

# INSPECTION REPORT

**THE NORTH SCHOOL**

ASHFORD

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number:118832

Headteacher: Mr R R S Barton

Reporting inspector: Mr D Pittman  
16976

Dates of inspection: 6-10 March 2000

Inspection number: 199147

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Modern (non-selective)
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Essella Road Ashford Kent
Postcode:	TN24 8AL
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr P W Bracher
Date of previous inspection:	1 December 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Denis Pittman	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it?
			The school's results and achievements
			How well are pupils taught?
			How well is the school led and managed?
			What should the school do to improve further?
Rosemary Burgess	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?
Martin Ash	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
Anthony Fiddian-Green	Team inspector	Religious education	Special educational needs
			Equal opportunities
Roger Freeman	Team inspector	Mathematics	
Peter Gilliat	Team inspector	History	
Sylvia Greenland	Team inspector	Geography	
Keith Hopkins	Team inspector	Design and technology	
		Information technology	
Ian Kirby	Team inspector	Music	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
David Leonard	Team inspector	Science	
Janet Simms	Team inspector	Art	
Sally Twite	Team inspector	English	English as an additional language
Anthony Weaden	Team inspector	Physical education	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The North School is a co-educational secondary modern school for pupils aged 11 to 16. It operates within a selective education system in which approximately 25 per cent of the more able pupils attend single-sex grammar schools. The proportion of pupils entering the school with well below average attainment is high.

There are 807 pupils on roll (431 boys, 376 girls) which includes 86 casual admissions; 43.5 per cent of the school roll have special educational needs. A higher percentage of boys than girls are identified as having special needs. 135 pupils are on Stages 3 to 5 of the school's special educational needs register and 54 pupils have statements; this figure is well above the national average. The school has two specialised units to provide additional help for pupils – these are for dyslexia and learning support.

Nineteen per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, broadly average for a school of this type. Nineteen pupils (2.3%) come from homes where English is not the first language - this is above average.

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

The North School is effective in providing a suitable education for pupils from a range of backgrounds. There is purposeful and strong leadership from the headteacher, who is committed to improvement. Test and examination results are below average but pupils' progress is evident in most subjects. The quality of its teaching is good, and improving. Staff create a caring and supportive climate for learning which is having a positive impact upon standards. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

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

- Attainment in the GCSE grade range A\*-G is good.
- Quality of teaching is good in many subjects and helps pupils achieve.
- The high quality of leadership and management of the headteacher.
- A caring and supportive learning environment for pupils.
- Good procedures for monitoring the progress of pupils.
- The positive attitudes of pupils to the learning opportunities provided, and involvement with extra-curricular activities.
- The quality of support for pupils with special educational needs.

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

- Standards of attainment at the higher GCSE grades and in the core subjects at Key Stage 3. Improve standards in art generally.
- Levels of attendance and its monitoring.
- National Curriculum requirements for music at Key Stage 3, and information technology at Key Stage 4 are not fully met.
- Focus for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural themes of the curriculum, and opportunities for spiritual development.
- The quality of written work and basic literacy skills of boys.

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

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

The school has successfully addressed most of the issues raised in the previous report. Attainment at GCSE level has improved particularly for the grade range A\*-G. Assessment data is more effectively used to monitor individual performance and establish targets for improvement. Pupil progress is better in design and technology and information technology but is still limited in art. The practice of monitoring and evaluation is now firmly established. The quality of teaching has improved markedly. Lesson plans have clearer objectives and better timing of activities helps pupils' concentration.

Attendance remains below average despite more resources being allocated to monitor the problem. The curriculum has been amended to provide more time for religious education and design and technology. The provision for information technology has improved at Key Stage 3 but does not meet statutory requirements at Key Stage 4. The provision for social development has had a positive effect on improving behaviour and attitudes. A tight financial budget has been managed well, although there are resource deficiencies in science, music, geography and religious education. The statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship are not met.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
Key Stage 3	E	E	E	E	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
GCSE examinations	E	E	E	E	

On entry to the school, the general standards of attainment of pupils in English, mathematics and science are well below average - spelling and competence in numeracy are particularly weak.

In 1999, the school's Key Stage 3 test results were well below the national average and well below that for similar schools. In all three subjects, English, mathematics and science, the average points score was well below the national average for all schools and for similar schools. There was no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. The trend in the school's test results is broadly in line with the national picture.

In 1999, GCSE results for pupils gaining five or more A\*-C grades (13%) were well below the national average. However, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more A\*-G grades (93.8%) was above the national average for all schools and that for similar schools, a particularly creditable performance given the ability profile of pupils on entry. In 1999 there was no major difference in the achievements of girls' and boys' results apart from the better performance of girls in English. The pattern in the school's average total GCSE points score has been below the national trend.

The percentage of pupils gaining a grade in English, mathematics or science, in the range A\*-C, was well below average. In other subjects, pupils did well in physical education, art and resistant materials. Subjects in which pupils did poorly include business studies, history, French, and food technology.

The school failed to meet its target of 18 per cent for five A\*-C grades in GCSE examinations for 1999. Its target of 19 per cent in 2000 is challenging but realistically based on performance in Key Stage 3 tests in 1998.

Generally standards in lessons are higher than the national test or examination results. The improvements in the quality of teaching are having an impact on standards of work produced. These improved standards are as yet not reflected in national test results but internal examinations and target setting show improved performance in some subjects. Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 in English, mathematics, French, history and geography are below national expectations and for information technology, religious education (RE) and physical education (PE) they are in line. Given the low level of attainment on entry, this represents an improvement in achievement for most subjects through the key stage. Attainment in science, art and music is well below national expectations.



At the end of Key Stage 4, standards are below expectations in all subjects except geography, religious education and physical education, where they are in line. Progress is generally satisfactory. It is good in history, geography and science but unsatisfactory in art and information technology.

### PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils are keen to do well.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Generally satisfactory and improving but some disruptive behaviour amongst a minority of boys.
Personal development and relationships	Good overall. Relationships are generally positive and pupils are supportive of each other. Personal development is satisfactory.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory – attendance figures have improved but are still below the national average. The rate of unauthorised absence is above average.

Many pupils show enthusiasm for their work. Movement of pupils around the school is orderly when supervised by staff but can deteriorate at other times. Relationships are good between pupils and between pupils and most members of staff. Attendance continues to be a problem despite strenuous efforts by the school to improve it.

### TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The general quality of teaching, at both key stages, is good. In 92 per cent of lessons teaching is satisfactory or better - this is a significant improvement from the previous inspection. At Key Stage 3, the quality of teaching is at least satisfactory in 91 per cent of lessons seen, good or better in 59 per cent of lessons and very good in 15 per cent of lessons. The quality of teaching is less than satisfactory in 9 per cent of lessons. It is rarely poor. The quality of teaching is good in design and technology, geography, history, IT, French and religious education. Some lessons in mathematics and art are unsatisfactory.

At Key Stage 4, teaching is at least satisfactory in 94 per cent of lessons seen, good or better in 55 per cent and very good in 11 per cent of lessons. The quality of teaching is less than satisfactory in 6 per cent of lessons. Teaching is good in English, science, geography, history, French and religious education. Teaching in some art lessons is unsatisfactory.

In many subjects, teachers use lists of key words, and their definitions, in order to improve pupils' literacy but technical accuracy of writing is not consistently reinforced. Teachers occasionally emphasise numeracy skills in lessons but the teaching of these skills is not effectively co-ordinated across subjects.

The good teaching has a positive impact on pupils' learning. Teachers generally have good expertise. Planning and the pace of lessons are usually matched to the needs of all pupils. Pupils know what is expected and how to move forward in their understanding. Teachers know their pupils well and relationships are good: this creates a positive learning environment. Inconsistent use is

made of information technology to enhance the curriculum at Key Stage 4. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, teachers' expectations are low and the work set is not geared to the pupils' ability levels.

#### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. An appropriate range of subjects at Key Stage 3. An effective work-related course is offered at Key Stage 4. A good range of extra-curricular activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils who attend the units make good progress. In the main school pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good progress made in learning English.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Overall, satisfactory but opportunities for spiritual development are not adequately planned for. Good provision for moral and social development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Support and guidance are good. Periodic reviews are increasingly helpful in setting targets for pupils.

Statutory requirements are fully met for special educational needs and the Code of Practice is complied with. The curriculum meets statutory requirements apart from the full coverage of the programme of study in music at Key Stage 3 and access to information technology for all pupils at Key Stage 4. Productive and helpful links with 'feeder' schools promote good continuity.

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

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides very good leadership and is fully committed to raising standards in the school. He is well supported by other members of 'the leadership team'.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body has a good working knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses and supports the school well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	A strength. Very good systems for monitoring and evaluating the performance of subjects and the quality of teaching.
The strategic use of resources	Effective use is made of the limited resources that are available. Overall, resourcing for departments is inadequate.

Middle management is increasingly effective in evaluating the work of departments.

There is a satisfactory match of teachers' qualifications and experience to the needs of the curriculum. Staffing requirements are not fully met in mathematics, music and art. There are effective programmes for staff development and the induction of new staff.

The quality and range of textbooks are too limited in geography, music, religious education and science. The school is well resourced for IT: this has improved standards. There is a lack of equipment and consumable resources in science. The library is adequately resourced but is under-

used as a facility to support independent learning. Accommodation and buildings have been improved but there are areas which are still unsatisfactory and do not provide a good learning environment.

There are well-defined procedures for seeking best value throughout the school.

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

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A caring school. Good support for pupils who have special educational needs</li> <li>• Quality of leadership and the approachability of the staff</li> <li>• Their children like coming to school</li> <li>• Good range of extra-curricular activities</li> <li>• Reports are helpful</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behaviour of some boys</li> <li>• Homework is insufficiently challenging</li> <li>• The progress of higher attaining pupils</li> <li>• Links with parents</li> <li>• The maturity and responsibility of pupils.</li> </ul>

The inspection team agrees with the positive views of the parents. The school does have very good leadership and staff are committed to providing a supportive environment for pupils. The good extra-curricular provision does enhance pupils' learning opportunities.

The inspectors also agree with the parents' concerns regarding the disruptive behaviour of a minority of boys. Effective monitoring procedures are having a positive impact on the quality of homework being set. The use of targets is providing a better focus on pupils' potential but it is not sufficiently embedded at Key Stage 3.

The partnership with parents is satisfactory although it is not as strong as the school would like. Parents are well informed about the life and work of the school. Pupils' reports provide appropriate and relevant information about their academic attainment and progress. The governors' annual report does not provide the national comparative figures for examinations.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. The general standards of attainment of pupils in English, mathematics and science are well below average on entry to the school - spelling and competence in numeracy are particularly weak.

2. In 1999, the school's Key Stage 3 test results were well below the national average and well below that for similar schools. In all three subjects, English, mathematics and science, the average points score was well below the national average for all schools and for similar schools. Boys' and girls' achievements were well below the national average; there was no significant difference in the performance of the groups. The trend in the school's test results is broadly in line with the national picture.

3. In 1999, the school's GCSE results of 13 per cent of pupils gaining five or more A\*-C grades were well below the national average of 46.3 per cent. However, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more A\*-G grades (93.8 per cent) was above the national average for all schools and for similar schools. Given the ability profile of the pupils on entry, these results are good evidence of the good progress pupils make. In 1999 there was no major difference in the achievements of girls' and boys' results apart from the much better performance of girls in English. Over recent years the school's average total GCSE points score has risen more slowly than the national trend.

4. The percentage of pupils gaining a grade in English, mathematics or science, in the range A\*-C, was well below the national average and the average for similar schools. In other subjects, pupils did well in physical education, art and resistant materials. Subjects in which pupils did poorly include business studies, history, French and food technology.

