. Pupils achieve well through Key Stage 3 and make good progress as a result of effective teaching and learning. During Key Stage 4 pupils' achievements are only satisfactory. Teaching is less consistently good at this level, and some pupils at this level are less well motivated. Standards have risen since the last inspection because the curriculum offered to pupils has widened and improved, the quality of teaching is more consistently good and resources have been improved.
141. In 2000, results at grades A\* to C gained by pupils entering for French GCSE were well below the national average but higher than in the previous year. Boys achieved lower grades than girls, but performed better than in most other subjects. Results in German at A\* to C were in line with the national average, and higher than in the previous year. Boys gained higher grades than the national average, but girls' grades were lower than those attained nationally. Both boys and girls performed better than in most other school subjects. All pupils entering for German GCSE gained grades in the A\* to G range.
142. In work seen the attainment of pupils in Year 9 is average and corresponds to their teachers' most recent assessments. This improvement is due to consistently good teaching and recent improvements in resources and management. After a term sampling both French and German, pupils make an informed choice about which language they prefer to study. Most pupils can follow lessons taught entirely or substantially in the foreign language. After a term of study, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, can exchange greetings and courtesies. They can talk and write about familiar topics such as school life and pets, stating their likes, dislikes and preferences. By Year 8 many pupils can confidently describe the weather and propose holiday plans and leisure activities. Lower attaining pupils, including some with special educational needs, enjoy putting their acquired language to practical purposes such as cooking. By the end of Year 9, higher attainers can simulate telephone conversations and everyday situations such as shopping for food. Most pupils can compose short descriptive accounts of events in the past, using dictionaries or the guidance given in their textbooks.
143. In Years 10 and 11, most pupils work methodically towards the grades they expect to gain in their GCSE examination. They express their opinions more fully, and learn to use future tenses to predict and speculate when speaking and writing on a range of topics. A higher attaining minority achieves very high levels of fluency and spontaneity and can argue convincingly about social and moral issues such as the environment. Most can adapt their writing to practical applications including CVs and job applications. Many pupils listen attentively with good levels of understanding, but are hesitant about speaking, expressing themselves only in the simplest of terms or answering questions in English. A minority of lower attaining pupils, including some with special educational needs, work steadily for an alternative certificate, acquiring the essential language needed for living and travelling abroad.
144. Most pupils are methodical in adding to their knowledge of vocabulary and grammar. A minority is frequently absent and hindered by the lack of continuity or limited ability to remember what they have learnt. Pupils of all ages and abilities use computers to improve the quality and presentation of their work, and a few older pupils benefit from

corresponding with partners overseas. This important means of communication is restricted by a lack of computers in the department.

145. The quality of teaching is good in both key stages, although less consistently so in Key Stage 4. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and usually offer a good model of spoken language for pupils to copy. When explaining grammar points or summarising the content of a lesson they often revert to English, so that all pupils can understand. They are familiar with the requirements of the National Curriculum and the examination boards and share this knowledge with their classes. They provide pupils with charts and descriptions that help them track their own progress. Relations between teachers and pupils are usually cordial and businesslike. Expectations of behaviour and diligence are usually high. Many French and German lessons have a positive and businesslike atmosphere, but in those where pupils' ability is very limited the pace is slow, or occasionally sustained by the teacher doing much of the work. In Years 10 and 11, a small number of pupils lack interest and have to be handled firmly, but most respond well to the lively activities their teachers create for them. Teachers plan their lessons well, and often use the time fully with a variety of short activities that exercise different language learning skills. In the best lessons, teachers give their pupils ample opportunity to join in presentations or enact dialogues they have written in pairs. Individual and choral responses give frequent opportunities for informal assessment of pupils' learning. Marking is regular and supplemented by reference to National Curriculum levels of attainment. Teachers are starting to make good use of standardised data to predict and encourage pupils' success in the GCSE examinations. They set homework regularly to prepare and extend the content of lessons and use short revision activities to practise the vocabulary and structures most recently learnt.
146. The vision and energy with which the department is led and managed are good. However, management is only satisfactory because the monitoring and evaluation of the work of the department is weak. The teachers of French and German and their assistants are committed to raising standards, particularly the attainment of boys who currently lag behind the girls. They introduce creative and realistic activities wherever the allocation of teaching time allows. They have made efforts to raise the profile of languages in the school and improve resources, building on the satisfactory findings of the last inspection. Their recent success in improving examination results and the enthusiasm evident in many pupils' attitudes suggests that some could profitably learn a second foreign language. Pupils do not have sufficient access to computers and in particular opportunities to make contact with schools abroad through the Internet.

