

INSPECTION REPORT

DEANSFIELD HIGH SCHOOL

Wolverhampton

LEA area: Wolverhampton

Unique reference number: 104387

Headteacher: Helen Singh

Reporting inspector: Gulshan Kayembe
2901

Dates of inspection: 12th – 15th March 2001

Inspection number: 195389

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

© Crown copyright 2001

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11-16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Deans Road Wolverhampton
Postcode:	WV1 2BH
Telephone number:	01902 556400
Fax number:	01902 556401
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Cllr K Inston
Date of previous inspection:	Ofsted inspection in week beginning 17/03/97 and HMI inspection in week beginning 10/02/99

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
02901	Mrs G Kayembe	Registered inspector	English as an additional language	<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>How high are standards?</p> <p>The school's results and pupils' achievements</p> <p>How well are pupils taught?</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
09779	Mrs S Smith	Lay inspector		<p>Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well does the school care for its pupils?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>
01684	Mr G Harris	Team inspector	Mathematics	
23246	Mr J Mitchell	Team inspector	Science	
10053	Ms J Simms	Team inspector	Art and design	
08552	Mr W Hart	Team inspector	Design and technology	
13734	Mr H Davies	Team inspector	Geography Religious education	How good are curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
17857	Mr D Walters	Team inspector	History	
20588	Mr I Hodgkinson	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
15396	Mr R Bulman	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
19532	Ms E Charlesworth	Team inspector	Music	
12336	Mr M Overend	Team inspector	Special educational needs	
23030	Ms C Runyard	Team inspector	Physical education	

17530	Ms M Cureton	Team inspector	English Hearing impaired unit Equal opportunities	
-------	--------------	----------------	---	--

The inspection contractor was:

Bench Marque Limited
National Westminster Bank Chambers
Victoria Street
Burnham-on-Sea
Somerset
TA8 1AN

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Complaints Manager
Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

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?	16
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?	18
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	21
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	24
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	25
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	28
HEARING IMPAIRED UNIT	29
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	32
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	36

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

There are 554 boys and girls aged between 11 and 16 on roll. About 77 per cent are of white UK heritage, the remaining 23 per cent come from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds, mostly Asian and African-Caribbean. About four per cent of pupils have English as an additional language, but almost all are fluent in English. The school is small for its type and has spare places. A high proportion of pupils, 40 per cent, claim free school meals, reflecting some of the extreme economic disadvantage and deprivation prevalent in the local area. The overall attainment on entry, though improving, remains well below average. This is exacerbated by the high turnover of pupils. Those who join from other local secondary schools usually have very low prior attainment and poor attendance. The school has an above average proportion, at 40 per cent, of pupils on its register of special educational needs although the proportion with statements, four per cent, is about average. Many of the pupils with special educational needs have emotional and behaviour difficulties. In addition, the school has a unit for pupils with hearing impairment (the HIU) and currently 17 pupils make use of it. The inspection of this school included a detailed inspection of its provision for pupils with special educational needs, both in the main school and in the unit.

The school has been experiencing difficulties in recruiting teachers, which is now being resolved, but at the time of this inspection there were a number of temporary staff covering for vacant posts.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective and improving school which does well for its pupils. Although standards of attainment are low, they are improving at a good rate, especially at GCSE, because of the very good quality of leadership and management, good quality of teaching and the good support provided to pupils for their academic and personal development. Though most pupils behave well and have positive attitudes towards learning, there are some very challenging pupils at the school. These pupils are largely managed effectively, but at times disrupt lessons, usually when teachers are not skilled enough in managing their behaviour or are relatively new to the school and have not yet established effective working relationships with all pupils. Overall, though, progress is good and the school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Leadership and management of the school are very good
- The quality of teaching is good and promotes pupils' learning well
- There has been very good improvement since the previous full inspection in 1997 and this has led, in particular, to a rapid rise in standards attained in GCSE examinations
- The unit for the hearing impaired is a very good provision
- Provision for extra-curricular activities is very good
- The school makes excellent use of the community to contribute to pupils' learning
- Procedures for improving attendance are very good
- Procedures for monitoring and improving pupils' academic and personal development are good
- Relationships between pupils are good and pupils from a wide variety of ethnic and social backgrounds get along well and appreciate one another's differences

What could be improved

- Poor behaviour and attitudes to learning amongst a minority of pupils, which has an adverse impact on their progress. This is exacerbated by lack of learning support assistants
- Pupils' attendance, though improved, is still well below the national average and further improvement is now reliant on improved parental support for their children's education
- Effective strategies to teach literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum are underdeveloped
- Legal requirements are not fully met with respect to the National Curriculum in ICT and design and technology (DT), in the requirements of the local syllabus for religious education (RE) and for a daily act of collective worship

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school had a full inspection in 1997 when it was placed under special measures for failing to provide a satisfactory education. An HMI inspection conducted in 1999 judged that the school had made good improvement and that this improvement was sufficient for the school to come out of special measures. Since both previous inspections, the school has improved the standards of attainment quite significantly, especially at GCSE where the rate of improvement has been much faster than in schools nationally. Though the school's results at GCSE are still well below national standards, the gap between these has narrowed substantially. The key issues from the 1997 inspection have been very well tackled. As a result, there has been very good improvement in the quality of teaching and learning, behaviour and attendance, though the latter two continue to require further attention. Very good progress has been made on developing the use of ICT since 1997, but not enough to meet fully the National Curriculum requirements. There has also been further good improvement since the HMI inspection of 1999.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 14 and 16-year-olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests and GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
Key Stage 3 tests	E	E*	E	B	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E very low E*
GCSE examinations	E	E	E	B	

Given their low attainment when they start at the school, pupils achieve well at both key stages and in most subjects. This is reflected in the favourable comparisons of the school's results with those of schools in similar circumstance. In national tests for 14-year-olds and GCSE examinations in 2000, pupils' overall performance, although well below the performance in schools nationally, was above that of pupils in similar schools. Results in English and science tests for 14-year-olds were better than those found in similar schools and were in line with results in these schools in mathematics. At GCSE, pupils' performance in 2000, though remaining below that of pupils nationally, was even better being well above the performance of similar types of schools. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C was well below the national average in 2000, but the proportion gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A*-G was above. Almost all obtained at least one pass grade at GCSE, and this was well above the national average. GCSE results in ICT, textiles and art and design were in line with national averages. In most subjects the proportion gaining a grade A*-C was below average, but good given pupils' prior attainment. However, results in history, geography, physical education (PE), religious education (RE), resistant materials technology and music were well below average. The school met its targets well for performance at GCSE level in 2000. Asian pupils performed better than white or African-Caribbean pupils.

Standards are continuing to improve. Attainment is currently below rather than well below average by the age of 16, though it remains well below at age 14. Standards in music and geography across the school and in RE for pupils aged 15 to 16 are not high enough. Pupils with hearing impairment make very good progress, but many of those with special educational needs, particularly emotional and behavioural needs, in the main school make only satisfactory progress because there is not enough learning support available for them.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Satisfactory overall, but many pupils show good enthusiasm for school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory overall. Bullying is dealt with effectively so that on the whole pupils feel safe in school.
Personal development and	Personal development is satisfactory overall. Very harmonious relationships

relationships	exist between pupils of different races and backgrounds.
Attendance	Well below average. Punctuality is good for many, but a few are regularly late to school. Punctuality to lessons is better than to school.

In the majority of lessons pupils' behaviour and attitudes are at least satisfactory and good in many. The large majority of pupils enjoy school, show enthusiasm for learning and are confident about asking and answering questions. However, in a significant minority, usually in teaching groups with lower attaining pupils, poor attitudes and behaviour adversely affect learning. This is often because teaching in these cases fails to take sufficient account of the needs of pupils or to establish effective working relationships with them. Much of the poor behaviour comes from those who have joined the school after the start of Year 7 and/or who have special educational needs. Where teaching is good, teachers anticipate the needs of challenging pupils well and adapt work to maintain their interest and concentration.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

With 94 per cent of lessons being satisfactory or better and 63 per cent being good or better, the quality of teaching is good overall, and good in English, mathematics and science. There are few differences between the quality of teaching between pupils aged 11-14 and 14-16. Most of the 6 per cent of teaching which is less than satisfactory is in Years 7 and 10, mainly because these year groups, especially Year 10, have experienced greatest disruption to learning because of staffing shortages.

Key factors in good teaching include skilful management of pupils, well-planned and well-structured lessons and high expectations. As a result pupils are well motivated, ready to learn and rise well to the challenges presented to them. In most lessons, the teaching effectively meets the needs of pupils. Where teaching is less than satisfactory, management of behaviour is usually not good enough resulting in the learning being disrupted and insufficient progress being made. Slow pace and lack of challenge also feature in less than satisfactory lessons. Where teaching is good or better, satisfactory attention is usually given to the development of pupils' numeracy and literacy skills. However, the school still has some way to go before all staff are consistent in the attention they give to developing these basic skills.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall. Legal requirements not fully met in ICT, DT and RE. The programme for personal and social development (PSE) is well planned, and there is very good provision for extra-curricular activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good for the HIU. Good in the main school, though lacking in sufficient learning support assistants. Good quality individual education plans are in place and well managed. The process of review and target setting is good, though subject teachers tend not to turn targets into subject related ones.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory overall. Provision is good for social development, satisfactory for spiritual, moral and cultural. The school plans well to hold a daily act of collective worship, but in practice this does not always take place for all pupils. Hence legal requirements are not fully met.
How well the school cares for its pupils	On the whole the school takes good care of its pupils and is determined to help them make the best of the opportunities provided for learning. Assessment procedures and their use are well developed, especially for target setting, which has been a key way of improving examination results.

The school puts tremendous effort into working with parents and in trying to gain their co-operation in helping their children to do well at school. Whilst this secures good communication with parents, in reality too many do not respond to the school's endeavours to involve them in their children's learning.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good leadership and management. Excellent leadership provided by the headteacher. Senior leadership team leads by example and works very effectively as a unit. All staff share common values and aims and the management of delegated responsibilities is very good.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good overall. Very good role in shaping the future direction of development of the school. Very good in holding the school to account for what it provides and as a result a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, some legal requirements are not met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. There are very well established mechanisms for checking the quality of the school's work, including the quality of teaching and learning. Examination data are very effectively analysed.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Financial planning focuses very well on educational priorities. These drive the budget. Money is spent well for the benefit of pupils and their education and on gaining the best value from funds available to the school.

Staffing and resources are satisfactory overall, though the library and the music curriculum are poorly resourced. Accommodation is good.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That their children are making good progress • That the school is approachable • The school expects their child to work hard • Extra-curricular activities are good 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behaviour • Homework, because not enough is provided • Information about their child's progress • How closely the school works with parents

The inspection evidence agrees with the positive views of parents and some of the concerns they express. Homework is well provided for and there are regular reports to parents though there is a lack of detail about what pupils attain. Also reports do not meet requirements. The school works closely with parents, but staffing shortages over recent months have meant that the usual first-rate communication and quick response to concerns raised by them have not been possible. Whilst behaviour around the school and in many lessons is largely good, poor behaviour in a significant minority of lessons lends some credence to parental concerns.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Pupils start at Deansfield High School with attainment levels, which though improving, are well below average. Results of national tests in English, mathematics and science taken by students at the age of eleven shortly before leaving their primary schools indicate that their performance is significantly lower than that of pupils nationally. Very few pupils begin at the school with high attainment whilst many start with low standards of work, particularly in literacy and numeracy. The majority of pupils make good progress and achieve well so that, by the time they leave the school at the age of 16, almost all have some formal qualifications, and most achieve sufficiently well to enable them to continue their education.
2. Analysis of National Curriculum test results for 14-year-olds and GCSE examination results for 16-year-olds indicates that the school's performance is well below the performance of pupils nationally. The 1999 results in the tests for 14-year-olds were very low overall and in English, and were well below national averages in mathematics and science. The 2000 results were significantly better than the 1999 results in all three subjects and improved from being very low to well below average. The greatest improvement was in science. In English, the proportion of pupils awarded high levels was similar to the proportion nationally. The school's overall results for 2000 are good when compared to the results of schools with similar intakes. Results in English and science were better than in mathematics as they were both above the averages found in similar types of schools. In mathematics, the school's results were in line with the averages found in similar schools. This reflects the findings of the inspection, which also point to good progress being made by the majority of pupils.
3. Performance in GCSE examinations was well below average in 1999 and although the overall results for 2000 remain well below average, the school has succeeded in further narrowing the gap between its results and the results of schools nationally. Over the last two years the proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C has been well below average, but the proportion gaining at least five GCSEs at grades A*-G has been above with the national average. The proportion of pupils gaining one grade at A*-G has been well above the national figure. Given their attainment on entry, pupils' overall performance at GCSE is now good, and very good in relation to the proportions gaining five or more grades A*-C, five or more grades A*-G and one or more grades A*-G. However, the poor attendance and behaviour of a minority continue to adversely affect their performance and the overall performance of the school.
4. GCSE results in English, mathematics and science were below national averages in 2000, but well above the averages found in similar types of schools. Given pupils' attainment on entry, results were good in art and design, ICT and textiles where the proportions of pupils gaining a GCSE grade A*-C were broadly in line with the national norms. Results in history, geography, music, PE, RE and resistant materials technology, however, were significantly below average. In most subjects, the proportion of pupils gaining a pass at GCSE, i.e. a grade A*-G, was broadly in line with national norms.
5. The results of National Curriculum tests for 14-year-olds over the last five years have been rising faster than the rate of improvement nationally, although the trend at the school has not been a smooth upward one. Conversely, the overall performance at GCSE has gone up year on year since the inspection in 1997, with the average points score and the proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C virtually doubling between 1997 and 2000. This suggests a very good rate of improvement. The school has recently been awarded the School Achievement Award, a government award, for the improvement it has secured in GCSE examinations over the past three years.

6. The school's analysis of its test and examination results indicates that, at both key stages, Asian pupils perform better than other ethnic groups, mainly because they start off with better standards of attainment than white or African-Caribbean pupils. By the age of 16, the proportion of Asian pupils who attain five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C is above average and has been well above average for the past two years. White pupils and those from African-Caribbean backgrounds show similar performance to one another, though other Black pupils did very well at GCSE level in 2000. There is not a significant difference between the results of boys and girls, though at GCSE the boys' results are closer to those of boys nationally than the results of girls and their performance has improved at a much faster rate than that of girls.
7. Inspection evidence indicates that there have been further improvements in pupils' overall attainment, especially by the age of 16, where it is now judged to be below average as opposed to well below. Attainment in English, mathematics and science is below the national average by the time pupils reach the age of 16. By the age of 14, attainment overall remains well below the national average particularly in English and mathematics. In science, there has been an increase since the last academic year in the proportion of pupils who reach the higher levels of attainment and hence standards have improved from well below to below average by the age of 14. Throughout the school, pupils' achievements are good when compared to their attainment on entry to the school. They are good in English, mathematics and science.
8. In English, pupils' skills in speaking and listening, reading and writing are well below age-related expectations by the age of 14. Whilst higher attainers make use of a reasonably wide range of vocabulary, read a wide variety of texts with good understanding and write at length, often expressively, many average and lower attainers tend to make use of a rather limited range of words and struggle to write at any great length without help. Many pupils rarely proffer detailed answers to questions, unless probed to do so. Written work contains frequent errors of spelling and grammar. However, pupils do make effective progress from their low starting points. Good progress between the ages of 11 and 14 ensures that most pupils are able to communicate effectively both orally and in writing, although only the ablest write with fluency and accuracy. Most pupils read with understanding and pleasure whilst higher attainers show secure depth of understanding.
9. In mathematics, most pupils across the school show a developing understanding of how to solve arithmetic problems mentally as well as by using pen and paper methods. Higher attainers are reasonably adept at handling mental arithmetic problems and have good levels of numeracy. Average and lower attainers solve simple problems with reasonable confidence and accuracy. They tend to be able to learn simple rules and apply them in familiar situations, but are poor at finding their own methods of working out problems, especially lower down in the school. Many require lots of practice and reinforcement at both key stages. Far too many pupils also set work out badly in their exercise books, often only providing the answer without showing how they worked out the problem. This is particularly noticeable in the work of pupils in lower ability groups. In addition, most pupils are not very good at explaining what they have done or how they solved a given mathematical problem.
10. Pupils' knowledge and understanding in science is developing well though still below average by the age of 14 and 16. At both key stages, higher attaining pupils provide comprehensive explanations about scientific phenomena and demonstrate good understanding of ideas and underlying principles. Average and lower attainers master simple facts and ideas effectively but often do not have the required depth of understanding, especially where complex ideas are concerned. Pupils' practical skills are often sound so that they can set up equipment and experiments with reasonable accuracy and adeptness. However, it is only the higher attainers who demonstrate reliable skills of analysis and the capacity to justify scientifically the conclusions they draw from carrying out experimental investigations. Most pupils

understand the need to vary factors if a test is to be valid and can make sensible predictions of experimental outcomes.

