

INSPECTION REPORT

ECCLESFIELD SCHOOL

Chapeltown Road, Sheffield

LEA area: Sheffield

Unique reference number: 107142

Headteacher: Mrs Ann Talboys

Reporting inspector: Mr John Paddick
10308

Dates of inspection: 24 - 28 September 2001

Inspection number: 194958

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 - 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Chapelton Road Sheffield South Yorkshire
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Godfrey Craik
Date of previous inspection:	12 -16 May 1997

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	11
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?	13
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?	14
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	17
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS	18
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	19
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	21
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	22
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	26

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Ecclesfield school is a mixed comprehensive with 1727 pupils in the age range 11-16 on roll. The school serves an urban area to the north of Sheffield, and takes an increasing number of pupils from more socially deprived wards much closer to the city centre. There are very few pupils from ethnic minority groups, mainly Pakistani and Chinese, and very few who have English as an additional language. There are no pupils at an early stage of acquisition of English. An average proportion of pupils qualifies for free school meals. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is below average but the number with statements of special educational needs is average for the size of school. The majority of pupils on stages 3 to 5 of the special needs register have problems related to hearing impairment, dyslexia, learning, and emotional and behavioural characteristics.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school has improved rapidly since the previous inspection. Pupils achieve well because they advance from below average standards on entry to the school to average standards by Year 11. GCSE results are better than might be expected from the nature of the intake each year. Pupils' good rates of progress result from the good quality of teaching which the school provides. Leadership and management are good. The school is effective and gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- The headteacher provides very good leadership.
- GCSE results are improving and pupils make good progress.
- Standards in art, drama and design and technology are good.
- Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are good.
- Teaching is good throughout the school.
- The accommodation is good.

What could be improved

- Below average standards in mathematics, modern languages and information and communications technology (ICT).
- The organisation of ICT to meet statutory requirements and to ensure its extensive use.
- Provision of suitably challenging work for the highest attaining pupils.
- Provision of better support for pupils with special educational needs in mainstream classes.
- Pupils' below average attendance.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was previously inspected in 1997. Since then it has improved rapidly. Teaching has improved, and GCSE results have risen faster than the national trend. Management has improved and is now good. Generally good progress has been made with the key issues from the previous inspection but some weaknesses remain.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE examinations	D	C	C	C

Key	
Well above average	A
Above average	B
average	C
Below average	D
well below average	E

In 2000, the results of the National Curriculum tests in Year 9 were average for all schools. They were above average for schools taking their pupils from similar backgrounds. The best results were in English, where they were well above average, girls doing better than boys. Results in mathematics and science were below average. In 2001, results in mathematics and science improved but those in English declined. In the current Year 9, standards are just below average overall but pupils have made good progress in many subjects since Year 7. Standards in mathematics, ICT and French are below average, in all other subjects they are average, and art and drama they are above average.

The proportion of pupils gaining five GCSE results in the range A*-C has improved greatly since the low point in 1998. GCSE results in 2000 were average for five A*-C grades, but above average numbers of pupils left school with no passes at all. In 2001, results were better overall, largely because the proportion of pupils with no GCSE successes reduced to average for the country as a whole. GCSE overall point scores per pupil on roll were average in 1999 and 2000, having improved over 1998. The GCSE results in the last three years represent good achievement from the below average starting point in Year 7. Girls do better at GCSE than boys as is the case nationally. Standards in the current Year 11 show good levels of achievement from Year 7 because they have risen to average overall. Standards are well above average in art and drama, and above average in English, science, design and technology, religious education, and history. They are average in physical education, music and geography, and below average in mathematics, ICT and German. Standards are well below average in Spanish and French. Particular gains are made in listening, speaking, reading and writing as the pupils move through the school.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have good attitudes to their work. They value their education. These attitudes strongly support learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour in class and around school is generally good.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils develop mature attitudes as they move through the school. Relationships are good.
Attendance	Attendance is below average and unsatisfactory. There are more unauthorised absences than the national average. Family holidays taken in term time are damaging some pupils' progress.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching has improved since the previous inspection and is now good throughout the school. English teaching is good. Pupils make good progress in their reading, listening, writing and speaking. Mathematics teaching is satisfactory but more attention should to be given to the needs of the highest attaining pupils and to the development of pupils' numerical skills. Science teaching is good. Teaching is good in most other subjects throughout the school. In art and drama it is very good. Teaching is satisfactory in music and

French in Years 7-9 and in French, German and Spanish in Years 10 and 11. Although the teaching of ICT in the lessons on the timetable is good, pupils do not make enough progress because teachers of most subjects do not incorporate the use of computers into their lessons sufficiently.

Particular strengths in teaching are the planning of lessons, clear explanations, and the management of pupils. Teachers understand their subjects well and expect pupils to produce work of good quality. The good quality of teaching promotes good rates of learning for almost all pupils. This includes specialist work with hearing impaired pupils and those with special educational needs. However, there are insufficient learning support assistants in mainstream classes to ensure that pupils with special needs can always benefit from the work being done by the rest of the class. The marking of pupils' work in several subjects is inconsistent and requires attention.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The quality and range of the curriculum are generally good. The provision of extra-curricular activities is also good. However, the school does not meet the requirements of the National Curriculum in respect of ICT in Years 10 and 11.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Specialist work with pupils having special educational needs, including those with hearing impairment, is good. However, the school does not employ enough learning support assistants to enable all pupils with special educational needs to benefit sufficiently from work in the main school.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. The pupils with English as an additional language make the same good progress in their work as the majority of other pupils.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for pupils' personal development is good. Provision for pupils' moral, social and cultural development is good. Spiritual provision is only satisfactory because, although there are strong contributions from several subjects, the school does not meet requirements for collective worship.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Arrangements for pupils' welfare are good. Procedures for promoting good behaviour are good. Arrangements for the assessment of pupils' work are satisfactory and could be improved.

The school promotes a satisfactory partnership with its parents

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership provided by the headteacher is very good. She has maintained the good pace of development and improvement in the difficult circumstances surrounding the building of the new accommodation. Leadership and management provided by key staff are good overall.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors fulfil their responsibilities well. They are active and probing. They understand the school's strengths and weaknesses well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school evaluates its performance well, especially in relation to GCSE results. It also evaluates the performance of its teachers through a programme of classroom observation.
The strategic use of resources	Staffing and resources are generally adequate. Accommodation is good. Financial planning is good and control is excellent. The school is careful with its resources and applies the principles of best value well.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teaching is good.• Pupils' overall standards of attainment• Their children make good progress.• The school expects pupils to work hard and do their best.• The recent improvements to school premises and facilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The school should work more closely with parents.• Arrangements for homework• The range of extra curricular activities• Information about pupils' progress• Standards of behaviour• Lunchtime arrangements• The organisation of parents' evenings

The inspection team agrees with all of the parents' positive views. They do not agree that there should be concerns about the range of extra-curricular activities or pupils' behaviour. Both are good. They have found that there is a satisfactory partnership with parents. The quality of information about pupils' progress is satisfactory but could be improved. Sufficient homework has been set for pupils since the beginning of term. Lunchtime arrangements are improving all the time as staff become accustomed to work in the new buildings. The school recognises that some improvements need to be made for consultation evenings.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Standards of attainment rise very significantly as the pupils move through the school. Intakes to Year 7 have below average attainment. Although overall standards are still below average by Year 9, good gains have been made in many subjects. Good teaching continues to accelerate progress, and by Year 11, standards have risen further to be broadly average. This represents good achievement for the majority of pupils, including those with English as an additional language.

2. In 2000, the school's results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in English, mathematics and science, taken together, were average for the country as a whole. Results in English tests were well above average but teachers' assessments were somewhat lower. Nevertheless, they represent good gains in literacy made by the pupils between Years 7 and 9. Mathematics and science results were below average. When the results in these three subjects, taken together, are compared with other schools taking their pupils from similar backgrounds, they are above average. Since 1997, girls have done better than boys in English. Boys have generally done slightly better than girls in science but there has been no clear picture in mathematics. In 2001, test results in English fell but only to levels more consistent with the teachers' own assessments. There were rises in both mathematics and science. Taken as a whole, the results represent significant added value from the beginning of Year 7, with the major contributor being English.

3. GCSE results in 2000 were broadly average compared to all schools nationally. They were also average for schools taking their pupils from similar backgrounds. Girls achieved better GCSE results than boys, but the margin was less than the national difference. In 2000, 47 per cent of pupils achieved five results in the range A*-C, which was average for the country as a whole. However, the proportion of pupils achieving one result in the range A*-G was well below average because nine per cent of the year group left school with no GCSE passes. The attendance of many of these pupils was poor and consequently they were unable to take GCSE examinations. In individual subjects, art results were well above average, science and design and technology were above average, and physical education slightly above average. Broadly average results were obtained in religious education, history and drama. Below average results were obtained in English, mathematics, music, geology and geography, and well below average in information technology, business education, rural studies, French, German and Spanish.

4. GCSE standards have risen faster than the national trend since 1997 after a low point in 1998. The 2000 results, being average for the country as a whole in many respects, represented considerable added value from the below average attainment of the pupils at the start point in Year 7. In 2001, the proportion of pupils achieving five GCSE results in the range A*-C declined slightly but the general quality of the school's performance rose, and there were far fewer pupils leaving without GCSE results than in 2000. Particularly good results were obtained in art, drama and geology where high proportions of the entry resulted in grades A*-C. A very high proportion of A* and A grades was achieved in short course religious education. The overall results in 2000 and 2001 both exceeded the governors' targets, which were suitably challenging, given pupils' below average attainment on entry to the school.

5. Current standards in Year 9 are slightly below average overall. Nevertheless, they represent good achievement from the below average attainment levels on entry to the school. By Year 9, standards in most subjects have improved to become average, and in the cases of art and drama, above average. The exceptions are mathematics, information technology and French where standards are below average. The highest attaining pupils ought to make more progress in English and mathematics.

6. By Year 11, several subjects have improved further, lifting the overall standards to average. This represents good achievement from the end of Year 9. However, as in Years 7-9, the highest attaining pupils ought to make more progress in English and mathematics. By Year 11, standards are well above average in art and drama, and above average in English, science, design and technology, religious education and history. They are broadly average in physical education, music, and geography but below average in German, mathematics and information and communications technology. Standards are still well below average in French and Spanish where a newly constituted department is trying extremely hard to counteract the effects of disruption of continuity of teaching in the past.

7. Pupils' competence in literacy develops as they move through the school, and the skills, which they acquire, assist them in making good progress in most subjects. Numerical and mathematical skills are generally used adequately across the curriculum but there is a tendency to use calculators as a substitute for normal mental agility. Pupils' capability in information and communication technology is below average overall. It is not used sufficiently in the curriculum and does not have a high enough profile in the school.

8. The progress made by pupils with special educational needs is unsatisfactory overall. At present there is a total of 398 pupils on the special educational needs register. Of these, approximately 60 pupils are at very low levels in their basic skills. Their reading abilities are generally raised significantly to enable them to meet the essential requirements of society, but their numerical skills are still often much too weak. Special educational needs pupils make good progress when they have withdrawal lessons and also when they are supported in class by learning support assistants. However, the number of learning support assistants is far too small to enable all the pupils with the greatest needs to make even adequate progress, and as a result, they often cannot understand the work in mainstream classes and underachieve. The three pupils with hearing impairment, who attend the special unit, make good progress in their lessons and over time. Their achievement is consistently good with regard to the targets contained in their individual educational plans.

9. There are 20 pupils whose first language is not English but all of them are literate and can study efficiently. Pupils have entered for GCSE examinations in their mother tongue such as Arabic, Urdu, or Hindi, usually with considerable success.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are good but attendance is unsatisfactory. Findings were similar in the previous report. The large majority of parents are satisfied with pupils' attitudes and personal development but some are concerned about the behaviour of a few pupils and particularly at lunch times.

11. During the inspection, many pupils were given the opportunity to express their views about the school. They say that they like most of their lessons and value the teaching that they receive. They are generally positive about the school, describing it as friendly and with lots to do. They view behaviour as mostly being good and are happy that instances of bullying are few. Older pupils said how much they appreciated the individual guidance and support they had received. Like some parents, some pupils are unhappy about lunchtime arrangements. Inspectors looked carefully at arrangements for supervision, hot meals, sandwiches and shelter from bad weather. Behaviour at lunchtime was good all week. Arrangements for supervision, shelter and meals are satisfactory and improving.

12. Pupils' involvement in the various activities is good and they make a good effort with their work. Behaviour in lessons is good and sometimes very good, and pupils make good progress because, in the large majority of lessons, there is little distraction or time wasting. In a small minority of lessons, and particularly when group work is not effectively managed, behaviour deteriorates, productivity falls and learning is adversely affected. Behaviour outside classrooms is mostly good and pupils conduct themselves in an orderly manner and usually with consideration for others. Their conduct, during the difficult times that have been caused by the new building, has been commendable. Nevertheless, the number of exclusions is just above the

average and the large majority of incidents that lead to exclusion occur outside classrooms. Most pupils, who are excluded, usually for just one day, do not offend again. The number of recorded sexist and racist incidents is extremely low and although bullying occurs, it is not considered by teachers or pupils to be a significant problem.