## **MUSIC**

147. Standards in music are below average for pupils at the age of 14 years. Progress and pupils' achievements in Key Stage 3 are poor because pupils do not get enough lessons to cover the National Curriculum in sufficient depth and also because of some unsatisfactory teaching. Progress and achievements in Key Stage 4 are satisfactory because pupils have more lessons and teaching is well focused to the requirements of the examination syllabi.
148. The attainment of 14-year-olds at the end of Key Stage 3 is well below average for their age. Teacher assessments confirm this picture. In work seen, pupils composing 12-bar Blues listened carefully and selected appropriate sounds from keyboards but could not create even short pieces without a lot of help from their teacher. Performance was weaker; they were unable to repeat ideas with consistent accuracy.

149. By the age of 16, most pupils in the GCSE group are close to expectations for their age. The number of pupils taking GCSE is too small to compare with national figures but in 2000 both candidates obtained a grade within A\* to C. Pupils studying for the Welsh Certificate of Achievement are meeting the requirements of the course. In work seen, pupils performed simple pieces effectively, with rhythmic accuracy and expression. A small minority were able to play longer and more complex works. Their composing was of a similar standard. Pieces were short but well structured, and the higher attaining pupils produced longer pieces. There are more lower attaining boys in the group but some are also among the highest achievers.
150. Pupils' progress through Key Stage 3 is poor, particularly for lower attaining pupils. A major factor here is that pupils do not have sufficient music lessons. Across the key stage, one-third of pupils have only 67 per cent of the average number of lessons nationally and two-thirds have only 55 per cent. This problem is compounded by a lack of continuity because they miss lessons one term in three. In individual lessons some pupils with special educational needs make good progress because of helpful support from learning assistants.
151. In Key Stage 4 pupils' progress is at least satisfactory and for the highest attaining pupils it is good because they reach grades A\* to C from a low base at the end of Key Stage 3.
152. During the inspection the teaching situation was unusual, in that a newly-qualified teacher had just started to cover for the maternity leave of the regular teacher and inevitably did not know pupils well. The quality of teaching as observed during the inspection was unsatisfactory in Key Stage 3 and satisfactory in Key Stage 4. Teaching is, overall, just satisfactory, because although some lessons observed lacked pace, and in them pupils were not well managed, over time and when permanent staff are in school, almost all pupils make some progress in Key Stage 3 despite the shortage of lesson time, and some make good progress in Key Stage 4. In Key Stage 3, effective aspects of teaching include detailed lesson planning, a firm focus on literacy, good choices of listening and performance pieces and helpful support to lower attainers and pupils with special educational needs. Where teaching is less effective, classroom discipline is not maintained because the pace of lessons is too slow, causing pupils to lose concentration. Questions are not sufficiently focused to identify where pupils need help. Sometimes time is wasted at the start of lessons because pupils do not start work immediately. This allows pupils, particularly a small minority of boys, time to start chatting. They are then reluctant to move on to work.
153. Teaching in Key Stage 4 is good because pupils' strengths and weaknesses are identified and they are taught very specific elements of the examination courses to raise standards in areas where they are weakest. They therefore make good progress.
154. Many pupils are noisy in lessons but this is usually exuberance rather than lack of interest. Often they work effectively, if slowly, in pairs. Many wish to please, and to achieve, but they find it hard to concentrate for more than a few minutes. Almost all pupils listen respectfully to the performances of their friends. However, a minority of pupils are disruptive. Most, though not all of these, are boys and many, though not all, are lower attainers.
155. The curriculum in Key Stage 3 lacks depth because of lack of time. It contains some multicultural music, but not enough. Assessment systems are satisfactory but there is inconsistent use of analysis to evaluate and monitor the progress of all groups across

years or from year to year. Departmental planning is good, both long-term and short-term objectives are well focused.

