

INSPECTION REPORT

LYNG HALL SCHOOL

Coventry

LEA area: Coventry

Unique reference number: 103733

Headteacher: Mr P G Smith

Reporting inspector: Mr Rod Spinks
2783

Dates of inspection: 15 – 19 January 2001

Inspection number: 196586

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 - 18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Blackberry Lane
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Coventry

Postcode: CV2 3JS

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Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr J Horton

Date of previous inspection: February 1999

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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2783	Rod Spinks	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it?
				The school's results and pupils' achievements.
				How well is the school led and managed?
				What should the school do to improve further?
15522	Bernard Morgan	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?
15458	Bill Dewar	Team inspector	Key Stage 4	How well are pupils taught?
			Sixth Form	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
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23436	Jane Lloyd-Davies	Team inspector	English	
			English as an additional language	
4689	Monica Christian	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
4513	John Thirlwall	Team inspector	Art	
12595	Gareth Large	Team inspector	Design and technology	
30911	John Barton	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
31701	Graeme Rudland	Team inspector	Music	
14943	Eric Peagam	Team inspector	Special educational needs	

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Lyng Hall School is a smaller than average secondary school for pupils aged 11 to 18 years. There are 831 pupils on roll with 94 students in the smaller than average Sixth Form. Just over half the pupils (51%) are listed on the school's special educational needs register which is well above the national average. The number of pupils for whom a statement of need is held is broadly average. The majority of pupils with special educational needs have learning difficulties, although a number of pupils have identified hearing problems. 37% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is above average. Also above average is the 9% of pupils for whom English is an additional language, most of whom have their family origins on the Asian subcontinent.

The school is situated to the north of Coventry and serves an area of mixed housing. Pupils come from the full range of backgrounds, however, significantly more than average come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school covers the full range of attainment but over half the pupils enter the school with attainment levels at least two years behind the average attainment in the national assessments for eleven year olds. Thus attainment on entry is typically well below average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school that has improved considerably over the past four years. Standards, although below average, show some improvement. Overall pupils are making at least sound and frequently good progress in most subjects of the curriculum. Students in the Sixth Form are attaining good standards in their General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) courses. Teaching has improved considerably with nine out of ten lessons seen at least satisfactory and three out of five judged to be good or better, and is effective in supporting pupils' learning. The school is well managed, with the headteacher providing clear direction and the governors carrying out their roles well. The school provides value for money.

What the school does well

- Good teaching in most subjects of the curriculum.
- GNVQ courses - provision and pupils' attainment are very good.
- Developing pupils' positive attitudes to school particularly by the end of Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form.
- The harmonious multi-ethnic ethos, based on good relationships and generally good behaviour in and out of lessons.
- The systems and procedures for supporting pupils with special educational needs.
- Effective subject planning and teaching of English and mathematics, enabling the most able pupils to attain high standards.
- The leadership of the headteacher, senior managers and the governors.

What could be improved

- The attendance of a significant minority of pupils.
- The management of and teaching in music and religious education.
- Subject schemes of work, which provide inadequate support to teachers in covering national programmes of work and in building on what pupils already know.
- The consistency with which some of the school's policies and procedures are applied across the school.
- The spiritual development of all pupils through collective worship and religious education for Sixth Form students.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Lyng Hall School has improved considerably since the last full inspection in March 1997 when it was found to require special measures. The quality of teaching and the effectiveness of managers have been the most notable improvements except in music and religious education. Teaching standards have improved from unsatisfactory to good. Although standards of work remain below average, most pupils are making good and often very good progress. Pupils with special educational needs and pupils for whom English is an additional language make good progress. Students in the Sixth Form are beginning to attain good standards in their GNVQ courses. The standards of pupils' work seen in lessons shows that standards continue to improve. Challenging whole school targets for future attainment are now in place, which provide a strong basis for further improvement. The school has worked very hard, using a range of strategies to improve pupils' attendance but the levels of authorised absence remain well above average and attendance levels overall remain well below average. This limits the progress some pupils make.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 and 18 year olds based on average point scores in GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	All schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
GCSE examinations	E	E*	E	E	well above average A above average B average C below average D
A-levels/AS-levels	N/A	N/A	N/A		well below average E

By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils attain standards that are below the national average. In the 2000 national assessments for 14 year olds pupils the percentage of pupils attaining the expected Level 5 or above was close to the national average for English, well below average for mathematics and low for science. The percentage of pupils attaining the higher Level 6 and above was above the national average in English and close to the average in mathematics and below the average for science. In comparison with schools with similar proportions of

pupils entitled to free school meals, the school's attainment in English was well above the average, mathematics was well below and science was low. Improving standards in English reflect the school's concentration on improving the literacy skills of pupils in Key Stage 3. Although the grades have remained similar for mathematics and science, results do show some improvement over the last three years and the improvement in English standards is more marked. When the results at Key Stage 3 are compared with pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 2, pupils have made very good progress in English and at least satisfactory progress in mathematics and science. Pupils' work in lessons and their written work show improving standards in all subjects except music and religious education. Although standards overall remain below average, they show that pupils generally make progress in response to the improved teaching they now receive. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in attaining the targets set for them. Pupils with English as an additional language are helped to make at least similar progress to other pupils and frequently better progress as a result of the effective support they receive.

By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils attain very low standards compared to the national average. In the 2000 GCSE examinations the percentage of pupils attaining 5 or more A*-C and A*-G grades was well below average and the percentage attaining 1 or more A*-G grades was very low, in the lowest 5% nationally. Examination results have been falling compared with national averages over the last three years; but detailed analysis of pupils' prior attainment shows that they mostly made satisfactory progress against their earlier results. Generally pupils attained their best results in science, information and communication technology and physical education and their worst results in mathematics, art and design, design and technology and history. Generally girls are attaining higher results than boys. From a review of pupils' written work and work seen in lessons, pupils are currently making at least sound progress in all subjects except music and religious education. Pupils with special educational needs are effectively supported and work hard to attain the targets set for them.

A very small number of students follow A-level courses within the local federation of schools' Sixth Form provision; and so comparison of recent results with national data is of limited value. These students, however, make sound progress, and attain grades which reflect their earlier attainment at GCSE. For students following GNVQ courses, attainment is good and they make very good progress to attain the higher levels in these assessments.

Overall, most pupils are achieving well. They enter the school with well below average attainment, often up to four years behind in their work, and make good progress to attain the standards indicated by the national assessments for 14 and 16 year olds. Many pupils have under-developed writing skills and this limits the progress they make. Students make even better progress in the Sixth Form on GNVQ courses where attainment at least matches the national average. The school has set challenging targets for attainment which are above those indicated by the wide range of assessment data available.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Positive: The majority of pupils attend school regularly. They work hard and try their best.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good: In most lessons pupils' behaviour is good and in some it is very good. However, in a few lessons where teachers are less effective specific groups of pupils can be disruptive and misbehave.
Personal development and relationships	Good: Pupils relate well to one another and their teachers. There is very little bullying or oppressive behaviour. Sixth Form students show good levels of responsibility and the ability to manage their own learning. However these skills are under-developed in younger pupils, particularly in Key Stage 3.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory: Attendance levels are well below the national average. A significant minority of pupils fail to attend school with their parents' consent.

Pupils show positive attitudes to school and the majority attend regularly. However, a significant minority of identified pupils have poor attendance records. The school has introduced a range of strategies to overcome this problem, including first day contact funded through the Education Action Zone.

This is a happy school where pupils from a wide range of cultural backgrounds get on very well with one another. Relationships between pupils and their teachers are good and there is an atmosphere of co-operation and hard work. Students in the Sixth Form have become effective learners and show good levels of independence; however, these skills are under-developed in earlier years.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	Aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	Satisfactory	Good	Very 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.

Overall, the quality of teaching was judged to be good. In all, 150 lessons or part lessons were observed during the inspection. 91% of lessons were judged to be satisfactory or better with nearly 60% judged to be good or better. 9% of teaching seen was judged to be unsatisfactory. This represents a major improvement since the last inspection. Teachers generally have secure subject knowledge, good relationships with pupils and deliver lively lessons, which enable pupils to learn and to make progress. In the good and very good lessons teachers encourage pupils to become enthusiastic and really interested in the work they are doing. The best teaching seen occurred in the Sixth Form, where students were encouraged to develop their own ideas and understanding. The weakest teaching occurred in

Key Stage 3, where some teachers were less able to manage pupils to ensure that effective learning could take place. The teaching of English is good throughout the school with some very good teaching seen. The teaching of mathematics is good in Key Stages 3 and 4. Teaching of science is good in Key Stage 4 but unsatisfactory in Key Stage 3. However, pupils' learning is limited by the weaker teaching received in the past. Teaching was at least satisfactory in all other subjects of the curriculum except history and religious education.

The school has made a concerted effort to develop the teaching of literacy in all subjects of the curriculum and this has resulted in better standards in English. Teachers do identify key words for their subject teaching but do not sufficiently develop pupils' independent research skills, for example, in history. The teaching of numeracy is less well developed. Teachers do identify and develop numeracy skills in subjects such as science and design and technology but overall the teaching of numeracy skills is not consistently developed. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported in lessons by classroom assistants and additional teachers. Pupils with English as an additional language are effectively supported as individuals and groups by dedicated support staff.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory: The school provides good curricular opportunities for Sixth Form students, however, it fails to meet the statutory requirement to teach religious education to these students. The curriculum although covering all required subjects in Key Stages 3 and 4 is unbalanced as the time and opportunity for pupils to study a modern foreign language are limited.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good: Procedures fully meet the national Code of Practice. Teachers take into account pupils' individual education plans when delivering lessons.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good: These pupils are making good progress and are attaining standards which at least reflect their ability. They are fully integrated into the life and work of the school
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good: Spiritual development is satisfactory although limited by not having a daily act of collective worship, nor religious education for students in the Sixth Form. Moral and social development are good. Overall cultural development is satisfactory although multicultural understanding is very good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Effective: the school cares effectively for its pupils. A good range of information and guidance is provided for pupils as they move through the school.

Overall, the curriculum is satisfactory. The key weaknesses are the lack of provision of religious education for Sixth Form students, the limited opportunities for studying a modern foreign language at Key Stage 4 and under-developed schemes of work in some subjects, particularly music. The provision of GNVQ courses in both Year 10 and the Sixth Form is an

example of good curriculum development to meet the needs of pupils by providing more relevant courses at the right level to challenge them.

The lack of a daily act of collective worship means that pupils' spiritual development needs are not fully met. Although there is good provision for multicultural education generally, there are few opportunities for pupils to relate to aesthetic experiences from their own and other cultures. The school is a safe and secure place in which pupils can learn. There are effective procedures for child protection and the health and well being of pupils is well managed.

The school provides parents with a good range of information about the school and the curriculum as well as about the progress their children are making. Contact with parents regarding pupils with special educational needs fully meets the Code of Practice and shows that parents are fully consulted at each stage in the process. The school generally works effectively in partnership with parents; however, a minority of parents show limited support for the school and the lower than average pupil attendance levels reflect this.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good: The headteacher has established a clear view for the future development of the school. Senior managers have effectively monitored the work of the school and worked very hard to improve the quality of education. The improved quality of teaching has not yet had time to impact fully and improve the standards pupils attain. Heads of subject and Heads of Year work effectively to support the improvements in the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very effective: The governors have a good understanding of the work of the school and their roles. They have however failed to ensure that all statutory requirements are met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good: The senior managers and governors evaluate a wide range of data and have a very clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
The strategic use of resources	Effective: The school seeks to make the most effective use of the resources available to it, including additional resources from the Education Action Zone.

The management by the headteacher and senior staff is a strength of the school. They are well informed and they have established very effective decision making processes. They have worked hard to develop similar skills in middle managers who in the main are now making a significant contribution to the development of the school. However, monitoring by heads of department has yet to ensure the consistency with which pupils' work is marked. The governors are fully involved in the work of the school and have a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. The governors and managers seek to obtain the best value in their

purchases and through detailed evaluation of the work of the school are beginning to apply the principles of best value.

The school has had difficulty recruiting staff with the correct expertise and will not be fully staffed until Easter. This has contributed to weaknesses in teaching and the implementation of school policies and procedures. There are sufficient well qualified support staff to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. Resources for teaching and learning are generally at least adequate. However, there are limited reference books in the library to support the development of pupils' independent learning skills.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children make good progress.• Teaching is good, expectations are high and standards are improving.• The school is approachable.• The school is well led and managed.• Children are helped to become mature and responsible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The amount of homework.• Limited extra-curricular activities.• The changes in staffing including large numbers of temporary teachers.• A few parents expressed concerns about bullying.

Overall, the inspection team agreed with the views of the parents that the school had improved significantly and that pupils in general are making good progress in response to the good teaching they receive. The standards that pupils attain have improved, particularly in the work seen if not yet in national test and examination results. Pupils are expected to do homework to support their learning and the school actively monitors both the amount and relevance of the homework set. The behaviour of most pupils is good although a very small minority do show some poor behaviour. The incidence of bullying is typical of that found in most schools and the school has appropriate procedures for dealing with such matters. The school has a typical range of extra-curricular activities for pupils. Inspectors agree that difficulties over staffing have had an adverse effect on some pupils' education but recognise that the school is working hard to overcome this problem. The school also recognises the need to develop further its links with parents particularly in the areas of open evenings, reports, newsletters and the use of school facilities.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

- 1 Overall, standards in Key Stages 3 and 4 are below average but in the Sixth Form standards in the General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) are at least typical of those expected for these courses and frequently above.
- 2 By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils attain standards which are below the national average. In the 2000 national assessments for 14 year olds pupils attained standards in English that were broadly in line with the national average, standards in mathematics were well below the average and standards in science were very low (in the lowest 5% nationally). The percentage of pupils attaining the expected standards of Level 5+ was close to the average in English, well below the average in mathematics and very low in science. The percentage of pupils attaining the higher Level 6 or above was above the national average in English and very low for mathematics and science. In comparison with schools having similar proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals standards in English were above average for Level 5 and above and well above average for Level 6 and above, whilst mathematics and science were well below average on both measures. There has been a general trend of slowly rising standards over the last three years, which reflects the national trend. English standards have risen more quickly as a result of improved teaching and the focus upon developing literacy skills in all subjects. There is, however, a marked difference between the test scores and teachers' assessments. Teachers have overestimated the standards pupils achieve in mathematics and science.
- 3 In the other subjects of the curriculum, based upon teachers' formal assessments at the end of Key Stage 3, standards in recent years have been below the national average in all subjects except information and communication technology and physical education where standards have been at least typical of those expected.
- 4 From a detailed scrutiny of pupils' work and the work they do in lessons in Key Stage 3, inspectors judge that standards are currently close to those expected nationally in English, information and communications technology, and physical education. Standards in the other subjects of the curriculum are generally below those expected, with the weakest being music and religious education.
- 5 By the end of Key Stage 3, standards of literacy are typical of those expected. In numeracy standards are below average and there are too few opportunities for pupils to utilise these skills in the other subjects of the curriculum.
- 6 By the end of Key Stage 4 standards are generally below average in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations. In the 2000 GCSE examinations the percentage of pupils attaining five or more A*-C grades was well below the national average. The percentages attaining one or more and five or more A*-G grades were both well below the national average. When the results are measured in terms of average points scores (where A* grade = 8 and G grade = 1)

standards are very low, in the lowest 5% nationally. Girls achieve better standards than boys within this pattern and while overall standards have been falling slowly over the last three years standards improved in 2000. The highest standards are attained in French where a small group of pupils does very well to attain standards above the national average, but in all other subjects standards are below the national averages with significant numbers of pupils attaining E, F, G and U grades.