11. In most other subjects, pupils' attainment is below average by the age of 14. In geography, music and religious education, however, their attainment is well below average, whilst in ICT and modern languages it is in line with national expectations. In ICT, most pupils have very good skills in using computers to organise and present information. Although they are adept at accessing information stored on CD-ROMs, pupils do not make enough use of ICT to gather, organise and store information of their own. Skills in using computers to control or take and record automatic measurements of variables, such as temperature, are weak. The weaknesses in pupils' ICT skills are mainly a result of insufficient use of computers across the curriculum and lack of appropriate resources, such as datalogging equipment. In modern foreign languages, pupils develop foreign language skills well. By the age of 14, lower attaining pupils express their likes and dislikes clearly in speech and written form whilst able pupils produce pieces of extended writing such as informal letters and accounts of past events. In geography, with the exception of higher attainers, pupils display weak basic skills, such as mapping, and poor knowledge and understanding of geographical ideas. Similarly in music, pupils' basic subject skills are weak, for example, when playing the keyboard most use one finger. Conversely, in textile technology work, pupils carry out appropriate research tasks and use their findings to inform their making. Basic construction skills are firmly developed.
12. By the age of 16, attainment is below average in most subjects, but remains well below in geography, music and RE, and pupils are not achieving as well as they should be in these three subjects, particularly in geography and in the non-GCSE RE course. For example, pupils following the non-GCSE RE course produce no written work. Attainment is well below average in resistant materials and pupils are underachieving here also. Attainment is in line with national norms in art and design and textiles indicating good achievement, in fact there is very good achievement for pupils taking the textiles technology course. Here, pupils carry out research successfully and apply their skills in designing and making effectively to make a range of sound quality products. In resistant materials technology, pupils' designing skills are weak, but their making skills are good, for example, by the age of 16 they produce good quality furniture and storage units. In ICT, pupils following accredited courses such as the GCSE and GNVQ courses reach nationally expected standards, though their skills in using programs such as spreadsheets are weaker partly because of weak numeracy skills and partly because of lack of opportunities to make use of them in other relevant subjects. The standards of those pupils in Years 10 to 11 who do not follow an accredited course in ICT are well below national expectations largely as a result of lack of sufficient opportunities to make use of computers across the curriculum.
13. Throughout the school, pupils' achievement is hampered by weaknesses in their long-term recall of facts and ideas. This is particularly noticeable in subjects such as history and geography. A number of pupils are held back by weak literacy and numeracy skills. Whilst some subjects make a good effort to promote both of these, this is not a consistent feature of teaching.
14. Throughout the school pupils with special educational needs, other than those with hearing impairment, make at least satisfactory progress in all subjects except music, where progress is poor. Progress is good in subjects where work has a practical content such as art and design, DT, ICT, PE and science. Overall levels of attainment and progress for these pupils are similar to those reported by the previous inspection in 1999. The many pupils who, in addition to being reluctant learners, are unable to concentrate throughout the whole of the lesson, particularly in the afternoon, make limited progress because of these factors. Although the school makes efforts to modify the behaviour of pupils and provide support in lessons to ensure that these pupils are not distracted from their work, in a significant minority of lessons a purposeful and work-centered atmosphere is not present.

15. While much effort is put into improving the behaviour of pupils, their progress is often restricted by the lack of in-class support for learning as the number of learning support assistants available to provide support is unsatisfactory. As a result, this support, which is of good quality, is too thinly spread across the school. Low levels of attainment on entry and poor skills of literacy and numeracy also inhibit attainment and progress. Although a small number of pupils are withdrawn from some lessons for additional support, which is of good quality, to improve their skills of literacy and numeracy and the school is seeking ways to promote literacy and numeracy for all pupils, the individual learning needs of many pupils with emotional and behavioural needs are not fully met because of the shortage of learning support assistants.
16. Those pupils in the HIU have severe to profound hearing impairment. One has learning difficulties and cerebral palsy. All have statements of special educational need. The unit provides a very good resource for hearing impaired pupils in the school and they make very good progress both when given one-to-one tuition and in lessons. When they have an appropriate level of support in lessons in the main school, they make better progress in a wide range of subjects than pupils from the main school. Pupils with hearing impairment gain good grades at GCSE, in line with their peers.
17. The very few pupils who are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language make good progress in learning English, and consequently make good progress in other subjects. Pupils from different minority ethnic backgrounds make broadly similar progress and, taking into account their attainment when they start school, there is little difference in their achievement across subjects of the curriculum.
18. The school has set itself challenging targets for performance in national tests and examinations. In 2000, it met its targets well.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

19. The attitudes of pupils to school are satisfactory overall and in many lessons they are good and support learning well. This is a good improvement from the time of the last inspection in 1997. The large majority of pupils enjoy school, show enthusiasm for learning and are confident about asking and answering questions. Pupils are often keen to do well and try hard, as when they redraft pieces of work to improve it. These positive features are particularly in evidence where lesson planning effectively ensures they are given suitable work and where they can become practically involved. Pupils are usually attentive to their teachers and enjoy their work, particularly practical activities, although many have low levels of concentration and need constant attention from their teachers to remain focused on tasks set. A significant minority of pupils have immature attitudes to work. They do not value their education sufficiently and demonstrate this by failing to take an active and productive part in the lessons provided for them. These negative attitudes are seen most frequently in teaching groups containing lower attaining pupils in Years 7 and 10 and in the responses of those who have been transferred to the school after the usual entry into Year 7. They have an adverse impact on the learning of these pupils, but less so for many others who often sensibly ignore them.
20. Pupils in the hearing impaired unit are keen to learn. They pay close attention to the teacher and signer and are capable of extended periods of concentration. They gain in confidence and the capacity to make relationships as they progress through the school. They join in the full range of activities the school has on offer.
21. The large majority of pupils respond positively to homework arrangements, completing work well and taking suitable advantage of opportunities provided for support with their work through the many subject related clubs and homework club. Pupils use these, and other more informal opportunities, increasingly well to get help where they need it. Many pupils take advantage of the time they are allowed in school, both before and after the normal

school day, to complete homework quietly, to ask help from individual teachers and to use library facilities for research purposes. These arrangements are particularly suited to the many pupils who are still establishing habits of independent learning and often need additional encouragement successfully to work on their own and to get started on individual research. Pupils are very aware that their school makes very good provision for their personal development through the extra-curricular activities offered. This provision raises their self-esteem and pride in their school as a community. There is a positive response to the activities provided and involvement is continuing to rise.

22. The behaviour of pupils is satisfactory overall, although in a significant minority of lessons poor behaviour has an adverse impact on learning. This is often seen in lower attaining sets in Years 7 and 10 and amongst pupils who have not transferred directly to the school at the end of Year 6. These pupils often have poor self-discipline and little respect for education and these lead to them being disruptive and sometimes rude to their teachers. These signs of poor behaviour and attitudes have been noted by some parents and reflected in the concerns they have expressed about their disruptive impact on learning. Many of the pupils who are poorly behaved in lessons are identified on the school's register for special educational needs as having emotional and behavioural difficulties. The majority of pupils on the register of special educational needs, especially from Stage 2 onwards, have difficulty in behaving well. They learn reluctantly and have a history of disaffection and disruption in school. They find it difficult to concentrate in lessons and the school has to work very hard to minimise the disruption that takes place in some lessons by providing additional support from teachers or adult mentors whom the school employs.
23. In the large majority of lessons where teachers know pupils well, provide suitably planned work, have positive working relationships with them and use positive behaviour management strategies consistently and effectively the immature behaviour is managed successfully and leads to little disruption to learning for other pupils. The recent staffing shortages have adversely affected the consistency with which the school's behaviour management strategies are applied. The results of this can be seen in lessons where pupils are unsettled when they arrive and take too long to respond positively to the generally high expectations for them to behave well. Year 10 pupils have been affected most as they have had the greatest amount of temporary teacher cover. Year 7 classes have also been affected more than other year groups. As the staffing shortages are being addressed, the consistency of the behaviour management strategies is being brought back to the good levels noted by the HMI inspection of 1999. Nonetheless, it is clear that the relatively high proportion of new and temporary teachers since the start of this academic year has set back the good progress the school was making in implementing its assertive discipline policy.
24. Behaviour around the school at break and lunch times is usually satisfactory, often good, leading to generally safe movement around the site. Pupils are usually polite and sensible, although they often appear unaware of others around them resulting in an apparent lack of courtesy, for example when pushing past or not giving way to people moving in the opposite direction. Where there is a high staff presence in corridors at lesson change over time this has a very good, positive influence on standards of behaviour at these times. Most pupils treat and use the premises with respect, and there is little evidence of graffiti. A few pupils do not respect what is provided for them and the impact of this is seen, for example, in deliberate damage to lavatories. Some pupils are thoughtless about dropping litter, causing additional work for the site management team, although most use the well-placed litterbins to good effect. The large majority of pupils use school equipment and materials sensibly and with care. During the last school year the number of exclusions was low with no permanent exclusions. In total there were 27 fixed term exclusions involving 23 pupils. Pupils usually respond well to the school's hard work to ensure they are supported effectively when returning to school, consequently there are few repeat exclusions.
25. Relationships throughout the school between pupils and with adults are usually good. A strong sense of community permeates throughout the school. The large majority of pupils

have high levels of respect for staff. In discussion during the inspection pupils affirmed that one of the most positive things about their school is its teachers and learning mentors who are always there with help and support when needed. Minority ethnic groups are well integrated to the extent that, on occasion, it is evident that they are joined in pride of their local culture, which they celebrate together. The large majority of pupils are usually able to work well together, sharing views and opinions and offering mutual support. This is particularly so with hearing impaired pupils whom other pupils want to help. A significant minority of pupils have not developed the habit of considering the needs and well being of others, which results in them butting in when others are trying to answer questions and showing a lack of thought when making hurtful remarks. Pupils are generally tolerant of beliefs that vary from their own and accept the rights of others to have different views and opinions. Parents are particularly concerned about bullying. Pupils interviewed during the week of inspection are confident that there is now little bullying and that it is dealt with well. They are particularly appreciative of the learning mentors who have a high presence in the school at break and lunch times and also the year group bases that provide a supervised retreat for those wanting peace and quiet.

26. Despite a significant improvement of about 11 per cent since the time of the last inspection overall levels of attendance are well below average and remain a concern at 88.4 per cent with 1.3 per cent of absences being unauthorised. Response to the many measures taken by the school to improve attendance has been positive and pupils value the system of awards for regular attendance. The school has many pupils who have been transferred from other schools and whose poor attendance contributes disproportionately to the high levels of absence at the school. Much of the high absence is related to pupils who habitually refuse to attend, or whose parents do not value education and condone them staying at home. Some are found to be absent without parental knowledge and in other cases parents keep them at home for unsatisfactory reasons, for example to look after younger children. Where pupils attend school regularly, they usually learn well and make good progress. The majority of pupils arrive on time for the start of the school day. A few are habitually late. After registration the movement of pupils between lessons is usually accomplished in a purposeful manner ensuring the time available for teaching is not wasted.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

27. The quality of teaching is good overall and this is a significant improvement from the inspection of 1997, as well as a further improvement on the 1999 inspection by HMI, particularly in relation to the now greater amount of good and very good teaching seen. During this inspection, the quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in 94 per cent of lessons seen. In 63 per cent, the quality of teaching was good or better. In 20 per cent it was very good and in a further two per cent it was excellent. The quality of learning generally matched the quality of teaching, but in a few lessons it was not as good because of the poor attitudes and/or behaviour of some pupils.
28. The quality of teaching in English and science was good overall at both key stages, and in mathematics it was good for pupils aged 11 to 14 and satisfactory for those aged 15 to 16. Teaching was good in business education, history, ICT, modern foreign languages, PE and textiles. In all of these subjects, very good teaching was also seen. The good quality of teaching is having a beneficial impact in these subject areas and leading to good progress for pupils. A significant proportion of less than satisfactory teaching was seen in geography and music. In the remaining subjects, including PSE, the quality of teaching was satisfactory. There is little difference between the quality of teaching for pupils aged 11 to 14 and those aged 15 to 16 other than that there is significantly more very good teaching for pupils in the older age group.
29. Thorough planning and preparation with clearly identified outcomes for pupils' learning are a key feature of the vast majority of lessons. Information on what pupils are to learn is usually shared with them at the start of most lessons and this practice ensures that pupils are

usually clear about what they are expected to do in the lesson as well as the gains they are expected to make. Most lessons are well structured with a clear introduction, relevant activities and tasks for pupils to complete and a summing-up session at the end.

30. In close to two-thirds of lessons where teaching is good or better, teachers' expectations are high and result in work being pitched at a challenging level for pupils. These, together with brisk pace, serve to engage pupils' interest and secure their commitment. They, thus, try hard, rising well to the challenges presented to them and make good gains in their learning. Good quality questioning of pupils is also a key feature of good or better lessons. Pupils are made to think for themselves and key ideas are effectively reinforced through thorough and well-structured questioning or whole class discussion. Very effective use is made of the foreign language in French and Spanish lessons to encourage pupils to respond to questions and develop the confidence to speak in that language. In science and mathematics, good questioning techniques help to clarify and reinforce difficult scientific or mathematical ideas. Teachers build good working relationships which effectively encourage and support pupils in their learning. Where such relationships have been effectively established, pupils willingly carry out even mundane, but necessary, tasks in order to help them move forward in their learning. The good relationships also result in a foundation of trust and respect being established between pupils and teachers. Most importantly, where teaching of pupils in lower ability groups is good or better, teachers have used their understanding of pupils' needs and the good relationships to ensure that the work set meets their needs effectively. For example, they take account of the fact that pupils' concentration can lapse much more easily in the afternoons and that tasks need to be interesting and varied more frequently, if they are teaching at this time, in order to keep pupils well focused and motivated. Conversely, where relationships have not been so effectively established, or where tasks do not take sufficient account of pupils' needs, lessons, particularly those in the afternoon, are prone to being less successful in helping pupils to make effective gains in their learning.
31. In the six per cent of lessons where teaching is less than satisfactory, pace is often too slow and behaviour management and control of pupils are often ineffective leading to pupils making too slow progress. In some cases these factors are present because teachers have not established effective working relationships with pupils. Teaching methodologies employed do not take sufficient account of the needs of pupils and are not sufficiently imaginative or interesting enough to engage pupils' attention. Some of these weaknesses are also apparent, although to a lesser degree, in lessons which are otherwise satisfactory. In many lessons, too little attention is paid to preparing different work for different ability groups of pupils in the same class. Despite the quite comprehensive arrangements for grouping pupils in different classes according to their ability, there is still often a wide range of attainment within any one class. Often, pupils who could work at a faster pace have to work at the same pace as that set for the rest of the class. In some mathematics lessons, for example, all pupils are set the same problems although some can work through them very quickly whilst others need to go at a much slower pace. Those who work fast are given more of the same kind of problems rather than different and more challenging work.
32. A significant proportion of less than satisfactory lessons seen were taught in Years 7 and 10. Year 10 pupils have had more of their lessons covered by supply staff or temporary teachers since September, when the school found itself with a severe shortage of teaching staff. As a result, attitudes to learning and progress have suffered more significantly in Year 10 than in most other year groups. In Year 7, pupils are still learning to develop good work habits and learning to conform to the high expectations of the school. Many have emotional and behavioural needs and find it difficult to concentrate and not to disrupt lessons. Pupils in Year 7 have also had more new teachers and supply staff than other year groups, though to a lesser degree than in Year 10.
33. In the best lessons, pupils are given good opportunities to develop their literacy skills and, particularly, to write and speak at length. In many lessons, however, opportunities to develop

pupils' speaking and writing skills are limited. This deficiency is particularly evident in geography, mathematics, music and RE. Numeracy is well taught in mathematics, but contribution to the numeracy strategy is variable in other subjects. It is satisfactorily taught in most but there are missed opportunities, particularly in geography, history and ICT.

34. While the quality of teaching for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall, in too many lessons, teachers have to work especially hard to overcome the effects of poor behaviour by many pupils who are on the register of special educational needs for emotional and behavioural reasons. In several lessons support by additional teachers does much to ensure that pupils concentrate on their work, but these measures are not always successful and disruptive behaviour distracts both the teacher and other pupils and so limits the amount of learning that takes place.
35. Despite the use of a variety of strategies, teaching often fails to keep lower attaining pupils, mostly those with special educational needs, occupied for the full time span of the lesson, especially during the afternoon. This is not always the case. Pupils were well motivated in geography lessons that simulated the conflicts for land use that arise in National Parks and investigated the factors affecting the site for a new factory. In PE lessons pupils respond well to activities appropriate to their levels of ability and in a lesson in modern foreign languages the many pupils with special educational needs responded successfully to the brisk pace and practical approaches used to help them to learn new vocabulary. Too often teaching does not provide tasks and materials suited to the needs of pupils with special educational needs, though in some groups, which are composed of lower attaining pupils, many of whom are on the register of special needs, a universal approach to teaching proves satisfactory.
36. Pupils with hearing impairment receive very good support in lessons and as a result make very good progress. Withdrawal lessons are very well planned to provide pupils with key skills and background information to help them in lessons in the main school. Liaison with class teachers is very good. Issues that are unclear to them in lessons are carefully explained with very good use of British sign language or other forms of communication, as appropriate.

