

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **THE SUTHERLAND SCHOOL**

Telford

LEA area: Telford and Wrekin

Unique reference number: 123585

Headteacher: Mr D Madine

Reporting inspector: Mr B. Jones  
18462

Dates of inspection: 21<sup>st</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> May 2001

Inspection number: 190622

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 to 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Gibbons Road  
Trench  
Telford  
Shropshire

Postcode: TF2 7JR

Telephone number: 01952 605571

Fax number: 01952 605894

Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr K Austin

Date of previous inspection: May 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
18462	B Jones	Registered inspector		Information about the school. The school's results and pupils' achievements. How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9132	J Godfrey	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
12658	M R Beardsley	Team inspector	English Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	
19523	E Charlesworth	Team inspector	Music	
22173	J Evans		Physical education	
2683	D Gaulton	Team inspector	Geography	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
3643	D Jones	Team inspector	Mathematics	
13003	A McDermott	Team inspector	Science	
22458	G McGinn	Team inspector	History General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ).	
17868	E Metcalfe	Team inspector	Art and design Equality of opportunity	

13054	M Pennington	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
15678	J Radford	Team inspector	Religious education Provision for pupils with special educational needs	
2079	T Slack	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT) Design and technology	

The inspection contractor was:

Independent School Inspection Services  
15, The Birches  
Bramhope  
Leeds  
LS16 9DP

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33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The Sutherland School is an 11 to 16 mixed comprehensive school, located in the north of Telford. It is a smaller than average secondary school, having 560 pupils on roll. There are roughly equal numbers of girls and boys. Numbers in Years 7 and 8 are significantly higher than in other years, indicating a growing popularity in the local community. The pupils represent the full ability range. There is a higher than average proportion of lower attaining pupils in the school as a whole, but an increasing number of higher attaining pupils in Years 7 and 8. Overall, the pupils' attainment on entry was below the national average among pupils in Years 7 and 8 but was well below average for other years. The school's population experiences a high degree of mobility. Many pupils joining the school after Year 7 are representative of the full ability range, but overall, late entrants are well below average in their attainment. In total 35 per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is above the national average. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs is 30 per cent, which is above the national average, and seven per cent of pupils have statements of special educational need, which is well above the national average. There is a high proportion of pupils, totalling 11 per cent, with English as an additional language.

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

The Sutherland School is an effective school, which provides satisfactory value for money. The quality of the leadership of the headteacher and senior staff is good and ensures a clear vision for the school. Planning is good, and a developing strength is the systematic approach taken to monitoring and evaluating how effectively the plans are implemented and the impact this has on raising standards. The quality of teaching is good and pupils achieve well from a low level of attainment when they enter the school. The school is well organised and ensures a good level of care for its pupils. The attention paid to pupils' personal development is satisfactory and pupils receive good guidance and support.

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

- Pupils achieve well given their low levels of attainment when they enter the school.
- In art and design and in textiles and food courses in design and technology, pupils achieve very well and gain above average GCSE results
- The quality of teaching is good and leads to good learning.
- The quality of leadership of the headteacher and senior management team is good.
- The school is increasingly effective in evaluating the impact of its work in terms of the effects on standards.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- The school's provision for pupils' welfare and guidance is good and makes a positive contribution to the good relationships that exist in the school.
- Good opportunities are provided for pupils to take part in extra-curricular activities, particularly in music, drama and sport.



### What could be improved

- Pupils' general literacy and numeracy skills.
- Standards in mathematics, science and French.
- Pupils' levels of attendance.
- The school's effectiveness in tackling under-achievement, particularly among boys in Years 10 and 11.
- The attitudes and behaviour of the small proportion of disruptive pupils in the school.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual development.

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

### HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection in May 1997. The new headteacher and the senior management team have put into place good systems and strategies to evaluate the initiatives taken and continue this process of improvement. Because of this effective leadership over the past two years, the school has good capacity and the commitment to improve further. The results in public tests and examinations have improved. The quality of teaching has improved. The school has made a satisfactory response to the main issues identified in the last report and to other issues identified throughout the body of the report. However, pupils' rates of attendance are still below the national average, there is still some under-achievement among older boys, and there is too much inconsistency in teachers' approach to poor behaviour.

### STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE examinations	E	E	E	E

  

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

### HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

At the end of Year 9, pupils obtained results in the Year 2000 National Curriculum tests that were well below the national average and well below the results of schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. There is insufficient information to determine a trend that can be compared to the national trend, because there are no results available for the year 1996. However, results have improved in the years since the previous inspection. Current standards of work in Year 9 are below average overall, but most pupils achieve well in relation to their levels of attainment on entry to the school.

In the Year 2000 GCSE examinations, results were well below the national average and well below the results of pupils in similar schools. However, when account is taken of these pupils' attainment on starting their courses, they made good progress and achieved well. Present standards in Year 11 reflect these results in mathematics and French, in which levels of attainment are nearer to, but still well below, average overall. Here, some specific weaknesses in teaching do not meet the needs of all pupils. In English and science, current standards are higher, but still below average. Present Year 11 pupils have made good, and in some areas such as music and art and design, very good, progress and have achieved well. This achievement comes as a response to generally good, often very good and sometimes excellent teaching, and very good use of assessment procedures to inform teachers' planning. There is a small proportion of mainly older boys, whose attendance patterns are poor and who are under-achieving. The school is not complacent and continues to work hard to address this issue. The targets set by the school last year for GCSE were very challenging in view of the prior attainment levels of the year group. The pupils did not meet the targets set for obtaining five or more A\*-C grades or one or more A\*-G grades. However, the average points score per pupil did reach the target.

Standards of literacy and numeracy are below average. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress throughout the school, as do pupils with English as an additional language. The highest attaining pupils, now formally identified and provided for in Years 7 to 9, make good progress.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Satisfactory. The majority of pupils like coming to school and show a satisfactory level of commitment to school life.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory overall. Behaviour in lessons is often good and pupils respond well where teachers' expectations are high. There is some poor behaviour among a small minority of pupils.
Personal development and relationships	Satisfactory. Relationships between pupils and with their teachers are good.
Attendance	Attendance is unsatisfactory. Levels are below the national average.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The overall quality of teaching is good and results in good learning. In 67 per cent of the lessons observed, the teaching was good or better; in 17 per cent of lessons it was very

good or better and in four per cent it was excellent. The teaching was satisfactory in a further 30 per cent of lessons and unsatisfactory in three per cent. The teaching has improved overall since the previous inspection. There is now a greater proportion of very good and excellent teaching and significantly less unsatisfactory teaching. The quality of teaching is good in English. It is satisfactory in mathematics, but insufficient attention is paid to pupils' oral work and this impedes pupils' progress. In science the overall quality of teaching is sound, but there is some unsatisfactory teaching in which pupils' progress is adversely affected by poor behaviour and the teachers' inconsistent approach to dealing with it. The contribution made by subjects in general to the teaching of literacy skills is good and to numeracy skills is satisfactory.

Pupils with special educational needs are well taught. Similarly, pupils with English as an additional language receive good teaching. The school generally provides effectively for the needs of gifted and talented pupils, and they receive good teaching, which is supplemented by well-planned extra-curricular work and activities.

Where teachers clearly demonstrate high expectations relating to pupils' behaviour and the quality of work produced, they obtain a very positive response from pupils. In the best lessons, teachers make good use of a range of teaching strategies, including clear explanations of the aims of lessons and a review at the end of lessons in terms of the pupils' success in meeting the aims.

Where the teaching is less successful, it is usually because teachers are inconsistent in the way that they manage pupils' poor behaviour. On occasion, there is unsatisfactory planning and preparation of lessons. The lack of consistent approach across the school to poor behaviour means that difficult pupils experience different responses from different teachers. Where non-specialist teaching takes place, standards are not usually adversely affected except in numeracy in the core skills course, physical education and science. Teachers do not use form time effectively as a means of raising standards.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. It meets statutory requirements, provides well for the needs of all pupils and is appropriately broad and balanced.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. It reflects the good level of commitment of the school towards these pupils.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language.	Satisfactory. Pupils make good progress in line with that of their peers.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Satisfactory overall. The provision for spiritual development is unsatisfactory and the school does not meet the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship. The provision for moral and cultural development is satisfactory and for social development it is good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	This is a caring school. Pastoral care is good. The arrangements for child protection and the attention given to

	health and safety are good.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	The school has a satisfactory partnership with parents. The school prospectus and governors' annual report to parents do not contain all the necessary information.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. Senior staff and heads of subject departments give good support. The school is well managed and there is a good level of shared commitment amongst all staff to raise standards further.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school well. They are effectively involved in the strategic management of the school and make a good contribution to the major decisions taken. The governing body is effective in discharging its responsibilities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good, systematic and rigorous. It is a developing strength of the school.
The strategic use of resources	Staffing is adequate and there is a satisfactory match of teachers to the demands of the curriculum, though some teach outside their specialisms. The school has clear and appropriate priorities, which are supported by careful financial planning. The principles of best value are applied effectively and resources are used well.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> <li>• The teaching is good.</li> <li>• Teachers' expectations are high.</li> <li>• Pupils make good progress.</li> <li>• Their children like coming to school.</li> <li>• Parents find that the school is approachable.</li> <li>• The reputation of the school within the community is improving and higher numbers are choosing this school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A significant number of parents believe that there is too much unsatisfactory behaviour.</li> <li>• Parents feel that the school does not work closely with parents and that there is insufficient information about progress.</li> </ul>

The inspection team agrees with the positive views expressed. Inspectors found that there is some unsatisfactory behaviour and this has an adverse effect upon pupils' learning; teachers do not take a consistent approach in dealing with it. The inspection team agrees that relationships with parents could be further developed in order to improve attendance and support pupils' learning. The team found that the information to parents about pupils' progress is satisfactory. A significant proportion of parents who completed the inspection questionnaire were not satisfied that the right amount of homework is set. However, the parents who attended the pre-inspection meeting expressed general satisfaction about the use of homework and the team found that homework is used satisfactorily.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Pupils entering the school are of the full range of ability. There is a higher than average proportion of lower attaining pupils in the school as a whole, but an increasing number of higher attaining pupils in Years 7 and 8. Overall, the attainment of current Year 7 and Year 8 pupils when they entered the school was below the national average, but was well below average among pupils now in Years 9 to 11. At the end of Year 9, pupils obtained results in the Year 2000 National Curriculum tests that were well below the national average and well below the average of schools deemed to be similar on the basis of the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. In the same year, Year 11 pupils' results in their GCSE examinations were well below the national average and well below the average achieved in similar schools.
2. In the 2000 National Curriculum tests for Year 9 pupils, the proportion of pupils reaching level 5 and above was below average in English and well below average in mathematics and science. The proportion reaching level 6 and above was below average in science, well below average in English and in the lowest five per cent in mathematics. The average points score in all three subjects was well below the national average and the average in similar schools. The results obtained by boys were higher than girls' results in mathematics and science. In English the girls gained higher scores, but the gap was closer than the gap found in results nationally. When account is taken of the levels of attainment of this group of pupils when they entered the school, they made satisfactory progress through Years 7 to 9. Because there is not a complete set of data available, it is not possible to judge the trend in results over time, or to compare such a trend with the national trend.
3. In the 2000 GCSE examinations, the average points score per pupil was well below average, and the results over the past five years have been consistently well below the national average. The trend in improvement in results has been broadly in line with the national trend, showing that results are improving at the same rate as improvements nationally. When compared with examination results achieved in similar schools, the results were well below average. The school set targets for this group of pupils that were very challenging. The targets for the proportion gaining five or more A\*-C and the proportion gaining one or more A\*-C, were not reached. However, the target of 27 points as an average overall was reached. This group of pupils made very good progress through Key Stage 4 when their GCSE examination results are compared with their results in Year 9 National Curriculum tests. Girls' results were better than boys' and the gap between their results and national averages was smaller than the gap in boys' results. Girls have maintained a steady improvement over the past four years. Boys' results over the same period have deteriorated. There was some variation in performance at GCSE between subjects within the school. Pupils performed better in art and design, design and technology and in drama. Their results in English, mathematics, science and French were significantly lower than results in other subjects.

4. There are two factors to consider when evaluating the standards and achievements of pupils. First, there are small numbers in each year group and levels of attainment vary considerably year on year, usually between below average and well below average. Second, there is a high degree of mobility in the school's population. For example, over 50 per cent of the current group in Year 10 did not start the school in Year 7 and many of the pupils joining the school later are low attaining pupils who have low aspirations and poor attitudes towards the value of education. The information on pupils' attainment on entry therefore has to be treated with caution, since the composition of the groups currently being judged at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 is substantially different from that of the groups starting in Year 7. The work seen in the inspection showed that pupils make satisfactory progress overall in Years 7 to 9. The work of the current Year 11 group demonstrates that they have made good progress and achieved well. Last year's GCSE group made very good progress and achieved well in relation to their prior attainment.
5. Current standards in Year 9 are below average overall but higher than the standards shown in the results gained by pupils in 2000 National Curriculum tests. These pupils have made good progress through Years 7 to 9 and achieved well in relation to their prior attainment. There are some variations between subjects. Pupils make very good progress and achieve very well in art and design and music as they respond to the very good teaching and very good use of assessment and target setting. In mathematics and science, standards remain well below the national average, but the work shows improvement and pupils are making satisfactory progress. In these two subjects and in French some weaknesses in the teaching, specific to each subject, prevent good progress. In all other subjects, pupils make good progress and achieve well.
6. Current levels of attainment amongst Year 11 pupils are higher than those of the group who took their GCSE examinations in 2000 and this reflects good achievement in relation to their prior attainment. Levels of attainment are still well below the national average in mathematics, but pupils make satisfactory progress overall in this subject. In French, pupils' standards are well below average and their progress through Years 10 and 11 has been unsatisfactory. This is mainly due to earlier problems associated with the availability of suitably qualified and experienced teachers and to specific weaknesses in the teaching methods adopted that have denied pupils the opportunities to communicate effectively in French. Standards are below the national average in English, science, history and geography. However, pupils have made good progress in these subjects and achieved well in the main. In most other subjects pupils achieve well and make at least satisfactory and mainly good progress to reach standards in line with the national average. The exception is art and design, in which pupils have made very good progress to achieve at and above the national average. A minority of pupils, mainly boys with poor attendance records, under achieve.
7. Most pupils with special educational needs achieve well. They make good progress in the Year 7 'mini school' and in their core skills lessons. In whole-class lessons there is no difference between their rate of progress and that of other pupils. However, the progress of a minority of pupils with special educational needs is hampered by absence, especially in Years 10 and 11.
8. The highest attaining pupils throughout the school make good progress and achieve well. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress. No such pupils are at an early stage in their development of English; most are close to the

top level of language acquisition. Some of these pupils enter school with lower reading scores than their peers, but they make good progress, particularly during Years 7 and 8.

9. Pupils throughout the school have standards of literacy that are below average. Standards of speaking and listening are average. Pupils of all levels of attainment express their views and experiences clearly when given the opportunity, and they often listen well as shown in their responses to questions. Reading standards are below average. The majority of pupils enter the school with reading ages that are well below their actual ages. Their skills improve, particularly in Year 7 because of the core skills programme that focuses on literacy. They read a range of texts of increasing complexity, but comprehension for some middle and lower attaining pupils remains a weakness. Standards of writing are also below average. Higher attaining pupils' understanding of what they read is reflected in the good quality of the written assignments they undertake, particularly at GCSE. Middle and lower attaining pupils use subject specific vocabulary well, but for the most part their writing is below average and has weaknesses in spelling and punctuation which brings down the overall standard of their work.
10. Standards in numeracy overall are below average among a significant number of pupils throughout the age range, though on balance standards are satisfactory when account is taken of pupils' prior attainment. Higher attainers reach standards above average. In dealing with the everyday demands of numeracy the level of competence of pupils is broadly in line with expectations in history, geography, design and technology, mathematics and modern foreign languages. It is below expectations in science. The handling of number and measurement, mentally, orally and in writing is also in line with expectations except in science. Calculators are used well in mathematics. The application of spatial concepts is good in art and design. Year 8 pupils, for example, gain good spatial concepts in creating very complicated repeat patterns of Islamic interlocking designs. Pupils make good sense of information presented numerically and graphically in art and design, ICT and mathematics. Standards in graphical presentation are below those expected in geography and science.
11. The school has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. In Years 7 to 9, standards are improving as the school has adopted an effective system to counter the low levels of basic skills that pupils have on entry to the school. Improvements in the overall quality of teaching have led to good achievement by pupils in Year 11 in relation to their prior attainment and improvement has taken place in GCSE results in line with the trend nationally.