13. Pupils with special educational needs have generally good attitudes. Those with the greatest needs respond well to the work of their specialist teachers and teaching assistants. Consequently, most mature well as their learning capabilities improve. All hearing-impaired pupils show interest in their work, concentrate during lessons and co-operate well in class. Relationships with both staff and other pupils are good. They behave well and show pride in their work. They make good progress in their personal development.

14. Through their personal, social and health education lessons pupils learn to have regard for the feelings and values of others. In religious education they develop regard for the beliefs of others. When pupils show, by their behaviour, a lack of appropriate respect and consideration for others, the intervention of teachers or learning mentors usually elicits an improvement.

15. Relationships between pupils are good. They work well together in lessons and sport and are supportive of one another. When given the opportunity to take responsibility, they respond well. By the time pupils leave school, most have reached a satisfactory level of maturity and are ready for the next stage of education or employment. Although pupils make good progress overall with their personal development, some aspects, such as team working skills, public speaking, and independent learning are not sufficiently well developed.

16. Attendance is below the average for secondary schools. Although the majority of pupils have a good record of attendance, one pupil in every ten attends for less than 75 per cent of school time. A few pupils abscond from school, from time to time, after registration. The school's educational welfare officer says some parents condone absence, and a significant amount of absence occurs because families arrange holidays in term time. Pupils are punctual for the start of the school day and almost all of them move between classrooms without unnecessary delay.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

17. The quality of teaching has improved considerably since the previous inspection, and is now good throughout the school. Significant improvements are now evident in several subjects, but particularly modern foreign languages. Altogether, 167 lessons were observed during the inspection. In 165 of them teaching was judged to be at least satisfactory. In 72 per cent of lessons, teaching was judged to be good or better, in 18 per cent it was very good, and in two per cent it was excellent. Only two unsatisfactory lessons were seen; these were in mathematics and music. The quality of teaching and its effect were carefully evaluated, not only from lesson observations, but also from the scrutiny of pupils' work in all National Curriculum subjects, religious education, and other subjects covered in Years 10 and 11. The good quality of teaching is the main factor promoting the good progress made by the majority of the pupils.

18. In Years 7-9, teaching and learning are at least satisfactory in all subjects. They are good in English, German, science, design and technology, information and communications technology (ICT), religious education, physical education, geography and history, and very good in drama and art. Although the teaching of ICT is good in the designated lessons on the timetable, it is not used sufficiently to support and develop pupils' learning in most subjects. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach, and they manage the pupils in their classes well. Relationships are good. Lessons are well planned to include a variety of approaches and expectations are high. Pupils respond well to their teachers and generally, co-operate and work hard. They build consistently on previous knowledge and understanding as they move through the key stage.

19. Some parents expressed concern about homework. Inspectors do not share this view because sufficient homework has been set for pupils since the start of term. Of far greater significance is the insufficient provision of suitably challenging work in class for the highest attaining pupils, particularly in English and mathematics. Hence, although lessons meet the

needs of the majority of pupils, some of the highest attaining pupils do not progress quickly enough. The marking of pupils' work is of variable quality. For example, it is of good quality in design and technology but it needs attention in English, mathematics, science and history. A consistently good quality of marking, showing the pupils clearly how to improve their work, would help to raise standards further. The teaching of reading, writing, speaking and listening is often good but there are exceptions. Several subjects prepare pupils well for group work and open debate in the full class setting. When this is handled well the pupils respond with enthusiasm, valuing the responses of their peers. However, in some subjects, such as personal and social education and religious education, these aspects of some teachers' work are relatively weak. The school does not have a coherent programme for the teaching and development of numeracy across the curriculum. This is also a weakness.

20. Teaching and learning are good in Years 10 and 11. They are at least satisfactory in all National Curriculum subjects and religious education. Teachers are particularly effective in preparing pupils for GCSE examinations. Teaching is good in English, science, geography, design and technology, information and communications technology, religious education, physical education, music and history, and very good in art and drama. Although the teaching of ICT is good on the GCSE course, many pupils' learning in the subject is unsatisfactory. Pupils who do not take GCSE in ICT do not have sufficient opportunity to develop further the skills acquired in Years 7-9 and use them in different contexts in Years 10 and 11. The teaching of personal and social education is satisfactory but, as in Years 7-9, there are sometimes weaknesses in the management of whole class discussion, debate and group work. In modern languages in Year 11, teachers are having to work particularly hard to overcome the negative attitudes of many pupils and a lack of confidence caused by staffing problems in the past. Several pupils are still reluctant to speak in French and Spanish.

21. The special educational needs co-ordinator and her support assistants teach conscientiously and well. Dyslexic pupils and others with severe literacy problems have the benefit of precise teaching and make good progress. The department has focused its teaching skills and attention sharply on literacy and hence teaching in other subjects is still to be developed significantly. Learning support assistants are often very effective in corrective reading groups. However, the teaching of many special educational needs pupils is unsatisfactory overall because there are not enough learning support assistants to make the curriculum in mainstream classes fully accessible to all of the children who need support. Teachers outside the special educational needs department do not make sufficient use of pupils' individual education plans.

22. Teaching and support within the unit for hearing-impaired pupils is consistently good. Teachers of the deaf and learning support assistants provide good quality support, both in the unit and in mainstream classes. Teaching, consisting of small inter-connected steps supported by frequent revision, facilitates learning and maintains good progress. The teaching of hearing-impaired pupils in the main school is satisfactory. Class teachers support the integration process and are aware of the special needs of the pupils. However, to meet the diverse and complex needs of the pupils more effectively, they require further training in the proper use of hearing aids and in special teaching strategies.

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

23. The curricular provision is generally good and has improved considerably since the previous inspection. It is broad, balanced and relevant and provides equally for boys and girls. In Years 7-11 the curriculum includes all the National Curriculum subjects as well as religious education, drama and personal and social education (PSE).

24. The quality and range of learning opportunities are good in most subjects despite the lack of use of computers to support pupils' learning. They are very good in art and drama so the school is well placed to make an application for specialist status as a Performing Arts College. They are good in English, science, music, physical education, religious education, geography and history.

However, they are unsatisfactory in information and communication technology (ICT), where National Curriculum requirements are not met in Years 10 and 11, even though the provision has increased significantly in recent years. The school has incorporated the new national strategy for the development of literacy into its programme and the provision is satisfactory. However, the co-ordination and development of pupils' numeracy skills across the curriculum urgently require attention. The school has recognised this, and a co-ordinator for numeracy was appointed in September 2001. A number of special theme days or weeks, for example an industry day in Year 9 and a work-related week for the whole school, enrich the curriculum.

25. In Years 7-9, all pupils take either French or German. In these year groups, parents are right to be concerned about some timetabling arrangements in design and technology. There are too many classes taught by more than one teacher, causing a lack of continuity in pupils' learning.

26. The breadth, balance and relevance of the curriculum are good, and represent an outstanding improvement since the previous inspection. In Years 10 and 11, pupils take up to nine full and two short GCSE subjects. All pupils take English literature and the dual award science. In addition to English, mathematics and a design technology subject, pupils have a choice of one full and two short GCSE courses from a modern language, physical and religious education. There are two options that now include geology, rural science and two GNVQ vocational courses. Work-related education is provided for some pupils who might otherwise not attend school regularly. A few pupils with special educational needs have individual studies to reduce their examination commitment. A new day structure underpins these developments and provides pupils with lessons of a more appropriate length.

27. Pupils with special educational needs have full access to the National Curriculum. However, the provision is unsatisfactory because there is insufficient classroom support to enable them to understand the work in many classes. In Years 7-9, there is very inconsistent use of pupils' individual education plans by subject teachers. Hence, the targets within the plans are not being given a high enough profile.

28. Provision for pupils with hearing impairment is good. All of them have access to a broad and balanced curriculum. They receive most of their education in classes in the main school with additional individual support in the special unit. Integration varies from pupil to pupil depending on ability and need. Overall, the organisation of the curriculum for pupils with hearing impairment is co-ordinated satisfactorily. Links with the community are good. Professionals from other agencies, such as speech and language therapy, educational psychology and audiology are involved, having a positive impact on the pupils' learning and progress. Transitional arrangements with primary schools and with further educational establishments are very well developed and organised, thus ensuring continuity of specialist provision and support.

29. The provision for gifted and talented pupils is satisfactory and improving rapidly. In 1999, when the programme started, some parents were disappointed because expectations were not fulfilled. Developments have now accelerated. Around 200 pupils, of whom 60 are in Years 10 and 11, have been identified as 'gifted or talented' by one or more subject departments. Thirteen enrichment activities were staged in the Year 2000-2001. These ranged from challenging subject based opportunities such as an artist in residence, maths challenge, a physics Olympia, and a young engineer competition, to more general activities such as Year 10 visits to Cambridge University.

30. The provision of extra-curricular activities is good and is wider than at the time of the previous inspection. Many teachers make a contribution to these activities and this work does much to extend the learning experiences of many pupils. Parents' concerns about this provision are unfounded. The provision of extra-curricular sport is good. There are school teams in five sports and these together with inter form competitions ensure a high participation rate. Pupils achieve considerable success in sport at local and regional level. Teachers provide extra support for coursework and there is an Easter revision programme in addition to a Summer Literacy School. There is a tradition of drama productions, for example the production of 'Gregory's Girl' at the Crucible theatre last year. There is a choir, brass band, keyboard club and there are three concerts each year. There is a range of clubs, and trips are arranged locally, nationally and

abroad for educational and recreational purposes. Gifted and talented pupils in Years 8 and 9 are taking a short GCSE course in ICT in lessons after school.

31. The school provides a satisfactory programme of PSE that has some good features. The course is very well planned and includes drugs education. The local community policeman makes a substantial contribution. There are also visiting speakers and drama groups. The course includes aspects of sex education and the biological aspects of sex education are taught in science. Form tutors in Years 7 to 9 teach PSE. However, the content and effectiveness of the course is diminished when they use the time for form administrative work. Some teachers are not confident with the group work and discussion in this subject.

32. The careers education and guidance programme is good. The careers service effectively supplements the work of the school and offers an advice interview to all Year 11 pupils. Colleges of further education, training providers and some national retailers support the school's careers convention. However, there is insufficient emphasis on interview techniques. Resources are satisfactory; a careers library is in the course of preparation and the use of computer information is developing. All Year 10 pupils undertake two weeks of work experience and it is carefully monitored.

33. The community makes a good contribution to pupils' learning especially in PSE. In addition there are a number of visiting speakers and good links with local sports clubs who provide coaching for the pupils. Artists in residence enrich the education of gifted and talented pupils. Pupils use the local area and the community to gather data in, for example science and geography to support their learning. However, there are not enough visits to places of worship or involvement of representatives of world faiths in religious education.

34. The relationships with partner institutions are very good and promote the progression of pupils' learning. Curricular links with primary schools include music and drama activities. A 'bridging project' is in place in mathematics, and pupils work on the theme 'bubbles' in science. Both Year 5 and 6 pupils visit the school, and induction days are held for Year 6 pupils in their new form groups. The procedures for transition are very good and the transfer of records is good. However, these transfer records are not used sufficiently to set challenging targets for the highest attaining pupils in English and mathematics. There are effective links with two other secondary schools to share training and ideas on improving the educational opportunities for gifted and talented pupils. There are good links with colleges of further and higher education and the school provides a number of places for students training to be teachers.

Provision for pupils' personal development

35. The school's overall provision for pupils' personal development is good and has improved since the previous inspection. This is because the provision for pupils' moral and cultural development has improved and is now good. Concern for pupils' personal development underpins much of the school's work but there is some inconsistency in planning for it at subject level. This could be strengthened if the school had a means of both making its intentions clearer to departments and a means of monitoring the extent and quality of provision.

36. Since the previous inspection, the school has not done enough to improve arrangements to meet its obligatory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all of its pupils. Year assemblies are orderly occasions and the themes provided by the senior members of staff who lead them, for example, the relationship between commitment and achievement in life, are relevant to pupils' lives and contribute towards their moral and social development. However, even these assemblies do not always constitute an act of collective worship. A 'thought for the day' is provided for form tutors to reflect upon with their pupils but its use is inconsistent and often unsatisfactory. However, a number of subjects contribute significantly towards pupils' spiritual development with religious education a particular strength, for example, in the way in which it focuses on personal and religious experience and deals with 'difficult' subjects such as death.

English provides opportunities for older pupils to explore the way in which religious beliefs underpin values and attitudes. Emotions and feelings are explored in history and personal and social education. Hence the overall provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory but with some considerable lost opportunities.

