

INSPECTION REPORT

THE SYDNEY RUSSELL SCHOOL

Dagenham

LEA area: Barking

Unique reference number: 101246

Headteacher: Mr. R. Leighton

Reporting inspector: Mr. R. Passant
2728

Dates of inspection: 08 - 12 January 2001

Inspection number: 199193

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

© Crown copyright 2001

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

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Parsloes Avenue Dagenham Essex
Postcode:	RM9 5QT
Telephone number:	020 8270 4333
Fax number:	020 8270 4377
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr. I. Rowley
Date of previous inspection:	26 to 29 January 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2728	Mr. R. Passant	Registered inspector	Media Studies Drama	The school's results and pupils' achievements. How well are pupils taught? How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils or students? How well is the school led and managed?
11041	Mr. M. Moore	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?
8185	Mr. P. Kendall	Team inspector	Art	
12885	Mr. J. Hunt	Team inspector	Mathematics	Sixth form
30563	Ms. J. Pentlow	Team inspector	Physical education, dance.	Equal opportunities
1990	Mr. G. Preston	Team inspector	Design and technology	Curriculum
20412	Ms. D. Shepherd	Team inspector	Modern languages	
8052	Mr. K. McKenzie	Team inspector	Information technology Business Education	
30427	Ms. F. Shuffle-Botham	Team inspector	History	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
12121	Mr. J. Mallinson	Team inspector	English	
23188	Ms. V. Maunder	Team inspector	Science	
12179	Mr. L. Moscrop	Team inspector	Religious education	English as an additional language
18984	Mr. D. Adams	Team inspector	Music	
11300	Mr. B. Smith	Team inspector	Geography	Special educational needs

The inspection contractor was:

Cambridge Education Associates Ltd
Demeter House
Station Road
Cambridge
CB1 2RS

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

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

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7 - 11
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	12 - 15
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	15 - 18
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?	18 - 21
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	21 - 22
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	22 - 23
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	23 - 24
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	24 - 25
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	26 - 29
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	30 - 51

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is a mixed comprehensive school for pupils and students aged 11 to 19. The school is bigger than average having 1462 on roll. It has a joint sixth form provision shared with a neighbouring school for 147 students. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is above the national average. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs is broadly average although the percentage of pupils with statements is above the national average. The majority of pupils are white UK heritage. There are about five per cent of pupils from Europe. The largest other ethnic groupings are Black Caribbean and Black African heritage. There are a small number of Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Chinese heritage pupils. The percentage of pupils speaking English as an additional language is higher than average. The dominant language of these pupils is Albanian.

On entry to the school the attainment of pupils, as measured by their tests in primary schools, show recent improvements but are well below average. Pupils enter with particularly low levels of literacy skills. Many pupils also arrive lacking confidence and having a low sense of self-esteem. The area has a very low percentage of adults with higher educational qualifications and many have very low educational aspirations, coupled with aspects of deprivation.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Overall, the school is providing an effective education for the majority of pupils. Standards are very low compared to national averages but examination results in GCSE are broadly in line with schools which have a similar number of pupils eligible for free school meals. Standards are rising at a rate above that nationally. Teaching is satisfactory and, given their prior attainment, pupils are making satisfactory progress. The leadership and the management across the school are good. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- The leadership and management of the school are good and this is leading to a rise in standards from a low base.
- The guidance and support the pupils and students receive through tutors, heads of year and the personal social and health education programme are good.
- Science, physical education, dance, business education, and religious education in the upper school are areas of relative strength.
- The range of activities that the school provides in addition to the formal taught curriculum is good.
- The commitment of the staff to improve further is good.

What could be improved

- Raise standards in tests and examinations across the school
- Pupils entitlement to the national curriculum particularly with regard to:
 - Modern foreign languages
 - The use of computers across the curriculum
- The use of assessment within departments to monitor how pupils are making progress.
- The school's ability to monitor itself to ensure consistency in the implementation of school policy and to evaluate its progress and development.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made satisfactory improvement since it was last inspected in 1998. The strengths outweigh the weaknesses. The quality of teaching has significantly improved across the school. Standards in GCSE, although still below national averages, have shown improvement. Attendance has improved although it remains well below the national average. Behaviour has improved. In English, now there is uniformity and a high degree of conscientiousness in the way the subject is taught. Basic skills and presentation are good at all levels of attainment. Examination results in English are improving, slowly in GCSE and rapidly in the sixth form. In mathematics, attainment in the lower school has improved and pupils are now making satisfactory progress in the upper school. In science, National Curriculum tests for fourteen-year-olds and GCSE examination results have improved. Standards in pupils use of computers are rising. Continuing weaknesses that the school

has not addressed are the statutory requirements for all pupils to take a modern foreign language in the upper school and religious education in the sixth form, and it still does not provide for a daily act of worship for all pupils.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE examinations	E	E	E	C
A-levels/AS-levels	E	E	E*	

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E
very low	E*

Results in National Curriculum tests at 14 in 2000 are well below the national average in mathematics, science and English in the percentage of pupils achieving level 5. They are also well below average in the percentage of pupils achieving level 6 in mathematics and science and very low in English, in the bottom five percent of schools nationally. When the results are compared to similar schools, (that is schools which have the same percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals) they are well below average in English and average in mathematics and science. When the same comparison is made in the percentage of pupils achieving level 6, they are very low in English, average in mathematics and above average in science. The trend for improvement is below that found nationally. Standards in physical education and dance are good.

GCSE examination results are improving above the rate nationally but standards are below average in all subjects. Pupils make satisfactory progress and achieve satisfactorily, given their prior attainment across all subjects. Standards in physical education and dance are good, while standards in science, business education and religious education are higher than standards in other subjects. The school sets itself challenging targets and although it missed its target of the percentage of pupils achieving A* to C in 2000 it is optimistic about achieving its target of 33 per cent achieving A* to C in the 2001 examinations.

Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress against their targets, as do pupils with English as an additional language. There are differences in the performance of boys and girls in some subjects such as English and geography, although the difference in the better performance of the girls is close to what is found nationally.

The performance in the sixth form is in the lowest five per cent of school nationally. However, in most subjects the majority of pupils achieve results at or above the level predicted by their prior attainment. In English, pupils achieve well considering the fact that many start the course with low GCSE grades. In art, students develop good skills and in history and geography students gain passes across the full range of grades.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	The majority of pupils enjoy coming to school and in the majority of lessons they settle to work and have positive attitudes to learning
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Overall, behaviour is satisfactory. The majority of pupils behave well for most of the time. There is some poor behaviour but it is usually dealt with well by the school.
Personal development and relationships	Personal development and relationships are satisfactory overall. The school is vigilant about the possibility of bullying.
Attendance	Despite the schools efforts attendance remains well below average. Registers are taken in classes and pupils questioned if they arrive late.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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.

During the inspection, excellent teaching was seen in one per cent of lessons, very good in 15 per cent, good in 36 per cent and satisfactory teaching in 44 per cent of lessons. Unsatisfactory teaching was seen in three per cent and poor teaching was seen in one per cent. There was no very poor teaching.

The quality of teaching in English is never less than satisfactory and in some lessons was good or very good. In mathematics, teaching is always at least satisfactory and frequently good. In science, the quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection and over half the lessons were good or better. Nevertheless, there were a small but significant number of lessons in science, which were unsatisfactory.

Good teaching was seen across the school and in all subjects. The strengths in teaching are particularly apparent with older pupils and students. These include good subject knowledge and confident presentation. Good planning and effective questioning skills and good classroom management are characteristics frequently seen. Good examples were seen of high quality marking and effective homework being set. These two aspects, however, are variable across the school.

These strengths in teaching are seen across the school and consequently pupils' learning is, overall, satisfactory. Pupils listen well and concentrate and learn at a good pace where there is a consistency in the teachers' expectations and teaching approach and where the pupils expect to be motivated and challenged by carefully planned work. Weaknesses occur when the management of behaviour becomes confrontational and teachers do not have the depth of subject knowledge.

Although many subjects do not make significant use of numeracy, there was no evidence during the inspection that pupils' lack of numeracy skills was impeding their progress. There are good examples, in for example, geography where mathematical data is being used and numeracy skills reinforced. The school has implemented a strategy to improve pupils' reading, writing and speaking skills across the school and has made some progress. Pupils demonstrate good basic skills in some subjects. where pupils speak frequently, make good use of writing guides, and use accurately the technical vocabulary required. Pupils not knowing the meaning of technical terms, however, undermine the learning, particularly in mathematics and science. In modern languages, the skills of writing are often ignored and the quantity of writing is insufficient. Pupils' lack of practice in speaking is a further weakness in many subjects, notably mathematics, science, art and physical education. As a result, they cannot always articulate fully their ideas or learn from each other.

Teaching of pupils with special educational needs is, overall, satisfactory, as is the teaching of pupils with English as an additional language. The school has only recently identified talented and gifted pupils. A member of staff has been appointed to ensure that these pupils will receive appropriate support and are extended in their work but the provision is currently unsatisfactory.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	There are strengths in the curriculum, notably the personal, social and health education programme and the provision for extra-curricular activities. The school works with another local school to provide a viable sixth form with a good range of courses. There are, however weaknesses and the provision is unsatisfactory in the lower and upper school. These weaknesses relate to pupils' entitlement to a modern foreign language in the upper school and the use of computers across all subjects in the curriculum. The banding arrangements inadvertently reduce the viability of some option groups in the upper school.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Overall, the provision is satisfactory. Teaching to specialist groups is often good and learning support assistants are effective in their support in lessons when that support is available. Not all teachers are using pupils individual education plans in their planning.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Overall the provision is satisfactory. There is effective specialist support until pupils ' English is regarded as adequate to access the curriculum. All staff have received training on teaching pupils with English as an additional language. Support in classes is limited.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Overall, the provision is satisfactory. The provision for spiritual development is unsatisfactory. The school is not meeting the requirements to hold a daily collective act of worship and there is no religious education in the sixth form. The provision for moral development is good as is the provision for social development; albeit opportunities for pupils to work together in class and take responsibility are limited but there is good other social provision. The provision for cultural development is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The provision is good and is a strength of the school. Child protection is good. Heads of year and form tutors know the pupils and the pastoral system is effective. A nurse and a counsellor are available for pupils and students to talk to in confidence.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership by the headteacher is very good. There is a clear sense of direction focused on raising pupils' attainment. There have been sharply defined priorities, such as monitoring and improving the quality of teaching. Across the school the quality of leadership and management are good and have led to improvements. There is a strong corporate commitment to improve.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is very supportive of the school and takes its role very seriously. It has not ensured that the school meets the statutory requirements with aspects of the curriculum but it has brought a strong commitment to raise standards and to hold the school to account for ensuring that improvement takes place. It monitors the work of the school effectively, including the budget and ensures that expenditure is carefully considered.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The senior management make effective use of comparative data to compare the school's performance. The use of data for setting targets and comparing performance within departments has been variable. The school now has an assessment management system which will help this process. Issues facing the school now relate to consistency of implementation of school policy and a more formalised monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance linked to longer-term school improvement plan.
The strategic use of resources	Specific grants are used well. For example, creating strategies to support improvements in behaviour, making improvements to the school building and developing resources.

Overall, the accommodation is satisfactory with significant areas of strength such as the school library and sports facilities. The level of resources is satisfactory. The school has an above average number of computers but access by subjects to them is restricted because of the growth in specialist courses. Generally, there is a satisfactory match of staff to the curriculum but there are weaknesses where the school has found it impossible to replace specialist staff, particularly in design and technology. With any significant expenditure the school ensures that it obtains best value for money that it can.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Their child likes school• Their child is making good progress in school• The teaching is good• The school expects their child to work hard and do their best	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The behaviour in the school• The work given to their child to do at home• The information they receive.

Overall, behaviour is satisfactory. There is some poor behaviour but it is usually managed well. The school is vigilant about the possibility of bullying. The setting of homework is inconsistent across the school. The information parents receive is satisfactory but reports could be improved.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. When the pupils in the recent and current examinations joined the school, their overall attainment as measured by the National Curriculum tests at the age of eleven was well below the national average. Over the past two to three years there have been improvements in pupils' attainment when they join the school but, overall, attainment is still well below average. Many pupils joining the school have particularly low-level skills in speaking, reading and writing. Many also arrive lacking confidence and having low self-esteem. The area has a very low percentage of adults with higher educational qualifications and many have very low educational aspirations coupled with aspects of deprivation.
2. Results in National Curriculum tests at 14 in 2000 are well below the national average in mathematics, science and English in the percentage of pupils achieving level 5. They are also well below average in the percentage of pupils achieving level 6 in mathematics and science and very low in English, in the bottom five percent of schools nationally. When the results are compared to similar schools, (that is schools which have the same percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals) they are well below average in English and average in mathematics and science. When the same comparison is made in the percentage of pupils achieving level 6, they are very low in English, average in mathematics and above average in science.
3. An overview of pupils' results that takes full account of the achievement of all pupils, and is not dependant simply on the proportions reaching a threshold level, is obtained by using the average point score achieved by pupils. This indicates that pupils' performance in English is very low and in mathematics and science, it is well below average. When these scores are compared to similar schools, the school's performance in English was well below average and in mathematics and science they were below average. Overall, the school's performance in these three subjects was well below average in comparison with similar schools.
4. Since 1998, there has been a decline in the English average point score, whilst in mathematics and science there has been an upward trend. Up to a year ago, the trend in the improvement in performance in these subjects was in line with the trend nationally. When the figures for 2000 are taken into account, it indicates a trend for improvement below the national trend.
5. Results in GCSE in 2000 are well below national averages in the percentage of pupils achieving five or more grades A* to C, those achieving five or more grades A* to G and those achieving one or more grade A* to G. When they are compared to similar schools, the results are average in all three categories. They are also average when compared to schools where pupils had similar test scores at the age of eleven.
6. Whilst the results are well below the national average they have shown improvement in recent years and the trend for improvement is above the national trend.
7. In 2000 the average points score of candidates entered for two or more A levels or AS levels was very low in comparison with the national average. When averaged over the last three years the points score for candidates entered for two or more A or AS levels is very low. However, in most subjects the majority of pupils achieve results at or above the level predicted by their prior attainment. In English, students achieve well considering that many students start the course with low grades in English GCSE. In art, students develop good skills and in history and geography students gain passes across the full range of grades. Because of the poor results in mathematics in the 2000 examinations, which the school partly attributes to staffing difficulties, the department has revised its entry requirements.
8. With the exception of business studies where attainment is often good, attainment in all subjects is below average. Based on the work and the lessons seen during the inspection and given their prior attainment pupils make at least satisfactory progress across all subjects.
9. In English, based on the work of the current pupils, progress and achievement, given pupils prior attainment, is satisfactory until pupils are 16 and good for students who stay on into the sixth form. Girls perform better than boys but similar to the difference found nationally. Progress and pupils' achievement in mathematics in the lower and upper school and the sixth

form is satisfactory although results were poor in the sixth form in 2000. In science, by the time pupils are 16 they have made good progress.