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

12. Pupils' attitudes are good and their behaviour is satisfactory. The majority of pupils like coming to school but attendance is below the national average and is unsatisfactory. In lessons, the attitudes of pupils are satisfactory overall but variable. In the best lessons, pupils are keen to learn and have good attitudes. They are well motivated, listen well to teachers and respond enthusiastically. They concentrate well on tasks and persevere. Pupils particularly enjoy practical activities such as those in art and design, music, drama and design and technology. They are proud of the work they produce in art and design and of their musical performances and achievements. Pupils are keen to extend their learning and



enjoy the Cell club (Centre for Extended Lifelong Learning). There is a good level of support for other subject clubs in science, ICT, expressive arts and physical education. However, in some lessons pupils arrive without the correct equipment, are slow to settle and have little enthusiasm for learning. In some subjects, such as modern foreign languages, pupils in lower sets have less positive attitudes than those in higher sets. They lack confidence in their ability and lose interest, concentration becomes unsatisfactory and little progress is made in learning. A significant number of pupils are too reliant on their teachers and independent learning skills are not well developed.

13. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is satisfactory overall. Behaviour in lessons is usually satisfactory, often good and sometimes very good, for example in art and design and music. When expectations of behaviour are clear, pupils respond well. However, the behaviour of a small minority of pupils is poor and in some cases has an adverse effect on the learning of the whole class. These pupils interrupt lessons and deliberately disrupt teaching. Most pupils take good care of resources and equipment, but a few abuse their environment by discarding litter in the playground at break times. Permanent exclusions are higher than average for a school of this size, but this reflects the proportion of pupils who join the school late and have a history of poor behaviour in their previous schools: there were five permanent exclusions last year and there have been five so far this year. Fixed-term exclusions are in line with national averages: last year there were 32 and there have been 37 to date this year. More boys are excluded than girls and exclusions are usually the result of a series of incidents.
14. Relationships across the school are good. Pupils develop constructive relationships with each other and with their teachers. In some instances, when pupils have been with their form tutors for several years, for example, relationships are very good. Relationships are not as good where there have been changes in tutors and teaching staff. Pupils co-operate well in pairs and groups, listen sympathetically to each other and usually respect each other's feelings, values and beliefs. Pupils in drama lessons perform confidently in front of their peers. They appreciate each other's performances and readily offer and accept the constructive criticism of their classmates. In rounders and cricket pupils are concerned about fair play. There is some bullying but this is usually sorted out quickly and satisfactorily. There is a good degree of racial harmony.
15. Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. Their confidence and self-esteem have begun to improve as a result of measures introduced since the previous report and pupils are developing a greater sense of social responsibility. A good number of pupils happily accept the responsibilities offered to them. The appointed 'senior pupils' are a credit to the school. They chair meetings of the school council, representatives of which are drawn from each tutor group. There are house captains and vice captains, sports captains and librarians. The newly appointed prefects in Year 10 and the Year 8 receptionists perform their duties conscientiously. When given the opportunity, pupils are happy to do routine classroom duties.
16. Most pupils with special educational needs appreciate the support which they receive. They have positive attitudes to their work and to school life in general, and they behave well. They usually settle down to work promptly and make good progress in developing self-confidence as they move through the school. A minority of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties have very short concentration

spans, and their challenging behaviour hinders the progress of others. This happens more often in lessons in which classroom support is not available and in which some teachers are inconsistent in their approach to managing poor behaviour.

17. Pupils who have English as an additional language show positive attitudes to school. They behave well and relationships between pupils are good. Some pupils in Years 7 to 9 have been identified as a gifted group. Their relationships with each other are good. They report that they have received some teasing from their peers, but that it is good-natured and they are fully accepted by other pupils.
18. Pupils support a good range of extra-curricular activities well. Membership of the choirs and expressive arts group is high and pupils practise conscientiously to ensure a good ultimate public performance. The choir includes pupils from all year groups and although the vast majority are girls, the number of boys is increasing. Nearly a quarter of the school were involved in a recent production of 'Annie'. Members of the senior choir are prepared to come to school an hour early to attend practices. Pupils support a number of charities such as Comic Relief and the NSPCC and there is healthy competition between the houses to see which can raise the most money. Houses also support their own charities, for example pupils in Grange house raise money to sponsor an orang-utan.
19. Attendance is below the national average and is unsatisfactory across the school. Low levels of attendance are having an adverse effect on some pupils' attainment. Unauthorised absence is above the national average. A significant number of pupils regularly arrive late for school, but punctuality is good once school has started. Attendance has declined steadily since the loss of full-time support from the educational welfare service. However, a new full-time welfare officer has recently been appointed and there are early indications of improved attendance among a few pupils. Attendance is unsatisfactory in all year groups but gets worse as pupils get older. The school has a few pupils with very poor attendance but the amount of holiday taken during term time also adversely affects rates of attendance. In the community there is a background of lack of appreciation of education and much absence is condoned by parents.

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

20. The overall quality of teaching is good and results in good learning. In 67 per cent of the lessons observed, the teaching was good or better; in 17 per cent of lessons it was very good or better and in four per cent it was excellent. The teaching was satisfactory in a further 30 per cent of lessons and unsatisfactory in three per cent. The teaching has improved overall since the previous inspection. There is now a greater proportion of good, very good and excellent teaching and less unsatisfactory teaching. The impact made by good teaching is seen in the good levels of achievement among pupils as they move through the school. By the time pupils take their GCSE examinations they have achieved well, having made good progress from the time they started their courses.
21. The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 is good. It was at least satisfactory in 97 per cent of lessons seen, good or better in 69 per cent of lessons and very good or excellent in 22 per cent. It was unsatisfactory in three lessons. There are variations in the quality across the years. For example, while the teaching is good overall and

leads to good learning, a significant proportion of pupils in Year 8 have unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour that adversely affect their learning, and teachers do not approach the issue with enough consistency. The teaching in Year 10 is predominantly good. Some 55 per cent of the teaching observed was good or better and 12 per cent very good or excellent. There was only one unsatisfactory lesson. Some pupils are disaffected, however, which gives rise to problems relating to behaviour and attitudes that have an adverse effect on their progress and learning. Year 11 pupils were away from school on study leave during the inspection. A detailed scrutiny of their work showed that they have made good progress and have achieved well as a result of good teaching.

22. In English, the teaching is consistently good and pupils achieve well in relation to their levels of attainment when they enter the school. In mathematics and science, the overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. In mathematics, teachers' class management skills are good, but insufficient attention is paid to pupils' oral work and this impedes their progress. In science pupils' progress is adversely affected by poor behaviour and the teachers' inconsistent approach in dealing with it. In modern foreign languages an unsatisfactory aspect of the teaching is that pupils do not receive enough experience in hearing and speaking the foreign language. The quality of teaching is consistently very good or better in art and design and music. In these practically-based subjects, pupils respond enthusiastically to well-planned work, which they find relevant and interesting and to teachers' high expectations.
23. Across the school, teachers have a sound command of their subjects, are usually well prepared and organised, and have clear objectives for lessons. Teachers present good role models for their pupils and earn their respect. As a result, in all but a few lessons, there is a good climate for learning in classrooms. Where teachers clearly have high expectations relating to pupils' behaviour and the quality of work produced, they are rewarded by a very positive response from pupils. The school recognises that aspirations among a significant number of pupils are low and reflect the negative values in some parts of the community in which education is not seen as a priority. The senior management team is active in raising pupils' expectations through consistently demanding that teachers keep their expectations high. There is evidence that this is having a positive impact, for example in English, design and technology, ICT and religious education, in which teachers are rewarded by good levels of achievement among pupils.
24. In the best lessons, teachers make good use of a range of teaching strategies. These include clear explanations to introduce new material and the aims of the lesson, and a review at the end of lessons in terms of the pupils' success in meeting the aims. For example, in a Year 7 English lesson, the lesson's objectives were shared with pupils so that they knew precisely what they were to do and why, and this, allied to good use of question and answer techniques, set the scene for the lesson. In this set of high attaining pupils, the teacher consistently challenged them to use a more extensive vocabulary and to work out meanings of new words by examining the context in which they were used. As a result, very good learning took place and pupils were able to recognise in writing the setting of mood and atmosphere.
25. This is a smaller school than average and teachers know their pupils well. The establishment of a house system is reinforcing this further as teachers also have a pastoral role and use this to ensure that pupils make the progress they should. However, teachers do not use form time effectively as a means of raising standards.

Day-to-day assessment is increasingly used effectively. For example, in a Year 8 mathematics lesson with low attaining pupils the teacher had a good knowledge of the level of progress being made by individual pupils and tailored the teaching accordingly. Thus, pupils were challenged and stretched and responded well and good learning took place. Teachers recognise the importance of pupils seeing that they are achieving some success and use assessment effectively in the best lessons to make this clear. Teachers also use question and answer techniques well to assess the progress being made during lessons and encourage pupils to contribute.

26. Excellent class management techniques and a high level of demand led to excellent learning by all pupils and high achievement in a Year 10 music lesson, and this typified much of the music teaching observed. Here the teacher drew on pupils' homework, using the technical language of music to reinforce their knowledge and understanding and their listening skills. The teacher made clear links with previous work, questioning closely and taking pupils' answers further. By the end of a very enjoyable and demanding lesson, the class had developed their skills and could appreciate the ideas of timbre and style when listening to music.
27. The teachers' use of homework is generally satisfactory and in art and design, for example, it is used very effectively to help pupils to extend their knowledge and understanding. In the best practice, homework is viewed as, and used as, an integral part of the lesson. In contrast, the impact was lost where teachers left the setting of homework to the very end of the lesson and tried to explain what was required against a background of pupils preparing to leave for the next lesson. A significant proportion of parents who completed the inspection questionnaire were not satisfied that the right amount of homework is set. However, the parents who attended the pre-inspection meeting expressed their satisfaction about the use of homework and the inspection team found that homework is used satisfactorily.
28. The relationships between pupils and teachers are good. Teachers generally manage their classes well and use appropriate methods and organisation. They use the time available to them to good effect by using a variety of activities and a range of approaches best suited to the activities. For example, in a Year 10 design and technology lesson the class was very well organised and managed and appropriate resources were provided to support pupils' learning. The very effective use of time deadlines within the lesson ensured a good, challenging pace as the group researched the theme of foods from around the world. A very effective end-of-lesson review brought home to pupils just how much work they had covered and how much progress had been made.
29. Where lessons are less successful it is usually because teachers are inconsistent in the way that they manage pupils' poor behaviour. On occasion, these problems are exacerbated by unsatisfactory planning and preparation. For example, in two science lessons, practical investigation work was poorly organised and pupils learned little. As a result they lost concentration, became bored, misbehaved and achieved little. A French lesson, which was unsatisfactory because it did not provide the opportunities for pupils to hear or use the language, was further weakened by the poor behaviour of some pupils, which the teacher failed to contain. The lack of a consistent whole-school approach to poor behaviour means that difficult pupils experience very different responses from different teachers. In the best lessons, for example in music, art and design, design and technology and ICT, pupils who present some other teachers with problems behave well. In these

subjects they are met with a positive and consistent approach that is effective and they respond with good behaviour and positive attitudes.

30. Where non-specialist teaching takes place, standards are not, in the main, adversely affected because teachers plan well and receive good levels of specialist support. However, in some subjects there are a few occasions where non-specialist teaching does have an adverse effect upon the standards achieved by the pupils, for example in physical education, science and numeracy in the core skills course.
31. The school has a higher than average proportion of pupils with special educational needs, including pupils with formal statements of such needs. The policy is to integrate these pupils into lessons rather than teach them separately. The school enjoys a good measure of success in this. Support assistants and further support from teachers are used effectively to ensure that these pupils make progress in line with their peers and achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. For example, in an ICT lesson with a class of Year 9 pupils, good support was given by two other adults who were well prepared, knew what the teacher was trying to achieve and were confident enough in their own ICT skills to be of help. As a result, pupils concentrated and made good progress as they learned how to establish and use databases. Pupils with special educational needs are well taught in their core skills lessons, in which teaching methods are carefully matched to pupils' requirements. The quality of teaching in the classroom is good overall. Teachers have a clear understanding of their pupils' strengths and weaknesses. In the most effective lessons the well-targeted teaching and the good working relationships between pupils, teachers and support staff have a very positive impact on pupils' achievement. In subjects such as religious education and science, pupils have access to learning materials that are well adapted to their needs, but in other subjects these materials are not as well developed. The teaching of gifted and talented pupils is good and these pupils make good progress and achieve well. The school is systematically monitoring and supporting their progress so that they achieve their potential.
32. The teaching of the basic skills of literacy varies from subject to subject, but is generally good. Many teachers include literacy objectives in their planning. There is some good practice in developing the range of writing styles, for instance in history and geography. In art and design, there is a strong emphasis on developing listening and speaking skills. However, there is insufficient emphasis on developing pupils' reading skills. The literacy programme in Years 7 and 8 is well taught and pupils make good progress.
33. The effectiveness of strategies for teaching numeracy is good in Years 7 and 8 and satisfactory in Years 9 to 11. Although overall the teaching of numeracy skills is satisfactory, there is not enough consistency in the contributions made by all subjects of the curriculum. In science, for example, the numeracy policy needs to be more detailed if standards are to be raised. The school uses its assessment procedures well in Year 7, identifying pupils in need of special support in numeracy and providing an appropriate course in Years 7 and 8. All subjects need to make a more effective, planned contribution to improve pupils' basic skills if standards are to rise and be maintained.

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

34. The opportunities for learning offered to pupils are good overall and meet statutory requirements. The curriculum is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11 in meeting the needs of all pupils. The school has taken account of the particular needs of its pupils in planning the curriculum and is making good use of local and national initiatives to support and extend the curricular opportunities in this small school. The length of the taught week is in line with national recommendations. The curriculum has improved to a good degree since the previous inspection, but the time pupils spend with their form teachers is not used well enough.
35. The curriculum provided for pupils in Years 7 to 9 is broad and mainly well balanced. It includes all the subjects of the National Curriculum, religious education and personal and social education. A separate lesson of ICT broadens the curriculum and drama is taught as a separate subject in Year 9. Work begun by pupils in the current Year 9 will enable them to continue with GNVQ courses in ICT at Key Stage 4 next year. The school has taken account of weaknesses in the skills of literacy and numeracy of many of its pupils by allocating time for all pupils in Years 7 and 8 to the development of these 'core skills'. This work is carefully targeted at the particular needs of different groups of pupils and is effective in raising standards, especially in pupils' literacy. A small group of lower attaining pupils, mainly with special educational needs, are taught by the same teacher for a number of subjects in Years 7 and 8 to provide a stable learning environment in which they can make good progress. Additional work outside the normal curriculum enriches and extends the learning of a group of the highest attaining pupils. The school has recently introduced Spanish as a second modern foreign language for higher attaining pupils in Year 8 in the time allocated for core skills. This enhances the range of their learning opportunities but at the expense of reducing the time available for English and mathematics. The allocation of time for mathematics for higher attaining pupils in Year 8 and for French in all years is unsatisfactory and has an adverse impact on the standards achieved.
36. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is broad and is generally well matched to the differing needs of pupils. All pupils follow a broad common core of subjects for the great majority of their time. In addition, most take two further GCSE subjects from among subjects studied in Year 9 or a course in leisure and tourism for a GNVQ Part 1 or Intermediate qualification. This gives pupils the opportunity to express a preference for subjects that match their interests and aptitudes. However, the breadth of the common core restricts pupils' range of choice and creates some imbalance in the curriculum followed by some pupils. The time allocated for optional GCSE subjects and for French is low, especially given the low earlier attainment of many pupils.
37. A small group of pupils for whom a full range of GCSE subjects would be inappropriate take the single award science course and only one additional subject in order to follow a course for the ASDAN Youth Award (Award Scheme; Development and Accreditation Network). This provides an appropriate level of challenge and promotes their personal and social development. For its size, the school provides a good range of accreditation for pupils' work, including short GCSE courses in religious education and ICT, and Certificate of Achievement for lower

attaining pupils in religious education and science. Pupils' opportunities are further extended by the provision after school of full GCSE courses in Punjabi and religious education.