37. The school aims to develop pupils' moral values and its provision for this aspect of their personal development is good. The school's behaviour policy has an initial emphasis on the reward of positive behaviour and teachers are encouraged to consider the way in which their pupils may see them as role models. The personal and social education programme directly deals with moral issues such as bullying, which the school's pastoral system also deals with effectively. Pupils themselves were provided with the opportunity to contribute to the development of the school's drugs policy. The majority of subjects provide well for pupils' moral development. The history curriculum is rich in opportunities to consider moral issues such as the impact of war, or religious and economic change on people's lives. Geography aims to develop a concern for the quality of the environment through dealing with such issues as industrial pollution in Japan. The school's work with pupils who have statements of special educational need includes concern for the development of positive moral and social attitudes.

38. Provision for pupils' social development is also good. The school's intentions here are well illustrated by the way in which the provision of social areas for pupils' use at breaks and lunchtime were included in the recent building programme. Several subjects provide a variety of settings in which pupils learn to work co-operatively and collaborate on tasks. Regular opportunities for demanding personal investigations are provided in history, which makes a good contribution to the development of pupils' independent learning skills. Concern for social development is reflected in some aspects of the citizenship programme. The school encourages pupils to demonstrate their concern for others by initiating collections for a range of charities or organising fund raising events, for example, a talent show. The school council is one of a wide range of opportunities, which are provided for pupils to exercise responsibility; older pupils are currently engaged in training, which will equip them to chair meetings of younger pupils. Older pupils justify the confidence, which the school has, in their capacity to act maturely, in the way in which they conduct elections for school captain. The school also gives serious recognition to pupils' maturity by giving weight to their views when making senior appointments to the staff. Other opportunities include acting as sports captains and librarians.

39. Provision for cultural development is good and has improved since the previous inspection. The school has attempted to broaden pupils' experience of cultural diversity, which the previous report identified as a weakness, by inviting representatives of local ethnic minority communities into the school to lead assemblies or work with pupils in other settings. However, there are still not enough visits to places of worship. All departments are encouraged to use particular festivals, for example, the Chinese New Year, as a stimulus for work and a week was programmed to incorporate a European theme throughout the school. Pupils take part in cultural exchange visits with students from other European countries, for example Germany. The contribution made to pupils' cultural development by a majority of subject departments is good and includes opportunities to take part in cultural activity such as music and drama through school productions and a variety of musical ensembles. Some of the latter meet informally and are organised by the pupils themselves, which also contributes strongly to their social development. In art, pupils interpret the work of major artists and some of their work also shows the influence of other cultures and past civilisations. Science is one of a number of subjects, which offers opportunities for pupils to be involved in extra-curricular activities, including homework clubs. The school works on co-productions, for example 'Gregory's Girl' with the local Theatre in Education Company. A good range of extra-curricular sporting activities is also provided, and links exist with local sports clubs, which also contributes to social development.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

40. The arrangements for pupils' welfare, health and safety are good. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' behaviour and personal development are good, and arrangements for academic assessment and support are satisfactory. Similar standards have been maintained since the previous inspection. However, the monitoring and promotion of attendance are insufficiently effective. Parents are generally happy with pastoral care but express concerns about lunchtime arrangements.

41. The procedures for child protection are in place. Arrangements for health and safety are good. A full time matron provides medical and personal support to pupils and adults. She and several other adults are qualified to apply first aid. Form tutors remain with their groups for five years and forge constructive and caring relationships with their pupils. They teach personal, social and health education to them in Years 7-9 and conduct counselling and progress reviews with all the pupils in turn. Pupils are confident to refer their problems to them or to other adults.

42. The specialist teachers and learning support assistants show exemplary concern for pupils with special educational needs. They are constantly looking for ways to resolve the problems facing their pupils. This includes using the study centre at Sheffield Wednesday FC to develop learning and social skills.

43. Owing to the building of new premises, considerable teething problems were experienced regarding lunchtime arrangements. These have improved and are now satisfactory. The school is well aware of pupils' and parents' concerns and is closely monitoring the situation. The introduction of a breakfast club is imminent.

44. Behaviour is closely monitored and well promoted through recognition and reward. A learning mentor effectively supports pupils with particular behavioural difficulties. Exclusion is used carefully and effectively. The school is keen to promote social inclusion and has an emergency workroom, which is always manned, to receive pupils who cause disruption in lessons. This enables lessons to continue without further disruption and allows the removed pupil to continue working under very close supervision. Bullying is firmly discouraged and pupils are confident to refer instances to a number of adults. However, there is no formal facility by which they can attempt to resolve their own experiences, for example via a pupil-run bullying surgery. The school recognises this and has plans for a 'drop-in' centre.

45. The school relies on a manual system for monitoring attendance and it is time consuming. The absence of an electronic system inhibits the school's effectiveness to very closely monitor the attendance and whereabouts of the very large numbers of pupils. Some registers are not fully completed at the time the roll is called and this has an implication for pupils' safety. At present the school does not contact parents on the first day of a pupil's absence. The high number of pupils, who have a poor record of attendance, represents a very heavy workload for the assistant heads of year. They would benefit from clerical help. Although high attendance is recognised by certificates there is a lack of imaginative promotional activity to motivate pupils to adopt more positive attitudes about it.

46. The key aspects of pupils' personal development, attendance, behaviour and effort are assessed and reported. The programme for personal, social and health education, including careers, contributes to personal development but various aspects of self-management and independence are not formally assessed, and there is no structured approach to the development of such skills. There is a wide range of opportunities for pupils to take responsibility. The school council provides pupils with good experiences to manage their own community and the recently introduced senior students group is a further enhancement of this.

47. Whilst assessment procedures are satisfactory overall, they are of variable quality across the school. Some departments have good or even very good practices in place whilst others, for example mathematics, do not. The previous inspection report stated that a working party was examining assessment. Considerable progress has been made but some weaknesses still remain. The school's assessment system does not relate to National Curriculum levels so pupils and parents are unsure about the actual standards being achieved. Some statutory teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 are insufficiently accurate. The use of assessment to modify the curriculum and to adjust teaching to the needs of pupils is satisfactory overall but practice is variable across the school. However, the system is used effectively to identify different groups of

pupils such as those who are gifted and talented and those who are underachieving. The school is improving its support to some of these groups through a learning mentor who is funded by the Excellence in Cities initiative. However, it is providing insufficient support for pupils who have special educational needs, apart for those who have statements. Progress towards the targets in pupils' individual education plans is not reviewed often enough in teaching outside the special educational needs department.

48. Initiatives such as a summer literacy school for pupils, who are transferring from primary schools, an Easter revision school and homework clubs are examples of good educational support that the school arranges. The school is steadily improving the way it is helping pupils to understand how they are progressing. The autumn progress review is followed by discussion with individual pupils in order to agree targets and strategies for improvement. It is currently not held early enough for Year 11 pupils but is to be brought forward. There is a suitable system to predict GCSE grades and to monitor pupils' progress towards them but there is an absence of a similar system for Years 7-9.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

49. The majority of parents' views are positive and they are supportive of the school. Hence, the school's partnership with its parents is satisfactory. However, there is scope for the partnership to be more effective. The previous report suggested that better organised meetings for parents, more informative reports and a more active parents' and teachers' association would improve the partnership. The association has become stronger but some elements of the other weaknesses remain.

50. Parents are pleased with the quality of education that the school provides, the standards of pupils' attainment and their progress. They are also pleased with the current improvements to the whole site and learning facilities. Inspectors agree with these positive views. Some parents believe that the school does not work closely enough with them and, amongst their concerns are the information about pupils' progress and the organisation of parents' evenings. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are well served by the concern and care of the specialist staff. Inspectors judge that the school tries very hard to co-operate with parents across a wide range of issues but information about pupils' progress could be improved.

51. Parents are generally well informed about the life and work of the school from the point of application for a place and thereafter. The half term magazine is a useful source of information and meetings are arranged for parents from time to time. Annual school reports, unusually, provide considerable opportunity for pupils to describe their own progress and identify targets for improvement. However, for pupils in Years 7-9, it is generally not clear how they are attaining with relation to expectations for their age, and this is a weakness. In all years, teachers do not consistently identify pupils' strengths and weaknesses in each subject. This is also a weakness. Interim progress reports were prepared last year but not sent out to parents due to union action. The school recognises the concerns of parents about the practical arrangements relating to parents' evenings, and that some improvements are needed to enable parents to consult adequately with teachers.

52. Parents make a satisfactory contribution to pupils' learning at school and at home. The parents' and teachers' association provides good support to the school financially and socially and is also used by the school as a sounding board regarding proposed developments. However, the school does not regularly take the views of all parents, for example, by the use of questionnaires. Co-operation between school and parents is good regarding the use of homework diaries, and usually when parents are invited to discuss issues about their own children. The head teacher holds a half term open surgery when any parent is welcome to drop in to discuss any issue. This is a strong feature. A good number of parents have participated in school-based initiatives such as paired reading and there is generally good support for public performances by pupils and for sporting events. However, attendance at parents' evening is not as high as it is at many secondary schools. A significant number of parents do not ensure that their children achieve the highest possible level of attendance.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

53. Leadership and management have improved greatly since the time of the previous inspection and are now good overall.

Governors

54. The full governing body is very effective. It is supported by a suitable number of sub-committees, which deal with much of the detail of the work. These meet regularly and feed information and advice to the full group. All records are in order and are of good quality. Governors understand the school's strengths and weaknesses well. They made an excellent appointment in the current headteacher who has had a massive positive impact on its work in a relatively short time. Governors set suitably challenging targets in terms of GCSE results, and monitor them carefully. The group fulfils all of its statutory duties, except those relating to requirements for information and communications technology in Years 10 and 11, and the provision of a daily act of collective worship.

55. The school has revised its equal opportunities policy and this is due to be adopted by the governors in the near future. It illustrates the school's commitment to providing equal opportunities for its pupils, teaching and non-teaching staff. Equality of opportunity and inclusion are very positive features of the school.

Senior management

56. The leadership provided by the headteacher is very good. She understood clearly what needed to be done following the inspection of 1997. Since the low point for GCSE in 1998, improvements have been such that the rise in standards has outstripped the rate of the national rise. She has reshaped the senior management team to include more teachers with whole school responsibilities. This team provides the staff with generally good leadership. However, the school would benefit greatly from the resolution of the conflict that currently affects the full cohesion of this group. Management at senior level is good overall. The school has improved well since the previous inspection, particularly as teaching has improved, and academic standards have risen. Good attention has been given to the key issues from the previous inspection, particularly in relation to the quality of the curriculum. However, there are some important weaknesses which remain; these particularly relate to information and communications technology and special educational needs. However, great credit must be given to the school's senior team and more junior staff for the maintenance of standards and the improvements because the life of the whole establishment has been severely disrupted by the rebuilding programme.

Middle management

57. The middle managers as a group are at the hub of decision-making processes and every day organisation. They have been given real responsibilities as managers since the previous inspection, and lead their subject and year group teams well. They provide the school with considerable stability and play their part in fostering good team spirit and morale. However, there is still scope for more consistent practice in the monitoring of lessons. The organisation of the provision for pupils with special educational needs in the main school is currently unsatisfactory.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

58. There are sufficient suitably qualified and experienced teachers to teach the subjects of the curriculum. The match between the teachers' expertise and the subjects they teach is very good. The amount of class contact has been reduced since the previous inspection, enabling teachers to carry out their duties more effectively. Training opportunities for staff are satisfactorily linked to the needs of the school. Most teachers are now being trained in ICT skills, which were lacking at the last inspection. However their confidence and competence have not yet increased to the extent that they can all make ICT integral to the pupils' learning. Arrangements for the induction of new teachers and for teachers' professional development are very good. A very good performance management programme has been implemented.

59. Members of the administrative and technical teams play an important part in ensuring the smooth running of the school. Levels of technical staffing are generally satisfactory but there are exceptions in art and in design and technology. Administrative staffing levels are adequate. The team is well organised and effective.

60. The number of learning support staff for pupils with special educational needs is inadequate. Since the previous inspection, the position has not significantly improved. This is a serious situation because it means that the many of the pupils in greatest need cannot access the full curriculum.

61. Accommodation is good. Since the previous inspection, most of the school has been rebuilt under the Private Finance Initiative. Older buildings have all been remodelled and refurbished. Problems of cleanliness noted at the time of the previous inspection have now been resolved and the building provides a good environment for learning. The management of the accommodation still needs some improvement because a few teachers currently have to teach in too many different rooms. Hearing-impaired pupils are able to learn quickly in their unit, which is partially soundtreated, but they encounter problems in other classrooms, which are often very reverberant.

62. Learning resources are very much improved since the previous inspection when low expenditure had an adverse effect on learning. The school has, for the last two years, spent more than average on books, materials and equipment, and levels of provision are now satisfactory. The resources are efficiently used. Although there has been considerable expenditure on ICT equipment, the school still has less than the average number of computers for similarly sized schools, as at the time of the previous inspection. This will have implications when the school provides all pupils with their ICT entitlement. For a school of this size, there is still a shortage of books in the newly refurbished library, which is otherwise well managed and organised. Pupils with hearing aids need their devices checked more frequently to ensure that they are providing maximum support.