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

37. The school provides a curriculum that is satisfactory in quality and range, and which mostly meets the interests, aptitudes and particular needs of pupils, including those with hearing impairment and other special educational needs. Whilst there is good access for pupils to the curricular provision, there are some weaknesses in the provision at both key stages which inhibit pupils' learning.
38. The curriculum provided for pupils in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. All National Curriculum subjects, together with RE and personal, social and health education are offered. All subjects receive a sufficient allocation of time with the exception of DT, which is below the national average. This results in lack of breadth of provision and a breach of statutory requirements as electronics and pneumatics are not taught. This situation also existed at the time of the 1997 report. There is also a breach in legal requirements in that the use of ICT in science and DT does not include the use of control and measurement applications. The PSE is a good provision.
39. In Years 10 and 11, the majority of pupils follow a fairly traditional and satisfactory curriculum leading to GCSE qualifications. GNVQ courses, however, are offered in ICT and business studies. A number of pupils attend courses off school premises, for part of the week, which leads to National Vocational Qualifications at Level 1. This is a good provision for these particular pupils, directly addressing their needs. The provision for ICT is still not planned and remains unsatisfactory for those pupils not taking a GCSE course. This was noted in the

1999 report. The DT curriculum is limited and does not include systems and control and computer-aided manufacturing. The time allocation for RE is far too short and the requirements of the Wolverhampton Agreed Syllabus cannot be fully met. In all three subjects the school is in breach of legal requirements.

40. Schemes of work are detailed and there has been general improvement since the 1999 report. There are still some weaknesses in DT, where the department is working to outdated National Curriculum requirements and in art and design where too little progress has been made. Grouping arrangements are flexible and are having a positive influence on standards in a significant majority of subjects.
41. The school has recently begun to develop procedures to support literacy and numeracy in all curricular subjects, and appropriate policies and plans are in place. The overall effectiveness of the strategy for teaching literacy is satisfactory because of the good work being done in this in English, supported by good practice in history, ICT and modern foreign languages. The strategy for numeracy is effective because the mathematics department is delivering numeracy well. It is also well taught to pupils in top sets in science. However, there is a lack of a co-ordinated and coherent whole-school approach to teaching literacy and numeracy. Consequently, implementation across different subjects is currently uneven and many opportunities missed to further develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills.
42. All pupils in the main school with special educational needs have opportunities to study all aspects of the curriculum and to the many extra-curricular activities and courses the school provides. Some pupils, however, are withdrawn from lessons on a rota basis for additional support in literacy and numeracy to enable them to make more progress in other subjects. Though currently underdeveloped, the increasing attention to promoting literacy and numeracy throughout the curriculum is benefiting pupils with special educational needs. Those in Years 10 and 11 benefit from following courses in business studies and the work they do in the local community. For pupils whose special educational needs relate to problems of a behavioural or emotional nature, the school provides many support mechanisms of good quality through adult mentors who help them to come to terms with, and begin to resolve, these difficulties. For pupils in the hearing impairment unit, the curricular provision is good with a high degree of integration with classes in the main school. However, access to music for some pupils in Year 7 is a weakness because they miss one or both of the weekly music lessons.
43. All pupils follow a well-planned course in PSE, which provides for the development of a range of learning and interpersonal skills. The Year 10 and 11 programme provides good opportunities for students to acquire a range of skills to prepare them for adult life. Topics include health education and substance abuse, rights and responsibilities and the development of understanding of issues associated with marriage and the family. The governors have ratified the sex education programme and the new DfEE programme on Sex and Relationships will be presented to them in the near future.
44. There are very good links with the local community, which have a positive influence on learning, and with other local schools in both the primary and post-16 phases. There are close links with Wolverhampton Youth Services and the Wolverhampton Metropolitan Borough Council. There is a Business Education Centre on site, which has a positive impact on the work of the school. Parents and the community use this facility, for example, to improve their ICT skills. Some parents are attending courses run by the school's learning mentors to train as learning support assistants. The 'Bright Sparks' link with a local primary school is an excellent provision, providing Year 5 and 6 pupils with an insight into science, technology and computing as well as music and the arts. It runs all year and there are hopes of extending it to another feeder school in the near future. Links with consortium schools post-16 are good and pupils are well prepared for their next stage of education and employment. Careers provision is satisfactory and there is an effective input by the local

Careers Advisory service which builds upon the school provision. Work experience in Year 10 provides pupils with useful and valuable insights into the world of work.

45. The school's provision for extra-curricular activities is very good. These activities broaden pupils' learning and experiences. Clubs take place before, during and after school. There are residential visits and many opportunities for participation in a range of activities. Staff give very willingly of their time to organise and manage these activities. There is a good range of sporting and musical activities. There are other school clubs associated with subjects, which play a very important part in extending learning opportunities as well as giving pupils additional cultural, leisure and academic activities. The homework club is a particularly good example. The school is open until 5.30 p.m. each day to provide for these activities.
46. The provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is satisfactory. The school makes a concerted effort to promote and plan for this development through assemblies, daily acts of collective worship, lessons in RE, in PSE and to ensure that subjects incorporate opportunities for such development in their teaching. These objectives are well supported by a comprehensive policy setting out aims and objectives and indicating areas through which spiritual, moral, social and cultural development can be promoted and key values introduced into the work of all departments. Not all areas of the school, however, consistently match the intentions of the policy. There is a variable response to the inclusion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural education by subjects, the provision of collective worship on a daily basis and opportunities to promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural development within the curriculum.
47. Arrangements are made for a daily act of collective worship for all pupils either through assemblies or tutor groups via 'Thought for the Day' and in this respect the school aspires to meet statutory requirements. Not all pupils, however, experience a daily act of collective worship. A small number are withdrawn for monitored reading and in some tutor groups 'Thought for the Day' receives only limited exposure. As a result statutory requirements are not fully met. Nevertheless, the school makes satisfactory provision for the spiritual development of pupils, for example through assemblies, creative writing about the solar system in English, opportunities to reflect on the physical environment in geography, a consideration of the meaning and purpose of life in RE and discussions about human experiences in PSE. Opportunities are missed in other subjects such as art and design and music to explore feelings and self-knowledge through creative activity.
48. Moral development is satisfactorily promoted in subjects such as geography, history, PSE and PE in which moral issues such as the dropping of the first atomic bomb, the exploitation of the environment, the implications of genetic engineering, rules and regulations and the responsibilities of married life form part of lessons. Pupils have a good idea of right and wrong, emphasised for many through mentoring and behaviour support programmes.
49. Good provision is made for the social development of pupils. There are many opportunities to participate in sports teams and in clubs and societies, some of which such as the gospel choir and the moral maze contribute to spiritual and moral development as well. Pupils are encouraged to work together in lessons simulating the conflicts that arise over land use in National Parks, the impact of pollution on society and the differing values placed on aspects of British justice. Residential courses and holidays in this country and abroad teach pupils how to live together and to respect other peoples' feelings and beliefs. Senior pupils fulfil roles as mentors and prefects. Others act as 'buddies' to pupils new to the school or serve their colleagues on the school committee and many learn to modify their behaviour through support from learning mentors and teachers.
50. The school has made an improved contribution to the education of pupils for a multi-cultural society since the last inspection of 1997. Pupils have a good awareness of different cultures and the school celebrates all relevant cultural festivals. Pupils are tolerant of different beliefs and ethnic groups and this is supported by links with minority ethnic groups in the

community. Cultural development is encouraged through theatre visits and the school's annual talent competition, through the use of visual images produced on computers to reinforce work in English on Nordic legends, the music of Peer Gynt and studies of other cultures in history and geography. Work in art makes a good contribution and pupils study the more traditional aspects of culture through the works of Shakespeare and through poetry.

51. The school has maintained the position in respect of the personal, moral, social and cultural development reported in previous inspections.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

52. Overall, the school takes good care of its pupils and promotes their personal and academic development well through its procedures for assessment and monitoring. The arrangements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils are mostly good and result in pupils thriving in an environment where they generally feel safe and happy. The large majority of staff know pupils well and the positive relationships that exist between them result in pupils being confident about sharing concerns where they need to. There is a suitably trained person with designated responsibility for child protection and there are effective child protection procedures in place. The induction programme for newly qualified teachers provides an adequate introduction to these procedures. Regular updating in procedures for other members of staff is less systematically planned. The school includes suitable sessions within PSE programme to develop pupils' personal effectiveness; including the confidence to say 'no' when they need to and an understanding of their right to make personal choices. There are very well established links with a full range of support agencies that usually meet the varying needs of pupils well. The school nurse and learning mentors hold valued and regular 'drop in' sessions for pupils wanting help and advice.
53. There is a health and safety policy that sets out in broad outline suitable procedures including risk assessment. There are firm plans in place for the person with overall responsibility for health and safety to receive further updated training. Risk assessments are carried out conscientiously but the procedures used are not of a consistently high standard. This has led to some points being overlooked, for example the need for yellow lines around machines in DT, the suitable marking of 'speed humps' in the driveway and some locked doors during the lunch period that could be hazardous in case of fire. Fire procedures are practised with sufficient frequency to ensure pupils know routines. The school's various appliances and equipment are serviced and checked with sufficient frequency to meet legal requirements. There are generally suitable arrangements to deal with first aid emergencies, although routines for recording these are not sufficiently well established to ensure the school can monitor and identify concerns, for example, where individual pupils are being seen rather more often than would be expected. Governors take an active interest in health and safety arrangements and prioritise action where this is needed. An update in their training is needed to ensure confidence with the latest requirements.
54. Procedures to promote good attendance are thorough and the school works closely with the education social worker to raise standards. These have contributed to a significant increase in levels achieved since the time of the last inspection in 1997. Attendance requirements are made very clear to parents and reasons for absence are insisted upon. Unexplained absence is investigated by telephone the same day and followed up by post if necessary. Awards for good attendance motivate the large majority of pupils well. The school monitors patterns of absence well and quickly follows up concerns, when necessary home visits are arranged. Registration procedures, including those for pupils who arrive late, are effective and ensure there is an accurate record of those present. There are very frequent whole school checks on absence after registration that effectively identify pupils who truant after receiving their mark in the register.

55. Expectations for behaviour are clearly expressed in the school's policy documents and pupils are well aware of the school's rules, the awards for achievement and the progressive system of sanctions that are only used after they have been warned about their behaviour. All except some temporary staff have been suitably trained with the intention of ensuring consistent and effective behaviour management across the school. The large majority of pupils respond well to the high expectations and courteous but firm insistence on good behaviour seen in most lessons. In the minority of lessons where classroom management is less effective and rules inconsistently applied, standards of behaviour fall and sometimes disrupt learning. Individual behaviour is closely monitored by year co-ordinators; who quickly identify emerging patterns and take suitable steps to find out why they occur, and what should be done about them. Learning mentors play an important role in promoting good behaviour and self-discipline. The high level of respect they have earned from pupils contributes significantly to their effectiveness. Good procedures to deal with bullying have reduced its frequency, and pupils now say there is little bullying and it is usually dealt with effectively. Learning mentors provide individual support for pupils involved in bullying and facilitate group sessions which explore issues around relationships, for example 'anger management' and 'coping with peers'. These have a positive influence on pupils' attitudes and ability to cope with difficult situations.
56. The school only excludes pupils as a last resort whilst agreeing the best way forward to help them to change unacceptable patterns of behaviour. Time out of school is kept to a minimum and there are very effective procedures to ensure the best possible support is provided when they return. Consequently, most pupils are excluded only once. The school has ensured that support for pupils' behaviour is given high priority through the role of learning mentors. This is proving successful in helping pupils with poor patterns of behaviour, in particular those who have been transferred from other schools.
57. Arrangements for the personal and academic guidance of pupils are good overall. Effective liaison arrangements with local primary schools ensure that pupils' pastoral needs, friendship groups and individual talents are well known before they transfer to the school and are taken into consideration when staff organise tutor groups. The school's special educational needs co-ordinator discusses support arrangements and individual education plans for pupils transferring from primary schools, ensuring the best possible continuity of provision. Arrangements to introduce pupils to the school and for induction are effective ensuring they settle quickly and happily into Year 7. The 'Bright Sparks' club that runs each week for Years 5 and 6 pupils from one of the primary schools is much enjoyed by them and means that they look forward with pleasure to starting in Year 7. The many members of staff involved with the club contribute time and effort unstintingly to make it a success. Pupils in Year 7 benefit from well-planned sessions, called 'circle time', which help them to explore issues that concern them and to develop self-confidence. Pupils particularly value their year base rooms where they can either socialise or work quietly under supervision at lunch times. They have good access to their form tutors who are available in form rooms before morning and afternoon registrations.
58. The school provides well for the personal development of pupils. Arrangements for PSE have improved since the time of the last inspection in 1997 and the programme is well planned to support the personal development of pupils. It includes relationships, citizenship, health education, sex education, drugs awareness and study skills. This programme prepares pupils well for making choices and decisions affecting their lives both in and beyond school. It is not consistently effective for all pupils as there is considerable variation in the quality of teaching.
59. The arrangements for setting homework are well understood by regular members of staff who usually follow the timetable with care, contributing well to the development of positive working habits. Recent staffing shortages have led to cover being provided by temporary members of staff who are not always fully aware of routines, leading to some inconsistencies. There is a well written marking policy and regular monitoring of teachers'

practice to ensure that pupils receive good information about what they need to do to improve their work. This information is usually expressed in clear targets, and progress towards them is suitably monitored and discussed with pupils where needed. Most teachers know pupils well and informally monitor progress during lessons, usually offering well focused advice on a personal basis where needed. Annual reports to parents usually include targets for individual subjects, however, in many cases, particularly for the more able pupils, these are not sufficiently specific to help them to understand what they must do to improve.

60. Procedures for monitoring pupils' academic support and guidance are usually good. The school has very positive working relationships with local primary schools, ensuring that information about pupils' standards on entry, including their test results at age 11, is suitably passed on. This information enables the school to plan its grouping arrangements effectively. Since the time of the last inspection of 1997, arrangements for assessment have been reviewed and considerably improved. There are very clear guidelines for staff and the implementation of procedures is monitored regularly and with rigour. The school is well aware that, despite this, assessment practice within subjects is still occasionally variable, to some extent because of staffing shortages in key positions. Procedures for assessing attainment and progress are good in English, geography, PE, RE and modern foreign languages and very good in mathematics, science, history and textiles technology. Analysis is detailed and accurate in these subjects and is usually used effectively by staff to plan suitable work for pupils. In some cases the information is not used as well as it could be to extend pupils at the upper end of the ability range. In art assessment procedures are implemented satisfactorily, but subsequent planning to meet the individual needs of pupils is not as effective. In ICT at Key Stage 4 the school does not assess or report on pupils' progress. At a whole school level, pupils' progress is carefully tracked and targets for achievement in public tests and examinations are set for them based on their prior attainment. This setting and monitoring of targets is very well developed and one of the key reasons for the improvements in performance secured by the school.
61. Individual education plans of good quality make clear provision for the needs of pupils on Stages 2 to 5 of the register of special educational needs and identify appropriate and specific targets for literacy, numeracy and behaviour modification against which their progress can be assessed. Where necessary these match the requirements of statements of special educational needs. Comprehensive records of attainment and targets for the future are also maintained and there are many effective measures to record and assess behaviour on a daily and weekly basis and to reward good behaviour and effort by pupils. Subject related targets of attainment and progress are rarely in evidence and subject departments do not assess and monitor the progress of pupils with special educational needs in any more detail than that of other pupils.
62. The school makes many efforts to modify the behaviour of pupils through support mechanisms such as learning support mentors, curriculum support centre staff, community mentors, additional reading and in-class support for behaviour. The measures to promote good behaviour are fully integrated throughout the school because so many pupils entering the school have a history of disaffected or disruptive behaviour. Procedures to monitor the overall progress of pupils towards behavioural targets are not yet sufficiently comprehensive to ensure that pupils work towards behaviour of an acceptable standard and the level of support for learning is still deficient.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

63. The number of parents completing questionnaires and attending the pre-inspection meeting was relatively low. The majority of parents who responded are broadly satisfied with what the school provides and achieves. Inspection evidence confirms their positive views that their children are expected to work hard and that they make good progress. The range of extra-curricular activities available is very good and supports both subject learning and personal development well. The school successfully fosters good relationships with parents

who feel able to approach staff with problems and concerns. Staffing shortages have meant that all teachers and senior managers at the school are carrying a very full teaching load. Hence, some parents have experienced a slower response when they have raised concerns compared to the very good response rate formerly.