38. The school has a very clear policy for special educational needs and makes good provision for pupils who are in need of extra help. The curriculum is accessible to all pupils on the special educational needs register. Individual education plans are effective in ensuring that pupils' needs are identified and catered for. However, short-term targets in subjects and basic literacy and numeracy are not sufficiently precise by which to measure the rate of progress. Arrangements for grouping pupils into sets of like ability enable them to achieve well because work is carefully tailored to pupils' requirements. Initiatives such as the Compact Club and the Bridge Project offer good support to older pupils.
39. The school has good links with the local multi-cultural service, which provides specific support in science, history and geography for pupils experiencing some difficulty in these subjects. Because of the school's emphasis on improving literacy for all pupils, it effectively caters for the needs of those pupils with English as an additional language through its core skills programme. Punjabi is offered as an extra-curricular activity, and pupils are able to study Punjabi to GCSE if they wish. The school plans to extend this to Urdu.
40. The provision of extra-curricular activities to enrich the curriculum has improved in recent years and is now good. A good range of sporting provision caters for the interests of both boys and girls, and there are good levels of participation by pupils at lunchtime and after school. The school offers good opportunities for pupils to participate in musical and dramatic activities in school and in the community. Nearly a quarter of pupils participated in a recent production of 'Annie' and the 90-strong school choir performed at the Millennium Dome. There is a good range of visits, mainly locally and within the West Midlands. Trips to the Lake District, Peak District and Wales for outdoor pursuits and the Duke of Edinburgh Award have increased. These include well-supported residential visits to mid-Wales. However, it has not proved economically viable to run trips abroad. Arrangements to support pupils' learning outside the school day through the school's Centre for Extended Lifelong Learning are good. Pupils make use of homework and ICT facilities as well as participating in a range of subject-related activities and revision support classes. A wide range of activities is organised during a Reading Week in the summer term and through summer schools for literacy and the performing arts.
41. Provision for work-related education, including careers education and guidance, is good. A well-documented careers education programme forms part of personal and social education in all years, but with a particular emphasis on Years 9 to 11. The school works well with the local careers service to ensure that up-to-date information and impartial advice are available for pupils but access to the library and to careers software is too restricted. Arrangements to prepare pupils for the next stage in their education or for training or employment are good, and pupils appreciate the guidance they receive, but the proportion of 16 year olds going on to full-time education, though rising, remains low. The school is participating in a number of initiatives with the careers service, employers and education institutions to raise pupils' aspirations and their awareness of further and higher educational opportunities and of the working environment. One example is a well-planned and effective mentoring programme that involves all pupils in Year 11. At the end of Year 10, all pupils also receive two weeks of work experience that is well prepared

and managed. There are effective vocational courses in Years 10 and 11, the Youth Award scheme supports the development of personal skills valued by employers, and some Year 11 pupils take part in work-related activities with further education and training providers.

42. The school has good links with the community, which contribute strongly to pupils' learning. The school has developed a successful mentoring scheme for Year 11 pupils using mentors from the local community, such as business people, police and staff and pupils from local colleges. Pupils are advised on interview skills, action planning and preparing their National Record of Achievement, as well as visiting the mentor's workplace. All Year 11 pupils also visit local further education colleges to raise their awareness of and aspirations about further education. A small group of Key Stage 4 pupils attend the local college one day each week to benefit from a less academic programme through the Bridge Project. The school is successfully involved in a number of local community projects. A number of subjects in the school use the local area to enhance the curriculum and to enrich the pupils' learning.
43. The school has good relationships with partner institutions. There are well-established and effective arrangements to enable pupils from primary schools to settle into their new environment. Year 6 pupils from local primary schools spend two days at The Sutherland School before they transfer and there are good subject links, including a cross-phase project in English and geography which begins in Year 6 and continues into Year 7. English, mathematics, geography, science and ICT also have strong curriculum links with primary schools, though these links are less developed in other subjects. The school provides good support for primary partners through use of its resources and facilities and collaborates on musical performances and productions. A jointly organised summer school for literacy is well established and a successful Performing Arts Summer School was run last year. The school has worked effectively with neighbouring secondary schools to enhance the curricular opportunities for pupils, especially for vocational education. There are constructive links with the local colleges, including 'taster' lessons and both organised and informal visits to colleges to ensure that pupils are fully aware of the opportunities available to them after the age of 16.
44. The school is committed to promoting equal opportunities for all and has a good equality of opportunity policy covering all the relevant aspects. All subject departments have a clear policy for equal opportunities in their documentation. The school meets the requirements of the Sex Discrimination Act and the Race Relations Act. There are no equal opportunities issues that need rectifying in the subject areas. There is a broad and balanced curriculum for all. The curriculum recognises cultural diversity and prepares pupils for life in a multi-ethnic society. There is no access for wheelchairs; the local education authority makes provision for all such special needs in a nearby school. Teaching assistants have been on courses specifically aimed at giving the correct support to boys and girls and to a range of special needs. Citizenship and health education courses cover all equal opportunities issues formally to ensure that all pupils are aware of current practice. Displays around the school demonstrate an awareness of an ethnically diverse society and all groups are represented in non-stereotypical ways. Pupils are made aware of and are sensitive to the needs of others. They are educated to be aware of worldwide inequalities in religious education and in personal and social education.



45. The school has a sound programme for personal and social education that has a positive impact on pupils' personal development. It includes confidence building, healthy lifestyles, careers, sex education and drug education. Form tutors teach discrete lessons and have recently received relevant training. The quality of teaching varies from unsatisfactory to very good, but most of it by far is at least satisfactory. Visiting specialists, such as the school nurse and community police officer, support the programme well. People from local industry make a good contribution to careers education. Personal and social education is supported across the curriculum; for example, health education in science and technology and relationships in English and drama. Plans to introduce citizenship into the programme are well advanced, but aspects of citizenship are already covered in geography, history and English. Pupils with special educational needs have good opportunities for involvement in activities which develop their social skills, such as discussions and role-play in lessons and taking part in clubs, sport, music and drama productions, trips and residential visits. The positive, inclusive ethos of the school encourages pupils to participate fully in the educational and social life of the school and to achieve success in the many different areas of communal life.
46. The school makes satisfactory provision overall for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and has shown a satisfactory level of improvement since the previous inspection. However, the provision for spiritual development is unsatisfactory. Individual subject departments include in their overall planning mention of opportunities for spiritual development that may be afforded in their subjects, but there is no systematic monitoring or evaluation of the contributions that departments actually make. Although art and design and music offer opportunities for pupils to explore the spiritual dimension to life, and pupils benefit from visits to places of worship such as the local parish church and the Sikh temple at Hadley, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to explore the spiritual dimension to life within the subjects of the curriculum. Formal whole-school acts of worship are usually based on themes, which include the potential for spiritual development. For example, pupils listened attentively to a well-conducted assembly dealing with the place and time of prayer and the session was carefully planned to interest pupils of all ages. Although pupils did not take an active part in the assembly, they clearly benefited from the spiritual content of the act of worship that took place. House assemblies and tutor periods, however, offer little opportunity for reflection and the school is not fully meeting requirements for a daily act of collective worship.
47. Provision for moral education is satisfactory. Teachers provide good role models and most have clear expectations of good behaviour. School rules are simple and based on respect for others, respect for learning and respect for property. There is a clear system of rewards and sanctions that most pupils appreciate and believe to be used fairly. Pupils of all ages like the recently introduced house point system of rewards. There is recognition, but insufficient celebration, of individual achievement. Themes for assemblies usually have a moral message, but there is no planned theme for the week or contribution through form time. Moral messages are reinforced throughout the curriculum and especially in the personal and social education programme. In an ICT lesson Year 8 pupils were considering a range of moral issues such as the legalisation of cannabis for medicinal purposes, abortion and the hunting of wild animals. In geography Year 9 pupils consider the ethics of fair trade and in drama Year 10 pupils investigate family violence and drug dealing. Pupils consider those less fortunate than themselves when raising money for charities.

48. Provision for social education is good. The social development of pupils is high in the school's list of priorities for future development. Improvements since the last inspection have contributed well to pupils' confidence, self-esteem and social development. Pupils are offered a wide range of responsibilities throughout the school. The house system has given pupils a new outlook on social responsibility. They have good opportunities to represent their house in sporting and other competitions. The school provides good opportunities within most subjects and in extra-curricular activities for pupils to work in pairs and groups, especially in personal and social education, science, drama, music and physical education. There are increasingly good opportunities for pupils to represent the school on social and academic visits out of school. The choirs have enjoyed a good range of social opportunities including a trip to sing at the Millennium Dome. Pupils represented the school in the Bailey Mile community fun run and there are sporting fixtures against other schools. The introduction of the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme has given a few pupils the opportunity to develop a wide range of social skills. All pupils are offered a residential experience. It is unfortunate that trips to France have had to be cancelled owing to lack of funding.
49. The provision for cultural development is satisfactory overall and there is some good provision. For example, subjects such as art and design, drama and music play a major part in teaching pupils how to appreciate visual and performing arts through the production of stage shows, concerts and visits to art galleries such as The Tate in Liverpool. The musical production 'Annie' was much enjoyed by pupils, staff and parents alike. In music lessons pupils prefer western popular music but through imaginative planning they are introduced to Indian and other eastern music as well as jazz. The cultural diet in art and design is varied and pupils investigate the techniques and styles of a range of artists. The patterns and geometry of Islamic art are studied in mathematics. In religious education pupils are introduced to the cultural aspects of Islam, Buddhism and Sikhism as well as festivals of the Christian church.

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

50. The school provides a good level of pastoral care for pupils, which has a positive impact on achievement. Pupils' academic progress and personal development are well monitored. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and attendance are satisfactory. Good attention is given to the health, welfare and safety of pupils. There are very few incidents of racism within the school, and any incidents are logged.
51. In the last year, the tutorial system has been successfully reorganised into house groups. Each tutor group belongs to one of four houses, under the care of the heads of house, who have overall responsibility for the pastoral care of pupils in their house. All members of staff, including the kitchen and cleaning staff, belong to a house. Pupils remain with the same tutor as they move through the school and are able to develop good relationships within the tutor group and house. Form tutors monitor overall academic progress, homework, good and bad behaviour and attendance through pupil planners and reviews. In the small school environment staff know pupils well. Pupils relate well to teachers and are happy to turn to them for advice and support. Good use is made of nurture groups and outside agencies to support particular groups of pupils.

52. Assessment is good overall. There is very good practice in music and good assessment procedures are in place across a range of subjects. Annual reports to parents are issued in line with statutory requirements. The quality of information on what pupils know, understand and can do in subjects is satisfactory in design and technology and ICT and good in all other subject areas. The assessment of pupils is an improving feature. The quality of information about pupils' work has improved so that teachers can now assess more accurately pupils' standards at the end of Year 9.
53. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress are good. The school provides a wealth of information on pupils in Year 7 that enables teachers to monitor pupils' progress and to set and review realistic targets for their performance. This is done formally twice a year. Statistical information and performance prediction have been a focus of the school's interest in Key Stage 4 for a number of years. The school has noted the under-achievement of boys, for example. Monitoring will become more rigorous as the current Year 7 procedures extend through the school. The use of assessment information to guide curricular planning is satisfactory overall. It is very good in music, good in art and design, geography, religious education and in Years 10 and 11, in history. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are good. The progress made by pupils with English as an additional language is monitored in the same way as that of other pupils; however, test results are analysed separately, although not by individual ethnic groups, as numbers are too small to draw out patterns that could be significant. Recording procedures are good in most subjects. The quality of marking is very good in music, good in art and design, mathematics and religious education, and satisfactory in all other subjects. Day-to-day assessment of pupils in lessons is satisfactory.
54. The school monitors the performance of pupils with special educational needs in a very effective way. The systems for identifying and supporting pupils in need of extra help are very good. Individual education plans are efficiently colour-coded for ease of referral. Learning support assistants work closely with subject teachers to promote pupils' day-to-day progress in lessons. However, although the quality of classroom support is good, it is not always available where needed. Pupils' academic and pastoral progress is monitored regularly and form tutors are kept well informed of changes in provision. The school's good links with local primary schools, further education providers and specialist agencies promote the efficient exchange of information.
55. Good links with local primary schools and a good exchange of information together with summer schools for selected Year 6 pupils ensure that pupils are placed in appropriate form groups and settle well in Year 7. Appropriate support is given to pupils returning from exclusions. Pupils who enter the school late with specific behaviour problems are integrated carefully, but it is unsatisfactory that there is no specific programme for the many other pupils who arrive late to the school. A sound programme of personal and social education taught by form tutors supports pupils' personal development. Pupils are offered good advice on option choice in Year 9, and good careers advice and an appropriate programme of work experience in Years 10 and 11. Extra support is given to those pupils with behaviour difficulties. In some instances the morning registration period is used well to improve basic skills or for pastoral support, but more often the time is not used effectively.

56. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance are satisfactory. The electronic registers are marked appropriately and attendance figures collated regularly in the office. Form tutors are provided with a weekly list of absences to follow up. Office staff telephone parents or carers on the first day of a pupil's absence. Information to parents reminds them of the need for good attendance. The school acknowledges good attendance with certificates for individuals and weekly rewards for whole form attendance. A full-time educational welfare officer has recently been appointed and plans are in place to further develop the monitoring and promotion of good attendance. To date the new appointee has concentrated on improving the attendance of individuals with particularly poor attendance. Attendance data has not yet been analysed to target specific groups of pupils and most pupils are not given individual targets for improved attendance. Individual lesson registers are used to monitor internal truancy, but the system is not reliable because there is insufficient time for most teachers to check on absence. There are appropriate procedures to monitor and register late arrivals to school. Ineffective use of the extended morning registration period, where it occurs is not conducive to the good punctuality of pupils.
57. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are satisfactory, but they are not applied consistently by all teachers so that maximum time is not used for learning in a minority of lessons. School rules are simple and are displayed clearly in some classrooms and in the dining room, but not in all rooms. There are clear guidelines for the use of rewards and sanctions. Form tutors monitor rewards and sanctions satisfactorily. Staff have had no recent training in positive behaviour management. Pupils whose behaviour is unsatisfactory are removed from lessons where possible in order not to disrupt the learning of others. There is a clear staged response to poor behaviour and good track is kept of pupils with problems through behaviour reports that give targets for improved behaviour. There are clear policies for dealing with racial incidents and bullying which are implemented effectively. Pupils are not afraid to report problems and are content that staff deal with all reported incidents effectively.
58. There are good measures to ensure the health and safety of all pupils and the school has shown satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. Risk assessments are in place and are reviewed regularly for all school activities. Safe practices are followed in lessons. First aid procedures are good and good records are kept of all injuries and sickness. Evacuation drills are carried out regularly and recorded accurately. Procedures for dealing with child protection issues are good. The school maintains good links with appropriate support agencies.

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

59. The school has a satisfactory partnership with parents. The vast majority of parents are passively supportive of the school. Parents who expressed a view believe that the school is well led and managed, teaching is good, expectations are high and pupils make good progress. They report that their children like coming to school. They find the school approachable. A significant number of parents believe that there is too much unsatisfactory behaviour. Inspectors found this to be the case. A similar number of parents feel that the school does not work closely with parents and that there is insufficient information about progress. Inspectors agree that relationships with parents could be further developed in order to improve attendance and support pupils' learning, but that information on pupils' progress is satisfactory.

The reputation of the school within the community is improving and higher numbers are choosing this school.

60. The school has a good partnership with parents of pupils with special educational needs. These parents are well informed about procedures when their children enter the school. They are also invited to attend the formal reviews of their children's progress and to comment on their personal development. They are encouraged to help their children at home and to contact the school if they have any concerns about their children's progress. They are kept well informed of their children's progress through the record cards in core skills, which are sent out at half-termly intervals.
61. The school provides a satisfactory level of information to parents, but there are some areas that require improvement. Newsletters, although interesting, are too spasmodic and the last one was produced over six months ago. The prospectus and governing body's annual report to parents are informative, but have a few omissions. The prospectus does not have a summary of national comparative data for National Curriculum assessment results and GCSE results nor the number of pupils studying for and achieving other vocational qualifications. The governing body's annual report omits: information about the next election of parent governors; a statement of progress in implementing the action plan drawn up following the last inspection; and details of steps to prevent disabled pupils being treated less favourably than others.
62. Pupils' reports comply with legal requirements and are useful, but targets in some subjects are vague. The school has well-advanced plans to improve the quality of reporting progress to parents. Parental attendance at consultation evenings, although not closely monitored, is not high. The school is beginning to monitor attendance at parents' meetings to assess the extent of parental involvement among parents with English as an additional language. Until recently, a member of the support staff helped communication with parents in Urdu, but this lapsed when she left the school. Many parents of pupils in Years 7 and 8 are unhappy that they have the opportunity to see only form tutors at consultation evenings and not subject teachers. Although this can be arranged by appointment, most parents do not take the opportunity. Parents can monitor homework and communicate with form tutors through the pupils' planners, but only a small number of parents sign the planners in spite of the encouragement given to pupils by form tutors who check them regularly. The school maintains good contact with parents of pupils with special educational needs and of those with a history of poor behaviour.
63. There is a very small but dedicated group of Friends of Sutherland School that contribute positively to social and fund-raising activities, but they are not well supported by parents. Money raised by the Friends has been used to purchase equipment for the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, worktops for the design and technology room and new bicycle stands. Many parents enjoy the school performances. Two parents accompanied pupils on the Bailey Mile Fun Run. In general, however, parents are not involved in the work of the school.

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

64. The headteacher, senior staff and the governing body provide good leadership. This ensures a clear educational direction to the work of the school in line with its

aims. The priorities established in the school development plan are appropriate and the systems and strategies to monitor and evaluate the success in meeting these priorities have now been established. The headteacher has been in post for less than two years and in that time has set about a realistic appraisal of the school's strengths and weaknesses. On the basis of this appraisal, a number of measures have been put in place that have been successful in raising standards, based on good planning and high levels of commitment and energy. The school's procedures for evaluating the effectiveness of its work are good, and appropriate and challenging targets have been established to measure the progress being made. The school is well organised and ensures a good level of care for its pupils.