10. By the age of 14, nearly all pupils have clear legible handwriting and can spell common words accurately. They structure their writing into paragraphs and develop a reasoned argument. The higher attaining pupils use a wide vocabulary and write at good length. They show perceptiveness in their comments on literature. The range of work is narrow, however, and heavily guided by the teacher, so that the work produced by each pupil is very similar.
11. These skills underpin the English work in the upper school. The best pupils are beginning to write analytically about literature although they still largely restrict themselves to re-telling the story. Lower attaining pupils study the same material, but rely even more on the guidance of the teacher. Pupils seldom become learners who can work independently. Until recently many of the lowest attaining pupils, chiefly boys, have not been entered for GCSE but for a Certificate of Achievement, but it is notable that many of those who are entered, and might have been expected to obtain very low grades, in fact achieve results a grade or two higher.
12. Standards of speaking and reading are well below national expectations. Pupils spend too little time in speaking and are not given practice in listening sensitively to each other. When they do speak, it tends to be in single words or phrases, directed at the teacher.
13. A literacy strategy across the school has been set in place. As a result, pupils demonstrate good basic skills in some subjects. In mathematics and science, however, the lack of knowledge of technical terms hampers pupils' learning. There are insufficient opportunities across the curriculum for pupils to practise their speaking and listening skills. Responses to questions are often one-word answers.
14. The mathematics curriculum includes the development of appropriate numeracy skills of the pupils. In the lower school, pupils work on basic algebraic expressions, subtraction of decimal numbers without using a calculator, and on coordinates in the first quadrant to find the mid-point of a line. Older pupils are able to convert from metric to imperial and work on the use of column vectors to describe tessellations. Although many other subjects do not make significant use of numeracy, there was no evidence during the inspection that pupils' lack of numeracy skills impedes their progress. Where it is used, as in geography, for example, use of number is satisfactory with appropriate understanding. Pupils can, for example, construct graphs and interpret statistics.
15. In science, younger pupils can carry out experiments planned by the teacher, are able to record observations, take reasonably accurate measurements and present data in the form of charts and graphs. Older pupils demonstrate a good understanding of the composition of blood, and the structure of the heart and blood circulatory system or recall facts such as the structure of the atom. Practical skills improve and pupils are generally able to draw conclusions that are consistent with the evidence and explain them showing scientific knowledge and understanding. Investigative skills, such as making predictions, and planning and evaluating their own investigations, are not well developed.
16. The school has invested in a detailed analysis of pupils' test scores at 11 and 14, which will be used to inform the target setting process and provide the means of identifying specific pupils requiring additional support. The school failed to achieve its 2000 target of 29 per cent of pupils achieving grades A* to C. It did, however, surpass its more modest target, in comparison with the previous year, of an average point score of 27. The school is, however, much more confident about achieving the 2001 targets of 33 per cent of pupils achieving grades A* to C which, although still below the national average, would represent a significant improvement from the very low base five years ago.
17. The school has divided the school population into two broad bands in order to raise pupils' aspirations and allow for targeted support. Lower attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs make at least satisfactory progress. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress against their targets. Pupils receive effective support from special educational needs teachers and classroom assistants when that support is available. Individual education plans are readily available to all staff but are not always considered in planning lessons. Ensuring a good match of work, particularly the reading level of the materials used is variable across departments.

18. All teachers in the school have a regular programme of in-service training, which gives them guidance and help on teaching pupils who have English as an additional language. Overall, the progress of pupils identified as needing support because they have English as an additional language and the level of support they receive in specialist classes and across the school is satisfactory. There is some support in lessons but this largely limited to mathematics, English, and science.
19. A recent audit has revealed a group of gifted and talented pupils representing about seven per cent of each year. At present support for this group is unsatisfactory. A member of staff has now been assigned to monitor the progress of the group to ensure they will now receive the appropriate attention and support.

Pupils' attitudes, values, and personal development

20. Overall, the behaviour of pupils is satisfactory. The majority of pupils behave well for most of the time. The majority of pupils know, understand, and follow the school rules and as a result, the school is, in the main, a calm community and there is a purposeful atmosphere in 90 per cent of lessons. There are incidents of poor behaviour and there are a number of pupils in the school who behave badly. These incidents are usually managed well. Nevertheless, such incidents gain notoriety within the school and its local community.
21. The school takes incidents of poor behaviour very seriously and the high rate of fixed term exclusions which have operated until recently, usually of one or two days, until parents and pupil have visited the school, has been a way of publicly stating that such behaviour will not be permitted. Whilst these exclusions reflect a high proportion of Black African pupils, given their numbers in the school, they relate directly to incidents of poor behaviour of the individuals concerned. There have been a small number of permanent exclusions and this number has recently fallen.
22. The school site is large and relatively open. It is a difficult site to monitor. Some parts of the school have narrow stairwells and corridors have hard reflective surfaces, which amplify any noise and help create a poor impression as large numbers of pupils move around, which is not justified by the reality of their behaviour. This is particularly the case in the older buildings and the older of the two canteens. At the parents' meeting, parents were concerned with behaviour and the amount of supervision. Supervision at the morning break is good. Adults are less evident around the site at lunchtime. Given the very high numbers going into the canteen and queuing, more supervision is required. The introduction of the school uniform has been part of a strategy of giving high visibility to the pupils within the community.
23. The school has introduced, very recently, a behaviour management programme aimed at reducing the large number of fixed rate exclusions. The school has received funding to set up a 'learning support unit', which admits and accommodates pupils who are in danger of being excluded because of poor behaviour. Form tutors identify these pupils after consultation with the appropriate Head of Year and discussion with members of the senior management team. The system used, whereby the Head of Year stays with the same group of pupils during their time at the school, is largely successful and the bonding which occurs between form tutors and pupils ensures that pupils are well known to staff and potential problems are picked up early. The school also makes use of an 'inclusion isolation unit' where the most disruptive pupils are sent for a fixed period to do work and where their behaviour and work are very closely monitored. The introduction of the learning support unit and social inclusion unit are effective strategies to tackle the behaviour of difficult pupils. The school has also carried out a behaviour audit, identifying pupils' behaviour in subjects across the school. It plans to use this information to identify individual pupils in order to provide them with support and to keep the governing body informed of progress in improving behaviour across the school.
24. The school is aware that bullying can occur. It is vigilant and there are effective strategies for dealing with such behaviour. Members of staff are quick to take action to identify offenders and remedy the situation. The personal and social education programme contains specific units on identifying types of bullying, including invidious name-calling, and, what pupils can do about it. Informal discussions with pupils indicated that, whilst pupils might be picked on because of the make of their training shoes, pupils were not picked on because of their race. Pupils' relationship with school staff and peer groups, including those with special educational needs and from other ethnic groups are satisfactory, as is their attitude to lessons and their life in

school in general. The vast majority of pupils enjoy coming to school and pupils, particularly in Years 12 and 13, offer assistance to younger pupils and act as role models for them.

25. In general, pupils display respect for their own property, the property of staff and pupils and the school building in general. Exceptions are the girls' toilets and litter. The school does spend a significant amount of time and money on eliminating graffiti as soon as it occurs and the younger pupils, particularly, appreciate this. The school also invests in maintaining the site as being litter free and through specific projects, such as a memorial garden and outdoor tables and seating, trying to raise pupils' awareness of their surroundings.
26. Pupils are given some opportunity to display personal responsibility and show initiative, but this is an area that requires development. Pupils help the staff in a small number of ways, for example: acting as receptionists, helping in the library and Year 10 and 11 pupils acting as mentors to the younger pupils. In addition, the school has appointed a sixth form committee who advise the staff on social events to be arranged. The school has not yet arranged a prefect system but has appointed a Head Girl and Head Boy, Deputy Head Boy and deputy Head Girl to represent the school at various functions. Where pupils are given responsibility they are able to, in the main, behave in a mature and sensible way but the school should create more opportunities for pupils to develop self-confidence, communication and social skills.
27. The school has a successful and very well structured personal, social and health education programme, which commences at Year 7 and continues through pupils' life at the school. Pupils are able to participate in these lessons in a confident and competent way. For example, in a Year 8 lesson on sex education, pupils were able to discuss contraception and the effects of unwanted pregnancy in a sensible manner and the level of contributions by both boys and girls to the discussion was high. In Year 9, pupils were beginning to consider where they might be in three years time and what they might be doing as part of the careers programme.
28. The school has energetically addressed the problem of poor attendance and is making strenuous, vigorous and successful efforts to improve it. Despite the school's efforts, attendance at the school is well below average and is therefore unsatisfactory. A successful financial bid has been made to set up a support group for pupils who attend poorly. This is aimed at the significant minority of pupils who attend school for only part of the week, which has a negative effect on the progress that these pupils are making. This group, which meets regularly, includes the Education Welfare Officer, the Education Psychologist and offers support and guidance within the school context to pupils. In addition, a recent audit held by the local education authority's 'Behaviour Team', at the schools request, has identified ways of possibly improving attendance, such as the awarding of small gifts, rewards such as extended school outings and certificates. Whilst these initiatives have been introduced only recently, they are already having a positive effect on attendance, which has improved significantly since the last inspection report. Pupils are expected to arrive at school on time and late-comers are monitored. Lessons start promptly, registers are taken in lessons and any pupil arriving late is carefully questioned.
29. The quality of pupils' attitudes, values and personal development mentioned in the previous report has been maintained and attendance and behaviour have shown improvement.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

30. Overall, the quality of teaching across the school is satisfactory. The strengths in the quality of teaching outweigh some weaknesses. Good and very good teaching was seen across the school in all subjects and particularly with older pupils. In the last inspection, 15 per cent of the teaching seen was classified as being less than satisfactory. In the lessons seen during this inspection, four per cent of the lessons were less than satisfactory and good or better teaching was seen in over half the lessons. This represents a significant improvement and reflects well on the considerable work that the school has undertaken in ensuring that teaching is professional and competent.
31. Overall, teachers have good subject knowledge. In a science lesson, this led to challenging tasks and activities and careful links being established with everyday life. In a geography lesson, the good subject knowledge allowed the teacher to conjure up word pictures of situations that stimulated pupils to seek answers to the problems being set around the question 'Why there are increasing numbers of jobs in the service industries?' In English, the teacher showed very good knowledge of the play the sixth form students were reading. This enabled

the teacher to give highly articulate and clear explanations as well as communicating to the students that he cared deeply about the play and the themes being explored. In history, the teacher's expertise meant that he was able to give specific help to the group with their examination essay writing technique. Where teachers were less secure in their subject knowledge, as in some religious education lessons taught by non-specialist teachers, there was less confident exploration of the material and the objectives of the lesson were more limited.

32. This good subject knowledge, which most teachers demonstrate, allows them establish a strong class presence, to project a confidence to the pupils that the work is not only interesting but that the pupils will be able to achieve the objectives which are appropriately demanding. It also allows teachers to demonstrate real enthusiasm and the fact that they care about what they are teaching which, in turn motivates and engages the pupils in their work. Many teachers communicate to the pupils that what they are teaching is important, is relevant, is fun or exciting and pupils respond, so that the task becomes important to them and is not simply a task being undertaken because the teacher 'says so'.
33. A criticism of the previous report was that, although some lessons were satisfactory as a lesson, pupils' learning did not develop in a planned sequence. This has been addressed well. Considerable work has been undertaken in developing schemes of work, which are detailed and support the teachers' planning and, as a consequence, the quality of teacher planning is good. The intentions of the lesson are clear and shared with the pupils so that they have a clear understanding of what they are doing and why and how this lesson fits into what they did before. Good planning also results in a good range of interesting activities and well-chosen resources. For example, in a history lesson on the sinking of the Titanic, the use of casualty figures and a range of first-hand account provided fascinating material for pupils to carry out their investigation.
34. At their most explicit, the schemes of work detail what is to happen lesson by lesson, providing the teacher with a template on which to build. In a very good personal and social education lesson on the theme of bullying, part of a unit of work for Year 7 pupils, the teacher used the lesson plan as a platform but used her professional expertise and her personality to teach and enrich the lesson and develop the trust and confidence of the pupils. In contrast, whilst the adoption of the scheme of work in English has led to undoubted benefits, teachers were sometimes less confident to bring their own expertise into play, building on the plan, so that some lessons lacked the 'sparkle' that the teachers could have undoubtedly brought to the lesson.
35. Teachers' questioning skills are often good. In a science lesson, the questioning helped the teacher find out what pupils remembered and understood by 'refraction' and in geography a useful question and answer session helped establish what the green house effect was and how it led to global warming. In art, questioning reinforced understanding of technical vocabulary such as 'tone', 'harmonious' or 'embellish' with a Year 7 class.
36. Classroom management is also generally good. Many teachers establish good relationships and have an obvious rapport with the pupils. Pupils' behaviour is usually managed well, in a firm but positive manner. Usually teachers distinguish between the behaviour that is being presented and the pupil. The distinction allows them to tackle the pupils' behaviour as it is presented without rejecting the pupil. There are a number of key characteristics in lessons where teachers manage pupils' behaviour well. Teachers have high expectations of achievement and behaviour, there are well established routines, and in some cases this includes pupils following a seating plan which prevents some pupils working alongside others, and there is a consistency about adhering to some basic class rules, for example putting your hand up and not shouting out. Although poor behaviour is managed well, generally, the pace of some of the lessons is slowed by the need to stop and manage the behaviour. This interrupts the learning which is taking place.
37. There are examples of particularly helpful marking of work; for example, within the English department, where it is exceptionally thorough and helpful, giving pupils and sixth form students a clear idea of what they have to do to improve. Homework, too, was seen to be set in some lessons across the school, which extended the learning opportunities and clearly was part of a consistent policy.
38. These strengths in teaching are seen across the school and consequently pupils' learning is, overall, satisfactory. Pupils listen well and concentrate and learn at a good pace where there is a consistency in the teachers' expectations and teaching approach and where the pupils expect

to be motivated and challenged by carefully planned work using a good range of interesting material which is carefully matched to their ability through the use of effective assessment systems.

39. Weaknesses in the quality of teaching are often at the other end of the spectrum from the identified strengths. Whilst there were good examples of marking and the setting of homework, for example, these were not a consistent feature across the school. Expectations are not always demanding enough, so that too little work is expected and the pace of the lesson becomes more pedestrian or that lessons lack a variety of approaches. Time is sometimes not managed well, particularly when there is a double period. In some lessons, perhaps because of concern over behaviour, the opportunities for pupils to work within groups or show independence are limited, with the result that the teacher's talk dominates the lesson. In a few lessons, behaviour is not managed well and becomes confrontational or teachers do not identify early enough in the lesson those pupils who are having problems with the work.
40. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is at least satisfactory and they make steady progress as a result. Teaching was good or very good in a half of the special needs classes. In these lessons, pupils were encouraged well; lessons were pitched at the right level and there was good teaching. Whether placed in the special educational needs groups or in the mainstream bands, pupils receive effective support from special educational needs teachers and classroom assistants when that support is available. Individual education plans are clear and helpful. They contain targets, which are set by the special educational needs co-ordinator and the team but are not translated into subject specific targets other than those for literacy. The individual education plans are readily available to teachers and departments but are not always used in planning lessons. It may be a perception amongst staff that special needs are taken care of by special educational needs staff in the special needs groups and consequently there is low priority given to issues such as matching work to the abilities of pupils in some departments. Many pupils have low levels of literacy skills which impede learning and overall, staff are not sufficiently aware of the reading levels required by some of the text books in use and the need to provide more help in helping pupils understand the material.
41. Overall, the progress of pupils identified as needing support because they have English as an additional language and the level of support they receive in class is satisfactory. All pupils are tested on entry to the school and those needing particular help join an induction programme which gives intensive English language help in the morning periods. The pupils join the normal school lessons in the afternoon. Pupils on the induction programme are tested every half term and then join the full timetable of the school when their competency in English is judged adequate. There is some support in lessons but this largely limited to mathematics, English and science. Sometimes the support in these lessons is inadequate and other subject areas too, such as religious education, receive no support in class. The English language support unit in the school, however, has only the equivalent of two full time staff to do both the induction programme and the in-class support and so they are severely limited as to what they can accomplish. All teachers in the school have a regular programme of in-service training, which gives them guidance and help on teaching pupils who have English as an additional language. Departments are provided with information, which identifies those needing support with English language.
42. A member of staff has been assigned to monitor gifted and talented pupils and a recent audit has revealed a group representing about seven per cent of each year, who will now receive the appropriate attention and support. At present that support is unsatisfactory.
43. Across the school, there were good examples of teamwork and an understanding of each others role between class teacher and classroom assistant. In these lessons, the role of the assistant had been planned for. In other lessons, however, the role of the additional adult was less than clear, other than being a presence in the classroom.
44. Although many subjects do not make significant use of numeracy, there was no evidence during the inspection that pupils' lack of numeracy skills was impeding their progress. There are good examples, in,, for example, geography, where mathematical data is being used and numeracy skills reinforced.
45. A literacy strategy has been set in place, building on effective work done in the primary schools, which began to take effect in 1998. As a result, pupils demonstrate good basic skills in some subjects. Particular strengths were observed in personal and social education, geography, and history, where pupils speak frequently, make good use of writing guides, and use accurately the

technical vocabulary required. In some other subjects, such as art, there is an emphasis on displaying or explaining words in common usage. Pupils not knowing the meaning of technical terms, however, undermine the learning, particularly in mathematics and science. In modern languages, the skills of writing are often ignored and the quantity of writing is insufficient. Pupils' lack of practice in speaking is a further weakness in many subjects, notably mathematics, science, art and physical education. As a result, they cannot fully articulate their ideas or learn from each other.