- 7 Analysis of individual pupils' attainment in the GCSE in recent years shows that their attainment is highest in English, combined science, English literature, French, information and communication technology and physical education and lowest in art and design, design and technology, history (girls) and mathematics.
- 8 From a scrutiny of pupils' work, observation of lessons and talking to pupils inspectors judge that current standards in Year 11 are similar to those attained in GCSE in 2000. Standards in English are higher than in other subjects and standards in mathematics and science remain below average. Standards in modern foreign languages are low due to the limits imposed by the course followed. The standards being attained by pupils in Year 10 following the GNVQ course are good and often above those expected for this course. Pupils with special educational needs work well to attain the targets set for them. Pupils for whom English is an additional language have full access to the curriculum and attain standards which reflect their ability.
- 9 In the Sixth Form students attain standards which at least match those expected for their GNVQ courses. In the final assessments in 2000 there were only 12 students entered. They all attained standards which were close to or in line with the national average.
- 10 From a scrutiny of Sixth Form students' work and observation of lessons and discussions with them inspectors judge that many students, through effective teaching and hard work, are attaining standards above those expected with many showing work at distinction level.
- 11 The school sets appropriately challenging targets for attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 and for GCSE examinations. Managers use a range of data as well as predictive information from teachers to set the targets. Detailed analysis of results underpins the evaluation of achievement against the targets.
- 12 In English pupils are attaining standards which are close to those expected at Key Stage 3, below average by the end of Key Stage 4 but in the Sixth Form students demonstrate good standards of written and oral work. From their current work pupils show limited writing skills particularly in Key Stage 3.
- 13 In mathematics pupils are attaining standards which are below average by the end of Key Stages 3 and 4. Students in the Sixth Form demonstrate appropriate mathematical skills and are meeting their course requirements.

- 14 In science standards are below average by the end of Key Stage 3 and 4 in all aspects of the science curriculum. Students in the Sixth Form are showing appropriate levels of understanding where their courses contain aspects of science.
- 15 Standards in information and communication technology are at least in line with those expected by the end of Key Stages 3 and 4. Pupils are able to use their word processing skills to present work in English and other subjects of the curriculum. They can use other equipment such as sensors to support their science learning and to present information using spreadsheets and graphs. In the Sixth Form students use more sophisticated skills in presenting written assignments well. All students are regular users of the Internet to access information associated with their coursework.
- 16 Standards in religious education are unsatisfactory. Pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 follow the appropriate course but difficulties with staffing have limited their progress. There is no provision for religious education for Sixth Form students.
- 17 Over half the pupils enter the school in Year 7 with low levels of literacy skills and especially low attainment in reading. Standards of literacy whilst overall below average show significant recent improvement. Pupils' writing skills are under-developed especially in Key Stage 3 and insufficient attention is being paid to developing these skills across the curriculum.
- 18 Pupils enter the school with under-developed numeracy skills and make some progress as they move through the school. At the present time these pupils do not attain average skill levels by the end of Year 11.
- 19 Pupils on average enter Lyng Hall School with well below average attainment at the end of their primary schooling. They work hard and are now showing generally good progress in their learning even though attainment by the age of 16 remains below average. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, as do pupils for whom English is an additional language.
- 20 There has been a marked improvement in standards since the time of the last inspection particularly in English. However, attainment remains below average although pupils are making good progress in response to the good teaching they receive. The improved quality of teaching is already having some impact on the progress pupils make.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

- 21 The majority of pupils in all age groups show positive attitudes to the school and respond well to the opportunities provided for them. Behaviour in the majority of lessons seen during inspection was good. Pupils respond with interest to the teaching especially where this is targeted closely to their needs and interests, and presented in a clear and interesting manner. Examples of this were seen across the school but were particularly notable in classes of pupils engaged in GNVQ work. In a minority of lessons, particularly in Key Stage 3 behaviour was unsatisfactory and on occasion poor. This was particularly found to be the case with some boys in Years 8

and 9. This was often linked to either the unsatisfactory management of behaviour or the inappropriate nature of the work provided by some teachers.

- 22 Students in the Sixth Form show positive attitudes to work and are keen to talk about their interests. Many show maturity in their thinking and are able to express themselves clearly when discussing their work and plans for the future.
- 23 Behaviour in and around the school is generally good. Pupils are polite, courteous and respond well to questions and are willing to discuss their work and interests. On occasion these high standards are not maintained. The school's systems are however effective in responding quickly to such events and pupils say that there has been considerable improvement in behaviour. This view is also supported by parents.
- 24 Evidence from this inspection shows that the school's management of behaviour, linked closely to the improvements seen in the quality of teaching has resulted in this aspect of the school's life improving considerably since the last inspection when it was highlighted as a key issue for improvement. The school needs to continue with its work in this area in order to bring about further improvement particularly amongst those pupils in Key Stage 3 where behaviour is unsatisfactory.
- 25 The school has a higher than normal level of exclusion of pupils, although there is evidence that this level is declining. Evidence from inspection shows that the school has acted consistently in using exclusion to support its clearly stated standards and policies for behaviour management. The procedures it follows are appropriate and meet requirements. Care is taken to ensure that there is a carefully structured and planned programme for the return of pupils after exclusion. The school has recently appointed a senior member of staff to further strengthen its handling of behaviour management and improvement. This appointment means that additional support can be offered to both pupils and staff as required. Evidence shows that this is beginning to have a beneficial impact on this aspect of the school's work. Appropriate use is made of relevant outside specialists to support this work.
- 26 The school has a clear policy with regard to bullying. During the inspection no incidents were seen. Pupils and parents express confidence in the school's response to any incidents which may occur. The school offers a counselling service to pupils and they are aware of its existence.
- 27 Relationships throughout the school are good with a high level of tolerance and respect shown to fellow pupils. The staff, led by the example of the headteacher, have worked hard to foster and develop these relationships and deserve credit for doing so. The school's pastoral system offers opportunities to support pupils' personal development and on many occasions this is well used. The school's programme of personal, social and health education also contributes to this. The school timetable provides a period of time each day for registration and contact with class tutors. On many occasions this was used well. For example, pupils were encouraged to discuss and reflect on some aspect of news or current events. On a number of occasions this time was not used productively and pupils either did not respond to the opportunity given or it was not given at all. Time was wasted and opportunities were missed. This aspect of the school timetable is not monitored sufficiently for consistency.

- 28 Generally teachers know pupils well and have their interests at heart. They use their knowledge to promote pupils' personal development well. Parents overwhelmingly say that the school expects pupils to work hard and is helping them to succeed and become mature and responsible. Evidence from inspection supports these positive views.
- 29 The school provides opportunities for pupils to develop independence and to take responsibility. Examples were seen where older pupils act as mentors for younger pupils with their reading, and this worked well. Other examples include the work of pupils who act as receptionists for visitors, the work of pupils within their work experience and participation in a community scheme. Pupils on the whole respond well to these opportunities. Pupils are aware of their targets in terms of academic achievement and these are discussed with them and their parents by staff. Opportunities for pupils to develop independent learning skills and to take responsibility for their own learning are however less well provided for in Key Stages 3 and 4.
- 30 Parents speak warmly of the work of some staff who have organised opportunities for some pupils to take part in holiday trips to Spain and France. They also recognise the value to pupils of the school's organisation of educational visits to support learning. Opportunities for pupils to take part in extra curricular activities also contribute to pupils' learning and development, for example the Drama Club held after school which will also enable pupils to take a GCSE qualification.
- 31 Levels of attendance are well below national levels and are unsatisfactory. Levels of unauthorised absence are broadly in line with the average but the school's position with regard to authorised absence (12.8%) shows levels double those found nationally (5.9%). The school is very well aware of the position and has committed significant time and effort to bringing about improvements. Whilst there is some evidence of gradual improvement over time there remains much still to be done to bring the levels to a satisfactory position. The school's systems for monitoring and improving attendance are substantial and systematic. Parents and pupils are very well aware of them and the school responds quickly and positively to absence. Punctuality at the beginning of sessions and lessons is generally satisfactory. The school's system for monitoring attendance and punctuality also provides substantial data on these issues. This is being used well by management to bring about improvements. Generally the school operates the process well. However on occasion this consistency of approach is not maintained in individual lessons across year groups. Parents are made aware of any problems associated with punctuality and are asked to support the schools efforts to bring about improvement. The school has close and effective working relationships with the Education Welfare Officer who makes good use of the data provided and works closely with senior staff to respond quickly to any case of absence.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

- 32 The quality of teaching is good overall. In 91% of lessons observed teaching was at least satisfactory or better. In 59% of lessons observed teaching was judged to be good or better. 22% of lessons observed were at least very good and on occasion excellent. This represents a very significant improvement on the quality of teaching reported in the last full inspection in 1997. In response to this improved teaching pupils have more positive attitudes to learning and make better progress. Standards are consequently beginning to improve although the improvement has yet to show itself in improvements in GCSE examination results. Parents commented favourably on the improved quality of teaching in the school.
- 33 The quality of teaching in Key Stage 3 is now satisfactory and in Key Stage 4 it is good. Teaching remains good in the Sixth Form. In 1997 only 60% of Key Stage 3 lessons were judged to be satisfactory or better. This figure has now risen to 89%. 80% of Key Stage 4 lessons were judged satisfactory or better in 1997, this figure has risen to 94%. In the Sixth Form all teaching seen was at least satisfactory or better compared with 90% in 1997. 91% of Sixth Form teaching seen was good or better, which is another significant improvement.
- 34 Teaching is consistently effective in the Sixth Form in promoting learning. There is a broader range of teaching quality in Key Stage 3 than in Key Stage 4. The proportion of good or very good teaching rises as pupils move up the school from Key Stage 3 to the Sixth Form. The very few instances of poor teaching seen were confined to Key Stage 3. Pupils learn more effectively when teaching is good. Overall, learning is good. It is satisfactory in Key Stage 3, good in Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form. Pupils with special educational needs make appropriate progress and pupils with English as an additional language learn effectively through well targeted support. Once again there have been significant improvements in the progress pupils make in their learning both in individual lessons and over longer periods of time, since the inspection of 1997.
- 35 Teaching is now good overall in a range of subjects including mathematics, English, geography, information and communication technology, physical education, GNVQ courses and for groups with special educational needs. Teaching in the other subjects is at least satisfactory apart from in religious education and history where it is unsatisfactory. Examples of excellent teaching were seen in mathematics and GNVQ. Very good teaching is now found across a wide range of subjects. There were examples of good teaching seen in all subjects apart from religious education. In contrast with the 1997 report examples of unsatisfactory teaching were seen in a relatively narrow range of subjects and examples of poor teaching confined to just two – religious education and art. There is evidence that staff absence, staff changes, lack of continuity in staffing within some subjects and comparative inexperience of some newly qualified staff have had an adverse impact on teaching effectiveness in some areas but particularly history, religious education and music.
- 36 Teachers generally have a good knowledge of their subject. This good subject knowledge results in effective presentations to pupils in a range of subjects. In English, for example, teachers present good models of reading and writing to the pupils. In information and communication technology and physical education teachers provide clear demonstrations that help pupils understand what is expected of

them. In geography and design and technology teachers use specific key word to promote more confident understanding on the part of pupils. Supply staff are on occasion less secure in relation to their command of relevant subject knowledge so reducing the effectiveness of their teaching.

- 37 Most teachers effectively manage their classes. In the majority of lessons an orderly atmosphere is established. Good relationships between teachers and pupils and amongst the pupils themselves positively contributes to purposeful lessons and effective learning. In a range of subjects there was clear evidence of a range of behaviour management strategies being successfully used although weaknesses remain in some lessons in Key Stage 3. Teachers praise and encourage pupils frequently and teachers' questions effectively promote pupils' progress. This is an improvement since the last inspection.
- 38 The approaches used by teachers are relatively effective in Key Stage 4 and particularly effective in the Sixth Form. Clear explanations, for example, in physical education contribute to pupils understanding, confidence and motivation. Good, well structured questioning as seen in English lessons encourages pupils' involvement and gives rise to more extended responses from them. In a number of subjects for example information and communication technology and design and technology, a good balance between formal whole class teaching and more individualised practical work sustains pupils' motivation.
- 39 Good lessons usually begin with a clear statement of objectives which are revisited at different points and re-emphasised in a final summary. There were particularly good examples of this seen in GNVQ, physical education and geography. Objectives are not always stated clearly in terms of what pupils are intended to learn and in such cases this reduces their impact on learning. Objectives are not always clearly understood by pupils or sufficiently related to lesson activities as, for example, in some history lessons. In the best sessions teachers give all students an appropriate range of tasks and demands that meets their needs and promotes maximum gains in learning. Practice in GNVQ courses and in teaching groups with special educational needs is particularly effective in this respect.
- 40 Teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good overall. In most mainstream lessons teachers are well aware of individual pupils' special educational needs and make good arrangements to accommodate and address them. Where pupils exhibit behavioural difficulties these are usually well managed and pupils are offered carefully graded support to match the extent of their misbehaviour. As at the last inspection teaching is consistently good when pupils are withdrawn for specialist support from teachers or education assistants
- 41 Teachers make effective use of time, support staff and resources, particularly in Key Stage 4 and the Sixth Form. The brisk pace of some geography lessons, for example, positively contributes to the rate and extent of pupils' learning. Support staff are efficiently deployed and briefed so that they contribute significantly to the effectiveness of teaching and learning in a range of classes, particularly in practical subjects and when literacy and numeracy skills are being addressed. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Overall teaching of literacy and

numeracy is sound though the contributions made by some subjects, for example, history are less effective than others in developing information gathering and note taking.

- 42 Homework is satisfactorily used to consolidate lesson content in Key Stages 3 and 4. It is used effectively and integrates particularly well with classwork in GNVQ courses. The tasks set allow pupils to work independently and often make good use of information and communication technology. Some parents and pupils raised concerns about inconsistencies in the quantity of homework set across different subjects.
- 43 In those lessons where teaching was judged to be on balance satisfactory and in the small number of unsatisfactory or poor lessons, teachers' instructions lacked impact or clarity resulting in confused messages being received by pupils. The pace of some lessons is slow and teachers lack effective control. Tasks are sometimes too easy and are inappropriate to the lesson objectives. Unsatisfactory conclusions to lessons reduce the effectiveness of some lessons, for example, in art, religious education and French. Teacher recruitment difficulties and the use of supply teachers has resulted in weaker teaching and the inconsistent use of school policies and procedures in some subjects.
- 44 Generally teaching quality is now more consistent following intensive monitoring and support by managers. It is more effective in English and mathematics than at the time of previous inspections. The quality of science teaching is unsatisfactory in Key Stage 3. There is some evidence that some science lessons lacked pace, variety and challenge. In such lessons, pupils lose interest, lack concentration and standards of behaviour suffer as a result.
- 45 In the Sixth Form current planning is effective in establishing high expectations and allowing significant opportunities for more independent learning on the part of students. Planning of GNVQ courses and lessons in particular is securely based on knowledge of what students already know from appropriate assessment practice. In Key Stage 4 the introduction of core GNVQ courses and developments in the structure and teaching of personal and social education courses are having a positive impact on establishing greater opportunities for more independent learning and responsibility on the part of pupils.
- 46 There remain weaknesses in the quality of teaching and its impact on learning, particularly in Key Stage 3 across a range of subjects. This reflects the extent to which current schemes of work and teachers' planning enable lessons to build upon what pupils already know. There are still weaknesses in the extent to which teachers plan lessons based on the effective assessment of pupils' prior attainments. As a result teachers' expectations are sometimes too low in lessons and pupils' progress impeded. This largely accounts for the fact that the extent of learning and pace of progress is relatively lower in Key Stage 3 compared with Key Stage 4 and the Sixth Form. Planning in English and mathematics is well structured and detailed and is more effective in enabling pupils to make better progress and attain the highest standards in Key Stage 3.