5. The school failed to meet its target for GCSE performance in 1999. Its target of 19 per cent, for five A\*-C grades, in 2000 is still challenging but nevertheless realistically based on the current Year 11's performance in Key Stage 3 tests in 1998.

#### **Standards seen during the inspection**

6. Generally the standards seen in lessons are higher than the recent national test or examination results. The significant improvements in the quality of teaching are having an impact on the standards of work produced by pupils. These improved standards are not as yet reflected in achievement in national test results but internal examinations and target setting show improved performance against national expectations in some subjects. In the core subjects achievement in relation to prior attainment is not as strong as in others such as geography and religious education.

7. Across the curriculum staff awareness of the importance of teaching literacy skills is growing, and subject departments, for example, art, mathematics and science, display key subject terms in the classroom and encourage their correct use. However, writing in many subjects is weak at both key stages, especially among average and lower attaining boys. Spelling and syntax are often poor. Higher attaining pupils can explain mathematical processes in writing, and in religious education there is accurate, well-presented writing at both key stages, including some extended pieces; in science, however, much written work by lower attaining pupils is left unfinished. Pupils largely meet the reading demands of

textbooks and other materials, though those with special educational needs often rely on the support of classroom assistants. In geography reading aloud is good among pupils of all levels of attainment. In mathematics opportunities to use a variety of sources to access information are dependent on the teacher. Though some pupils lack confidence as speakers, many respond well to teachers' questions and some can explain their ideas clearly and accurately, for example, in geography, mathematics and science; in religious education lessons pupils express themselves well. Listening skills are more variable: they are relatively weak in science but in geography, modern foreign languages and religious education they are at least satisfactory.

8. The standard of numeracy is weak. Currently, numeracy is not promoted well about the school. Teaching is directed towards procedures to be followed rather than developing understanding and building upon pupils' knowledge of number. This is particularly evident in some design and technology, mathematics and science lessons where pupils' retention of methods is generally weak. Opportunities for developing line drawing, scale and proportion are missed in art, where pupils also exhibit weaknesses in measuring and in accuracy of drawing patterns. In science, teachers recognise the need to support pupils, for example in Year 10, to use a calculator to calculate pulse rates from raw data and also in Year 11 to balance chemical equations. Pupils can use and make sense of tabulated information and present it clearly, as for example, in Year 11 geography coursework when studying the economic development of Dover.

9. Standards in English at the ends of both key stages are below those expected nationally and, in the case of a significant number of boys, well below. Pupils at both key stages are confident but not often articulate speakers: most have quite a limited vocabulary. Listening skills vary considerably. Reading comprehension improves from a sometimes low base and most pupils gain a sound understanding of the texts read in class. At the end of both key stages girls' writing is markedly more fluent and expressive than that of boys. Though most pupils can write in a reasonably wide range of styles, the work of many, particularly boys, is badly flawed by errors in spelling, punctuation and syntax. Limited command of Standard English often compounds these errors. However, given the low level of attainment on entry, progress is satisfactory through each of the key stages.

10. In mathematics, the standards at the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 are below the level expected of pupils nationally. Pupils demonstrate good approaches to investigations, splitting the activities into steps and giving valid reasons for conclusions. Whilst the general presentation in pupils' exercise books has improved, there is insufficient explanation as to how problems are solved. Pupils' mental mathematical skills are underdeveloped and many have insufficient strategies to help them do calculations. However, the rate of progress is as expected through the key stages and in particular ten higher attaining Year 11 pupils are making good progress towards an additional GCSE in statistics.

11. In science, the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 at age 14 are well below the level expected for pupils of the same age; these standards reflect the results in the National Curriculum tests. Pupils are good at handling simple laboratory equipment but their investigative skills are not well developed. In work seen during the inspection the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 at age 16 are below the level expected for pupils of the same age nationally. At this key stage pupils' investigative skills are better developed although they find difficulty in relating predictions and explanations to

their scientific understanding. Relative to their prior attainment, pupils' achievement and progress are satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4.

12. In other areas of the curriculum, at the end of Key Stage 3, standards in art and music are well below national expectations. In French, history, and geography standards are below national expectations and in information and communication technology (ICT), religious education and physical education they are in line. Given the low level of attainment on entry this represents an improvement in achievement for most subjects through the key stage. Progress in art is unsatisfactory.

13. At the end of Key Stage 4, standards in art and ICT are well below national expectations and in design and technology, history, French and music they are below these expectations. Standards are in line with expectations in geography, RE and PE. Pupils make good progress in history and geography; they achieve satisfactorily in design and technology, French, music and RE, but their progress in art and IT is unsatisfactory.

14. Pupils who have special educational needs make satisfactory progress towards their targets. Moreover, in small group lessons and one-to-one in the special needs base or units, progress is often good, and pupils' records bear this out. The same is broadly true of the small number of pupils who have English as an additional language.

15. Most pupils achieve well at the school. The majority enter with levels of attainment well below expectations and by the end of Key Stage 3 at age 14 most have made good progress and are showing improvements in their studies. This pattern of improvement continues into Key Stage 4.

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

16. Attitudes to school are good, particularly among those who attend regularly. Many pupils are keen to get involved in extra-curricular activities, such as sports practices and matches, or in the annual school production. In lessons pupils are keen to do well. They are prepared to ask questions and generally enjoy working, especially in practical lessons such as science and design and technology.

17. Behaviour is satisfactory overall. In most lessons it is good. Behaviour is beginning to improve but there are still too many occasions when unsatisfactory behaviour is seen. It is often boys who disrupt lessons, especially in physical education, art and mathematics. Movement around the school is orderly when supervised by staff, but sometimes deteriorates at other times. Pupils who threaten the safety of others with physical violence or verbal abuse are excluded for a fixed period. The level of exclusion is high in comparison to other schools but the sanction is not used inappropriately. Well thought out strategies are employed to support these pupils both before exclusion and on their return to school. The majority of pupils are polite and friendly. They respond well to the school's system of rewards and most accept sanctions good-naturedly.

18. Relationships in the school are good, both between pupils and between pupils and most members of staff. They encourage each other in their learning and work well in groups and pairs. Personal development is satisfactory. Some show initiative and support for the school, but many have low self-esteem. Year 11 pupils undertake their role as mentors to Year 7 tutor groups responsibly but many are still too dependent on adult help. For example, some are unable to make arrangements for their work experience and request help in making telephone calls to their prospective employers. Many Year 7 pupils accept responsibility willingly; they have helped with football in a local infants' school and

shown initiative in requesting lunch-time activities.

19. In withdrawal lessons, pupils who have special educational needs respond well. They are supported by the knowledge and expertise of the staff there and consequently behave well and are willing to work. Their activities are varied frequently so that they are able to concentrate and persevere well. There are very good relationships between adults and pupils in the special needs base.

20. Attendance is below the national average and below 90 per cent in Years 8, 10 and 11. This is unsatisfactory although there has been a slight improvement since the last inspection. The rate of unauthorised absence is above the national average. Generally pupils arrive on time for lessons but too many arrive late in the morning, especially at Key Stage 4. Punctuality has improved since the last inspection and lessons are not usually interrupted by late arrivals.

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

21. The quality of teaching at Key Stages 3 and 4 is good. In 92 per cent of lessons teaching is satisfactory or better; this a significant improvement since the previous inspection. This improvement in teaching has brought about higher standards of work in lessons, at both key stages. Carefully planned and enthusiastic teaching, which interests pupils and stimulates learning, is a key features of lessons.

22. At Key Stage 3, the quality of teaching is at least satisfactory in 91 per cent of lessons seen, good or better in 59 per cent of lessons and very good in 15 per cent of lessons. The quality of teaching is less than satisfactory in 9 per cent of lessons and it is rarely poor. The good teaching at Key Stage 3 promotes good learning and progress. The quality of teaching is good in design and technology, geography, history, information technology, French and religious education. Some lessons in mathematics and art are unsatisfactory.

23. At Key Stage 4, the quality of teaching is at least satisfactory in 94 per cent of lessons seen, good or better in 55 per cent of lessons and very good in 11 per cent of lessons. Teaching is less than satisfactory in only 6 per cent of lessons and rarely poor. Teaching is good in English, science, geography, history, French and religious education. The quality of teaching of teaching in some art lessons is unsatisfactory.

24. Teachers have good levels of expertise and background knowledge that underpin their authority in the classroom. This was evident in a Year 9 science lesson, where an example of a tug of war was used to illustrate the idea of forces. This approach gave relevance to the lesson and sustained pupils' interest. The level of work and the pace of the lessons are carefully matched to the needs of the pupils. This was shown in a Year 8 history lesson where a range of tasks dealing with the life of Louis XVI enabled pupils at all levels of attainment to make progress. Consistently applied literacy strategies for supporting structured writing are used in history lessons. In science and design and technology, teachers use lists of key words, and their definitions, in order to increase pupils' literacy and understanding. In information technology numeracy skills are effectively reinforced through the use of spreadsheets but the teaching of numeracy skills is not co-ordinated across subjects.

25. Teachers make effective use of question and answer to review and reinforce pupils' knowledge and understanding and also as a way to involve all pupils in the lesson. These skills are also used to informally assess pupils' knowledge and understanding. Teachers also make good use of target setting in order to motivate pupils. In a Year 10 physical education lesson on weight training, the use of targets enabled pupils to focus on specific muscle development. Homework is carefully chosen to enable the pupils to develop their knowledge or undertake research.

26. In music lessons, thorough planning clearly identifies what is to be learnt, and objectives are shared effectively with pupils at the beginning of each lesson. Pupils understand well what is expected, how to do the task, and how to move forward in their understanding. In many subjects pupils demonstrate good attitudes to their work and respond positively to the good teaching. They focus well on the work assigned, though occasionally a class will lose concentration between tasks. Pupils respond best to challenging or imaginative activities. This was evident in a Year 10 French lesson when pupils were motivated by an innovative approach to learning vocabulary through the teacher singing about the items. Teachers frequently include a lesson summary in order to consolidate the work covered during the lesson.

27. Teachers know their pupils well and relationships are good; this creates a positive learning environment. Teachers make a point of displaying pupils' work, an increasingly positive feature of the school, which also enriches the classroom environment. Pupils show respect for other pupils' work. Teachers' expectations are usually high. This has a good effect on learning and progress enabling pupils at all levels of attainment to achieve well through the key stages. However, in some art lessons the absence of these characteristics has led to diminishing standards of behaviour and attainment.

28. Insufficient use is made of information and communication technology to enhance and enrich the curriculum. Teachers do not always make effective use of information technology to develop pupils' research skills. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, expectations are low and the work set is insufficiently geared to pupil' level of ability. In a Year 11 mathematics lesson on correlation the work was undemanding, lacked sufficient pace and did not set clear objectives for pupils.

29. Teaching in the special educational needs department is very good. Teachers have established very good relationships with pupils, and they know their educational needs very well. Pupils feel secure and learn well in the lesson in the special needs rooms, often using them as a form of 'respite' from the pressures that sometimes build up elsewhere for them. Here they experience success, and are able to re-visit topics at their own pace. Teachers use their expertise to provide appropriate lessons, helping pupils principally with literacy and numeracy.

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

30. The curriculum is broad and balanced, and generally meets statutory requirements. The exceptions are insufficient access to the full National Curriculum in music at Key Stage 3, and information technology at Key Stage 4. The school does not fully comply with requirements for a daily act of collective worship. The curriculum includes all subjects of the National Curriculum, as well as religious education and personal and social education. The latter are taught through the moral, personal and social education programme. The length of the teaching week at 25 hours is in line with the model for schools nationally at Key Stage

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and the DfEE recommended time at Key Stage 4. With the exception of music, the allocation of time to subjects is appropriate.

