

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **WHEELERS LANE TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE**

Birmingham

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103501

Acting Headteacher: Mr C Appleton

Reporting inspector: I D Thompson  
12271

Dates of inspection: 14 – 17 January 2002

Inspection number: 199413

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

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## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school: Comprehensives

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11-16

Gender of pupils: Boys

School address: Wheelers Lane  
Kings Heath  
Birmingham

Postcode: B13 OSF

Telephone number: 0121 444 2864

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr T Coello

Date of previous inspection: March 1998

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
12271	I Thompson	Registered inspector		The school's results and pupils' achievements. How well are pupils taught? What sort of school is it? Leadership and management. What should the school do to improve further?
9462	A Beckley	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school work in partnership with parents? How well does the school care for its pupils
20119	T Bell	Team inspector	Mathematics	
19453	L Evans	Team inspector	Provision for pupils with special educational needs	
15051	L Kauffman	Team inspector	Design and technology Information and communication technology	
23436	J Lloyd-Davis	Team inspector	English	
4335	S Masson	Team inspector	Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	
2414	J Oxley	Team inspector	Physical education	
20412	D Shepherd	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages Equality of opportunity	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
17799	A Stoddart	Team inspector	Science	
19309	K Stubbs	Team inspector	Religious education	
4397	N Taylor	Team inspector	Music	
4513	J Thirlwall	Team inspector	Art and design	
4293	C Warn	Team inspector	Geography History	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Wheelers Lane Technology College is a comprehensive school for boys aged 11-16, with joint specialist technology college status shared with King Edward VI Camp Hill School for Boys. The school is smaller than most secondary schools and has 593 boys on roll. The school is popular and more parents want to send their children to it than there are places available. It draws its pupils from a wide area of Birmingham, many pupils coming from areas of considerable social and economic deprivation. An above average proportion of pupils is eligible for free school meals. Slightly more than half of the pupils are white and a number of ethnic minorities are represented, the largest groups being pupils from Indian and Pakistani backgrounds. The proportion of pupils whose home languages are other than English is much higher than in most schools but no pupil is at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is broadly average, the majority having moderate learning difficulties; the proportion having a statement of special educational need is below average. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school has been below average in recent years but previously it was well below average.

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

This is an improving school with the capacity to improve further. The overall effectiveness of the school is satisfactory. The strength of the school is the way it promotes pupils' social and moral development. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and the majority of pupils, from all backgrounds, make satisfactory progress through the school, although a high rate of absence hinders the progress of many. The school makes good provision for pupils with special educational needs and satisfactory provision for those for whom English is an additional language. The quality of leadership and management provided by the acting headteacher is satisfactory. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

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

- The school makes good provision for pupils' moral and social development.
- Pupils from all backgrounds get on well together.
- The school looks after its pupils well.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- Careers education is very good.
- The school has strong links with partner institutions.

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

- Standards in mathematics.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual development, particularly opportunities to reflect on the meaning and significance that the topics they study have for them.
- The teaching of elements of information and communication technology (ICT) and the teaching of numeracy across the curriculum.
- Attendance.
- The organisation of the curriculum and the timetable.

*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 overall since the previous inspection in 1998. Teaching has improved, reflecting improvements in the monitoring and support of teaching. Standards have improved at a similar rate to the national trend of improvement in Years 7-9 and at a faster rate in Years 10 and 11. Reports now provide parents with clearer information about progress and what pupils need to do to improve. Attendance has improved slightly but is still a cause for concern. Levels of literacy have improved. Progress in dealing with the key issue relating to pupils' spiritual development has been unsatisfactory.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved at the end of Year 11 based on average point scores in GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	compared with				<i>Key</i>
	all schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
GCSE examinations	E	D	E	N/a	well above average    A above average        B average                C below average        D well below average    E

Standards in the National Curriculum tests at the age of 14 in 2001 were below the national average in English and well below in mathematics and science. Results were below average overall in comparison with boys' results nationally. Results were above average in comparison with schools taking pupils from similar social and economic backgrounds. Although results were lower than in 2000, the overall rate of improvement in results has been close to the trend nationally over the last four years. Standards of current work are below average overall. They are strongest in design and technology. There are particular weaknesses in mathematics.

In the 2001 GCSE examinations, pupils' results were well below average in comparison with all schools nationally. The proportions of pupils gaining five or more grades A\*-C and five or more grades A\*-G were above average in comparison with schools taking pupils from similar social and economic backgrounds. No data is available to enable direct comparisons with all-boys schools but inspection evidence shows that pupils are attaining standards that are below the national average for boys. Recent results were close to, but below, the school's target. The trend of improvement in results has been above the national trend over the last four years. Standards of work seen during the inspection broadly match those of recent examinations. Standards are highest in physical education. They are relatively weak in mathematics. Most pupils are overall doing at least as well as might be expected, given their attainment when they entered the school. Poor attendance hinders many pupils.

The majority of pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall in all years in relation to their standards when they entered the school but unsatisfactory attendance slows the progress of many. Throughout the school, there are no major differences in the rate of progress made by pupils with differing levels of prior attainment or from different ethnic backgrounds. In work seen during the inspection, standards are below average overall. Standards of literacy are average but standards of numeracy are below average.



## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. The great majority of pupils have good attitudes to learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. The majority of pupils behave well in and out of lessons.
Personal development and relationships	Good personal development. Relationships are good and pupils' social and moral development is particularly good.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory.

A high level of absence is one of the main factors in underachievement by pupils, particularly in Years 10 and 11 where it interferes with the continuity of learning and the completion of coursework. When present, the majority of pupils are keen to learn and show good attitudes. Good relationships contribute to racial harmony in the school.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11
Quality of teaching	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.*

In Years 7-9, teaching is good in English and science and satisfactory in mathematics. In Years 10 and 11 teaching is good in English and satisfactory in mathematics and science.