- 47 Overall there are still insufficient opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning across the curriculum. There is evidence that assessment practice in English, special educational needs, mathematics, GNVQ in Key Stage 4 and the Sixth Form helps pupils understand what they should be achieving and how to improve. This is still the exception rather than the rule across the curriculum as a whole and particularly in Key Stage 3.

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

- 48 Overall the school provides a broad and balanced curriculum. There have been significant developments in the curriculum since the last full inspection, which have made it more relevant for a significant number of pupils. The school now provides particularly good curricular opportunities for Sixth Form students. However, there remain some inadequacies of provision.
- 49 The curriculum meets statutory requirements in all respects apart from the provision of religious education for the Sixth Form and a daily act of worship for all pupils. 25 hours 25 minutes of teaching time in each of Key Stages 3 and 4 is above the recommended minimum figure and is sometimes extended when taught activities take place after school or within tutorial sessions. The use made by tutors of tutorial time however, varies significantly.
- 50 In Key Stage 3 pupils receive a broad and mainly balanced experience of all National Curriculum subjects and religious education. A weekly cycle of 25 periods makes effective use of time in this and other key stages; and ensures that pupils experience all areas of the curriculum at least once a week. Curriculum time for foreign languages is below average in Key Stage 3 and only French is taught. There are weekly timetabled lessons for information and communication technology in Year 7. In Years 8 and 9 information and communication technology is taught within the other subjects of the curriculum. In addition pupils receive guidance on health, sex and careers education within a taught programme of personal, social and health education.
- 51 In Key Stage 4 the curriculum enables pupils to study the subjects required by law and the National Curriculum. All pupils take full courses in English language, literature, mathematics and double award science. Accreditation in these required subjects is through the GCSE or the lower level Certificate of Achievement. In addition all pupils in Year 10 follow a GNVQ course leading to a vocational qualification. The range of vocationally orientated GNVQ courses in Key Stage 4 and their continuity with related Sixth Form courses has significantly improved since the last inspection. As a result of these curriculum changes some pupils have a more limited choice of academic subjects to study. Consequently this year there is a significant reduction in the numbers of pupils starting certain GCSE courses, for example, geography, French and drama. The school is aware of this and has plans to broaden the range of possible GCSE options next year. The school does provide access to additional GCSE teaching to extend pupils' choice through after-school lessons in subjects such as drama, Punjabi and music. These three courses are well supported by pupils.

- 52 Overall, the curriculum is broad and balanced in Key Stage 4. Though there are variations in time allocations for information and communication technology within the key stage, all pupils have a satisfactory range of experiences either through the GCSE course or through other subject areas. As in Key Stage 3 the time and opportunities for pupils to study modern foreign languages are too restricted. There is no opportunity for pupils to study another European language other than French. The very small numbers of pupils following the GCSE course in Year 11 achieve well. Otherwise standards are too low as most pupils have only one lesson in French each week. Pupils doing the GNVQ business French course in Year 10 do not have enough time to complete the course in the detail required to allow them to achieve their full potential. A majority of pupils are required to follow the Certificate of Achievement course in French. This course is markedly less demanding than the GCSE. Consequently many pupils are working at a lower level than they were in Key Stage 3.
- 53 Additionally all pupils in Key Stage 4 are required to follow programmes in personal, social, health and careers education, and to undertake structured work experience. These and other parts of the Key Stage 4 core programme contribute to the additional award of a Record of Achievement. Guidance on subject and careers choice has been enhanced this year and was well received by pupils and parents.
- 54 Curriculum opportunities for Sixth Form students are good. Although the statutory requirement to provide religious education is not met, the school provides a good range of courses for all levels of ability in the Sixth Form. Students have access to two-year GNVQ advanced and one year GNVQ intermediate courses. There are also opportunities for students to resit GCSE courses. The school works well in a federation with four other schools in providing a broad Sixth Form provision. Through this arrangement students have access to a wide range of A-level courses. Students appreciate this approach though in the current Sixth Form there are comparatively few A-level students compared with the numbers taking GNVQ courses. Currently most students follow the courses based at the school. Entry into the Sixth Form and students' choice of courses is well managed. Students are well guided and supported and co-operation between institutions is appropriately managed. Although current A-level groups are small in comparison with GNVQ groups predictive data suggests increased A-level uptake in the future. In addition to the above all Sixth Form students work towards Key Skills accreditation and have access to physical education, work experience and careers guidance. A range of topics are covered in tutorial periods. This provision is relatively unstructured though valued by students. There is lack of continuity with personal, social and health education provision lower down in the school which means that the work does not build upon what students already know. There is appropriate support and guidance for university and college entrance. The school recognises that as Sixth Form numbers and aspirations grow current levels of support and guidance will need to be significantly enhanced.
- 55 All pupils including those with special educational needs and with English as an additional language, have full access to the planned curriculum and extra curricular activities. There are examples of financial support being provided so that all pupils can participate in school visits. Access to information and communication technology

in Years 8, 9 and 10 is less secure than in Years 7 and 11 where there are specific lessons allocated for all pupils. Pupil groupings across the school do vary in size and in the balance of boys and girls. However, inspection evidence indicates that in general this does not significantly impact on the quality of provision or pupils' progress; although strains are imposed on some staff in relation to marking work of some particularly large classes.

- 56 The overall provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. There is an appropriate balance between in-class support and withdrawal. The curriculum offered to pupils with formal statements is a good match to that specified. When pupils are withdrawn they follow the same programme as the rest of the class so they are able to keep abreast of other pupils. Setting is effectively used to provide work differentiated by group while in mixed ability settings educational assistants provide good support. Individual education plans are used effectively to provide individual targets for pupils with special educational needs as well as strategies by which these are to be addressed. These include a behaviour management programme for those pupils for whom it is appropriate. Pupils with behavioural difficulties achieve enhanced self-esteem through the success of the behaviour management programmes and as they gain acceptance by their peers their behaviour improves and the risk of exclusion recedes. Through the school's commitment to special educational needs, pupils learn to be tolerant of the difficulties others experience and are supportive of one another in lessons.
- 57 Whole school curriculum development and planning are effectively steered by the deputy headteacher with responsibility in this area. There is evidence of productive collaboration with other colleagues in the school. Effective links have been established with other schools with the active support of the Education Action Zone. Governors are kept well informed and are appropriately involved in curricular decisions. Parents are increasingly well informed and appreciative of many of the recent curricular developments, for example, in relation to GNVQ. They also appreciate the extra after school provision for some subjects, for example, Punjabi and drama. Senior managers monitor and evaluate the impact of curricular decisions on the standards pupils attain. Arrangements are also sufficiently flexible to be sensitive to the identified needs of some individuals or groups within the school. Adjustments have recently been made, for example, to the nature of GNVQ provision in Year 10 to accommodate the needs of pupils who were struggling with the demands of the part one GNVQ course.
- 58 Generally subject schemes of work provide teachers with an effective framework for the teaching programme. However, there remain particular weaknesses in schemes of work for religious education and music. With the exception of mathematics and English schemes do not sufficiently build upon what pupils have already learnt and so teaching is less effective and pupils make more limited progress. In addition curriculum planning for Year 7 pupils is still insufficiently supported by effective curricular links with feeder primary schools. Strategies are currently being developed and implemented to rectify this weakness which was highlighted in the last full inspection report.

- 59 Strategies to teach literacy skills have been developing over the last few years and are beginning to underpin work done across a range of subjects. Pupil mentoring, literacy summer schools and additional reading sessions have been successfully developed. In some subjects, schemes of work and lesson planning identify the development of literacy skills, for example, the use of writing frames in science. However, the development of literacy skills is not consistent across all subjects of the curriculum. In particular pupils have insufficient opportunities to write at length in all subjects of the curriculum. Strategies to develop numeracy skills, although emerging, remain relatively underdeveloped and as yet have not had significant impact across the broader curriculum and in all years. A successful summer school in numeracy skills for higher attaining pupils has however been established recently. A number of subjects encourage the use of the Internet to research information. In general GNVQ, design and technology, physical education and special educational needs support make effective use of information and communication technology. More limited use is made in English, mathematics, music and geography.
- 60 There is a range of extra curricular activities provided, in addition to optional subject courses. These include sports clubs and teams, clubs relating to information and communication technology, drama, history, homework and revision activities. There is access to library and information and communication technology facilities before, after school and during lunchtimes. This is so popular with pupils that access can be restricted due to pressure of numbers and pre-booking of certain facilities becomes necessary. Extra lessons are provided in certain subjects after school and there are school trips and productions. These collectively enhance pupils' learning opportunities and experiences and encourage increasingly positive attitudes to school.
- 61 A sound framework of personal social and health education is in place in Key Stages 3 and 4. The current programme provides requisite elements of sex, health, drugs and careers education. It is effectively delivered by tutors, mainly through weekly lessons on a rolling programme. The programme is currently under review to ensure that what is taught builds upon what pupils already know as they move from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4 and the Sixth Form and includes citizenship and careers guidance. Guidance on Key Stage 4 option choices is currently being enhanced, and more systematic attention paid to developing more realistic and appropriate aspirations on the part of pupils. Access is provided to work experience and related areas of careers information or advice from a variety of sources including outside agencies such as the local careers service. Outside speakers including the local Member of Parliament enhance the effectiveness of the personal, social, health education programme.
- 62 The school has a homework policy and most teachers set homework regularly. The use of homework to support learning is generally satisfactory in Key Stages 3 and 4 and good in the Sixth Form. Senior managers regularly monitor the level and appropriateness of homework across the school. Evidence indicates that for most pupils homework is supporting their work in school even though some parents express concern over the amount and regular setting of homework.
- 63 Overall the school's provision for pupils' personal development is sound. The school has a written policy for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There is a clear commitment to pupils' personal development within the school. As a

result relationships are very good and pupils demonstrate increasing maturity as they move through the school.

- 64 Provision for pupils' spiritual development is by comparison relatively weak. The school still does not fully meet the statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship. The morning 'thought for the day' considered during the tutor period is not having sufficient impact. There are comparatively few opportunities for pupils to develop an insight into values, beliefs, self knowledge and awareness. Although some opportunities for reflection are provided in assemblies and such areas as religious education and English, opportunities to reinforce pupils' spiritual development are generally missed in most subjects. However, the good provision for pupils with special educational needs makes a significant contribution to these pupils' sense of self worth.
- 65 Provision for pupils' moral development is good. The school has established a clear code of conduct that has contributed to improved behaviour and a clear sense of right and wrong on the part of pupils. There are many opportunities to explore moral issues and decisions within the curriculum. In history, for example, issues relating to the slave trade are considered. In English dilemmas confronting characters in literature are explored. In geography environmental choices are discussed.
- 66 Provision for pupils' social development is also good. Pupils relate well to each other and staff. There is little bullying or oppressive behaviour. Personal and social education supports key aspects of pupils' development, emphasises social issues such as drug abuse and raises questions about personal relationships. Positive examples of pupils working collaboratively in groups were seen in English and GNVQ course. Social awareness is promoted in GNVQ course materials. Staff commitment to meeting pupils' special educational needs encourages a climate in which pupils are tolerant of each other's difficulties and support each other's learning when given the opportunity. Though there are opportunities for decision making (for example in personal, social and health education) and more independent learning (for example in GNVQ) these aspects remain underdeveloped across the broader curriculum. Sixth Form students are being given a broader range of responsibilities in the school. They effectively supervise lunch time arrangements and act as mentors to younger pupils. Year councils have been established, continue to develop and provide opportunity to debate and consider personal responsibility. Despite this, opportunities for younger pupils to take greater responsibility for their own learning and in the school remain too limited.
- 67 Provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils have a sound awareness of and respect for other cultures. Pupils from different ethnic backgrounds have been well integrated and there is harmony within the school. The traditions and practices from a range of diverse cultures are reflected in displays, practice and resources in the school and in the make up of the governing body. Aspects of different cultures are explored in assemblies and a number of subjects including music, French and geography. Pupils learn about their own area and some other areas through trips. Such trips include a Year 7 trip to France. Opportunities are still

missed in some subject areas such as drama, music and art to further develop pupils' awareness of the richness of the cultural environment around them.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

- 68 A safe and secure environment is provided for all pupils. Good arrangements are in place to enable the school to meet its responsibilities in relation to health and safety principles and practice. The school pays careful attention to safe working both in relation to day-to-day school life and in curriculum matters for both pupils and staff. Considerable attention has been paid to the establishment and operation of site safety arrangements. Senior staff are available and respond quickly to support both teachers and pupils should any incidents occur. This has supported the school's drive to improve standards of behaviour and safety in and around the school.
- 69 Arrangements for the care of pupils who are unwell have received attention and are handled well as are arrangements for first aid. Effective procedures are in place for such matters as the keeping of relevant records, risk assessments and fire safety drills. Child protection procedures have been established using the local education authority's recommended procedures. The senior teacher acts as the 'named' person and works in co-operation with colleagues and the appropriate agencies as required.
- 70 The school has a very well developed policy for the promotion of good behaviour. The school staff recognise both effort in personal development as well as academic achievement. This is well balanced with the need for sanctions when necessary. The school has also recognised that the successful development of pupils' attitudes and behaviour is closely linked to the quality of teaching and the provision of courses relevant to the needs of pupils. The improved teaching and curriculum are having the effect of bringing about considerable improvement in pupils' attitudes and behaviour. Evidence from inspection shows that pupils, especially those who were in the school at the time of the last inspection, recognise and welcome the improvements achieved. This is a notable improvement on the findings of the last published inspection.
- 71 There remains, however, more to be done. The inspection evidence shows that there are a small number of pupils, mainly boys in Key Stage 3, whose behaviour in lessons is inappropriate. The school has already recognised the need to further develop its response to such situations. It continues to work effectively with visiting specialists and has recently appointed a specialist teacher to support and ensure all pupils have equal access to all aspects of school life. Early indications are that this is beginning to have an impact on pupils' involvement in all aspects of the school's life. Parents indicate that they feel that behaviour has improved since the last inspection. This view is also supported by pupils particularly those who were in the school at the time of the last inspection.
- 72 The school has a record of excluding more pupils than similar schools. It is clear that the school only uses this sanction as a last resort having made full use of the strategies set out in its agreed policy of behaviour management. Care is taken to ensure that appropriate planning goes into organising the return to school of excluded pupils. The procedures, which the school operates in these situations, are appropriate. The evidence shows that the level of exclusions is declining.