31. At Key Stage 4, all pupils follow a core curriculum, with further options available which effectively enhance their curricular opportunities. A previously broad range of GNVQ courses has been diminished because of staffing reductions and lack of demand by pupils. For the coming year, only ICT GNVQ is available for pupils. However, the school offers a work-related learning course, which is providing an effective inclusive curriculum for those pupils involved. In addition to GCSE accreditation, many subjects appropriately offer additional accreditation through the certificate of achievement. At present, music is available only as a half-credit GCSE, taught as a twilight session.

32. The school offers a good range of extra-curricular opportunities for pupils which, for many who participate, helps enrich their curricular provision. Activities take place in music, drama and sport, and many departments offer curricular clubs, activities and educational visits. The school farm, staffed and managed by pupils, and the Youth Action Group have a positive effect upon the life of the school. The physical education department provides a range of activities for all abilities, supervised by all the physical education staff, but during the week of the inspection the number of pupils supporting these activities was low.

33. The school provides satisfactory equality of opportunity and access to the curriculum for all pupils including those in wheelchairs.

34. The school operates an inclusive policy towards special educational needs. Pupils who have special needs are fully integrated into the school's life and work. They have access to the curriculum, and are withdrawn for extra help only when this is deemed necessary. One or two pupils are disapplied from a modern foreign language. The majority of the help they receive is in lessons from teachers and learning support assistants. Provision overall is satisfactory, but in the two units for dyslexia and learning support, it is very good. Provision in the special needs base is good, but varies from subject to subject in classroom lessons. Some subjects, such as history, set specific targets but this good practice is not consistent across the whole range of the curriculum. Statutory requirements are fully met.

35. A good moral, personal and social education programme is provided for pupils throughout their school life, and this is proving effective in preparing them for future education, the work place and adult life. Systems are in place to monitor the delivery and success of the programme, and experienced and enthusiastic staff deliver it. The programme includes health education, sex education, and issues of bullying and drug misuse.

36. The school's provision for careers education and guidance is good. At Key Stage 4 it includes the opportunity for all pupils to have one week's work experience in Year 11. All work experience is monitored and the staff provide careful preparation and follow-up, both during and after the placement, with pupils completing diaries of their experiences.

37. The school has established good links with the community, which enhance the pupils' intellectual and personal development. These include good links with businesses, such as those established with an international fast food chain, and support for local charities.

38. Links established by the school with partner institutions are also good. The school has a good policy document on the transition from primary to secondary phase. The transfer of pupils is effective in as much as most pupils feel confident and happy during their first year in the school. Many departments are developing curriculum links, a good example being those established with primary schools in design and technology and information and communication technology. The school has also established firm links with a local further education college.

39. The last inspection report indicated that time allocations for religious education and design and technology were insufficient; these have now been addressed. However, there is still no provision for all pupils in information technology at Key Stage 4; the option structure is being changed to take account of this omission. The report stated that the syllabus for music was not being properly implemented; this has been partly dealt with, although the full access to the National Curriculum is still not provided.

40. The school makes satisfactory provision for pupils' personal development. Social education has improved since the last inspection, but subject departments have not yet made planned provision for pupils' personal development in their schemes of work. Pupils attend assemblies on three days of the week, but no provision is made for collective worship on the other days. The current provision for pupils' spiritual development is unsatisfactory, and opportunities are limited to religious education and some assemblies. The school has not given full consideration to ways in which other subjects can contribute to this aspect of pupils' education.

41. Good provision is made for pupils' moral education. The daily life and routines of the school successfully promote positive values, and help pupils distinguish between right and wrong. Valuable discussion on ethical issues and moral dilemmas takes place in a number of subjects including the school's programme of moral, social and personal education (MSPE). This encourages pupils to consider a range of viewpoints and to think about some of the choices they will need to make in life.

42. Social education is also good, with opportunities for pupils to develop social and collaborative skills in many of their lessons. Pupils can also participate in various aspects of school life. The school council enables them to take on responsibilities and contribute to decisions about facilities in the school. The Youth Action Group has tackled issues of concern to the school, such as bullying, vandalism and litter. The well-organised mentoring system enables older pupils to support Year 7 pupils in their first year in the school.

43. Overall provision for pupils' cultural development is sound. Some opportunities to learn about different cultures are provided in many subjects. For example, in modern languages pupils' understanding of other European cultures is enhanced through regular visits to France. Work on African traditions in music and on world faiths in religious education also exposes pupils to cultures beyond Western Europe. The school's programme of extra-curricular activities provides pupils with a wide range of opportunities to extend their interests, through participation in activities such as sports fixtures, drama productions and educational visits.

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

44. The school makes good provision for the care and guidance of its pupils, which impacts positively on their learning.

45. There are good procedures for child protection. Proper attention is paid to health

and safety matters so that pupils may work in a safe and secure environment. Pastoral care is very good and, whenever possible, a pupil has the same form tutor and head of year throughout his or her life in the school. This helps cement relationships with pupils and their parents.

46. The procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are good. The school's assessment policy provides a good framework of aims and principles for assessing, recording and reporting, enabling departments to have a consistent approach. The recently introduced regular meetings which line managers have with their heads of department are improving procedures and accountability. Together with the highly informative colour-coded spreadsheets, the recently appointed curriculum manager has given assessment a higher profile and this is improving staff awareness and involvement. Departments continue to be at various stages of development, but all now have effective end-of-module assessment tasks. Some relate the results in terms of National Curriculum levels which are then shared with Key Stage 3 pupils but this is not common practice. However, within the art department, assessment at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 is inaccurate and misleading to pupils. Assessment of music has improved as has that for ICT, which is in place for Key Stage 3 and the school anticipates that a scheme for Key Stage 4 will be implemented next academic year. Marking is monitored but is not always as effective as it could be, as for example in mathematics and science.

47. The use of assessment information to guide curriculum planning is good and developing further. The information includes Key Stage 2 test results, cognitive ability assessments and reading ages; this data is shared with teachers. This baseline information and relevant predicted grades effectively promote correct setting in most subjects and aid curriculum planning. Arising from this data more appropriate schemes of work have been written including those for mathematics and work related courses. Additional Year 9 pupils have been identified as needing help and are now using computer-aided learning programs that improve their basic skills. Similarly, policies and strategies for literacy and numeracy based upon baseline information are evolving and being adjusted to meet the challenges offered by the current Year 7 whose attainment is higher than that of recent intakes.

48. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress are good. The centrally-produced spreadsheet is particularly effective at Key Stage 4 for the identification of underachievement by pupils and classes, enabling departments, heads of year and form tutors to take appropriate remedial action. It also assists heads of year, together with tutors, to monitor effectively pupils' academic performance in addition to progress made in behaviour and personal development. This supportive monitoring involves tutors discussing with pupils the contents of their portfolios of work and personal achievements, which are maintained throughout their school life, in preparation for the accredited National Record of Achievement.

49. Very good monitoring procedures have been adopted to promote good behaviour and eliminate oppressive behaviour. A range of strategies is used to improve behaviour and attitudes both in and out of the classroom and often involve parents. Outside agencies are brought in as necessary. Most teachers apply disciplinary measures consistently. Pupils appreciate the reward system of merits and certificates.

50. Procedures for monitoring attendance have been improved by the appointment of an attendance officer but the use of a manual rather than a computerised system hinders efficient monitoring of the whole school's performance. Not all teachers are sufficiently conscientious in completing the registers. The advice and help of the educational welfare officer are appropriately sought.

51. The good assessment of performance in most subjects and the formal and informal monitoring of personal development enable the school to provide good support for its pupils. Careers advice is good. Identification and monitoring of suitable pupils for work-related learning programmes at Key Stage 4 are effective, especially for the Year 10 pupils involved.

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

52. Parents' support for the school is satisfactory. Few attended the pre-inspection meeting held for parents and the return from the questionnaire was relatively low. The results gave a mixed picture but, on balance, showed that parents support the work of the school. The school is working hard to address many of the areas where parents had concerns, such as the amount of unsatisfactory behaviour, the provision of personal and social education and achieving greater consistency in the setting of homework. As at the time of the previous inspection, the impetus for establishing a partnership with parents comes from the school, which has found it hard to create strong links with them.

53. The response of some parents in the questionnaire was that they were not well-informed about events or their child's progress; this view is not borne out by the evidence of the inspection. Information provided to parents is satisfactory. Parents receive a well-produced newsletter each half term and sufficient notice of dates of events. The school sends many letters of commendation to parents as well as making contact whenever there is a concern, whether about academic work, behaviour or other matters. There are some statutory omissions in the information provided in the prospectus and the governors' annual report. Annual reports give satisfactory information on each pupil's strengths and weaknesses in all subjects, although statutory assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 have not been reported in art and music. Appropriate consultation evenings are offered and parents who do not attend for any reason are contacted.

54. Parents of pupils who have special needs are kept well informed. At annual reviews their views are sought and recorded, and they are informed about progress and targets at all times. They have opportunities to consult with special needs staff and there is frequent telephone contact when necessary.

55. Parents attend performances and respond to school requests to discuss their children. Support for the Parents Association is weak and other involvement limited. A very small number of parents, supported by friends of the school, raise funds for extra resources each year. Use of home-school contact books is variable and often unsatisfactory at Key Stage 4. Home-school agreements were satisfactorily introduced for pupils joining Year 7 in September 1999.

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

56. The quality of leadership and management in the school is very good. The headteacher provides very good leadership and is fully committed to raising standards in the school. He has established a very clear direction for the work of the school. The school's mission statement, aims and values are central to the work of the school and all developments and policies are related to these aims and values. There is a strong commitment to good relationships and equality of opportunity. The headteacher is very well supported by other members of the school 'leadership team', whose individual skills complement those of their colleagues. The management structure operates well and enables strengths to be recognised and areas for development and improvement to be

identified.

57. The quality of leadership at middle management level is good. Most middle managers have established a clear direction for their subject and monitor the work of the departments effectively. For example, in modern languages, the head of department has a prioritised plan for development, which has a strong emphasis on improving standards of attainment. In general, there is a focussed commitment to improve standards. However, in art, despite the monitoring and evaluation of the subject's performance, efforts have been ineffective in raising standards in the classroom. The crucial issue has been the low quality of teaching in this area.

58. The special educational needs department is very well led. The co-ordinator has a very clear vision for the department and has a commitment to high standards. This is reflected in the dedication and co-operation of the large team of teachers and assistants. Learning support assistants work closely with teachers in supporting pupils, and the whole team offers a high level of expertise and commitment. The co-ordinator has oversight of all special needs provision, and one of the strengths of her leadership is that all pupils receive good support and encouragement whether or not they are in a designated unit. The special educational needs department underpins much of the work of this school, where nearly half of those on the roll have special needs.

59. The governing body has a good working knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses and supports the school well. It takes an active role in monitoring the work of the school. There is a planned programme of subject reviews and governors work with the school 'leadership team' in identifying areas for development, setting targets and monitoring the progress made towards these targets. The governing body played a full and active part in formulating the 're-structuring plans' which were necessary to address the serious budget deficit. The factors causing the deficit are largely historical and relate to 'protected posts' over which the governors had little control. The governing body, however, fails to meet some of its statutory responsibilities for curriculum provision. The school does not comply fully with requirements regarding a daily act of collective worship, for the provision of information technology at Key Stage 4 and for elements of the music programme of study at Key Stage 3.

60. The monitoring and support of teaching are very good. The school has made significant progress in addressing this key issue in the last inspection report. There is a comprehensive programme of classroom observations carried out by the headteacher, the curriculum line managers and heads of department. Subject performance reviews are regularly arranged and examination results are discussed and action plans drawn up to support subjects. The results of this approach are clear in the improvement in teaching and the improvements in pupils' progress and learning.