Efficiency

63. Systems for financial planning are good. The various sections of the budget are planned carefully each year using historical data. Spending is monitored with precision and financial control is excellent. Development planning is good but it could to advantage be more securely linked to the funding available. The current bursar inherited a large number of very unsatisfactory

financial systems on his appointment. He has successfully eliminated all of the shortcomings and now manages very secure well-documented systems. There are secure systems to ensure that all specific grants are spent on their intended purposes. The principles of best value are applied well.

64. The school office staff are welcoming and helpful. They provide good quality administrative support to the school, keeping the necessary flows of information and documents running efficiently.

65. Funding is broadly average, the education programme is of a good standard, pupils do well, especially at GCSE, and so the school is effective. It gives good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

66. In order to improve further the quality of educational provision and the standards achieved in the school the governors, headteacher and staff should:

(1) Improve the below average standards in mathematics, modern languages and information and communications technology

- In mathematics improve the scheme of work to incorporate the development of numerical and investigative skills. Strengthen assessment procedures.
- In modern languages ensure that recent improvements in standards in Years 7-9 are maintained when pupils move to Years 10 and 11.
- In information and communications technology ensure that all pupils are receiving their National Curriculum entitlement. Increase substantially the use of ICT in the teaching of all subjects.

(2) Provide suitably challenging work for the highest attaining pupils

- Use transfer information from the primary stage of education to set suitably challenging targets, especially in English and mathematics. Monitor progress towards them.

(3) Improve the rates of progress of pupils with special educational needs in mainstream lessons

- Provide an adequate amount of support in lessons so that these pupils can benefit from the work covered in class and experience success.
- Improve the quality of liaison between special educational needs staff and subject teachers.
- Make more use of pupils' individual education plans.

(4) Improve the below average attendance by pupils

- Strengthen procedures for monitoring attendance and checking on absence by completing registers adequately and contacting parents as soon as pupils are absent without explanation.
- Devise strategies to promote more positive attitudes to good attendance.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

167

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

63

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	4	30	87	44	2	0	0
Percentage	2	18	52	26	1	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y 7 – Y 11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1736	
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	247	

Special educational needs

	Y 7 – Y 11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	32	
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	228	

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	21

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	23
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	28

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.6
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	2.0
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 (Year 9)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
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Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2000	168	180	348
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National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	136	102	105
	Girls	166	101	87
	Total	302	203	192
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	87 (62)	61 (57)	55 (53)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	37 (13)	34 (28)	25 (21)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	93	110	124
	Girls	117	116	130
	Total	210	226	254
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	60 (54)	65 (49)	73 (62)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	23 (24)	29 (24)	36 (28)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

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

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	167	175	342

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	68	145	150
	Girls	92	153	157
	Total	160	298	307
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	47 (39)	87 (94)	90 (96)
	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	36.0 (36.4)
	National	38.4 (38.0)

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

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	8
Black – African heritage	3
Black – other	9
Indian	
Pakistani	22
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	15
White	1679
Any other minority ethnic group	

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other	4	
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	88	4
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y 7 – Y 11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	96.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y 7 – Y 11

Total number of education support staff	17
Total aggregate hours worked per week	474

Deployment of teachers: Y 7 – Y 11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	73.8
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Average teaching group size: Y 7 – Y 11

Key Stage 2	N/a
Key Stage 3	26.67
Key Stage 4	22.90

Financial information

Financial year	2000-2001
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	£
Total income	4234344
Total expenditure	4215437
Expenditure per pupil	2429
Balance brought forward from previous year	165850
Balance carried forward to next year	184757

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	15.7
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	19.2

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	4
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1736
Number of questionnaires returned	237

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	24.0	62.0	6.8	5.5	1.7
My child is making good progress in school.	35.4	54.4	4.6	2.6	3.0
Behaviour in the school is good.	25.6	40.0	18.1	5.5	10.8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	16.9	52.7	19.8	7.6	3.0
The teaching is good.	18.6	62.0	7.6	2.1	9.7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	20.3	49.7	18.6	9.3	2.1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	32.5	50.6	9.3	6.3	1.3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	45.1	46.4	3.0	2.1	3.4
The school works closely with parents.	17.3	40.6	23.6	10.1	8.4
The school is well led and managed.	21.9	50.7	8.9	4.6	13.9
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	23.2	56.9	9.3	3.0	7.6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	13.1	38.4	17.7	8.9	21.9

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

ENGLISH

67. The quality of provision in English is good.

Strengths

- Good specialist teaching enhances the pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills
- Pupils achieve well, gaining standards that are better than would be expected
- Good response to the National Literacy Strategy
- Texts and discussions make a good contribution to the pupils' personal development

Areas for improvement

- Better use of assessment data to help raise standards
- Better provision for higher attaining pupils
- Pupils' entitlement to information and communications technology
- Better provision for pupils with special educational needs in Years 7-9

68. In the 2000 national tests at the end of Year 9, the pupils' results showed a significant improvement on the results in 1998 and 1999. Standards were well above average for all schools and for schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. The proportion that gained the expected Level 5 or higher was well above the national average and in the top 5% for similar schools. The proportion at Level 6 or higher was well above both the national and similar schools average. There was no significant difference between the standards of boys and girls. However, the teacher assessments for these pupils judged their standards to be above rather than well above average. Analysis of the pupils' work during the inspection showed the teacher assessments to be a more accurate judgement of the pupils' standards. In 2001, test results were in line with the standards indicated by the previous year's teacher assessments.

69. In the 2000 GCSE English examination, the proportion of pupils achieving grades A*-C was in line with the national average and significantly higher than in 1998 and 1999. It was above average for similar schools. However, fewer pupils, particularly boys, sat the examination than in most schools so the results were slightly below average overall. More girls than boys reached grade C or better, and the gap between them was greater than in most schools. The pupils' results tended to match their results in most subjects. In the 2000 English literature examination, the proportion of pupils achieving grades A*-C was in line with the national average from an entry that was higher than in most schools. Results were better than in 1999 but lower than in 1998 when the entry was smaller. Significantly more girls gained grade C or higher in 2000 than boys. Pupils tended to do better in literature than in most of their other subjects. In 2001, results in English were similar to 2000 but the literature results declined slightly.

70. Standards in the current Year 9 are broadly average. They are not as high as in previous years because there are fewer pupils who show the flair and control needed to gain above average standards. Nevertheless, achievement has been good, given that the pupils entered Year 7 with standards that were below average, especially in writing. About a quarter of the pupils are above average. They listen well and provide well structured explanations and arguments. They identify relevant information from a fiction or non fiction text quickly and use it to support an argument or opinion. Their writing is accurate, although the presentation of some boys could be better. These pupils consistently engage the reader's interest through their choice of language and the range of their sentence structure. The speaking and listening standards of most pupils, about two thirds of the year, are average. Their answers are clear, but too many tend to give short answers. However, many give longer answers in English and other subjects when the teacher asks them to. They read independently, and in many lessons effectively make deductions about meaning from a range of different texts. The development of these pupils' reading is an effective feature. Their writing skills are broadly average. They make good progress in its organisation and paragraphing. Punctuation and spelling require more accuracy. About one third of the year is below, and occasionally, well below average. Although these pupils listen well their range of spoken vocabulary is limited. They read independently, but their understanding tends to be literal. They need the teacher to help them make deductions. Their writing tends to be short, not paragraphed and too inaccurate.

71. In Year 11, standards are above average and better than the recent GCSE results might suggest. This is because the above average standards of this cohort have been maintained since the national assessments at the end of Year 9. Most pupils are working at a level associated with GCSE grade C or better in both English language and literature. They are achieving well. The speaking and listening skills of higher attaining pupils are above average with a smaller number well above. These pupils respond well to reading assignments. They select key elements to support their judgements. Work and discussion on 'Macbeth' showed that these pupils can handle contradictory ideas. They adapt their writing to a range of styles. One boy's science fiction assignment was an outstanding example of sustaining an appropriate voice and style while being highly accurate. Middle attaining pupils make well structured spoken contributions to lessons, but some need to be more extensive. Their reading assignments show understanding that is broadly average. They have detailed knowledge of the content of the texts they study, but some do not consistently apply that knowledge to the title's requirements. Their writing skills are broadly average with sound paragraphing and sentence structure, but there are some whose accuracy is insufficient to ensure success in examinations when they have less time to draft and check work. The work of lower attaining pupils is below average and sometimes well below. They listen well and many of them make longer contributions in class. However, too many do not readily expand on their answers. Their reading assignments often make clear what happens in a text but they do not use this knowledge effectively to support arguments. Writing skills still have inaccuracies although the pupils make good progress in producing substantial pieces.

72. The progress of pupils with special educational needs, especially those with general learning difficulties, is unsatisfactory in Years 7 - 9. Despite the English teachers presenting activities in an appropriate way, these pupils find it difficult to make progress because there is not enough additional classroom assistant support for them. The progress of pupils for whom English is an additional language is good. There is no significant overall difference in the progress of boys and girls given their relative standards on entry to the school.

73. The pupils' attitudes and behaviour in English are good throughout the school. Often behaviour is very good. Occasionally the attitudes of some pupils are less enthusiastic because the organisation and timing of an activity does not provide enough rigour. The presentation of course work in Years 10 -11 is good, showing the pupils value its importance, but it is not as good in Years 7 - 9. Pupils see the issues and texts they study as relevant to them. Consequently English makes a good contribution to their personal development.

74. The overall standard of teaching and learning is good. In particular the department helps most pupils improve their standards from below average to average, resulting in good achievement. However, there is insufficient provision for the higher attaining pupils, both in terms of the texts they study and the tasks they do. Generally, pupils have a good understanding of the texts and issues they study because their teachers have very good subject knowledge. This also helps to prepare them well for course work. Thoughtful and informed planning lead to a range of activities, resources and methods that interest the pupils. These include many opportunities for independent and group learning. Sometimes these methods are less effective because planning has not paid enough attention to their timing. The introduction of methods from the National Literacy Strategy is having a positive impact on this. Teachers have high expectations, manage behaviour well and want their pupils to succeed. However, expectations are not always communicated sharply enough. For example, pupils in Years 7 - 9 are not aware of their National Curriculum levels and how to improve them. In Years 10 - 11, pupils are clearer about their targets but less so about what they need to improve. An exception to this was the Year 11 class in which the teacher constantly reinforced the criteria and skills the pupils needed to show to move towards their potential grade. Another example of high expectations was a Year 11 lesson in which the teacher required pupils to expand their answers and be more specific. In Years 10 - 11 marking is very good with supportive comments. It is less consistently so in Years 7 - 9.

75. The department has responded satisfactorily to the last report. Speaking and listening are improving, drama is well established and entry for GCSE literature has increased dramatically. However, teachers do not use information and communications technology in their lessons, and the use of assessment needs to be strengthened. A recently appointed head of department provides very good leadership. She monitors work and standards very well. She is clear sighted about how the department needs to develop, as is evident in the emerging curriculum materials in Year 7.

Key Skills - Literacy across the curriculum

76. The provision for literacy development is satisfactory. Although there is no whole school policy several subjects are making good provision. Most subjects develop key vocabulary well but some do more. For example, in history, teachers encourage the pupils to use a range of reading techniques such as skimming and scanning. They also enhance good critical reading through examining a text for reliability and possible bias. Higher attaining pupils are required to undertake some extended writing tasks. The above average history results, including those of boys, indicate this approach is having a good impact on history as well as

literacy. There is also good practice in art and religious education where the use of subject vocabulary and efficient research skills are effectively tackled.

77. In other subjects provision is less consistent. For example, although there is a good emphasis on key terms in geography, design technology and mathematics there is no systematic approach to supporting and improving the writing of average and below average pupils. In music there is not enough opportunity for research, and what there is may be too often copied or downloaded from a web site. There is some effective practice in information and communications technology on the presentation of written material.

78. The school has correctly identified the need to enhance research and information skills. The plans are sound and the librarian is making important contributions to them. The library is active and effective in promoting reading, through its links with the English department and its own schemes. For example, a number of pupils successfully took part in a city wide book review.

79. There is a disparity in standards of speaking and listening between subjects. For example, in drama, pupils make sustained and lucid contributions in whole class and group work. This is not consistently the case in other subjects such as religious education and personal and social education because of shortcomings in expectations and class organisation.

80. The school has rightly given priority to literacy. However, there is a need to achieve a more cohesive approach to speaking, listening, reading methods, and support for writing and research across the school. The good practice that exists provides a basis for this, supported by a coherent policy giving clear guidance and a way of evaluating progress.