- 73 The school makes very good use of its policy for rewarding both effort and improvement in personal and academic development. Similarly its sanctions are proportionate and well used. Parents and pupils recognise the value of the school's approach; pupils appreciate particularly the public recognition of their success. During the inspection no incidents of bullying were observed. Overall, parents express confidence in the school's response to such situations if and when they occur. Pupils are also very clear that the school's response to such situations has improved since the last inspection.
- 74 The school has a good range of policies to promote pupils' personal development, including a policy for personal, social and health education. This offers a structured programme of work for all year groups. Pupils indicate that much of this work is helpful and appreciate the likely benefit from it. The school provides good information for pupils and parents regarding subject choices as pupils move from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4. The detailed support and guidance for pupils as they move into the Sixth Form includes good careers information as well as detailed descriptions of the courses available within the school and the Sixth Form federation.
- 75 The school makes considerable use of assessment data to monitor pupils' progress and attainment. Senior managers make effective use of this information to set targets for improvements. Contacts with the contributory schools also means that a good range of pupil data is available to staff to organise pupils on arrival at the school so as to ensure a smooth transfer.
- 76 The school's policy for assessment is clear and places much responsibility with departments to make use of data so as to inform teaching and raise standards. The policy also provides advice about the marking of pupils' work and recording of assessment data. There are examples of good practice to be seen where such action is taken, as for example in English and mathematics. However, there are many examples where the use of assessment does not inform teaching and lead to improvements in the attainment of individual pupils, for example, in music, some aspects of science and in religious education.
- 77 The day-to-day use of pupil assessment data by teachers to plan effectively for the next stages of learning also show a range of practice. In many cases teachers use the data and their knowledge of pupils well to ensure that the work they set is sufficiently challenging and relevant. Examples of this were seen across all year groups and in many subjects. This was closely associated with those lessons where the quality of teaching was good or very good. In a minority of lessons where teaching was found to be unsatisfactory, teachers' failure to use data to target sufficiently closely what all groups of pupils were to learn led to pupils' poor responses which resulted in unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour.
- 78 The school places much emphasis on the use of homework and has a very clear policy setting out what will be provided to pupils in each subject and in each year group. The provision is monitored closely by senior managers for relevance and provision. Pupils are well aware of the school's arrangements, as are parents. Evidence from inspection show that in many cases homework is used well and that pupils respond

well to it. Homework diaries are maintained by pupils and signed by parents and staff. On a number of occasions, however, inspection evidence showed some staff not setting homework and some parents not signing homework diaries.

- 79 Considerable attention has been given to the systems for monitoring and improving levels of attendance and punctuality. These are comprehensive and are generally operated well by staff. The school uses the *Bromcom* system to record attendance at the beginning of sessions and for individual lessons. The system enables data to be obtained about individual and class patterns of attendance very quickly. The school, working closely with the Education Welfare Officer, monitors the data systematically. A first day response policy is operated; the school contacts parents of pupils where no information has been received to explain an absence. Parents and pupils are aware of the school's procedures and parents express support for the school's approach. Nevertheless the school's record shows a very high level, almost twice the national average for similar schools, of authorised absence. Overall the school's level of attendance remains unsatisfactory. The last published report saw attendance as an area requiring attention. It is clear that the school has worked hard to bring about improvement. There has been some improvement over time and indeed the school's record of unauthorised absence is now broadly in line with that found nationally. In view of the high level of authorised absence, the school needs to continue its efforts to improve its overall position.
- 80 Where lateness occurs there is generally an appropriate response from staff although on occasion during inspection this was not the case. Parents are clear, however, that the school takes attendance and punctuality issues very seriously. They comment on the way in which they are kept informed about pupils' attendance in considerable detail by the school.
- 81 The overwhelming majority of parents consulted stated clearly that they feel that the school works hard to provide pupils with a safe and secure environment and that staff are committed to pupils' best interests. Evidence from inspection indicates that these beliefs are well founded.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- 82 The school takes care to provide prospective parents and pupils with useful information and advice about its aims and facilities. Arrangements are made to enable pupils and their parents to visit the school prior to admission. Staff also liaise with their colleagues in the primary schools to ensure that they obtain appropriate information about the pupils to ensure that their transfer is completed smoothly. Working with others in the Education Action Zone the school is planning to further enhance these arrangements to include curriculum information.
- 83 The prospectus is a helpful and well produced document, which meets requirements. Parents are kept informed about school life by a monthly newsletter. Routine administrative matters are also handled well. Parents say that they feel well informed and welcome the information provided, as for example over detailed reports about attendance matters.

- 84 The school has a home-school agreement which has been supported by many parents. In addition the pupils' homework diaries contain clear statements about the school's expectations in terms of conduct. The code is also prominently displayed in classrooms. Parents say that the school expects pupils to work hard and achieve their best.
- 85 The school keeps parents well informed about the progress made by pupils in both their academic and personal development by a well planned series of opportunities for meetings with staff and through detailed written reports. Whilst these contain much useful information they do not always set out clearly enough what the pupil needs to do next in order to improve. Some parents, whilst recognising the value of opportunities for discussion with staff, indicate that on occasion some staff, particularly when there has been a rapid change in staffing, are not always as fully aware of the pupils' progress as they would wish. The school could with advantage review its procedures to ensure that appropriate records are available to support staff in such situations.
- 86 The school welcomes support from parents and is fortunate to have a small but active group who form a parent-teacher association. They have supported the school through assisting at parent-teacher consultation meetings and by providing social events for pupils. Their activities could with advantage receive wider support and the school could assist by giving their work a higher profile.
- 87 The school is supporting the introduction of the "SHARE" programme which is designed to encourage and enable parents and pupils to work together on joint learning experiences. A small group of parents are currently taking part in the scheme which has recently been introduced to secondary schools on a "pilot" basis. Such initiatives are enabling parents to be more fully aware of and be able to support pupil development as well as developing their own interests.
- 88 A small number of parents have expressed some concerns about aspects of the work of the school, for example the behaviour of a small minority of pupils, some inconsistencies in the operation of school procedures and the impact of staff turnover. They recognise, however, that staff are working hard to deal with these matters and have expressed considerable confidence in the headteacher and his work to improve such matters. This positive endorsement given by parents of the work of the school is a significant strength. It is clear that much has been achieved since the last inspection to bring about a better partnership between parents and the school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- 89 The headteacher has provided clear and very effective leadership for this school since the last inspection. He has sustained the focus on improving the quality of education and raising standards. Senior managers have effectively supported him in this. There has been a very high level of classroom monitoring and supportive training to improve teaching and the effectiveness of middle managers.
- 90 In planning its continued development the school has moved from the action plan from the last inspection to a clear, well thought out development plan. The plan

identifies clear goals and strategies for development as well as being linked to budget setting. There are clear evaluation procedures to measure how well the plan is working. The plan has been particularly effective in making the curriculum more relevant to pupils' needs and interests. This has been a major factor in the improvement of pupils' attitudes and the standards they achieve.

- 91 The senior managers evaluate the work of the school carefully including a detailed analysis of the results of tests and examinations. The school compares its performance with that of schools nationally and of similar schools. Managers use the information to identify weaknesses in the curriculum and how it is taught and then supportively manage improvements; middle managers play their full part in this process. For example, many lessons have been observed and teachers given detailed advice and support on how to improve their teaching skills.
- 92 The school has clear aims, which commit it to equality of access for all and to the improvement of standards. However, current curriculum organisation in practice limits pupils' access to and attainment in modern foreign languages especially, in Key Stage 4. In contrast the provision of additional courses notably in drama and Punjabi, extends curricular opportunities still further.
- 93 The managers and teachers are fully committed to continuing to improve the quality of education and the standards pupils attain. They have the capacity to continue the significant improvements already achieved.
- 94 The school sets realistic and challenging whole school and individual targets for pupils' future attainment. The setting of targets is based upon a wide range of assessment information; and the targets set frequently exceed predictions based on national trends and patterns.
- 95 The governing body is well informed and fully conversant with its roles and responsibilities. There is an effective committee structure, which enables the governing body to manage its responsibilities and day-to-day work effectively. The budget is set appropriately against the development plan. A significant carry-forward of funds has built up over the last few years. This is due in part to the move to a new building and additional resources provided through the Education Action Zone. Governors have made appropriate plans to use these funds to continue to improve the quality of education and the range of experiences pupils receive over the next few years.
- 96 Many governors are regular visitors to the school and several have attended in-service training for teachers as observers. They are well informed about the work of the school, its strengths and weaknesses. They have set appropriate short-term priorities for the development of the school since the last inspection.
- 97 The governors' finance committee with support from senior staff, including administrative staff; set the budget carefully to meet the school's agreed development targets. The spending patterns are then monitored closely to ensure that the targets are being achieved. The financial control and administration are very good and make

very effective use of information and communication technology to support the process and provide accurate information for governors.

- 98 The number of students in the Sixth Form is lower than average. The courses followed, mainly GNVQ, are popular amongst students; and numbers in teaching groups exceed 12 in many cases. The links with the local federation leads to generally effective A-level group sizes. The Sixth Form provision is therefore effective in meeting students' needs and in giving value for money.
- 99 The school is making very effective use of additional resources from specific grants, especially those associated with the Education Action Zone, to support its planned development. For example, the provision of a broad band telephone connection now enables up to 120 computers in the school to have access to internet resources for learning.
- 100 Whilst the school is in practice following the four 'best value' principles in its work it does not yet explicitly state or plan its procedures in terms of these principles. It does, however, successfully give good value for the funds it receives and uses.
- 101 The school has experienced difficulties in recruiting staff over the last three years and at the time of the inspection three staff had only been in the school for one week and a vacancy for the head of religious education will not be filled until Easter. Several staff were absent due to illness and in all five different supply teachers were used during the inspection. As a result pupils are receiving inconsistent learning experiences and make less progress. Staff absence rates are not above the average and many schools are facing similar recruitment difficulties; but these staffing difficulties have reduced the quality of education for some pupils, particularly in religious education. Whilst managers seek to ensure effective teaching the need to use temporary and supply staff limits the consistent application of the school's policies and procedures.
- 102 Overall, apart from the problems identified above, there are sufficient appropriately qualified teachers who are generally deployed effectively. There are a number of very effective support staff and teachers who support pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language.
- 103 The school is housed in a new building, which provides for all specialist subject needs. It is well looked after and provides a welcoming learning environment. However, with the growing numbers of students in the Sixth Form constraints are already being placed upon the accommodation. There are no social spaces for pupils in any year group or the Sixth Form and pupils are only given limited access to the building outside of lesson time. There are good outdoor social areas and recent improvements to the playing fields are designed to make them more available during the wetter winter months. The school has its own indoor swimming pool, which provides a good resource for the school as well as primary pupils in the area and the community.
- 104 There are broadly sufficient learning resources. The school has large numbers of computers, which are accessible to most teachers to support the work in their subjects.

However, there are limited book resources in the library and this reduces the opportunity to develop pupils research and independent learning skills.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- 105 The school governors, in conjunction with the headteacher and staff should take the following actions to raise standards by:
- i) Improving the attendance of a significant minority of pupils by:
[31, 79]
 - continuing with the current effective strategies;
 - publishing attendance data for classes regularly.
 - ii) Improving the management and teaching in music and religious education by:
[58, 227, 238, 239, 251, 253, 255, 256]
 - providing support and advice for the head of subject;
 - setting clear targets for the future development of these subjects.
 - iii) Developing subject schemes of work to meet the requirements of Curriculum 2000 and to ensure that pupils' learning builds consistently as they move through the school by:
[21, 43, 46, 58, 59, 77, 156, 173, 200, 209, 230]
 - reviewing current schemes to ensure compliance;
 - monitoring the shorter term planning by heads of subject to make sure that what pupils are learning builds upon what they already know.
 - iv) Monitoring the consistency with which the school's policies and procedures are applied across the school by:
[21, 24, 43, 63, 64, 71, 76, 78, 88, 101, 167, 180, 208, 225]
 - reviewing the induction procedures for new staff and supply staff;
 - monitoring the implementation of all policies and procedures.
 - v) Improving the spiritual development of pupils by:
[27, 49, 54]
 - ensuring that all pupils have access to a daily act of collective worship;

- ensuring that the statutory requirements for religious education are met for Sixth Form students.

The numbers in brackets relate to the main paragraphs of this report where these issues are mentioned.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	150
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	57

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	20	37	33	7	2	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth Form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	737	94
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	240	-

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth Form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	18	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	384	17

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	159

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	36
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	28

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	12.8
National comparative data	5.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.9
National comparative data	0.4

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2000	71	76	147

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	33	26	23
	Girls	48	29	25
	Total	81	55	48
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	59 (22)	38 (37)	33 (23)
	National	63 (83)	65 (62)	60 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	32 (4)	17 (15)	8 (7)
	National	28 (28)	41 (38)	29 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	12	31	27
	Girls	26	46	42
	Total	38	77	69
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	26 (30)	53 (39)	48 (38)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	24 (10)	27 (15)	20 (16)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	2000	69	76	145

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	8	46	55
	Girls	18	65	71
	Total	26	111	126
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	18 (13)	77 (68)	87 (79)
	National	47 (45)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	21.1 (18.7)
	National	37.7 (37)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or Units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	3	100
	National		N/a

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the Latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	12	16	28

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a
National	17.7	18.6	18.2	2.6	2.9	2.7

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved Vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	18	66
	National		76.5

International Baccalaureate		Number	% success rate
Number entered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all they studied	School	N/a	N/a
	National		N/a

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	15
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	3
Indian	114
Pakistani	81
Bangladeshi	3
Chinese	2
White	572
Any other minority ethnic group	41

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	2	1
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	5	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	7	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	55	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 – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	50.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	345

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	67.3
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	24.8
Key Stage 4	22.2

Financial information

Financial year	1999
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	£
Total income	1,995,382
Total expenditure	2,066,192
Expenditure per pupil	2,680
Balance brought forward from previous year	365,993
Balance carried forward to next year	295,183

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	831
Number of questionnaires returned	94

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	29	41	20	6	3
My child is making good progress in school.	35	57	2	3	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	33	40	15	2	10
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	30	54	13	2	1
The teaching is good.	15	69	9	1	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	47	39	11	2	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	44	46	7	3	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	51	44	2	1	2
The school works closely with parents.	23	56	15	1	4
The school is well led and managed.	28	51	11	2	9
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	22	62	10	2	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	19	50	12	3	16

Other issues raised by parents

Several parents in written comments identified some concerns regarding the extent of bullying within the school.

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

ENGLISH

- 106 Overall, standards of attainment in English are below national averages. When they enter the school, pupils' attainment in the Key Stage 2 national tests is well below the national average.
- 107 In the 2000, Key Stage 3 tests the percentage of pupils gaining Level 5 and above was close to the national average and was just above the national average for pupils gaining Level 6 and above. Key Stage 3 results were well above average when compared with schools in similar contexts. The trend since 1997 has been of strong improvement at Key Stage 3.
- 108 GCSE results for English and English literature in 2000 were well below the national average A*-C grades. Boys perform significantly less well than girls at GCSE level. Overall the trend over the last four years is of slightly falling standards. Performance in English is higher than in other core subjects. Standards in the current Year 11 demonstrate an improvement over the previous year.
- 109 Results at Key Stage 3 have improved considerably since the last inspection. Although there has been no discernible trend of improvement at GSCE a larger proportion of the cohort than usual are entered for examination in both English and English literature. Marking and day-to-day assessment procedures are helpful and supportive to pupils. Success criteria for units of work are shared with pupils and targets for individual pupil's improvement are usually precise, achievable and clearly understood by pupils.
- 110 No students have followed A-level courses in recent years. Students following GNVQ course show effective writing skills that enable them to attain the expected levels for the course in written communication skills.
- 111 In speaking and listening, the highest attaining pupils by the end of Key Stage 3 listen attentively and are confident when making contributions using appropriate vocabulary. Lower attaining pupils do not always adapt what they say in response to the views of others. By the end of Key Stage 4, the most able pupils structure their talk clearly and show that they have listened with understanding. Lower attaining pupils remain less confident, do not make extended responses and do not have control over vocabulary and standard English.
- 112 In reading, by the end of Key Stage 3 the highest attaining pupils read for meaning beyond the literal and have good knowledge of the key features of a range of genres. For example, Year 9 pupils working on *Examination Day* were able to identify the author's intent at various stages in the story. The weaker readers do not move beyond surface meaning. By the end of Key Stage 4 the most able pupils make critical responses to their reading. A significant proportion of lower attaining pupils at both key stages do not bring inference and deduction to their reading.