61. Development planning, at a whole-school level and at department level is good, with carefully identified priorities appropriate to the needs of the school. Priorities are clearly linked to raising standards and improving the educational experiences of pupils. The priorities identified have built well upon the findings of the previous inspection. The work of the school is monitored closely by the school management team and the governors. Systems are in place to compare the performance of departments in examinations with each

other. The school sets challenging targets for both the standard of teaching and the standards which pupils should achieve.

62. Financial planning and the designated use of funding and grants are satisfactory. The school is now able to manage its budget more efficiently as a result of the 're-structuring' proposals. The current school strategic planning is good and covers both short- and long-term financial implications of the relevant priorities for development. These documents provide a suitable basis for the long-term improvement of the school. The governing body plays a full and active role in the financial planning and management of the school and there is a good working partnership between the governors and the staff.

63. Routine administration of the school's budget is satisfactory. The school is beginning to make better use of new technology to monitor expenditure against budget. There are well-defined procedures for obtaining quotations and tenders before placing orders. The school applies the principles of best value to its financial decisions. The recommendations of the auditor's report have all been agreed and are being implemented. The quality of the school administration and routine administration is very good and ensures that the school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis.

64. Given the sustained improvements in the quality of teaching, the progress most pupils make in their academic and personal development and the continuing commitment to raising standards the school provides satisfactory value for money

65. Overall, the school has adequate, suitably qualified teaching and non-teaching staff. In some departments, notably mathematics, music and art, there are staffing shortcomings, which are outlined in other sections of this report. The remaining departments, however, are staffed appropriately, with a satisfactory match of experience and qualifications to the needs of the school's curriculum. Recent reduction in staffing levels has had the effect of improving the overall quality of teaching.

66. The school's induction of new staff is good. Both newly qualified teachers and those with experience are supported by sound procedures to ease their integration into the school. The contact with a local teacher training institution remains strong, with students well supported in their teaching practice in the school.

67. The school makes good provision for the unusually high numbers of pupils with special educational needs. Learning support staff generally work well with teachers to enhance the learning of lower attaining pupils.

68. In the food and textiles aspects of design and technology, and in science, the school has too few technicians to support teachers adequately.

69. The accommodation is sufficient to allow the curriculum to be taught and there has been considerable, ongoing improvement since the last inspection. Many self-help schemes utilising funds from a variety of sources have enhanced the environment. Double glazing, security fencing, refurbishment, changes of office space and some redecoration present a more welcoming picture in some areas. The rationalising of subject areas has continued and the development plan will enable all subjects to be grouped, encouraging professional dialogue and improving teaching efficiency. Certain subject areas, namely science, design and technology and art, are a major priority for zoning and the current provision for these subjects is poor. There is a need to investigate the viability of science laboratories being housed in wooden huts, as some are now.

70. Much has been done to enhance the environment with worthwhile displays

celebrating pupil work, particularly in mathematics, art and design and technology, but there are areas of shabbiness which fail to provide a stimulating environment in modern foreign languages, geography, some science laboratories and design and technology. Many rooms, corridors and the entrance to the sports facilities are in need of refurbishment to provide the right messages to pupils. The headteacher and senior management have identified future requirements in the light of current pressures and priorities.

71. Resources for learning have improved since the last inspection, particularly in information and communication technology, mathematics and special educational needs. However, the overall position remains unsatisfactory. The quantity and range of textbooks and other printed resources are too limited in subjects such as geography, music, religious education and science; this has an adverse effect on students' learning because it restricts the variety of tasks that can be set, particularly for homework. In science there is insufficient basic laboratory equipment for pupils to undertake the full range of investigations required for the National Curriculum, while in physical education some of the mats used for gymnastics are in a dangerous condition.

72. The school is very well resourced for information and communication technology; pupils make good use of the equipment at lunchtimes, and the resources centre is well used by groups of pupils to support their work across an increasing range of subjects.

73. An unusual resource is the farm. It is well used in science lessons and also provides interesting extra-curricular opportunities for a significant number of pupils in caring for animals and taking decisions about farm management. Animals have won a number of prizes at local shows.

74. The quantity and range of stock in the library are adequate and books are attractively displayed; there is a full-time librarian. However, the library is an under-used facility in supporting learning across subjects and in developing students' literacy.

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

75. In order to raise standards the school should:

(1) Improve standards of attainment in the higher grades at GCSE, in the core subjects, and at Key Stage 3 and improve achievement in art generally by:

- ensuring the effective use of current assessment data to identify higher attaining pupils in all subjects;
- monitoring the performance of these pupils against appropriate targets;
- using target setting to identify under-achievement at Key Stage 3;
- establishing monitoring and review procedures for Year 9 pupils;
- continuing to share good practice in the art department to raise overall standards of performance.

*(See paragraphs: 2,3,5,8,9,10,11,12,27,46,53,57,88,99,101,107,109,117)*

(2) Raise the general levels of attendance and improve monitoring by:

- continuing to devote the current level of staffing resources to sustaining monitoring initiatives;

- making more effective use of IT to process data and promote a faster response to problems of attendance.  
(See paragraphs: 20,50,104)
- (3) Improve the quality of written work overall and the basic literacy skills of boys by:
- identifying boys with specific learning needs in literacy;
  - focussing the use of IT software to support these pupils;
  - reinforcing the use of literacy skills in all subjects;
  - ensuring a greater consistency in the identification and correction of basic errors in pupils' writing.  
(See paragraphs: 7,9,74,90)
- (4) Satisfy the National Curriculum requirements for music at Key Stage 3, and information technology at Key Stage 4 by:
- amending the option structure to accommodate a half-course in information technology for all pupils at Key Stage 4;
  - reviewing the curriculum content and time allocation for music at Key Stage 3;
  - supporting non-specialists in music with relevant training.  
(See paragraphs: 27,30,31,39,46,59,150,153,164,167)
- (5) Provide a better focus for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural themes of the curriculum, and more opportunities for spiritual development by:
- giving clearer guidelines in the policy statement as to how opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development can be exploited;
  - ensuring that each subject identifies in its documentation how it will address spiritual, moral, social and cultural development;
  - monitoring the implementation of the action statements within subjects.  
(See paragraph:40)

#### **Other issues for consideration:**

- Develop the cross-curricular work in information technology, and support this with appropriate staff training.  
(See paragraphs: 71,125,146,150,155,167)
- Continue to monitor and modify the behaviour of disruptive boys.  
(See paragraphs: 17,27,104,113,119,134,152)
- Implement and evaluate the numeracy policy.  
(See paragraphs: 8,24,101)
- Continue to explore avenues for developing a partnership with parents.  
(See paragraphs: 52,53)
- Amend the governor's annual report to include the statutory requirements of the national comparators on examination performance.  
(See paragraph: 53)
- Make appropriate provision for a daily act of collective worship.  
(See paragraph: 59)
- Improve the levels of resourcing for geography, modern foreign languages, music, religious education and science.  
(See paragraphs: 68,71,115,139,166)



- Modify the accommodation provision to allow 'curriculum zones' for science, design and technology and art.  
(See paragraphs: 69, 115, 121, 128)
- Improve the general appearance and decorative state of the school, particularly in the physical education area.  
(See paragraphs: 70, 121)

## **OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES**

### **Dyslexia Unit**

76. The Dyslexia Unit works within the special needs group of rooms, and gives very good teaching and support to its designated pupils who are also well integrated into the school's life and work.

77. The team of teachers and support assistants offer expert help across the range of the school's subjects, together with withdrawal lessons for individuals or very small groups.

78. Teaching in this unit is very good. Teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of their pupils' special needs, and they are very well qualified. They bring a high level of expertise and knowledge of dyslexia to their work, and pupils benefit very well from the times they spend in one-to-one or small group lessons. In these withdrawal lessons, teachers build upon success and reinforce the learning very well.

79. Pupils learn well here, but because of their special educational needs, many have difficulty with skills requiring use of short-term memory. They therefore find it hard to remember what they have learnt. Teachers and support assistants, being well aware of this, construct lessons and help that re-visit and reinforce their teaching points frequently.

80. Organisation and records in the unit are very good, and details of support, testing and progress are all carefully recorded. Statutory requirements are met for annual reviews, and parents are fully involved and informed.

81. Pupils find the unit a respite from the pressures that sometimes build up for them elsewhere, and this contributes towards their progress and the improvement of their self-esteem, which is itself a feature of the unit's work. Teachers and support assistants are very knowledgeable about pupils' educational needs, and work very well together to address these. They use the pupils' individual education plans to address targets and further pupils' understanding of literacy and other aspects of the school's curriculum. Resources are adequate for the work that the unit does, and include sufficient computers. The rooms are so divided that some eight to ten adults can conduct support classes at one time.

### **Learning Support Unit**

82. The Learning Support Unit is a very well organised facility where pupils receive close support, but are also well integrated into the main curriculum of the school. They work for the majority of their week in mainstream classes and are withdrawn for one-to-one or very small group lessons, according to their educational needs. They receive specialised literacy and numeracy teaching in their withdrawal lessons.

83. Teaching in this unit for these withdrawal lessons is very good, and shows the expertise and patience that these pupils need in order to succeed. Good relationships have

been established, and pupils often use the unit's rooms in their free time, sometimes bringing non-unit friends with them. There is a warm, welcoming atmosphere, which allows pupils to relax, feel safe and be appreciated for their own worth. The provision that the unit makes for these pupils enables them to increase in self-esteem and self-confidence.

84. The standard of record keeping and monitoring of pupils is very good. Files give a very clear picture of the individual pupils' needs, and the strategies to be used to address them. Records of tests, outside agencies' reports, reviews, and the progress pupils make are all carefully compiled.

85. Progress of pupils varies according to the individual's special needs, but most make good progress towards their own targets. Reading, spelling, numeracy and the National Curriculum tests are all recorded, so that a profile of any pupil's progress may easily be seen.

86. A useful diary is kept of successes and difficulties, and teachers and support assistants also keep regular records of all lessons and support given. Teachers and learning support assistants liaise very well together, and there is a sense of co-operation and purpose in the unit, which benefits pupils very well.

87. Resources are good, including six computers. Statutory requirements are fully met for annual reviews.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	166
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	30

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
-	13	44	35	7	1	-

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	1999 – 2000	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	807	N/A
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	154	N/A

Special educational needs	1999-2000	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	54	
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	351	

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	19

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	52
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	68

### Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	8.8
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	2.1
National comparative data	1.1

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		1999	86	72

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	26	28	25
	Girls	38	36	19
	Total	64	64	44
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	41 (52)	41 (39)	28 (31)
	National	63(65)	62(60)	55(56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	9 (15)	10 (10.5)	6 (3.5)
	National	28(35)	38(36)	23(27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	12	36	31
	Girls	28	39	24
	Total	40	75	55
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	25 (41)	47 (43)	35 (53)
	National	64(61)	64(63)	60(63)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	8 (5)	11 (12)	3 (3)
	National	31(30)	37(37)	28(30)

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	89	73	162

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	11	83	86
	Girls	9	69	72
	Total	20	152	158
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	12.3(14)	93.8 (94)	97.5
	National	46.3(44.6)	90.7(89.8)	95.7

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	26
	National	37.8

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

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

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

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	3
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	5
Chinese	1
White	797
Any other minority ethnic group	0

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	109	4
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

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

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	50.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.9

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Education support staff: 1999-2000**

Total number of education support staff	13.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	355

#### **Deployment of teachers: 1999-2000**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74.8
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#### **Average teaching group size: 1999-2000**

Key Stage 3	23.8
Key Stage 4	21.7

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1998-1999
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	£
Total income	2 091 566
Total expenditure	2 154 616
Expenditure per pupil	2625
Balance brought forward from previous year	-7615
Balance carried forward to next year	-70 665

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	800
Number of questionnaires returned	91

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	26	51	19	4	0
My child is making good progress in school.	21	59	12	3	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	13	48	21	10	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	12	60	19	9	0
The teaching is good.	12	64	15	3	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	12	56	23	8	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	36	44	13	7	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	32	54	8	4	2
The school works closely with parents.	14	56	24	4	2
The school is well led and managed.	20	54	13	7	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	11	40	26	8	15
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	44	49	4	1	2

### Other issues raised by parents

- Concerned about incidents of bullying and lack of school involvement with parents
- Comment on the lack of homework in some subjects
- Some are unhappy with higher attaining pupils' achievement and progress

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

### **ENGLISH**

88. Pupils have in the past entered the school with low levels of literacy but standards in the current Year 7 are somewhat better. Recent results in national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 have been well below the national average and below those in similar schools. Boys have achieved much less well in these tests in relation to their peers nationally than have girls. Results at the higher grades, A\* to C, in GCSE English have also been well below the national average and well below average for similar schools. The gap between boys' and girls' performance is very wide at this stage. There has, however, been a steady upward trend in results across the range of grades, A\* to G, and in 1999 these reached the national average. The pattern of results for GCSE English literature has been similar but in 1999 many more pupils than in previous years were successful at the higher grades.