65. The senior management team have been active in tackling some of the long-term problems that have beset the school. For example, the problem of under-achievement among boys is being addressed by modifying the curriculum they follow to better meet their individual needs and producing targets to encourage these pupils towards greater achievement. This process has not yet produced better results and boys are still under-achieving. To the school's credit they recognise and continue to address the issue. They recognise the need to make their targets for improvement more precise and have started this process in Years 7 to 9. They have also earmarked additional funding in the coming year to research the problem with the aid of external consultants. Similarly the work undertaken to improve attendance has not yet been successful. However, the school is developing, testing and evaluating initiatives such as the establishment of the house system, in order to change some pupils' negative attitudes towards the value of education by increasing their commitment to the school.
66. A satisfactory level of improvement has taken place since the previous inspection. The response to the previous inspection report has been positive and the school has responded well to the main issues identified in that report. The continuing process of improvement is guided by a development plan of good quality, which details appropriate priorities. The plans set out are manageable and the school has good levels of commitment to and capacity for further improvement. Good systems have been established to ensure sound managerial practices in which staff and pupils have the opportunity to contribute to the decisions made.
67. The roles of the teachers with managerial responsibilities are clearly defined and these teachers are working effectively to raise standards of achievement. They give good support to the headteacher. The headteacher and senior management team link formally with individual departments to ensure common approaches across the school to measuring the effectiveness of departments. For example, the formal, systematic and rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning, based on an established framework, have been put in place and are effective in raising the quality of teaching and learning. The systems are still being developed and there are areas where practice is not as good as in others. The senior management group have addressed this issue and have spread their direct influence to the areas of greatest need. Thus, the problems associated with previous poor staffing for modern foreign languages are receding and the issue of unsatisfactory standards has been addressed and improvements are taking place. The whole area of pastoral care and associated issues relating to improving the behaviour and attitudes of pupils has been tackled. The recently established house system is having a good measure of success in increasing pupils' commitment to the school. The school is now in a better position to evaluate the impact on standards of initiatives taken and changes made.

68. The leadership and management of the special educational needs department are good and there is very clear educational direction. Although responsibilities have recently been reorganised, the systems are well established and day-to-day routines run smoothly. Statutory requirements in respect of pupils with statements of special educational need are met. The specific grant is used effectively for its designated purposes. The learning development base provides spacious and flexible accommodation. It is very well equipped and is a cheerful and welcoming place for pupils. The organisation of classroom support ensures that the available hours are used to maximum effect, but there are examples of lessons where pupils' progress is limited because the required support is lacking. Future priorities include the inclusion of up-to-date information on literacy and numeracy on pupils' records for use in annual reviews of progress, the introduction of the 'Successmaker' interactive learning computer program, and the formulation of short-term targets which can be monitored and measured effectively. The department recognises that the task of implementing the new Code of Practice is one which will have to be planned for and undertaken in the near future.
69. The targets set by the school last year were appropriate and challenging in the context of National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 and GCSE performances. Not all targets were met at GCSE, however; the school has set out to improve the proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A\*-C. The school increasingly uses information of good quality about pupils' levels of attainment to determine its targets. This is particularly important in this small school, where individual year groups vary so much and need precise and challenging targets that fit their specific levels of attainment. This process has been very effective in art and design and in music, in which pupils know where they are in National Curriculum terms and know what they have to do to improve further. As a result, pupils achieve very well in these subjects.
70. Governors have a good level of understanding of the strengths of the school as well as those areas needing further improvement. They are involved in the strategic management of the school at an appropriate level. For example, they make a good contribution to the production of the school development plan. The governing body makes an effective contribution to the major decisions taken by the school. Governors are active in the areas of finance, personnel and accommodation, and in developing the school's curriculum. The relationship between the governing body and the staff of the school is good and enables governors to make a good contribution to the life and work of the school. Governors are effective in fulfilling their statutory duties, although the school does not fully meet legal requirement relating to the provision of a daily act of collective worship and there are some minor omissions in the information given to parents. The governing body is in a good position to make informed judgements when holding the school to account for the educational standards achieved and the quality of education provided.
71. The school development plan is effective in ensuring a clear direction to the school's work. The plan also provides an effective framework for evaluating the success of initiatives taken. It is a good working document giving appropriate levels of detail in setting out how the school's priorities are to be met and how financial and staffing resources are to be assigned to meet these priorities. The priorities that have been established have been carefully planned and are appropriate to address the areas that need to be further improved in order to raise standards. All departments make a formal contribution to the planning process and this is effective in raising

awareness of whole-school issues as well as focusing teachers on the role that they and their subjects have to play.

72. The process of financial planning is sound. The governing body's finance committee has a good level of awareness of the financial implications of meeting the planned priorities and it plans the annual budget accordingly. The school is administered effectively and daily routines operate unobtrusively. Spending is carefully controlled and is effective in ensuring that the principles of best value are applied in the school's use of resources. Financial administration is sound and day-to-day accounting procedures are efficient. There is a regular programme of external audit and the school responds positively to the auditor's reports.
73. The school is adequately staffed. However, a significant number of teachers are required to teach subjects other than their main specialism. In some subjects this has an adverse effect upon the standards achieved by the pupils, for example in physical education, science, and numeracy in the core skills course. The high level of staff change has also adversely affected standards in some subjects, particularly French. There is a good balance of experienced, longer serving teachers, recently appointed experienced staff, and those more recently qualified. The school provides a satisfactory induction to its newly qualified teachers, but more structured procedures are needed to meet the needs of other teachers joining the school. The continuous professional development of staff is suitably focused upon the priorities identified in the school and departmental development plans. The school is implementing its performance management programme in a satisfactory manner and the initial round of lesson observations is under way. The school is very well served by the administrative staff, who provide effective support to school managers. Technical support is also very good in science, design and technology and ICT.
74. The strategic use of resources is good. As at the time of the last inspection, resources for learning are satisfactory. Materials are adequate to support pupils' learning in all departments. Expenditure in the last year benefited from an extra direct government grant, and the proportion apportioned to learning resources from the school budget was increased. Learning support and study support as well as music and computer facilities were areas to benefit from the extra resourcing. There has been a major investment in ICT in which the network has been extended and the number of computers increased to above national levels of provision.
75. The library is an attractive and welcoming area, with good accessibility. A qualified librarian is in post and many of the plans from the time of the last inspection have been successfully completed. The level of provision for the library is good and there is sufficient support for study in individual topics, with good provision from the county library services. The provision and condition of books are under constant review and all are well maintained. The library has good provision of computers with a good supply of CD-ROMs, as well as supervised Internet access.
76. Accommodation is good. It is well managed and organised, clean, well decorated and relatively free from litter and graffiti. There is good opportunity for pupils to display work of which they are proud and the Cell Club make good use of display space. Accommodation for most subjects is good, although in some subjects, such as modern foreign languages, teaching rooms are too dispersed. The reception area is secure and welcoming. There is wheelchair access to the ground floor, but



no access to upper floors. The local community makes good use of the accommodation.

77. The leadership and management of the school are increasingly effective in raising standards. They ensure that pupils in Years 7 to 9 make good progress and improve their basic skills in order to lay a foundation for further improvement as they move through the school. Initiatives in the provision of a curriculum more suitable for the many well below average attaining pupils have been put in place to improve achievement throughout the school. The impact of these initiatives has yet to be reflected in higher attainment at this early stage of change. The amount of the school's income expended on staff costs is broadly in line with the average. Although unit costs per pupil are above average, specific grants allocated to the school are managed efficiently and the school gives satisfactory value for money when account is taken of the good teaching pupils receive and the school's success in enabling pupils to make good progress.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

78. In order to improve standards further, the headteacher, staff and governors should:

1. **Raise the levels of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills by:**
  - ensuring that all subjects make a planned contribution to improving pupils' basic skills in Years 9 to 11 that builds on the good work undertaken in Years 7 and 8.  
(Paras. 9, 10, 32, 33, 35, 91-93, 103, 104).
2. **Raise attainment in mathematics, science and French by:**
  - improving the quality of teaching;
  - extending the time allocations for mathematics and French.  
(Paras. 21, 22, 36, 100-102, 109, 164, 166).
3. **Improve attendance by:**
  - evaluating the newly introduced initiatives such as the appointment of the education welfare officer, setting attendance targets and rewarding good and improved attendance;
  - using attendance statistics more effectively to target poor attendance among particular groups of pupils;
  - developing relationships with parents to help them to appreciate the need for good attendance.  
(Paras. 19, 56, 62, 63).
4. **Address under-achievement, particularly among boys in Years 10 and 11 by:**
  - monitoring and evaluating the impact of the changes made to the curriculum that set out to meet the needs of lower attaining pupils;
  - increasing pupils' commitment to improving standards through the effective use of assessment and target-setting.  
(Paras. 37, 38, 53, 65).
5. **Improve the attitudes and behaviour of the small proportion of disruptive pupils by:**
  - extending to all subjects the very good behaviour management that exists, for example, in art and design, music and design and technology;
  - adopting a more positive approach to managing unsatisfactory behaviour and ensuring greater consistency in approach across the school;
  - increasing the precision of achievement targets and using them so that pupils can see clearly how well they are achieving and what they have to do to improve further.  
(Paras. 13, 38, 62, 65, 119, 127, 166).
6. **Provide more effectively for pupils' spiritual development by:**
  - requiring subject departments to plan specifically for spiritual development;
  - monitoring and evaluating the contributions made by individual subjects;
  - ensuring that all acts of collective worship contribute to pupils' spiritual development.  
(Paras. 46, 190).

**In addition to the areas to be improved above, the school needs to:**

- fully meet the requirement relating to the provision of a daily act of collective worship; (Paras. 46, 171);
- make more effective use of form time to promote achievement; (Paras. 34, 56);

- attend to minor issues of non-compliance in the school's information to parents. (Para. 61, 70).

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	133
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	45

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4	13	50	30	3	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 - 11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	560
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	193

Special educational needs	Y7 - 11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	37
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	164

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	60

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	53
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	7

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	9.7
National comparative data	7.7

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.5
National comparative data	1.1

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	47	46	93

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	24	20	22
	Girls	26	14	10
	Total	50	34	32
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	56(55)	36(44)	40(40)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	9(4)	11(19)	15(9)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	15	18	26
	Girls	17	16	21
	Total	32	34	47
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	37(39)	37(62)	56(46)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	10(12)	22(27)	17(18)
	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	45	37	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	4	34	41
	Girls	9	35	36
	Total	13	69	77
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	16(28)	84(80)	94(90)
	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	27
	National	38.4

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

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

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	2
Indian	26
Pakistani	33
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	0
White	497
Any other minority ethnic group	0

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	1	0
Pakistani	1	0
Bangladeshi	1	1
Chinese	0	0
White	29	4
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

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

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	34.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

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

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	331

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

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	73.2
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	23
Key Stage 4	20.3

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	1680588
Total expenditure	1729774
Expenditure per pupil	3582
Balance brought forward from previous year	109353
Balance carried forward to next year	60167

**Results of the survey of parents and carers**

**QUESTIONNAIRE RETURN RATE**

Number of questionnaires sent out	498
Number of questionnaires returned	64

**Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	38	49	9	3	2
My child is making good progress in school.	39	48	6	5	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	19	51	19	6	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	30	44	17	9	0
The teaching is good.	41	46	6	3	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	35	35	21	8	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	45	42	6	3	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	53	42	2	0	3
The school works closely with parents.	27	39	23	6	5
The school is well led and managed.	37	46	10	5	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	36	38	14	3	9
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	42	38	6	0	14



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

### **ENGLISH**

79. In the 2000 National Curriculum tests for 14 year olds, the pupils' standards in English were well below the national average. Standards were below average in comparison with those of schools with pupils of similar backgrounds. Although the proportion of pupils who gained level 5 was above that found in similar schools, the proportion of pupils gaining level 6 was well below, thus bringing down the overall standard. The school does not hold records of prior attainment for all of these pupils because many entered the school during the key stage, so progress is difficult to measure. However, those pupils for whom the school does hold records of their attainment at 11 years had made satisfactory progress. There was no significant difference between the boys' and the girls' results. The standards of the boys have been rising steadily each year since the last inspection, whereas the standards of the girls have been uneven, but overall standards have improved significantly, especially over the past two years. Pupils did somewhat better in English than they did in mathematics and science. The standards of work seen in the inspection of the present Year 9 pupils differs from the test results in that it is below average rather than well below. This is because of the different profile of the cohort. There are fewer higher attaining pupils in the year, but the school has been successful in raising the attainment of the large number of lower attaining pupils. This represents good achievement because their standards when they entered the school were very low.
80. The results of the GCSE examination in English language were well below average in the grades A\*-C, but were average in the A\*-G range. All pupils were entered for literature and although results were still well below the national average they were better than in English language. This represents good achievement in relation to their National Curriculum test results two years ago. The girls performed significantly better than did the boys in these examinations relative to the national norms. Pupils did not do as well in English language as they did in most other subjects, which reflects their very low level of literacy when they entered the school. The work seen in the present Year 11 is of a higher standard though still below average. These pupils have made good progress, as there are many pupils who are working at a higher level than their attainment on entry would have predicted. They have thus achieved well.
81. Pupils who have special educational needs and pupils for whom English is an additional language achieve as well as their peers in relation to their prior attainment, as confirmed by their successful performance in examinations at the end of Year 9 and Year 11.
82. The standards of speaking and listening are average throughout the school. Pupils of all levels of attainment listen well to the teacher when the teacher is reading to them, and they can recall details from the text; however, they do not always listen to instructions carefully. Many higher attaining pupils are articulate and speak clearly. For instance, a Year 7 pupil gave a good explanation of how a pair of commas is used in writing. In another lesson, they showed an increasingly wide vocabulary as they described the characters in the book as 'naïve', 'reckless' or 'logical'. In Year 9,

middle and lower attaining pupils improvised a short scene in drama, speaking clearly and distinctly. In Year 11, some higher and middle attaining pupils, when revising 'A View from the Bridge', explained quite cogently the ways in which the play resembled a Greek tragedy.

83. Standards of reading are generally below average. Pupils enter Sutherland with very weak reading skills and a poor vocabulary. For instance, in the present Year 9 only one pupil had a reading score above average on entry to the school and two thirds of pupils had reading ages that were below their actual age. Because of the emphasis that is put on improving literacy skills, these pupils made rapid progress in Years 7 and 8. This was particularly true of pupils with English as an additional language, who had reading scores lower than their peers on entry to the school. By the age of 14, higher attaining pupils understand well what they read and show some insight into the ways that authors make their impact. However, some middle and lower attaining pupils, whilst able to recall the main events and characters in a text, have weaker comprehension skills, and they miss the finer points, or underlying meanings. Reading aloud is satisfactory. Pupils enjoy reading and do so with a fair degree of accuracy and expression. Standards improve further through Year 10 as they read more complex and demanding books, and standards are closer to the national average.
84. Standards of writing are below average. Most pupils in Year 9 have a good grasp of the conventions of writing literary essays, using quotations to support their comments, but the essays of the middle and lower attaining pupils tend to be less analytical than those of the higher attaining pupils. The range of writing is good, from well-planned research on the greenhouse effect in Year 7 to writing magic spells in Year 8, or to a critique of advertisements in Year 9. Higher attaining pupils write imaginative accounts of journeys through dungeons in a fantasy story, experimenting with words such as 'trepidation', 'illuminated' and 'assailed' to increase their vocabulary. When pupils re-draft a piece of work for coursework, their presentation is satisfactory, but generally, they lack practice in writing neatly and accurately at the first attempt, a skill which is important in examinations. Some middle attaining pupils could reach the average standard, but weaknesses in expression, punctuation and spelling bring down the overall standard of their writing. Pupils lack the necessary proofreading skills that would eliminate some of the more obvious mistakes.
85. In Year 11, higher attaining pupils produce written work of good quality. Their original writing is interesting and lively, and extended essays are well constructed and organised. For instance, a discursive essay exploring gender issues in today's society was very well argued. In literary essays, pupils show good analytical skills, and occasionally some original thought; for instance, when discussing 'The Lady of Shalott', a pupil wrote: "leaves fall on her like confetti; she is bonding with death". Middle and lower attaining pupils show a sensitive response to literature, for example, when writing letters as Lady Macbeth or the diary entry of Candy after the death of his dog in 'Of Mice and Men'. Writing is sometimes fluent and confident but is often marred by spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors, which bring down the overall standard
86. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. The English teachers are well informed of their needs, set realistic, individual targets and support them well in the classroom. The creditable results that most of these pupils achieve in examinations are a testimony to the progress they have made. Pupils with English

as an additional language and gifted and talented pupils also make good progress and they perform well in their examinations.