DRAMA

81. The quality of provision in drama is very good.

Strengths

- A great improvement in standards at GCSE
- Above average standards from a below average starting point in Years 7 - 9
- Lively, enthusing and ambitious teaching that results in very good learning
- Very good leadership that is focused on achieving and sustaining high standards

Areas for improvement

- Enhance activities through blackout and soundproof facilities

82. In the 2000 GCSE drama examination, the proportion of pupils reaching grade C or higher was in line with the national average. These results were an improvement on 1998 and 1999. Results for 2001 show a dramatic improvement on 2000. 90% of pupils reached grade C or higher including 62% at grade A.

83. Standards in Year 9 are above average. This represents very good achievement given the pupils' overall standards on entry to the school. In lessons, pupils work quickly to devise improvisations. The co-operation between groups is good. Performances are skilled, showing an awareness of the need to communicate conviction through language, facial expressions, gesture and movement. A striking feature is the willingness and ability of other pupils to watch closely and make lucid and thoughtful evaluations of what they see. In drama many pupils reach standards of speaking and listening that are higher than they appear to achieve in other subjects.

84. In Year 11 standards are well above average. In the two groups seen most pupils are performing at GCSE grade C or better. A major strength is their evident comfort with the challenge and techniques of drama. They have a deep and wide understanding of drama techniques such as tableau, hot seating and thought tracking and use them effectively to prepare and perform their work. Pupils take a positive and supportive evaluative approach to each other's work. They suggest ways to improve but in a respectful way. The impression they give is of mature young people who work independently, enthusiastically and collaboratively.

85. The major feature is the very good teaching of the head of department and her colleagues. When she arrived, GCSE drama was taken by a very small number of pupils. In the intervening three years it has grown to nearly 100 candidates in the current Year 11 and is now a significant strength. Teaching is lively, informed and full of the highest expectations. Specialist staff know their subject well and demonstrate their enthusiasm which in turn enthuses the pupils. Continuous evaluation is a major feature that helps the pupils to succeed in improving their standards. Technology such as video equipment enhances the evaluation.

86. The subject is very well led and managed. The support of the school's senior management is also an important factor. Drama is well provided for in curriculum time. Extra curricular provision is good and has included a performance at The Crucible theatre. Recent staffing shortages have been managed well with no detriment to standards. The department has two roomy performance areas but the lack of sound and blackout restricts the range of performance activities that are available. In Year 11 girls clearly outnumber boys. This has been redressed to a degree in Year 10 and the department is aware of the need to secure the trend of more boys into GCSE drama.

MATHEMATICS

87. The quality of provision in mathematics is satisfactory.

Strengths

- Standards of work are improving in both key stages
- The most effective teaching successfully develops pupils' independent learning skills

Areas for improvement

- Extension of the scheme of work to incorporate the development of numerical and investigative skills
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs, particularly in Year 7
- Monitoring of pupils' progress through regular scrutiny of work and the use of systematic assessment procedures

88. In 2000, results in national tests at the end of Year 9 were below average compared with all schools. They were average compared to similar schools. The downward trend in results in 1998 and 1999 was reversed in 2000, the rate of improvement being similar to that found nationally. Results improved further in 2001. In GCSE examinations in 2000, pupils' results were similar to the national averages for all schools at A*-C and A*-G but a significant number of lower-attaining pupils was not entered. Taking this into account, results were below average, as in 1998 and 1999. In 2001, almost all pupils were entered for GCSE. Results improved at A*-G but not significantly at A*-C. No pupils achieved A* grades. Throughout the school there is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. Pupils' results are not as good as in English and science.

89. Standards of work are below average throughout the school. However, they are closer to average than at the time when pupils entered the school. This represents satisfactory achievement. There are clear signs that standards are improving now that the pupils are taught in classes grouped by ability from Year 8. This enables the highest-attaining pupils to cover the work at a faster pace and tackle more complex work. Their achievement is satisfactory although not as good as it could be because there is too little emphasis on developing investigative skills and encouraging pupils to apply their knowledge in unfamiliar circumstances. Average and lower-attaining pupils achieve satisfactorily but could also do better. Their ability to transfer and inter-relate number and algebra with shape and space, graphical work and data handling is below average, as are their computational skills and mental agility. Too often calculators are used for simple operations that should be done mentally. Teachers satisfactorily promote literacy skills through the development and use of appropriate mathematical terminology. Computers are not used sufficiently to enhance learning in mathematics; opportunities to aid pupils' understanding of basic concepts in number and geometry are being missed. Progress in mathematics is hindered for all pupils in Year 7 by the wide range of ability in each class. Higher-attaining pupils in particular are not advancing their knowledge fast enough because teachers sometimes spend a disproportionate amount of time supporting the least able pupils.

90. Pupils with special educational needs do not achieve as well as they should, particularly in Year 7 where provision within the mixed ability classes is unsatisfactory. The approach to teaching is often too theoretical

and there are too few opportunities for pupils to consolidate their learning through practical experiences. In other year groups, these pupils achieve satisfactorily although not to optimum potential. Difficulties with numeracy are not clearly identified in pupils' individual education plans and the school does not provide enough help from classroom assistants. There has been little improvement in this situation since the previous inspection.

91. Overall, pupils' attitudes are good. Most listen attentively and sustain concentration throughout the whole lesson. Lack of confidence in oral work and in making deductions from given facts is a weakness which reduces progress for many pupils. Their powers of recall and retention are relatively weak. Teachers are aware of this and try to overcome it by regularly revisiting and extending each topic area. Some good strategies are in place for raising pupils' self-confidence, particularly in higher-attaining classes. Pupils in these groups tend to be more highly motivated and ambitious. Others have lower aspirations because they have no means of knowing how well they are progressing towards the teachers' expectations of them. Pupils' behaviour is generally good but a small element of challenging behaviour in some classes diminishes progress. The presentation of pupils' written work is variable. At best it is good, when logical sequencing and clear explanation of the methods used assist teachers to identify areas of concern. However, there is too high a proportion of untidy, incomplete work that reflects lack of pride and lowers achievement. The marking system is used consistently but the grades alone are sometimes not sufficiently informative to help pupils know how to improve their work. Marking was not considered to be sufficiently rigorous in Years 7-9 at the time of the previous inspection. It is still inconsistent. Homework is used satisfactorily to complement classwork but the quantity and challenge do not always make equal demands on pupils of varying abilities.

92. Overall, teaching is satisfactory throughout the school. This leads to satisfactory gains in knowledge and progressive learning for most pupils, including those with English as an additional language. The teaching mostly ranges from satisfactory to very good, similar to that at the time of the previous inspection. All except one of the lessons observed were satisfactory or better. The good lessons were equally distributed throughout the year groups. In these lessons pupils worked quickly, transferring and interpreting information well. It was also noticeable that teachers constantly involved the pupils in dialogue and used their contributions to extend learning. High expectations were transmitted to pupils, who responded by repeatedly questioning the teachers until understanding was secure. A very good example was the Year 10 lesson in which some pupils teased out the difference between simple and compound interest and considered how this might affect their approach to saving and investment of money. The unsatisfactory teaching was characterised by slow pace, poor teaching strategies and inadequate challenge. The quality of the satisfactory teaching and learning could be raised through increased pace and challenge, and closer checks on the progress and work of individual pupils. A more consistent approach to the teaching of numerical skills and greater use of practical and investigative work to underpin learning would benefit pupils of all abilities. They would also benefit from regular feedback on their performance, related to known standards, so as to measure their progress against short-term goals.

93. Management is satisfactory overall but the department lacks structure in key aspects of its organisation. A more coherent approach is needed to further raise pupils' standards of work. The scheme of work is not rigorous enough in focusing on the development of numerical and investigative skills; pupils' work is not monitored closely enough; and assessment procedures for identifying and responding to underachievement are not sufficiently well developed. An acting head of department has recently been appointed and some changes have been effectively implemented, for example the monitoring of teaching is successfully beginning to promote the sharing of the best teaching practices.

Key skills - numeracy across the curriculum

94. The school is in the process of implementing a policy to engage all subject departments in the promotion of numerical skills. At present, these are adequate enough to support pupils' needs in subjects such as design and technology, geography, history and science. However, the methods used for numerical work and forms of presentation lack consistency across the school. Particular examples of varying requirements from teachers are in graphical work and the analysis of data. This can be confusing and time wasting for pupils.

SCIENCE

95. The quality of provision in science is good.

Strengths

- Consistently good teaching
- Pupils achieve well
- Good GCSE results

Areas for improvement

- There is insufficient use of computers in science lessons
- Monitoring of teaching and learning to share good practice
- Marking of pupils' work and assessment need to be improved

96. Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 in 2000 were slightly below average. They were average when compared with schools taking pupils from similar backgrounds. Boys perform marginally better in these tests than girls following the national pattern. Over the past three years, pupils' performance has improved broadly in line with national trends. Pupils' performance in these tests is better than in mathematics tests but inferior to English. Results in 2001 improved compared with 2000. All pupils take GCSE double award science. Results in 2000 were above the national average both for A*-C and A*-G grades. Over the past three years, results have steadily improved, and pupils perform relatively well in science compared with their other subjects. Girls do better at GCSE in line with the national picture. Results in 2001 declined in the range A*-C but more pupils achieved at least grade G.

97. Standards of work in Year 9 are broadly average and achievement is good. Pupils enter the school with attainment that is below average for their age. Their practical and investigative skills are underdeveloped and their knowledge and understanding of theories and concepts in physics, chemistry and biology are below average. However they make good progress in their lessons as a result of consistently good teaching so that at the end of Year 9 their attainment is about average for their age. For example, higher attaining Year 9 pupils can write word equations for reactions and are beginning to understand how to balance molecular equations. Average attaining pupils have a good understanding of biology. For example, they understand the relationship between cells and tissue and how these form important organs in the body. Lower-attaining pupils are developing their investigative and practical skills well. They can identify factors that effect heat transfer in liquids and devise experiments to test them.

98. Standards of work in Year 11 are above average and achievement is good. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of science, including scientific enquiry, is above what would be expected for their age. For example, higher attaining pupils have a very good knowledge and understanding of physical processes such as change of state and the importance of the relative forces between particles. Average pupils use their mathematical skills well to enhance their evaluation of experiments. Lower attaining pupils have a sound understanding of chemistry and can explain how to speed up a chemical reaction. Pupils make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of important scientific concepts. Practical and investigative skills, in particular, develop well. Achievement and standards are good as a result of good pupils' attitudes coupled with effective classroom teaching.

99. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in their science lessons because the work caters well for their abilities. In the laboratory, teachers support the pupils' learning well. However, the level of in-class support from assistants is too low. Pupils with English as an additional language make the same good progress in science as other pupils.

100. Pupils of all ages display positive attitudes towards science. They are interested in the subjects they study. Well-structured lessons ensure that pupils concentrate in class. They collaborate well with each other when doing practical and investigative work and this improves their learning. Pupils' behaviour in the laboratory is invariably good, and they are relatively mature in their approach to learning. They have established good relationships with their teachers and this helps them to learn more effectively.

101. Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. In Years 7-9, teaching was at least good in nine out of ten lessons and in Years 10 and 11 it was at least good in eight out of ten. No unsatisfactory lessons were observed. Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of their subject and explain key concepts and theories well, making them relatively straightforward for pupils to understand. Lessons are well planned with clear aims although these could to advantage be shared more explicitly with the pupils. Lessons are well managed so that pupils carry out practical activities in safety. Teachers have high expectations of pupils in terms of behaviour and achievement and this is improving the learning ethos in the department. Homework is regularly set and consolidates the pupils' learning well. However, teachers employ only a limited range of methods in lessons. They often spend too long instructing pupils and provide only limited opportunities for discussion. The quality of day to day marking of pupils' books is variable within the department. Different systems of marking are used, and comments do not usually highlight pupils' strengths and weaknesses or show them how to improve. Teachers' National Curriculum assessments tend to overestimate pupils' attainment. The department makes a satisfactory contribution to the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills but computers are not sufficiently used. Coverage of

information and communications technology in science is very patchy and pupils do not receive their full entitlement.

102. The interim head of science is managing the department satisfactorily. Good teamwork is being established after a period of upheaval following the move to better accommodation. There is an effective and improving science curriculum that gives pupils a wider experience of the subject, for example, through visits and projects. The department functions well on a day to day basis and the technical staff work well and efficiently to ensure its smooth running. Health and safety requirements are met. However there is no systematic monitoring and evaluation of teaching, which would serve to share good practice and foster further improvements. Since the previous inspection, the department has improved well. Teaching has improved considerably and standards are rising. The science curriculum has improved. Schemes of work are more relevant to the needs of the pupils. To improve further, the department needs to use computers regularly, establish the monitoring and evaluation of teaching, and provide the pupils with a better quality of marking.