89. According to the evidence of inspection levels of attainment at the end of both key stages are overall below those expected nationally and, in the case of significant numbers of boys, well below. Sound progress is made, however, by most pupils in relation to their prior attainment and this progress is often good at Key Stage 4. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language achieve well when they receive special support.

90. At both key stages pupils of average and above average attainment contribute confidently to class discussion. Overall, however, pupils are not very articulate: their vocabulary is often narrow and not many are at ease in Standard English when its use would be appropriate. Some teachers are working successfully to extend pupils' range of speaking styles. Especially at Key Stage 3 listening skills vary quite widely. Reading comprehension improves at Key Stage 3 to the point where in Year 9 pupils have a sound grasp of events and characters in the books studied in class. Boys of average and lower attainment often read more superficially than girls. At the end of Key Stage 4 most pupils know their set texts well and can write about them with empathy and understanding and, with good guidance from their teachers, are learning to use evidence to support their assertions. Personal reading for pleasure and information is not well developed at either key stage; the well-stocked school library is under-used as a resource. At the end of Key Stage 3 pupils can write in an appropriate range of styles and most handle description and narrative with reasonable facility. By Year 11 the range develops suitably and those of higher attainment are beginning to write more analytically. The others find more formal styles difficult. The work of many pupils at both key stages is badly flawed by errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar. This is particularly true of boys, even among the higher attainers. However, steady progress towards more accurate writing is made over time by a majority of pupils.

91. The quality of teaching is predominantly satisfactory or better; in half the lessons it is good. In about one in ten lessons teaching is unsatisfactory or poor. Teaching is generally better at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3. The quality of pupils' learning correlates strongly with the quality of teaching. Strengths of the teaching are the generally careful planning of lessons to include a variety of suitably challenging activities and good monitoring of pupils' progress in class. Most teachers explain work well and many are able to gain and hold pupils' interest through lively and clear presentation. Most use helpful worksheets and teaching materials to good effect. Subject knowledge is usually well based. Relevant homework is regularly set. All these positive characteristics help pupils to focus, to concentrate on their work and to make progress. In some important areas,



however, there is inconsistency across the department. While most teachers formulate clear learning objectives for their lessons, by no means all share these with their pupils. When they do, pupils are generally more involved and more aware of their own progress. Marking does not always show pupils clearly what they need to do to improve; the department does not have a consistent strategy for dealing with technical errors in writing. Though assignments are usually appropriately targeted to meet individuals' learning needs, sometimes pupils who finish quickly are not offered extension work and sometimes tasks are not differentiated so as to give access to those who are struggling. Good relationships and firm expectations of sensible behaviour establish in most classrooms an atmosphere in which learning can and does take place. In the few instances where work lacks challenge and interest, where gossip and silly behaviour are tolerated and where the timing of activities is ill judged, pupils make minimal progress in the lesson. Overall, however, pupils have positive attitudes to the subject: they are often well motivated to succeed and they work sensibly together.

92. Coverage of the National Curriculum is generally satisfactory, and recent strengthening of the language and literacy component in Year 7 and in schemes of work in Years 8 and 9 is already benefiting pupils. There is a general expectation that all pupils at Key Stage 3 will have a consistent experience of dramatic approaches to texts; this is not met in practice. Some classes use information technology for word processing and desktop publishing; when they do, drafting and re-drafting often improve and presentation of work is better. However, computers are not used regularly and systematically enough in English. Similar issues were raised in the last inspection report. Though improvements have been made, more work remains to be done.

93. Procedures for assessment at Key Stage 3 have developed well since the last inspection report, in which there was some criticism of this area. Moderation of grading standards is securely based; outcomes of assessment are increasingly analysed and are used to shape curriculum planning. The department is beginning to use the data now available on pupils' attainment to predict outcomes for groups. Some targets are set for individual pupils but this area is not yet so well developed.

94. Management of the department is in competent and experienced hands. The head of department leads a well-qualified team supportively. As yet, responsibility for specific aspects of the department's work has not been devolved to the second-in-charge, appointed at the beginning of the school year. Teachers of English are committed to raising pupils' attainment and the head of department is aware of the necessary priorities for change and development. These are not, however, set out in the form of an action plan which would allow the department itself as well as senior management to monitor progress towards targets. As literacy co-ordinator, the head of department has contributed towards raising awareness of literacy across the curriculum.

95. Overall, sound progress has been made in addressing the issues raised in the last inspection report.

## Drama

96. Drama is not taught as a separate subject at Key Stage 3 but it is available as an optional GCSE course at Key Stage 4. Take-up of the subject has fluctuated. Results at the higher grades, A\* to C, in 1999 declined sharply from a level in previous years near to the national average. This may be attributable, in part, to the loss of specialist staff in recent years.

97. Pupils lack consistent experience of drama work at Key Stage 3. This means that they have much ground to make up at Key Stage 4. Standards in the current Year 10 and Year 11 option groups fall below average. There is some good work in movement and in the development of character but concentration in role, use of voice, choice of language and evaluation of performance are all under-developed. A significant weakness is pupils' lack of familiarity with the concepts and terms and, in some cases, the basic techniques of drama. Most pupils are committed to the subject and are making progress.

98. There are now no experienced drama specialists in the school. Though the teaching seen was satisfactory in most respects there is an acknowledged need for in-service training, especially in the more technical aspects of the subject. Some in-service training could also usefully be offered to other teachers of English to give them more confidence in drama work in English at Key Stage 3.

## **MATHEMATICS**

99. Pupils' attainment on entry is well below the national average. Pupils' overall performance in the 1999 Key Stage 3 tests was well below national averages for level 5 and level 6. Results are well below those for similar schools. Results have declined over the last two years following an improvement in 1997. Since the previous inspection, results, in relation to national averages, have improved for girls and worsened for boys. Results, over the last three years, place mathematics behind both English and science.

100. Pupils' attainment in GCSE examinations at the higher grades is well below average. Boys' results have shown an upward trend since the last inspection. In 1999, 18.6 per cent gained A\*-C grades which was a considerable improvement on the previous year (8.1%) but they are still below the national average for similar schools. Girls' results have fluctuated since the previous inspection, dropping from the best performance in 1998 when 14.5 per cent gained A\*-C grades to 11.4 per cent. In 1999, the proportion of all pupils attaining A\*-G dropped below the national average for the first time in three years. Attainment is in line with other subjects.

101. Pupils' attainment at Key Stage 3 is below national expectations but occasionally in line with these. Higher attaining Year 9 pupils sometimes achieve above average standards. They demonstrate good approaches to investigations when examining number patterns generated by T-shapes within a number grid. They split the activity into steps, interpret their information in different ways and give valid reasons for conclusions. Lower attaining pupils benefit when using computer programs by improving their numeracy skills. However, pupils' mental mathematical skills are underdeveloped and many have insufficient strategies to help them do calculations.

102. At Key Stage 4, attainment is below national expectations. Higher attaining Year 11 pupils have a good understanding of tabulating data and presenting it graphically, resulting in accurate calculations of the inter-quartile range. Ten pupils are making good progress towards an additional GCSE in statistics. Lower attaining Year 11 pupils understand the statistical terms and do calculations with teacher support; however, they cannot recall the procedures shortly afterwards. Whilst the general presentation of pupils' work has improved, insufficient use is made of written English to explain the working. Many pupils still lack an understanding of number. This reduces progress in algebra, space and shape, and data handling.

103. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. However, despite almost half the teaching promoting good or very high standards, about one lesson in four is unsatisfactory

or poor. Better teaching, which shows high expectations and strong commitment, results in raising standards. For example, some Year 10 pupils are preparing to take their GCSE a year early. Clear objectives shared with classes enable pupils to see gains in knowledge and skills. Marking that is thorough and regular improves pupils' learning. Lessons become more productive and enjoyable when the better teachers share their subject enthusiasm with humour. Better teachers use their detailed knowledge of pupils effectively to adjust teaching to meet individual needs. However, rarely do teachers use part of their lessons to improve pupils' recall skills. Inadequate lesson planning leads to unsatisfactory and poor teaching when teachers have not anticipated pupils' problems nor provided variety. Insufficient target setting for pupils results in a leisurely working pace and a failure to complete exercises. Teachers without effective strategies to control pupils severely reduce the progress made. Pupils in smaller lower sets benefit from the valuable support provided by curriculum learning assistants working in partnership with teachers; this results in pupils with special educational needs making good progress.

104. Pupils' behaviour is closely related to the quality of the teaching. When teaching is good, pupils behave very well and are keen to learn and to share their findings. They ask questions to gain further understanding. Younger pupils are quick to take their place at computers and sustain good levels of concentration. However, some pupils adopt ploys to undermine weaker teachers' authority and confidence. These instances show a lack of respect and reduce the others' learning. Some pupils' unsatisfactory attendance has an adverse effect upon the quality of learning.

105. The head of department, a recent appointment, is responsible for most of the improvements made since the previous inspection. The department is well led and has a new sense of direction and optimism. The detailed development plan has appropriate strategies, including monitoring of teaching and learning, to raise pupil performance. New schemes of work have been put into place for Year 7 and Year 8. These pupils benefit from the new course structure, which improves continuity and progression. New end of module assessments should assist future monitoring of both class and individual progress. The department makes good use of centrally-produced assessment data to re-organise Key Stage 4 sets, improving their chances of success. The head of department has an increased workload because there is no second in department. The time for departmental monitoring and evaluating is further reduced to provide necessary support for his colleagues. The good accommodation is enhanced by the celebration of pupils' work. Displays of key mathematical words, not in all rooms, provide an additional learning resource that assists the raising of standards.

## **SCIENCE**

106. In 1999 the results of National Curriculum tests in science at the end of Key Stage 3 were well below the national average and well below average in comparison with similar schools. Over the last three years results in science have been higher than in mathematics and similar to those in English.

107. At the end of Key Stage 4 the proportion of pupils gaining the higher (A\*-C) grades in GCSE examinations in 1999 was well below the national average and well below average in comparison with similar schools. However, results for the full range of A\*-G grades were similar to the national average. Boys did significantly better than girls. Results in science were similar to those in English and mathematics.

108. Results in the National Curriculum tests in 1999 were lower than at the last inspection but GCSE results have improved significantly, both for pupils gaining the higher

grades and for those gaining the full range of grades.