46. Some progress has been made. Nevertheless, the low levels of literacy skills of many of the pupils remain a considerable challenge. The school needs to ensure that all departments are aware of the strategy, contribute to its further development and regularly review its progress. In particular, more attention needs to be given across the school to developing skills in reading, speaking and listening. There remains the need for a greater awareness within departments of the importance of the need to match written material to the reading abilities of the pupils as well as pitching the work to the appropriate level.
47. The quality of teaching in English is never less than satisfactory and in some lessons was good or very good. In mathematics, teaching is always at least satisfactory and frequently good. In science, the quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection and over half the lessons were good or better. Nevertheless, there were a small but significant number of lessons, which were unsatisfactory and overall, because of this, the quality of teaching in science is unsatisfactory.
48. Teaching in art is at least satisfactory with some good and very good teaching seen in the upper school and sixth form. Teaching in design and technology was by a mix of specialist teachers and non-specialist supply staff. Non-specialist teaching was never less than satisfactory, with all staff showing secure class management skills. Specialist teaching was often very good. Teaching in geography is satisfactory or better in all lessons and good in a half. In history, teaching is satisfactory as it is in information technology, drama, and modern foreign languages. In music, teaching is at least satisfactory and mostly good. In business education teaching is never less than satisfactory and more often good.
49. Teaching in physical education is good, as it is in media studies, dance and personal and social education. Teaching in religious education is satisfactory in the lower school and at least good in the upper school.
50. There are three other factors, which lie outside the direct control of the class teacher, which cause discontinuities in pupils' learning. The first of these is erratic attendance. The school has made significant and successful attempts to improve attendance. Nevertheless, poor or erratic attendance remains a problem with a core of pupils in examination classes; pupils miss work, and, consequently, coursework suffers. The second discontinuity is caused by lack of specialist teaching for a sustained period because of staffing problems. This has caused particular difficulties in mathematics and the design and technology area. Not only are examination groups affected but also younger pupils lack the necessary practical design and technology experience and therefore the foundation to build on their work. The third factor is caused by the discontinuity caused by a rotation of activities. For example, in drama, the teacher was meeting the group again for the first time since October and inevitably relationships and expectations regarding behaviour and classroom routines were having to be rebuilt from scratch.

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

51. There are some significant strengths in the quality and range of learning opportunities provided by the school. They are, however, outweighed by weaknesses, some of which are statutory. The provision is unsatisfactory in the lower and upper school. It is good in the sixth form and, overall, is broadly satisfactory.
52. The provision for the pupils' personal and social and health education is good. The course is structured and taught well. It covers important aspects such as sex education, crime and disorder, drug awareness, citizenship and self-esteem. The personal, social and health education programme encourages pupils to improve their behaviour, live within a multi-cultural

society and deal with important social and emotional matters that they may have to consider. Careers education is good and there is good liaison and support by the local careers service.

53. The provision for extra-curricular activities is also good. Teachers spend much of their own time in providing a good range of arts and sporting activities. There is a homework club and the library remains open at the end of the day to provide a space for pupils to work. The school has operated successful summer schools to raise literacy and numeracy skills. In addition, the school has a strong presence in the local community through its links with local guidance organisations, local employers, including Ford and a telecommunications company, both of whom have sponsored learning initiatives and through the community's use of the sports facilities on the school site. There are good links with other local institutions through the joint sixth form provision and the links with the local college.
54. The curriculum in the lower school provides the full range of National Curriculum subjects. In addition, there are lessons in personal, social and health education, and dance and drama experiences are also provided as part of the performing arts provision. Since the previous report, the school has invested considerable time in developing detailed schemes of work to ensure that experiences in a subject are built in a logical progressive manner.
55. Since the previous report, the school has divided, for timetabling purposes, the school population into two broad bands. It is a specific strategy which is aimed at raising pupils' expectations and targeting specific support to those pupils who need it.
56. The timetabling of an additional English period for some lower attaining pupils is done at the expense of a modern language period in one of the years. Some lower attaining pupils currently do not take a modern foreign language although the school has not undertaken the formal process entailed in withdrawing these pupils from a National Curriculum subject. The amount of time given for music and art in the lower school is below average and, whilst not stopping the delivery of the National Curriculum, does, through its limited time, affect attainment.
57. The recent staffing problems in design and technology have restricted the quality and range of experiences for pupils in the lower school particularly with regard to their skills of design and making. There have been significant improvements in information technology provision since the last report. All pupils in the lower school have a designated information and communication technology period and this is raising attainment. At the moment, the subject does not present a fully balanced course because of current lack of opportunities to explore measurement, modelling and control.
58. With older pupils, the school has broadened the curriculum by including courses such as media studies, business studies and child development. In addition, there are two link courses. One course is a horticulture/literacy course for two days a week for lower attaining pupils who take the course as their science provision. There is also a construction industry trades course for some pupils who take it in their design and technology time. The school funds the first and the second is a local education authority initiative. Higher attaining pupils benefit by taking an additional GCSE option, by taking the courses in slightly less time.
59. There are, however, weaknesses. The school has not addressed the issue identified in the previous report relating to the majority of pupils not taking a modern foreign language. Currently nearly all pupils take a modern foreign language in the lower school but it is only offered as an option in the upper school and the school is failing to meet statutory requirements in this regard.
60. The school now provides valuable opportunities for about a quarter of pupils to follow an information and communication technology course as a GCSE option. However, as with lower school, the information and communication technology entitlement is not being covered because of the lack of use of the information and communication technology by other subjects.
61. The discrete timetabling of the two bands of pupils makes it more difficult to create viable groups in each band. It has the unintended consequence of denying pupils access to subjects if they fail to attract sufficient numbers from within the particular band; for example, in French, drama, music and history.
62. Given the nature of the school's intake in terms of pupils' interests and aptitudes, and the flexibility which is now available to introduce vocational elements within the curriculum, the

school should consider whether such courses might be more appropriate and relevant for some students.

63. The school works jointly with another local school to provide a viable sixth form offering a good range of courses. The school has an established a link with a major telecommunications firm to enable students to pursue training and accreditation in network management. All students take key skills in information and communication technology, communication, and application of number and have good opportunities to participate in recreational and community service activities. The school has successfully addressed the lack of religious education in the upper school, identified in the previous report but, the lack of religious education in the sixth form remains an issue.
64. Throughout the school a number of pupils are withdrawn from classes for legitimate reasons; for example, to provide additional support or to participate in a college course. On occasions, insufficient attention is given to considering the impact of the pupil missing specific classes.
65. The school makes satisfactory provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils.
66. The school does not meet the legal requirements for a daily act of worship. Assemblies are used well to reinforce positive behaviour and to applaud success but no evidence was seen of opportunities for reflection or, for example, celebration of the significant days in the religious calendars of the major world faiths. There is no planned programme of topics for assemblies, or full record of those that have taken place. There is significant tutor time each day, but no part is used to support thoughtful reflection on a considered topic. The provision for the spiritual development of students is unsatisfactory. The school has no policy for guidance for departments and there is no requirement for departments to consider their responsibility in this area. As a consequence many opportunities are overlooked that would offer students the time to reflect and consider their emotional response to what they are learning and experiencing. There are good examples where this does happen. Pupils in Year 9 described the emotions raised by the painting 'The Scream', and opportunities are presented in history where, for example, study of the World Wars and life in the trenches and concentration camps gives rise to very good opportunities for reflection on people's inhumanity to others and the effects of intolerance and fear. In religious education, individual teachers promote excitement and wonder in their students, but generally the emphasis on learning about religion, rather than learning from religion, limits the opportunities for spiritual growth.
67. Provision for the moral development of pupils is good. The school has a clear moral code that is understood well by all and is supported by a system of rewards and sanctions. These are used consistently and good use is made of celebration of achievement to promote positive attitudes. During the year, pupils are encouraged to think of the plight of others through charity fund raising and significant amounts are raised for national and local causes. The school works well with the police service in personal and social education to provide a secure understanding of the dangers of the abuse of drugs and the consequences of breaking the law. The effects of prejudice and discrimination are considered in personal and social education and the topic of bullying is revisited in some form each year. In history, pupils write with sensitivity about the effects of racism on the individual. In English and in religious education pupils have the opportunity to consider contemporary moral issues and to develop their own ideas.
68. Provision for the social development of the pupils is good. Within classes, provision is limited by the restricted use of group and paired work that would enable students to develop social skills. There is a lack of opportunity for students to take the initiative or responsibility around school. Other areas of social development are addressed well, however; in particular through the personal and social education course that enables students to consider a wide range of topics that are designed to support their passage into adult life, such as relationships, marriage and parenthood. The school is developing its links with outside agencies, such as the 'Eaststreet' advice and information service for young people, and a nurse, counsellor and careers advisor are available for pupils and students to consult in school. The school provides good opportunities for pupils to socialise by arranging trips such as the Danbury Camp for students in lower school, and outings as rewards for positive behaviour. Year 10 are providing peer support for Year 7, and pupils in Year 11 support the extra-curricular sporting activities of younger pupils. The school's links with Kingsley Hall provide good opportunities for pupils to interact with people of different generations and to learn from them. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award provides challenges and opportunity for initiative as well as social development.

69. Provision for the cultural development of pupils is satisfactory. Good opportunities are provided for theatre trips, art galleries and concerts, and there are annual school concerts and productions. Artists, touring theatre companies, and actors from the local theatre company visit the school enabling the students to experience live theatre and workshops at first hand. The school has a range of extra-curricular dance, music and drama activities open to the pupils. Opportunities for the pupils to realise the richness of the multi-cultural society in which they live is weaker. There are good examples in the well-supported visits to France and Holland, which provide for both social and cultural development. Some opportunities are found in English, where some students study poetry from other cultures, in art, where aboriginal art is studied, and in music, where pupils consider different styles of world music. Pupils who study geography for GCSE compare their own culture with that of Ethiopia and Japan. In dance, pupils explore the different dance customs of some other lands, and a group of pupils attended a Sakoba African Dance workshop held in the borough. Opportunities to visit places of worship of other cultures and faiths are not taken however, and little evidence is to be seen about the school of the diversity of British culture apart from the wall sculpture presented by Ford workers to the school.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

70. In general, procedures for ensuring pupils welfare are good and the school takes great care and concern for this aspect of its work. Health and safety audits take place on a regular basis but inspection of electrical equipment throughout the school has not taken place for the last two years. This is now being addressed.
71. Members of staff are informed well by their handbook on the protection and care of pupils and all pupils are well aware of whom to go to for help if needed. The local health authority nurse is a frequent visitor to the school and is available to pupils to consult her on a confidential basis. In addition, the school has arranged for a counsellor from Relate to come into school to offer help and advice for pupils on personal matters that they feel they wish to discuss with an adult not directly connected with school. The work of both the nurse and the counsellor is much appreciated by pupils and the school and makes a significant contribution towards their social development.
72. Child protection procedures at the school are good. The designated person for child protection has an extensive knowledge of the child protection policy and ensures that the child protection procedures in place at the school are well known to all members of staff and are vigorously applied. She maintains excellent liaison with the appropriate statutory bodies, pupils and parents and, as a result of the very efficient and well-ordered child protection arrangement, items of concern are very quickly picked up and acted upon.
73. The school has an effective and well-ordered pastoral system. Form tutors remain with the same group of pupils throughout their school life and good liaison takes place between form tutors, heads of year and subject teachers. The school efficiently monitors pupils' personal development and pupils' work and pastoral progress is carefully tracked on a regular basis using a colour coded computer system which is well used by form tutors and heads of year to ensure that pupils make satisfactory progress and items of concern are picked up. Procedures for monitoring and promoting improved behaviour and for picking up on concerns relating to oppressive behaviour such as bullying are good.
74. Overall, the use of assessment to monitor pupils' progress and as an aid to planning is satisfactory. At the time of the inspection, the school had just had appropriate software installed, which will allow for centralisation and standardisation of examination and test results. This will allow greater use to be made of this information across the school, particularly by the heads of department. The school has also invested in detailed analysis of National Curriculum test results at the age of eleven and fourteen in order to predict and target individuals who should achieve well in GCSE examinations. The school will use this information in two main ways. Firstly, it will provide the school with a further means of evaluating how well it is doing and what difference it is making; the value it is adding to pupils' education. Secondly, it will allow the school to identify individual pupils who should achieve well and, through mentoring and other means, provide these individuals with effective support. The information will also allow form tutors and heads of year to set meaningful pupil targets and to monitor individual's progress towards achieving them

75. Within departments, the quality of assessment information and its use to monitor pupil progress is variable. In English, pupils have a very clear idea of where they stand and what they have to do to improve. In mathematics, although work is regularly set and marked by most teachers, there is a need to develop a standard approach to assessment. Whilst there is excellent assessment practice in the upper school in design and technology, the lack of specialist teachers in the lower school means that developing a shared understanding of national design and technology standards is more difficult. In geography, long-term assessment is improving with pupils having some knowledge of where they stand in terms of National Curriculum level. In history, very good use is made of examination criteria for pupils to understand the demands of the question and take additional responsibility for their own improvement. In modern foreign languages, the use of assessment is not yet established well enough to help pupils make progress and enable teachers to identify areas of weakness. Work is not yet linked regularly to National Curriculum levels. In physical education and science pupils are not clear about their levels of attainment and lack clarity about what they need to do in order to improve. In business education and media studies, pupils and students are made aware of the assessment criteria, which are frequently discussed during the course of the lesson.
76. There are good procedures in place to monitor and to improve attendance and there have been significant improvements in attendance since the last inspection.
77. The school has a sharply defined mission to improve pupils' attainment and progress. The links between improved attainment and the quality of welfare, support, attendance and behaviour and their importance in contributing to pupils' progress are well established at the school. The school has made considerable progress since the last report in this aspect and in liaison between form tutors, year and departmental heads.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

78. Parents' views of the school are satisfactory. The significant majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire felt that the school has good relationships with pupils, assists them to make progress and relates well to parents.
79. A minority of parents felt that the school's policy on giving of homework is not consistent and in the teaching of design and technology, the subject was not being delivered consistently. The finding of the inspection team confirmed these views. Homework is not given consistently throughout the school and the standard of marking of pupils' class work and homework is variable. The school has not been able to recruit specialist design and technology teachers, which has disrupted the teaching programme, particularly in the lower school. The school has put in place a recruitment strategy to cope with this staffing shortage and expects that the department will be staffed fully in the next academic year.
80. Three school reports are issued each year to parents but in most cases reports do not give sufficient detail of the progress pupils are making, or targets that easily indicate to parents what pupils should aim for. However, reports in the sixth form are well prepared and give full information to parents on their child's progress.
81. Parents meetings are held after the issue of reports, where parents are invited to come into school to discuss their children's progress. Attendance by parents at these meetings is usually good. Parents also take up the invitation to see heads of year or subject tutors, if they have any items of concern.
82. The school communicates with parents by means of a twice-termly newsletter, which gives parents full information about activities within the school and future events of interest. An attractive brochure has been prepared by the school, which gives complete and full information to parents and carers about all the aspects of school life and all the opportunities for pupils which the school presents. The brochure is presented written in a friendly style and contains all information which parents need to make an informed choice on whether to select the school for their child's secondary education.
83. The school offers good support to pupils with special educational needs. Parents are encouraged to attend annual reviews of their children's progress and to take part in discussions regarding target setting in pupil's individual education plans. The special needs department is very successful in being pro-active with these parents and their work is much appreciated.