ART AND DESIGN

103. The overall quality of provision for art and design is very good.

Strengths

- Excellent leadership of the head of department
- Well above average GCSE examination results
- The very good quality of teaching and learning
- Pupils' very good attitudes
- The very good quality of curriculum planning for the subject
- The very good quality of monitoring of pupils performance

Areas for improvement

- The provision of technician support
- The range of visits to study art outside the classroom
- The development of a greater range of multicultural reference resources
- Increased provision of computer hardware and software

104. GCSE results in the range A*-C were below average at the last inspection. There has been a steady improvement from 1997 to 2000 when results were well above average. All pupils entered gained an A*-G pass in 1999 and 2000. The number of pupils gaining higher A*-A passes was also above average. In 2000, art was one of the higher performing subjects at the school with both girls and boys achieving significantly above the national average. Results in 2001 confirm this high achievement with 81 per cent of pupils gaining A*-C passes; this is twice the school average. Teacher assessments for pupils in Year 9 in 2000 were above the national average. The percentage achieving beyond expectations was well above average. In 2001, 80 per cent of pupils gained the expected Level 4+ and half gained a Level 5+. The inspection findings support the accuracy of the teacher assessments.

105. Standards are above average in Year 9, and achievement is good. By Year 11, standards are well above average and achievement is very good. Pupils of all abilities make very good progress, and this is reflected in the GCSE examination success. From Year 7, the teaching provides pupils with a very firm grounding in key artwork skills. Pupils throughout the school are encouraged to develop as artists, and consequently gain the confidence and ability to work in a wide range of media. Excellent standards of observational drawing, composition, colour work and the use of creative imagination are often evident. Critical, analytical and evaluation skills are securely developed. Pupils use sketchbooks very effectively to develop image resources and ideas. By Years 10 and 11, pupils are able to produce extensive, in-depth preparation work, which provides a very good range of choices and possibilities for final pieces.

106. There is very good provision for pupils with special educational needs and those who are gifted or talented. All groups of pupils are challenged by the teaching and provided with the opportunity to take their work and studies that extra stage further. There is a strong commitment to equality of opportunity. Consequently, pupils with special needs make very good progress and learn very well.

107. Pupils' response to the subject is very good. They are keen, enthusiastic and appreciative of the teaching, as they recognise it has a great deal to offer. They are prepared to become actively involved in lessons and offer personal opinions and views. Pupils develop confidence in their own ability and consequently develop high levels of self-motivation. Teachers and pupils jointly contribute to an extremely productive working atmosphere because there are high levels of mutual trust and respect.

108. Teaching and learning are very good throughout the school. They were never less than good in any lesson seen. In Years 7 to 9, teaching and learning were very good or excellent in two-thirds of lessons. In Years 10 and 11, they were very good or excellent in all lessons. All teachers set, and achieve, consistently high standards for both themselves and the pupils. For example, in Year 8, an excellent lesson on Oriental painting succeeded because the teaching helped the pupils channel existing skills in a new direction when exploring a different cultural style. Similar strategies also opened up and provided access to a new area of learning for Year 9 when they were introduced to Celtic art styles. Resources are consistently used very well to stimulate learning and pupils' interest. In Years 10 and 11, pupils are constantly encouraged to be versatile and freedom of interpretation is emphasised. Teachers offer good constructive criticism to pupils to enable them to analyse, evaluate and improve their artwork.

109. Management of the department is very good, as is improvement since the last inspection. Leadership by the head of department is excellent, coupled with the commitment of the art team to raising standards and enabling pupils to succeed. This is supported by the very good systems for monitoring, assessment and setting pupil targets for improvement. The department has a very well chosen curriculum with extensive planning for a variety of work units. However, teachers lack any technician support. The provision of art trips and visits was an issue at the last inspection. Such opportunities are still insufficient and require further improvement. The range of art books in the main school library is very good. However, additional reference material on multicultural art is required to support that provided within the department itself. There has been an improvement in computer hardware, but art still lacks some equipment and software to properly contribute to information and communications technology education.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

110. The provision for design and technology is good.

Strengths

- Standards have improved consistently and are above average
- Pupils achieve well
- Teaching is good
- The subject is well led

Areas for improvement

- More emphasis on pupils' understanding of designing
- Curriculum planning in Years 7-9
- More opportunities for the most able pupils to extend their work in years 7-9

111. The proportions of pupils awarded GCSE grades A*-C and A*-G in 2000 were above the national average. Results for design and technology were better than for other subjects in the school. Girls did better than boys, in line with the national trend. These results show a steady overall improvement compared with 1998 and 1999, which has continued in 2001. In food technology, the proportion of pupils achieving grades A* to C was well above average and the trend of improvement in this area is particularly good. Results were particularly good in systems and control in 2000 and in resistant materials in 2001. There has been a steady overall improvement since the previous inspection.

112. Pupils' achievement in relation to their attainment on entry by the end of Year 9 is good, by which time they attain overall average standards. They acquire good skills in drawing and in making with resistant materials. They acquire basic skills and knowledge of food but lack of continuity in this area restricts their learning. This year, pupils are also learning to use textiles. They acquire a sound knowledge of basic aspects of control. Pupils' designing mostly follows a routine. They produce alternative ideas, but their ability to make well-researched decisions and select appropriate ideas and materials is not as good as their technical skills. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 are unreliable because they do not take

sufficient account of this weakness. Differences in attainment between pupils of different abilities are quite narrow because many projects do not extend higher attaining pupils.

113. In Years 10 and 11, pupils continue to make good progress, which accelerates in Year 11. By the end of year 11, overall standards are above average overall and very good in food technology. Pupils' drawing and presentation skills are very good in all areas, as are standards of making. They experiment well in food and understand how to use this to create better products. Pupils' designing is thorough and many show a good understanding of how different aspects of designing contribute to the quality of products. Pupils evaluate their products well in relation to their initial objectives. Many make good use of their own computers to present their work. Current limitations on pupils' use of computer-aided design and manufacture are being eliminated as new equipment is installed.

114. Pupils of different abilities make equally good progress because they receive thorough individual support from teachers. Those with special educational needs achieve well, but up to Year 9 the most able pupils are not sufficiently extended by the routine nature of many tasks. However in their GCSE courses they progress well because they have more opportunities for independent development of design projects.

115. Pupils mostly work hard and are interested in their work except where the purpose of a task is not clear to them. They respond well to questions and, with well-directed questions, they can reason well. They co-operate well with each other both informally and also when they work together in groups. They behave well and use equipment responsibly.

116. Overall, teaching and learning are good throughout the school. Even though incomplete facilities made teaching difficult during the inspection, three-quarters of the lessons observed were judged to be at least good. All lessons in Years 10 and 11, and half of the lessons in Years 7-9 were at least good, the rest being satisfactory. The strength of the teaching lies in its consistency, resulting from thorough planning, good subject knowledge, constructive relationships with pupils, thorough individual help and effective use of questioning. This leads to good acquisition of basic skills. Teaching pupils to carry out design tasks without ensuring that they understand their purpose is the weakest aspect of teaching, particularly up to Year 10. However, in some lessons, notably in food technology and product design, understanding is emphasised. Very thorough marking and individual target setting in Years 10 and 11 helps to raise standards. Teaching has improved, particularly its consistency, since the previous inspection.

117. The subject is very well led resulting in improving standards, and there is clear and appropriate planning for the future. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Monitoring of teaching has led to greater consistency. New accommodation has improved the provision for the subject since the previous inspection although there are weaknesses in storage that affect access to resistant materials. The breadth of pupils' experience of the subject is very good. However, in Years 7-9 there is a lack of continuity because some pupils are taught by more than one teacher, particularly in food technology.

GEOGRAPHY

118. The quality of provision in geography is good.

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good
- Good quality of monitoring in Years 10 and 11
- Very good accommodation and good resources support learning

Areas for improvement

- Classroom support for pupils with special educational needs
- The use of computers to support pupils' learning
- Guidance to enable more pupils to write detailed descriptions and explanations
- More use of National Curriculum levels to monitor individual progress in Years 7 - 9

119. In 2000, the GCSE results were average in terms of A* to G grades and slightly below average in terms of A* to C grades. A larger proportion of girls obtained the higher grades, in line with the national

trend. Results showed an improvement over those of previous years. In 2001, the performance of boys and girls was more even but there was a decline in the proportion of pupils attaining A* to C grades.

120. The standards of pupils' work by the end of Year 9 are average. In relation to standards at the start of Year 7 they represent good achievement. This is the result of good teaching and learning. Pupils develop their geographical skills and extend their knowledge of places well. However, in comparison, their understanding of the distribution of different climates is more limited. In Year 9, higher attaining pupils understand the impact of the development of tourism on a tropical island. They explain their ideas in more detail than average and lower attaining pupils. In Year 11, standards are average and represent good achievement. This is because the majority of pupils who chose to study geography for GCSE had below average levels of attainment at the end of Year 9. In Years 10 and 11, pupils continue to increase their knowledge and understanding of physical and human geography. Higher attaining pupils can describe the formation of coastal features, using technical language to explain the physical processes of erosion and deposition. Average and lower attaining pupils write less cogently and have difficulty explaining these processes in detail. Map reading and fieldwork skills are extended gradually in each year. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is good despite the lack of classroom support. Different and carefully structured resources like those on weather and climate in Year 8 enable these pupils to achieve well.

121. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are generally good and these have a positive impact on standards. The work of a few pupils lacks continuity due to irregular attendance. Units of work in each year provide opportunities for pupils to develop their skills of independent research.

122. Teaching and learning have improved since the previous inspection. They are good throughout the school. During the inspection, teaching was at least good in two thirds of lessons. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Teachers have a good understanding of geography. They plan their lessons effectively and manage their classes well. During the inspection, good teaching challenged pupils to justify their planning decisions about the location of amenities in a country park. Satisfactory teaching had too much input by the teacher and lower expectations, for example when pupils were learning about the climate of deserts. The improvement in the attention to subject vocabulary has not extended to guidance on its use in extended writing. The use of computers to support pupils' learning has been planned but they were not in use during the inspection.

123. Leadership and management of the department are very good. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. All the courses are planned in detail though there is scope to reduce the breadth and increase the depth of some topics. Assessment data is used well to monitor pupils' progress in Years 10 and 11 but not in Years 7 to 9 where National Curriculum levels are underused. Teaching and learning are monitored effectively. The teachers are well qualified and experienced and share good practice and resources. They are committed to raising standards and the gradual trend of improvement in the results indicates they have the capacity to achieve this. The new geography rooms are spacious, very well furnished and provide a very pleasant learning environment.

HISTORY

124. The overall quality of provision for history is good.

Strengths

- Pupils achieve well and standards in Year 11 are above average
- Boys' results at GCSE have improved and are above average
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good
- The quality of teaching is good
- Subject management and leadership are very good

Areas for improvement

- Girls do not reach as high a standard as boys in the GCSE
- Day to day marking is inconsistent and could be improved
- Better use could be made of the assessments of pupils' work
- Pupils should be provided with opportunities to use computers

125. Since the previous inspection, GCSE results in history have generally been close to average. Boys' results have improved. Results in 2000 were close to but slightly above average. Boys' results were above average and were better than those obtained by girls, in contrast to the national picture. The proportion of pupils who gained at least a G grade was above average, but few pupils gained the higher A* and A grades. Pupils' results in history were better than in most of their other subjects. In 2001, results were similar to those of 2000 but a higher proportion of pupils gained A* and A grades.

126. Standards in Year 9 are average. This represents good achievement since Year 7 and is due to good teaching and pupils' positive attitudes to learning. Pupils have a good capacity to locate events accurately in time because this skill is well established in Year 7. Most pupils have a good understanding of the characteristic features of the periods that they study and understand the causes and results of changes brought about by events such as the Industrial Revolution. All pupils readily use a good range of sources from which to select information for their investigations and higher attaining pupils can successfully analyse the material, for example by identifying the motives behind recruitment posters from the First World War. The work of lower attaining pupils tends to be limited to description. Pupils are aware of different views of the same event, such as the Treaty of Versailles, but have relatively few opportunities to develop this historical skill. Most pupils can express their ideas and present information well and in a wide variety of forms although some work of the lowest attaining pupils is incomplete. Many pupils produce work of good quality and write at length in the regular well-designed personal investigations which they are expected to complete as homework tasks. There is no significant difference in the standards reached by boys and girls.

127. History is a popular choice at GCSE. Standards of Year 11 pupils' work are above average. Higher attaining pupils use their detailed knowledge and understanding well when writing at length. They have a good understanding of complex issues such as recent political developments in Northern Ireland. They interrogate their sources of information well and understand motives and detect bias. Average pupils also write at length but do not fully analyse their sources of information. Lower attaining pupils, in particular, benefit from the good support provided to all pupils by teachers in planning essays. Consequently, they also write at reasonable length but their work tends to be largely descriptive and there are weaknesses with spelling and punctuation. Good teaching and very positive attitudes to learning displayed by pupils in Years 10 and 11 result in their good achievement.

128. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because their teachers know them well, provide individual support and adapt the learning for them. They also make good progress in lessons where learning assistants support them. Evidence from pupils' written work in Years 7 to 9 indicates that for some, progress is restricted because of weak writing and spelling. The department has a good strategy in place for providing extra work in order to stretch the highest attaining pupils.