109. When pupils enter the school, their attainment is well below that expected for their age. For example, in Year 7 most know that a bulb fails to light if there is a break in the electrical circuit but are unable to explain this in terms of electricity flow. Pupils make satisfactory progress as they move through Key Stage 3, but standards in lessons at the end of the key stage are not high enough; they are still well below average, reflecting results of the National Curriculum tests. Pupils leave too much work unfinished because they are frequently absent or have too many different teachers. This adversely affects their ability to recall earlier work and make links across science as a whole. In Year 9 pupils knew that breathing in humans results from movement of the diaphragm but could not explain how this causes the lungs to inflate and deflate.

110. Pupils make good progress through Key Stage 4, achieving well in half their lessons. Standards in lessons at the end of the key stage are below average but higher than suggested by the results of GCSE examinations. Setting arrangements at Key Stage 4 enable teachers to match work more closely to the needs of individual pupils. For example, higher attaining pupils in Year 11 were challenged when they began to balance equations and understand how they are used to represent chemical reactions. However, in other lessons they are insufficiently challenged; pupils learn basic facts but not the underlying scientific principles that would help them explain their observations. In Year 10, pupils knew that sugar dissolves faster in hot water than cold but could not explain this in terms of movement of the particles.

111. Pupils demonstrate good skills in handling apparatus carefully and safely. However, their investigative skills are not well developed at Key Stage 3, particularly their ability to make predictions about experimental outcomes based on scientific understanding and to draw out conclusions from results. Pupils' understanding of key words in science is being systematically developed at Key Stage 3, but their spelling and grammar remain generally poor. Teachers are aware of pupils' weak numerical skills and usually plan lessons to provide support at the appropriate time, for example in Year 10 when calculating pulse rates and using experimental results to draw line graphs.

112. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall, and at Key Stage 3 they often make good progress because learning support assistants are effective in helping them to organise their work.

113. Most pupils behave well and concentrate throughout the full length of lessons. They co-operate well in small groups during practical work and respond well to teachers' questions. A small minority, mostly boys at Key Stage 3 and girls at Key Stage 4, is not well motivated and holds back the progress of other pupils.

114. Teaching is satisfactory overall, but better at Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3. It has improved since the last inspection but remains unsatisfactory in a small number of lessons. Teachers' planning usually gives pupils a clear understanding of what they are expected to do, but when planning is less sharply focused they are unable to see the purpose of their work; teaching and learning are then unsatisfactory. In Year 11, pupils observed what happened when they added metals to acids but their learning was unsatisfactory because they were not encouraged to look for variations in reactivity. Teachers make effective use of their good subject knowledge by using familiar examples that help pupils to learn by engaging their interest, as in Year 9 when explaining differences between balanced and unbalanced forces using the idea of tug-of-war. In the best lessons teachers make their expectations of good behaviour and high work-rate clear at the outset and pupils respond

by making full use of lesson time for productive learning. Marking of day-to-day work is up to date but teachers' comments are sometimes too brief to show pupils how to improve. Teaching is less good at Key Stage 3 because teachers do not take full account of the wide range of pupils' abilities at this key stage, leaving slower pupils with unfinished work and others insufficiently challenged. Learning is not checked, reviewed and reinforced at frequent enough intervals.

115. The department is satisfactorily led. Although there is focus on raising attainment, particularly at Key Stage 3, there are few sharply defined strategies for doing this. Effective teamwork is difficult because the laboratories are widely dispersed. As at the last inspection, poor accommodation and lack of resources adversely affect pupils' learning. The technicians work hard but have insufficient time because they must move equipment between different areas, sometimes necessitating undesirable last-minute changes to lesson plans. The laboratories themselves are in urgent need of refurbishment (or relocation); they are not stimulating working spaces for pupils. The school farm is an unusual resource that helps pupils understand a variety of animals, as well as providing interesting extra-curricular activities. Lack of other learning resources, such as textbooks, restricts opportunities for pupils to reinforce their learning at home.

## **ART**

116. GCSE A\*-C results have improved significantly from a very low base of 7 per cent in 1997 to 43 per cent in 1999, but only a very small proportion of the year group took the subject compared with the national picture. Although 43 per cent is still below the average for modern schools, it is good compared with pupils' prior attainment; all pupils entering GCSE attained A-G in 1999.

117. Pupils' art skills are very weak when they enter the school. In particular their spatial awareness is very poor. By the end of Year 9, pupils' attainment is still well below average, and most pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable. In many classes this is because they are not taught well enough, and do not acquire the skills they need to do as well as they could in art. Where progress is better it is because of good teaching; attainment, whilst still below average, more closely matches national expectations. Pupils' use of all the formal elements of art, line, shape and composition remains well below average throughout the school. Although they are taught about artists' work, few remember this well enough for it to be useful in supporting standards of attainment. In some classes, the range of media used is stimulating, engaging pupils' interest. Here they attain better standards in relation to their limited abilities. In general, though, the department has an insufficiently stimulating variety of resources to enable these pupils to succeed well. In many classes, teachers use unimaginative media through which pupils are unlikely to attain good standards. In many classes pupils have wasted too much time on work outside the department's schemes of work, drawing cartoon images, for example, without developing key skills or understanding. Pupils do best when they work in media other than painting and drawing, for example printing, where some examples seen match the national expectation.

118. At Key Stage 4, pupils' attainment varies similarly, with many pupils not attaining the standards they could. In some classes, though, they do well for their abilities, and by Year 11, some pupils' work shows a good standard. For example, drawing, collage, printing and colour work are good when judged against pupils' potential. In other classes, pupils' standards are well below average, and well below their capabilities. The GNVQ group is particularly weak. Attainment varies between the two GCSE groups in Year 11. In one class, standards approach national expectations. In the other, the teacher has expected too little. Too many pupils in this class have developed poor work habits and made insufficient

progress during their course. Here standards are well below average, and not commensurate with pupils' potential. A similar pattern emerges in Year 10. Overall standards are still well below average at the end of Key Stage 4.

119. In many classes and lessons seen, pupils are successful in their practical work, working purposefully to the best of their abilities. Here, art contributes usefully to pupils' developing sense of self-esteem. In some classes, though, pupils' short concentration spans, lack of commitment to their tasks and disruptive behaviour, mostly of boys, prevent effective learning. Commendably often, even here, some pupils, especially girls, focus well on their work despite the disturbance. Too many pupils in these classes, even if compliant and well behaved, are insufficiently stretched, developing negative attitudes towards art, a subject in which most could be very successful.

120. The quality of teaching varies unacceptably, as at the time of the last inspection. In many classes teaching is good. Here, good planning sensitively considers the needs of individuals and groups, and projects are well designed to exploit pupils' potential. The teacher's expectations are high and pupils enjoy their learning and their achievements. A strength of teaching is the effectiveness of teachers' one-to-one sessions with pupils as they work. Although a specialist supply teacher "held the fort" well in the absence of a key staff member, in these classes pupils' work showed unsatisfactory or poor progress across time. Here, pupils develop little rigour in their painting and drawing skills, which they urgently need in order to improve their attainment. In these classes, behaviour is much poorer, and expectations of their art work have been much too low.

121. The last report raised many issues. Insufficient progress has yet been made towards rectifying many of these, despite the department's and school's active monitoring. The key remaining issue is the quality of teaching, associated with insufficient improvement of some staff towards identified targets. The head of department's useful knowledge of national standards as an examination moderator has been a major factor influencing the improvement in examination performance. Many issues identified last time still remain, but these hinge critically on the staffing position. Consistency of practice in the department must be ensured. Although the school has improved the art environment somewhat, parts are still unattractive places in which to learn, and space is still too restricted to store larger scale work. Pupils of all abilities now take pleasure from seeing their art work displayed around the school and elsewhere, an improvement from the last inspection.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

122. Over the past two years the proportion of pupils achieving an A\*-C grade in all the material areas for design and technology has been significantly below the national average. The proportion achieving these grades was in line with the average in resistant materials last year and above average for home economics in 1998. During the same period the proportion achieving an A-G grade has been above the national average. Girls outperform boys in design and technology subjects but not significantly so. Pupils often achieve better in design and technology than they do in most of their other subjects.

123. At the end of both key stages overall attainment is below the national average for most pupils. However, an increasing number of pupils attain in line with and sometimes above the national norm. Standards are broadly average in the Key Stage 4 GNVQ health and social care foundation course. Standards in the GCSE child development course are variable but generally appropriate for pupils' capabilities.

124. At Key Stage 3 pupils' attainment in making is better than in design, particularly in resistant materials where making skills are well developed, but design is not given sufficient priority. In food and textiles pupils' design ideas show satisfactory levels of creativity. Some pupils' work shows flair and imagination as, for example, in the 'carrier bag holder' in a Year 7 textiles lesson and the 'layered trifle' project in food technology. Pupils' presentation of their ideas is satisfactory in lessons on food and textiles but is generally weak in other material areas. Apart from work in graphics with Year 8 and in the compliant material areas, pupils' presentation and graphicacy skills are weak. A small proportion of work is not enhanced where outcomes of the use of felt-tip colour pens are garish and rendering techniques are ineffective. Construction drawings lack accuracy in terms of conventional drafting techniques except in the work of the very highest attainers. Pupils with special educational needs keep up well with the others in lessons particularly when supported by specialist learning support staff. Pupils' progress, knowledge and understanding in computer-aided design and manufacture are underdeveloped in all material areas.

125. In Key Stage 4 food technology pupils' grasp of the principles and processes of design together with presentation techniques is satisfactory and it is good in the work of the higher attainers. Initial food technology tasks relate well to product designs and to industrial practice. Pupils show a satisfactory understanding of the nutritive, sensory, chemical and physical properties of food. In resistant materials there are significant weaknesses in designing work. Pupils' technical writing and graphical communication skills are weak: sketches to explain design ideas often lack detail or the judicious use of colour. Where colour is applied it is often in the form of indiscriminate use of felt-tipped colour pens that does nothing to enhance the work. In most of the material areas pupils show at least satisfactory and often good skills in using tools, equipment and machinery and are very conscious of the need for safe working practices. The lower than average attendance rates in several lessons affect continuity and progression in GCSE coursework. In all design areas very few pupils use information technology to complete coursework. Higher attaining pupils show a satisfactory level of fluency in the use of technical terms but lower attaining pupils do not. Pupils' skills in using computer-aided design software or computer-aided manufacturing equipment are very much underdeveloped.

126. Teaching is satisfactory overall with many examples of good practice. The teaching is good in most of the lessons at Key Stage 3 and in about half of the lessons at Key Stage 4. Teachers explain and demonstrate skills and techniques in making very effectively, coupled with safe working practices. All teachers have good knowledge and understanding in their subject areas but in some material areas expectations for design work are too low. The development of literacy skills is given sufficient emphasis in the spoken word but not always in the written word. Insistence on the use of the correct technical vocabulary of the subject is developing through emphasis on the learning of key words in most areas.

127. Some teachers use a range of exemplar material to good effect to motivate and guide pupils in their work. Most teachers provide a satisfactory range of design project worksheets, which challenge and extend the higher attainers but are insufficiently modified to meet the needs of the lowest attainers. Clearly the very high levels of teacher support for individual pupils compensate in part, but not fully, for all ability levels. Most pupils are clearly aware of what they need to do and are well informed and motivated by the teaching. Most are fully engaged on task and make satisfactory gains in the completion of their work in lessons. In many lessons good humour prevails and an atmosphere conducive to positive learning is established. Most pupils respond well to the teaching styles and show good interest levels, sustain their concentration for long spans of time and make good progress in these lessons. Teachers provide good verbal feedback to pupils on their progress and the assessment system effectively enables pupils to understand how well

they are progressing. Technical support is good in resistant materials but insufficient in food and textiles. The technician and learning support staff make an invaluable contribution to pupils' learning.