64. Inspectors found parents' concerns about homework to be largely unfounded, it is usually of good quality and set regularly. Year co-ordinators check pupils' work every two weeks and identify and effectively deal with instances when homework has not been provided or is not of a good enough quality. Some pupils make good use of the facilities provided for homework support at lunch times and at the end of the school day so that they have a reduced workload when they get home. Some pupils do not always record in their planners the work they have been set.
65. Many parents are concerned about standards of behaviour and the extent to which it disrupts lessons. In most cases behaviour is managed well in lessons. There is, however, a significant minority of pupils who have poor self-discipline and who, on occasion, slow learning for others. This is particularly so for those taught in lower ability groups, where there is a concentration of pupils with behaviour difficulties, and where this is linked to ineffective behaviour management skills. There are too few learning support assistants to support teachers with the learning needs of these pupils. Around the school out of lessons behaviour is usually satisfactory and pupils questioned say they feel safe and confident.
66. Inspection evidence confirms the views of those parents who feel they are not given sufficient information about how well their children are getting on. Annual progress reports have many good features, for example, they explain clearly what work has been covered in class during the year, provide an effective assessment of pupils' personal development, their attitudes to work, behaviour and the impact of their attendance on how well they have learnt. There is, however, too little evaluation of what learning has taken place and the target levels given are not explained in terms of what is expected at that age. Because of these weaknesses, reports do not always give parents a realistic picture of what their children know, understand and can do. In most subjects targets to improve work are set, these are often helpful, particularly for lower attaining pupils. Overall, however, there are too many targets that are not sufficiently specific to help parents understand what their children must do to improve their work, for example, 'revise carefully', 'maintain high standards' and 'develop confidence'. Pupils make very useful contributions to their reports in terms of how well they feel they have done and these contributions develop in maturity as they move through the years. The school makes suitable arrangements for parents to discuss their children's progress with teachers, although too few take advantage of these opportunities. For pupils aged 15 to 16, annual reports to parents do not meet legal requirements because they do not report on progress in RE or ICT where pupils are not taking these as discrete subjects. The reporting of ICT was a concern at the time of the last inspection in 1997 and there has been a partial improvement since this time. The interim reports each term provide a very useful basis for dialogue between parents and the school by identifying emerging problems with either work or attitudes to learning.
67. The overall effectiveness of the school's partnership with parents through the information it provides is good. The prospectus gives good information about school routines and expectations and covers all the topics required, although insufficient detail is given about arrangements for pupils with special educational needs. The governors' annual report provides good information about their work over the year, targets for the coming year and school performance. Information about provision for pupils with special educational needs, however, is not sufficiently evaluative, particularly in relation to pupils with hearing impairment. The newsletters sent home each half term are informative about ongoing news and events and give suitable reminders about diary dates for parents. Arrangements to ensure parents are well informed about the school prior to their children's enrolment are thorough. They are contacted at an early stage when the school has any concern about their children and are encouraged to take an active role in discussions about ways forward.

Not all parents are willing to be involved in this way. Those that are generally have a positive impact on the way their children respond to the support provided. The school has used questionnaires well to identify and respond to parents' concerns. It has, for example, organised meetings about both homework and behaviour, and also run a positive parenting support group, although attendance by parents at these has been poor. Neither the school nor parents take full advantage of pupils' planners as a means of two-way communication, although information contained in them ensures parents have good access to school routines and expectations for their children.

68. The involvement of parents with the school and their impact on pupils' learning is unsatisfactory. There is a parent and teacher association that is supported well by a small group of hardworking parents. The events they organise are usually suitably attended and successful in raising funds to support the work of the school. Some parents are interested in their children's progress and take time to attend events arranged for them to discuss and find out about this. There is, however, a significant minority of parents who do not attend such events, or co-operate with the school to help their children improve unsatisfactory standards of behaviour and attendance. Attendance at the annual Presentation Evening is now good in response to successful efforts to raise its profile. Attendance at the Year 9 information evening about choices for GCSE is usually satisfactory.
69. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are invited into the school for annual reviews and there is effective telephone communication with parents as necessary. Additionally learning support mentors work with the parents of specifically targeted pupils with behavioural or emotional problems to help parents support pupils in the resolution of these problems.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

70. The overall leadership and management of the school are very good. In particular the leadership provided by the headteacher is excellent and described by her deputies as 'inspirational'. The headteacher provides a very clear direction for the development of the school with pupil achievement being central to its work. Shared aims and common purpose unite senior managers, governors and staff and provide a powerful guide to their work. Well-established teamwork is a key strength of the school management and well co-ordinated and co-operative teams ensure that the school's aims, values, policies and procedures are translated into action that benefits pupils' personal and academic development. The very good focus on self-evaluation and self-review ensures that the school and its governors are well aware of its strengths and weaknesses and that appropriate action is taken to improve areas of work that do not match up to the high expectations that are a well established norm. The good quality of teaching and learning is a result of thorough monitoring and evaluation and clear targets set for improvement.
71. There is good delegation to staff with management responsibilities and effective follow-up to ensure that tasks are completed well. The two deputy headteachers provide very good support to the headteacher as well as very good leadership and management of their own areas of work. The majority of middle managers, that is heads of department and year co-ordinators, provide good, and often very good leadership and management to their own teams. All of these positive aspects of leadership and management have led to the very good improvement in the standards of attainment of pupils, in particular the improvements seen at GCSE level. The high quality of management has also sustained the school through a difficult period when staffing shortages and difficulties in recruitment seriously threatened the hard work done by the school to come out of special measures. Governors monitor performance and have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and the challenges it faces, and set the right priorities for development and improvement. They provide a clear sense of direction for the school and ensure that the school fulfils most of its statutory duties, however, not all are met.

72. There are effective procedures for the management of the provision the school makes to satisfy the needs of pupils with special educational needs. A very comprehensive handbook supports the aims and objectives of a policy of good quality and provides strategies for teachers to meet the needs of pupils in lessons. Whilst the number of teaching staff employed is sufficient to cater for the teaching needs of pupils the provision of additional support for learning does not match the needs of pupils in lessons. Evaluation of the work of the department is very good and the department development plan, though of only one year's duration, is thorough and matches school development planning. The recent appointment of a new co-ordinator and plans for the future mean that the department is currently in a transition phase, one outcome of which is that the new co-ordinator does not have sufficient non-teaching time to carry out the full responsibilities of the post. Finance for pupils with special educational needs is spent on pupils as intended and recent additional finance has been appropriately used to purchase resources for literacy. The department has made good progress since the inspection of 1997 to provide for pupils with special educational needs and to maintain the position reported by the inspection of 1999. Future proposals to establish learning support and transition centres in the school are intended to resolve the problems of providing sufficient support for learning, draw together under the umbrella of the newly appointed co-ordinator for special educational needs all aspects of the work in behavioural and learning support and enhance the good provision that already exists in the school.
73. The quality of the school's financial management is very good. The headteacher and senior administration officer have long and valuable experience of handling budgets. With governors they have worked hard and efficiently to clear, in the current financial year, the deficit that has dominated the school's planning in recent years. In the most recent auditor's report, virtually all aspects of the school's control and organisation of its funds were declared satisfactory. Governors have responded effectively to the few points raised in the report such as comparing the cost of using different agencies for supply teachers.
74. In most respects the priority given to the deployment of funds and resources matches precisely governors' long term and more immediate targets for the school. Recent difficulties with recruitment of teachers have required an unusually large investment in temporary staff. However, the school makes very good use of retention points to keep good staff and has a wide range of initiatives to help recruit teachers, such as the graduate and registered teacher programme.
75. The school's priorities for future development are appropriate and are clearly stated in a detailed improvement plan. The costs are carefully worked out and the necessary funds are allocated appropriately. The school successfully negotiates and actively pursues additional funding to finance the many aspects of its broad and complex educational provision. Financial resources acquired for supporting special educational needs, the inclusion of hearing impaired pupils and those from minority ethnic backgrounds are demonstrably well used. Funding from the European Union has enabled the creation of an attractive conference facility and prompted plans for a community learning centre. The book stocks in the school library, on the other hand, are poor due to minimal investment over a number of years, though this is beginning to be addressed now that the school no longer has a deficit.
76. Governors hold the school's senior and middle managers accountable for the improvement in provision and achievement stemming from their funding. They frequently meet with staff members to approve, monitor and support particular projects such as the development of policies for ensuring that educational opportunities are provided for all pupils or the refurbishment of the school building. Good attention is paid to the principles of best value. Effective use is made of new technology by teaching and non-teaching staff to support their work.
77. Although the match of staffing to meet the needs of the curriculum is satisfactory overall, there are variations and some subjects are weakened because of the need for temporary

cover from non-specialist staff. Staffing levels and the match of expertise to the needs of the subject are satisfactory overall. However, the GCSE course in RE at Key Stage 4 is taught effectively by a subject specialist, but where pupils not taking the GCSE course are taught RE it is by non-specialist staff and this is unsatisfactory. In art, English and modern foreign languages long-term absence and unfilled positions result in unsatisfactory staffing levels. The school has made a number of appointments to start after the Easter break. The smooth day-to-day running and organisation of the school is supported well by sufficient effective administrative and office staff. Morale amongst teaching and non-teaching staff is generally very high and teachers feel well supported by a senior leadership team that willingly shares the burden of covering classes affected by staffing shortages.

78. Newly qualified teachers and those on the graduate training programme receive very well planned induction that ensures they are fully aware of the school's policies and procedures. The regular support and mentoring they receive effectively help them to establish good practice. In particular senior managers are alert to the need for them quickly to establish strong classroom management skills and ensure they receive suitable support for this.
79. Priorities for staff development are effectively linked to the school development plan and support the needs of the school well. There has been appropriate emphasis given to the need for effective classroom management and consistent assessment procedures that is paying dividends in raising standards overall. Rigorous and regular monitoring of all aspects of teachers' performance results in effective individual support being provided where it is needed and without undue delay. Staff development and performance management of temporary teachers have been more difficult than those of permanent staff. This is partly because of the short-term nature of these appointments and partly because staffing shortages have meant that senior staff have not had enough time to devote to this performance development work as they themselves have been covering for absent colleagues or vacant posts.
80. Resources for learning are satisfactory overall, however the library stock is old and does not provide a wide enough and up-to-date range of texts for pupils. Resources in music are poor and in science lack of sufficient books and equipment means there is too much sharing between pupils. Accommodation is of good quality and well maintained. The provision of separate rooms for pupils in each year group, year bases, where they can go at break and lunch times is particularly good.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

81. In order to improve the quality of education provided and the standards of attainment, the headteacher, senior staff and governors should:
 - (1) Improve the behaviour and attitudes, especially amongst pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties, by:
 - ensuring that all teachers are sufficiently skilled in managing behaviour of challenging pupils;
 - ensuring that all teachers provide work and use methods that are interesting and effectively matched to the needs of pupils in low ability teaching groups;
 - converting the general targets in pupils' individual education plans to more specific, subject focused ones and monitoring the progress of pupils with special educational needs against these targets;
 - improving the level of support for learning through the use of learning support assistants in lower ability groups.
 - (2) Improve pupils' attendance and punctuality to school by:

(paragraph numbers: 14, 15, 19, 22-23, 30-32, 34-35, 55, 61, 65, 96, 102, 129, 134, 135, 159, 178, 181, 187, 191, 194, 196-197)

- continuing to work with parents in order to raise their awareness and aspirations for their children.
- (paragraph numbers: 26, 68, 134, 171)

- (3) Fully implement the policies for effectively teaching literacy, numeracy and ICT in subjects of the curriculum by:
- establishing a co-ordinated and coherent approach to the implementation of the use of literacy, numeracy and ICT across the curriculum;
 - including relevant references to the delivery of literacy, numeracy and use of ICT in schemes of work for all subjects;
 - ensuring that all staff are aware of what they must teach;
 - monitoring teaching and learning and pupils' work regularly to assess the effectiveness of implementation of the strategies;
 - ensuring that there is sufficient access to equipment and resources in all subjects to deliver these policies;
 - providing training and support for staff where they do not have sufficient skills or knowledge to effectively implement the policies.

(paragraph numbers: 8-9, 11-13, 33, 38-39, 41-42, 107-110, 114, 120-121, 125, 129, 131, 134, 150, 157, 161-162, 166, 168, 182)

- (4) Meet legal requirements with respect to the National Curriculum in ICT and DT; in the requirements of the local syllabus for RE and for a daily act of collective worship by:
- allocating sufficient time to RE at Key Stage 4 to cover the agreed syllabus;
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can do in the non-GCSE course, such as expecting them to complete written tasks on a regular basis;
 - improving the quality of subject expertise in RE for those teachers who are involved in its delivery;
 - ensuring that there are sufficient, and relevant, resources and teacher expertise to deliver all the elements in the National Curriculum in DT and ICT;
 - working on staff-pupil relationships in tutor groups so that these are secure enough for all staff to confidently deliver the 'Thought for the Day'.

(paragraph numbers: 4, 11-12, 38-39, 47, 71, 149-150, 161-162, 166, 168, 182, 195, 198)

In addition to the key issues above, the following minor issues should also be included in the governors' action plan:

1. Continue to work towards recruiting a full complement of staff; (paragraph numbers: 77, 105)
2. Build on existing good practice to develop teaching methods so that different work is provided, or different methods used, for pupils of different ability in the same lesson; (paragraph numbers: 31, 118, 181)
3. Ensure that pupils make sufficient progress in geography, resistant materials technology and music; (paragraph numbers: 4, 11-12, 138-140, 142, 148, 152-156, 177-182)
4. Ensure there is a regular updating of all staff on the school's procedures for child protection; (paragraph numbers: 52)
5. Ensure all health and safety issues identified in the report, including the training needs of governors, are effectively tackled; (paragraph numbers: 53, 148)
6. Ensure that reports provide all the required information on standards and that they report on pupils' progress and attainment in RE and ICT; (paragraph numbers: 66)
7. Ensure that the governors' annual report to parents evaluates the provision made for pupils with special educational needs, including in the HIU, and how funding for the HIU is spent: (paragraph numbers: 67, 90)
8. Improve resources in the library and in music and science; (paragraph numbers: 80, 131, 182).

Hearing Impaired Unit

82. The unit provides a very good resource for hearing impaired pupils at the school. Pupils make very good progress both in tutorial sessions before and after lessons, and in lessons. Given the effectiveness of the support they receive, hearing impaired pupils often make better progress in lessons in the main school than the other pupils in a wide range of subjects. Pupils gain good grades at GCSE in line with their peers.
83. Pupils are very well taught in the unit. Lessons are very well planned to provide pupils with key support in mainstream lessons consequently pupils are keen to learn. Liaison with class teachers is very good. Issues that are unclear to pupils in lessons are carefully explained with very good use of British sign language or other forms of communication, as appropriate. Hence pupils gain in confidence and are able to concentrate well for extended periods of time. Teachers' skilful questioning ensures pupils listen well and observe the signing carefully, and this encourages them to speak or sign in their turn. Suitable resources are well used. In a Year 11 lesson in the unit, designed to support science, good notes written on the white board and competent signing supported all explanations. Teachers effectively supplement signing with gesture and a commentary, making use of all the pupils' hearing and their vision. Teaching is rigorous. Teachers know the learning styles of the pupils very well, and adapt to them. One teacher recommended one pupil to make notes and another to make a mind map in order to remember key information. Lessons go at a fast pace, so that much ground is covered. Teachers expect pupils with hearing impairment to do at least as well as the rest of the school, and they do.
84. A deaf adult who is a qualified instructor undertakes the teaching of British sign language. He serves as an excellent role model for the hearing impaired pupils and his teaching is very good. He successfully prepares pupils for Stage 1 of the British sign language qualification endorsed by the Council for Advancement of Communication of Deaf People. Hearing pupils from the main school have the opportunity to learn sign language as well and this further promotes integration of hearing and hearing impaired pupils.
85. Curriculum opportunities for pupils in the hearing impaired unit are very good. They are highly relevant to their hearing impairment and help them to succeed. Most pupils in the unit share in the full range of curriculum opportunities offered by the school. In order to find time for tutoring support before and after lessons, a few pupils in Years 10 and 11 are appropriately disapplied from modern foreign languages. Some Year 7 pupils do not attend one or both of the weekly music lessons. There are highly effective strategies for teaching numeracy and literacy in the unit, which support pupils' achievement in a range of subjects, including the social use of communication and preparation for life after school. The highly competent signing assistants and teachers, who explain and consolidate all learning, support pupils very well in lessons. Links with the local college of further education are close and productive. One Year 11 pupil attends college for two half-days a week to study for a vocational qualification in basic living skills. The college currently co-operates with the school to provide a range of taster courses to enable him to make a realistic decision as to future training. The hearing impaired pupils have the same opportunities for careers education and work experience as the rest of the school. They benefit particularly from highly specialist careers advice. They engage in mock job interviews, with signing support. Local employers increasingly provide opportunities for work experience to pupils with hearing impairment. When interviewed for this work, some pupils have signing support to ensure that there are no misunderstandings as to what is expected of them.
86. Hearing impaired pupils are very well integrated into the life of the school. Although their participation in extra-curricular activities is not specifically monitored, they appear to take advantage of what is on offer. The unit takes great care to ensure that the hearing impaired pupils retain a positive sense of their identity as a deaf person whilst further encouraging their integration with hearing pupils. Extra-curricular activities, open to hearing impaired pupils only, include participation in Disability Sport, where pupils can take part in sports such as golf, indoor cricket and basketball. Friends of the Young Deaf provide social programmes

for small group and individuals. There is an annual opportunity for residential experience. A signing club operates on Wednesdays and Thursdays.