- 113 In writing the highest attaining pupils by the end of Key Stage 3 write in a range of forms for different purposes. By the end of Key Stage 4 the pupils in the top range produce writing that is varied and interesting and adapt their style according to task. Weaker writers at both key stages experience difficulty with the organisation of their writing and do not have control over grammatical features.
- 114 Overall, progress in lessons at both Key Stage 3 and 4 is good. Pupils enter the school with well below average attainment and then make progress as writers developing the confidence to write at length using a range of strategies to plan and revise their writing. However, opportunities for using these skills in other subjects are too limited. For example, Year 11 pupils analysed each others' work against examination criteria and discussed the strengths and weaknesses in their own writing. In Year 8, a class produced interior monologues when reading *The Tulip Touch* which successfully demonstrated their understanding of character and viewpoint. Pupils are given appropriately demanding texts and challenging tasks, for example, a lower ability group of Year 10 pupils successfully interpreted Carol Ann Duffy's *Stealing* showing understanding of the imagery in the poem. Progress in reading is most marked in pupils' developing close reading skills and their application of strategies such as skimming, scanning and text marking. Pupils of all abilities make sound progress over the long term in speaking and listening. There is little discernible difference in the progress of different groups of pupils.
- 115 The overall quality of teaching is good. There was no unsatisfactory teaching seen during the inspection and in one third of the lessons the quality of teaching was very good. Teaching seen was slightly better in Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form than in Key Stage 3. A good feature of many lessons is the way in which teachers establish new skills and knowledge in the context of prior learning. Pupils are asked to review and revise what they already know, and told clearly how this fits in with what they are going to learn next. Teachers usually have high expectations of all pupils and this is linked to good knowledge of pupils' performance. For example, in a Year 10 lesson on *An Inspector Calls* pupils were asked to analyse Mr Birling's first meeting with the inspector. Pupils discussed video clips from different productions of the play and were prompted by the teacher to focus on the language and the stage-craft. As a result pupils were able to explain the significance of Birling's exchanges with the inspector. Teaching in Year 9 and Year 11 is clearly focused on test and examination requirements and the development of specific language skills in the context of stimulating reading and writing activities.
- 116 Many lessons are characterised by a good balance of activities and in the best lessons opportunities are given for pupils to work collaboratively. For example, in a Year 8 lesson on persuasive writing pupils worked in pairs to identify the distinguishing language features of a written argument. Teachers present good models as both readers and writers. For example, in a Year 8 lesson the teacher used a piece of her own persuasive writing as a model for the class. Teaching is usually supported by well produced resources which provide effective frameworks for pupils. For example, when a Year 7 class was working on Philip Pullman's *Clockwork* they were given a grid in which to record 'details from the story' and 'what this adds to the story' which helped the pupils to focus on the style of the writing as well as the content. These positive features of teaching have a corresponding impact on pupils' learning and the

standards achieved. Where teaching is less effective the lessons are dominated by teachers' talk and the pace of the lesson is slowed. This occurred mostly with the lower attaining groups.

- 117 Pupils' attitudes to learning in English are almost always satisfactory and were good or better in two thirds of lessons seen. Pupils usually show interest in their work and behave well. The management of pupils' behaviour that was an issue in the last inspection has been successfully addressed. Pupils' capacity to work collaboratively and to persevere with tasks set is now generally good although lower attaining pupils in some classes at Key Stage 3 do not sustain their concentration.
- 118 The English department is efficiently and effectively led, morale is good and there is a shared commitment to development. The department has identified appropriate priorities for the future and development planning is effective. Results at both key stages are carefully analysed and the curriculum is reviewed accordingly. Monitoring of the curriculum and its delivery is systematic. Since the last inspection the Key Stage 3 scheme of work has been revised and a coherent curriculum is now in place. However, opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology in English remain limited.
- 119 Pupils' reading is effectively encouraged through a number of initiatives in English and in liaison with the librarian. However, many pupils do not read independently and the development of a reading culture remains an area for development.
- 120 Drama makes a positive contribution to standards of attainment in English. At both key stages pupils are regularly given opportunities to work collaboratively, to emphasise, to speak and write in role and to show initiative. Pupils of all abilities respond well to such opportunities. Drama also makes an effective contribution to the social and cultural development of pupils. The recent production of *West Side Story* enabled a wide range of pupils to demonstrate a variety of skills to a wider audience.

Literacy

- 121 A literacy working party of representatives from most subject areas has developed literacy and oracy policies which are beginning to have a positive impact across the school. In speaking and listening, there were good examples seen of teachers expecting and supporting pupils to give extended responses to questions in design and technology and science. However, opportunities for discussion are frequently restricted to answering closed questions. In reading, all pupils in Key Stage 3 read during registration period on two days a week. In Year 7 form tutors successfully delivered a unit of work on reading in the autumn term. Older pupils have been trained as mentors to support weaker readers in Year 7. There are few opportunities across the curriculum for extended reading although research tasks are occasionally set for homework. Good examples were seen in history when pupils were asked to extract information from a range of resources on the Battle of Hastings. In Year 9, work on the first world war was supported with a good range of poetry. Key words are displayed in many classrooms and teachers regularly draw pupils' attention to these. In geography, for example, teachers have ensured that pupils understand and use a good range of geographical terms. In writing, many departments provide writing

frames to support pupils in structuring their work and some opportunities are provided for pupils to write in different forms for different audiences for example, poems on scientific themes, newspaper reports of major events in geography. Overall, the effectiveness of strategies for teaching literacy skills across the curriculum is sound although pupils have too few opportunities to produce longer pieces of writing.

MATHEMATICS

- 122 Overall, standards in mathematics are well below average and have shown little significant improvement over the last three years.
- 123 By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils are attaining standards well below those typical for their age. In the 2000 national assessments the percentage of pupils who attained the expected standard of Level 5 or above was well below the national average and those of pupils from similar schools. The percentage of pupils attaining the higher standard of Level 6 was well below national and similar school averages. The general trend over the last four years is of slowly improving standards.
- 124 From a scrutiny of pupils past work, their current work in lessons and talking to pupils, the evidence indicates that attainment by Year 9 pupils by summer 2001 is likely to be slightly better than the standards in 2000. For example, pupils in the upper sets in Year 9 are able to calculate percentages such as 25 per cent of 60 and show an understanding of simple ratios and their relationship with percentages. They can calculate percentage increase and decrease. However, the standards shown by lower attaining pupils were well below the expected average level.
- 125 By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils are attaining standards lower than the national average. In the 2000 GCSE examinations the percentage of pupils attaining the higher A*-C grades was well below the national average with girls attaining slightly better standards than boys which was similar to the national picture. The percentage of pupils attaining a pass grade in the GCSE is below the national average. Pupils do less well in mathematics than they do in the other core subjects of the curriculum. The school enters a slightly smaller proportion of pupils for the examination to that found nationally. Over the last four years the percentage of pupils attaining a pass grade has improved although it remains well below average.
- 126 From a scrutiny of pupils' current and past work and talking to pupils currently in Year 11 inspectors judge that standards continue to improve and that a higher proportion of pupils are on course to attain a higher grade pass than last year. For example, pupils in the upper sets in Year 11 are able to solve complex probability problems demonstrating a good understanding of the processes they are using.
- 127 Standards of numeracy are well below average on entry to the school. Although skills do improve they are below average by the end of Key Stage 4. However, there is limited contribution to the development of numeracy in the other subjects of the curriculum.
- 128 Overall, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. They are making at least satisfactory progress in their mathematical studies. More able pupils within the setting system are making good progress. For example, the overall trend for the high attainment group

currently in Year 11 is that they have progressed from Level 4 in the National Curriculum at the end of Key Stage 2 to Level 6 at the end of Key Stage 3 and GCSE grade D at the end of Year 10. They have a target of Grade A or A* at the end of Year 11. However, pupils in the lower sets are only making satisfactory progress. Pupils with special educational needs are making satisfactory progress. Pupils for whom English is an additional language make good progress in the upper sets and satisfactory progress in the lower sets. This indicates an improvement since the last inspection.

- 129 The quality of teaching was good or very good in the majority of lessons seen, and at least satisfactory in all. This represents a significant improvement since the last inspection although the improved teaching has yet to raise the standards pupils attain by the end of Key Stage 4. Lesson planning was invariably good and teachers had a good knowledge of their subject. Homework was set but usually at the beginning of the lesson as a continuation of the classwork for the lesson. The pupils were not asked to indicate where homework began and it was difficult to gauge the amount set and the progress pupils were making. Marking was thorough and assessment grades which matched the school policy were added to the work. There were very often summary and encouraging comments on the marked work but there were few comments indicating what pupils need to do to improve. The use of praise in the lessons was very pronounced. The logo 'The Mathematics Department Cares' appears as a caption on all displays and it pervades the department.
- 130 All members of the department were aware of the individual pupils with statements of special educational needs and their levels but it was not apparent that they received any specifically targeted work. Higher ability pupils are not always given extension work although the department had been involved in a summer school for gifted and talented pupils which had been funded by the Education Action Zone. Pupils were invariably enthusiastic about their learning and displayed positive attitudes towards mathematics. They were almost always pleased to answer questions and were let down gently if their responses were inaccurate. The pupils were particularly good orally. A pupil with physical learning difficulties is producing outstanding work with the assistance of his Learning Support Assistant.
- 131 There are clear schemes of work for the subject indicating national curriculum levels, attainment targets and available resources. The scheme ensures that teachers develop pupils' learning progressively. The record cards in use in the department are well designed with a self assessment section for pupils. The pupils were aware of their current levels of attainment and their expected targets levels. Some record cards for lower ability pupils were not up to date which reduced the effectiveness of teachers in promoting better learning and improved standards.
- 132 The department has a good level of resources. A computer based recording system to monitor grades of attainment and effort was in place and functioning well in providing teachers and pupils with detailed information to guide teaching and learning.
- 133 The subject leader took over the department three years ago and selected appropriate priorities. The main one has been to improve teaching and learning in the classrooms. Teaching is monitored by frequent observations, which identify weaknesses, and steps are then taken to overcome them. There are good co-operative relationships within

the department. At the time of the inspection, mathematics teachers made insufficient use of information and communication technology. At the moment it is restricted to data handling in Year 9.

SCIENCE

- 134 On entry to the school the average attainment of pupils is well below national standards. Although pupils make steady progress their low starting point means their performance in science remains below the national average throughout their full-time education. Examination results have varied from year-to-year but results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 and GCSE results at the end of Year 11 were both better in the year 2000 than they have been for some time.
- 135 In the 2000 national tests and assessments for 14 year olds, results were well below the national averages. The proportion of pupils attaining the expected Level 5 or better was about half the national average and for the higher Level 6 was even lower. These results suggest that on average boys would require almost another two years of study to reach the expected standard whilst girls would require more than one year. These standards are well below those found in similar schools being in the lowest five per cent. Over the last four years standards fell slowly to 1999 and there has been a small improvement in 2000.
- 136 In the 2000 GCSE examinations results were below the national averages for the proportion of pupils attaining A*-C grades and A*-G grades. About a quarter of the school's pupils gained A*-C grades whilst nationally about half the pupils gained these grades. The school enters a greater proportion of pupils than nationally for the science GCSE. Overall, results have been falling slowly over the last five years but results in 2000 showed improvement from 1999. Pupils are doing better in science than they do in many other subjects.
- 137 Statistical analysis of results in the Sixth Form is inappropriate because of the small numbers but those following the biology course show a good basic knowledge of their subject and were seen working carefully on practical work to identify DNA bases. This reflects good progress from their attainment in the GCSE examinations. There is evidence from lower down the school that more pupils might want to enter the Sixth Form to study science in the future.
- 138 Overall, the quality of teaching in science is satisfactory. In all almost four out of five lessons seen were judged to be at least satisfactory. Nearly half of the lessons seen were judged to be good or very good. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection.
- 139 Teaching was judged to be good in the Sixth Form and Key Stage 4 and unsatisfactory in Key Stage 3. The weakest teaching was seen with the younger pupils.
- 140 In Key Stage 3 where teaching was judged to be satisfactory or good, teachers had secure subject knowledge and planned appropriate lessons to enable pupils to learn and make progress. For example, in Year 7 a very low ability group were making steady progress. Patient work by the teacher was helping the class, with a very high proportion of pupils with special educational needs, to learn what qualities a good

diagram possessed and how they could improve their own drawings. In Year 8 a class were working on optics experiments which involved data logging and showed they had a good grasp of basic principles.

- 141 Where teaching was judged to be unsatisfactory then the pace of the lessons was slow and the work frequently too easy with the result that pupils lost interest, many pupils lapsing into silly behaviour, and a significant number of pupils make insufficient progress.
- 142 In Key Stage 4 teaching seen was always at least satisfactory with many good lessons seen. Where teaching is good teachers have good subject knowledge, which they use well to plan lively and interesting lessons. In these lessons pupils respond well and make good progress. For example, in an able Year 11 class pupils were learning about atomic structure. A question and answer session helped them to recall work they had done several years ago then new work enabled them to establish the link between atomic structure and an element's position in the Periodic Table. Pupils learned how to calculate the number of protons and neutrons in its nucleus and were introduced to the idea of isotopes. In a Year 10 less able group with a very high proportion of pupils with special educational needs, the teacher helped pupils to work out what would happen in various situations by thinking in terms of "collision theory" and guided them to carry out safely an experiment investigating how the strength of an acid affected the speed with which it reacted.
- 143 Generally teachers mark pupils' work regularly, however, the teachers' assessments fail to identify where pupils have done well or what they need to do to improve. Thus pupils are not able to use assessment information to enable them to set their own targets for improvement.
- 144 The science department is well organised. The recently appointed head of science has identified what needs to be done to improve the quality of teaching and to raise standards in science.
- 145 The accommodation for teaching science is very good. The laboratories are all spacious and new and there are no health and safety issues. Resources for practical work are good but there are barely enough textbooks for class use and none to spare for pupils to take home to use for homework which reduces the opportunities for pupils to develop and use their research skills to produce more extended pieces of written work. There are examples of pupils using information and communication technology skills for homework, coursework and for display but there are still insufficient opportunities during science lessons because of a lack of computers.

ART AND DESIGN

- 146 Standards of attainment overall are in line with national expectations.
- 147 By the end of Key Stage 3, standards are in line with national expectations, but some Year 8 and 9 classes are working below this standard, where the challenges are mostly

limited to prescriptive responses and the focus of learning is unclear to the pupils. Where the attainment is higher, pupils successfully use the work of artists such as Picasso and crafts from other cultures to inform aspects of their work in painting, drawing and collage. Sketchbooks are used well to investigate and inform future work, linking aspects of pupils' knowledge and understanding. Surprisingly, homework is not done in these books.