128. The leadership and management of the department are good and have enabled the good progress to be made in resolving the issues from the last report. Although overall standards remain below the national average, a significant proportion of pupils in lessons now achieve in line with these expectations. In addition, in all material areas most pupils achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. The development of designing skills has improved in food and textiles but remains the weaker element within the subject overall. Some tasks in resistant materials remain over-prescriptive. The quality of the accommodation in the resistant material workshops impacts negatively on the quality of learning. The spread of specialist design and technology rooms around the school acts as a constraint on developing efficient management and a coherent identity for the subject.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

129. Standards of attainment overall are average at Key Stage 4. GCSE results for grades A\*-C were below the national average for similar schools in 1996 and 1997, slightly above in 1998 and below for 1999. Overall they show a rising trend. Results for grades A\*-G have been in line with the national average and were above the average for similar schools in 1998. There has been no pattern of differences between boys and girls. Many of the current Year 11 pupils have exceeded their target grades in the recent mock GCSE examination.

130. Standards of attainment at Key Stage 3 are below average. The percentage of Key Stage 3 teacher assessments for level 5 and over, and level 6 and over, have been well below national results for the past three years and show no overall improvement. Boys' results have been consistently lower than girls'.

131. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils have made good progress since entry to the school. They have gained geographical skills in map and atlas work and in the formal interpretation and presentation of information. Many pupils can explain their ideas about tectonic plates and understand the conflicting claims on space in National Parks. They can explain the causes of rainfall and construct a simple weather forecast from relevant data. Pupils are able to access a computer and use spreadsheets to interpret information. Higher attainers can read well and interpret information from books, and can work independently. Lower attainers have progressed through the same range of knowledge but the standard of presentation of their work is often poor and their written responses are short.

132. By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils have made further good progress. They use both descriptive and explanatory writing and can interpret all kinds of maps and diagrams. They understand the factors affecting economic development in different parts of the world, changes affecting the iron and steel industry in Britain, and the processes of urban development. They can describe the formation of limestone scenery and the processes of glaciation. High attainers can form hypotheses, gather information and present conclusions in an organised way, as in the coursework study of the central business district of Dover. Lower attainers have difficulty in expressing complex ideas. At both key stages, pupils use appropriate geographical vocabulary to describe features and processes.

133. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. They have a good understanding of geographical terms and concepts but their work is held back



because of poor literacy skills.

134. The attitudes of pupils to their work are almost always good. There was one lesson where the poor behaviour of a group of boys prevented the effective learning of other pupils in the class. In every other lesson seen behaviour was positive and co-operative.

135. The overall quality of the teaching is good at both key stages; an unsatisfactory lesson resulted from the inattentive behaviour of a significant minority of boys in a class. Teachers are secure in their knowledge and lessons are well planned, leading to effective learning of basic geographical information. At Key Stage 3 lessons are well paced and expectations are high, with a significant number of lessons centred on group work and enquiry learning. This generates a high level of interest and creative effort on the part of most of the pupils, as for example, in a Year 7 lesson where groups of pupils had to write and present weather forecasts based on meteorological data. Similarly, in a Year 8 lesson pupils had to decide on the ideal site for a steel works and explain their conclusions to the rest of the class. At Key Stage 4 the pacing of some lessons is slow, with insufficient activity-based work to develop the skills of independent learning. For example, in a Year 10 lesson introducing glaciation in upland Britain there was no opportunity for pupils to develop their own questions and conclusions. Information technology is now being regularly used as a teaching and learning tool and this is enabling pupils to make analyses of data they have collected themselves, and to present their work better. Homework is set regularly.

136. Strategies to improve literacy, such as reading aloud in class, are exercised at every opportunity. Numeracy is taught as part of the schemes of work when skills are required.

137. The quality and use of assessment are good at Key Stage 3 where regular end-of-unit assessment has been introduced and a portfolio of National Curriculum Level work is being assembled. However, this portfolio has not been moderated with other similar schools in order to validate the levelling judgements. Pupils' work is marked and commented upon on a regular basis but not every piece of work is graded. This, plus a lack of target-setting for most groups, means that pupils do not have the means to understand and monitor their own rate of progress.

138. Learning support assistants are well briefed and, in the lessons, which they attend, make a positive contribution to the learning of many of the pupils with special needs. However there is generally too little difference in the work set for pupils of varying ability levels.

139. Management is satisfactory, with well-documented monitoring of teaching and of pupil progress. There is still a shortage of basic resources such as textbooks and atlases for whole class use, and easily accessible video and OHP equipment. The present system of sharing these items between several classrooms is unsatisfactory in a subject that relies on the use of up-to-date data and visual information to develop investigative skills.

140. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Attainment is still below national expectations but it has improved and strategies are in place to raise it further, such as single-sex teaching groups at Key Stage 4 and the introduction of enquiry-based learning. Literacy skills have been improved and the use of information technology has been developed. However, there has been no significant improvement in the level of teaching resources, which is constraining the work of the department.

## **HISTORY**

141. For the last three years GCSE results at grades A\* to G have usually been above national averages. At grades A\* to C results have been below national averages for all maintained schools but have usually been broadly in line with those for modern schools.

142. Attainment in work seen towards the end of Key Stage 3 is slightly below the nationally expected level. Pupils often show a sound grasp of the content of a topic although many have difficulty in recalling what they have learnt in previous lessons. They work well with historical sources: Year 8 pupils successfully found out about the causes of the French Revolution by extracting information from a variety of sources. Some higher attaining pupils produce good historical writing, for example, work on the impact of the railways by Year 9 pupils. Many pupils, though, find it difficult to select and organise information to produce extended written work. Overall pupils achieve well in relation to their prior attainment during Key Stage 3 and make good progress. Attitudes to the subject are generally positive and standards of behaviour are good

143. Attainment in work seen at Key Stage 4 is generally below national averages for all maintained schools but is broadly in line with those for modern schools. Most pupils demonstrate a sound knowledge and understanding of historical facts and issues, such as the Poor Law in 19th century England. Pupils' oral work is better than their written work, which tends to contain insufficient historical explanation and analysis. However, over the period of the GCSE course pupils achieve well and make good progress. The attitudes of those taking the course are positive, although the number choosing to take GCSE history is low.

144. The quality of teaching has become more consistent since the last inspection and better provision is now made for higher attaining pupils. The range of learning resources available has also improved. This has contributed to an increase in opportunities for independent learning by pupils. Good strategies for supporting structured writing have been developed and although many pupils have difficulty with this aspect of history, standards of writing have improved since the last inspection.

145. The overall quality of teaching is good. In some lessons the teaching is very good and it is never less than satisfactory. Planning is thorough and work is well matched to the learning needs of all pupils; for example, in a Year 8 class different tasks about Louis XVI enabled pupils of varying levels of attainment to make equally good progress. Teaching methods are varied and well judged, although some tasks are insufficiently structured and this slows down the pace of learning. Skilful questioning which consolidates and extends pupils' understanding is a strength of teaching in the department. Pupils are well managed. They expect to get on with their work and make progress. Teachers' day-to-day assessment is good which means that individual pupils are set appropriate targets for improving their work. Overall the quality of pupils' learning is good at both key stages.

146. Good leadership and effective collaboration between staff in the department have contributed to improved teaching in history. Good assessment and recording procedures help to promote pupils' attainment and progress. The low take-up for the subject at Key Stage 4 is disappointing and the use of information technology for teaching history is still at an early stage. However, the department is well placed to address both of these issues.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

147. The proportion of pupils attaining an A\*-G grade for GCSE information technology was significantly below the national average in 1997; this examination course has not been offered since. Currently a small group of pupils in Year 10 is studying a GNVQ foundation

course.

148. At Key Stage 3 standards of attainment are at the nationally expected level for the majority of pupils. A small number of pupils attain above the national average. Most pupils make good progress in their lessons. By the end of the key stage pupils are confident in the use of IT for word processing and desktop publishing. Most pupils show a good understanding of the hardware and the software used. Almost all have satisfactory keyboarding skills. They use the mouse well to negotiate icons, menus and functions when loading the required software from the network and when using the Internet. Similarly, most pupils show satisfactory and often good skills in researching information, and in importing and managing graphics from a range of sources including the Internet. These skills were evident in a Year 8 project designing a promotional magazine about Ashford. Oral communication and the application of numeracy skills through the use of spreadsheets are satisfactory. Pupils speak with enthusiasm about their work and most pupils are able to use the correct technical vocabulary. Pupils' achievement in control technology, modelling and measuring is improving, but although satisfactory, it is only at a basic level. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress and achieve standards in line with their capabilities, especially when supported by specialist learning support staff. The lowest attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress and attain satisfactory outcomes for their capabilities.

149. Standards of achievement at Key Stage 4 are more variable. In the GNVQ foundation course standards are in line with the national expected levels. Standards are well above for a small minority of pupils who have already attained a distinction grade for some of the modules. Standards of IT competence are satisfactory in the vocationally related courses.

150. For most pupils at Key Stage 4 there is a lack of opportunity to develop their information technology skills through a planned and sustained provision; this situation affects overall standards. Some subjects have yet to identify National Curriculum requirements for information technology in their schemes of work. Other subjects, for example geography, make good use of IT in support of learning and pupils make good progress in developing their skills and understanding. Information technology does feature in the examination coursework of a small number of pupils but it is currently the exception rather than the rule. The use of CD-ROM or the Internet for independent learning is underdeveloped throughout the key stage.

151. The quality of teaching is good in the specific lessons designated for IT. Specialist teachers are enthusiastic about their work and effectively stimulate pupils' interest and motivation. They explain software concepts clearly and provide straightforward, effective demonstrations of the applications. Teachers provide challenging and interesting tasks in using the software. The problems posed draw on pupils' prior knowledge and conceptual understanding of information technology. Teachers provide high levels of individual support and guidance. Most pupils respond well to the teaching styles and show good levels of interest. They sustain their concentration for long spans of time and make good progress in lessons.

152. Teachers are good at testing pupils' understanding of the required task. The effective support pupils receive enables them to understand how well they are progressing and to understand how they can improve their work. Course worksheets for Key Stage 3 successfully identify learning objectives, list new, relevant terminology and fully reflect National Curriculum requirements for the subject. However some tasks and written instructions are insufficiently modified to suit the needs of the lowest attaining pupils.

Where learning support staff are present pupils with special educational needs are helped considerably to keep on task and to make good progress alongside their peers. Most pupils show a good attitude to learning and are well-behaved in lessons. The occasional poor behaviour from a small minority of boys is dealt with effectively by teachers, with little disruption to other pupils' learning. The technician provides good support to teachers and pupils alike and contributes effectively to pupils' learning.

153. The leadership of the department is very good indeed and has been responsible for the significant improvements since the last inspection. Major improvements have been made in resources including the introduction of innovative software, which has had a positive effect on pupils' interest and motivation. The subject now fully reflects the requirement of the National Curriculum through the timetabled information technology lessons at Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4, whilst the cross-curricular usage of information technology has been clearly mapped in some subjects, weaknesses remain in many areas. The subject does not meet National Curriculum requirements at Key Stage 4. However, the school has recognised these shortcomings and has planned a short course in information technology from September for all Key Stage 4 pupils.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

154. All pupils study French in Years 7 to 10. Almost all pupils learn French in Year 10. In recent years French GCSE results have been well below national standards. The results in French have also been below those for most other subjects in the school. Some pupils in Year 9 have reached level 4 in listening, speaking, reading and writing. These outcomes are below national standards. At the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 some pupils had reached level 5 in French. In lessons standards are below national averages at both key stages.

155. At Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 pupils are stronger in reading and writing, and weaker in listening and speaking. When speaking in French, Year 10 pupils were able to perform dialogues about lost property. In a Year 7 lesson pupils listened to a tape and were able to understand opinions about school subjects on tape. In reading, Year 10 French pupils could recognise the vocabulary of different items of lost property when written on the board. When writing, Year 11 French pupils could write well about their personal health. However, they made errors in grammar and spelling. This is the greatest overall weakness throughout the school: pupils do not check their written work carefully enough. Girls usually attain better results than boys. There are no significant variations between pupils of different ethnicity, background, or ability. Pupils only use numbers occasionally. Pupils have little access to computers, but a few have done some word processing.

156. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. At Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 teaching is usually satisfactory, and often good. Teachers plan a sequence of activities, are proficient in French, project their voices clearly, and have good accents. They use the foreign language for large parts of the lesson, but sometimes use too much English. The use of overhead projectors and other resources effectively promotes pupils' learning. Standards of discipline are generally good, but a few pupils find it difficult to concentrate sufficiently. Time is used well, and some teachers are good at encouraging oral work in pairs or groups: however, others do not use pair work sufficiently. Staff display pupils' work, maps, posters, and other authentic material, which increases the pupils' knowledge of the languages and countries concerned. However, more display is needed in some classrooms. Pupils' work is assessed regularly, and results inform subsequent teaching. Useful homework is set regularly. The teaching of those with special needs is satisfactory, and meets the needs of these pupils as well.

157. Teachers manage classes well, and pupils learn effectively. For example, in a Year 9 French class the teacher revised rooms and house furniture orally. Pupils then wrote lists of furniture for three rooms, and dictated them for the teacher to write them on the board. Finally the teacher played a tape, and pupils had to match rooms to the people they heard. In a Year 10 French class, the teacher showed pupils a suitcase, and sang a song about three items of clothing missing from the case. Then he revised many items orally before asking a girl and a boy to pick items from the clothes pile and say what they were wearing. At each stage the other pupils had to say what they were wearing, had worn or would wear. In both these lessons the pupils were actively involved throughout, worked very well on the different tasks, and made very good progress.

158. The majority of pupils behave well. They show interest in their work, sustain their concentration, and develop good study skills. Their response is usually satisfactory and sometimes good at both key stages. Some pupils show an obvious sense of enjoyment in lessons. They work well in pairs, and sometimes have opportunities to use their initiative in creating role plays and working independently. Their positive attitudes are enabling them to improve their performance. However, a few pupils find it difficult to concentrate and achieve their potential. Most pupils, including the most and least able and those with special educational needs, make satisfactory and sometimes good progress in lessons at both key stages.

159. The department has successfully addressed almost all the issues raised in the last inspection report. The quality of teaching and pupil attitudes have improved, pupils understand tenses and agreements better, and GCSE results have improved.

160. The organisation of the curriculum meets statutory requirements. The head of modern languages monitors the progress of pupils. The department is well led and organised, and has prioritised development plans. Visits to France encourage social interaction and personal responsibility. The textbooks and other materials used, together with the visits abroad, help develop awareness of the diversity and richness of other cultures. The quality of most teaching, the attitudes of most pupils, visits to France, and the leadership of the head of modern languages have a positive effect on standards. However, lack of resources, insufficient use of pair work and errors in written work are preventing pupils from achieving higher standards.

## **MUSIC**

161. From the 1999 teacher assessments of levels of attainment at age 14, standards were well below national expectations, but with girls significantly outperforming boys. There have been no examination entries at age 16 in recent years. Attainment on entry is well below the level expected for pupils of the same age nationally.

162. At the age of 14, pupils' attainment is well below the nationally expected level. However, achievements do show an improving trend over the last year. Pupils effectively refine and modify their ideas in group discussions. The more able play or sing simple pieces or accompaniments with some degree of confidence, fitting their part in well to the whole performance. These pupils listen attentively and make appropriate analytical comments, recognising various conventions and styles. However, many pupils have poorly developed vocal skills. In group performances, although most pupils manage to keep going and complete the performance, they do so with inaccuracies in rhythm and little awareness of ensemble. Many of these pupils find listening attentively difficult and are very reliant on

the teacher for support to appraise the music. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls.

163. There are no pupils studying music in the current Year 11, but in Year 10, four pupils are following a half credit GCSE course after school. Their level of attainment is below that expected for pupils of the same age nationally. They perform on their selected instruments or vocally, with some degree of control and confidence, producing prepared improvisations. In listening exercises, they are able to recognise resources and conventions used and how textures are created and are able to place music in its broad historical context. However, their knowledge and use of musical vocabulary are very limited and they lack confidence in performance and improvisation.

164. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. Lessons start with clear instructions and targets for attainment and behaviour, which are then revisited through the lesson. For example, in a Year 7 lesson on African music the teacher ensured that all the pupils had a full understanding of the requirements which enabled them to stay on task and make appropriate progress. Teachers have a sound knowledge and understanding of the subject. A good relationship has been established with pupils, which enables them to make appropriate progress in their learning. Effective teaching makes use of question and answer techniques in a variety of ways. For example, in a Year 7 lesson these were used by the teacher to review and consolidate learning and then to inform assessment and appraisal. In the extra-curricular GCSE Year 10 lesson there was appropriate use of the available time and resources, which led to good pace. Pupils thus made appropriate progress in the lesson. However, at Key Stage 3, not all lessons are planned to match the work to the ability levels of the pupils and so higher attainers were not adequately challenged. In a Year 8 lesson, the management of time was not efficient, leading to an unstructured end to the lesson. Some pupils do not receive teaching from a music specialist teacher and in addition are not covering elements of the National Curriculum.

165. A feature of many Key Stage 3 lessons is the way that pupils work together collaboratively in groups and pairs, developing their ideas to create a desired end result. In these lessons, pupils are keen to take responsibility and think and work things out for themselves. However, in some lessons, inappropriate behaviour resulted in time being wasted and this adversely affects learning and progress. Many pupils are unable to work on their own initiative, as in a Year 9 lesson observed, where pupils could not remain on task unless with direct teacher supervision. Many pupils have poor retention levels which means that work often has to be revisited: this has a detrimental effect on the rate of progress in lessons. Overall, however, the attitudes and personal development of most pupils in music are satisfactory.

166. The management of the subject is satisfactory, with the leadership providing a clear educational direction. Central to the development plan of the department is the raising of both the attainment in and the profile of music. Teaching in the subject is regularly monitored and evaluated. There is a commitment and capacity to improve. However, at present there is an inadequate number and match of specialist teachers to meet the demands of the curriculum.

167. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. The accommodation is now adequate and there are some limited opportunities for instrumental tuition available to challenge the more able pupils. The department still needs to address fully the curricular provision and time allocation at Key Stage 3 and widen the range of resources, such as the use of computers, to support fully the delivery of the curriculum.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

168. GCSE results for the last two years are above the average for the school. In 1999 53 per cent of pupils achieved grades A\*-C, above the national average. A significantly greater number of boys than girls took the course. The total number of pupils taking the GCSE option has remained constant.

169. The majority of pupils at both key stages are achieving standards of practical performance in line with national expectations for their age in a variety of games and gymnastics. A small number of boys are achieving high standards in games, particularly rugby and table tennis at Key Stage 4. This reflects the in-depth work the pupils experience over the key stages. Knowledge of how to prepare for specific activities is less well established. Knowledge and understanding of principles, strategies and tactics in games are also less assured. In gymnastics at Key Stage 3 boys participate vigorously but awareness of what constitutes quality in movement is not as well established as with girls. In netball some girls are demonstrating very good skills. In games most pupils make satisfactory progress in acquiring skills and applying them in specific contexts.

170. The majority of teaching is satisfactory, with some of it good or very good. As a result the majority of pupils make appropriate progress through structured units of work. Teachers have good subject knowledge, allied to accurate knowledge of their pupils, enabling them to promote realistic expectations and for pupils with special educational needs to succeed. There is a good balance of individual, small group and whole group tasks. GCSE teaching is well researched and the 'booster club' and other opportunities for rock climbing and dry skiing beyond the curriculum enhance attainment. Pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated and are often not identifiable in lessons. Strategies for dealing with inappropriate behaviour are not always consistent across boys, girls and mixed groups.

171. A limited number of pupils take advantage of the opportunity to advance and refine their skills through the extra-curricular programme. Some individuals and teams progress to achievements at district level and beyond.

172. The members of the department work well as a team but a greater sharing of individual good practice in teaching would help to raise standards further. There is a need to establish an overall curriculum map, which develops knowledge and understanding as well as skills. Curriculum units at Key Stage 3 are not currently informed by pupil attainment in the different activities.

173. The issues arising from the last inspection continue to be addressed. There is a degree of choice in the curriculum at Key Stage 4, but opportunities to extend pupils' experience by involving the use of off-site facilities are limited. Although attempts have been made to develop extra-curricular provision for all and not just the elite, the participation rates are still low. Strategies to achieve success at GCSE are well considered and have been crucial to improvement.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

174. Standards of attainment meet the expectations of the locally Agreed Syllabus by the end of Key Stage 3. Some pupils at Key Stage 4 attain above average, and the majority attain in line with expectations. Pupils with special educational needs also achieve satisfactory standards at both key stages. A small number of pupils took the 1999 GCSE examination and all gained a grade in the range A\*-G, with a few achieving success at the

higher grades A\*-C. In 1999 the first group of pupils from Key Stage 4 took the short course GCSE examination and a good start was made, with a wide range of grades. In general, standards of attainment have improved well since the last inspection, when attainment was below average.

175. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils are beginning to grasp some 'ultimate' questions, such as issues about life and death. They can talk sensitively about emotions for example, jealousy, love and joy. Pupils know facts about religions such as the Five Pillars of Islam, and can discuss aspects of these topics well. They understand that rituals such as baptism require commitment from believers. In a Year 9 lesson, pupils discussed the background of immigration to Britain in the 50's and 60's, and wrote clearly and with understanding about subsequent racial problems.

176. Pupils, by the end of Key Stage 4, have progressed in their knowledge and understanding and are able to give considerable detail, for example, when talking about Islam in preparation for their examinations. In one such lesson, attainment was above average. Other pupils, in Year 10, were studying the concept of spirituality, using music as a stimulus and discussed their responses well. Extended essays for examination purposes are in line with the coursework requirements overall, and several are above average. Pupils at Key Stage 4 show a sound grasp of the topics they are studying, together with ability to research and present an essay. There are some good examples of research and extended writing on the topic of abortion, where pupils have taken information from a variety of sources, including the Internet.

177. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall at both key stages. Teachers have a good grasp of the subject and are able to set good challenges and pace as a result. This in turn allows pupils to acquire new learning well, or to consolidate previous work. Teachers use appropriate methods that keep pupils interested in their work and promote concentration and perseverance well. Planning is usually very good and teachers share good practice. Management of pupils is good, and relationships that teachers have established result in good behaviour and application to work from the pupils. In examination classes there is a strong sense of co-operation between pupils and teachers, which encourages good discussion and learning.

178. Clear objectives for each lesson are given which enable pupils to understand what is expected of them and to take some responsibility for their own work. Generally there needs to be greater use of information technology as a resource. However, a Year 10 class was seen using the Internet to research their work prior to using a word processing program to present their ideas. Key words are given to pupils, and the displays in the rooms help to reinforce these.

179. The schemes of work for religious education follow the locally Agreed Syllabus closely, giving a broad and balanced curriculum. This is enhanced by visits to places of religious interest such as the Regents Park mosque, Canterbury Cathedral, and visits abroad to St. Omer and Aachen. The allocation of time to the subject is shared with moral, personal and social education but all pupils receive at least one lesson each week of religious education, which meets the statutory requirement and represents an improvement since the last inspection.

180. The subject is very well led. The head of department is a specialist, as are most of the teachers in the team. Procedures for monitoring and assessment are good; there are effective records and feedback notes about these evaluations. Assessment of pupils' work is thorough, and marking gives pupils help on how to improve.



181. The department makes a good contribution towards the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. Overall, there has been good improvement since the last inspection; it is a developing subject benefiting from good leadership and an effective team of teachers.