87. The school makes good use of visiting professionals, such as educational audiologists, particularly in meeting the requirements of pupils' statements. The senior medical officer (audiology) has medical oversight of all pupils. The educational psychologist visits to give advice to teachers, pupils and parents. Pupils benefit from the skilled services of speech and language therapists.
88. The unit provides a high level of general support and advice to hearing impaired pupils. Although there is little independent monitoring of pupils, their academic progress, and personal development are well known because the standard of liaison with teachers in the main school is so good. Assessment is very well used to guide the planning of the tutorial sessions and the numeracy and literacy content of these sessions is based securely on current assessment of attainment.
89. Partnership with parents is very good and is effective in promoting a high level of co-operation between home and school. This fully supports pupils. The unit operates an open door policy in which parents are encouraged to contact school whenever they need to. Home visits are made when it is appropriate to do so.
90. Management of the hearing impaired unit is very good. Activities are very well co-ordinated. The statutory requirements of the Code of Practice and requirements of pupils' statements are fully met. Arrangement for pupils' annual assessment and review are very good and parents are invited to attend. Specific grants are used entirely for the benefit of hearing impaired pupils. The governing body has a good level of strategic oversight of the work of the unit. The chairman of governors involves himself with day-to-day affairs. The named governor has yet to make a visit. The annual governors' report to parents fails to evaluate the provision the unit makes for hearing impaired pupils, or say how the funding is spent. These are omissions of legal requirements.
91. Staffing is unsatisfactory, because one of the sign interpreters has been absent for some weeks and her level of skill cannot be easily replaced. When she is present, staffing just covers the learning requirements of the pupils. The unit is right in prioritising its staffing resources in favour of pupils in Year 7 and Years 10 and 11. Staff work as a harmonious and highly effective team. They are appropriately qualified and well trained. One interpreter currently attends a course in learning support locally, for which the school pays. Another interpreter has already qualified in the same skills. The unit has begun to evaluate its own teaching and provision. The staff attend meetings every six weeks. These have a training component which further improves their skills. Resources are satisfactory, except that the unit's computer is not linked to the school's network, which results in inefficient use of resources. The unit has made or accumulated a bank of excellent resources specially adapted to the needs of the hearing impaired, and these support learning in a wide range of curricular subjects.
92. Since the last Ofsted inspection in 1997, and the subsequent inspection by HMI in 1999, the work of the unit has made a satisfactory level of improvement and is now very good. Support of individual pupils in school and in the unit is now very well planned and very well carried out. All pupils continue to make very good progress. The mode of communication in the unit continues to match pupils' needs.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	162
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	47

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	20	41	31	4	1	1

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7-Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	554
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	224

Special educational needs	Y7-Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	23
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	220

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	20

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	45
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	40

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	10.3
National comparative data	5.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.3
National comparative data	0.4

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	61	55	116

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	23	26	32
	Girls	26	23	21
	Total	49	49	53
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	42 (29)	42 (29)	46 (23)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	20 (8)	14 (13)	9 (3)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	21	33	33
	Girls	33	28	29
	Total	54	61	62
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	47 (41)	53 (27)	53 (25)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	23 (8)	29 (6)	15 (3)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	39	43	82

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	12	35	39
	Girls	13	42	42
	Total	25	77	81
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	30 (18)	94 (92)	99 (100)
	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	29 (25.2)
	National	38.4 (38.0)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	28
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	46
Indian	29
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	425
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Data provided here is taken from the returns made to the DfEE by the school in January 2000.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7-Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	33.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7-Y11

Total number of education support staff	20
Total aggregate hours worked per week	665

Deployment of teachers: Y7-Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76.2
---	------

Average teaching group size: Y7-Y11

Key Stage 3	21.5
Key Stage 4	20.3

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	4	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	6	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	16	0
Other minority ethnic groups	1	0

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

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
----------------	-----------

	£
Total income	1,536,226
Total expenditure	1,465,192
Expenditure per pupil	2,765
Balance brought forward from previous year	-42,171
Balance carried forward to next year	28,863

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	554
Number of questionnaires returned	91

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	35	46	15	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	42	45	7	3	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	26	45	21	4	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	34	34	22	7	3
The teaching is good.	37	45	7	3	8
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	34	33	22	9	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	52	37	4	5	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	64	32	3	1	0
The school works closely with parents.	32	40	21	4	3
The school is well led and managed.	37	34	15	3	10
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	42	37	12	4	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	38	43	4	3	11

The main points raised by parents at the meeting with inspectors and in their written notes on the back of the questionnaires were related to the areas of concern indicated in the analysis of the questionnaire responses above: poor behaviour, particularly of certain groups of pupils; insufficient or irregular homework; information about progress.

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

ENGLISH

93. Standards of attainment are well below the national average when pupils enter the school in Year 7. These standards are improving steadily from year to year. They are, however, depressed by the high proportion of low achievers who enter the school later than the rest, after Year 7. The results in the National Curriculum tests for 14-year-olds in 2000 were well below the average of other schools nationally, but above those of similar schools. The proportion of those attaining Level 5, and above, was well below that of other schools nationally. Figures showed that the proportion of pupils attaining Level 6 reached the national average, but inspection evidence suggests that this is not replicated in the current group of 14-year-olds. Girls do better than boys. Over the last five years, the overall rate of improvement has been greater than the rate of improvement nationally. Though still well below average, the gap between the school's results and results nationally is much narrower than it was at the time of the last inspection in 1997.
94. In the GCSE examinations in 2000, the proportion of pupils attaining grades A*-C in English language and English literature were below the national average. All pupils achieved a grade A*-G in English language, and the proportion achieving grades A*-G in English literature was above the national average. Girls did considerably better than boys in both examinations. It is a strong feature of the department that a very high proportion of pupils are successfully entered for both examinations. Since the last inspection of 1997, the proportion of pupils achieving grades A*-C and A*-G has risen considerably in English language with a significant improvement at grade B. Although the proportion of grades A*-C in English literature has remained static, the number achieving grade A*-G has improved well. There are now more pupils attaining B grades than formerly. More pupils are now entered for English literature than previously was the case. The GCSE results in English language for 2000 were well above the results found in similar types of schools and were better than in most other subjects.
95. The school's analysis of results by ethnicity indicates that pupils of Asian ethnic origin perform better than those from white or African-Caribbean backgrounds at both key stages, largely because they start off with better attainment. Inspection evidence reflects similar findings. However, pupils from different ethnic backgrounds make similar progress due to the good teaching and target setting.
96. Inspection evidence indicates that attainment is well below average by the time pupils are 14 and below average by the time they are 16 years old. Overall, at both key stages, pupils achieve well given their low attainment when they start at the school. Pupils from different minority ethnic backgrounds achieve equally well. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall at both key stages. Their progress is not as good as others because of the limited support available from learning assistants. Those with hearing impairment do very well. The very few whose first language is not English and who are only beginners in English learn effectively because the support given is good.
97. By the age of 14, pupils usually listen carefully to the teacher and sometimes listen intently to one another. Some speak clearly, but too often their speech in the classroom is mumbled and unclear. Many pupils rarely elaborate what they say unless specifically encouraged to do so. Few understand they must change the way they speak according to the social occasion, however. Higher attaining pupils have effective skills of group discussion and present group findings intelligibly to the class. By the age of 14, all pupils read the simple learning materials put before them in lessons. They enjoy the stories and plays studied in class, and all have tackled at least one Shakespeare play with confidence and success. Higher attainers understand the motivation of the main characters and say how this affects the plot. Lower

achievers can understand the play at a basic level. All but the higher achievers fail to pay enough close attention to the text for successful literary criticism. Pupils write in a narrow range of styles. They have written accounts, diaries, stories and poems. Imaginative work shows little sense of audience. First drafts of their work show serious weaknesses in spelling, punctuation and grammar, but standards of accuracy improve on redrafting. Presentation is frequently careless and untidy. A significant proportion of the best work is well presented using ICT.

98. By the age of 16, pupils' skills in participating in group discussions have improved although they still do not always listen attentively to the teacher or to each other. In drama lessons pupils brainstorm effectively, and use their inter-personal skills effectively to plan and rehearse their work to a suitable standard. There are good opportunities for pupils to take part in public performances.
99. When studying literature, only the higher attaining pupils independently make effective notes on the novels, plays and poems they study. Average and lower attaining pupils still do not pay close enough attention to the text to obtain an in-depth grasp of the plot and characters. Higher attainers have a good technical vocabulary, for example, in one Year 10 lesson, able pupils studying *Animal Farm* by George Orwell fully understood such terms as 'allegory', 'dictatorship', 'propaganda' and 'bias'. This knowledge enabled them to fully understand that Squealer was a propagandist and to appreciate how he was able to operate so successfully. Higher attainers confidently analyse texts such as press reports for bias, paying particular attention to the language used. Average attainers accurately write about their thoughts and feelings on what they read, such as the unequal social organisation described in the poem *Nothing's Changed* by Tatamkhul Afrika. In their study of media texts, lower achievers had insufficient skills of analysis to recognise the techniques of 'repetition', 'alliteration' and 'rhyme' in a range of commercial advertisements, tending to describe the advertisement instead.
100. By the age of 16, higher attainers write independently and at length. The best work is strikingly presented using ICT. Literary criticism showing some skills of analysis and a good grasp of technical vocabulary is a strong feature of their written work. Higher and average attainers use well developed skills of analysis to compare and contrast reports in tabloid and broadsheet newspapers, such as on crowd trouble at an important football match. Higher and average attainers use persuasive language in writing but lower achievers cannot do this. Too often, first drafts of all work contain major errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar which redrafting does not entirely eradicate. Too much work is presented in a slapdash and untidy way.
101. Teaching is good in both key stages, and very good teaching was seen in about a third of the lessons. Lessons are carefully planned and what pupils are expected to learn is clearly shared with them so they know what to do to succeed. Explanations are lively and hold pupils' interest. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and of examination requirements for which pupils are well prepared. Specific teaching and careful marking focus well on the teaching of technical vocabulary and correct spelling, punctuation and grammar in written work. Teachers encourage pupils to re-draft their work. In the best lessons, they use interesting strategies to catch pupils' interest and imagination. In a Year 7 lesson, pupils used folded paper language 'quackers', a well-known children's game adapted to teach pupils to look for characterisation in *Mrs Frisby and the Rats of NIMH*. In a drama lesson in Year 10, warm-up activities began with a brisk game of 'fruit salad' which was an effective warm-up exercise and improved cooperation and interaction. In these lessons, expectation was high and pace rapid. As a result progress was also very good. In a sequence of two lessons on *Twelfth Night* in Year 9, pupils were given outline pictures of characters on which they were asked to write their chief character traits. The results were perceptive and showed thoughtfulness and good skills of textual analysis. This exercise improved their skills of annotation.

102. Pupils do not learn as much as expected when lessons are based on topics which lack relevance for them such as folk tales, which they find unappealing. Unsatisfactory behaviour in some lessons was caused by lack of variety in the activities and too little opportunities for pupils to take an active part in proceedings. In these lessons class management is, at times, ineffective.
103. Management of the subject is very good. Careful monitoring, evaluation and self-review has served to improve teaching and learning at both key stages. Assessment of pupils' literacy needs have improved because some pupils attend a summer school before they enter Year 7. Thus, when they begin at the school in Year 7, teachers are in a good position to plan lessons which are well suited to their needs and this enables them to make a good start. Planning for the introduction of lessons based on the National Literacy Strategy across Year 7 are well advanced.
104. GCSE standards have improved because the school organises additional classes to prepare pupils for GCSE. Pupils are given the full syllabus of the examination at the beginning of Year 10, and this shows them the ground they must cover. This helps their motivation. The recent provision of overhead projectors and screens has served to raise staff morale and focuses pupils' attention very well. The provision of listening stations and the supply of recorded books serve to improve standards of listening. The recent introduction of drama to Key Stage 4 is already improving pupils' confidence and use of speech. An interactive computer programme has been introduced to improve the spelling of low attaining pupils. The school promotes the writing of holiday diaries. When pupils write these, their confidence in writing improves. Writing frames and the use of ICT continue to improve standards of writing, particularly in terms of accuracy and presentation.
105. Staffing is currently unsatisfactory as the department is one teacher short. This has led to lack of continuity of provision in some classes which have had to make do with supply cover. Standards are already being affected by the teacher shortage.
106. Since the last inspection in 1997, there has been a very good level of improvement. Standards have risen substantially in both English and English literature. Progress is now good at both key stages. In some lessons, especially in Key Stage 4, pupils make very good progress. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are no longer unsatisfactory at both key stages, although there was unsatisfactory behaviour in some lessons in Years 9 and 10. Teaching is now good with some very good lessons, particularly at Key Stage 4.

Literacy

107. Pupils' standards of literacy do not always support their learning. The school has begun to develop procedures to support literacy in all curricular subjects, but implementation is uneven. It is good in science, English, drama, history, ICT and modern foreign languages. Elements of good practice are also evident in other subjects, such as spelling checks and provision of definitions of key word in mathematics.
108. Pupils do not always listen carefully to the teacher or to each other and this is especially the case in lower attaining groups. In a Year 10 mathematics lesson, for example, pupils were very poor listeners, and some were deliberately inattentive. In many subjects, pupils sometimes had difficulty in following instructions. Pupils do not speak clearly or at length. In music, pupils have difficulty in expressing themselves in musical terms or in plain language. High attainers have good skills in group discussion in English and drama at both key stages but not all pupils participate effectively. In many subjects, average and lower attaining pupils find it difficult to provide detailed explanations of the work they are undertaking. In mathematics, for example, many pupils cannot explain how they solved a given problem.
109. All pupils read the simple texts put before them in lessons. Some high attainers read avidly to support their learning. Average and lower attainers are often content to look at magazines,

which reflect their leisure interests. Able pupils often demonstrate sound, sometimes good, skills in research work, especially in history, science and textiles technology. Average and lower attainers show limited skills of independent research. Teachers help pupils to develop and spell technical vocabulary in English, science and ICT. This results in better progress than when insufficient attention is given to the development and use of technical or subject-related vocabulary.

110. Pupils' writing frequently contains an unacceptable number of errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar, which improves on redrafting. Pupils make effective notes in history and science. Good emphasis on extended, evaluative writing and careful attention to the annotation of diagrams helps to explain the relatively high proportion of A* grades in ICT. Presentation improves when pupils use word processing to present their work in striking and original ways.

MATHEMATICS

111. Although pupils' performance in the National Curriculum tests for 14-year-olds was well below the national average of all schools in 2000, it was in line with the average of similar types of schools. Results in these tests have improved well so that the gap between the school's results and results nationally is narrowing steadily. The most recent results of 2000 were the best achieved by the school and considerably better than the results found at the time of the last inspection in 1997. There is a distinct trend of upward improvement. However, results were not as good as in English and science, where they were above the averages of similar types of schools.
112. Attainment at aged 16 as reflected in the GCSE results in 2000 show that the percentage of pupils gaining A*-C grades was below the national average. However they are a significant improvement over results obtained in the previous year and well above those obtained at the time of the last inspection. Results in 2000 for A*-C grades were below the national average but well above the average found in similar types of schools
113. The school's analysis of results by ethnicity indicates that pupils of Asian ethnic origin perform much better than those from white or African-Caribbean backgrounds at both key stages, largely because they start off with better attainment. Inspection evidence reflects similar findings.
114. By the age of 14, attainment, as observed from inspection evidence, is well below average and it is below average by the time they are 16. Over both key stages good progress has been made from pupils' low starting points. Whilst many with special educational needs make good progress, overall progress is satisfactory, and it is satisfactory for most of those with emotional and behavioural difficulties because there are insufficient learning support assistants. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds make similar progress to their white peers. The very few who are at the early stages of learning English make satisfactory progress. They are capable of making further progress but there is insufficient bi-lingual support for them and the support provided by their teachers varies. New initiatives in teaching practices and in the development of the numeracy strategy have contributed strongly to these advances. Most pupils across the school show a developing understanding of how to solve arithmetic problems mentally as well as by using pen and paper methods. Higher attainers are reasonably adept at handling mental arithmetic problems and have good levels of numeracy. Average and lower attainers solve simple problems with confidence and accuracy. They tend to be able to learn simple rules and apply them in familiar situations, but are not so good at finding their own methods of working out problems. Many require lots of practice and reinforcement at both key stages. Too many pupils also set work out badly in their exercise books, often only providing the answer without showing how they worked out the problem. This is particularly noticeable in the work of pupils in lower ability groups. In addition, many pupils are not very good at explaining what they have done or how they solved a given mathematical problem.