84. The parents of pupils who have English as an additional language are informed of the progress of their children and they can attend parents evening where they are supported by translators and they are therefore enabled to participate meaningfully in the proceedings. At the pre-inspection parents' meeting, for example, two parents were supported by their sixth form student daughters who translated the proceedings.
85. The school has a very active parent teachers association, which provides very valuable funds for activities within the school. In 1999, the association raised funds for, and presented the school with, a new mini-bus and funding for audio and lighting equipment for the school hall.
86. Some parents do come into school to help work alongside the pupils and act as invigilators in examinations and also help on school day and residential visits, acting as escorts and chaperones.
87. The school has introduced courses for parents, for example, in information and communication technology and has also introduced workshops to show parents how best to work alongside their children to obtain best results. This work by the school is much appreciated by parents.
88. The introduction of the Home/School Agreement is working well. Parents are able to understand from this Agreement the aims and ideals of the school and the school uses the Agreement as a basis for forming firm links with parents. The school has good transition arrangements for the transfer of pupils at Year 7 from Primary School and parents are invited into school where each parent is given a personal interview by the head of year to inform them about school life and expectations of their child.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

89. The leadership by the headteacher is very good. He is determined to raise the level of pupil attainment in the school and has effectively prioritised what needs to be accomplished to achieve that aim. He has successfully set the agenda and the direction and established the parameters of what needs to be done. The statement of intent is embodied in a five-year plan produced at the request of the governing body. This is a simple document but it clearly states what will be done by when to raise standards in the school. Its power, possibly, lies in the simplicity of its message and the fact that the headteacher and the governing body have successfully created a climate whereby members of staff share that commitment and show a good capacity to succeed. The five-year plan represents the school's corporate commitment to raise standards.
90. The previous report noted significant weaknesses and the headteacher and senior management have focused on improving the standards pupils achieve by improving the quality of teaching and learning in the school, improving behaviour, getting the budget under control so that there is funding for developments and setting targets for improvement. The school is now a calm community, teaching has improved and standards in GCSE are rising above the rate nationally. The school is also confident that it will achieve 33 per cent of pupils achieving A* to C at GCSE in 2001.
91. The sustained focus on raising achievement is reflected in the job titles of the senior management team. They are clear about their roles, carry them out effectively and provide good support. Heads of year and departments are also effective in leading their teams. Across the school, the qualities of leadership and management are good.
92. Good systems are in place to monitor the quality of teaching across the school. There are formal evaluations of departmental performance by the deputy head and, if necessary, by the governing body. Target setting, linked to managing teachers' performance is in place.
93. Overall, the governing body is effective. It is very supportive and brings to the school a range of personal and professional expertise. It is not fulfilling its statutory duties with regard to aspects of the curriculum. It has, however, very clearly focused on the need for the school to raise standards and it exerts considerable critical pressure if the improvements are not being achieved. Through a variety of strategies, such as reports and staff presentations, it has a good understanding of the strengths and the weaknesses of the school. The budget is monitored with care and expenditure carefully considered to ensure best value for money is obtained and that it funds appropriate educational developments. The governing body has

taken a specific interest in determining how grants to the school are being used. A priority in the recent past has been to stabilise the budget and generate sufficient to fund educational developments. This has been achieved. The 2.3 per cent funding carry forward allows for increases in learning resources, staff development and building improvements. The budgetary forecast for this financial year identifies a carry forward of 0.4 per cent of the budget.

94. The five-year plan is supported by a year-by-year action plan, which has suited the school in its early stages of improvement when the priorities were stark. Now that the school has reached its current position and priorities are no longer as simple, a longer-term improvement plan, setting out the trajectory for developments over the next three years, is relevant, particularly as funding has stabilised. It will also be helpful to encourage heads of department to think further ahead in their planning and prioritisation.
95. The headteacher makes effective use of comparative information to assess the school's development. The school has only just obtained the necessary software to enter examination performance data on a centralised system but the school will now be able to make better use of this data across the school. In addition, the school has invested in detailed analysis of each pupils score in the National Curriculum tests and 11 and at 14 and this information, too, will enable it to predict and set targets for GCSE at departmental level using national comparative data. It will also enable the school to identify those candidates who should do well and those who will require additional support.
96. Currently annual reviews are undertaken with departments, looking at examination results. The information, which the school is now gathering in a more systematic manner, will enable these reviews to be even more rigorous. Whilst senior management make extensive use of comparative data, comparing how the school is performing compared to other similar schools and against national data is not yet a common feature across departments. The assessment information now available in school will enable heads of department to set realistic targets and compare these targets to schools operating in similar broad contexts.
97. The issues facing the school now are issues relating to consistency in the way school policy is delivered to improve further the quality of learning. Having raised expectations and shown that examination results can improve, further improvement will require consistency in approaches to homework and marking, for example. Achieving this consistency will require formal scheduled monitoring and evaluation by members of the senior management team and heads of department. Developing the school's internal monitoring processes and evaluation of its own performance also establishes the priorities for further improvement and therefore links directly into the improvement planning cycle.
98. Overall, accommodation and learning resources are at least satisfactory across the school. There are areas of particular strengths such as the provision for physical education and the library. There are an above average number of computers in the school, although access to them by subjects is restricted. Overall, the match of staffing to the curriculum is generally satisfactory. A specific weakness, however, has been the long-term staffing problems in one curriculum area. The school has made every effort to solve the problem in the short-term. It has developed a specific staff strategy to recruit staff in the longer-term and is confident that the area will have a full compliment of staff in the next academic year.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

99. In order to build on the improvements the school has made, the headteacher, governing body and staff should:
 - (1) raise standards in tests and examinations across the school by:
 - using pupil assessment information to target pupils for support;
 - setting targets for individual pupils and students and monitor their progress;
 - continuing to develop literacy skills across the school;
 - developing pupils' and students' ability to become independent learners;
 - ensuring consistent approaches to homework;
 - continuing to improve attendance, particularly in examination years.
(paragraphs: 30,39,45,50,74,75,79.)

- (2) improve pupils' entitlement to the National Curriculum and ensure statutory requirements are met:
- ensure that all pupils in the upper school, unless formally withdrawn, take a modern foreign language;
 - ensure that all subjects support the use of computers;
 - establish religious education in the sixth form.
(*paragraphs: 59,60,63.*)
- (3) develop departmental assessment systems so that a pupil's progress is monitored effectively:
- use assessment information to plan the pitch of what is taught to support higher and lower attaining pupils;
 - use assessment information to determine the suitability of written material;
 - ensure that pupils' individual education plans are used to plan work;
 - reinforce departmental responsibility towards all pupils, including the gifted and talented, pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language;
 - ensure pupils know where they stand and what they need to do in order to improve.
(*paragraphs: 40,42,75.*)
- (4) Develop the school's monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure consistency in the implementation of school policy and to evaluate its progress and development:
- to use this information to identify priorities for improvement;
 - to establish a school improvement planning cycle based on evaluation.
(*paragraphs:94,95,96,97.*)

100. In addition, as a minor issue

- develop the provision for spirituality across the school, particularly those aspects which relate to developing pupils' sense of self worth by:
 - reinforcing individual success through targeted praise;
 - ensuring that behaviour is consistently managed in a positive manner;
 - providing opportunities within the curriculum for pupils to reflect on their own lives and the lives of others;
 - using tutor time as a means of fulfilling the need for a statutory act of collective worship by providing opportunities for reflection;
 - developing more opportunities for speaking and listening across the school;

in order to:

consistently foster pupils' sense of self esteem across the school.
(*paragraphs 36,45,66*)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	188
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	60

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	15	36	44	3	1	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1315	147
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	475	47

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	59	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	316	1

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	113

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	57
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	97

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	9.7
National comparative data	5.9

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	1.9
National comparative data	0.4

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	118	124	242

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	22	49	39
	Girls	57	49	49
	Total	79	98	88
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	33 (37)	41 (36)	37 (29)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	2 (13)	18 (18)	13(10)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	N/a	N/a	N/a
	Girls	N/a	N/a	N/a
	Total	0	0	0
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	N/a (42)	N/a (40)	N/a (29)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	N/a (10)	N/a (20)	N/a (7)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	126	118	244

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	24	92	109
	Girls	37	107	117
	Total	61	199	226
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	25 (26)	82 (89)	93 (97)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	28.6 (28.7)
	National	38.4 (38.0)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	0
	National	N/a

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	13
Black – African heritage	20
Black – other	11
Indian	6
Pakistani	5
Bangladeshi	2
Chinese	3
White	1397
Any other minority ethnic group	5

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	7	0
Black – African heritage	3	0
Black – other	21	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	684	5
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	88
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	5.6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	175

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75.2
---	------

Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	24.4
Key Stage 4	22.7

Financial information

Financial year	1999/00
----------------	---------

	£
Total income	4,091,806
Total expenditure	4,027,593
Expenditure per pupil	2867
Balance brought forward from previous year	31,701
Balance carried forward to next year	95,914

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out

1174

Number of questionnaires returned

42

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	42	40	8	8	2
My child is making good progress in school.	37	54	2	7	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	26	31	26	7	10
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	22	51	12	10	5
The teaching is good.	33	48	10	5	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	36	38	14	10	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	48	24	12	12	5
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	43	43	0	5	10
The school works closely with parents.	29	40	10	14	7
The school is well led and managed.	21	48	10	7	14
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	26	48	12	5	10
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	33	38	10	7	12

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

ENGLISH

101. The attainment of pupils when they enter the school has shown improvement, in the last two years but is still below the national average. Prior to this, attainment on entry to the school, as indicated by pupils' National Curriculum test results at the age of 11 have been well below the national average. Pupils arrived in the school with particularly low-level skills in reading and writing and many arrived lacking personal confidence, which is reflected in their reticence to put forward their ideas.
102. Standards in English are well below national averages at age 14. In the 2000 National Curriculum tests, pupils' performance was very low, in the lowest 5 per cent of schools nationally. They were well below average when compared to similar schools. Pupils' performance in the tests at 14 in 1999 were somewhat better and were below average when compared to similar schools. The performance in 1998 showed particular improvement, reflecting what happened nationally that year, but the average point score has shown a year-on-year fall from that point, unlike mathematics and science, which have shown improvement. When the results are averaged over the last three years, the average point score is higher than that achieved up to 1997, a key date, in that it was the data from that year which contributed to the judgements in the previous report. Standards therefore have not declined over time but, on the other hand, have not shown clear improvement. Given the improvement in pupils' attainment, particularly in the last two years, performance in the 2001 National Curriculum tests will be particularly important in measuring the impact of the work of the department in the lower school.
103. The school is working closely with the local education authority in piloting literacy approaches. Inspection evidence indicates that the work of the current pupils show satisfactory progress and achievement given their prior attainment. By the end of Key Stage 3¹, nearly all pupils have clear legible handwriting. They can spell common words accurately, and structure their writing with a mix of simple and complex sentences in appropriate paragraphs. They learn how to incorporate adjectives and adverbs to make descriptions vivid, and in essays they can develop a reasoned argument, for instance about the merits of compulsory school uniform.
104. The higher attaining pupils use a wide vocabulary, and write at good length. They show perceptiveness in their comments on literature, notably *The Tempest*, and prove in comprehension exercises that they have a good grasp of mature language. However, the range of work is narrow, and heavily guided by the teacher so that what pupils produce is all very similar. The attainment of pupils with special educational needs in Key Stage 3 is well below national averages, but they can write legibly and with fair accuracy. Pupils with English as an additional language make steady progress in their English work, through the specialist teaching and through the classroom support, particularly so when that additional help is available.
105. Pupils' performance in GCSE examinations is well below the national average in the percentage of pupils obtaining grades A* to C in English Language and Literature and in the average point score that pupils achieve. Approximately 80 per cent of the cohort, the majority of girls and 70 per cent of the boys, are entered for the examination with the majority gaining a grade in the A* to G range. Other pupils, mainly boys, are entered for the Certificate in English. Girls perform very much better than boys, but the difference is little greater than the difference to be found nationally.
106. Given pupils' prior attainment, the work of the current pupils indicates that they are achieving satisfactorily and making satisfactory progress. The skills taught so thoroughly in Key Stage 3 usefully underpin the work of Key Stage 4². The best pupils can react intelligently to passages such as the *Modest Proposal* of Jonathan Swift, and compare it, both in its use of language and in its approach to poverty, with that found in *Stone Cold* by Robert Swindells. Though they are beginning to write analytically about *Macbeth*, they still largely restrict themselves to re-telling the story. Lower attaining pupils study the same material, but rely even more on the guidance of the teacher. Indeed, a major weakness is that pupils, being directed so narrowly about what

¹ Key Stage 3 refers to pupils in Years 7,8,9.

² Key Stage 4 refers to pupils in Years 10 and 11.

to write, seldom become independent learners and lack the zest for their own researches. However, pupils of all levels of attainment can write sensitively in an imaginative recreation of life in the family of Derek Bentley when they learn that he is to be hanged. Until recently many of the lowest attaining pupils, chiefly boys, have not been entered for GCSE, but it is notable that many of those who are entered and might have been expected to obtain very low grades in fact achieve results a grade or two higher.

107. The prior attainment of sixth form students is wide, many embarking on the course with relatively low grades in GCSE. In the last two years, half the candidates have achieved better results in A level than would be predicted, and higher grades than those they obtained in other subjects. Standards observed in lessons confirm that some students know the texts well and make perceptive comments on them. Others make no contribution in class, and in writing rely on teachers' notes which they have inadequately digested. Overall, however, students make good progress and achieve well in the sixth form, given their prior attainment.
108. Standards of speaking and reading are well below national expectations. Pupils spend too little time in speaking and are not given practice in listening sensitively to each other. Where they do speak it tends to be in single words or phrases, directed at the teacher. It is rare for a teacher to ask for an opinion, or for that opinion to be discussed by others in the class. Pupils are expected to have a book from the library, but the only time set aside formally is in tutorial periods rather than English lessons. Pupils get little practice in reading aloud. Although more than one lesson observed dealt with the opening scene of *Macbeth* pupils were not allowed the pleasure of speaking the witches' lines, and savouring the magic of the verse for themselves.
109. Teaching is never less than satisfactory, and in some lessons was good or very good. There has been improvement since the previous inspection where some teaching was judged ineffective. All teaching is now at least satisfactory and pupils make satisfactory progress as a result. All teachers are knowledgeable, prepare conscientiously, and explain each lesson's objectives clearly. A great strength is the unusually thorough marking. This includes giving pupils much praise, correcting mistakes assiduously, pointing out how to improve, and identifying the targets individual pupils should aim at. Teachers expect all pupils to cope with the same material, a feature which ensures that no one is excluded. However, weaker pupils often struggle with the language they face, and find the content dull. This occurred most obviously in lessons given to pupils with special educational needs, where very high skills of teaching had to overcome the obstacles posed by unsuitable material.
110. Teachers follow the schemes of work associated with the literacy pilot scheme closely. This means that all lessons have a uniform level of competence, and all pupils reach basic standards in writing and presentation and all pupils have a similar English experience. These are key features, which the literacy pilot is seeking to address. The weakness is that teachers have, in the way they are often seen teaching the scheme, little chance to display their own considerable knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject and consequently many lessons are correspondingly somewhat heavy going for the pupils or lacklustre. Clearly, ensuring teaching competence, entitlement and progressive learning of key skills are essential elements in raising standards, particularly in a situation, faced by many schools, where non-specialists may be teaching English. Material which is largely prepared because it is 'teacher-proof' is particularly helpful in such circumstances. The question for the department is how far teachers, whilst preserving the essential key features of the literacy scheme, develop the confidence to invest their professional skills and use the scheme as a template rather than a mould.
111. Pupils seldom use computers as an aid to learning or presentation. Furthermore, despite the intention of giving pupils frequent opportunities for discussion, in practice the teachers do most of the talking and the pupils very little. This in turn means that pupils are often passive, being denied the opportunities for expressing their own ideas or for learning from each other. Learning is thereby often restricted to a stale and mechanical repetition of teachers' notes.
112. All subjects are expected to contribute to improving pupils' skills in reading and writing, and although not strictly literacy, also to their speaking and listening skills. The impact of this work is variable. In some subjects, for example, personal and social education, history and geography, pupils are given opportunities to speak frequently and writing skills are encouraged by making good use of templates to help in the construction of their essays. In media studies, constant use of technical terms and testing of pupils' understanding of these terms develops pupils' and students' confidence to use technical terms accurately. In art, too, key words are displayed, and used with confidence. However, in other subjects pupils not knowing the meaning of technical language undermine learning. This is particularly true in mathematics and

science. In modern foreign languages the skills of writing are often ignored, and the quantity of writing insufficient. Many subjects, notably mathematics, science, art and physical education do not give sufficient opportunities for pupils to practise their speaking. Developing language skills across subjects in a school is a challenge and the school has made some progress. However, given the very low levels of literacy skills of the majority of the pupils it is an aspect of the school's work that needs to continue. The school needs to ensure that all departments are aware of the strategy, contribute to its development, and regularly review its progress. More attention needs to be given to speaking and listening, and reading, in particular developing a greater awareness within departments of the importance of matching written material to the reading abilities of the pupils.

113. Shortly before the last inspection, the department was in some disarray, with no consistency in what material was taught or how it was put across. Much teaching was ineffective. Now there is uniformity, and a high degree of conscientiousness in the delivery. Marking is now exceptionally thorough and helpful. Pupils know where they stand and what they need to do to improve. Basic skills and presentation are good at all levels of attainment. Examination results are improving, slowly in GCSE and rapidly in the sixth form. Overall, much that needed doing has been done. The department is now ready to move on by giving pupils more independence, and so turning them into enthusiastic learners.