87. The quality of teaching is good. Because pupils respond well to the effective teaching, learning is also good. Teachers plan their lessons well, with clear objectives which they share with pupils at the beginning of the lesson. This gives the lessons focus, and pupils are able to see at the end of the lesson whether they have met the objectives, and consolidate what they have learned. A strength of the teaching is in the high expectations teachers have of all pupils. For instance, pupils are constantly urged to use the thesaurus to find more interesting words. This had an immediate impact on the quality of some Year 9 work, when pupils used words such as 'trepidation', 'pandemonium' and 'obstreperous'.
88. In a top set Year 10 lesson, pupils were introduced to the idea of 'stream of consciousness' writing; as a result, several attempted to incorporate this technique into their own writing. Teachers are no less demanding of lower attaining pupils than they are of higher attainers, and the work set is appropriately challenging. For instance, a Year 10 lower attaining group in which most pupils had special educational needs discussed the use of similes and how they could use them in their own work. Basic skills are taught well, particularly in the literacy lessons in Years 7 and 8. Teachers continually offer support and encouragement to pupils whilst they are working. As a result, pupils gain in confidence and self-esteem. Teachers generally manage their pupils well and choose interesting tasks to motivate and engage the interest of pupils as, for instance, in Year 10 when pupils writing a diary responded well to a Desert Island game.
89. In most lessons, pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils show positive attitudes to their lessons, which makes an important contribution to their achievement. However, the immature behaviour of a minority of pupils disrupts some lessons, and teachers have to work very hard to keep their attention and to minimise the effects of their behaviour on the learning of the rest of the class. Relationships between pupils and with their teachers are generally good. The result is an ethos in lessons in which pupils expect to work hard and teachers are able to encourage them to their best efforts.
90. Since the last inspection, the department has made satisfactory progress in most of the areas of weakness. The head of department provides good leadership. She has managed a difficult staffing problem very well during the past year, minimising any adverse impact on pupils' learning. The department works closely with the learning support department to ensure that pupils with special educational needs are provided for. The curriculum and its units of work are well planned, and the head of department is well prepared for the changes in the curriculum due in the forthcoming year. However, the time given to English for the top sets in Year 8 is below the recommended time. The programme for the core skills in literacy in Years 7 and 8 complements the English curriculum very well for middle and lower attaining pupils, and they make good progress. The extension work for the top set in Year 7 is very effective. There is a need, however, to extend these core skills for the middle and lower attaining pupils into Year 9 in order to consolidate the gains they make in former years.

### **Key Skills - literacy**

91. The contribution made by other subjects to the development of the key skills in literacy is satisfactory. The school has made good progress in developing a policy for the whole school, and several initiatives to improve literacy have been introduced, for example, the literacy summer school for new pupils coming into Year 7, a book week for Key Stage 3 pupils, and certificates and prizes to celebrate pupils' achievements in reading and spelling. The core skills programme in Years 7 and 8 has been established for several years and has had a major impact on improving literacy. All teachers are expected to plan for the development of literacy skills, and there is some good practice in this area. In art and design, for instance, the development of speaking and listening is planned as part of all lessons. Consequently, pupils answer questions in detail and in good standard English. In modern foreign languages, however, listening skills are under-developed because pupils have not been used to listening properly, although there is now some improvement where teachers insist on their listening. In design and technology and ICT, pupils listen well and respond eagerly to questions. Pupils' use of technical vocabulary is satisfactory, and is aided in some departments by word lists or glossaries.
92. Standards of reading are below average. Worksheets and materials are often modified for lower attaining pupils who have some difficulty with the textbooks and generally, pupils either read them silently, or the teacher often reads them for the pupils. In some subjects, such as art and design, pupils have the opportunity to develop research skills using books and computer programs when looking at the work of artists. There are few opportunities for pupils to develop the skill of reading aloud, except in English lessons, although when they do, they read quite well; for instance, in a science lesson on acids in Year 7, pupils read clearly and accurately.
93. Although standards in writing are below average, there are good opportunities for extending the range of writing skills. Pupils develop note-making skills in several subjects. For example, in a Year 10 ICT lesson pupils listened to and followed the text on screen of a meeting and made notes to record as minutes. In religious education, pupils sequence notes for retelling a story. History offers opportunities for creative responses as, for example, when pupils wrote a poem about the plague when studying the medieval realm, or a newspaper report of a visit to Ironbridge. In geography, pupils write stories about volcanic eruptions and discursive essays on their views on trade and aid. There is extended writing in most subjects; however, weaknesses in spelling and punctuation mar the work of middle and lower attaining pupils.

## **DRAMA**

94. Drama is well taught in the school. It is a popular option at GCSE and pupils do well in their examinations compared with their results in most other subjects. Although the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C was well below that found nationally, all pupils entered gained a grade, which is better than the national average. At the end of Year 9, higher attaining pupils reach standards that are close to those expected for this age, despite having studied drama for only one year. They create drama with a satisfactory degree of conviction, incorporating into their work some of the techniques they have learned, such as thought-tracking; however, progress is hindered sometimes by too high a rate of absence. Pupils are developing the ability to evaluate their own and others' performance with some sensitivity, but for some pupils, this is still a difficult concept to apply.

## MATHEMATICS

95. In the 2000 national tests for 14 year olds, results were well below the national average for the number of pupils achieving level 5 or higher and very low for those gaining level 6 or above. Standards were very low in comparison with those of similar schools. Standards have varied little over the past four years. There is no significant difference between boys' and girls' results. Pupils' performance in mathematics was not as good as their performance in English but not significantly different from their performance in science.
96. In the 2000 GCSE mathematics examinations, the proportion of pupils passing at grade C or higher was well below the national average and has been so for the last four years. The proportion of pupils passing at grade G or higher was in line with the national average. Girls performed better than boys in 2000. A certificate of achievement was available for the low attainers, although some were not entered as their attendance was poor. Statistical analyses that take standards at the start of the course into account indicate that pupils who entered the examination achieved well by the end of Year 11. Achievement is no better than satisfactory, however, if absentees are included in the analyses,
97. Present standards among the 14 year olds are an improvement on the 2000 results but are still well below those expected for their age. The higher attainers in Year 7 are achieving well owing in part to their very good attitudes to their work and the good teaching. Thinking skills are required in their work on investigations that involve appropriate use of computers. The higher attainers at the end of Year 9 have achieved well, reaching National Curriculum level 6. They cope well with new learning, but errors in their work follow from poor setting out, working across a page with several 'equal' signs, for example.
98. The teaching focuses appropriately on the needs of those pupils who start from a much lower level of prior attainment, and the school's emphasis on numeracy in Years 7 and 8 is good. Even so, these pupils have difficulty in remembering previous work. Standards of numeracy are still below expectations for half of the pupils at the end of Year 9. The teaching of basic skills is good, such as that seen in simplifying eight divided by five, but it is not always followed up with whole-class mental or oral work to reinforce the teaching. Achievement overall in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make sound progress and their achievement is satisfactory as well.
99. Standards among the present 16 year olds are an improvement on the 2000 examination results but are still well below those expected. The higher attainers achieve well as approximately five pupils are working at a level in line with grade A at GCSE. There were no pupils with this grade in 2000. A further 20 pupils are working in line with grade B. Standards of numeracy are in line with expectations for the majority of pupils but there is a significant minority below this level at the end of Year 11. Higher attainers know the formula for solving a quadratic equation and use it accurately. They solve simultaneous equations efficiently. Pupils entered for the intermediate level know their trigonometrical ratios and use them appropriately in solving problems. Some pupils entered for the foundation level enjoy their work on shape and have a good knowledge of enlargement. Not all of the lower attainers

know their tables, however. Most cope satisfactorily with halves and quarters, 50 and 10 per cent, and know how to work out the area of a rectangle. Overall, achievement by the end of Key Stage 4 is satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress and their achievement is satisfactory as well. The gifted and talented also achieve satisfactorily in relation to their prior attainment.

100. The teaching is satisfactory overall: about half is good or better and half satisfactory. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. The teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Year 10 (no Year 11 pupils were in school during the inspection). The strength of the teaching lies in the good and at times very good management of pupils: some pupils need this control in the teaching to focus on their work. Others are very dependent upon their teachers in their learning. Few have developed independent learning skills. Pupils' attitudes are good and they listen and answer questions well in many lessons. Good use is made of homework and most pupils do it.
101. Teaching methods do not promote oral work and whole-class discussion or set open-ended questions. Consequently pupils spend too long on one task, lose concentration and learn less. In comparing two frequency distributions, for example, calculations were repetitive and took pupils a whole lesson to complete accurately. Earlier learning is not sufficiently reinforced on a regular basis through the planning of lessons. Challenges to pupils are good overall given the well below average attainment levels of pupils. Assessment is a strength of the department. Day-to-day assessment is good in lessons and regular testing ensures that teaching is appropriately focused on the needs of the pupils through the setting arrangements. The marking of pupils' work is good overall and in some cases excellent, offering pupils written help with their learning. ICT is planned to form an appropriate part of the mathematics scheme of work. Computers are not used enough in the teaching of mathematics: plans are in hand to extend the network through appropriate software. Investigation work is good and is an integral part of the teaching.
102. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. In Year 8, higher attainers' allocation of teaching time reduces from three hours to two hours a week, which is unsatisfactory. The curriculum satisfies the demands of the National Curriculum and the leadership gives a good clear direction for development. Good procedures are in place for the monitoring of teaching but outcomes in terms of teaching methods are not yet uniformly good. The extra teaching group in the current Year 11 and the extra classes arranged by staff after school are mainly responsible for the improvement in standards this year. Other improvements are in teaching, the use of computers and the development of investigational techniques. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

### **Key Skills - numeracy**

103. The strategies within mathematics for teaching numeracy are good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11; they are good overall. This is not the case in science where the numeracy policy is not detailed enough to raise standards. The school uses its assessment procedures well in Year 7, identifying pupils in need of special support in their numeracy skills, and providing an appropriate course in Years 7 and 8. However, not all subjects make a planned contribution to improve pupils' basic skill to build on this course.

104. Pupils' competence in dealing with the everyday demands of numeracy is in line with expectations in history, geography, design and technology, mathematics and modern foreign languages. It is below expectations in science. The handling of number and measurement mentally, orally and in writing is also in line with expectations except in science. Calculators are used well in mathematics. The application of spatial concepts is good in art and design. Year 8 pupils, for example, gain good spatial concepts in creating repeat patterns in very complicated examples of Islamic interlocking designs. Pupils make good sense of information presented numerically and graphically in art and design, ICT and mathematics. Standards in graphical presentation are below those expected in geography and science. Geography teachers use pupils' graphical skills and reinforce them in cross-sections of rivers in all levels of coursework but the use of numeracy skills is less than that seen in many schools. The development of numeracy skills is not yet fully integrated into the GNVQ course.

## SCIENCE

105. In the 2000 National Curriculum tests for 14 year olds, results were well below the national average. The proportion of pupils gaining level 5 or higher was well below the national average, and the proportion of those achieving level 6 or above was below average. The proportion of pupils obtaining level 5 or above was lower than in similar schools, but the proportion gaining level 6 or above was broadly in line with that of similar schools. The results obtained represent satisfactory progress and achievement for the pupils concerned, whose attainment was low in science when they entered the school. Results in science were much the same as those in mathematics but not as good as those in English. Results have improved over the last four years, but are still well below those obtained in similar schools. The performance of boys is better than that of girls at the end of Year 9
106. In 2000, GCSE double award science results were well below the national average for grades A\*-C, and slightly above the national average for grades A\*-G. Almost all pupils in the year were entered for the examination. Girls outperformed boys in terms of the number of grades A\*-C obtained. Results in science had shown improvement in 1998 and 1999 but in 2000 dropped to just above the 1997 levels. Pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds achieved better grades overall than other pupils. The results in 2000 were not as good as those in English or mathematics, but represented good progress and achievement in view of pupils' attainment when they entered the school.
107. Levels of attainment of the pupils currently in Year 9, like last year's results, are well below the national average, though they represent satisfactory achievement compared with pupils' prior attainment. Higher attaining pupils write at length and accurately whilst explaining changes that take place during puberty. They make successful attempts to draw straight line graphs to illustrate findings and draw conclusions from these findings. Lower attaining pupils can recognise and describe a limited range of materials, making some written observations, but do not show understanding of observations, and cannot explain them. The small number of graphs are not scaled and are inaccurately drawn. Much work remains uncompleted especially lower down the ability range. Higher attaining pupils in Year 9 are working at national levels of expectation and use high levels of technical language as they complete a written research exercise. Lower attaining pupils in

Year 9 are able to label a diagram of the digestive system when supplied with the names of parts, but have difficulty in describing the functions of the various parts of the digestive system. When using a well-prepared research sheet, they manage to test some foods for the presence of starch and can talk about the results obtained, but do not show understanding of the whole digestive system.

108. Standards in Year 11 are below average, although achievement overall is satisfactory as pupils achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. Higher attaining pupils recognise the operation of the critical angle of light travelling through glass. They can investigate the critical angle, obtaining enough results to obtain a reliable conclusion. They understand information about critical angle and its relationship with total internal reflection to explore applications and uses in quite some detail, linking ideas and applications. A group of lower attaining pupils have difficulty in recognising the internal parts of the heart and they cannot explain the functioning of chambers and valves. They can partially label a diagram of a heart but do not use technical language appropriately. They understand the importance of keeping the heart in good condition; they have explored practically the effect of exercise on heartbeat rates, but find it hard to talk about cause and effect of exercise and diet on the heart and rely on simple messages in designing a heart-care booklet.
109. The teaching overall is satisfactory, being slightly better in Years 7 to 9 than in Year 10. Throughout the age range, there is a small proportion of unsatisfactory teaching. Features of good teaching include the setting and sharing of lesson objectives, making good links to the last lesson, outlining tasks in advance and using the time available effectively. The work set takes account of the level of attainment of the class and a variety of teaching and learning methods are used. Teachers manage behaviour well, sometimes supported by a well-briefed and experienced assistant. Where the teaching is unsatisfactory, lessons start slowly, pupils are unsure of safety procedures and experiments are not sufficiently well prepared to ensure that they work. On occasion, teachers do not cope well enough with disruptive behaviour, and this problem is exacerbated where there is a lack of support in classes that have pupils with behavioural special needs. In these classes, the practical work tends to be confirmation of teachers' demonstrations rather than an investigation of a problem, and pupils' learning is adversely affected. In contrast, a lesson which made a big impact on pupils' learning had a very sound sequence of planning, well shared so that all pupils knew where they were going. The pace of work was very high and pupils acknowledged enjoyment at having made good progress. The presence of a second adult to help with behaviour management made a significant difference to the rate of learning.
110. Generally, teachers use homework effectively. Overall, the rate of progress in learning is satisfactory in both key stages and pupils learn how to work on their own and with others in thinking and in talking about and developing ideas. They generally use scientific language in a satisfactory manner when doing so. Some pupils, in a small number of lessons, make unsatisfactory progress and under-achieve. This is usually related to poor behaviour and often linked to poor attendance.
111. Pupils with special educational needs, especially when supported by well-briefed and experienced classroom assistants, make similar progress to that of their peers and good progress in relation to their individual learning plans. Where pupils have special needs that relate to behaviour, the presence of adult support in the



classroom usually ensures that they make better progress. Higher attainers are challenged effectively. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress in the language of science. There is good emphasis on the development of basic literacy skills, but the teaching of numeracy skills is unsatisfactory. Regular marking of work is evident, but close marking to help pupils to understand their progress towards targets is insufficiently developed. Target setting is developing well in Years 7 and 8, but some pupils are not taking part fully in this and are not recording their achievements.

112. Attitudes and behaviour in science are good overall. On occasion there is some unsatisfactory and poor behaviour, however. Pupils show a trust in each other, working well in teams yet increasing in independence and wishing to achieve in their work. Relationships between teachers and pupils and between pupils are good and this has a positive impact on learning.
113. The leadership of the department is good, providing clear educational direction to a highly committed team, well serviced by good technical support. Senior management oversee the quality of teaching and learning and the head of department monitors academic progress with an increasing level of accuracy as systems are developed and implemented in Years 7 to 9. An extra-curricular science club is well attended by enthusiastic pupils. There has been good response to issues in the last report; full access to the curriculum has been improved by the development of a new scheme of work, which is well resourced with attractive textbooks in sufficient numbers. The evidence base for assessment is now wide enough and ready to include school-wide factors such as attendance. Teaching is now satisfactory. The issue of under-achievement of boys has been thoroughly reviewed and action taken to improve coursework standards. The department has made good improvement since the last report.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

114. Most pupils enter school with low skills in art and design. At this stage some pupils know about primary colours but do not mix colours in an informed way. They use a limited range of drawing and painting equipment. At the age of 14 the standard of work in art and design is a little above average for the majority of pupils. The results of teacher assessments in 2000 show that 85 per cent of pupils in Year 9 achieved or were working above national expectations. These results represent very good achievement when previous attainment is taken into account.
115. The percentage of pupils gaining GCSE A\*-C grades has fluctuated over the past three years from below the national average in 1998 and 1999 to above the national average in 2000. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. Results in art and design were the best of all subjects taken within the school in 2000 and are the best for many pupils.
116. Overall the work seen in Years 7 to 9 represents attainment that is above average. Pupils in Year 7 combine the skills of sketching with gaining a knowledge and understanding of the major styles in architecture from ancient Egyptian through Byzantine, Baroque and Neo-Gothic to modern styles. In Year 8, pupils gain a good understanding of the main techniques associated with repeat patterns, such as mirror, inverse and rotation methods. This work enhances their spatial concepts. Attention is drawn to the links with numeracy here. Pupils are given excellent

examples, including three-pronged Islamic patterns and Celtic, that are demanding and complex when used in a rotation system. In Year 9, pupils learn to identify the works of specific artists and can comment on and explain specific art and design terms such as texture and composition. They can compare the works of two artists by looking at their techniques, media and subject matter.