129. The vast majority of pupils respond well in lessons. They show interest and sustain concentration because the lessons are well planned and much of the teaching is lively. Pupils work well together in pairs and groups, for example in preparing and taking part in debates. Most pupils readily answer questions and are prepared to read aloud for the class. Many take great care with the presentation of their personal investigations. Behaviour is uniformly good.

130. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school. A quarter of the lessons observed were very good and, other than one satisfactory lesson, the rest were good. The proportion of good teaching has improved since the previous inspection. Lessons are very well planned to a common format, which effectively reinforces previous learning and uses this as a base on which to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding. Teachers' command of their subject is good and used effectively in explanations and to question pupils about their work. Teachers know their pupils well and good classroom relationships exist; these also support learning. Activities are generally interesting and often make use of well-designed worksheets, which provide a good framework for learning, particularly for average and lower attaining pupils. Pupils are given regular opportunities to take part in extended historical investigations. These are very well planned and good additional support is provided for pupils who have special educational needs. Teachers pay good attention to the development of pupils' literacy skills through history, and there are more opportunities to use and reinforce pupils' skills in numeracy than normally found. However, computers are not being used to support pupils' learning in history. Teachers mark tests and assessed pieces of work thoroughly but day to day marking is more inconsistent and could be improved.

131. Management and leadership are very good. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. A departmental ethos has been created in which teachers feel valued, contribute to subject development through shared evaluation, and work effectively as a team. In order to improve further, the information gained from the assessment of pupils' work needs to be used better to help to raise standards, particularly of girls in Years 10 and 11. Development planning needs to be more sharply focussed with more effective means of monitoring progress towards targets, and computers need to be used in lessons.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

132. Provision for information and communications technology is unsatisfactory.

Strengths

- GCSE results greatly improved in 2001
- Good teaching and learning in ICT lessons
- New equipment and accommodation
- Pupils have good attitudes in lessons

Areas for improvement

- Standards are below average
- Curriculum does not meet statutory requirements in Years 10 and 11
- Little use of ICT in the subjects of the National Curriculum
- Insufficient equipment

133. In 2000, GCSE results were very low and few pupils achieved the higher grades. Boys did better than girls. Results were similar in 1999. In 2000, pupils' results in ICT were inferior to their results in most other subjects but in 2001 they were much improved.

134. Standards in Year 9 are below average and represent unsatisfactory achievement over the period since the pupils entered the school. In lessons in Years 7-9 most pupils are confident and increasing in competence in using computers. However the modest amount of time for ICT lessons and the general lack of ICT in other curriculum subjects mean that they are not reaching the higher levels of ICT capability or applying the skills learned to solve problems. Standards of word processing, spreadsheets and data and information handling are around average but skills in measuring, recording and controlling events are below what is expected. During Years 10 and 11, GCSE classes show satisfactory evidence of having research skills and the ability to select and combine information from various sources. Standards reached by these pupils by Year 11 are average and their achievement is satisfactory. However, the majority of pupils do not take GCSE and as their existing ICT skills are not used or developed in many other subjects their standards and achievement are unsatisfactory.

135. Girls are now beginning to progress at the same rate as boys in Years 7-9 but many fewer girls than boys take the GCSE course. Special educational needs pupils make unsatisfactory progress because there is little extra help for them in lessons. However, gifted and talented pupils make satisfactory progress because opportunities exist for them to develop their skills to a high level and there is an opportunity for them to take a GCSE examination very early.

136. Pupils in all lessons in all years are well motivated and show perseverance and interest in their work. They are excited by the new provision and better teaching and enjoy ICT lessons. Pupils work well in a co-operative atmosphere and are always ready to help each other solve difficulties. Behaviour is good in all lessons.

137. Teachers have a good command of their subject and the technology that goes with it. They have excellent relationships with pupils and their questioning techniques are good. Lessons are usually planned carefully and thoroughly. Overall, teaching is good in Years 7-9, and never less than satisfactory. Teaching was only satisfactory when the lesson was insufficiently structured, did not include enough class teaching and relied too much on pupils working on their own to discover and learn the skills concerned. In a good lesson, pupils created their own personal timetables with clear instructions and teaching of the relevant techniques. In Years 10 and 11, teaching of GCSE classes is good overall and occasionally very good. Integrated GCSE projects, such as one to design wedding invitations and then use mail merging to despatch them to guests, helped pupils to learn and bring together a wide range of skills. Learning is good in all year groups in specific ICT lessons. However, the teaching and learning of ICT in other subjects are unsatisfactory.

138. Management of the ICT department is now satisfactory; it is well organised and runs smoothly. However, there is not enough monitoring of teaching and the scheme of work is insufficiently detailed. The department has focused on improving literacy but not numeracy. ICT is not well managed in the school as a whole. No systems exist for the monitoring of the provision of ICT within subject departments or for

assessing the contribution to ICT capability they make. Hence, improvement since the previous inspection has been unsatisfactory overall. However, considerable progress has been made in the provision of new ICT courses and in the large number of new computers soon to be networked. Despite this the school is still under-provided with equipment compared to other secondary schools. Training of teachers has improved since the last inspection. Most are improving their skills but so far these still have to be integrated into their lessons.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

139. The quality of provision in modern languages is satisfactory.

Strengths

- All teaching is at least satisfactory and some is good
- Standards are rising, especially in Years 7-9

Areas for improvement

- Standards in Years 10 and 11 are not rising quickly enough
- Boys underachieve in Years 10 and 11

FRENCH

140. In 2000, the proportion of pupils achieving GCSE grades A*-C in was well below average and similar to results in the previous two years. Pupils did significantly less well in French than in their other subjects, and boys did less well than girls. Results in 2001 showed a slight improvement but were still well below average.

141. Standards in Year 9 are below average but improving. Pupils' achievement over the three years is satisfactory overall. Boys and girls in Years 7 and 8 achieve well in all of the skills because opportunities to develop them are well balanced and there is strong emphasis on speaking and listening in teachers' planning. This contrasts with Year 9 where pupils have been through a difficult period of frequent teacher changes, which has not only adversely affected their progress, especially in the development of speaking and listening skills, but has also led to some disaffection. Most pupils in Year 9 lack confidence in speaking and some are reluctant to give more than a brief response. However, some high attaining pupils can take part in a dialogue and can describe another person fairly confidently. Pupils make progress in listening because they now hear French spoken routinely in lessons. Lower attaining pupils match what they hear on tape to a visual prompt whereas higher attaining pupils can pick out detail. Pupils do some reading, but opportunities for them to develop their reading skills beyond the course materials are not yet in place. All pupils make some progress in writing but more stress needs to be placed on learning basic grammar and verbs to enable them to write sentences with greater accuracy and confidence. High attaining pupils can write sentences in the past tense and can write a paragraph about themselves.

142. Standards in Year 11 are well below average overall. Pupils taking the full GCSE course are operating at below average standards but improving. Achievement is satisfactory given their low starting point. Speaking is weak but improving as pupils gain in confidence in response to good teaching. In their coursework, pupils show a reasonable knowledge of basic structures and tenses, though accuracy remains quite weak. A few higher attaining pupils write fluently and at length. Standards in the short GCSE course, taken by the majority of pupils, are well below average. Achievement on this course is unsatisfactory. Listening and speaking are very weak. Pupils find it difficult to cope with the demands of the course in the small amount of lesson time provided. They rely heavily on sources to write their coursework, and lower attaining pupils convey very limited information because vocabulary is often inappropriate and sentences are poorly constructed. Poor attitudes and immature behaviour among a significant minority of pupils, mainly boys, cause them to underachieve.

143. Boys progress at a similar rate to girls in Years 7-9 but in Year 11, girls make better progress because of their better attitudes. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Attitudes are good in Years 7-9. Most pupils participate willingly in oral activities and work together well in pairs. Behaviour overall is good. However, in the lower attaining groups in Year 9 where there is no in-class support for pupils with special educational needs, the behaviour of a minority of pupils is not always

appropriate and can interrupt the learning of the class. Attitudes and behaviour in Year 11 are satisfactory overall but variable. When the teaching is good, pupils show interest, work hard, participate well orally and co-operate well. Boys outnumber girls in the short course and the negative attitudes and immature behaviour of a minority of boys slows their learning and results in underachievement.

144. Teaching and learning in French are satisfactory throughout the school. Teaching was satisfactory in half of the lessons observed and good in the remainder. In the best lessons, teachers manage pupils very well and working relationships are very good. The lessons are well planned and lively and the pupils' active involvement is high, all of which ensures that they learn effectively and at a good pace. Teachers are fluent in French and there is good use of resources such as flashcards, tapes and the overhead projector to capture pupils' interest. However, some activities are pitched too low and do not push pupils along quickly enough. Undemanding written work is sometimes set as a means of controlling classes with a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and behavioural problems, in the absence of any in-class support. Marking needs to be more rigorous to enable pupils to understand their mistakes and learn from them.

GERMAN

145. In 2000, the proportion of pupils achieving GCSE grades A*-C in German was well below average. Pupils did less well in German than in their other subjects and boys did less well than girls. Results in 2001 showed a marked improvement for the first time since the previous inspection.

146. Standards of work in Year 9 are broadly average for their age and pupils achieve well because attitudes and teaching are good. Pupils readily understand classroom instructions, most can identify some details from a tape and high attaining pupils can pick out several details from a longer extract. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 develop their speaking well and some higher attaining pupils rapidly memorise and use new phrases confidently. High attaining pupils in Year 9 recall words readily from memory and many respond confidently to familiar questions and can take part in a dialogue. All pupils develop reading skills through regular reading of short stories and magazines. However, worksheets used in class are not always well matched to the pupils' levels of ability, which leads to some underachievement. Because they learn basic grammar from Year 7, pupils can write sentences, though there is some loss of accuracy in middle and lower attaining groups. In Year 9, high attaining boys and girls can write lengthy and accurate accounts in the past tense.

147. Standards of work in Year 11 are below average and closely match the most recent GCSE results. Standards are higher in the full GCSE course where teaching and attitudes are good. However, speaking is weak, especially in the short course where the reluctance of a minority of pupils and lack of time to practise the skill thoroughly are contributory factors. Pupils generally understand spoken instructions and most can extract some information from tapes. High attaining pupils show good understanding of printed texts and letters and read aloud confidently. In coursework, some higher attaining pupils write fluently and accurately and use tenses appropriately. Girls taking the short course achieve more highly than boys because their writing is more carefully presented and there is good attention to detail. Pupils' achievement in Year 11 is satisfactory overall.

148. Boys respond well to the strong emphasis on oral and aural work in Years 7-9 and they progress at a similar rate to girls. In Years 10 and 11 girls progress at a faster rate than boys because they have better attitudes and generally work harder. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress.

149. Attitudes are good in Years 7-9. Many pupils are enthusiastic and they clearly enjoy the opportunities provided for active involvement, for example to play games and sing in German. Behaviour is good, although pupils become restless when the work is too easy. Attitudes and behaviour in Years 10 and 11 are satisfactory overall. Pupils behave well, respond positively and work hard when the teaching is good. In the short course there is a lack of interest, some inattention and instances of immature behaviour among a minority of boys who do not achieve as highly as they should. Pupils generally take a pride in the presentation of their written work and some word-process their coursework assignments.

150. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7-9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. The quality of teaching was good in around half the lessons observed and satisfactory in the remainder. Teachers speak German fluently and use various strategies to improve pupils' pronunciation. Lessons are well prepared and include a variety of resources and activities that give practice in each skill. However, some reading and writing activities do not provide enough challenge for the more able pupils so their rate of learning slows. Homework is set regularly and ensures that pupils consolidate what they have learnt in class. Teachers have a good understanding of National Curriculum levels, which they use regularly when assessing pupils' work. As a result, pupils have a clear idea about how well they are progressing in each skill.

SPANISH

151. In 2000, the proportion of pupils achieving GCSE grades A*-C in Spanish was well below average. Results have been consistently well below average each year since the previous inspection. Pupils did significantly less well in Spanish than in their other subjects and boys did less well than girls. Results in 2001 improved very slightly but were still well below average.

152. Standards of work seen in Year 11 are well below average overall. In the small full GCSE set, standards are below average and there is some underachievement. However, there is considerable underachievement in the GCSE short course sets where standards of work are well below average. Speaking is very weak. Pupils have considerable gaps in their knowledge and understanding and do not readily respond to simple questions. High attaining pupils lack confidence and some are reluctant to speak. The level of work in listening and reading is very low. In their coursework, most pupils convey some relevant information at a basic level but spelling and grammatical accuracy are often quite poor. Attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory. Although they do not show much enthusiasm for the subject, the majority of pupils are prepared to make an effort. Girls take more care with the presentation of written work.

153. Observations of lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work show that teaching is satisfactory. Of the two lessons observed, one was good and the other satisfactory. Teachers work particularly hard to try to motivate the pupils as their confidence and interest have been badly affected by inadequate provision in the past. They speak Spanish fluently and they encourage pupils to interact with them through games and role-plays to develop listening and speaking skills. Learning homework ensures that pupils acquire new vocabulary but lesson planning needs more stress on improving pupils' knowledge and understanding of grammar. Marking of written work needs to be more rigorous and informative to enable pupils to learn from their mistakes.