- 148 Standards of attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 in the GCSE are well below national averages for A*-C grades, and have declined over the last three years to the present level of 20%. Girls out-perform boys particularly in the higher grade passes, where they show a greater rigour in planning and in the skilled use of materials. The school enters a similar proportion of pupils for the examination as is found nationally. Pupils perform less well in art than they do in their other subjects. The work currently underway, especially in Year 10, is of a higher standard than shown by recent examination results; and would appear to be on track to significantly improve the present situation. Drawing from observation and colour work is quite strong, but work which relies excessively upon copied images, even from the work of artists, tends to detract from the overall presentations.
- 149 Since the last inspection, attainment has improved overall. Skills of drawing and three-dimensional work are better, and pupils are developing a greater knowledge of different art forms. Results in the GCSE have not shown any improvement. The GNVQ group no longer operates, but there is now a group of students studying to A/S level whose work is of an appropriate standard.
- 150 A greater percentage of pupils now show satisfactory progress in their learning of and about art in Key Stages 3 and 4, although in some instances the challenges are still not appropriate to the needs of some Key Stage 3 groups.
- 151 The quality of teaching remains satisfactory overall, but with some poor lessons caused through having narrow and inappropriate learning objectives. Recording the attainment of pupils has improved, although there is still insufficient monitoring of the work of Key Stage 3 pupils. Information and communication technology is still not integrated into the programmes of study and so is not used sufficiently to support and enhance pupils' learning.
- 152 Some good lessons were observed in Year 9 and at Key Stage 4. Most lessons are suitably resourced and planned, with challenging learning objectives. Where teaching is poor lessons are overly prescriptive and offer no opportunity for personal response to materials or image. In one lesson, all the pupils were expected to do was to trace very badly pre-drawn figures and overlap them. The most effective lessons recognised pupils' needs and allowed them to respond creatively to images and materials.
- 153 Lesson planning considers a variety of two and three-dimensional opportunities, and refers to a wide range of male and female artists along with references to art works from other cultures. Artists such as Picasso, Modigliani, Giacometti, Frink, Hockney

and Aboriginal and Greek images are in regular use, and pupils respond to them enthusiastically.

- 154 Teachers give generously of their own time to encourage pupils at all levels to develop their work in less formal circumstances, which is used by some of them in a worthwhile way. Homework is regularly set and marked, and teachers' assessments relate to clear criteria. At Key Stage 3, homework is not done in books, but on loose sheets of paper which does not encourage pride in the work or provide the necessary references to previous work.
- 155 Pupils' attitudes to work at Key Stage 3 differ considerably. Some pupils in Year 8 and 9 have difficulty in settling to the tasks, although they do understand the instructions given to them. Other pupils, even in large classes, approach their work diligently. The majority of pupils at Key Stage 4 behave well and relate positively to each other and to the teacher. They show courtesy and have an ability to talk about their own work. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in art.
- 156 The departmental handbook presents clear information on a range of important class management issues for teachers. However, the aims and objectives of the subject are generally confused. In some lesson plans when too much is expected to be taught and learned, pupils are unclear of what they should do and progress is limited. There are many spelling errors of names and technical terms in teachers' planning records, which are transferred onto the boards and into the pupils' books. At Key Stage 4 the context of the work is not clearly evident in some of the study units.
- 157 Information and communication technology is not a part of the planned curriculum. None of the present groups has the opportunity to visit art galleries to develop their understanding of art in contemporary society. All of which results in a narrow range of pupils' experiences.
- 158 One of the studios displays a good range of pupils' work and reproductions of the work of artists, supplemented by other visual material to stimulate interest and create a good working environment. The art-work of the pupils is not displayed anywhere else in the school to encourage interest and celebrate achievement.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

- 159 Overall standards are below those expected nationally.
- 160 By the end of Key Stage 3 teachers' assessment identifies attainment to be below national expectations by around one level which is equivalent to two years work. Boys are attaining significantly lower standards than girls. There has been a gradual improvement in standards over the last three years and in practical lessons most pupils were observed working within national standards, although work on designing is not as well developed as work in making things at present.
- 161 Examination results at the end of Key Stage 4 are well below national averages. The percentage of pupils attaining A*-C grades and A*-G grades are well below national

averages. However, the school enters a larger proportion of its pupils for the examinations than is found nationally. Pupils do less well with GCSE examinations in design and technology than they do in other subjects.

- 162 There have been considerable changes in staff and courses during the last few years, and the policy to enter all pupils for GCSE results in a large number of unclassified results; but current stability in staffing and courses is contributing to work of a higher standard than that represented by recent results. Girls' attainment is higher than boys' and practical work is better developed than designing.
- 163 Pupils generally utilise key competencies of reading and writing soundly but many lack the confidence to apply these skills independently. When suitably motivated, pupils can exhibit good listening skills and can provide detailed extended verbal responses to questions. Application and use of information and communication technology is well developed. The current general level of graphicacy at both key stages is low showing under-developed numeracy skills.
- 164 In relation to their prior attainment pupils at Key Stage 3 achieve well in practical lessons, they can talk with enthusiasm about their work. Strategies are in place to monitor pupils' progress but they currently lack sufficient clarity and consistency to set clear targets for future learning and have a positive impact on standards. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, aided by positive teacher support but the most able pupils are not being fully challenged to attain the highest standards.
- 165 Some pupils produce coursework of a good standard in Year 11. Whilst most older pupils are making sound progress within lessons, their progress over the longer term is restricted by an inadequate grounding in designing and making skills from their Key Stage 3 course. This results in them receiving more detailed guidance in basic concepts than would normally be expected. This contributes to the relatively low standards of pupils' independent work. Current Year 10 achievement is better than Year 11.
- 166 The quality of teaching throughout the department is sound and has a positive impact on standards. Staff have good knowledge of their specialist subject areas, discipline is generally of a high standard and there is good use of technical language and vocabulary.
- 167 Marking is supportive but does not give sufficient guidance to pupils on how to improve, restricting opportunities for them to take ownership of their learning. At Key Stage 3 assessment based upon levels of attainment has been developed. Pupils are aware of the level they have achieved but not of exactly what they need to do to improve the standard of their work. At Key Stage 4 assessment is better developed. Pupils have targets, and can identify the grade to which they are working; but they do not know how they may improve.
- 168 In the most effective teaching there is a prompt and clear start to lessons, reviewing prior work and clearly setting goals for the lesson. Pupils are given opportunities to offer extended responses to questioning and they are rapidly introduced to practical

activity with good procedural routines in place. Pupils' opinions are elicited to reinforce their knowledge and understanding and individual support is offered to identified pupils. Interest and lesson pace are maintained through a balance of teaching styles and range of activities. Good use is made of humour, praise and encouragement and pupils are challenged to develop independence and responsibility for their equipment, work and learning. A mutual respect between teacher and pupils is evident. Lessons conclude in good time with a clear summary and review of what has been learned. Homework is given and marked regularly and does not merely require work started in class to be completed

- 169 Where less effective teaching was observed, lesson objectives were unclear and activities failed to sufficiently motivate and challenge all pupils. Lesson pace was pedestrian with over direction by the teacher; a significant number of pupils failing to engage with the lesson.
- 170 Progress in lessons is directly related to teaching approach. At its best teachers' questioning both at the start and end of lessons shows pupils that they have the capacity to develop their knowledge and understanding both within the lesson and over the longer term. Pupils generally trust that their teacher is guiding their learning and willingly engage with tasks, although often without full knowledge and understanding of the overall purpose of their work. When suitably challenged pupils are willing and enthusiastic workers capable of sustained activity. Pupils cooperate well and in many lessons observed social harmony has a positive effect on standards.
- 171 During the last three years the department has responded both to a new National Curriculum order and a new suite of GCSE courses. There has been an improvement in departmental coherence, and classroom management is particularly strong. Monitoring of teaching and the work of pupils is developing and standards are rising as a result. The department has moved forward since the previous inspection.
- 172 The subject leader was regrettably indisposed during the inspection but the department members articulate a clear vision and understanding of both what the department does well and those areas in need of development. There are developing strategies to assess and monitor pupils work and embed common features of designing and making across all material areas.
- 173 A new Stage 3 scheme of work based upon the recently published Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's model is already having a positive impact on ensuring that pupils' learning develops steadily and systematically; but needs further monitoring and development to ensure that all teachers work to this scheme.
- 174 Staff are suitably qualified and deployed to deliver the curriculum on offer. However, staffing instability over the last three years has reduced the effectiveness of teaching and learning. There is currently no technician support resulting in teaching staff having to utilise teaching time to prepare, set up and maintain resources.
- 175 Accommodation is generous but showing signs of heavy usage. Textual resources are limited with a particular paucity of library resources. There is a suite of ten computers situated within, and well used by, the department. Overall resourcing is barely adequate to cover the curriculum on offer. There is a limited range of hand and

machine tools and equipment, some of which have been removed from service due to health and safety deficiencies, limiting pupils' opportunities. Display is limited with minimal exhibition of recent work of high quality by pupils from any year; this limits pupils' chances to appreciate what they should be aiming to achieve in their work.

GEOGRAPHY

- 176 Standards in geography are low. This is reflected by the GCSE results in 2000 where only one A*-C grade was secured. There were too few pupils entered for the geography examination for accurate comparison with national or similar school data. The quality of the written work seen in the scrutiny of current pupils' work was of a low standard. The evidence indicates that this was caused by weak teaching in the past which did not sufficiently emphasise geographical skills or promote a consistent challenge to pupils to practise investigation and analysis.
- 177 By contrast attainment seen at Key Stage 3 during the inspection was in line with national expectations because pupils are now being challenged by imaginative teaching to think about geographical evidence and to begin to offer hypotheses. Attainment at Key Stage 4 in Year 11 remains low because the pupils have experienced far too narrow a curriculum in their earlier work in geography and so have not been challenged sufficiently. Improvements in the course and its teaching are now evident but are too recent to have had a major impact on this weakness.
- 178 Teaching seen was always at least good, and sometimes very good. This was characterised by good subject knowledge, careful lesson planning, regular use of learning objectives, challenges to pupils to raise their expectations, and good use of time. Pupils were provided with a range of activities which provoked excitement, interest and enthusiastic participation. This very positive atmosphere, which contrasts strongly with the situation which has generally prevailed since the last inspection, is largely due to the appointment of two new experienced and effective geography teachers with effect from the start of this term.
- 179 Pupils' progress in lessons seen was generally good and always at least sound. They were enthusiastic and anxious to succeed in the new challenges that were being offered. Behaviour was always at least sound, and frequently good, because of this positive atmosphere. This contrasts with the previous situation where geography did not recruit sufficiently in the present Year 10 option arrangements to enable a viable group to proceed. During the inspection pupils were seen to relish the challenges of site analysis and various forms of environmental enquiry.
- 180 Recent improvements in teaching and course organisation have begun to raise expectations, and therefore attainment and progress. There remains weaknesses which need to be addressed within this subject. Assessment procedures do not enable attainment and progress to be monitored effectively. There is not an established procedure for subject-specific target-setting for pupils which gives clear guidance. Marking does not identify where pupils are successful or what they need to do to improve and so does not contribute to pupils' progress. Teachers are not supported by a scheme of work which meets current requirements and promotes consistent learning, and this reduces the impact of teaching on improving standards.

- 181 Regular fieldwork, complimented at the previous inspection, has ceased to operate, reducing the effective promotion of geography within the school.

HISTORY

- 182 Standards of attainment in history are below national expectations overall.
- 183 In 2000, the standards pupils attained at GCSE were well below those of the national average, both at grades A*-C and A*-G. Pupils performed less well in history than in the other subjects they took at GCSE. No boys obtained the higher grades of A*-C. The percentage of pupils entered for history GCSE but gaining no grade was above the national average. The school's history results over the last three years have declined, in contrast to the national and school trends which have seen an increase in results. In 2000, the statutory teacher assessments of pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9 were also below the national average.
- 184 The standards of the work observed during the inspection was generally below what might be expected for pupils of similar ages at both key stages. Some higher attaining pupils in Key Stage 3 and some GCSE pupils were attaining national standards but overall pupils' attainment was low. Girls' written work was generally of a higher standard than boys', whereas boys' oral work was more evidently secure as fewer girls' took part in the class discussions observed during the inspection.
- 185 At Key Stage 3, teachers' explanations of key words enable pupils to acquire a sound knowledge of historical facts and terminology. Pupils' grasp of chronology is also sound and has improved since the last inspection. This is the result of teachers' frequent use of a timeline displayed in the history classroom and encouraging pupils to compile their own timelines of events and developments. However, pupils' written work does not contain enough references to dates and the passage of time to show they fully understand the significance of the sequence of history.
- 186 Overall, pupils are not able to produce structured written accounts which show they can organise information for a variety of purposes. Much of their work is confined to providing short factual answers to questions or composing empathetic pieces of work such as letters which often have insufficient historical content. Most pupils can extract information from historical sources but few can usefully analyse their findings. They do not have enough skills to research independently, often finding the amount of material they have to deal with overwhelming. An example of this was observed in a Year 7 lesson where pupils were researching into medieval life. Most pupils had identified questions they wanted to research but few pupils knew how to select relevant sources for their enquiry and few knew how to take notes effectively.
- 187 Most younger pupils can offer simple explanations for event and, by the time they reach Year 9, some pupils are able to understand the complex nature of causation. This was observed, for example, in a Year 9 lesson where pupils were discussing the causes of the First World War and trying to identify who was to blame for the outbreak of war. However, pupils' understanding of how historical events and personalities can be interpreted differently is below what might be expected as they have few opportunities to develop skills related to this area.

- 188 At Key Stage 4, pupils demonstrate secure factual knowledge both in their oral and written work. However, many are not able to select and deploy information effectively. Much of their written work is detailed but many pupils cannot construct an argument in an analytical and evaluative way. This was exemplified in some Year 11 coursework, where several pupils had written extensive accounts of the different fronts of the First World War but were able to provide only limited justifications for their conclusions as to which had the most significant impact. Most pupils can analyse sources for bias. However, they cannot draw information together from a variety of sources in order to form conclusions and they do not effectively compare different sources of evidence for their usefulness.
- 189 In general, pupils' achievements are below what might be expected at both key stages; they could be making better progress. This is because the teaching does not systematically develop pupils' basic literacy and historical skills throughout the time they are at the school. Occasionally, where teaching pays attention to helping pupils learn and practise relevant skills, pupils make better progress. A rare example of this was observed in a Year 11 lesson where pupils were shown how to prepare and organise their work in order to write a report for President Truman on the growth of communism in Eastern Europe. In other lessons, however, it was clear that pupils could not tackle the tasks set for them. For example, a Year 8 group found it difficult to write about an attack in the English Civil War from different points of view. They had not spent enough time studying the bias in the sources they were studying before being asked to write their own accounts.
- 190 The progress of pupils with special educational needs is particularly hampered by the lack of attention to developing their basic skills. However, they do achieve better when they are supported by learning assistants who can focus directly upon their differing needs. Pupils with English as an additional language generally achieve similarly to other pupils.
- 191 The quality of teaching in the department is inconsistent and, overall, unsatisfactory. The teaching observed during the inspection ranged from very good to unsatisfactory. One third of the lessons observed were unsatisfactory. One third of the teaching was good or very good. This inconsistency reflects insufficient sharing of effective practice and the lack of an effective departmental teaching scheme.
- 192 Teachers' subject knowledge is generally good and, in the most successful lessons, was well-demonstrated in clear explanations and skilful questioning of pupils. For example, in a Year 9 lesson on the First World War, pupils' answers were both valued and extended by the teacher asking supplementary questions often requiring the pupils to justify their responses.
- 193 Teachers' planning of lessons varies in its effectiveness. Some planning is carefully directed to meeting pupils' differing needs, with tasks and resources adapted appropriately for different groups. Teachers are clear about what they want pupils to learn and the activities are well chosen and structured to help the pupils learn. A Year 8 lesson on the Battle of Birmingham in the English Civil War was effectively planned to help pupils learn how to use sources. Pupils were shown first how to look

for specific information, with key words appropriately introduced and explained. Then they were shown how to analyse the way in which the sources had been written, and finally given clear instructions about how to write their accounts. In contrast, other lessons were characterised by vague aims and tasks unrelated to these aims. For example, a Year 9 lesson, which was intended to focus on understanding life in the trenches during the First World War, involved pupils carrying out tasks on the recruitment to the army. In a Year 10 lesson, the aims of the lesson were described to pupils as finding out about what fighting was like on the Western Front. However, the lesson actually focused upon the changes in warfare. These examples reflect the inconsistent understanding across the department about how to plan and structure lessons to help pupils make progress.