117. All pupils are taught formally the basic skills of drawing and painting and acquire good technical skills. Single and two-point perspectives are taught formally and pupils gain a knowledge and understanding that can be used to good effect in later work. Many pupils on the special educational needs register show flair and confidence in art and design and make similar progress to that of other pupils. Pupils with English as an additional language have no difficulty in understanding English in lessons and they too make similar progress to other pupils.
118. At the age 16, pupils' standards are above average. Standards in the present Year 10 are significantly higher than in Year 11 and are well above average. No Year 11 lessons were seen as these pupils have completed their final GCSE examination, but their final examination studies were available for scrutiny. All, including pupils with special educational needs, observe closely and draw carefully. They have a good understanding of how to represent work to achieve an interesting composition. All pupils understand about tone and shade and use these carefully to achieve subtle effects. Many lack the courage to go for more dramatic effects even when they have the necessary skills. A significant number of Year 11 pupils have reached standards at the GCSE grade C/D borderline. There are very few pupils achieving at a low level. This represents very good achievement. There is a pattern of poor attendance throughout the years and a small number of very talented pupils do not reach their potential because of absences. Throughout all years pupils link their work well to that of major artists or specific art movements.
119. There is only one art and design teacher who is a specialist in fine art. The quality of teaching is very good, one in six lessons being judged excellent. The teacher works hard to make the lessons interesting and has a very quiet but secure authority and discipline within the classroom. The teacher expects all pupils to be composed in lessons and has only to wait a few seconds for pupils to reach a calm state. There is an excellent working climate in all lessons that helps pupils to concentrate and think about their work. Pupils are encouraged to express opinions. The teacher examines their knowledge and understanding of art and design, in relation to the topic being studied, at the beginning of all lessons and a review of the work is done at the end. Pupils are helped to express their comments in correct standard English and this adds significantly to their skills in spoken language.
120. Lessons are planned in very good detail and each lesson is structured into short stages to ensure that pupils work at a good pace, concentrate on the essential learning points and do not dwell too long on any one area. The teacher has high expectations of the pupils with regard to their creative ability and their capacity for learning. All pupils get individual attention from the teacher in class and this enables them to make very good progress, not wasting time in being unsure of how to develop their ideas and skills. Marking and assessment are good. There is ongoing assessment in all lessons. Sketchbooks are marked in detail with comments to show pupils how to improve. All units of work are marked formally on the key elements and good records are kept. Pupils are appropriately involved in their own assessment.

121. Pupils have good attitudes towards art and design. They arrive at lessons cheerfully and settle to work quickly. They pay close attention to the teacher's demonstrations. Behaviour throughout lessons is good and often very good. This is a tribute to the high standards set by the teacher and to the pupils' respect for the teacher's expertise. They respect the work of others and do not touch the still-life groups set up around the room.
  
122. The department had a good report at the time of the last inspection. No weaknesses were identified. All the good features have been maintained. The upward trend in the higher grades in GCSE continues. Leadership continues to be strong. Standards have improved through good documentation and lesson planning. The only weakness is the loss of a ceramics specialist, but there are plans to recruit a part-time specialist for the next academic year. There is good use of ICT; pupils scan in their own drawings and use the computer to manipulate images. However, there is a need for a digital camera to extend provision in ICT further.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

123. At the end of Key Stage 3, teacher assessments indicated that standards of attainment in 2000, for Year 9 pupils, were broadly in line with the average in the proportion of pupils achieving level 5 or above. In 2000, the proportion of pupils obtaining GCSE grades A\*-C was in line with the national average. Results at these higher grades in the textiles and food courses were well above the national average. Results in the systems and control course were in line with the average but in resistant materials were well below the national level. In all courses, all the pupils entered achieved a pass at grade A\*-G, and these results are above the national average. Overall the pupils achieved results in design and technology above those in all their other examinations. The attainment of boys at grades A\*-C is significantly lower than that of the girls. Results in previous years, compared with 2000, were lower in 1999 and again in 1998. The results are improving well over time even though there are fluctuations from year to year, which reflect the differences in prior attainment among the different year groups.
124. Attainment at the age of 14, as observed during the inspection, is below the national average but pupils achieve well in relation to their prior attainment as many pupils enter the school in Year 7 with levels of attainment that are well below the average. The majority of the pupils have making skills that are at the national average in a range of materials by the end of Year 9. For example, in a lower attaining Year 8 textiles group, the pupils were undertaking a practical task using computer-aided design and manufacturing as well as hand methods to embroider lettering and mount the work produced onto card. Though challenged by this task, the pupils produced work of good quality, demonstrating a high level of accuracy and care. Graphical skills improve over time but are not as well developed for the majority of pupils as their making skills. The higher attaining pupils have satisfactory design skills and a more secure grasp of subject knowledge and understanding. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs have greater difficulty with design skills but their making skills are better developed. The attainment level of the girls is marginally higher than that of the boys.
125. Standards of the work at the end of Year 11 are in line with the national average, and Year 10 pupils are also achieving well. The progress made by pupils of all levels of attainment is good, especially for a majority of the girls, and builds on the firm foundations laid in Years 7 to 9. Practical making in all materials continues to be the strongest element of the subject for the majority of pupils and is of good quality, especially in textiles. Pupils handle tools and materials with care and precision. For example, in a Year 10 systems lesson, the pupils assembled accurately their moisture-sensing circuits and produced well-made casings by vacuum forming. Subject knowledge and the technical vocabulary which underpins it, are in line with national levels for the middle and higher attaining girls and higher attaining boys. These pupils also have the higher levels of design skills. For example, in a Year 10 food lesson, pupils researched, planned and evaluated recipes from other countries and cultures. The research work of the boys, in general, lacked the depth and rigour evident in the work of the girls. Graphical communication skills are weak for the lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs but their practical making continues to be better developed than other areas of the subject.

126. Throughout the school the pupils handle tools, equipment, machines and materials with increasing confidence and skill, and work with due regard for safety and hygiene. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress in relation to their prior attainment in all years, especially in making. Graphical communication skills are improved over time as pupils use an increasing range of drawing methods to model, record and communicate their design ideas. The higher attaining pupils make good progress with their design skills. They undertake research, analyse it, draw up specifications and evaluate with increasing depth and rigour. Throughout the age range, pupils with English as an additional language make good progress in line with their peers.
127. The quality of teaching is consistently good or better in all years and is a strength of the department. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan and prepare resources for their lessons very effectively. They set tasks and use projects that challenge the pupils, and have high expectations of the work they produce. In the lessons observed the teachers used a range of methods and learning activities appropriate to the pupils' levels of attainment. For example, in a Year 9 lesson, pupils engaged in a project to design gift packaging, analysed a range of existing solutions to the task and developed criteria for their own designs. The teacher had provided a wide range of resources to engage the pupils with the learning, gave good individual support and ended the lesson with a 10-minute videotape to consolidate the learning and extend the pupils' understanding. Also in a Year 7 resistant materials lesson, the teacher had set up a production line to simulate industrial practice, producing a batch of bird mobiles for young children. The pupils undertook specific roles in making parts for the mobile, extending their practical skills and at the same time contributing to their personal development by working as a team. Such teaching approaches ensured that the pupils worked hard and showed a high level of interest in the tasks set, leading to good productivity in lessons.
128. In some lessons the teachers shared the aims of the lesson with the pupils so that they were aware of what they should achieve by the end, but this was not a consistent practice. In a few lessons, there was some loss of pace. This occurred when teachers did not set time targets for the completion of intermediate tasks. Only rarely did the teachers review the progress made at the end of the lesson with the pupils, but where they did the quality of learning improved.
129. Pupils have very positive attitudes to their work in design and technology. They listen attentively to their teachers' explanations and demonstrations. They concentrate well and are interested in the tasks set. Pupils respect the equipment and resources provided for their use. Routines are well established and teachers manage pupils' behaviour very well and ensure a very good working atmosphere in lessons. Relationships are good and pupils collaborate effectively when working in pairs and groups.
130. The department is well led. The recently appointed head of department has begun to identify areas for further development. Departmental documentation is good and the development plan has appropriate priorities aimed at raising attainment. The department needs to tackle the under-achievement of the boys, however. At present there is no formal monitoring of teaching. The curriculum meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and the department is in a strong position to develop further its use of ICT in the subject. However, the planning of the curriculum puts insufficient emphasis on the systematic development of design skills

alongside those of making, and the tasks in Years 7 to 9 are not varied enough in their length. The rooms which have been refurbished provide attractive working environments, and effective displays of high quality celebrate pupils' achievements and set standards for all pupils to aspire to.

131. The last inspection report identified a range of issues, most of which have been dealt with and improvement has been good. For example, in all years levels of attainment have improved and the rate of pupils' progress has been raised. The curriculum is now well balanced, has appropriate emphasis on subject knowledge and understanding, and design work has greater coherence. However, graphical skills are still relatively weak for many pupils and along with design skills need to be more systematically developed.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

132. In 2000, teachers assessed pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9 as being well below the national average. In the GCSE examination in 2000, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C was well below the national average and below the performance in the previous year. However, all those entered for the examination gained at least grade G. Overall results in 2000, as measured by the average points gained per pupil, showed an improvement on 1999, though they were still below the national average. Girls performed better than boys, but the difference may not be significant because of the small number of girls in the group. Pupils' grades in geography in 2000 were below the average of those gained in their other subjects and below those expected from their attainment at the end of Year 9. The reasons for pupils under-performing in 2000 included weaker than expected coursework, especially from boys, and the impact of a significant minority of pupils who joined the school after the GCSE course had started.
133. Standards of pupils' work, as seen during the inspection, are below average for pupils aged 14 and 16 years. The attainment of pupils in the current Year 9 is a little higher than that recorded in the previous year. This reflects the better progress now being made by pupils as a result of measures taken by the department to improve teaching and the curriculum, including a clearer focus on what pupils need to do to improve their work. Pupils of all levels of attainment make good progress across Years 7 to 9 and achieve well in relation to their earlier attainment. It was possible to see only a very small sample of the work of pupils in Year 11 because they were revising for their examinations, but all their GCSE coursework was inspected. Only one lesson was observed in Year 10. The attainment of pupils in Year 11 is below average, but they are achieving in line with expectations from their earlier attainment. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make similar progress to other pupils throughout the age range, and there is no significant difference between the progress of boys and girls.
134. Pupils at both key stages use graphs and maps competently to find and present information but most pupils use only a small range of graphical presentation and this has an adverse effect on the quality of many pupils' coursework in Year 11. Most pupils are competent in their use of ICT to present their work, whether for research projects in Years 7 to 9 or for GCSE coursework. In a lesson in Year 9, most pupils, all of whom had special educational needs, were able to use the Internet effectively to find and save pictures of coastal features. Most higher attaining pupils in Year 9

have a good command of geographical terms, for example in work on coastal landforms and processes, but many others throughout the age range are insecure in their knowledge. Many pupils in Year 11 do not make enough use of appropriate vocabulary in their coursework.

135. By the age of 14, many pupils have begun to recognise and describe geographical patterns and processes, for example in work on river and coastal features. Higher attaining and some middle attaining pupils in Year 9 recognise and describe coastal landforms and give some explanation for their formation. Many pupils of all levels of attainment, however, do not develop explanations in sufficient detail, and middle and lower attaining pupils especially are too dependent on transferring information solely from text sources. Pupils of all levels of attainment recognise that trade makes countries inter-dependent and that patterns of trade may disadvantage less economically developed countries. They can recognise and describe different kinds of international aid but most offer only brief analyses of the impact of schemes. Higher attaining pupils recognise that aid may have disadvantages as well as benefits for the recipients and can express their own views, sometimes at length, on the relative merits of aid schemes in Tanzania.
136. By the age of 16, a few pupils produce work of a good standard in their GCSE coursework and some are average, but most are below average. Most pupils can collect information effectively from urban and river studies and present it in maps and diagrams. Some higher attaining pupils describe their evidence and methods well and are able to relate their findings on rivers to what they know about river processes. Middle and lower attaining pupils generally give simple descriptions and most do not relate them to ideas about geographical patterns and processes. Few show initiative by extending the work beyond the basic minimum. Interpretive analysis is generally weak and lacking in detail. Higher and some middle attaining pupils draw conclusions from their work and a few attempt a limited evaluation, but these aspects are weak in most work. In other work seen, there are examples of good, detailed writing, for example on changes in farming in the United Kingdom and the role of the European Union, but most pupils do not give enough detail or specific examples in their answers.
137. The quality of teaching is good overall and is never less than satisfactory. It is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory at Key Stage 4. Pupils' learning reflects the quality of the teaching. Relations between teachers and pupils are generally good. Teachers manage pupils well and have high expectations of their behaviour. This creates a pleasant and orderly environment for work in most lessons, though teachers sometimes have to work hard to achieve it. In a Year 7 lesson, lower attaining pupils with special educational needs made very good progress in their knowledge and understanding of patterns of employment within a professional football club because they were managed firmly but pleasantly and work was conducted at a high pace that permitted no distractions. As a result, pupils worked hard and concentrated well. In this lesson and in a Year 9 lesson, support staff made a significant contribution to the good progress made by pupils with special educational needs.
138. Teachers plan well and have clear objectives. Resources are well prepared and tasks and resources are generally well matched to the attainment levels of pupils in the class. Teachers use questions well to test, reinforce and extend pupils' knowledge and understanding. Pupils in Year 8 made good progress in understanding the influence of physical geography on the pattern of world

population distribution because the teacher had planned a well-structured lesson with short activities for pupils that maintained their interest and the pace of work. Questions were used well to share and consolidate their learning and prepare them for the next stage of the lesson. Pupils responded with interest and worked productively. Teaching is less effective when activities are allowed to continue for too long, allowing the pace of pupils' work to drop and some to lose concentration, as in a Year 8 lesson on the destruction of tropical rain forests. Pupils' work is marked well and regularly. Teachers' comments indicate clearly how their work might be improved, but there is some inconsistency in teachers' use of grades on pupils' work.

139. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good, especially in Years 7 to 9, when they are often very good. Higher attaining pupils in Year 8 and Year 9 lessons responded very positively to the tasks of planning and researching booklets on sustainable development of the rain forests and on coastal features in the Swanage area, and many showed initiative and worked responsibly together. Some pupils in Year 10 are less positive and show little motivation or initiative. Behaviour is also good overall, and sometimes very good in Years 7 to 9, but a minority of pupils in some classes throughout the age range find it difficult to sustain concentration or to listen quietly when the teacher or other pupils are talking. It is a measure of the determination of teachers and their good management of pupils that satisfactory learning takes place in these circumstances.
140. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The curriculum for Years 7 to 9 is planned well and gives pupils a broad and balanced experience of the subject, though opportunities for fieldwork are currently restricted for reasons beyond the school's control. The curriculum makes a good contribution to pupils' moral and social development. The use of assessment information and self-assessment by pupils to set targets and help them to understand how to improve their work is beginning to have a positive impact on standards at Key Stage 3.
141. Although standards of attainment at both key stages remain much as they were at the time of the last inspection, pupils' achievement at Key Stage 3 has improved and is now good. The quality of teaching and the use of ICT have improved and the department has responded positively to issues raised in the last report. Overall improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The department now has good arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of teaching and the curriculum. As a result, the recently appointed head of department has identified clearly what needs to be done to raise standards in the subject and the benefits of measures already taken have begun to be seen in Years 7 to 9 in pupils' improved progress.

## HISTORY

142. Teacher assessments in 2000 indicate that standards of attainment of pupils by the age of 14 were below the national average; the proportion achieving level 6 and above was well below the national average, and girls performed less well than boys. Standards, as shown by teachers' assessments, have been improving over the last three years.