156. In recent years staffing has been a problem because of high turnover and difficulties in recruitment. These had apparently been solved but maternity leave has led to further temporary cover which affects the consistency of teaching for the pupils. Resources are poor. There are no good quality tuned percussion instruments and the supply of untuned percussion is limited. The department is short of multicultural resources such as instruments and CDs and library provision for music is poor.
157. Progress since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory though there are signs of recent improvement. The senior management team have given much support and monitoring of teaching has been satisfactory. However, standards of teaching and learning have declined in Key Stage 3, and the allocation of time remains too little at Key Stage 3. As a consequence leadership and management is judged unsatisfactory. However, in Key Stage 4 the separation of GCSE lessons from Welsh Certificate of Achievement lessons has led to more effective teaching because it is now tailored to each specific syllabus.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

158. Standards are average at the end of Key Stage 3 and above average at the end of Key Stage 4. Pupils' achievements are good throughout the school, and pupils make good progress. In Key Stage 4, many pupils are making very good progress as a consequence of good teaching.
159. In 2000, assessments by teachers at the end of Key Stage 3 showed the majority of pupils achieving the expected standard. Results in the GCSE examination in which 67 per cent of pupils entered obtained grades A\* to C were well above the national average and continued the upward trend of recent years. Although far more boys were entered for examination there were no significant differences in attainment between boys and girls. GCSE results obtained in dance were above the national average with 60 per cent of the 25 girls entered gaining the higher A\* to C grades.
160. Work seen during the inspection at the end of Key Stage 3 indicates that standards of attainment have been maintained since the last inspection and are at least in line with those expected nationally. Younger pupils show confidence and versatility across a range of activities that during the inspection included aerobics, gymnastics, dance, cross-country running and trampolining. Pupils appreciate the need to warm-up correctly and they understand the effect that exercise has on the heart rate. Most pupils are able to plan aspects of their own work either individually or in co-operation with others. They are also able to comment sensibly and constructively on their own work or that of their peers. At the end of Key Stage 4 in both core and GCSE, PE standards are above average. Pupils consolidate and develop the skills acquired earlier performing more consistently and effectively. Standards are also good in the GCSE dance groups where pupils show imagination and fluency.
161. In relation to prior attainment most pupils are achieving well in both key stages. For example pupils' learning was particularly good in a Year 7 gymnastics lesson. Good progress was also seen in a Year 8 aerobics class. Pupils also make good progress at Key Stage 4. This is especially evident in the GCSE groups where the work produced in pupils' files is of a good standard. Progress is also good among pupils studying for the Junior Sports Leaders Award. Pupils work with interest and maturity in developing their qualities of leadership. In other practical lessons, for example dance in Year 10,



important emphasis is placed on the quality of movement. Combined with the ability of the pupils to produce creative sequences showing control, tension and co-ordination this results in work of good quality. Pupils with special educational needs who are fully integrated into all physical education and dance lessons also make good progress and several are successful in external examinations.

162. The quality of teaching is good at both key stages. Lessons are purposeful and well organised and they result in pupils of all ages responding very positively to the enthusiasm and commitment of the teachers. Class management is usually efficient and effective. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good and levels of participation are high throughout the school. Encouraged and supported by the staff, pupils are willing to work consistently hard to develop their skills. They are frequently given opportunities to co-operate with each other in various practices aimed at improving their level of performance and they do so very effectively. This attitude, together with the challenging tasks that pupils experience in lessons, has a beneficial impact on the standards achieved. Pupils also respond positively and with enjoyment to the high expectations of work and behaviour set by their teachers.
163. The department continues to have a strong commitment to the provision of a wide range of extra-curricular activities that are well supported by pupils. There are school teams for boys and girls in a range of sports. Individual pupils have represented the district in athletics, cross-country and football. Pupils have been involved in Sports Development Coaching programmes in cricket and tennis. Pupils also participate in the North Dudley Dance Festival.
164. Leadership of the subject is good and monitoring of teaching is satisfactory. Improvement since the last inspection has been good and a number of significant developments have taken place. Examination results have improved consistently. Funding has been obtained to develop links with local clubs. Facilities have been improved. They now include an impressive floodlit astro-turf pitch and new changing rooms. Three years ago the school received the Sportsmark award for the quality of provision in physical education and it is currently awaiting the result of its re-application. Priorities for improvement include implementing and monitoring the assessment system and introducing the use of ICT where appropriate.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

165. Standards are below average at the end of both key stages. Pupils' achievements are unsatisfactory, because of insufficient time, staffing problems and inadequate planning and schemes of work.
166. The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 is below the standards indicated in the agreed syllabus. The pupils' knowledge and understanding of world religions, including Christianity, is very limited. They have a knowledge of a number aspects of religions, such as festivals, religious buildings and rites of passage, but this is not developed to the extent of them being able to understand how these aspects might fit into each religious tradition as a whole. There is very little written work in their books so their skills in extended writing are not strong. The pupils can give good verbal responses on a general level but they find it difficult to respond fluently in extended conversations about a lot of basic religious themes and beliefs. At both key stages the pupils find it difficult to relate what they are doing to their own lives and experiences and their knowledge and understanding about religions are largely related to the phenomena of religion rather than the beliefs and values that lie behind the phenomena. Overall in both key stages knowledge and understanding of world

religions as total entities are very patchy and they have a very limited overall and in-depth understanding of the teachings and central beliefs of Christianity.