- 194 Some teaching helps pupils to develop some literacy skills through the use of key words and some use of writing frames. However, in general there is insufficient understanding across the department of the range of teaching and learning strategies needed to support pupils' learning. The department's involvement in an local educational authority literacy project has not resulted in necessary improvements to the teaching scheme. Consequently it has had little impact on pupils' learning.
- 195 Teaching and learning styles are somewhat more varied than at the time of the last inspection when the range was described as narrow. The acquisition of audio-visual equipment has enabled pupils to use a wider range of resources. Educational visits are planned for each year group and some information and communication technology activities are provided for the pupils. However, there is scope for extending learning styles further, particularly in the areas of problem solving and drama. There are currently too few opportunities for pupils to show initiative, work creatively and sustain their interest
- 196 In general, teachers manage pupils effectively and relationships between teachers and pupils are positive. Teachers pay due attention to establishing ground rules for behaviour, encouraging pupils to listen and to have self-discipline. There is effective use of praise although teachers' expectations of pupils are not always as high as they might be. During the inspection, standards of behaviour were sometimes allowed to lapse and pupils spent too much time chatting rather than applying themselves to their work. A variety of factors influenced such lapses. Sometimes pupils were unmotivated by the tasks set, sometimes they could not do the work because they had been inadequately prepared and sometimes there was insufficient intervention by the teacher to keep pupils working purposefully. The most productive learning occurred when lessons contained a variety of well structured, timed tasks and targeted support for pupils as they worked independently or in groups, with the teacher drawing the class together to emphasise key learning points.
- 197 Pupils' work is marked regularly and sometimes teachers provide pupils with useful comments about their work. Occasionally teachers set pupils targets for improvement, though this effective practice is not widely used across the department. Teachers' judgements of pupils' attainment are generally consistent. This is well supported by the department's portfolio of assessed pupils' work and the use of common assessment tasks. There are some limited but effective examples of pupils assessing

their own achievements, as was observed in a Year 9 assignment on the Poor Law. These developments represent an improvement since the last inspection.

- 198 Teachers' analysis of pupils' performance at GCSE is beginning to have some impact on teaching. Weaknesses in pupils' use of historical sources are beginning to be addressed and additional revision lessons are being planned for Year 11 pupils. The department's expectations of pupils' attainment have also been raised by an analysis of Key Stage 3 assessment information. This is now being used to set examination targets for the pupils and the department. However, teachers' assessment of pupils' attainment is not yet used to set pupils' learning targets.
- 199 Generally, pupils' attitude to the study of history is satisfactory. Pupils are better motivated in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3. Older pupils show more maturity and mostly work conscientiously, even on mundane activities such as note taking. Younger pupils show most interest when they are challenged to think and apply their knowledge. When pupils find work inaccessible or lacking challenge, their concentration lapses and they make little progress. Boys generally are less inclined than girls to settle quickly to do written work.
- 200 Since the last inspection, the department has made some progress, but this has been slow and confined to certain areas. There are evident improvements in assessment methods, data analysis and resources. However, the department's development plan does not contain enough clear strategies for improvement; and whilst teaching schemes have been written, these do not provide teachers with enough guidance about how to help pupils make progress. Links with primary schools, for example, are too few to influence teaching in Year 7 by building on pupils' learning in Key Stage 2. There is some monitoring of teaching, but as yet this is not having enough impact on raising standards and significantly improving the quality of teaching.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

- 201 Overall, standards are in line with those expected. Pupils and students enjoy working with computers and try hard in lessons. Standards in the subject are rising steadily in all years and have improved since the last inspection.
- 202 The attainment of pupils in information and communication technology is in line with the national average at the end of Year 9. In lessons seen during the inspection, and from looking at pupils' folders and books, it is clear that almost all pupils know how to log on to the network, use passwords, call up programs and use them to communicate with others, make calculations and search for information. Work on word processing is good. Pupils alter the style of letters to make words more attractive to the reader, and add suitable illustrations in their texts, called up from clip art files, compact discs or Internet web sites. Most pupils, with help, use a spreadsheet successfully to show what happens to figures when variables are changed, although only the higher-attaining pupils understand about how to create formulae to do this. Pupils collect suitable data and make records to add to a database. They know how to use it for simple sorting and selecting of information, but few of them know how to interrogate the database to do complex searching. Pupils use computer-

controlled equipment to move objects and record changes in, for example, time and temperature. Some of the higher-attaining pupils can write simple commands to make models such as mini traffic lights work in sequence. Most pupils have sound practical skills. They use the mouse and keyboards effectively, but many pupils who have difficulties with literacy, especially spelling, are slow to pick out the keys they need and are less likely to use short cuts to speed up their work. Pupils generally know where computers are used in society. Work with the school Intranet is good. Most pupils know how to find information, but some of the lower-attaining pupils are often overwhelmed by it and cannot always decide what to discard and what to retain.

- 203 Pupils in Year 7 have formal lessons in information and communication technology, but pupils in Years 8 and 9 are taught aspects of it through other subjects. As yet there is no formal testing at the end of the school year and therefore no pupils are awarded national curriculum levels. The department has recently worked out strategies for collecting information from subject teachers and intends reporting on attainment and standards at the end of the current academic year.
- 204 The overall attainment of pupils in information and communication technology is in line with the national average at the end of Year 11. In the year 2000, the number of pupils gaining A*-C grades in GCSE was well below the national average for boys and below the national average for girls, but the overall number of pupils attaining A*-G grades was above the national average. GCSE results have fluctuated over the past three years, but three times as many pupils now attempt the examinations as previously and represent a wider range of ability. Pupils attain higher standards in information and communication technology than in their other subjects. At the age of 16, practical skills in using computers are good. All pupils are generally quick when using the mouse and the keyboards. They know the programmes available and select the most appropriate ones to present their work in the best format. Desktop publishing skills and work on creating title pages and posters are good. Pupils enhance their work attractively, especially when writing letters and evaluations and use tables and graphs to explain figures and percentages in business simulations. The higher-attaining pupils can evaluate the impact which information and communication technology has had on society, and predict the next stages of development, but some of the lower-attaining struggle with this. Pupils are familiar with the Internet and use it effectively to search for information and communicate by Email. Most pupils have a good amount of work in folders, but few keep them in logical order and many encounter difficulties when revising for examinations.
- 205 The overall attainment of students in information and communication technology at the end of Year 13 is in line with the national average on a range of vocational courses. Students have good practical skills and produce sufficient work. They concentrate mainly on raising their standards in communicating and handling information and evaluating technological advances and methods. They are less adept at working with computer control and monitoring. Students from this school will take the first Sixth Form examinations in the subject at the end of the current academic year.
- 206 Pupils enter school in Year 7 with varying degrees of competence but overall with below average attainment and most make rapid progress in the subject. Many pupils

have used computers at primary school to write words, do mathematics exercises, draw pictures and investigate adventure programs, but for short lengths of time and on less sophisticated equipment than available in this department. Some pupils have had few opportunities to use a computer at all and others have only used them for playing games. Not all pupils have access to a computer at home. Pupils learn to be responsible for remembering their passwords, accessing programs and saving and retrieving their own work. In lessons, they build up skills and confidence and by the end of Year 7 can cope with the range of programs given to them. During the inspection, for example, pupils in Year 7 worked very competently on a multi-media presentation. They used wizards and templates and devised ways of creating a sequence of illustrated screens. Boys worked quicker and were more adventurous in trying out new operations from the menus, but girls were slower and more methodical. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in practical skills and satisfactory progress in acquiring knowledge. Their low levels of literacy and numeracy, however, hinder progress in understanding and they cannot always logically get themselves out of difficulties or recognise their mistakes, even when using the spell and grammar checkers. Most pupils in Year 10 and students in the Sixth Form make good progress.

207 The response to information and communication technology is very good. Pupils and students have very good attitudes to the subject, try hard, appear interested during instruction and settle to work speedily in lessons. They enjoy watching demonstrations and the younger pupils are especially keen to answer questions. Few pupils, however, ask questions or volunteer comments that would indicate initiative. Behaviour is very good. Pupils respect their teachers and look after school property. On the few occasions when pupils have to work in pairs, they do so cheerfully and share the tasks fairly. A few pupils show interest in what others are doing and some try to help each other if the teacher is busy, showing mature attitudes. Pupils who are taking external examinations generally set themselves enough work to do and most are diligent in doing their homework. Some pupils, mainly girls, who are taking GCSE use their assessment sheets sensibly to refine their work and are completing aspects of the coursework well ahead of schedule.

208 The qualities of teaching and learning are good. In the eight lessons observed during the inspection, three were very good, four were good and one was satisfactory. The teachers know their subject thoroughly, plan lessons carefully and successfully pass on skills and knowledge to the pupils by informing them of facts or demonstrating to them. They use computer-linked screens or interactive whiteboards to ensure that all pupils can see exactly what happens and the correct sequence for success. Teachers ask questions to ensure that pupils have understood the basic work before progressing to the next stages and use pupils' answers effectively to stretch their thinking. A good feature of lessons is the attention paid to literacy. Teachers select certain key words to increase pupils' vocabularies and improve spelling. Lessons are well timed to allow pupils sufficient time for thinking and practice. Pupils, therefore, become confident in experimenting and refining their work. Teachers are fair and treat all pupils equally. Classroom discipline is good; pupils are usually well behaved, so pupils are not distracted by others or prevented from learning by them. The technician gives good support to both the teacher and pupils in many lessons. Homework complements the

class work and can be completed without the need for a home computer, so no pupils are disadvantaged. Teachers mark pupils' work using the school guidelines, but sometimes the marking does not inform pupils of how the work should be improved. Ticks and marks are insufficient, as many pupils, especially those with special educational needs, require written detail to help them understand what to do to gain a better grade. Most pupils, except the highest attaining, are unsure of what is meant by a national curriculum level and exactly how they can rise from one grade to another.

- 209 The scheme of work for the subject contains all the required elements of information and communication technology, but pupils in Years 8 and 9 do not have weekly lessons in the subject and are expected to develop and to use their skills in other subjects. Most departments have plans to allow pupils to use the computers, but not all the intentions are realised. Some departments, such as design and technology, history, physical education, modern languages, special educational needs and vocational education use the equipment often to help pupils with, for example, computer control, searching for information, recording fitness, communicating with schools in Europe by Email and improving literacy and numeracy. Other departments, such as science and art use special equipment and programs occasionally to monitor changes and create screen art. Departments, such as English, Mathematics, music, geography and religious education hardly use the computers at all and miss opportunities to allow pupils to show their skills or build on to them.
- 210 Leadership of the subject is very good. The department has made a good response to the comments made in the last inspection report. Standards have improved in all years, although the GCSE results remain below the national average for grades A*-C; basic skills, especially literacy, are higher, pupils' attitudes and behaviour are better, the quality of teaching is higher and the resources and accommodation are much improved. In addition to the improvements there have been significant changes. The new head of department has raised staff morale; all staff can now attend courses to give them extra skills; new teachers have been appointed; more pupils now opt to take the subject to GCSE level and examination courses have been introduced to the Sixth Form. The department recognises the need to create better learning resources for pupils with special educational and language needs, to extend the scheme of work for pupils in Years 8 and 9, clarify the cross-curricular coverage and complete the work on end of year assessments.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

- 211 At the time of the inspection the head of department had been in post for two weeks. There was a vacancy for the post of second in department, whose lessons were being taken by a non-specialist supply teacher. Only one language, French, is taught in the formal curriculum but a course in Punjabi is available outside normal school hours.
- 212 Standards at Key Stage 3 are below the national average. In 2000 34% of pupils reached Level 4+ on the National Curriculum scale compared with the national average of 63%. Results for teacher assessments have not been consistent over the last few years but tend to reflect pupils' below average attainment in English on entry into the school. Girls perform better than boys.

- 213 At Key Stage 3 pupils usually make satisfactory progress overall. Progress in listening skills is good. Progress in oral skills is poor. Expectations of what pupils can achieve are not as high as they ought to be. The National Curriculum Ladder which is displayed in all classrooms only goes up to Level 5.
- 214 In 2000 pupils taking the full GCSE course in French achieved results that were well above the national average. 74% of pupils achieved grades A*-C (national average-46.1%) and 100% achieved grades A*-G (national average –98%). This figure is, however, based on a low entry. A more significant figure is that the average points score for these pupils was 1.71 better than the average points score for the same pupils in all their other subjects. Nationally the difference is –0.46. These results are much better than in previous years where the trend was one of gradual improvement in line with the improvement in the school as a whole. Girls perform significantly better than boys.
- 215 Of the pupils who took the short GCSE course in French 23% achieved grades A*-C (national average 10.5%) and 100% achieved grades A*-G. Once again girls performed better than boys.
- 216 Approximately 45% of Year 11 in 2000 were entered for the Certificate of Achievement Course which has a standard between National Curriculum Levels 1 and 3. Given the fact that half of these pupils had already achieved Levels 2 and 3 at Key Stage 3 this represents a poor level of progress for them at Key Stage 4.
- 217 Pupils in the GCSE group in Year 11 and in the GNVQ Business French group in Year 10 are making progress that is in line with reasonable expectations given their earlier attainments. The majority of the rest are, however, making unsatisfactory progress. The fact that 70-80% of the present Year 10 are following a course with a ceiling grade of National Curriculum Level 3 when 34% of the year group was already at Level 4 by the end of Key Stage 3 means that a considerable number of pupils are regressing rather than progressing at Key Stage 4.
- 218 Teaching is satisfactory overall at both key stages. The only unsatisfactory lesson observed was at Key Stage 4 when a Year 11 group was observed following the Certificate of Achievement Course. Here the level of work was not allowing pupils to make progress.
- 219 There are good relationships between teachers and pupils. Incidents of poor behaviour are well managed by staff. Teachers are sensitive to pupils' needs and give good support when pupils are experiencing difficulties. In one Year 8 class the teacher used a variety of methods to help pupils cope with a listening exercise once she realised that most pupils were finding it difficult.
- 220 Listening skills are being well developed. Pupils have a lot of practice and have learnt the need for total concentration during these exercises.
- 221 Homework is set regularly and builds on work done in the lesson.