143. The proportion of pupils attaining grades A\*-C in the GCSE examinations in 2000 was well below the national average. Although this is below the level reported in the previous inspection in 1997, there had been an improving trend since then until 1999. Pupils have consistently done better in history than in most of their other subjects until 2000, when a higher proportion than usual showed less commitment to their studies. The standards of attainment of the current Year 11 pupils, while below average, are higher as a result of their stronger commitment. The proportion attaining grades A\*-G was above the national average in 2000, all pupils passing. It has been consistently in line with or above the national average for grades A\*-G for the last three years. Although girls did significantly better than boys at the higher GCSE grades in 1999, there is no marked trend of significant difference between them over the last three years.
144. Standards among the 14 year olds are below the national average. In view of their low levels of attainment when they entered the school, however, they have made good progress and achieved well since then. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language also make good progress. They have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the key characteristics of the subject and of chronology. Most pupils have competent basic skills of note making. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs receive good support to reach these standards, for example by good use of appropriate outlines for their writing and prompts by the teachers. These pupils can select and record evidence effectively only when the written, primary sources have been suitably simplified. Many pupils find it difficult to recall and prioritise causes without the teacher's guidance, for instance in a Year 8 assessment when examining the failure of the Spanish Armada. Research topics such as investigating the Holocaust in Year 9, help higher and some average attaining pupils to develop other historical skills of enquiry, organisation, source analysis and the use of ICT. This frequently leads to high standards of well-constructed extended writing from the small minority of higher attaining pupils, for example on effectively interpreting the different views of the Gunpowder Plot. However, despite the good foundation provided by the core skills programme in the earlier years and the high quality of learning support in the classroom, skills of evaluating sources and extended writing are less well developed in pupils of middle and lower attainment.
145. The attainment of pupils by the age of 16 is below the national average. This is better than the latest GCSE results, which were well below the national average. This represents good progress in pupils' achievement compared with their low level of attainment at the end of Year 9. Nearly all pupils in the current Year 11 have satisfactory historical knowledge and note-making skills. Higher and most middle attaining pupils have developed satisfactory skills of enquiry, organisation and analysis of different sources, as seen in competent coursework studies. The highest attainers pupils write analytically at length, using relevant evidence to support their conclusions. However, middle and lower attaining pupils find it difficult to evaluate sources and causes, despite helpful support materials, and this leads to work of below average standard.
146. The quality of teaching is good overall and is never less than satisfactory. It is best in Years 7 to 9 where nearly three-quarters of lessons are good. This is an improvement on the situation at the time of the last inspection. The criticisms reported then have largely been met: the setting of higher expectations in these years has led to more challenging tasks and a faster pace to lessons; homework tasks are now more purposeful and effectively extend the learning in lessons;

pupils' behaviour is consistently good as a result of mostly well-planned lessons and good management of pupils. Challenging source materials generally match the needs of all pupils of all abilities and there is a strong emphasis on developing skills, especially writing in different forms. For instance, lower attaining pupils in Year 8 learned to use primary sources successfully in investigating the plague and then were encouraged to develop literacy skills by writing a poem based on their findings. Teachers' high expectations for all levels of ability have encouraged stimulating tasks. For instance, Year 9 pupils with special educational needs were carefully allocated to groups to find evidence on the Holocaust from various websites, which had been carefully reviewed beforehand to check their accessibility. With a different set of pupils, the same basic lesson was less effective when this detailed planning was missing and the written primary sources proved too difficult for the group.

147. Teachers have a good subject knowledge and set appropriate learning objectives which are clearly explained to the pupils. This produces an orderly and purposeful start to lessons, so that pupils quickly settle to work. There is a good pace to most lessons. Classroom management is also good. Teachers have high expectations of good behaviour and react quickly to inattention. This leads to a co-operative response and good behaviour in nearly all lessons. Marking is done regularly and makes encouraging comments, but it does not adequately tell the pupils their strengths and weaknesses and how to improve. However, the review sheets which follow major assignments in Years 7 to 9 are successfully used for target setting and for indicating National Curriculum levels.
148. As a consequence of the good teaching, pupils make good progress in their learning in class at both key stages and achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. An effective working atmosphere is created in which productive learning of new knowledge and skills takes place at all levels of ability. Pupils' literacy skills are being taught successfully, especially note making and writing in various forms, though key words are inadequately referred to and displayed. Skills of using source work and interpretation are being well developed. The good behaviour of the pupils and their readiness to listen, concentrate and co-operate with the teacher and with each other, promote a good atmosphere for learning. The pupils' attitudes to work are good and occasionally very good in nearly all lessons. This is a significant improvement on the situation previously reported when a minority disturbed the learning of others in Years 7 to 9.
149. Significant improvements have taken place in the department since the last inspection: teaching is now of a higher quality, pupils' behaviour and attitudes are consistently good and pupils' progress through all years is now more rapid. These developments reflect the commitment, good organisation and clear educational direction provided by the head of department. The school's aims of raising standards and improving skills in literacy are to be seen clearly in the department's aims and teaching. ICT is now beginning to be used and further development is planned. The regular monitoring of teaching is effectively encouraging the sharing of good practice. Pupils' academic progress is also well monitored through good assessment procedures throughout the years. However, the use of assessment results in Years 7 to 9 to inform curriculum planning and teaching is undeveloped. Pupils' achievement is celebrated well with good displays of their work. The good programme of outside visits is helping to make history one of the most popular subjects in the school.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

150. Teacher assessments of pupils' work at the age of 14 in ICT show that more than half the pupils achieved level 5 or higher, but levels of attainment are below the national average overall. The school does not use GCSE accreditation for ICT and in the current Years 10 and 11 pupils are working towards GNVQ Key Skills Levels 1 and 2.
151. The ICT skills of the pupils when they enter the school are well below the national average. By the end of Year 9, standards of work show that good progress has been made by the majority of the pupils and levels of attainment are near to, though still below, the nationally expected standard for girls and boys. The work of some pupils in Years 7 and 8 is already at a similar level to that of pupils currently in Year 9 and levels of attainment are rising. Middle and higher attaining pupils have a secure knowledge of basic procedures and can use the features of a range of software to develop their work. They increasingly understand how menus, toolbars and icons are used to modify, edit and refine information and are developing a sense of audience for their work and presentations. These pupils are also able to combine information from a range of sources including research from the Internet. For example, in a Year 8 class the pupils were researching Internet sites to find information, for and against, on controversial topics such as modified food, abortion, and third world debt. This work was leading to a presentation, which would be shown to other members of the class using PowerPoint software. The technical vocabulary and knowledge of the subject are not fully secure for many pupils, however, and lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs still require support with basic procedures to make further progress.
152. Good achievement continues into Years 10 and 11, and the majority of pupils, boys and girls, are working at the levels expected and in line with the course requirements of GNVQ Key Skills. Pupils are building on their experiences from earlier years and use a widening range of software with increasing skill and a deeper understanding of its potential. The majority of pupils can use databases and present their findings from these graphically and make calculations using formulae in their work with spreadsheets. They apply these skills and knowledge to their project work that requires them to process information for a variety of audiences in a range of contexts. For example in Year 10, pupils were working on a project that required them to listen to some information which they had to process, and then produce an agenda for a meeting. This was developed further into taking minutes, again from listening to and watching a video, and extracting the important details. Pupils can evaluate their work and use annotations to indicate the areas where improvements can be made. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are less secure and less well developed in their skills, knowledge and understanding and need more support from their teachers. Their work lacks depth and they do not fully grasp the importance of modifying their work to meet the needs of a particular audience.
153. The quality of learning and rate of progress are good in all years. In Years 7 to 9 the pupils, girls and boys, develop skills rapidly, and quickly gain knowledge and confidence in using the computer, the software, the keyboard and mouse. They apply these skills to a variety of tasks and work with good levels of interest and concentration. This good progress is maintained for the majority of pupils in Years 10 and 11, especially the middle and higher attaining pupils. They consolidate their

skills, improve their levels of knowledge and understanding and are able to work with greater independence. The highest attaining pupils are able to work with increasing creativity and enjoy the intellectual demands made on them by the tasks set. The lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress in relation to their prior attainment. The subject is contributing effectively to the personal development of many pupils and preparing them for living and working in a technological society. Throughout Years 7 to 11, pupils with English as an additional language achieve well and make progress at the same rate as their peers.

154. The quality of teaching is consistently good and is a strength of the department. All the teachers have good knowledge of the subject and are able to explain the skills required to use the software effectively. They set appropriate and challenging tasks to fully involve pupils. For example, in a Year 7 middle ability class, the pupils entered data that they had collected into a spreadsheet, making calculations using formulae and manipulating data using Excel software. Part of this activity was to calculate the profit or loss on a range of goods sold and they completed this successfully. Lessons are planned well and meet the needs of pupils of all abilities, including the higher attaining pupils and those with special educational needs. The teachers have precise lesson objectives but not all teachers consistently share them with the pupils initially or undertake an end-of-lesson review of the progress made. Where teachers do follow this process, the quality of pupils' learning is better and they are more involved in the lessons. Explanations are clear and questioning is used well to check and consolidate earlier learning. Classroom management and organisation are good and routines are well established. Very good individual support is given to pupils, designed to meet their specific needs, and often includes detailed feedback to help progress.
155. The majority of pupils have very positive attitudes towards the subject. Behaviour is good overall, and very good in some groups where the level of concentration and commitment to work is high. Good attention is generally given to explanations by teachers and many pupils are keen to respond to their teachers' questions. Relationships between the pupils and with their teachers are good.
156. The head of department provides good leadership and management of the subject. The strategic planning is good and further phases for improving the facilities are planned and are awaiting the necessary funding for implementation. Specialist accommodation is good and the technician provides very good support. Resources in the specialist rooms are good but further investment in subject departments is needed if the required level of cross-curricular use is to be achieved. The curriculum meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. In addition, most subject departments make some use of ICT in their lessons. However, these further contributions to pupils' increasing levels of capability are not formally evaluated or their potential for contributing to pupils' assessment in ICT explored. In the specialist ICT course in Years 7 to 9, teachers do not consistently use National Curriculum levels to make assessments of pupils' work.
157. Improvements since the last inspection have been good. Attainment in all years has been raised, progress is good and teaching is consistently good. The curriculum has been broadened, pupils have access to the subject in all years, and cross-curricular use has been extended. Pupils are enthusiastic when using computers and are challenged by the work set. This is a very positive picture overall.

## **Key Skills - information and communication technology**

158. Pupils have a taught course in ICT in all Years from 7 to 11 and within these lessons the majority of pupils gain good levels of skill, broadly in line with the standards expected for their age. In Years 10 and 11 the pupils study for GNVQ qualifications and achieve well, particularly since they have only one lesson each week. The majority of other subjects in the school curriculum now use ICT for extending the learning of pupils and are in a strong position to meet the National Curriculum requirement to use the key skill of ICT. Some staff are waiting for further training and some departments need further investment in computers, all of which is planned. Access to central facilities is good, at least one ICT room being available for booking each lesson throughout the week.
159. Cross-curricular use of ICT gives the pupils opportunities to use and develop their skills in a range of contexts and use CD-ROMs and the Internet as research tools. For example, in English, pupils use word processing and desk-top publishing to create news articles on a range of topics. In mathematics, pupils use databases and logo for control activities. In a Year 10 science class, data logging was used effectively as part of a lesson on evaporation, and in Year 8 pupils researched on the Internet for information on Louis Pasteur as part of a topic on microbes and micro-organisms. History and geography also make extensive use of ICT in all years especially for word processing and for research using the Internet. Music teaching uses computers very effectively and the work done has had a significant impact on the standards achieved in the subject. Other departments with significant use of ICT include art and design and design and technology, in which it is used to support a range of learning activities.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

160. Spanish has this year been introduced in Year 8 to pupils in the upper ability band. There are as yet no results for these pupils in public tests. Nationally reported standards in French in the teacher assessments for the end of Year 9 in 2000 were very low, with only a fifth of pupils reaching the expected standard. There was little difference between the performance of boys and girls. These assessments were not made by the school's regular teachers and were inaccurate. In reality standards were higher, although, as in previous years, below average.
161. Results at GCSE for 2000 in French show that, at age 16, only one in seven candidates achieved A\*-C grades, all at grade C, which was well below the national average. The school entered nearly all the year group for GCSE French, well above the national figure, and almost all candidates achieved a grade in the A\*-G range. Girls did better than boys, and, although the difference between their results was similar to the difference nationally, they under-achieved significantly in comparison with girls in similar schools. Both boys and girls did worse in French than in their other subjects. Although standards in French have fluctuated in the meantime, they have remained broadly the same since the last inspection. The small number of candidates entered for Punjabi achieved well in grades A\*-C, as at the last inspection.
162. Current standards in Year 9 are below average, but most pupils are achieving satisfactorily in relation to their prior attainment. They make good progress in writing, especially the more gifted, but the listening, reading and, above all,

speaking skills of all pupils are unsatisfactory. A few higher attaining pupils are on course for average National Curriculum level 5 by the end of the year. They can write paragraphs about their family and adapt a given model of writing, making simple agreements of verbs and adjectives; some begin to use the past tense. However, middle attaining pupils are well below average at levels 2-3, some recognising only words and short phrases in speech and text. They can write sentences with help. Across the whole range, pupils are introduced to more structures than is often seen in schools, but most have not consolidated their learning well enough. Few pupils speak confidently, especially from memory. In the upper band listening is not as good as it should be and pupils do not cope well with the language spoken in authentic situations and at normal speed. There are signs of proportionally more pupils reaching expected writing standards for their age in Years 7 and 8, and upper band pupils of Spanish, the second language, have progressed well in two terms. They can already identify masculine and feminine endings and use these to describe people's feelings and moods.

163. It was not possible to observe lessons in Year 11, but an extensive sample of written coursework and the results of completed modules show that current attainment is still well below average. In relation to their prior attainment most pupils under-achieve and make unsatisfactory progress. A small number of higher attaining pupils are the exception. They have a good understanding of the way the language works and are on course for A\*-B grades. They can use a range of past, present and future tenses, negatives and relative clauses in their higher tier writing and express opinions and reasons, for example in pieces on healthy living. A few other pupils at the C-D boundary can communicate effectively, as in letters describing holiday disasters, but their writing is not so secure grammatically, and has a less ambitious range of structure. Re-drafted coursework is supporting improvements in writing, when pupils are conscientious enough to learn from their mistakes, as seen in the progress being made in Year 10. Most Year 11 pupils are not so interested, however; four out of five are below to well below average across all skills. As in Year 9, listening and speaking are undeveloped across the whole ability range and most pupils depend very much on support. The average attaining pupils recognise some vocabulary in listening and reading exercises on such topics as food, travel and leisure, but cannot use the words in meaningful statements without help. Girls write more carefully and at greater length than boys. Boys are more prepared to speak, although usually not in a sufficiently structured way.
164. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language is similar to that of other pupils: it is satisfactory at age 14 but unsatisfactory at age 16. There is no significant difference in any year in the achievement of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds. The low standards and under-achievement stem from a number of inter-related factors. Throughout their time in school, pupils have insufficient time for learning French, as was reported at the last inspection. The GCSE course is unsuitable for the lowest attaining pupils, and pupils with special educational needs do not receive enough additional in-class support at this stage. Most significantly, there have been exceptional staffing problems over the past two years. For most of last year, for example, most pupils did not have a regular teacher.
165. This instability has been very damaging to pupils' attitudes and progress. Most upper band pupils are positive towards their learning. In the top two sets in Year 7 and the top set in Spanish in Year 8 they show real interest, concentrate, and are keen to take part. However, where learning has been severely interrupted, between

Years 8 and 11, the attitudes of a significant minority of pupils are unsatisfactory. The top set in Year 9, for example, have only recently started to regain confidence. In lower band classes in Year 8 to 10, a significant minority, usually but not exclusively boys, disrupt the learning of others. Teachers nevertheless ensure that relationships remain good throughout. Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. Pupils do not learn to become independent, but most are now learning the importance of following expected rules of behaviour, and, where teachers have the confidence to allow the activity, they are starting to work responsibly, with mutual support, in pairs.

166. Teaching and learning are now satisfactory overall with some strengths but with some acknowledged weaknesses. In a quarter of the lessons seen teaching was good. In one lesson teaching was unsatisfactory. Writing skills are taught well. Teachers encourage the keeping of neat revision notes and vocabulary books as study aids. Most pupils cover a range of structures and learn to write in sentences, including pupils with special educational needs and some lower attaining pupils. Teachers mark regularly, give good guidance, and help pupils in Years 7 to 9 know how well they are progressing through the system of self-assessment and target-setting. The management of behaviour needs to be a strength and often is. Teachers build positive relationships with calm authority, insistence and appropriate use of praise and sanctions. Where behaviour is managed effectively pupils are learning basic skills such as listening, waiting turns, repeating in chorus, not interrupting, and staying focused. Where teaching is weaker expectations are not firmly established, and where teachers talk unnecessarily they distract pupils from the task they have been asked to do.
167. Learning objectives are shared and teachers try to instil a sense of purpose. However, methods are too concerned with keeping pupils on task, and do not yet promote the development of skills, especially speaking. The teachers are good linguists but they do not use the language enough to conduct the lessons, especially in Years 7 and 8 and in the upper band. This reduces challenge, and sends the wrong message to reluctant speakers, especially since learning through disciplined listening and speaking practice has been neglected in recent years and these skills are very undeveloped. More needs to be done to encourage all pupils to speak and write from memory, especially the higher attainers. Pupils with special educational needs are not always supported adequately with additional help, but teachers try as much as possible to meet their needs with individual help and suitable questioning and tasks.
168. The department is now led well. The head of department is realistic and determined, and is giving a more confident lead. In general the work of the department is beginning to meet the aims of the school. There is a commitment to improvement, an enthusiastic approach to teaching and learning, and a healthy spirit of self-evaluation. A cycle of monitoring of teaching is in place. Examination results are analysed and reviews of progress in the development plan inform new targets. However, action to meet previous targets has inevitably been delayed or not implemented at all during recent years. There are no foreign links or exchanges. The department's rooms are too dispersed for effective teamwork. New reading material and software for the network are needed.
169. There has been insufficient improvement since the last inspection. Standards are still low, although improving in the upper band in Years 7, 8 and 10. The lack of progress by age 16 and unhelpful attitudes and behaviour are serious issues.