MATHEMATICS

114. The attainment levels of the majority of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form are well below the national average. Standards in mathematics on entry to the school, although rising in recent years, remain well below national average level. Overall, the achievement of the majority of pupils is therefore satisfactory at each of the key stages and in the sixth form, given their prior attainment. This represents improvement since the previous inspection where progress in Key Stage 4 was judged unsatisfactory.
115. Key Stage 3 results in recent years have improved and were in line with similar schools in 1999. In 2000, 41 per cent of the pupils achieved level 5 or above in the Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests; this compares to the national average of 65per cent. Attainment at Key Stage 3 has improved since the last inspection.
116. In the GCSE examinations in 2000, 21 per cent of the pupils achieved grades A* to C compared to the national average of 47.9 per cent. In each of the last three years, however, over 90 per cent of pupils achieved a grade in this examination. Although boys' GCSE results were marginally better than the girls in 2000, this does not form a consistent pattern. As a trial, the school has been entering a number of pupils for the GCSE in statistics. Results so far have been good and the school plans to enter all Year 11 pupils for this examination during the current year.
117. Until 2000, only a very few candidates were entered for the A level in mathematics. Results were generally satisfactory with the majority of students achieving pass grades. Results were much poorer in 2000, however, and only three of the 11 candidates achieved pass grades. As a result, the department has amended its entry policy for the examination.
118. In mathematics lessons and in work seen in classes attainment levels are well below that normally expected at Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form for the majority of pupils. Some Year 7 classes, for example, had difficulties in understanding and manipulating basic algebraic expressions. In one class in particular, poor literacy skills impeded pupils' progress with the examples that had been set. Several Year 9 groups had difficulties drawing different two-dimensional shapes using given coordinates. A Year 13 class was being introduced to the use of the chain rule in order to differentiate composite functions. Although many showed a basic understanding of the rule, several students lacked the confidence to complete the examples that had been set without further support from the teacher.
119. In overall terms, several of the higher sets in the upper band in each of the years are working at, and in a few cases above, the levels normally expected. All other groups are undertaking work either below, or well below, this level. The setting arrangements allow targeted support to lower attaining and pupils with special educational needs and they make satisfactory progress. Overall, pupils with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress particularly in those lessons where they have additional support.

120. Teaching is always at least satisfactory and frequently good. There has been an improvement since the last inspection when there was some unsatisfactory teaching. There is no significant difference between the quality of teaching in mathematics at each of the key stages and in the sixth form. Lessons are planned well and contain clear objectives, which are shared with the class. Most contain an appropriate range of activities. Lessons involve an element where the teacher undertakes work with the whole class. Significant use is made of questioning during this aspect of the lesson. Pupils are then encouraged to work individually or in small groups undertaking examples. Teachers give clear explanations during the group work and good use is frequently made of prepared overhead projector transparencies to support aspects of the work.
121. In one particularly good class with a set in the upper band of Year 10, the teacher covered the basic principles involved in converting imperial to metric units and vice versa. The presentation was lively and interesting, involved examples from everyday life and made good use of the pupils' suggestions to develop the solutions. Several pupils were required to develop the solutions on the white board for the rest of the class. Pupils clearly enjoyed the approach and individuals responded well when required to do so. In a number of classes in the lower school, good use is made of white boards provided for the pupils to individually develop and present their solutions to problems set by the teacher. Pupils in all classes are managed effectively and good standards of discipline are maintained.
122. The progress and learning of pupils in several classes has been adversely affected by the long-term absence of a number of teachers. The school has been unable to recruit specialist mathematics teachers as replacements. This means that a number of classes have been without specialist teachers for significant periods. During the previous year, three teachers had been absent through illness over a long period. At the time of the inspection, two teachers were absent; one of these was a long-term absence.
123. The majority of pupils have a positive attitude to their mathematics work. Pupils, with a few minor exceptions, are well behaved. Many respond well to the frequent questions, which are asked during the group work. Several pupils have the confidence to develop a reasoned argument as their response rather than merely giving one-word or brief answers. Most pupils are able to maintain their concentration and complete the tasks that have been set. However, some pupils take a relatively long time to settle down at the beginning of lessons and frequently pupils arrive late to classes. In a number of classes, large numbers of pupils are absent. Particularly in the middle and lower bands, some pupils have relatively short concentration spans, are easily distracted, and fail to complete the task that has been set. Poor behaviour by some pupils in one Year 7 class impeded the progress of the class as a whole.
124. The mathematics curriculum is appropriate and provides a structured programme of learning for the pupils. The teaching team follow the agreed schemes of work. Pupils are now being given the opportunity to enter for the GCSE in statistics at Key Stage 4 as well as in mathematics. Currently, very little use is being made of appropriate information and communications technology to support teaching in mathematics, which restricts pupils' learning.
125. The mathematics curriculum includes the development of appropriate numeracy skills of the pupils. Although many other subjects do not make significant use of numeracy, there was no evidence during the inspection that pupils' lack of numeracy skills impeded their progress. Although work is regularly set and marked by most teachers, there is a need for the department to develop and agree a standard approach to assessment. Policies and procedures covering the setting, marking and recording of work, including homework undertaken by pupils, need to be developed, agreed and implemented.
126. The department is effectively managed. The mathematics teachers meet on a regular basis and are working well as a team. Several procedures are in place that are designed to monitor and evaluate the work of the department. The head of department has undertaken lesson observations of colleagues and pupils' exercise books are periodically examined. There is an annual review of examination results and a system of target setting. Overall, there is a good range of expertise across the teaching team and adequate resources to support the work of the department. Pupils have access to a good range of textbooks. Good use is made of display materials in the teaching rooms, though more use could be made of pupils' work.

SCIENCE

127. In the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000, the proportion of pupils achieving level 5 or above was well below the national average. The proportion reaching level 6 or above was well below the national average. The average point score based on all the pupils' levels was well below average compared to averages for all maintained schools, and below average for similar schools. Girls achieved slightly better results than boys at this stage. Results in science in 2000 were better than those in English and mathematics. Test results in science have been consistently below the national average for the last four years, but are slightly higher than they were at the last inspection.
128. In the GCSE examinations in 2000, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C was significantly below the national average with no pupils gaining the highest grade. On the basis of average point scores, girls' performance in the examinations was better than that for boys. The school's GCSE results in 2000 were considerably better than those in 1999.
129. No pupils took the A level examinations in 2000. In 1999, the small number of students entered makes national comparisons inappropriate. However, results achieved in biology and chemistry were very low with only one student gaining the highest grade and this was in biology.
130. Inspection evidence shows the pupils achieving higher standards than those shown in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 and 2000. There has been some improvement since the previous inspection, though standards remain below national expectations. Despite grouping pupils by attainment, there is a broad range of attainment in each class and in many lessons expectations of achievement are set at the middle or lower level so that higher attainers are not covering work in sufficient depth. Standards are also inhibited because the work does not cover applications to everyday life frequently enough, a point which was also commented upon at the last inspection. For example, in two Year 9 classes, revising refraction of light, pupils know that when light travels from one medium to another it bends as it crosses the boundary, but they do not understand why; and many do not know the difference between the incident and refractive ray. In this lesson there was insufficient application of refraction to nature and everyday life.
131. Pupils make insufficient progress in developing experimental skills because there are too few opportunities for them to make their own predictions, or to define problems based on scientific knowledge and understanding and plan their own investigations. Pupils can carry out experiments planned by the teacher, are able to record observations, take reasonably accurate measurements and present data in the form of charts and graphs.
132. By the end of Key Stage 3, most middle and lower attaining pupils, including those with special education needs, are achieving average and sometimes above average standards in relation to their prior attainment. Pupils with English as an additional language achieve satisfactory progress overall. Though many are proficient English speakers, a small number are not, and their level of fluency does inhibit learning in science. There was inadequate support for pupils who have English as an additional language in a few lessons. Generally, the development of pupils' literacy skills is not very well supported by the department, with many pupils lacking confidence in using basic scientific terminology. The standard of presentation of written work is generally below average, with many pupils keeping records of work that are neither clear nor set out effectively for later revision. Numeracy skills have improved since the last inspection, being satisfactory, and are often good in the upper band and weak in the lower bands. Pupils' information technology skills are poor, as there is a lack of computers to improve learning in the subject.
133. Most pupils' attainment is well below the national average when they start the school as eleven-year olds. From the work seen in the inspection, by the time they are 16 they have made good progress and have improved compared with their prior attainment relative to the national average. Standards are, however, below those expected, though they show good improvement over those in recent examinations. Pupils in Year 11 have a good understanding of the composition of blood, and the structure of the heart and blood circulatory system. Higher attainers could explain the need for a double circulatory system in mammals. In another class, others could recall facts such as the structure of the atom and they understood that some metals react more vigorously with acids so forming an order in their reactivity. Practical skills improve and pupils are generally able to draw conclusions that are consistent with the evidence and explain them showing scientific knowledge and understanding. Investigative skills, such as

making predictions, and planning and evaluating their own investigations, are not well developed. Most middle and lower attaining pupils, and those with special education needs, continue to achieve standards that are in line with or better than might be expected of them. There is, however, a small but significant number of pupils with special educational needs who are failing to reach their full potential because there is insufficient additional support provided in lessons. Pupils with English as an additional language achieve satisfactory progress overall. As at Key Stage 3, though many are proficient English speakers, a small number are not, and their level of fluency inhibits learning.

134. As with 11 to 14 year olds, a significant number of higher attaining pupils in some classes are achieving less than might be expected as the tasks they are set are not sufficiently demanding and because they cannot relate the work to everyday situations. There are too few opportunities for them to think critically and to work things out for themselves. Their depth of knowledge and understanding is insufficient to enable them to achieve the higher grades of GCSE. Overall, pupils attain equally well across the two attainment targets: life processes and living things and materials and their properties. Attainment is weaker in experimental and investigative science and in physical processes.
135. The number of pupils entering the sixth form has increased in the current Year 12, particularly in physics and chemistry. In lessons during the inspection, pupils were revising for modular examinations. From the work seen, standards have improved considerably since the last inspection in all three sciences. However, though there are likely to be some higher grades obtained, standards remain below national expectations.
136. The attitudes of pupils to science ranges from very good to poor. The majority of pupils show a satisfactory and often good attitude to work and perform practical experiments safely. In a few classes, some pupils behave poorly and in a disruptive manner. Many respond well to aspects of scientific knowledge and understanding which are presented in ways that they can understand and become interested in. When teachers provide challenging tasks pupils respond well, use their initiative and show commitment. For example, a Year 8 class used the knowledge gained from a previous lesson on respiration to explain the results obtained from a practical investigation to compare the composition of inspired and expired air. They did very well and showed a very good understanding of cellular respiration. Further, almost all pupils interviewed in the class said that they enjoyed their science.
137. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection. Of the lessons observed during the inspection, almost 80 per cent were taught satisfactorily or better, indeed almost 50 per cent were good or better; but just over 20 per cent were unsatisfactory. There is more unsatisfactory teaching in science than in any other subject and based on the statistics alone the quality of teaching is, overall, unsatisfactory. Nevertheless, there is much that is good within the department associated with the quality of teaching, which accounts for pupils' progress and learning. Teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good in the sixth form. Many lessons are taught by teachers who combine good knowledge and expertise with high expectations, enthusiasm, and effective planning. These teachers give the pupils confidence; pupils respond positively and try hard. In these better lessons, teachers share the aims with the class, challenge the pupils with carefully constructed open-ended questions to explore understanding and make them think critically. This happened in a Year 9 class, exploring the relationship between force, area and pressure. The pace of work was good, so that learning was effective and progress good.
138. The discrepancy in teaching quality means that not all pupils have the same experience of science as they move through the school. There is inadequate monitoring of teaching and learning and insufficient sharing of good practice. The differences in teaching quality between lessons produces marked differences in the pupils' responses. Unsatisfactory teaching is characterised by time wasting in the lesson, slow pace and insufficient learning in any depth. Other weaknesses are in planning that does not identify specific outcomes; and low expectations.
139. Following recent significant changes in the department, it is too soon to comment authoritatively on the overall effectiveness of the new head of department. However, leadership and management overall currently appear to be at least good, with the potential to effect necessary changes and improvements.
140. The inspection took place only three months after the new head of department took up the post. He has a good understanding of the department's current strengths and weaknesses and is

drawing up suitable plans to tackle underachievement and to improve the overall quality of teaching and learning. A number of new teaching staff have been appointed to the department during the last two years and together with most of the other staff share a commitment to raise standards in science. There has been insufficient rigorous emphasis upon planning and upon monitoring and evaluation to raise standards in recent times, but this is changing. Responsibilities in the department are now well defined and the department action plan seeks to address the situation in appropriate ways. The provision of science equipment is generally adequate. Lack of information technology resources, however, restricts the progress of pupils.

141. The technical staff provides good support to the teaching of science. Some deficiencies in the management of health and safety were drawn to the attention of the department and were acted upon during the inspection. Accommodation is good, though the quality and amount of pupils' work on display in laboratories is very variable. Where displays are good, they enhance the learning environment.
142. Overall, there has been good progress since the last inspection. Test and GCSE examination results have improved. There are more high achieving pupils in the sixth form and standards are higher. Monitoring policies, which were a weakness, are now appropriate, but not all have, as yet, been implemented. Pupils were previously described as being generally passive participants during lessons. Whilst this is still applicable in some instances, steps have been taken to make lessons more interactive. Though teaching has improved, there is the need for still further action. Teachers' expectations of pupils were described as low and whilst this remains the case for a small number of teachers, this is certainly not true of all. In this respect, there has been an improvement. Leadership of the department, which was satisfactory, is now at least good. Staff development priorities are now related to raising attainment of pupils.

ART AND DESIGN

143. In 2000, the percentage of A* to C grades gained in the art GCSE examination was well below the average for similar schools nationally. On average, girls did much better than boys in the examination. In the sixth form, individual students taking advanced and vocational art examinations in recent years have achieved well, gaining good grades but the number of students has been too small to make accurate national comparisons.
144. Currently, attainment in all Key Stage 4 art courses is in line with expectations for the courses, with a small number of pupils below expectations. In all post-16 art courses, attainment is in line with course expectations. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is just a little below expectations for the ages of the pupils, but this overall judgement conceals some variability over the key stage. Examples of work beyond expectations and work meeting expectations were seen, as well as some areas of relative weakness.
145. Practical skills with materials and techniques begin to develop in Key Stage 3, with some good drawings, prints, sculptures, ceramics, textiles and paintings seen. This is a reflection of the broad range of specialist expertise of art teachers, passed on to pupils in mainly well organised, enjoyable and productive lessons. Teaching in Key Stage 3 is mostly satisfactory. Pupils respond well to the large amount of individual attention they receive. They behave well, work hard, and are keen to succeed in their tasks. In a small number of lessons, the teaching is not clear. Pupils are unsure what they have to do, and teaching materials like photocopies are insufficiently matched to the task or to the ability of the pupils. Apart from these lessons, pupils of all abilities, including pupils with special educational needs and pupils with less experience of the English language, achieve well in most practical aspects of art. For almost all pupils, spoken and written work in art is an area of weakness. They find it difficult to explore art history or to say what they think when discussing works of art.
146. A major reason for lower attainment in Key Stage 3 is the small amount of time made available for art. All requirements of art National Curriculum are met, but there is often insufficient time to develop depth of understanding, or to practise skills.
147. Most pupils who take art in Key Stage 4 progress quickly, partly due to the extra art lesson time. The quality of teaching in the upper school is mainly satisfactory with some good and very good teaching seen. Teachers' experience and knowledge of exam courses is used to guide the development of pupils' work towards meeting examination requirements. When teaching is very good, the ethos created is positive, supportive, encouraging and structured so

that all pupils feel confident. Pupils gain the ability to develop their own expressive ideas through experimentation and investigation. Skills of information gathering and drawing from observation increase, which improves the quality of image making. Some powerful, complex and expressive images are produced in a good range of materials and processes. Pupils' knowledge and understanding about the work of other artists and designers improves.