154. Leadership and management of modern languages are very good. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Since his appointment in 1999, the head of department has tackled the significant weaknesses identified at the previous inspection, most notably unsatisfactory teaching and low standards. Much has already been achieved. Many teachers have left and have been replaced by well-qualified and experienced linguists. Rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning has led to the raising of the overall quality of teaching and to improving standards throughout the school. Teachers work together as a team, sharing a commitment to raise standards. Standards have improved considerably in Years 7-9, but much more still needs to be done in Years 10 and 11 to change pupils' attitudes, combat underachievement and raise standards at a much faster rate. Recent changes to the curriculum for modern languages include shorter lessons and grouping by attainment level from Year 8, both of which are beneficial to pupils' learning. The GCSE short course has also been made available but an early review of its time allocation in Year 11 is recommended. Computers are not used in the teaching of modern languages at present, and this is a significant weakness.

MUSIC

155. The quality of provision in music is satisfactory.

Strengths

- By Year 9, pupils have developed satisfactory knowledge, understanding and listening skills
- By Year 11, pupils' composing skills have improved
- At all stages pupils learn well in class because teaching is systematic and enthusiastic

Areas for improvement

- Management of the subject
- By Year 9, pupils need to develop more secure practical skills
- By Year 11, pupils need to become more confident performers and to express their responses to music more precisely

156. In 2000, the proportion of GCSE results graded A*-C was below average, and also below levels reached in art and drama. Results were similar to 1998 and 1999. In 2001, results in the range A*-C fell while in drama and art they improved. Numbers entered for music are small.
157. At the end of Year 9, standards are close to average. Students enter the school with limited experience in music, and few have begun to learn to play an instrument. As a result of encouraging and enthusiastic teaching, pupils develop good listening skills and begin to use their knowledge of subject language to comment on music they hear. Pupils of higher ability perform with increasing sensitivity. However, pupils of average ability are not confident in performing as individuals because they have not developed technical fluency. When performing simple pieces in groups, they co-ordinate parts well. In Year 9, pupils learn to compose simple pieces in Jazz and Blues style, but few develop their ideas into longer pieces. Achievement by pupils in Year 9 is satisfactory; after some discontinuity in teaching most are beginning to retrieve lost learning. However, the challenge for gifted and talented musicians is not always high enough and these pupils underachieve. Pupils in Years 8 and 9 read uncomplicated staff notation and use this to notate their work but because they do not have sufficient access to information and communications technology (ICT) they are not able to write extended scores. In Year 7, singing is good; pupils sing enthusiastically, control the effect well, and willingly try to improve their first efforts. Achievement in Years 7 and 8 is good, and standards have improved since the previous inspection.
158. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are average; this is an improvement since the previous inspection. A small number of more able musicians performs well but, because so few have instrumental lessons most pupils lack confidence and do not know how to improve the quality of their performances. More able musicians in Year 11 create imaginative and extended pieces, and those of average ability follow guidelines satisfactorily to create short, properly structured pieces. Listening and appraising skills of all students are below average because of their poor general musical experience and because pupils do not have a wide descriptive vocabulary to support their responses to this aspect of the subject. Most pupils confidently use ICT for research and presentation of information, but almost no use is made of it as a composing and scoring tool.
159. The attitudes of most pupils are satisfactory. They react positively to the energetic, supportive approaches of their teachers and respond well to their high expectations. Pupils in Year 7, working in small groups, display high levels of independence and organisational abilities. However, some pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties are easily distracted, have limited concentration and are often poor at listening to each other's contributions. Most pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in music, but a number of boys have great difficulty in settling to work and concentrating and therefore underachieve. These pupils have insufficient learning support.
160. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 7-9 is satisfactory. In half the lessons seen teaching was good or very good; as a result, pupils were learning well. The one unsatisfactory lesson occurred because of the lack of learning support for pupils who cannot concentrate easily. In Years 10 and 11, teaching and learning are good, and pupils achieve well. Teachers are secure musicians who demonstrate ideas spontaneously and often with great flair, providing good examples for pupils to follow. This was particularly evident when pupils in Year 7 were taught how to refine their singing of a two-part round and when they were presented with an intriguing collection of materials with which to create 'haunting' sounds. Relationships are secure, lessons are well planned and conducted at a good pace; and opportunities to extend students' knowledge and understanding are rarely missed. Weaknesses in teaching occur because not enough attention is paid to providing suitable levels of challenge for pupils of different abilities, particularly the more able musicians, when pupils are not required to express themselves fully and clearly and when classroom space is not used to the best effect. A very small number of around 30 pupils has lessons in orchestral and non-orchestral instruments. A good range of extra-curricular activities takes place and there is an extensive programme of concerts and other musical events within the school and the locality. However, only a small percentage of the school's population becomes involved in these.
161. Management of the department is unsatisfactory, because the head of department has been on maternity leave and the school has not provided adequate managerial cover. School policies have not been fully implemented and departmental systems for assessing pupils' progress and attainment have not been consistently maintained. Considerable damage has occurred to several pieces of equipment, and because these have had to be replaced the department has been unable to improve its provision of classroom percussion or ethnic instruments. Provision for ICT is unsatisfactory. The low take-up of instrumental lessons and the participation rate in extra-curricular activities has an adverse effect on standards of attainment at all levels. Hence, since the previous inspection improvement has been unsatisfactory. The head of department is fully aware of the omissions and is working to redress the situation as a matter of priority. The department is now well placed to make a steady improvement.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

162. The quality of provision for physical education is good.

Strengths

- Leadership and management
- Consistently high standard of teaching
- Positive attitudes and good behaviour
- Programmes that offer and emphasise improvement as a goal
- Very good specialist facilities

Areas for improvement

- Effective and efficient use of new facilities

163. GCSE results in 2000 were just above the national average for A*-C grades. This represents a slight increase on 1999 but a much greater increase since 1998. Over time, and since the last inspection, the trend has been clearly upwards. Results in the range A*-C fell in 2001 but pupils still did better than in their other subjects.

164. Attainment on entry to the school is variable but is generally below average. This is confirmed by work seen in some newly admitted Year 7 classes where many pupils display low levels of general co-ordination and there is a wide range of levels of personal fitness. By the end of Year 9, achievement is good and standards have been raised to levels that are much nearer the national average especially in terms of overall fitness and games playing skills. Of particular note is the improvement in all pupils' knowledge and understanding of the principles of physical fitness. These characteristics, both of which represent improvement since the 1997 inspection, continue into Years 10 and 11. They ensure that by the end of Year 11 pupils leave school having reached average levels of attainment overall and some have exceeded these standards. Current GCSE pupils in Year 11 are making good progress and many have a well-developed theoretical knowledge to complement their physical skills. In all years, higher attaining pupils compete in a wide range of sports and games with considerable success both as individuals and in teams at local and regional level. All these achievements result from the consistently good standard of teaching and the positive and committed approach by most pupils.

165. There is no difference between the progress of girls and boys. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in the physical aspects of the subject. Their needs are well understood by their teachers and this promotes clear improvement especially in their levels of self-confidence.

166. Throughout the school, most pupils display a positive approach to the work in lessons and in extra-curricular sport and games. Almost all behave well and have a clear understanding of what their teachers expect of them in terms of behaviour as well as performance. Most are eager to do well and demonstrate, through their high levels of attendance, participation, and the high standards of personal kit, their keen interest in the subject.

167. Teaching is good throughout the school and this ensures that learning is good and accounts for the improvement in standards over five years. All teachers know their subject well and devise and manage activities that promote improvement. The encouraging style and sensitive feedback ensure that pupils are aware of how well they are doing and enable them to know what they need to do in order to improve. Lessons are well planned and most conform to the department's pattern with a thorough and sufficiently demanding warm-up followed by activities or practices that offer the opportunity for all pupils to improve. There is considerable emphasis on developing knowledge and understanding, for example of the principles of physical fitness, in Years 7-9. In Years 10 and 11 this approach pays dividends in providing background knowledge to more complex concepts relating to the components of fitness. Assessment strategies are well developed and both teacher assessment, through feedback, and pupil assessment, through partner work, are strong features.

168. The good improvements in the subject since the previous inspection have been achieved through good teaching and the planned development of a responsive programme designed to meet pupil needs. The department benefits from the very good leadership provided by a hard-working, capable and committed head of department. Currently the programme offers all pupils the chance to gain accreditation at the end

of Year 11 and more than normal have achieved this. With the most recent renewal and extension of specialist facilities to such a high standard the department is well placed to raise standards further in the future. However, timetabling of lessons could currently be improved to allow the staff to maximise the use of the new facilities.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

169. The overall quality of provision in religious education (RE) is good.

Strengths

- The effective leadership of the department
- The good quality of teaching and learning
- The good quality of curriculum planning
- Good results in GCSE examinations

Areas for improvement

- Provide more opportunities for pupils to become involved in discussion and debate
- Increase the numbers visitors from a broader range of the major world faiths and provide more opportunities for visits to places of worship
- Further develop the use of information and communications technology

170. Pupils last entered the GCSE full course examination in 1999. Results for A*-C and A*-A were above the national average. As a result of this success, the full course was re-established in September 2000 and there are currently 170 pupils in Years 10 and 11 studying for this examination. The first year groups of pupils to take the GCSE short course in RE did so in 1997, following the previous inspection. Results were above average for grades A*-C. In 1999 and 2000, A*-C and the higher A*-A passes were broadly average. However, in 2001, results improved substantially over those of 2000. Forty-five pupils gained an A* grade and three girls gained full marks. The 45 A* grades for RE exceeded the combined total from all other subjects and represents high achievement.

171. Standards are in line with the expectations of the Locally Agreed Syllabus in Year 9. By Year 11, they are just above the national average for examination work and Agreed Syllabus expectations; achievement is good. This is an improvement since the last inspection. On entry, in Year 7, pupils often show only a basic knowledge and understanding of religion. Their RE skills are generally under-developed but they are enabled to make good progress. In Year 7, the teaching focuses well on the key skills of investigation and interpretation. Pupils know, for example, about Hindu Holy Books, Shastras, and what they contain. By Year 8, pupils give sound consideration to important events which have had a personal impact in their lives. Year 9 pupils are developing sound knowledge about the features and symbolism of places of worship, such as a Synagogue. In Years 10 and 11, there is often a good focus on preparing pupils for GCSE examinations and the recording of notes for revision purposes. Written work, particularly for pupils in lower ability classes, provides useful comprehension type answers to examination questions. However, there is more limited evidence for personal insights into issues. In the Year 11 full GCSE course, some pupils show very good factual knowledge of Islamic beliefs from their work in Year 10, whilst others recall only simple facts.

172. In all year groups there is a good emphasis on literacy, and the learning of new vocabulary using terms such as 'monotheism' and 'polytheism'. Pupils are encouraged to create their own 'glossary' of such language at the back of their exercise books. Pupils' extended writing also supports their literacy development. GCSE project work, particularly for the higher attaining pupils, is of good quality and reflects the standards being achieved in examinations.

173. The progress of pupils with special educational needs, and those who are gifted or talented, is satisfactory. The planning of the RE curriculum gives proper consideration to their needs. However, not all teachers consistently apply this approach. The element of 'challenge', particularly for the more able pupils, is not always sufficiently stressed.

174. Pupils' response to the subject is better in Years 7-9 than in 10 and 11, although overall it is good across all year groups. A minority of the older pupils, particularly in lower ability classes, can show negative attitudes to the subject. This can affect the quality of learning for themselves and others. This is particularly the case with discussion work where free and open debate can be curtailed by immature approaches. Consequently, other pupils can become rather quiet and acquiescent. However, the majority of pupils respond well to clear teacher expectations and encouragement, working steadily and productively.

175. Teaching and learning are good overall throughout the school. All teaching was at least satisfactory during the inspection. Teaching was at least good in two-thirds of lessons seen and very good in a quarter. In the best lessons the teaching supports learning by promoting a confident and interested approach to the subject. Key teaching points are well made and lesson objectives clearly shared. This encourages a good pace to lessons allowing for progress and ensuring that pupils understand. Lessons build steadily on previous work, which is properly marked with supportive comments. Homework is well linked to classwork. However, because of the attitudes of some pupils, referred to above, some teachers limit the amount of open discussion. Improvement is required in developing oral work, to enable teachers to take more risks in order to make discussion and questioning more lively and relevant. This would help to meet the demands of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. There is some very good practice within the department which needs to be more widely shared.

176. Overall management of the department is good. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Statutory requirements for the teaching of RE are fully met. The head of department provides very clear leadership and has contributed significantly to the high quality of curriculum planning and documentation, and the drive to raise standards. However, further improvement is required in developing a broader range of visits, and in inviting more visitors to the school representing the major world faiths studied. The department lacks the computer hardware and software to make its full contribution to the pupils' information and communications technology education.