Teachers use far too much English to conduct lessons and control is too dominant set against opportunities for pupils to practise speaking with each other. However, the department is now under good leadership, provision for the second language is now suitable and book provision has improved. Assessment procedures are good; teachers know pupils' strengths and weaknesses. The department has the capacity and commitment to improve further.

## MUSIC

170. According to teacher assessments, standards in 2000 at the end of Year 9 were average. In recent years pupils taking GCSE music have been small in number and results have been well below average. In 2000 pupils attained results in music which were higher than their average in other subjects.
171. Current standards among pupils aged 14 are above average. There are no pupils working as high as level 7 but no pupil is below level 4. The testing of pupils at the beginning of Year 7 shows that they are well below average, most at level 2. Regular subsequent testing shows that they make very good progress. Pupils use musical terms to describe what they hear and the processes of composing. Lower attaining pupils confuse some of the terms they use, but can clearly demonstrate their understanding through what they are able to do. The previous report highlighted weaknesses in instrumental playing; by following a carefully planned curriculum all pupils now can play keyboards with the correct fingering in both hands and simple guitar chords. This is a great help to them because they can express their ideas without being inhibited by poor playing. All pupils are able to use computers and this helps them when refining their composition. In Year 9, all pupils can play all parts of the blues and individuals were able to provide a good contribution to their own class version of Bessie Smith's 'Thinking Blues'.
172. The quality of singing is a strength of pupils' performance. It is done with confidence, good tone and good breathing. As yet they sing in unison only, but many pupils are members of the choir and their two-part singing is very effective. Because of this, they internalise sounds and their aural memory is good. This was seen to be particularly telling in Year 8 where pupils wrote their own pop songs. Pupils are expected to behave well and to do their best. Consequently achievement is very good.
173. The current Year 11 pupils have been with the head of music since they were in Year 8 and have worked consistently to a carefully structured scheme, developing skills and concepts. Their standards are close to the national average. Standards are similar in Year 10, where significantly more pupils have opted for music, many of them without the benefit of extra instrumental tuition. Because they are continuing the keyboard playing and singing begun in earlier years, many are able to play pieces of sufficient difficulty to ensure a higher grade. Skilful use of keyboards and computers helps them to develop melodic ideas and the skills to present quite complex compositions. Although many of them prefer listening to contemporary popular music, they have nevertheless built up a good vocabulary of different styles of music. They find the reference book, which the head of music has written for them, very helpful in developing their skills, knowledge and understanding.
174. The teaching is very good and has a number of excellent features. Relationships with pupils are very good and this sets a good example for pupils when they are



working with each other in groups. Lessons are planned to give pupils a range of activities within a lesson, which, as a result of the energetic pace, keeps pupils working hard. The teacher's own musical ability is not only central to their planning but is also a source of inspiration to the pupils, who enjoy exciting musicmaking every lesson. This helps them to experience success and increase their self-worth and confidence. Consistent standards are applied in terms of behaviour and achievement so pupils have a clear idea of how well they are doing. The strong emphasis on teaching basic musical skills such as rhythm and instrumental technique means that when practical tasks are set, pupils have the necessary tools. Singing is taught particularly well and the good work done in class is continued before and after school in the senior and the school choir. Pupils are taught how to breathe properly in order to improve tone quality and add expression to their singing.

175. Pupils enjoy music very much. The practical nature of the work gives them an opportunity to express themselves and to enjoy success. Behaviour is never less than very good and pupils work very well in groups, sharing ideas, discussing work and completing tasks on time. Even during the hot weather in the inspection week they never flagged and they persevered with the most challenging of tasks.
176. The leadership of the department is very good and the improvement since the previous inspection has been very good. The head of department was appointed shortly after the previous inspection. Imaginative recycling of equipment and requests for sponsorship have resulted in the department being furnished with a suite of computers linked to keyboard, so addressing a weakness identified in the previous report. Parents support the work of the department by encouraging their children to persevere with instrumental practice, playing in the orchestra for shows and in the case of a Year 11 girl, forming the backing group for her GCSE performance. The departmental scheme of work has been developed to meet new National Curriculum requirements and goes hand in hand with comprehensive assessment procedures. This is a vital factor in driving up standards, which ensures the very good achievement of pupils. Numbers of pupils involved in music beyond the compulsory classes are high, especially for the annual school production and this is due in large measure to the energetic leadership. Appropriate priorities for development have been established to include an increase in the number of pupils taking instrumental lessons and a broadening of pupils' interest in a wider range of musical styles.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

177. In 2000, the teachers' assessments of pupils' levels of attainment placed the Year 9 group broadly in line with the national average, but a small proportion of pupils were under-achieving. The school does not offer a GCSE option in the subject.
178. Attainment by the end of Year 9, as observed during the inspection matches the 2000 teacher assessments. Overall, pupils' levels of attainment are in line with the national average and include the whole ability range. Pupils' particular strengths are in the area of practical performance. In Year 7 cricket, the higher attaining pupils throw and catch with control and accuracy and although the lower attaining pupils find performing the basic skills difficult, they quickly develop an understanding of simple tactics. In Year 8, pupils bat and bowl with increasing confidence and apply these skills into a small-sided competitive game. By Year 9

most pupils can serve and keep a rally in tennis with increasing consistency. Pupils' knowledge and understanding about preparing for exercise and conditioning the body in recovering from vigorous exercise are insufficiently developed. The higher attaining pupils are able to observe the performance of a classmate and evaluate it using appropriate terms in such a way as to help the performer to improve. However, middle and lower attainers are below average in their ability to observe and evaluate performance against specific criteria. Pupils have a sound knowledge of rules and are able to throw and catch effectively. They can apply these skills in a modified game that demonstrate sound understanding of using simple tactics and strategies. Overall, pupils achieve well and make good progress by the age of 14, including pupils with special educational needs. There are no significant differences between the attainments or progress made by boys and girls.

179. Physical education was not observed in Year 11 during the inspection and only a small amount of work in Year 10 was seen. Year 10 pupils showed that they are also broadly in line with national expectations, though a small proportion of pupils are under-achieving. High attaining pupils can use their batting skills effectively to place their shots in the field of play to outwit the defending side. Lower attainers lack confidence in their catching skills using a hard ball, but persevere with their practising and make sound progress. All pupils have a sound knowledge of the rules and positional play in games. There are no significant differences in levels of attainment between boys and girls, and pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated into the physical education programme and make good progress. Pupils with English as an additional language make progress through all the years at the same rate as their peers.
180. The teaching is good overall in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Year 10. Pupils are managed well and organised efficiently, and teachers work hard to keep pupils interested and on task. Lessons are planned well with clear learning outcomes, ensuring that pupils know what is expected of them. Questioning of good quality and evaluative feedback are used in order to improve pupils' skills. Praise and encouragement are used effectively and the good relationships engendered help to develop pupils' confidence and self-esteem. Where the teaching is less than good, tasks are often directed too strongly by the teacher and not planned to meet the needs of all pupils. As a result, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning. In some lessons, the overall quality of teaching was satisfactory, but a lack of specialist knowledge had an adverse effect on pupils' learning and progress when opportunities were missed to take pupils' work further.
181. Pupils' attitudes to learning are variable. In some lessons poor behaviour and poor social skills impede learning and have an adverse impact on standards achieved. In those lessons where learning is good, pupils respond well to the high expectations demanded of them in standards of clothing, behaviour, participation and attitudes to work. In Years 7 to 10 all pupils use specialist equipment safely, use the facilities with due care and attention and are aware of their own and others' safety.
182. The physical education department provides a wide range of activities both in and outside curriculum time. The programmes of study in Years 7 to 9 emphasise games. This reduces the amount of time allocated to gymnastics, dance and athletics, but still ensures a good experience for all pupils. In Years 10 and 11, pupils opt for and study two areas of activity in depth, which provides a satisfactory curriculum. However, there are currently no opportunities to study for examinations and accredited vocational qualifications. Extra-curricular provision is good and

enhances and extends the curriculum for all pupils. The introduction of the inter-house sporting competitions along with the annual swimming gala and sports day are highly successful and large numbers compete. Assessment is good and well organised and there are individual pupil profiles.

183. The quality of leadership and management is good. The department handbook is good and day-to-day procedures are efficient and effective. Schemes and units of work are currently being developed and, as a result, pupils' involvement in planning and evaluating performance has increased in lessons. The teachers work well together as a team. They are committed and give generously of their time, but departmental meetings are limited in their effectiveness because the majority of teachers are part time and involved in teaching other subjects and cannot always attend. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 has improved and ensures that all pupils study two areas of activity in depth. Schemes and units of work now include the requirement for pupils to participate in the processes of planning and evaluating as well as performing practical activities. Participation in extra-curricular activities has increased and procedures for risk assessment are fully met.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

184. At the end of Year 9 the standards of attainment meet expectations as set out in the local agreed syllabus. In 2000 there were no examinations in religious studies at GCSE but all pupils in Year 11 have followed examination courses this year. Standards have risen since the last inspection and again meet expectations. They reflect the good teaching throughout the school.
185. In Years 7 to 9, pupils achieve well in view of their prior attainment and attain average standards by the end of Year 9. Pupils have a sound knowledge and understanding of the main beliefs and practices of Christianity and other major world religions. Pupils also have a firm knowledge of the significance of religious artefacts. For instance, at the end of a Year 8 lesson, pupils gave accurate explanations of how different Hindu artefacts were used in worship. Pupils retrieve information efficiently from textbooks and learning materials and use key religious vocabulary correctly in speech and writing. Teachers expect high standards of presentation in written work, and pupils usually set out their work neatly, taking particular care with pictorial information such as the Buddhist Wheel of Life and the Last Supper. Higher attainers write at length in well constructed sentences and they give reasoned opinions in their personal responses, as for example in the Year 8 analysis of problems and suggestions for solutions relating to access for disabled people in Telford town centre. Middle attaining pupils write at reasonable length, although homework is sometimes untidily presented and spelling is inaccurate. However, in their own evaluations of their work, pupils show that they are aware of these weaknesses, as for example in the comment: "It was rushed and not very neat." Most lower attaining pupils achieve well. For instance, a Year 7 pupil with a statement of special educational needs produced a lively modern version of the parable of the Good Samaritan which showed a good grasp of the lesson behind the story.
186. It was not possible to see any lessons in Year 11 and so judgements are based on a sample of written work and on examination work already completed. Pupils make good progress in coping with the requirements of the different courses, and by the

end of Year 11 standards of attainment are broadly in line with the average. At this stage, most pupils following the full and short courses in religious studies have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the life and ministry of Jesus and the main beliefs and practices of Sikhism. For example, they understand the significance to Christians of Jesus' death and resurrection, and can give clear descriptions of key rituals in Sikhism. The responses of higher attaining pupils in extended writing and in tests show that they have a good understanding of Christian doctrines and a detailed knowledge of Sikhism. Middle attaining pupils make effective notes on significant Christian concepts, but there are a few examples of uncompleted work and inadequate revision for tests. Pupils who are studying for the Certificate of Achievement have a satisfactory understanding of Judeo-Christian moral codes and an adequate knowledge of the distinguishing features of churches belonging to different Christian denominations.

187. The quality of teaching is good and has a positive impact on pupils' rate of progress. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Both teachers have very high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour. A strength of the teaching is the effective way in which pupils are managed so that group discussions are conducted in a lively but organised manner and all members of the group have an opportunity to air their views. For instance, in a Year 10 lesson in which higher attaining pupils were discussing beliefs and devising personal creeds, the effective organisation of the different groups resulted in discussion of good quality so that pupils were able to gain a clearer understanding of the ways in which people decide on priorities in life. Teachers also plan their lessons well. Objectives are clearly stated at the outset and work is carefully matched to pupils' needs. Activities offer good opportunities for the development of literacy skills and the final summing-up allows both teachers and pupils to review what has been learned in the lesson. As a result, the lessons move forward purposefully and pupils achieve well. For example, in a Year 7 class which included pupils with special educational needs, the teacher introduced the theme of Sikh festivals through a well-designed question and answer session in which pupils were encouraged to give examples of religious and social festivals and explain how they are celebrated. The teacher's enthusiasm and good subject knowledge enabled her to explain the origin of one of the Sikh festivals in a very dramatic and clear way so that all the pupils listened attentively and were able to recall the key facts accurately in the notes they wrote in preparation for their homework. The good working relationship between the teacher and the learning support assistant ensured that pupils received individual help where necessary, and the pupils' responses in the final discussion showed that they had made very good progress in understanding the significance of the Sikh festival.
188. The strengths of the teaching far outweigh the weaknesses but the latter occur on the rare occasions when pupils are not sufficiently responsive because they are not given enough opportunities to take an active part in the lesson and evaluate their own progress.
189. Attitudes to learning are generally good and make an important contribution to pupils' learning. Most pupils enjoy their lessons and behave well. They listen attentively to other people's points of view and collaborate well in group discussions.
190. The subject is well managed and there is very clear educational direction. Pupils benefit from very good resources, as for example in a Year 9 lesson where pupils were gripped by a video about murder, forgiveness and reconciliation. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. Teaching has

improved and expectations of work and behaviour are high. In Years 7 to 9, the standards of written work have improved and lower attainers are progressing at the same rate as higher and middle attainers. In Years 10 and 11 all pupils follow an examination course and attitudes towards the subject have improved. Pupils generally are now more confident in expressing their own ideas and beliefs. Overall priorities for the future are appropriate and include the further development of procedures for assessment in relation to the local agreed syllabus and improving the opportunities for use of ICT in homework tasks. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' moral, social and cultural development but the opportunities that exist in most lessons for deepening pupils' spiritual awareness are not always used to the full.

## **OTHER SUBJECTS**

### **GNVQ LEISURE AND TOURISM**

191. The school provides a vocational education course, GNVQ (Intermediate Part 1) in leisure and tourism at Key Stage 4 in conjunction with a neighbouring school. It was first offered in 1999 and the first cohort is finishing in summer 2001. Standards of attainment by age 16 are in line with the national average for Intermediate GNVQ. Half the cohort are on target for at least passes in the full award, and a small number are working at merit and distinction levels. The remaining pupils are on target to gain a part award.
192. Pupils have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the different forms of organisations found in the leisure and tourist industry, especially in their local area. Most pupils use correctly the appropriate terminology connected with these organisations, though weaknesses in literacy for a minority make clarity of written expression difficult. Their communication skills are helped by insistence by teachers on the drafting and re-drafting of final assignment pieces. Most pupils plan their work well, especially higher attaining pupils in Year 11. They demonstrated this well in their precise and detailed planning in organising an event, a five-a-side football tournament for four local primary schools. Skills of planning and evaluation are less well developed in Year 10. Pupils of all abilities show competent and often good skills in ICT. Higher attaining pupils have used PowerPoint presentations successfully. Nearly all pupils meet deadlines for assignments and complete work at least satisfactorily to the required standard and appropriately to their level of prior attainment. There is a tendency, however, at the beginning of the course for pupils to rely too heavily on the Internet, both for research and for written presentation.
193. The quality of teaching is good. Assignment tasks are well written and lessons are well planned so that pupils know exactly what they are doing. Teachers set high expectations. Time and resources are used well and staff have good subject knowledge. A strength of the teaching is the very good relationship with the pupils, in which the teacher gives good individual support in class: questioning, advising and prompting without giving the answers. This is reflected in the detailed and informative evaluation of assignments, which gives good guidance on how to improve. Pupils respond to this well and consequently the learning in lessons is also good. Good progress is being made in developing skills of research,

organisation and teamwork. The grading of work is consistent and fair, as indicated by a good recent report from the external verifier for the course. Achievement in key skills, however, is not being regularly logged and numeracy skills are not yet fully and logically integrated into assignments. Pupils are being encouraged to show initiative in their learning and most work well independently as well as in a team. However, opportunities are not being consistently provided in assignments for independent action and initiative to challenge the pupils, such as organising individual visits to interview local employers.

194. The attitudes of the pupils to work and their behaviour are generally good. Year 11 pupils in particular have shown much enthusiasm and commitment, as when they publicised and promoted the school play. This also demonstrated their initiative and good teamwork. Most pupils work well by themselves and share good relations with each other and the teacher. They know what to do and usually stay well focused throughout the lesson.
195. The success of the course has been enhanced by the very good accommodation and excellent facilities: 16 up-to-date computers and an electronic whiteboard to facilitate both pupil and teacher presentations. A further strength is the commitment, enthusiasm and close working relationship of the staff involved in the two schools. The course has also benefited from close liaison with the local colleges of further education to ensure that pupils can progress to further GNVQ studies. It also encourages pupils to consider further education.