115. The quality of teaching is good overall. In all lessons seen at Key Stage 3 the quality of teaching was satisfactory or better with more than half of the lessons being good or better. Pupils' learning was often well matched to the interesting way in which lessons were taught. Teachers knew their subject and delivered their lessons enthusiastically. Planning of lessons was thoughtful and was closely aligned with National Curriculum attainment targets. A particularly good feature was the assessment and recording of pupils' performance. The teachers and the pupils know the levels of attainment that are reached and those that they are working towards.
116. At Key Stage 4 the majority of lessons were satisfactory and over a third of them were good or better. Preparation of lessons is usually sound and pitch work at an appropriate level to serve pupils' needs, though often the needs of abler pupils within a teaching group are met by providing them with extension exercises rather than different and more challenging work. All pupils were considered and there was full inclusion for pupils with special educational needs, especially those from the hearing impaired unit. Teachers from the unit provided excellent support for their pupils and enjoyed the lessons themselves. There was good rapport between the subject specialists and the support staff.
117. Where lessons were excellent or very good they had pace and engaged pupils purposefully. Teachers' board work was very good and attention to detail to assist and guide learning was first class. Skilful questioning gave opportunities for more able pupils to show what they knew and understood. Many times able pupils willingly took up challenges presented to them and demonstrated good powers of reasoning. Pupils were not afraid to ask for clarification and this was an encouraging sign in grasping new concepts. Mathematics came over as an exciting subject and the lesson became alive and vibrant. By contrast, lessons that were unsatisfactory and, even some which were satisfactory, lacked pace and the pupils were inattentive.
118. Pupils' learning tended to be satisfactory or better at both key stages. Progress within the lessons was noticeable by pupils' participation in oral work and in the ease with which written tasks were tackled after the teacher's demonstration and exposition were completed. Most lessons provided ample time for tasks to be done, though at times too much of the lesson was spent on pupils practising a technique using lots of examples, rather than moving forward more quickly to variations on the same theme, thus helping to develop their problem solving skills. Overall, in many lessons, insufficient attention is given to providing different work for pupils of differing ability in the same class.
119. Classroom displays are very good and provide a pleasant and stimulating learning environment. Annotated pupils' work, key words for current topics, grade descriptions for GCSE, action targets, marking criteria and charts with times tables all have their place. The information displayed on the walls is used to illustrate teaching and learning points and, therefore, used as an effective resource.
120. The teaching of numeracy and ICT both satisfy National Curriculum requirements. The former is now in an exciting phase where subjects across the curriculum are beginning to be more aware of the need to teach aspects of numeracy that lie within the compass of their subject areas. However, this is currently uneven across subjects, with opportunities missed for developing use of mathematics. In geography and history, for example, there is more limited use of numeracy than usually found. In science, only the ablest pupils make adequate use of numeracy as part of their science work. Often, those in lower ability groups deal only with basic application of numeracy. Within the mathematics department there is a strong initiative to raise standards and the designated numeracy lesson each week for each pupil in Year 7 is already welcomed by staff, enjoyed by pupils and beneficial to pupils' learning needs. The latter provides computer experience especially in the use of a graphical program, called LOGO, in the appreciation of shape and space. Folders show that a wide

variety of topics are studied successfully. However, the mathematics department has not taken a strong enough role in developing the numeracy in subjects across the curriculum.

121. The department is made up of four specialists. The head of department is a very able professional who provides effective leadership to the members of her team. She has used her experience to bring the documentation and organisation of the department up to an excellent standard. She leads by example and has made the department into a cohesive unit. However, not enough work has been done to co-ordinate, promote and monitor the use of numeracy across the curriculum.

SCIENCE

122. By the age of 14, attainment in science overall is below national expectations. The percentage of pupils achieving at least Level 5 and those reaching at least Level 6 were both well below the percentage achieving these results nationally in 2000. Results were, however, above the average of those achieved by schools with pupils from similar backgrounds and there is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls. Despite a dip in 1999, the Key Stage 3 results show a significant upward trend in the last three years.
123. In lessons seen and in the examination of pupils' work, there is a wide range of attainment by the age of 14, but more evidence of higher performance in all the National Curriculum strands for science than indicated by national test results. For example, pupils with high prior attainment rapidly develop good skills in experimental science and, by the age of 14, are beginning to show sound understanding of some scientific theories such as the particle theory of matter and the process of photosynthesis. Most pupils can carry out experiments safely and without support, although pupils with low attainment have difficulty in drawing conclusions related to their results and are hampered in writing about their work by weak literacy skills. Many pupils with high attainment show a good grasp of literacy and numeracy. They can write intelligently about their work and carry out calculations in a range of contexts including motion and the moment of a force. Pupils with low prior attainment and those with special educational needs are beginning, for example, to learn the science vocabulary associated with light and sound and some, with appropriate support from the teacher, can organise experimental work.
124. Attainment, by the age of 16, is below national expectations. In the GCSE double science award in 2000, the attainment of pupils at the end of Year 11 is well below the national average for those pupils achieving at least grade C. The proportion of those reaching at least grade G is only just below the national average. The performance of boys is better than that of girls. GCSE results are significantly above the average of those schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. In the last three years, there has been a strong upward trend in GCSE results.
125. Attainment from lessons and analysis of pupils' work is below average with significantly more pupils showing higher attainment than indicated by recent examination results. Pupils with high attainment show good understanding in a range of topics such as the structure of hydrocarbons and the concept of electrical resistance. They show well-developed numeracy skills and can calculate the percentage of different elements in a compound and many score very high marks for coursework in Year 11. Pupils with otherwise average attainment also produce good coursework and, for example, draw well-presented flowchart diagrams illustrating the carbon cycle. Pupils with low attainment show substantial weakness in numeracy but make good progress from Key Stage 3 in their ability to draw conclusions in experiments related to the measurements they have made.
126. The achievement of most pupils of all ages is good. The improvement in attainment of all pupils in each key stage, but particularly by the age of 16, is greater than that to be expected from their results at the end of the previous key stage. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress as a result of the good support they receive. The achievement of pupils

with impaired hearing is very good due to the expert help in lessons and to their own very positive attitude to learning. The school's analysis of results by ethnicity indicates that pupils of Asian ethnic origin perform much better than those from white or African-Caribbean backgrounds at both key stages, largely because they start off with better attainment. However, little difference was noted during the inspection of the progress of different ethnic groups, even though Asian pupils tend to demonstrate higher attainment.

127. Teaching is good overall. Almost three-quarters of lessons seen were good or better with one-third of all lessons at least very good. One excellent lesson was seen. There are no significant differences in the quality of teaching in the two key stages. Teachers are well-qualified, subject knowledge is secure and there is a good range of experience in the department. Where learning is very good, two features of teaching are at the heart of the department's recent and substantial rise in standards, particularly for pupils aged 15 to 16. These are the creation of a culture whereby pupils arrive at lessons ready and eager to learn, and teachers' good knowledge of the prior attainment of all pupils so that the gains in learning can build up progressively in a sequence of lessons, for which planning is uniformly good and often very good. Pupils in a Year 11 lesson were constantly engaged and challenged by a mixture of written work, questions and demonstrations to make connections across topics including waves, energy, chemical reactions and the structure of rocks. This gripping lesson came to a spectacular climax with the 'eruption' of a model volcano. All pupils in this lesson substantially increased their understanding of how several branches of science are often needed to explain a single phenomenon. In a very good Year 10 lesson on chemical bonding, sharply directed and very well structured questioning with uncompromising use of technical language on the subject of the previous lesson moved pupils forward in comparing and contrasting the differences in properties of ionic substances with those formed by covalent bonding. Learning is good in lessons where teaching is good because methods in these lessons take good account of the needs of different groups in the same lesson. A group of pupils in Year 11 with low attainment and poor listening skills learned effectively how to write up an experiment on germination as a result of the teacher spending time supporting each small group of pupils in turn in a situation in which a whole class approach would have been unsuccessful.
128. Pupils with special educational needs learn well as a result of good support from the class teacher and others in support. In particular, pupils with hearing impairment and the very few whose first language is not English learn especially effectively because the support given is very good. For example, in a good lesson with pupils in Year 8 carrying out experiments to investigate the transmission of light through substances, the learning experienced by pupils with hearing impairment was at least as good as the rest of the class due to the support teacher being able to maintain a dialogue with pupils using sign language during a whole class discussion. The challenging behaviour shown by some pupils is very well-handled in the majority of lessons and the variety of activities which are often used within a lesson are effective in making lessons go at a good pace.
129. There are some features of lessons, satisfactory in most respects, in which learning is inhibited by a number of factors. For example, in a Year 10 lesson on motion, there was a poor match between the expectations of the teacher and the prior attainment of the pupils who had insufficient numeracy skills to tackle the calculations demanded of them. In a few lessons, the structure of the lesson was inadequate. For example, the lack of clear links between activities left pupils insecure of the purpose of the lesson and, in one or two others, there was so much content to be covered that lessons ran out of time and no opportunity was left to review gains in knowledge or understanding. Work is marked consistently and teachers use encouraging comments effectively. However, not enough information is given to help pupils improve their work. In a minority of lessons, usually in groups of pupils with low prior attainment, some pupils expect constant support and show little inclination to work unaided. In other cases, teachers have to spend too much time managing the behaviour of pupils so that there is less time available for effective teaching and learning, leading to slower progress than expected.

130. Leadership and management in science is outstanding. The head of department has well-defined goals for the future and a clear understanding of the strategies needed to achieve them. The monitoring of the work of pupils is excellent and the thorough analysis of test and examination results gives a strong focus to the prime objective of driving up the achievement of all pupils. The use of assessment to develop both the curriculum and to review the effectiveness of teaching is carried out consistently and methodically. The development by a science teacher of a scheme whereby pupils in Year 10 act as mentors for pupils in Year 8 is proving to have a very good influence on motivation. This scheme is now being extended across the whole school. The monitoring of teaching is very good and continues to develop well. The strategy to delegate some of this work to a colleague is proving to have a positive impact on the work of the department.
131. The science curriculum is very good. Schemes of work are written to a common format and give good guidance to teachers on a whole range of key issues including, for example, numeracy and literacy. Extra-curricular activities such as the 'Pond Force' project and 'Towers' residential visit, along with other activities such as the science club, provide opportunities for pupils not only to further their learning in science out of school but also to take responsibility for their development as individuals. Accommodation is good and improving as a result of a current programme of progressive refurbishment of laboratories. There is good provision of technical support and the two hard-working technicians are valued members of the science team. Learning resources are unsatisfactory although the situation is improving. Some shortages of equipment means that pupils cannot benefit from appropriate hands-on experience and the stock of textbooks, particularly at Key Stage 4, is inadequate. The use ICT to aid learning in science is unsatisfactory. Although the delivery of ICT is planned in the curriculum, the department does not have the necessary resources to deliver it.
132. Improvement since the last inspection in 1997 has been very good. There has been good improvement in attainment at the age of 14 and the improvement in examination results at age 16 has been dramatic. Pupils now make good progress throughout their time in school and there have been significant improvements in the quality of teaching.

ART AND DESIGN

133. The art department has improved very significantly since 1997. Standards have risen from well below the national average at GCSE to being above average in 1998, and average in 2000. Whilst 1999 results were lower, pupils have done very well in art in all three years compared with their other subjects. These results represent considerable achievement for many pupils.
134. Pupils' attainment, by the age of 14, is below national expectations. By Year 9, whilst some pupils attain well, far more are below than above nationally expected standards. Standards of pupils' work in the current Year 7 are higher, showing a broadly average spread of attainment in their printing/textiles project based on abstract designs developed from the patterns of butterflies' wings. Less difference than usual exists between the standards of boys' and girls' practical work, with some boys producing good drawings and delicate colour work. Extremely poor research and writing skills and insecure understanding of the historical/critical aspects of the curriculum very often restrict attainment. While these weaknesses underpin many pupils' work, they are most extreme in boys'. By the age of 16, pupils' standards match the national average. The range of attainment in Year 10 is skewed below average, and the quantity of work produced so far is smaller than would be expected. Those pupils who attend regularly, and whose motivation is good generally, do well in art. The subject enhances most pupils' self-esteem, including those with special educational needs and particularly those with hearing impairments whose progress is often good. Particularly talented individuals attain the highest grades, with some of the school's few A*s coming from this department. In lessons seen the only under-achievement was from pupils

whose behaviour and motivation were poorer. Their progress has also been compromised by recent staff absence and the use of supply teaching. The prolonged absence of the head of department and concurrent maternity leave of the other teacher have impacted adversely on many aspects of pupils' work. The school's strong liaison with another local school has been helpful in providing pupils with a 'loaned' supply teacher whose expertise is currently having a beneficial effect in redressing the slippage in standards.

135. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Much current classroom practice is good, but the adverse effects of staff absence are clear when judging the impact of teaching on pupils' progress over time. This has been much less effective this academic year. Staff absences have resulted in lost work, time wastage in searching for resources and the demotivation of some pupils. Others, particularly in Year 11, have been able to maintain the degree of independence clearly expected of them by regular staff. They remain sufficiently self-motivated to sustain their interest and enthusiasm for the subject. Expectations of pupils' behaviour and commitment, and of the standards of their artwork, were high on the week of inspection. These expectations were resisted by some pupils who thus learned less well than they might. The schemes of work currently in place are insufficiently detailed to provide a good framework from which teachers can plan their lessons. These schemes of work do not incorporate proper assessment opportunities, opportunities for the use of ICT and regular homework tasks. The latter is further hampered by lack of provision of sketchbooks, thus currently pupils cannot develop good habits in recording their research and investigation. Pupils do not sufficiently understand the process of designing, modifying their work, and carrying it through to practical realisation as a result of lack of use of sketchbooks. Understanding of this process is still weak as at the time of the last report in 1997.
136. The last report in 1997 was extremely critical of almost all aspects of this department. Almost all the issues mentioned have improved very well. Pupils' progress and attitudes are much more positive. Teaching seen was much better. The department's use of assessment and the regular inclusion of homework are still to be addressed.
137. Given the temporary nature of staffing, including in the role of the head of department, at the time of this inspection, it is not possible to make a clear judgement on the quality of leadership and management. However, the senior leadership team have kept a close eye on the department during the absence of the head of department and have provided good support to maintain work in this area to at least a satisfactory standard.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

138. Last year, the overall results from both GCSE examinations and teachers' assessments of pupils aged 14 were below average. However, GCSE results in textiles technology were in line with national averages and good when compared to pupils' attainment at the start of the course. On the other hand, results for resistant materials for 2000 were very low when compared to schools nationally. Neither were they as good as many other subjects in the school. However, they are improving.
139. Pupils' GCSE examination results at age 16 and the results of teachers' assessments at age 14 have improved significantly over the past two years. The test scores for 14-year-olds last year were getting quite close to the national average score, with 53 per cent of pupils gaining the expected Level 5. The percentage of GCSE grades A*-C in textiles technology more than doubled between 1998 and the year 2000. In the same time period the results in resistant materials technology also improved though overall results were very low. Since the textiles results mostly involved girls, their examination performance was much better than that of the boys who mostly chose to work with wood and metal. However, the number of boys taking textiles is increasing and girls were observed working effectively with wood.
140. From inspection evidence, pupils' attainments in resistant materials by the ages of 14 and 16 are well below average but good progress was often made in lessons. However, a significant

number of pupils in textiles lessons were not only making good progress but also matching or exceeding the average attainments of pupils of the same age nationally.

141. By the age of 14, pupils in textiles carry out appropriate research tasks. They use computers effectively to display the results of their surveys. They also effectively apply ideas from other subjects when designing in fabrics. They are less confident, however, when asked to evaluate their information sources. They can talk about the modifications they have made but the modifications too rarely appear in their own 'step by step' plans. The quantity of work produced by Year 9 in resistant materials is smaller than it should be.
142. By the age of 16, pupils make good quality furniture and storage units mainly from wood but also with square section metal pieces for table legs. They mark out and cut joints accurately but too rarely work from their own plans. However, some do refer to rough sketches and they are becoming more used to making and using lists of materials to be cut. They use both hand and power tools effectively. In textiles technology pupils investigate the properties of fabrics by conducting thorough tests. They use previously taught skills to design and make a range of sound quality products. They have become used, through the teacher's good interventions, to using their own notes as they thoughtfully check on progress and quality. This is why examination results in textiles are relatively high.
143. In both subjects the inclusion of all pupils in lesson activities is impressive. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support both from the learning support staff and the technician, as for example when learning how to sew accurately with machines. In resistant materials pupils with hearing impairment enjoy working with adults such as the 'neighbourhood engineer' who is deaf and who provides a very effective role model. In the same lesson, a pupil explained enthusiastically that the group had been together for five years and were used to helping each other. Their observed behaviour fully justified the comment he had made. In another lesson a new pupil who spoke Punjabi only received good support from bi-lingual peers and from the teacher as he gained experience in the use of a power sander. Pupils from different ethnic backgrounds all make good progress, for example when designing and making attractive fabric products.
144. Pupils generally make good progress because of the good overall teaching. Though it ranges from excellent to poor, it is often good or very good, occasionally exemplary and rarely less than satisfactory. Good teaching in textiles technology ensured that pupils' behaviour improved to the point where all were working so well that the teacher had time to encourage others. Pupils worked thoughtfully and well as they used stencils, leaf prints and computers to enhance their appliqué designs. The teachers' good knowledge of commercial methods enabled pupils, for example, to understand why flat packed furniture is popular and to succeed, after much effort and tribulation, in the making of three-dimensional scale paper models of garments. The teachers are increasingly using methods to improve the pupils' literacy skills, for example putting sentences in the correct order to describe the correct use of a sewing machine. In textiles and in resistant materials pupils read scale lines accurately and calculate sizes needed for garments and these activities help with their numeracy.
145. Pupils made good progress when the teachers' expectations were high and appropriately linked to the tests or exams to be taken. Teaching, at its best, enabled pupils to work energetically, enthusiastically and accurately. For example, in a textiles lesson, Year 8 pupils, some of whom had not found learning easy, progressed in a single lesson from being initially almost speechless when challenged, to confidently use specialist words by the end of the lesson. They were initially over dependant upon the teacher but moved on to confidently apply knowledge and skills when designing and making a patchwork. Their attitudes were good and they were able to discuss effectively the use of the patchwork on garments they would be prepared to wear. Pupils' progress was sometimes excellent because of the teacher's ability to give them the confidence they needed to solve problems themselves. Because the teacher gave very good guidance, managed the class very well and organised the resources very well the pupils were amazed at the level of their own

progress. They left at the end of the lesson with satisfied smiles on their faces. Not surprisingly, these pupils showed considerable respect for the staff present, for each other and for each other's achievements. In other lessons for pupils aged 11 to 14, they produced good quality decorated fabrics in good variety and they worked effectively with resistant materials to make models of aircraft because the teachers had good knowledge and good skills. Pupils were required to be precise when sewing and when writing step-by-step plans and cutting lengths of wood.