167. No pupils have been entered for an examination in religious education in the last few years so no judgement can be made about standards in comparison to national standards at the end of Key Stage 4. Of the work seen in the lessons and in their books, standards are below those indicated in the agreed syllabus. Pupils only have a very basic knowledge of some aspects of world religions. The pupils can discuss and talk meaningfully about a number of social and moral issues such as euthanasia and poverty. Overall, however, their grasp of a detailed knowledge of specific world religions, including Christianity, is weak and consequently they are not very confident in being able to relate their study of moral and social issues to the overall belief systems of the major world religions. The amount of written work in their books is very limited and as a consequence their skills in extended writing in the subject is not strong. Their understanding of how world religions approach and give answers to the many fundamental issues of life needs more development.
168. The pupils' achievement over time is largely unsatisfactory. The reasons for this include issues of insufficient time, problems of staffing, and inadequate planning and schemes of work. Progress of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory because teachers are aware of their needs and plan accordingly. Planning does not effectively meet the needs of the higher and lower attaining pupils. There is some evidence that girls achieve better than boys but this is not a significant issue.
169. In most lessons, pupils are well behaved and concentrate well. In the instances where attitudes and behaviour are less than very good, pupils lose concentration and productivity drops. This is usually in the cases where the lesson objectives are unclear to the pupils or where the work is insufficiently demanding. Some concentration is also lost where the pace of the lesson is too slow or where the pupils cannot see the immediate relevance of what they are doing. Pupils relate well to each other and to the teachers and they respect the views and opinions of others as well as the immediate classroom environment. Not a lot of collaborative work was seen but where it was the pupils worked together in a co-operative way.
170. In Key Stage 3 the teaching is satisfactory. Lessons are adequately planned and generally the methodologies are at least satisfactory. However at times there is too much reliance on a single textbook or photocopied worksheet. Control of the class is good and there is a pleasant working atmosphere. Expectations in terms of depth and content of the lessons, however, are not strong and teaching tends to be restricted to the facts and figures of religions at the expense of a more spiritual dimension. Consequently the pupils' learning is very much restricted to knowledge about religions without adequate reference to learning from religions. There is also very little emphasis on encouraging the pupils to give personal responses to specifically religious issues. This reflects the lack of subject expertise in the teaching. Much of the teaching is currently being carried out by non-specialists and their subject knowledge and understanding is poor.
171. In Key Stage 4 the teaching is satisfactory. At times the pace of the lesson is slow and time is wasted. A significant feature of the teaching at this key stage is the imbalanced emphasis on social and moral issues. Consequently the specifically religious content is not strong and when it is present it is often just an incidental part of the lesson. As in Key Stage 3, this reflects the lack of subject expertise in the department. Also, as in Key Stage 3, there is little emphasis on personal responses to specifically religious issues and it is not always evident to the pupils what relevance

their study might have to themselves. In both key stages, homework is not well used to support learning and work is not always planned effectively to meet the needs of pupils of all abilities. Research and investigative skills are not taught systematically, and there is too much time spent on low level tasks such as labelling, cutting and pasting. At the time of the inspection, the staff doing the teaching in both key stages were doing the best they could but the lack of subject specialism means that the pupils' learning is very limited.

172. At the time of the inspection lessons were being covered by supply teachers and other non-specialist teachers. This situation is unsatisfactory and having a significant impact on pupils' learning. The subject is led by a specialist teacher who is on long-term sick leave and who normally covers most of the teaching. Although the senior management team has intervened, the current leadership and management of the subject are poor. Overall improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. Lesson plans and other subject documents do not reflect the new agreed syllabus. There is no overall scheme of work and so the lessons being taught in both key stages lack a sense of coherence and continuity. It was a serious weakness at the last inspection and has not yet been satisfactorily addressed. Statutory requirements are being met at Key Stage 3. Statutory requirements are not being fully met at Key Stage 4 although the allocation of time has improved.