148. Teaching and learning in sixth form art courses is good. Productive use is made of time and course requirements to carry students forward purposefully. In both the GNVQ Intermediate and AS level courses, students are keenly involved in their learning. They work hard and develop good skills and understandings. Teachers provide plenty of expert practical and critical guidance, including a visit to the Tate Gallery, to deepen students' knowledge of art and their thinking about it.
149. In all key stages, printing skills are strongly developed. Particular attention is given to teaching the disciplined techniques needed to achieve good quality results using block and screen-printing methods. Another feature is the making of complex graphic design and expressive images using computers. This is a major strength. It is interesting to note that these two strong areas of art attainment have been the subject of recent investment and staff training.
150. The art department is well organised. Teachers work as an experienced team. Studios are good working spaces well supported by materials and equipment. The improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Standards, as reflected by the work of the current pupils have been maintained and the quality of teaching referred to in the previous report as 'being satisfactory or better' seems to have improved, with some very good teaching seen in the examination courses. The department has addressed the issue of ensuring that lessons build on previous learning.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

151. Over recent years, the school has had considerable difficulty in establishing a stable design and technology team, and at the time of the inspection, four specialist posts were being covered by supply staff. In spite of this, standards at GCSE have been sustained and in the Year 2000, over a quarter of pupils gained grades A* to C and four fifths obtained a graded result. These results are well below the national average, though broadly in line with the results for similar schools. On average, pupils in the school do as well in design and technology as they do in their other GCSE subjects, though this hides considerable variation between different teaching groups.
152. In lessons and work seen, standards are well below average by the end of Key Stage 3. Pupils have a limited understanding of a design and make process and few work with any real independence in researching, developing and presenting their design ideas. In those lessons supervised by non-specialist teachers, pupils show some understanding of material properties and practise simple graphical skills. In food technology, the higher attaining pupils demonstrate skills in evaluating different food products and most have a sound understanding of nutrition. Practical making skills are significantly underdeveloped because of the limited access to specialist staff and the limited learning programme. This was evident in a Year 9 upper set group, where work with systems was limited to a simple mechanical toy.
153. In Key Stage 3, pupils achieve less well than they should. The scheduled access to the specialist staff provides useful opportunities for pupils to manufacture mainly simple food and timber products. These opportunities are, however, too few and insufficiently challenging to enable pupils to make satisfactory progress in the subject.
154. In lessons and work seen, overall attainment in Years 10 and 11 is well below national average; although there are indications, notably in food technology, that project work is better than recent GCSE results would suggest. For example, higher attaining pupils in a Year 10 group had a clear understanding of product evaluation and development in a commercial context and demonstrated good practical skills in bread making, along with some interesting design ideas. In a GCSE resistant materials group that additionally benefited from a college link course (developing construction trade skills), practical making was good with pupils using tools confidently and accurately to make storage products. However, most pupils completing their major GCSE projects demonstrate less understanding of a design process and have limited research and evaluation skills. Their design solutions are often simple and guided by the

teacher. Pupils' limited understanding and use of information and communications technology further restricts the quality of research and presentation.

155. In most GCSE lessons, pupils benefit from specialist teaching and achieve appropriately. Where this is not the case, as in an upper band GCSE graphic products course, pupils make unsatisfactory progress; and this is evident in their limited range of graphical skills. The specialist teachers are often successful in retrieving ground lost through staffing difficulties and pupil absence. For example, in a Year 11 resistant materials group, a structured learning programme (which had been developed by a very good teacher) was helping a lower attaining group - including four pupils with special educational needs - achieve worthwhile GCSE project outcomes.
156. Attitudes to the subject are mostly positive when pupils are involved in practical work, though predictably less so in those lessons covered by non-specialist staff. In some GCSE classes, the very good teaching involves pupils and encourages them to take pride in their work. Behaviour is generally satisfactory or better. A few, less committed, pupils are inattentive and talkative and are slower in responding to the teacher's efforts to ensure appropriate behaviour.
157. At the time of the inspection the subject was being taught by a mix of specialist teachers and non-specialist supply staff. That teaching was never less than satisfactory, with all staff showing secure class management skills and ensuring that the intended learning outcomes were met. The school has some committed and effective specialists and as a result, a quarter of teaching, all of it in Key Stage 4, was very good and on occasion, excellent. These teachers have a strong and positive class presence that ensures that pupils are attentive and interested in the work. They plan lessons in detail, with excellent use of exemplar material that sustains good pace to learning and encourages pupils to work with greater independence. Pupils readily complete homework and maintain a better standard of content and presentation in order to meet the higher expectations of the teacher. Importantly, these teachers provide regular and informed assessments that enable pupils to improve their work. The less strong specialist teaching lacks many of the above features though it does provide informed support to pupils and helps them develop their technical skills. The expectations of those teachers are, however, lower and lessons less well organised, contributing to pupils being more dependent on the teacher and lacking sufficient planning skills to produce better quality work and meet deadlines.
158. The enthusiastic head of department is keen to raise standards in the subject and has, in many ways, provided effective leadership in a difficult situation. The specialist team has shown considerable resilience in facing severe staffing problems that are limiting the school's capacity to deliver the subject. At Key Stage 3, the school has effectively suspended its scheme of work and is not covering the National Curriculum programme of study. Even within the previous scheme, there was insufficient coverage of systems, with no electronics and no provision for control. In both key stages there is little or no planned use of information and communications technology. In part, this is because of a lack of information and communications technology facilities in a department that in other ways has good resources and accommodation. The inaccurate Key Stage 3 assessments for the previous year reflect a lack of a shared understanding of the national standards and, with fewer specialist staff contributing to Years 7 to 9, there are real difficulties in maintaining a sound system of monitoring and assessment. There is some excellent assessment practice in Years 10 and 11 but it is not shared across the staff.
159. Since the last inspection, there has been an improvement in the quality of teaching by specialists and the staff has managed to sustain GCSE standards. However, major staffing problems have adversely affected the delivery of the curriculum, particularly at Key Stage 3; and so the school has been unable to maintain sufficient progress in the subject.

GEOGRAPHY

160. In 2000 the overall A* to C grades at GCSE were well below the national average. Both boys and girls are about 17 per cent below their respective national averages, but the overall trend over the last four years shows a significant improvement. Girls in particular have made good progress since 1997. A* to G grades, over time, are in line with the average, with girls gaining 100 per cent in 2000 and boys achieving the same in 1999. In 2000, a particularly high proportion of boys failed to gain a grade and this had an adverse effect on the overall results. There has been no A* grades in recent years, and the percentage of high grades are very low.

Girls taking geography are doing significantly better than in the other subjects they take, but boys are doing significantly worse.

161. In 2000 one candidate gained an A grade at A level and in 1999, out of 13 entered; there was one A/B grade, and 11 A/E passes. Number and quality of entry is varied and the teaching is shared with Dagenham Priory School. Although numbers are small and comparison with national averages is not useful, the department makes a satisfactory contribution to post-16 provision.
162. Overall, in lessons at Key Stage 3, attainment is just below the national average. At age 14, it is average in the upper band. Basic geography skills are put in place early in Year 7. Pupils can use coordinates and measure line and angle; these skills are seen in work on scale and location exercises, using latitude and longitude. They have good knowledge of map symbols, contours and can construct and interpret various types of graph. The school and local area provide good opportunities to increase spatial awareness, and Year 7 pupils are able to relate pictures to maps and write interesting accounts describing 'A route around the school.' Standards of presentation of written work are often good, particularly in the upper band, but also on occasion in the middle and lower bands. Note making is useful and accurate and the department makes good use of writing templates to support pupils' writing as seen in the Year 8 accounts of the San Joaquin Valley in California, which show satisfactory levels of spelling and grammar. Departmental initiatives are helping pupils to extend their technical vocabulary. By the end of the Key Stage 3, pupils show an understanding of patterns that are more complex and processes and tackle questions, such as 'Why is there a global pattern of earthquakes?'
163. Use of number is satisfactory with appropriate understanding and use of graphing methods, tabulation, and examples of interpretation of statistics in work on industry and employment. Reading aloud is fluent and pupils in a Year 9 special educational needs group read well and demonstrated understanding of the text.
164. Pupils' performance in GCSE is well below average, but in lessons at Key Stage 4, attainment is, paradoxically, in line with national expectations. There are two reasons why this paradox exists. Within the lesson structure, pupils demonstrate that they have the skills and are gaining the knowledge and understanding to succeed at an appropriate level in their GCSE course as long as there is a teacher providing the structure to their learning. Given that the girls did relatively well in geography in comparison to other subjects and boys did relatively badly in 2000, it suggests that the stereo-types associated with coursework, that, for example, girls are better than boys of organising and managing their course work, may well apply. In addition, erratic attendance, often of boys, is a second reason, which affects learning over time. Whilst recognising that the department is making steady progress in terms of examination results, and that this upward trend seems likely to continue, staff should consider ways in which boys' attainment might be improved, specifically looking at coursework and attendance. Strategies to improve D to C grades could have a significant effect on overall results.
165. During their examination courses pupils continue to improve their understanding of more complex concepts and are able successfully to undertake decision-making exercises, for example, in Year 10 work on river basins and flood hydrographs. In coursework, pupils show that they can hypothesise, gather data, analyse and reach conclusions. The local area has proved to be a good source of material for investigations into the 'Success of the Barking Relief Road' and the Loughlon Brook Flood. Use of number is satisfactory and pupils are able to use triangular graphs in studies of industrial types. Written work also improves in Key Stage 4 but there is little use of information and communication technology, other than some word processing and construction of graphs in individual books. Learning is seriously hindered by lack of access to computers.
166. Teaching is satisfactory or better in all lessons and good or very good in over half of them. Lessons are well planned and conform to a pattern that leads to progress. Pupils are engaged from the start by prompt and enthusiastic introductions that combine clear aims with a review of knowledge and maintain interest and concentration through good probing questions. Teachers are committed and energetic which encourages participation by pupils and also deliver lessons with a fair measure of humour, in a non-threatening environment. All of this helps to build positive relationships between pupils and teachers. Pupils are sufficiently confident in their skills to respond well to challenges, seen in a well-planned, pacy Year 10 lesson requiring pupils to make links between the 1952 Lynmouth floods and the characteristics of the river basin. Pupils taught in special educational needs groups follow the same program as other

students and are enabled to make satisfactory, and often good, progress by use of appropriate materials and good support from classroom assistants. The department needs to consider further what range of techniques and materials might be employed to improve the progress of higher attaining pupils and some lower attainers in the mainstream classes.

167. Day-to-day assessment is good. Books are marked regularly using a well-understood scheme and marks are supported by constructive comment. Long-term assessment is improving with pupils having some knowledge of their level in the national curriculum. Further work is necessary to improve target setting in order to encourage progress. The effectiveness of the teaching is reflected in the progress made by pupils from entry. Across all key stages, progress in lessons is satisfactory or better in all lessons.
168. With few exceptions, the behaviour and attitudes of the pupils are good. The majority enjoy the subject, are well-motivated and prepared to persevere in challenging work. They are friendly, confident and they respond well in activities. No one is excluded from lessons. Girls, boys and members of ethnic minorities are all valued, expected to contribute and respond with enthusiasm.
169. Since the last inspection, improvements in attainment have been maintained and overall attainment in the upper band matches the national average. Enquiry work has improved and the correct use of vocabulary is becoming more precise. Progress of all pupils across the key stages is much improved and particularly in written skills. Teaching now regularly offers a challenge to pupils and lessons follow logically on previous work. Despite major improvements, there are still some shortcomings, chief of which are the lack of audio-visual and computer resources and their regular use in lessons. Some on-going initiatives need to be completed, such as the revision of schemes of work and the departmental handbook. Also a timed and costed development plan is required.
170. The department forms a hard working, united team, well led, with steadily improving standards of teaching, learning and behaviour. Expectations are high and there is a willingness to explore new initiatives to improve the examination results.

HISTORY

171. The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 is below national expectations. Teachers' assessments are below the national average although the numbers of pupils achieving the higher levels is rising. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils select and extract information from a variety of sources and use it to build up a picture of the period studied. They use the knowledge to respond to questions. Teacher guidance is required, however, if they are to develop their written responses beyond a superficial level. They are beginning to question the reliability of source material and are aware that it may be affected by bias. In work related to the 'Black Peoples of America' they demonstrate understanding of the feelings of the people of the time, and in diary entries of an 19th century factory worker they demonstrate an awareness of the changes that have taken place over time. Higher attaining pupils can make reasoned judgements after study of various sources, supporting their opinion with evidence. The majority of pupils, however, reach conclusions that demonstrate little consideration of alternative ideas.
172. The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 is below the national average. The number of pupils gaining A* to C is below the national average; however, there has been an upward trend since the last inspection. The GCSE results for the year 2000 indicate that the percentage of pupils achieving grades A* to G is close to the national average and that girls performed less well than the boys in the higher levels. A number of pupils who study the history course do not enter for the GCSE examination and work for the Certificate of Achievement. All pupils gain a sound body of knowledge relating to the rise of Nazi Germany and the aftermath of the World War 1. They study the period in history that relates to the Russian Revolution and the rise of Stalin and pupils that are more able have an understanding of the reasons leading to these events. They use source material with confidence in response to GCSE-type questions in order to obtain information. The depth of their responses is, however, often limited, and suggests a weakness in skills of investigation. They are aware of the nature of propaganda and higher attaining pupils are beginning to recognise that unreliable sources can be of value to an historian when seeking to gauge the opinion of the time. At both key stages, there is little evidence of the use of evaluation or of prioritisation in order to develop reasoning skills and to develop a deeper understanding of the events studied. Information is taken at its face value and responses are generally brief.

173. The achievement of pupils is satisfactory although the progress of a minority of pupils is restricted by weak reading skills, and for others by a willingness to leave work unfinished, or missing as a result of absence. Progress of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory in Key Stage 3.
174. Attainment of students who study history at A level in Year 13 is in line with expectations. Teaching is shared between the two schools that provide the joint sixth form provision. In alternate years A level history is taught at Sidney Russell School. The number of students entered is insufficient for national comparison. Students observed have a sound understanding of the growth of the political parties in the late 19th and 20th centuries. They identify events leading to changes in government and study the contribution of government to the development of 20th century Britain. They have an understanding of 19th century European history and the growth of alliances that developed after the fall of the French Republic. Students can independently research and arrange information logically, using it to support arguments and discussion in extended essays. They can make reasoned judgements, supporting their opinions with evidence.
175. The attitudes and behaviour of the large majority of pupils who study history is good. Pupils are quick to respond to questions and volunteer readily to read aloud. Concentration is good and pupils apply themselves to the tasks given. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form students are well motivated and work in partnership with their teachers. In Key Stage 3 there is some lack of urgency and concern to complete written tasks however, and pupils do not act upon comments made by teachers in their books. In a small minority of classes, the noisy and demanding behaviour of a few pupils is distracting for the rest of the class and teachers have to work hard to maintain the calm working environment that is apparent in other classes.
176. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in all key stages. Very good teaching was observed where teachers challenged the pupils to think independently and to reach conclusions that they could support with reasons. An example is in the application of blame for the loss of the 'Titanic'. Clear time allocation for tasks ensured that the pace of lessons was generally brisk, and the practice of identifying the aims of the lesson enabled pupils to focus on the central points quickly. Very good use of examination assessment criteria for pupils' self-assessment enables them to share responsibility for their own improvement and understand the demands of the questions set. Teachers are supportive of their pupils and their concern for their self-esteem results in a good working relationship between teacher and pupils. Teaching is less effective where behaviour is challenged directly in a way that disrupts the continuation of the lesson, or where the lesson is concerned with delivery of information rather than learning. As a result, in these lessons pupils do not develop key skills and cannot consolidate their understanding of concepts. Some pupils are over-dependent on their teachers for direction; and there is insufficient use of independent learning and of more imaginative learning strategies in order to develop initiative and investigation. The lack of computer access within the department limits the availability of information technology in lessons for research, presentation and display; and the lack of video monitors restricts the use of visual stimulus which would enable history to 'come to life'.
177. The subject is taught in a light and attractive suite of rooms; although the temporary nature of the departmental office reduces the accessibility of the assessment data that is necessary for teachers to monitor student progress. Display is tidy and well used to promote literacy, although it is not generally used to celebrate pupil achievement across the years, or to support learning above Key Stage 3. There are few opportunities for trips to historical sites, which would enable pupils to visualise and explore the past.
178. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Attainment has continued to rise and good use is made of GCSE and A level style questions in order to prepare pupils for their examinations. There is greater consistency in work and standard between the classes, although this has been achieved at the expense of the pupils at either end of the ability range. There is still a lack of independent learning and at Key Stage 3; too much work is still left unfinished.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

179. The only examination taken in the information and communication technology department last year was in advanced level computer studies, where results were very poor. Attainment overall in information and communication technology at the end of Key Stage 3 is below expectations. The provision of information and communication technology across the curriculum is poor and there were no discrete information and communication technology lessons until the beginning of this academic year. The new course in Years 7, 8 and 9, which provides all pupils with one computer lesson per week, is beginning to raise attainment. Some interesting presentations have been created, many with sound and animation. Problems with the new, extended computer network has slowed the implementation of the scheme of work.
180. The new scheme of work will enable pupils to cover all necessary aspects of information and communication technology by the end of the Key Stage but they are not yet having experience of using computers to control equipment or measure changes, so requirements are not yet being met.
181. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is below expectations for the majority of pupils. Since the beginning of this academic year, about one quarter of pupils in Year 10 is now able to take GCSE information and communication technology. Most of these are making good progress, and for some pupils, attainment is now in line with expectations in those aspects of the syllabus, which have been covered so far. A Year 10 examination class as part of their coursework was using a database effectively. However, about three quarters of pupils in Year 10 and all in Year 11 do not receive their entitlement to an information and communication technology curriculum because there is insufficient use of computers in most subjects. There is no systematic approach to information and communication technology across the curriculum in Key Stages 3 or 4 and requirements are not yet being met for the majority of pupils.
182. Overall attainment in information and communication technology in the sixth form is satisfactory. All pupils cover information and communication technology as part of their key skills provision. All those following a GNVQ course have good access to computers. In addition to word processing, many pupils make frequent use of spreadsheets and are able to produce appropriate charts when analysing information. Tuck-shop finance and stock levels were being analysed on a spreadsheet by pupils who were running an enterprise activity.
183. Teaching in the newly established timetabled information and communication technology lessons in all key stages is usually good and some is very good. Lessons are well planned, support materials are well produced and pace is usually brisk. Teachers cope well when technical problems arise. Teachers in the art department make very good use of information and communication technology for image manipulation and generation using scanners and digital cameras. Teachers in many other subjects of the curriculum do not include information and communication technology in their schemes of work and are not meeting National Curriculum requirements.
184. Although there is still much to do to ensure full compliance with requirements, there have been significant changes recently in response to the previous inspection report. There is now clear leadership and a detailed, costed and ambitious development plan. The quantity and quality of resources are greatly improved, bringing the number of pupils per computer into line with the national average. This has facilitated the introduction of discrete information and communication technology lessons in all years and ensures progression for all at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form. There is now access to the internet and the school's internal network throughout the site.
185. In order to improve further and ensure full compliance with requirements there are a number of issues which still need to be addressed. The improvement in attainment which is beginning at Key Stage 3 needs to be maintained as the new scheme of work is implemented, eventually covering all the required aspects of information and communication technology. All pupils at Key Stage 4 need to have adequate access to the information and communication technology curriculum. The lack of a systematic approach to the use of computers across the curriculum should be tackled as a matter of urgency, taking full advantage of the impetus provided by the 'New Opportunities' funded information and communication technology training for all teachers, which is now underway.