146. Year 11 pupils responded very well to the subject and progressed very well both in textiles and when making products from wood. Pupils were proud of their 'throwovers' and work-wear. They had clear ideas about the high GCSE grades they expected to attain. Progress was very good in a lesson with Year 10 pupils because the teacher was using her own recent training to encourage the pupils to link the textiles with commercial processes, for example to design and make with minimum wastage of materials. The teacher also set the pupils a good example with regard to work rate and quality when designing and making. She also gave good demonstrations to individuals and groups.
147. Some aspects of the teaching were not effective in enabling pupils to make progress more independently. In one lesson, for example, the teacher talked too rapidly so that the pupils lost interest and failed to learn the skills they needed, i.e. to confidently mark out and cut the wood strips with the required degree of precision. Pupils were sometimes asked to read about important ideas or targets from text that was too dense or too complex or else not clearly written on the blackboard. Because of this, the pupils failed to understand what was required or else worked with reduced levels of enthusiasm for what was in other respects a good lesson activity in food studies. Progress was occasionally poor because the pupils had not been inspired in the past and 'do not like this subject' or else they had received too little continuous time with the teacher to establish mutual respect.
148. Progress, since the last inspection in 1997, has been satisfactory overall and very good in the last two years. Previously pupils' behaviour was unsatisfactory in seven out of ten lessons whilst it is now satisfactory or better in nearly all lessons. Pupils now work safely in all lessons seen, though there are no safety lines around the machines. Homework is better organised than it was in 1997. The accommodation is better used now with the textiles room adjacent to the other rooms. However, some rooms are under-used and the environment is less stimulating than it ought to be. Technical support is much improved and the senior leadership team effectively monitors the department's progress.
149. Variations in teaching and learning and the response of pupils are a consequence of inconsistencies in departmental planning although this is much better than it used to be. The planned sequence of lessons does not fully meet the requirement of the National Curriculum because topics such as sensing and control and pneumatics are not covered. The range of materials and processes is too narrow at Key Stage 4. Assessment procedures are inconsistently applied by teachers in resistant materials and textiles. Teachers new to the school and teachers working outside their own subjects are not well enough supported by detailed enough planning. Opportunities provided to share expertise within the department are infrequent slowing down departmental development. Leadership and management of the area are not as good as they should be because not enough has been done to tackle the inconsistencies in planning, assessment and standards.
150. Computers are used to enhance the appearance of products and folders and to produce charts and graphs from pupils' own enquiries but this aspect of technology needs to be further improved. Computers are not used to develop pupils' understanding of control and CAD/CAM. This is unsatisfactory. Marking to find out what pupils already know is sometimes very good and it enables the teachers to set just the right task for them to do next so that they keep improving. However, the pupils themselves have a bigger part to play in this process. The introduction of clear statements to guide the pupils when they mark some of their own specific activities will also enable parents to become more involved in the pupils'

personal development. Some important resources are underused, e.g. food technology and metalworking equipment.

GEOGRAPHY

151. The GCSE results in 2000 and 1999 were significantly below the national average for both higher A*-C grades and overall A*-G grades. While some candidates did achieve above their target grades, most pupils made insufficient progress.
152. Although levels of attainment are very low on entry in Year 7, too little progress is made across Years 7 to 9. The only group in line with the expected National Curriculum level, by the age of 14, is the top group. Overall attainment is well below the national average. Achievement over time is hindered by weak retention of information together with the adverse influence of poor behaviour on standards. Some pupils can make decisions on geographical problems, when given the chance, as for example in Year 7 examining the best site for a new factory. Most pupils, other than those in the top group, display weak basic mapping, graphical and diagrammatic skills. Knowledge of key geographical ideas and key words is also well below expectation.
153. By the age of 16, attainment overall is still well below the national average and from assessments already carried out and observation in lessons and books, GCSE performance in 2001 is likely to be similar to last year. Books in Year 11 indicate a poor attitude to presentation, with far too many examples of unfinished work. In one lesson however, pupils were confident in expressing opinions about the conflict of land use in National Parks and in this lesson good progress was made. Too many pupils in both Years 10 and 11 are underachieving. Pupils also display weak analytical and evaluative skills in their urban coursework study on Wolverhampton. There have been no significant differences in attainment between boys and girls in GCSE but girls strongly outnumber boys in the top set in Year 9.
154. While teaching overall is just satisfactory, there is some unsatisfactory teaching and in a number of the satisfactory lessons some weaknesses impinge upon pupils' progress. In the small number of good lessons, clear lesson objectives which meet pupils' needs are set and tasks are appropriate. In other lessons however, insufficient thought has been given to the use of strategies, which not only meet individual needs but also motivate pupils to improve the standard of their work. Progress in learning is also reduced by the attitudes and behaviour of a significant minority of pupils and by the inability to adequately manage classes to enable pupils to achieve their true potential. Often too little attention given to the development, use and understanding of geographical language. Too little attention is given to the development of independent thinking and writing at length.
155. Marking is carried out regularly, but in some books insufficient attention is given to the correction of poor spelling, particularly of key geographical words. Where pupils are prepared to be positive towards work and the teacher plans well and maintains a satisfactory working pace in lessons, satisfactory progress is made. This was seen in a lesson in Year 9 on earthquake processes and their consequences. As was the case at the time of the last report, expectations between teachers are inconsistent and higher attaining pupils are not always challenged sufficiently rigorously. Careful monitoring of individual performance at GCSE to ensure work is up to date and pupils achieve at least in line with their targets is not carried out. The provision of support for hearing impaired pupils is of a high quality and has a very positive effect on the good and very good progress often made by these particular pupils. There is very little support for other pupils with learning and behavioural needs and these pupils make unsatisfactory progress. When supported in class by teachers, who are aware of their particular needs, satisfactory progress is made, which is equal to the majority of pupils up to the age of 14. Pupils on the GCSE course are making unsatisfactory progress.

156. Geography is part of the humanities faculty, which continues to be well led, particularly in terms of its administration. There are good schemes of work and a range of appropriate guidance in terms of policies and future planning. Limited attention is given to widening teaching and learning styles and strategies to raise pupils' interest and to improve behaviour management in lessons. Good progress has been made in developing the use of computers as a means of gathering information and presenting and analysing data. Too little practical/field study based work is provided. The only opportunity for all pupils is in Year 7 and this is totally insufficient. Too little progress has been made in tackling the issues from the last report. There is still a need to improve behaviour management, provide stimulating resources and tasks and gain consistently high expectations of pupils if standards are to rise from the low current base.

HISTORY

157. At the last inspection, attainment by most pupils was below the national expectations for their age. Teacher assessments of pupils aged 14 show attainment has improved slightly between 1997, the time of the last full inspection, and 2000, but remains below the national average. The use of grouping by ability and improvements in standards of literacy is having a positive effect. As a result, attainment amongst pupils in the higher sets in Years 8 and 9 is close to national average, but overall it is lower than found nationally. Attainment by the age of 16 also remains below the national average. The number of pupils who achieve grades A*-C in GCSE examinations has been more consistent of late though still significantly below average, while for grades A*-G the school is nearer, though still below, the national average. Pupils' historical knowledge is better than the results of GCSE examinations indicate as poor literacy often prevents them from gaining higher grades, even though inspection evidence shows they have acquired sufficient skills, knowledge and understanding to be capable of higher performance. Achievement, given pupils' attainment on entry, is good in both key stages and much improved because teaching is better than it was at the time of the last inspection in 1997 and pupils now have individual targets, which show what they must do to improve their grades. Pupils with special educational needs are also making good progress through both key stages. Work is planned to accommodate the targets set in their individual education plans. As a result, there has been improvement in writing and vocabulary, which are better than reported at the last inspection especially amongst pupils aged between 11 and 14, though much remains to be done to improve the overall literacy of most pupils, particularly those aged between 15 and 16. Good teaching and effective support from staff from the unit for hearing impaired pupils are having positive effects on their attainment and participation in lessons.
158. Inspection evidence shows that the good grasp of chronology and use of timelines in both key stages has been sustained. Year 7 pupils sequence a series of events by date correctly and know that 1066 is in the eleventh century. Good progress is made by pupils in Year 8, whose understanding of the term 'stereotype' is sufficiently well developed to enable them to recognise it in films and an everyday situation. One of the teaching improvements has been the way in which pupils are more involved in their lessons than at the time of the last inspection. This is having a good impact across Years 7 to 9, but only about one third of pupils contribute ideas regularly. Where this occurred successfully, as in a Year 9 lesson about the Great War, pupils showed surprise, horror and disbelief at the conditions soldiers experienced in the trenches. As a result, they made good progress in understanding suffering and improving their knowledge of the period, through terms such as 'no-man's land' and 'trench foot'. At Key Stage 4, pupils are making good progress in applying themselves to the skills of interpreting historical sources and enquiry. In these activities they use their study skills, such as note taking, effectively when producing course work. Higher attaining pupils regularly use their detailed knowledge in discussions. In a lesson relating different aspects of propaganda, such as the means, effect and purpose, to the Nazi party of the 1930's, this was clearly demonstrated as part of the teachers' expectations.

159. The quality of teaching is good, which is a significant improvement since the previous report. It has been achieved due to a more consistent approach to lesson planning and organisation, particularly the use of assessment information to set individual targets. All teachers are now qualified in the subject. Consequently, in question and answer sessions, pupils' responses are more rigorously challenged, creating further questions which has a positive effect on the rate and depth of learning. The consistency in approach has not detracted from the individual characteristics each teacher brings to their lessons. This is shown in the effective working relationships within classes and good effect this is having on pupils' willingness to participate in lessons. Teachers take their responsibility for improving literacy seriously. Lessons offer regular opportunities to speak and read aloud from texts, as well as writing from different points of view or comparing evidence. Some responses are more willing or enthusiastic than others, but pupils' overall attitude towards work is positive because they understand what they have to do and that their contributions are valued. No serious disruption of lessons was observed, although the end of lessons was not always well managed when pupils began to clear away as soon as the session bell sounded.
160. The subject is led effectively and has a clear sense of direction. This influence is shown in changes in teaching styles and the use of assessment information to provide a benchmark for pupils to measure their progress. Wider use of ICT and a higher standard of presentation in workbooks are identified as areas for improvement.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

161. Overall attainment by the end of Year 9 is in line with that in other schools nationally. The results of teacher assessments were deemed to be well above average in the year 2000, but they did not take account of the pupils' performance in all aspects of the subject. Pupils do indeed have very good skills in using powerful business-standard computer programs to organise and present information. During the inspection, Year 8 pupils applied these skills very confidently and effectively in religious education, where the insertion of pictures and other images developed the spiritual quality of work on miracles, and in English, where pupils were able to explore the use of fonts, letter styles, pictures and images to help develop their persuasive language in advertising. Pupils from Year 7 onwards were able to animate on-screen presentations in work on a variety of themes. However, while Year 9 pupils were skilful in using video and CD ROM facilities to improve their understanding of life during World War 1 in history, pupils in all years do not make enough use of ICT to gather information. Pupils at both key stages do not have the opportunity to use computers to control equipment and to measure and monitor events, and so their understanding and skills are weak in these matters.
162. The first time pupils were entered for GCSE was in 2000. Their results represented very good achievement for the pupils concerned, with the proportion of A*-C grades gained being broadly in line with the national average. One-third of the group gained a grade A or A*, which is proportionally well above national norms. Girls, however, did not do as well as boys. Current Year 11 GCSE work is of a similar standard. Pupils following the course have a thorough understanding of computer software and systems and, among higher attainers in particular, strong skills in evaluating their use. Only a minority of pupils, though, follow the GCSE course, and overall standards across Years 10 and 11 are below those in schools nationally because those pupils who do not follow an accredited course have weaker skills. Those taking the full GNVQ course in Year 10 have satisfactory skills in presenting information, but their competence in the use of spreadsheets to process numerical data is weak. Among pupils who do not follow courses in ICT, standards are well below those expected and basic weaknesses are apparent in, for example, the use of toolbars in word processing.
163. Given relatively low standards of attainment on entry to the school, pupils do well to achieve standards equal to those found nationally by Year 9. However, while achievement on the

GCSE course is very good, other pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not build sufficiently on their attainment in Key Stage 3, and so do not achieve high enough standards.

164. Pupils with special educational needs make generally good progress. Those with hearing impairments play a full and active role in lessons and benefit from some excellent signing support. Those with learning difficulties make effective use of computer programs to enhance their basic skills in numeracy and literacy. Where observed in Key Stage 3, the very few pupils at the early stages of learning English as an additional language made good progress, through a combination of focused support from the teacher, easy-to-interpret guidance booklets showing annotated pictures of the computer screen, and their own determination.
165. The teaching is good. In ICT lessons across Key Stage 3, a lively and engaging approach by the teacher helps to build strong relationships with the pupils. The teacher has a good understanding of the capabilities of individual pupils. An effective use of praise and, where appropriate, reprimands and sanctions, helps keep pupils highly motivated across the fifty-minute periods. The teacher constantly refers to target levels of performance for pupils during practical work in lessons and in the marking of books. As a consequence, pupils are well aware of the meaning of the level at which they are working and what they need to do to improve. The teacher prepares clear and helpful guidance booklets to help pupils master new computer programs. Lessons to develop pupils' skills in the use of PowerPoint on-screen presentations yield some rapid improvements in pupils' technical competence, but the presentations lack substance and impact because pupils are not fully prepared: they have insufficient background knowledge of their themes, and are not briefed on who the presentations are for. Homework tasks do not take sufficient opportunities to get pupils to research in greater detail into their themes.
166. Across both key stages, pupils are given some good opportunities to use computers effectively to support their learning and improve the quality of their work in English, mathematics, history, geography and religious education. There are, however, insufficient opportunities offered to pupils in science, design and technology, music and physical education, with the consequence that pupils do not adequately learn about the application of computer technology in the control of equipment and in the measuring and monitoring of events.
167. Pupils are thoroughly prepared for GCSE coursework and exams in ICT through clear guidance from their teacher. On the GNVQ course, though, pupils have made inadequate progress, partly because the current lack of on-line teaching support has left them very short of teaching time. Sometimes, there is also a lack of clarity about the GNVQ course aims and structure among teachers and pupils.
168. The subject is well led and managed, and has made very significant improvements in standards of attainment, teaching, and learning since the 1997 inspection, though progress since the 1997 inspection has not been as rapid. The commitment to improvement in standards in the subject is strong, within the department itself and among the senior managers who monitor its work carefully. A very good range of extra-curricular clubs is available to enable pupils to develop computing skills and to use computers to complete homework tasks and projects. The school's priorities for development are mostly appropriate, and satisfactory progress has been made since the 1999 inspection, particularly in relation to extra resources, better accommodation, and improved staff training. There is still some way to go, however, in meeting the statutory requirements which were central to the issue identified in the 1999 report. In particular, there is not as yet a clear plan to offer all pupils a programme to develop their ICT skills at Key Stage 4, and, until this happens, the requirement to assess and report on pupils' capability in the subject cannot be fully met. Plans exist to address weaknesses in the use of computers in subjects, but these have not been fully implemented and there is insufficient co-ordination of the use of ICT across the curriculum.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

169. Standards in languages have improved significantly since the last inspection of 1997, and particularly since the beginning of the current school year.
170. The majority of pupils study Spanish. In 2000, the GCSE results attained at A*-C were well below the national average and slightly lower than in the previous year. Results at A*-G were close to the national average. Girls attained higher grades than boys, although the results attained by both boys and girls were higher than the same pupils attained in most other subjects. In 2000, results in French at A*-C were below the national average but significantly higher than in previous years and better than in most other subjects. Results at A*-G were broadly in line with the national average, and slightly higher than in the previous year. Girls attained higher grades than boys, although both boys and girls performed better than they did in other subjects. The small group of pupils who study GCSE Punjabi do well and over the past few years all who have taken the course have gained a grade A*-C. This performance compares well with national averages.
171. Currently, pupils' attainment in Spanish in Year 9 is in line with national expectations and higher than in their teachers' most recent assessments. Most pupils in Year 7 including those with special educational needs make good progress in understanding lessons delivered entirely or substantially in the foreign language. Hearing impaired pupils achieve equally well through signing or by using specialised equipment. Pupils extract the gist and detail of taped conversations and statements, and learn to exchange greetings and courtesies, as well as speaking and writing about their daily lives. Pupils in Year 8 develop their language well, learning to describe where they live or writing and performing dialogues about buying food or ordering a snack. Their descriptions of people they know are detailed and some form the basis for attractive three-dimensional wall decorations. By the age of 14, lower attaining pupils are able to express their likes, dislikes and preferences clearly in speech and writing, although a minority are hesitant or inaccurate in their speech. Higher attainers produce longer pieces adapted to such purposes such as informal letters or accounts of events in the past. The majority of pupils acquire good insight into the workings of Spanish grammar, initially building an awareness of gender and number, then developing more complex structures using the infinitive form and various tenses of verbs. A few are hampered by irregular attendance and their work is incomplete.
172. Currently, the progress and learning of most pupils studying French and Spanish for GCSE is good, although their overall attainment is below average. Consistent and frequently dynamic teaching have improved many pupils' standards of speaking and writing, so the attainment of a substantial minority now corresponds to the higher GCSE grades. Higher attaining pupils learn and use a good, wide range of language effectively. They speak and write informatively, often imaginatively, expressing the humour or disappointment of recently encountered situations such as work experience or holidays. Some have additional fluency developed on study holidays in Spain. Lower attainers, including some pupils with special educational needs, consolidate the basic language acquired earlier, and learn to deal with situations such as booking accommodation and retrieving lost property when living and travelling abroad. A minority of older pupils, coming from other schools and used to other languages, find the work difficult and achieve little, as do those whose learning has previously been disrupted through absence or staffing problems. Pupils occasionally make good use of computers to design brochures and posters or to present their written work attractively. The department does not fully exploit the benefits of ICT at present.
173. Currently, Punjabi is being taught only in Year 10 as there was no take-up for it amongst pupils currently in Year 11. Standards of attainment in Punjabi are broadly similar to national averages and the progress being made by pupils is good, particularly in relation to reading and writing skills. All pupils learn the Punjabi characters and symbols quickly and most are writing short sentences with reasonable accuracy, with the highest attainers writing at

length. Able pupils read with good confidence, others hesitate on new or difficult words, though almost all can follow a text when it is being read out in class. Most pupils successfully follow taped conversations, instructions and expositions in Punjabi in the classroom. Speaking skills are the weakest with many pupils lacking the confidence to speak, with the result that their speech is often hesitant and, at times, inaccurate.