- 222 Particularly valuable are the Punjabi lessons offered twice a week in a twilight session. Extra-curricular provision is good; even though the numbers of pupils who take up the opportunity is small. The four pupils from Years 9 and 10 made good progress in the lesson observed.
- 223 The target language is not used extensively as a means of communication in the classroom even with the more able pupils. Pupils do not hear teachers using the target language in their general work and, therefore, see no reason to use it themselves. As a result oral skills are poorly developed. Not enough time is spent practising pronunciation and opportunities to involve pupils in oral practice are missed. Very few examples of pupils practising oral skills in pairs or groups were observed.
- 224 The pace and challenge of lessons are limited. Lessons tend to be very routine. There are too many examples of teachers following the order of exercises in the textbook rather than giving the lesson a particular focus. Lessons do not often have a structure where a variety of teaching techniques, combined with high expectations, engage pupils' attention and enthuse them so that they become actively involved.
- 225 Assessment is not an integral part of teaching. Teachers do not, as a matter of course, set out the objectives of the lesson in terms of what pupils are to learn and do not review them at the end. The National Curriculum levels awarded to pupils do not always coincide with the levels of work observed in the classroom. Standards of work in relation to the National Curriculum are not identified in schemes of work. At the moment there is too much reliance on end of unit tests. Pupils are not involved in the assessment process. Some good practice exists in the department, for example, the National Curriculum levels, written in simple language, are displayed in all classrooms and have been stapled in some exercise books. Pupils were not, however, aware of the levels at which they were working. They need to be given more opportunity to assess their own progress on a regular basis. Assessment needs to ensure that pupils know exactly what they have to do to reach the next level.
- 226 Since the last inspection the quality of teaching particularly in Key Stage 3 has improved. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is better, especially that of boys. However, the development of oral skills is unsatisfactory and boys' attainment remains a problem.
- 227 Curriculum provision at Key Stage 3 is below average and limits the progress pupils make and the standards they achieve.
- 228 At Key Stage 4 the fact that, apart from twelve pupils in Year 11 who follow the full GCSE course, pupils have only one lesson of French each week is having a major effect on standards. Pupils doing the GNVQ Business French course in Year 10 will not have enough time to complete the course in the detail required to allow them to achieve their full potential. The majority of pupils are forced to follow a course which results in many of them working at a lower level than they were at the end of Key Stage 3. There is no opportunity for pupils to study a second foreign language.
- 229 The new head of department is being well supported by the senior management team. A detailed induction programme has been planned

- 230 Schemes of work provide insufficient guidance to teachers as opportunities to assess National Curriculum levels on an on-going basis are not identified. The scheme provides insufficient guidance where common approaches to teaching are essential. There is no guidance, for example, on the use of the target language in teaching.
- 231 Accommodation is very good. In addition to well-equipped classrooms the department has virtually sole use of an information and communication technology room with enough computers for a whole class. Resources and display are good.

MUSIC

- 232 At the time of the inspection the only music teacher in the school was in his first year of teaching.
- 233 Standards in music are low. Teacher assessment data for the year 2000 indicates that by the end of Key Stage 3 less than half of Year 9 pupils achieved standards in line with national expectations. Observation of the standards of pupils' work in lessons confirmed that this is likely to be the same this year. Pupils in Year 9 are currently being taught similar concepts to Year 7 and there is little evidence of progress across the key stage. A small sample of written work confirmed that pupils are achieving standards well below that which would normally be expected for their age. Whilst there is a GCSE course currently running in Year 11, music has not previously been taught beyond Key Stage 3, and therefore there is no past data available. The very small number of pupils taking GCSE are achieving standards in line with their ability in the practical aspects of the course but their listening skills are underdeveloped.
- 234 Overall teaching is broadly satisfactory with a small amount of good teaching being observed. There is a minority of unsatisfactory teaching. The teacher has established good classroom routines. Strategies for positive behaviour management are having a beneficial effect on the attitudes of most pupils and provide an environment conducive for learning. Lessons are clearly structured, with objectives always made explicit, and there is an appropriate emphasis on the use of musical vocabulary. Where teaching is less effective it is because pupils with limited musical and social skills are expected to work in groups on relatively complex tasks for substantial periods of time, combined with the fact that tasks are not adapted to match different pupils' abilities. As a result pupils sometimes achieve relatively little. Some tasks make too many diverse demands. For instance, pupils in Year 7 were asked to work in groups using a raga scale to create and perform a piece in four parts using question and answer phrases, based on a time of day and using self-determined parameters. Because there were too many elements in the brief to take into account, the results were unsatisfactory. Pupils lack the disciplined musical skills to achieve effective outcomes to their work: in keyboard performance work they do not have the instrument-specific skills to articulate and sustain ideas, and in ensemble work they have difficulty listening to each other in order to keep together. For instance in a Year 8 lesson, pupils practised a short piece based on the style of Vivaldi, but were unable to play it fluently or to follow the pulse set by the teacher.

- 235 Pupils value and listen attentively to each others' work. There are no significant differences in attainment or attitude between boys and girls, or different cultural groups. Topics taught enable a range of music from different cultures to be studied. Vocal work and work using information and communication technology are undeveloped.
- 236 At Key Stage 4, teaching is good and is well focused on the needs of the very small number of pupils taking the course. Lessons take place mainly after school and pupils are supported by visiting instrumental tutors who assist with their performance work. Pupils use information and communication technology to create and record their composition work and this has provided the necessary motivation for many of them to develop good work. One pupil had produced an effective extended composition based on blues variation in this way. In a lesson observed, the teacher adopted a range of strategies to support pupils in developing a sense of relative pitch and articulating this through simple graphic notation.
- 237 The leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory. The new teacher has set some basic short term priorities for development which are on course for being achieved. Effective support is provided in generic teaching and professional issues through the newly qualified teacher induction programme. There are a large number of departmental management issues, which require subject specific support, that have not yet been addressed. The department has no scheme of work and there is no evidence of the planning of learning across the key stages. Topics and lessons are planned in detail but the planning is not always effective in supporting pupils' learning. For instance lesson objectives are set, but these are often descriptions of what pupils will do rather than what they will learn. Assessment strategies are being developed but are not yet fully used to inform individual learning or to track individual pupils' progress.
- 238 Accommodation and resources are unsatisfactory. The teaching room is of adequate size but practice facilities are poor. In lessons observed, keyboards were inappropriately positioned to enable effective group work. There are insufficient working keyboards, an adequate range of tuned and untuned percussion instruments, and three computer workstations. Audio facilities are poor and there is a lack of quality CDs for listening work. The organisation of resources is in need of attention.
- 239 There are no formal extra-curricular activities in the subject. The two visiting instrumental tutors support the Year 11 GCSE pupils: there are no instrumental opportunities for other pupils. Links with the community are underdeveloped.
- 240 There have been some improvements since the last inspection in terms of quality of teaching and accommodation, but all of the issues raised need to be addressed further.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- 241 Overall standards of attainment in physical education are at least in line with expectations. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs make good progress in both key stages. Pupils are now competing successfully in a range of inter-school activities with some individuals achieving significant success.

The wide range of extra-curricular activities, including clubs and inter-form activities, provided by specialist and non-specialist staff extends opportunities and contributes to raising pupils' attainment.

- 242 By the end of Key Stage 3, teachers' assessments in recent years indicate standards to be above average. Lesson observations during the inspection confirm that the majority of pupils are attaining appropriately with some demonstrating high levels of skill. Overall, pupils demonstrate sound knowledge, understanding and skills in a range of activities. For example in Year 7, girls are confident and competent in water and make good progress in learning and improving different swimming skills. Boys in basketball lessons, develop skills and strategies, which they effectively apply in competitive games. In Year 8 boys and girls learn the essential skills, rules and codes of practice of hockey, which enables them to compete effectively and safely. In a Year 9 soccer lesson, where a pupil led part of the lesson, pupils demonstrated not only high levels of competency, but also considerable maturity and responsibility in their attitudes, behaviour and care of equipment.
- 243 Since the last inspection the GCSE physical education course has become firmly established and results are improving. In 2000 20% of the 31 pupils entered for GCSE physical education achieved passes at A*-C grade. Although these results are significantly below the national average for the subject, 87% of the pupils entered gained at least a G grade, which is closer to the national average. Pupils do better in physical education than most other subjects in the GCSE. The number of pupils entering for GCSE is increasing, although it attracts more girls than boys. Rising standards throughout the department suggests higher attainment than seen in recent GCSE results. In GCSE groups, pupils in Year 10 were observed learning about different training methods and discussing the purpose, advantages and disadvantages of the various methods. In a Year 11 class, pupils discussed and analysed sports coverage in tabloid and broad sheet newspapers before entering their findings into the computer to generate data and graphs for interpretation as homework. In general physical education lessons pupils show standards that are broadly above average. For example, in a highly competitive Year 11 soccer game, pupils displayed very high levels of skill, team and tactical awareness.
- 244 The overall quality of teaching is good with a high proportion of very good teaching. Lesson planning and organisation are detailed, providing structure and progression in learning for all pupils. Many elements contribute to pupils being able to understand and develop their work. These include effective class management, the use of shared learning objectives, clear explanations and demonstrations, together with well planned opportunities for observation, analysis and discussion by pupils. The teachers are confident and enthusiastic, with secure subject knowledge. They expect and set high standards.
- 245 Pupils respond well to this purposeful and supportive approach. They are appropriately dressed; the majority are very positive; pay attention and with few exceptions work with energy, determination and enthusiasm to meet tasks and challenges. Consequently relationships and behaviour are very good. This contributes to pupils' good progress within the subject and to their social and personal development. Pupils respect and value their teachers.

- 246 The department responded positively to the last inspection. The pace of lessons has improved. Pupils take more responsibility and use their initiative, for example officiating, organising equipment and competently leading warm-up activities. Schemes of work continue to be revised. Assessment and target setting processes have been made more manageable and effective. This, together with the introduction of pupil self-evaluation and target setting, helps to raise standards of work. A risk assessment policy is now established which includes local education authority requirements and nationally recognised recommendations. Links have been strengthened with outside agencies and local clubs. The department feels sufficiently confident to apply for the prestigious 'Sports Mark Award'.
- 247 Significant improvements have been made to facilities and resources including a new gymnasium, changing rooms, office, a hall with cushioned floor, a new hard play area and improvements to the swimming pool and playing fields. However, it is recognised that the range of facilities, equipment and activities still needs to be extended to provide greater variety and opportunity.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

- 248 The attainment of pupils by the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 are below locally agreed expectations. Standards, which were reported in the last inspection as being in line with expectations by the end of Key Stages 3 and 4, have not been maintained. The school does not meet statutory requirements, as it does not provide any form of Sixth Form religious education.
- 249 By the end of Key Stage 3 most pupils have an insecure and often vague knowledge of various religious traditions. Although some pupils with a faith background have a better knowledge of the faith they identify with, often this knowledge is also insecure and limited. Pupils' knowledge of Christianity is rudimentary although it is in most cases slightly better than of other faith traditions.
- 250 Pupils' understanding of faith and belief are also below expectations by the end of Key Stage 3. Often pupils are highly reticent and evade questions or when asked to explain the purpose or significance of a ritual or ceremony make only generalised statements like, "To keep a rule" or "It solves their problems". Pupils are also reluctant to evaluate or develop reasons to support a personal view. In many cases pupils fall back on statements like, "I don't know" in order to evade a response.
- 251 By the end of Key Stage 4 although standards remain below expectations pupils are more likely to share their views and engage in discussion particularly on issues which raise moral questions like relationships, marriage and euthanasia. Pupils however continue to find it difficult to develop a persuasive argument. They are also unfamiliar with religious teaching and principles, which informs the views of many with a faith commitment.
- 252 Insufficient progress has been made with regard to the issues raised in the last inspection. Although the poor behaviour and attitude of pupils reported in the previous inspection has improved, behaviour continues to be an issue. It was poor in

nearly a quarter of the lessons observed. Teachers' expectations are still too low with pupils being insufficiently challenged.

- 253 The quality of teaching has recently been affected by the loss of experienced members of staff and by the need to use temporary staff. Teaching overall is unsatisfactory; and teaching was poor in nearly a quarter of the lessons seen. Where teaching is more successful teachers are more inclined to engage the pupils through praise rather than criticism. Also sometimes a novel analogy is used to help pupils understand. For example, in one lesson pupils in Year 8 were invited to consider how the walls of the classroom supported the ceiling in order to grasp the use of the term Five Pillars in Islam. Lessons which are poor, tend to be formal and predictable with little to engage pupils' attention. Often information is conveyed by worksheets with little explanation by the teacher. Assignments mainly consist of comprehension tasks and often lack challenge and variety. For example, pupils in Year 9 were invited to copy out sentences on the Bar Mitzvah and fill in missing words. Teachers use little stimulating material and do not use active and involving tasks to promote pupils' progress. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to share ideas, learn from each other, feed back learning, express ideas or opinions or engage in discussion or debate. Where teaching is poor some pupils show little interest and a lack of respect. Some pupils are disorderly and engage in off-task talking and disruptive calling out.
- 254 Although the better teaching largely meets the needs of most pupils of different ages, backgrounds and abilities the needs of more able pupils are not being met. Pupils with special educational needs are being supported in the classroom although differentiated tasks to meet their more specific needs are not being used.
- 255 At the time of the inspection there was little structured management of the subject, pending the arrival of the new subject leader who is due to take up the post after Easter. Currently members of staff involved in teaching the subject are working well together and are providing mutual support. However, several of them lack experience in teaching the subject, and are not receiving sufficient support from senior managers in what to teach or how to implement the school's policies on classroom management. A GCSE short course is due to be offered to more able pupils for entry in 2002. A newly appointed specialist religious education teacher, although inexperienced, is demonstrating a great deal of enthusiasm and also a natural capacity to establish a good rapport with the pupils.
- 256 Nevertheless, formal assessment procedures are undeveloped, there is a lack of variety in teaching strategies being used and opportunities for GCSE or other forms of national accreditation at Key Stage 4 are underdeveloped. Although accommodation is adequate a significant number of religious education lessons are taught in non-specialist accommodation. Finally there are insufficient resources particularly there is a lack of textbooks in Key Stage 3. There are no artefacts, auditory resources, information and communication technology software and a paucity of visual material to support learning. All of these factors reduce teachers' enthusiasm and pupils' awareness of the subject. They also lead to very limited teaching and learning opportunities which cause poor progress and low standards.

GNVQ COURSES

- 257 The school provides a range of GNVQ courses including health and leisure, business and information technology for students in the Sixth Form, at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. Currently 20 students are following advanced courses in Year 13; and 9 in Year 12. A further 57 students in Year 12 are following GNVQ courses combined with A-level or GCSE courses.
- 258 Overall students attain standards which at least match those found nationally for students on these courses.
- 259 In 2000 a limited number of students were assessed at both intermediate and advanced levels and their results reflected those found nationally.
- 260 From a scrutiny of students' work and observing them in lessons current students are achieving well in relation to course objectives and previous attainments. Their assignments used for ongoing assessment shows many students respond very well to the problem solving and research approaches and attaining distinction levels. The courses on business and information technology and on health and leisure are well matched to students' prior attainment.
- 261 Overall the quality of teaching is consistently good. There were several very good lessons and one outstanding lesson seen. Teachers have secure subject knowledge, which they use to encourage the full participation of the students. The briskly delivered lessons cover a good range of subject material as well as advancing students' understanding. Students readily offer their ideas and views and learn more quickly as a result. Teachers regularly expect students to seek information and to make judgements on what they find out. Students show good research skills. Students on all courses use information and communication technology to present their work to a very high standard, using the full range of word processing and spreadsheet skills. They also regularly use the Internet to gather information pertinent to their current topic of study.
- 262 The GNVQ courses in the Sixth Form are becoming increasingly popular and with the introduction of the intermediate course in Key Stage 4 numbers are expected to increase. The management of the courses and the development of the programme are having a significant impact on the numbers of students likely to stay at school in the Sixth Form.