MEDIA STUDIES

186. A relatively small sample of lessons was seen. The subject is taught in the upper school, as a GCSE course and in the sixth form.
187. In 2000 the percentage of pupils obtaining grades A* to C was close to, but just below, the national average. In 1999, the results were significantly below. Comparison with the national average is difficult, however, because at Sydney Russell, the subject is extremely popular and approximately 25 per cent of the school take the course compared to 6 per cent nationally. Overall, standards are below average.
188. The quality of teaching is good and pupils achieve well in relation to their prior attainment and make good progress as a result. Their practical work and analysis is better than their written work. Teachers have good subject knowledge and clearly work hard at ensuring that the work being studied has a freshness and therefore a relevance for the students. For example, pupils in Year 11 explored the features of a reality documentary, using material taken from the Dutch and English trailers to 'Big Brother'. Pupils clearly identified with the material, as a Year 10 class did with their material on comics or the image presented by boy bands. The work, therefore, assumes a relevance to the group and establishes the subject's popularity. The relevance of the material and pupils identification with the material meant that they were working at a task over which they felt they had some ownership and to which they could contribute from their own experience.
189. Teachers are skilled at setting clear tasks, sharing the objectives of why the pupils are undertaking the work, ensuring that they have the necessary skills to tackle the task through careful step by step progress in the lessons and also ensuring that pupils understand the criteria by which their work will be judged. Pupils, therefore have a clear understanding of what they have to do, the means of achieving it and an objective criteria by which it will be judged. All pupils, including those pupils with special educational needs in the lower set and those pupils for whom English as an additional language make good progress as a result.
190. Teachers develop friendly relationships and are consistent in their approach and classroom routines. They wait until the individuals are listening; they insist that answers will not be shouted out. As a result, in the lessons there is a purposeful atmosphere, pupils work steadily and with enjoyment. Teachers also have high expectations, which means that the work is appropriately pitched to the attainment of the group but also challenges them to be mature. For example, in the Dutch trailer marketing the series, members of the class discussed with maturity why specific decisions had been taken by the director to include an element of nudity and who in his target audience he was appealing to.
191. Teachers ensure that pupils understand the technical terms, frequently stopping a pupil by asking, 'what do you mean by that?' to ensure that terms such as 'docu-soap,' 'hybrid' are not being parroted without understanding. Teachers also manage time well, knowing when to say 'you have five minutes to finish this' and because it is a consistent feature and part of the classroom routine pupils know that at the end of that time they will be asked to make a specific contribution to the class discussion.
192. Numbers taking the subject in the sixth form have been low making it difficult to compare meaningfully to national averages. In 1999, nine students took the A level with seven passing at grades B to C. In 2000, results were poor, which the school explains by the fact that the group had particularly low attainment as measured by GCSE average point score and had experienced a number of different teachers during the course. Given the standards of work seen with the current cohort of pupils this is a reasonable explanation of the sudden dip in performance. Given their prior attainment, students achieve well in their media studies work and make good progress.
193. Attainment of the current group of Year 12 students is in the B to E range at AS level. The AS course structure with its regular assessment suits the students and, as in the GCSE examinations, students have a very good idea of the criteria being used and what made a difference between a piece of work graded as C and a piece graded as A. Written work is marked thoroughly, indicating areas where the student should give further thought or how to improve the work. The course is structured well within each unit and lessons are well prepared. All students have a copy of the course outline and therefore know what it is they are going to have to do to complete the course. Time is used well and lessons are conducted at a good

pace. . The teacher has established good relationships and has good subject knowledge so is therefore confident to challenge individuals, to make them think and refine their ideas. 'Do you think the audience is passive or actively engaging in the text?' In a Year 12 lesson, students in groups were developing the questions that one could use to analyse a film poster, under specific headings of 'language', 'representation' and 'audience'. The students worked effectively, clearly engaged by the task, used to working together, sharing ideas and using technical language within the groups appropriately and well.

194. The teacher in charge of the subject has been relatively newly appointed. She has a clear idea of what needs to be undertaken; in particular, a training programme to support staff and to involve them in developing the schemes of work. No use was seen of information and communication technology, although the teacher uses it for research and the production of handouts. Clearly, this is an aspect for further development, given the nature of the subject. There have been improvements since the previous inspection, particularly in the improvement in the quality of teaching. Teaching is now good, whereas before it was described as being 'sometimes good'. This has also meant that pupil progress has improved from being 'satisfactory' at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form to its present state of 'good.'

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

195. Standards in French are well below national expectations by the end of Key Stage 3, and below what they should be, given the attainment profile of pupils on entry to the school. In 2000, pupils of French were assessed by their teachers as working well below the national level and this was confirmed in work seen during the inspection.
196. Examination results at GCSE in 2000 were just below the national figure for those gaining A* to C grades in French, and below in German. These figures are distorted by the fact that last year only about 20 per cent of the year group studied a language at Key Stage 4, despite the statutory requirement for all pupils to do so up to the age of 16.
197. In work seen during the inspection, at the age of 14 standards in listening, speaking, reading and writing are well below average. French is not used routinely by all teachers as the main means of communication in class, although there is good practice in some lessons. Pupils speak with variable accents and are not given enough opportunity to develop speaking beyond very short answers to teachers' questions. Some attention is given to pronunciation but pupils need to hear more French spoken by the teacher, as well as on tape. The course book is used occasionally for reading practice but there is no reading scheme in place. Writing is consistently underdeveloped. Most written work consists of copying vocabulary, taking grammar notes or completing gap-fill activities. There is very little development through the Key Stage. Pupils in the special educational need ability band do not study French although there is a statutory requirement for them to do so. Other pupils with special educational needs in the middle band make similar progress to other children. Gifted and talented pupils are not identified and there is no specific work targeted to pupils of higher ability.
198. In work seen during the inspection, at the age of 16 standards are below average in French, although few choose this option and entry is restricted to the upper band. Pupils lack confidence in speaking and find it difficult to remember work they have done before. There is not enough emphasis on expanding answers and as a result, progress in speaking is slow. Because progress in all the four attainment targets is slow in Key Stage 3, this means that pupils have much work to catch up at the start of Key Stage 4. They have many gaps in their knowledge. Teachers work hard to ensure that the curriculum is covered but the pupils' work is not of sufficient depth for them to gain the top grades. Writing is the skill with which they have most difficulty. The lack of sufficient grounding at Key Stage 3 again has an impact on standards. Listening skills are better, with most pupils showing reasonable understanding of spoken language at a basic level.
199. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and has improved a great deal since the last inspection. Teachers have good knowledge of their subject. However they do not plan their lessons to ensure that pupils of all abilities are able to make as much progress as they should in all areas of the subject curriculum. Their expectations are often too low and the methods they use do not bring out the best in their pupils. In a very good lesson with Year 12, however, the teacher worked hard to boost the students' confidence. She made good use of the resources at her disposal, was enthusiastic and had high expectations. The lesson was conducted at a brisk pace.

By the end of the lesson, students were able to discuss career options in German. They gained a real sense of achievement from the activities. The four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing were interwoven so that they reinforced each other. The teacher's enthusiasm was contagious and led to very good progress over time, as well as in the lesson. In another lesson, unsatisfactory learning took place because the pace was too slow and not enough French was used in the classroom. Pupils started to lose concentration. The written exercise was copying into exercise books. This took a long time and some less able pupils found it difficult to copy accurately. Time was not used wisely and expectations were too low. The use of assessment is not yet established well enough to help the pupils make progress and enable teachers to identify areas of weakness. Work is not yet regularly linked to National Curriculum levels. There is good, but limited use, of information technology, and most teachers possess the necessary skills to include it in their teaching.

200. Pupils have a satisfactory attitude to their work, seeming keen to participate in lessons. Their behaviour in class is also satisfactory although some low-level disruption interrupts the flow of lessons on many occasions. In some lessons, they work well in pairs but there are not enough opportunities for pair and group work. Teaching styles do not always reflect the fact that many pupils have difficulty concentrating for long periods
201. Since the last inspection, there have been many changes. The head of department has been in charge of modern languages since then and has made a positive impact on both the curriculum and the teaching. She has a clear idea of what needs to be done and works well with her staff. She now needs to focus on raising standards. With her leadership there is potential for improvement. Teaching must be better planned, so that pupils' work is appropriate; lessons must be conducted at the right pace and with realistic expectations. Teaching methods must reflect what the pupils need to know. Pupils must be made aware of what they need to do to improve their work, through regular assessments and target setting. It is now an absolute priority to ensure that the statutory requirement for all pupils to study a language to age 16 is fully met. This issue was raised at the last inspection, yet no progress has been made since then in ensuring that the pupils' entitlement is met.

PERFORMING ARTS

MUSIC

202. Pupils come to the school from a very wide and disparate variety of musical experiences and at a general level of attainment much lower than expected of their age group. Standards observed during the inspection indicate that the majority of pupils in Key Stage 3 are still working towards national expectations, with a significant number well below that standard across all aspects of the attainment target by the end of the key stage.
203. In general, across the whole of Key Stage 3, pupils exhibit a below-average knowledge and understanding of the many topics studied such as 'blues', 'chords', 'variations' etc. There is little opportunity to develop skills in selecting instrumental timbres and make any effective use of the elements of music, because of the lack of sufficient range and number of pitched percussion instruments. Keyboard work tends to dominate each project area and practical skills both in playing and creative music making are very much under-developed. Powers of retention are generally weak and though obvious progress is evident for many within lessons, continuity and development of skills and knowledge is not consolidated or improved over time. Many pupils are able to identify aspects of their work which they could improve, but they lack the motivation and ability to sustain concentration and often the interest to do so.
204. Key Stage 4 results over the past years have been considerably lower than national averages. In the current Year 11, three pupils take the subject as an optional extra-curricular activity. Present standards in Year 10 are below national average; nonetheless pupils are well-motivated and made good progress within the lesson observed, this being manifested in playing and extending simple improvisations and notating composition work, albeit both at a very elementary level. Extremely limited technical prowess inhibits practical responses and development, however, and composing is yet at the rudimentary level of building simple structures in very short phrases. Most pupils lack confidence and need much teacher support in organising and developing simple ideas and patterns. Nevertheless, they meet challenges well and tackle set tasks with interest.

205. There is no music course in Years 12 and 13, though students can offer music as a unit within a Performing Arts option. It was not possible to observe any specific music work in this area during the inspection.
206. Teaching in Key Stage 3 is at least satisfactory, mostly good and sometimes very good. The most effective teaching is well paced and challenging and matched to pupils' known levels of attainment. A particularly good example was observed in a Year 8 lesson with less able pupils, where the tasks were rightly pitched and timed and pupils encouraged throughout to respond to the best of their ability. The impact of such teaching was reflected in the very good progress made during the lesson and that pupils clearly enjoyed making their contribution to the clearly set objectives. Teachers make a positive use of pupil demonstration and pupils of all abilities present their work without embarrassment. Lessons are planned to provide opportunities for pupils to share and compare responses to set tasks and the presentation of work to each other is encouraged and praised. Teachers and support staff move from group to group giving individual help and encouragement and providing valuable teaching points.
207. There is a satisfactory rapport between staff and pupils and between pupils themselves, particularly so in Key Stage 4 where teaching is good. However, pupils' general attitude and behaviour is inconsistent between classes. Some lower ability pupils tend to give up very easily and classes are often marred by inattentiveness, which needs constant attention by the teacher, resulting in much time wasting. Concentration levels are often low but friendly and respectful relationships are noticeable. Most pupils respect the code of discipline expected of them and are prepared to make some effort in practical tasks and help each other in paired activities.
208. Although aspects of the work are under-developed the scheme of work meets national curriculum requirements and a satisfactory assessment system is helping to inform curriculum planning to include new national curriculum levels. Pupils' self-assessment is under-developed and thus the opportunity for pupils' progress to influence teaching strategies and lesson content is missed. There is a need to cultivate curriculum links with feeder schools, and not least to acquire information about pupils' achievements so that appropriate Key Stage 3 planning can ensue. It is recognised that there is at present very little opportunity for pupils to use information and communication technology in the subject. Class music is supplemented by a modest programme of extra-curricular activities which provides opportunities for performance and there is a fairly generous programme of peripatetic instrumental tuition.
209. Key Stage 3 curriculum time is significantly lower than that recommended, thus limiting the breadth and depth of study and development of skills such as correct playing techniques for the electronic keyboards. Performing and composing work is also restricted, due to the lack of sufficiency in range and number of classroom instruments. This is limiting opportunities for corporate work other than singing as well as for the exploration and use of a wider range of timbres and the development of practical skills in creative work.
210. The targets identified in the development plan are pertinent to the needs of the department, which continues to be well led and organised. Improvement since the last inspection shows both strengths and weaknesses. On the face of it, standards at Key Stage 3 have fallen. However, a possible impact of the National Literacy Strategy and National Numeracy Strategy and the subsequent relaxation regarding the implementation of the National Curriculum in primary schools is that many pupils may have experienced significantly less music by the time that they enter the school than they did some three years ago. The previous report identified the fact that there was no unsatisfactory teaching. Teaching is now good. The previous report did not identify lack of time for the subject as an issue and it may be that timetable re-organisation, and in particular, the creation of the banding within the school has had an inadvertent effect on examination groupings with subsequent apparent loss of subject status.

DANCE

211. Attainment in dance at the end of Key Stage 3 exceeds the level expected by the National Curriculum. Pupils keep a diary of their lessons and they are able to describe and evaluate their dances. This ability develops throughout Years 7 to 9 both in the literary style used and in the complexity of the dances performed and analysed. Pupils in Year 8 were seen learning a set routine with improving level of timing. Pupils in Year 9 were seen performing a series of fixed freezes with a much greater level of body spatial awareness and showing a wide range of ideas and movements.