174. The quality of teaching is good overall. A third of lessons seen were very good. Teachers are fluent in French and Spanish, using the languages they teach in a challenging or supportive way, according to their pupils' ability and needs. They are thoroughly familiar with the National Curriculum and the requirements of the GCSE examination, so a logical progression is evident in most pupils' acquisition of skills and knowledge. Lessons are well planned, often including a sequence of short, varied activities that engage pupils' enthusiasm and allow them responsibility for their own learning. Pupils enjoy learning to speak and listen by playing familiar games, handling prompt cards and acting out simulations such as buying food and clothing. Occasionally the level of language proves too demanding so teachers reiterate or simplify the content to ensure that everyone understands. They deal quickly and firmly with any incidences of inattention, so that disruption of learning is minimal. Teachers judiciously limit the content of some lessons for lower attainers to the acquisition of key vocabulary. Preparation for reading examinations is carefully organised to train pupils to work efficiently with source materials including dictionaries. Teachers stimulate and sustain pupils' interest by exploiting authentic resources ranging from real foods to articles taken from the Internet. They work in close co-operation with colleagues and assistants to include pupils with special educational needs, and most impressively those with hearing impairment, in all aspects of language learning. Teachers' assessment of pupils' attainment is continuous and meticulously recorded. They acknowledge and reward good speaking and writing, displaying the best examples of finished work for other pupils to emulate. They employ the most recent methods of data analysis to predict and encourage optimum performance in the GCSE examinations, although their high expectations are tempered by a realistic appraisal of their pupils' abilities. Teachers make regular use of homework to extend and prepare the content of their lessons.
175. Teaching in Punjabi is also good, displaying many of the good features of teaching described in the paragraph above. A particular strength of the teaching observed was the very good use made of on-going assessment to promote pupils' learning. Based on responses from pupils, for example, the teacher adjusted his questions or provided more intensive tuition on areas he recognised as requiring greater reinforcement. There was a good range of activities which focused on all the four skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing. Different activities were provided for pupils at different stages of learning Punjabi, and the lesson was consistently taught in Punjabi, thus making good use of the teacher's skills in the language and modelling them for pupils.
176. There is currently a head of department in training, and interim arrangements are working effectively to oversee the work of the department and to continue to promote the development of the subject. The languages department is staffed by a buoyant and hard-working team. They have done much in the short time they have been working together to raise standards and restore the quality of educational provision to its current good level, following a period when staffing provision was decimated. There is a productive blend of established good practice and innovative teaching, complemented by recent training and expert external advice. Several significant improvements, such as consistently good achievement by a greater number of pupils are of relatively recent date, so it will require more time for the full effects, for example through improved performance in GCSE examinations, to be seen.

MUSIC

177. At the time of the inspection in 1997 standards of attainment in music by the age of 14 were average. There are no results of teacher assessments available for 14-year-olds in 2000 but

in lessons and work seen during the inspection they are well below average. By the age of 16, standards of attainment are well below average, as they were at the time of the last full inspection of 1997. Of the 10 pupils entered for GCSE, only one gained grade C, however as numbers taking GCSE music are small, comparisons and trends are not statistically significant.

178. Pupils' basic skills in music are weak, for example, when playing keyboards most use one finger which inhibits their understanding of musical shape and pattern. These weaknesses have a detrimental impact on both composition and performance. Girls do slightly better than boys and are more willing to try out ideas in improvisation and more formal composition. There is very little difference in the performance of different groups of pupils except in some low ability groups where pupils with behavioural problems are not managed effectively enough or supported and helped to keep to the task. In these lessons, attainment is even weaker. Pupils do not use musical terms either to describe what they hear or to discuss their own work. The department has identified pupils with particular talents in music, but standards reached in class are not significantly higher than their classmates.
179. Pupils begin GCSE courses with a low level of skill and, apart from those who have additional instrumental lessons, continue to show well below average attainment. For all pupils listening and appraising with understanding is inadequate. They lack the wide vocabulary of musical terms and understanding of the development of music to answer questions in sufficient depth. In Year 11 pupils who have instrumental lessons, less than half, are able to play musical pieces at the required level of difficulty, but they do not make connections with other areas of music making to gain the fullest benefit. Most of the rest are at a very early stage of learning the keyboard. A small number of pupils use the computer for composition, which enables them to develop their ideas and record them easily. These pupils produce work which is in line with the expected level for a higher grade. The compositions of other pupils do not show a wide enough range of ideas and development of techniques. This includes one boy in the early stages of learning English.
180. Pupils underachieve quite significantly in music throughout the school. As they are not helped sufficiently to build basic skills systematically, they lack the building bricks with which to create and perform music. They encounter barriers which they cannot overcome by themselves. Their inability and often unwillingness to listen to each other and to their teacher also holds them back from higher achievement. Pupils with special educational needs or beginners in English are not making good enough progress principally because of weaknesses in teaching.
181. The quality of teaching has declined since 1997 and overall is unsatisfactory although there are some strong features in individual lessons. For example, pupils in a Year 8 class were seen to grow in self-confidence, as they were encouraged to try in turn to improvise a fill in Blues. In the minority of lessons where pupils are challenged to succeed, as in this example, they rise to the occasion and pick up energy and enthusiasm from their teacher. In too many lessons though, the pace is allowed to slacken, and pupils lose their concentration and learning slows. At its worst extreme, relationships and behaviour break down. However, on the rare occasions that music is effectively demonstrated and modelled to pupils, as seen particularly in instrumental teaching, they are inspired to improve their own performance. Planning for individual lessons does not take sufficient account of pupils' poor concentration, thus variety in activities and learning opportunities to meet the needs of different groups of pupils are not planned for. A narrow range of methods is in use across the department which does not give pupils enough opportunities to work together to make music as a whole class. Strategies to address weaknesses in listening are not fully in place. Singing is not used in lessons to help pupils to develop their musical memory and their inner ear. Homework, though identified in lesson plans and schemes of work, is not provided, thus opportunities to develop pupils' independence or to enable them to bring their own musical experiences into classwork are missed.

182. A new head of department has been in post since September. She is enthusiastic and committed to raising the status and standards in music, but intentions have yet to result in improvement, especially in the quality of teaching and the standards of attainment. A scheme of work and assessment policy in line with the new National Curriculum orders are in place and form the basis of the strategy. The department is housed in adequate accommodation but the resonant acoustics detract from attempts at focused listening. Resources in the form of classroom instruments are poor, consisting mainly of electronic keyboards in a poor state of repair. Valuable lesson time is lost collecting and returning them and installing batteries. Pupils have no opportunity to work with tuned percussion so their access to a variety of sounds is very restricted. The department has one computer which is used at Key Stage 4, otherwise the only access to ICT at Key Stage 3 is electronic keyboards.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

183. GCSE results in 2000 were well below the national average at grades A*-C and A*-G. The pupils performed better in their other subjects. Results have fluctuated since the last inspection in 1997 when standards were well below the national average. In recent years the choice of examination board has been changed twice and teaching standards have varied. The current syllabus introduced two years ago is now more suited to the needs of the pupils. Standards have risen and the quality of teaching has improved.
184. Standards reached by the majority of the pupils aged 14 are below the national expectation. When the pupils arrive in Year 7 they are well below average. This represents satisfactory achievement through the key stage. A minority of pupils have satisfactory ball handling skills in basketball. They understand how to attack and defend and they can outwit an opponent with change of speed and choice of pass. The majority of pupils know how to warm up correctly before exercise and they understand the importance of exercise for a healthy lifestyle. A significant minority find it difficult to transfer newly acquired techniques into the next part of the activity because they do not have the self-discipline to work consistently hard to the level that is required to be successful. They also find it difficult to remember tasks and rely heavily on individual teacher attention. When skills become difficult they tend to give up and revert to old habits. Their evaluative skills are also below average. However, the overall picture is improving progressively from Year 7 because the style of teaching has changed in the last two years from that of recreational games to educating the pupils about physical activities and principles.
185. Standards reached by the pupils aged 16 are below the national expectation. A significant minority are in line with the expectation. These pupils have increasingly refined skills and their performance is more consistent and effective in basketball, netball umpiring and trampolining. Overall, basic skills are weak because in the past they have not been used to practising skills before putting them into a game. Many pupils understand tactics and how to refine skills, but do not have the patience to apply them. Pupils' progress is satisfactory.
186. Pupils currently studying GCSE are well below average in their understanding of theory and below average in their practical work. They are attaining higher standards than the pupils from the previous two years and achieve well relative to their ability. The majority have an unsatisfactory depth of knowledge and recall of facts under examination conditions. They are generally not confident in the use of technical language and find it difficult to link practical and theoretical concepts. A few higher attaining pupils present written work that is well structured and researched. For example, project work on the 2000 Olympics showed a high level of interest, use of computers for presentation and a variety of writing styles from different viewpoints. In badminton, a few of the pupils are able to play shots with good technique and use power and touch to outwit their opponent. The majority has a limited range of shots and the girls especially are slow to anticipate the response from others.

187. The quality of teaching and its impact on the pupils' learning is good. This is an improvement since the last inspection when it was considered to be unsatisfactory. It is best between Years 7 to 9 where the new teaching methods are starting to have an impact. The quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11, though satisfactory, is less effective due to a significant minority of the pupils having poor attitudes to hard work. In these lessons the quality of learning is less than can be expected, especially for pupils with behavioural difficulties. They are easily distracted until given individual attention from the teacher. In the best lessons the teachers use their subject knowledge well to progress tasks logically, building the skills to transfer into the final activity. Too often however, the pupils are slow to change at the start of the lesson resulting in insufficient time to consolidate skills. The teachers' use question and answer sessions effectively to make the pupils think about how to improve their work and recall knowledge from past lessons using technical vocabulary. A good example of this was seen in a lower set health-related exercise lesson where the pupils had to take their pulse rate at various stages during the lesson. They then plotted their recovery rate on a graph and worked out, with provoking questions from the teacher, what affected their speed of recovery. As a result the pupils had a greater understanding of factors affecting performance.
188. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into lessons with tasks that are adjusted to their needs if required and they achieve well. Individual education plans are used effectively in the planning of lessons. A good example of this was seen in a GCSE theory lesson where the teacher's very good planning ensured that all pupils had a task that challenged them at their own level. The consistent ongoing assessment and individual attention throughout the lesson resulted in a far greater understanding of how the body physically responds to exercise. The pupils are mostly sensitive to the needs of those who are less able and ensure that those with hearing impairments are sure of the task. As a result these pupils make good progress relative to their ability. This is an improvement from the last inspection when these pupils made unsatisfactory progress.
189. The teaching of GCSE is improving. The teachers are becoming familiar with the new syllabus requirements but have not yet devised methods to encourage long-term recall of facts. Marking of work is constructive and targets are set resulting in improved work for those pupils who have the motivation to do well.
190. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities but a mixed response from the pupils. They are enthusiastic at the start but enthusiasm and commitment wanes. There is some success for teams at local level in activities such as athletics and soccer. The local community facilities and coaches are not effectively used to promote higher standards and attitudes to sport for life. There are also too many pupils choosing not to take part in lessons.
191. A change of teachers and rigorous monitoring of teaching has resulted in good improvement since the last inspection and a gradual improvement of standards from Year 7 upwards. The pupils are more inclined to practise skills, but still lack the level of perseverance to improve further in Years 10 and 11. There is a greater range of activities especially at Key Stage 3, but the boys do not have the opportunity to study dance. The assessment policy is linked to the new levels which have to be assessed nationally in PE but is not fully established for tracking pupils' progress from their standards on entry to the school. Expectations are not yet consistently high of both pupils' behaviour and work rate. The lack of a central departmental office creates difficulties in the sharing of resources and day-to-day discussions. The overall picture of sport in the school is not high profile.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

192. The GCSE results in 1999 and 2000 were well below the national average for both A*-C and A*-G grades. In relation to their attainment at the start of the course, some progress was made by a number of candidates.

193. Standards overall by the end of Year 9 are well below the expectations of the Wolverhampton Agreed Syllabus. In the top ability group pupils are achieving in line with expectations.
194. A significant number of pupils continue to have a very superficial knowledge of religious beliefs, practices and symbolism. They find long-term retention of knowledge very difficult and many are unable to recall what they have learnt in earlier lessons. Poor attitudes and behaviour from a significant number of pupils and weak teacher control, also adversely hinder attainment. Girls' attainment is generally higher than that of boys but not significantly when looked at in relation to national trends. No improvement has been made in standards since the 1997 report.
195. There are no GCSE candidates in the current Year 11. There is a small group of ten pupils on a GCSE course in Year 10. Attainment in relation to prior attainment is well below the average and is affected by a high level of absence, which hinders progress. Overall however, those who do attend regularly made satisfactory progress in relation to their attainment at the end of Year 9, in the lesson observed. The remainder of pupils in Years 10 and 11 are offered a small amount of RE within the PSE programme. Non-specialist teachers teach this in an 'ad hoc' manner. No lessons were available for inspection during the week and no written work was available to be assessed. Pupils are not receiving their legal entitlement and achievement is poor given there is no written work.
196. While satisfactory overall there was some unsatisfactory teaching. Weaknesses were also observed in some of the lessons judged satisfactory. The weaknesses include poor behaviour management, low expectations as to quantity and quality of work and a lack of appropriate challenge in class and for homework. Marking however is a strength and detailed comments and targets are written into pupils' books to help raise individual standards. They are not always followed up and too frequently incomplete work is allowed to go unfinished. Only in one lesson, on the inspirational aspects of the life of Martin Luther King, was the quality of teaching and progress any higher than satisfactory. Too often the pace of the lesson lacks rigour and a significant minority of pupils are allowed to interrupt the flow and continuity of the lesson with poor behaviour. This not only results in them underachieving but also reduces the progress of the majority who wants to work. No teaching was observed in the non-GCSE groups. Pupils from the hearing impaired unit are well integrated into classes and are well supported. As a result they make better progress than other pupils do. No support for other pupils with special educational needs was seen but progress overall was similar to that of the majority of pupils. Although the subject is taught in groups based on ability, too little attention is given to the provision of tasks to meet differing individual needs, as the range of attainment is wide, even in ability sets.
197. Homework is still set regularly but it is not always sufficiently challenging for the higher attainers. Computers are being well used and a good example was observed when pupils in Year 8 were using publishing software to produce word-processed leaflets on the miracles of Jesus Christ. Teaching of the GCSE course demonstrates secure knowledge and understanding, but the range of teaching and learning styles is limited and pupils are not always stimulated and motivated to work hard to raise their standards. A significant number of pupils are poorly behaved and this hinders their own and others' progress.
198. This subject is part of the humanities faculty. The scheme of work meets the requirements of the Wolverhampton Agreed Syllabus up to the age of 14. In Years 10 and 11 insufficient time is allocated to enable the agreed syllabus units of study to be full covered, outside the GCSE course. In fact several areas are not tackled at all. Wider range of teaching and learning styles, improved class control and raised teacher expectations is needed if standards are to be improved in line with many other subject areas. There has been too little improvement in standards or approach to key issues since the 1997 report.