212. Dance is available as an option at GCSE although, currently, due to the small numbers opting for the subject no middle or lower band pupils are following the course. Over recent years, the number taking the subject has been variable and so statistical comparisons cannot be made. In 2000 33 per cent of Year 11 pupils taking the course obtained grades A* to C compared to a national average of 49.3 per cent. Three pupils from other year groups studied the course as an after school activity obtaining grades B or C to give an overall average of 43 per cent A* to C.
213. The numbers taking this subject to an advanced level is small but increasing. There are eight pupils studying the AS course in the current year 12. In 1999 and 2000 there were seven advanced level pupils who obtained grades ranging from C to E. The current Year 12 and 13 groups are mixed for practical work and pupils were seen working very well together in developing a group dance, sharing ideas and developing a routine on the theme 'carnival'.
214. Teaching in dance is good or very good. The strength within the teaching is the enthusiasm, which is conveyed to the pupils adding life and vitality to all lessons. The pupils come prepared to take part and respond positively in lessons. Boys and girls participate freely at Key Stage 3 and, although currently there are no boys studying the subject to GCSE, there are a number studying the AS and A level courses.
215. The dance curriculum is good with a range of projects incorporating different aspects. Some dance of other cultures such as Irish, and Black American, is included but the course would benefit from a wider range of cultural styles. After-school activities are available on most days and pupils have the opportunity to take part in productions such as part of the Christmas celebrations, a GCSE dance display and as part of the summer school production. Assessments within dance follow the format of those used in physical education and music and as such revisions are being undertaken to fulfil the new requirements of the National Curriculum. Up to 2000, dance assessments have not been included in the end of key stage physical education assessments but they are being included this year.
216. Leadership of dance is good, with a teacher in charge as part of the performing arts faculty. Close links are being developed with the physical education department. The good dance facilities are well used. Since the last inspection the good aspects reported upon then have been maintained and an advanced level course has been introduced, as an option within performing arts.

DRAMA

217. A small sample of drama lessons were seen.
218. Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are below expectations. Standards in the 2000 GCSE examinations are below average in the percentage of pupils achieving A* to C. In the A* to G range, 90 per cent of the pupils gained a grade. In 1999 the percentage achieving A* to C was well below average but all achieved a grade in the A* to G range. Direct comparison between years is now more difficult. Because of the introduction of banding and the inadvertent consequences to subjects such as drama, which might fail to attract viable numbers to run a group in both the upper and lower bands, year-on-year comparison may be misleading. For example, the performance in 1999 may represent a significant achievement for those pupils, if they were drawn from the lower ability band. Throughout the school, pupils achieve satisfactorily, given their prior attainment.
219. In the sixth form, drama is taught as part of a performing arts course. Numbers are very small. In the 2000 examinations, three candidates entered and gained grades D to E. The previous year four candidates achieved grades in the range of C to D. A performing arts lesson was seen which had three candidates on roll, two candidates attending regularly. The viability of the group size must be questioned given that it is very difficult to create a meaningful group dynamic in drama with such small numbers. Future recruitment to the sixth form course is also uncertain, given that GCSE drama groups depend on viable numbers in each band rather than across the whole year group.
220. In the lower school, the lessons seen were the start of a new unit of work and the teachers had not seen the group since October because of the carousel arrangements, which operate with dance. Teaching is satisfactory, with evident strengths and pupils make satisfactory progress as a result. Impressively, teachers give every impression of knowing the pupils and they are

skilled at managing the behaviour. In one lesson, pupils worked noisily and in a somewhat chaotic fashion. until the teacher focussed their work by skilful questioning working as a whole class around a pair of pupils who demonstrated their work. 'How did she react? What did she do next? How do you know which person was of the higher status?' Although pupils tended to respond with very brief one-word answers initially, the teacher was confident to press them with further questioning to extend their responses. Teachers are aware of the range of attainment in groups and those pupils who have specific difficulties. Pupils with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress. Pupils with special educational needs were fully integrated into the activities. In one lesson, however, one pupil with emotional and behavioural difficulties disengaged from the work for a short period, having been participating fully for the first 15 minutes, eventually rejoining the class in the whole-class discussion towards the end of the lesson. In this lesson, where there were a significant number of special educational needs pupils, the role of the additional adult present in the studio was unclear.

221. Units of work and lessons are planned well, with clear learning intentions. The teacher in charge of the subject is giving the work more focus on developing drama skills rather than examining specific issues and pupils skills are built on in a consistent fashion. The carousel arrangements, however, is disruptive to learning. It means that the teachers have to rebuild their relationships with the class and re-establish routines and the inherent disciplines of the subject. Relationships between teachers and pupils are warm and friendly. Pupils are supportive of the teachers and enjoy the work. Difficulties with behaviour tend to stem from pupils over-enthusiasm rather than any malign intent. Nevertheless, managing their exuberance slows the lesson down.
222. The strengths seen in teaching at Key Stage 3 are more evident in the GCSE courses. Relationships are good. Lessons are structured well so that theory informs the practical work which, in turn helps to support and explain the theory. This was most evident in Year 11 practical polished improvisation work. Pupils demonstrated good disciplines and understanding of the power of the mask resulting from their brief introduction to Greek drama, achieving good standards relative to their prior attainment. Teaching in the sixth form is planned well and is supportive. It is, however, very demanding to establish a meaningful dynamic with such small numbers.
223. The teacher in charge of the subject is relatively new to the school. She is revising the schemes of work and introducing an assessment system based on levels, using criteria that she is devising. The department operates a drama club. Pupils and students have worked with professional actors and directors and performed in the Millennium Dome and in a borough-wide history. A major musical production is planned for the summer. It is difficult to compare the present situation to the previous report. There would seem to be an inadvertent decline in status as a result of the structural changes in the timetable. Standards are similar and the sixth form course in performing arts has been established.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

224. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 exceeds that expected by the National Curriculum. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 for those following the core course in physical education exceeds the national expectations in those areas covered at school and is in line in those areas studied at local centres. The examination results of those pupils following the GCSE course in physical education is below the national average with 39.2 per cent of pupils obtaining grades A* to C in 2000 compared to a national average of 51.6 per cent. Results over the past three years have been variable but show a rising trend and pupils did significantly better in physical education than in their other subjects in 2000. Pupils in the sixth form can opt for a recreational physical activity but this is not assessed.
225. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils understand the safety aspects of the physical activities being studied. Standards are particularly high in badminton, where pupils are able to play a game using a variety of strokes; in trampolining where sequences with a range of bounces are beginning to be performed; and in dance. Pupils are able to offer an evaluation on a performance when asked but they do not do this spontaneously. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils show a higher level of skill in trampolining and play games showing a higher level of skill and also using a good range of tactics. In some cases, the pupils use umpiring and coaching skills effectively; this was seen especially in basketball. GCSE pupils show a higher level of practical skill. Pupils in the sixth form opt to follow a recreational programme of physical activity

and although the Community Sports Leader Award is not available this year, there are plans to re-introduce it.

226. The school has achieved a number of successes locally. The boys' Year 7 and Year 8 basketball teams won the Barking Schools Rallies and the Year 11 team lost in the final of the Essex Cup to the National Champions. The girls' football team won the Essex Cup and the Year 10 and 11 girls' cross-country teams won their age group in the Barking and Dagenham championships. A number of individuals have achieved success at local and national levels.
227. Progress can be seen within lessons and from year to year; pupils of different groups progress at similar rates and there is no significant difference between the progress of boys and girls.
228. The teaching of physical education is good in all key stages. Over three-quarters of the teaching seen was good or better with no unsatisfactory teaching being seen. Strengths in teaching are the knowledge and understanding of the staff that is used to add interest to the lessons and the good structure in the lessons that builds on the skill being practiced in a developmental way. A pleasant, relaxed atmosphere of pupil management creates a lively environment in which learning can take place and the times when pupils are involved in planning and organising activities, such as acting as a coach for a small team, enable the pupils to put their understanding in to practice. Weaker aspects in teaching are the missed opportunities for peer evaluation and constructive criticism and, at times, a drop of pace.
229. Attitudes to physical education are good - the pupils come ready and keen to participate - and the behaviour in the lessons seen was always at least satisfactory and usually good or very good. All pupils accept and respect the efforts of others and work well together in pairs, small groups, and teams. A number of older pupils assist with the extra-curricular club activities. The small number of times when a lack of concentration was seen was usually linked to a drop in pace during the long double lessons.
230. The curriculum provided fulfils the requirements of the National Curriculum in breadth and depth. At Key Stage 3, the physical education department provides games, athletics and trampolining and dance is delivered via the performing arts department. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form the pupils participate in a number of other activities such as bowling, canoeing, swimming, golf, skiing and table tennis. There are a wide variety of extra-curricular activities available for all pupils, which vary from term to term and are well attended. The dual use of the leisure centre, with the close links of the teacher manager, enables pupils to continue their interest in evening activities. Inter-form matches allow a large number of pupils to experience formal competitive situations and higher attaining pupils also participate in school teams. The assessment scheme within the department is undergoing revision to take into account the new requirements of the National Curriculum; currently pupils are not clear about their levels of attainment and lack clarity about what they need to do to improve to the next level.
231. Leadership of the department is good. The department work well together sharing ideas and expertise in both a formal and informal way. Teaching is routinely observed by other staff so that good practice is shared. The good facilities of the department are well used and with the interesting informative displays, the department creates a welcoming purposeful environment. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection in that the good aspects mentioned in the last report have been maintained. The GCSE results are improving and the shared feedback from the in-service training of staff enables all the staff to introduce new ideas into their teaching and thus improve the learning of the pupils.
232. In order to raise standards further the department needs to link the work on the assessment scheme - including informing pupils more clearly of their attainment levels - and to consider ways of adapting the theory work at GCSE to enable the pupils to retain the knowledge learnt. It would also be beneficial to consider devising a more efficient use of the 100 minutes per class per week.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

233. All pupils are prepared for a national and externally verified Certificate of Achievement in Religious Education in Key Stage 4 and so no comparisons can be made with national GCSE results. On this course, of the 91 pupils entered, 31 per cent received distinction grades, 39 per cent received merit grades and 7 per cent received pass grades. The rest were

unclassified. Some of the present pupils on this course have transferred to a short course GCSE in religious education.

234. The attainment of the pupils in Key Stage 4, in the work seen in the classes and in their books, is broadly in line with the standards indicated in the course syllabus. The pupils are acquiring a sound knowledge and understanding of the beliefs associated with Christianity and are becoming aware of a range of moral and social issues, such as prejudice and discrimination. Their ability to relate these issues to the religious belief system, which they are studying, needs to be stronger. The pupils can identify and respond to various fundamental questions of life raised by religion and by human experience. Their knowledge and understanding of a wider religious perspective on these issues is limited by a less secure awareness of the teachings and beliefs of other world religions. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls.
235. The standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 are below the standards outlined in the Agreed Syllabus. The pupils have a sound knowledge and understanding of Christianity but are less secure in their knowledge and understanding of other world religions. The pupils can understand and use some religious language in a meaningful way but this is not very developed. The pupils can recognise and talk about various separate aspects of religions but they cannot yet build this into a more coherent picture whereby they can see and understand how the different religious traditions operate as a whole. The pupils are also less secure in seeing how their studies might be related to their own lives and experiences. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls.
236. The achievement of pupils in relation to prior attainment in Key Stage 4 is good but is less so in Key Stage 3. The pupils identified as needing support because of special educational needs are making satisfactory progress, but additional differentiated work would be of benefit to them, as would additional extension work for the higher attainers. The progress of pupils identified as having English as an additional language is not as good as it could be, as there is no support for them in the class.
237. In Key Stage 4, the attitude and behaviour of the pupils is good in about 50 per cent of the lessons and very good in the rest. They are always courteous and polite and show respect both for the teacher and for each other. Where attitudes and behaviour are very good the pupils apply themselves diligently to their work, concentrate well and are able to sustain their concentration. Loss of concentration sometimes occurs when the work is insufficiently demanding or when the pace of the lesson is not fast enough. In Key Stage 3, pupils' attitudes and behaviour are variable but overall, satisfactory. In some lessons attitudes and behaviour are unsatisfactory. When this occurs pupils are not working consistently and at times there is poor behaviour and disrespect is shown to the teacher and to each other. This is more often the case where the work set is insufficiently demanding and the purpose and objectives of the lesson are unclear and where the subject expertise of the teacher is not strong. Overall, in both key stages, the pupils have a positive attitude to religious education.
238. At Key Stage 4, the teaching and learning is good in about 50 per cent of the lessons and very good in the rest. Lessons are well planned and the objectives are clear so that the pupils' learning is distinct and purposeful. In some instances, the pace of the lessons could have been better so that the pupils could have done more in the time available. The very good lessons have an unambiguous religious content even when dealing with social and moral issues. In general, more emphasis needs to be placed on examining the issues involved from more than one religious perspective in order that their learning is more balanced. Control of all lessons is very good and there is always a pleasant, positive working atmosphere.
239. At Key Stage 3, teaching is satisfactory, overall. Lessons are well-planned and general objectives set. At times, control of the classes is not so strong and the atmosphere of the lessons are less positive than in Key Stage 4. This is usually the case where there is some uncertainty in the subject matter due to lack of expertise and consequently where the specific objectives of the lessons are much more limited. Also where there is insufficient emphasis placed on explaining the relevance of what they are studying to their own personal lives and experiences. Learning in this key stage is therefore less sound than in Key Stage 4. Learning over time is also less sound as there is not a great deal of written work in pupils' books. Overall, the work presented to the pupils could be more demanding with more emphasis placed on encouraging the pupils to give personal responses to specifically religious issues as well as looking at more world religions in detail.

240. A specialist teacher manages the department but more than half of the teaching is done by non-specialist teachers. This is unsatisfactory as it is having an impact on the attainment and progress of the pupils particularly in Key Stage 3. Statutory requirements are being met in Key Stage 3 and 4 but not in the sixth form. The department's documentation would benefit from an overall scheme of work which clearly identifies the two main attainment targets of the Agreed Syllabus as well as the skills, processes, concepts and world religions found in it. It would also further help with the monitoring of progress, which was an issue at the last inspection. Progress since the last inspection has been purposeful, particularly in Key Stage 4 with the introduction of the new course. Expectations are higher but could still be improved. The use of information technology is planned. The accommodation and resources are satisfactory.

VOCATIONAL COURSES

BUSINESS EDUCATION

241. The 2000 GCSE results in business studies, which were taken by one quarter of the year group, were impressive. They showed a very significant increase over the previous year with A* to C grades, which is well above the national average. In contrast to the national trend, the performance of boys was better than that of girls. In the sixth form, attainment in GNVQ advanced business education was below the national average: about a quarter of those entered achieved merits. Attainment at intermediate level was below the national average. The small number of students entered for A level economics all passed and matched their predicted grades.
242. Attainment in lessons at Key Stage 4 reflects the wide range of ability of pupils taking the course. The attainment of the majority of pupils in the upper band is good, a high proportion of the remainder are making good progress in relation to abilities. There is, however, a minority whose work is well below expectations, gaps in work in some folders and books point to erratic attendance being a contributory factor. In the sixth form, attainment in lessons is satisfactory overall, although there are a significant number of students who find the work very challenging on both the GNVQ and economics courses.
243. At Key Stage 4, pupils in the upper band of the GCSE course are attentive and keen to take part in lessons. They are prepared to answer questions and in one lesson, the more able frequently provided additional comments and pertinent observations on the coursework topic under discussion. Middle band pupils were less confident and needed more support from teachers but did make frequent contributions to lessons and were developing a sound understanding of the issues and concepts being studied.
244. The teaching observed in the department was never less than satisfactory and more often good or very good. Lesson objectives are clear and classroom management is good. Teachers work hard to cater for a range of abilities using suitable targeted questions around the class and encouraging pupils to explain their answers in more detail. Pupils are made aware of assessment criteria, which are frequently discussed, as lessons progress. In all courses within the department, marking and assessment is thorough. Analysis of performance in the GCSE examination is thorough; it has led to a successful teaching and learning strategy with impressive results. Analysis of GNVQ results is not as rigorous. A more detailed picture of overall performance is needed to inform planning and move results nearer to national expectations. Relationships with pupils are good, particularly on the advanced GNVQ course, where Year 12 and 13 have frequently been taught together. Effective collaboration and flexibility within the department has reduced the impact of a long-term absence due to illness.
245. In contrast to the way in which the use of information and communication technology is integrated into the sixth form GNVQ course, at Key Stage 4 there is little evidence that information and communication technology is used in teaching, although some pupils use computers for their coursework. There is scope for greater use of computers by pupils in Key Stage 4 for presenting work, analysing information and modelling using spreadsheets and simulations. In the light of the wide range of ability and aptitude of pupils in the school and staff experience with vocational courses, the department should consider including some vocational provision in the Key Stage 4 curriculum.
246. To improve standards further the department should make more use of information and communication technology in the Key Stage 4 scheme of work; introduce more rigour into the

analysis of examination results on vocational courses; and consider broadening the scope of the Key Stage 4 curriculum to include some vocational provision.