The overall quality of teaching and the learning that it promotes is satisfactory throughout the school. Most pupils are keen to learn and respond well. Teaching generally meets the needs of pupils from different backgrounds and of differing levels of attainment. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good in individual and small group teaching within the special educational needs department, where it is well structured and tailored to meet pupils' individual needs. It is generally satisfactory across the school. Teaching of pupils whose home language is other than English is satisfactory overall.

The quality of teaching has improved considerably since the previous inspection. The strengths of teaching are in teachers' good knowledge of their subjects and their good management of pupils. The characteristics of the unsatisfactory teaching are weak planning, lack of pace and, occasionally, ineffective management of the consequent unsatisfactory behaviour. Teaching of the basic skills of literacy is satisfactory but the teaching of numeracy across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. The teaching of elements of ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory, partly because pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to use computers in their work in most subjects and partly because appropriate equipment is not available.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory quality and range overall, but the amount of time allocated to some subjects is low in a relatively short teaching week. Statutory requirements are not met for teaching ICT across the curriculum or for the provision of a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. A large number of pupils do not study a modern foreign language in Years 10 and 11. Careers education is very good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good within the special educational needs department. Satisfactory across the school.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory overall. Good provision for social and moral development. Satisfactory provision for cultural development but unsatisfactory provision for spiritual development. Pupils do not have sufficient planned opportunities to reflect on the significance that the topics they study have for them.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school looks after pupils well; procedures to ensure pupils' welfare and personal development are good. Arrangements to monitor and support academic progress are satisfactory.
Partnership with parents and carers	The school has a satisfactory partnership with parents.

The way that the curriculum is organised and the short teaching week means that some subjects, such as music, do not have sufficient time and this affects standards. Statutory requirements are not met for teaching ICT across the curriculum. Pupils value the high quality of careers education. The school has very good links with other institutions and benefits from its links with the community. The school tries to work closely with parents but its efforts get a limited response.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory. The monitoring of teaching and schemes of work is not as effective as it should be. There are weaknesses in the leadership of some departments.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Unsatisfactory. The school is not held rigorously enough to account.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. Although performance data is used effectively at senior level, its use to guide planning needs development in departments.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The school manages its resources well.

Middle management is inconsistently effective. There is a general weakness in the use of assessment data to support the planning of teaching. The monitoring of teaching in departments is inconsistent. Governors need to play a fuller role in shaping the direction of school and in monitoring standards. The school applies the principles of best value to its work. The school's accommodation is unsatisfactory and does not meet its needs. Statutory requirements are not met in respect of a daily act of worship or for the teaching of elements of ICT across the curriculum.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technology College status.</li> <li>• Pupils like the school.</li> <li>• Pupils are expected to work hard and achieve their best.</li> <li>• The progress pupils make.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistency of homework.</li> <li>• Information about progress.</li> <li>• Bullying.</li> <li>• Racial harmony.</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with parents that pupils like the school. Pupils are expected to work hard in most lessons and their progress is satisfactory. Technology College status has yet to have much impact on the school. Inspectors agree with parents that the use of homework should be more consistent. Reports are of reasonable quality but to help improve pupils' progress and participate more fully in their children's education, parents need more frequent and more detailed information. We believe that the school acts promptly and effectively to deal with bullying and works hard to promote racial harmony. During the inspection, inspectors were impressed by the good relationships between pupils from different ethnic backgrounds.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. In the 2001 GCSE examinations, pupils' results were well below average in comparison with all schools. The comparison does not do justice to an all-boys school because most of the schools on which the national comparisons are based are of mixed gender. Girls' average points score nationally is more than ten per cent higher than boys'. No data is available to enable direct comparisons with all-boys schools but inspection evidence shows that pupils are attaining standards that are below the national average for boys. Results for the award of five or more grades A\*-C and five or more grades A\*-G were above average in comparison with schools taking pupils from similar social and economic backgrounds. When pupils' GCSE results are measured against their test results at the age of 14, the school's performance is average. These results suggest that boys at Wheelers Lane, particularly those with lower levels of prior attainment, are doing at least as well as might be expected, given their attainment when they entered the school. Recent results were close to, but below the school's target. The trend of improvement in results has been above the national trend over the last four years. Pupils did best, compared to the other subjects they studied, in French, physical education and religious education. Poorest comparative results were in geography and mathematics.
2. Standards in the National Curriculum tests at the age of 14 in 2001 were below average in English and well below in mathematics and science when compared with all schools. Results were below average overall in comparison with boys' results. Using average points scores for comparison, overall standards were above average in comparison with schools taking pupils from similar social and economic backgrounds. The school's performance looks better when considering that the comparisons are made with the results of mixed schools and that in 2001 the average points score for girls nationally was 0.4 points higher than that of boys. Although results were lower than in 2000, the overall rate of improvement in results has been close to the trend nationally over the last four years.
3. The majority of pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall in Years 7-9 in relation to their standards when they entered the school. In work seen during the inspection in these years, standards are above average in design and technology. Standards are average in art and design, history, ICT and religious education. They are below average in English, mathematics, science and all other subjects. In Years 10 and 11, pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall in relation to their standards at the end of Year 9. Standards are well above average in physical education. Standards are average in art and design, design and technology, history and French. They are below average in English, science and all other subjects except mathematics, in which they are well below. Throughout the school, there are no major differences in the rate of progress made by pupils with differing levels of prior attainment or from different ethnic backgrounds. Overall standards are higher in Years 7-9 than in Years 10 and 11, reflecting gradual improvements in pupils' standards when they join the school. However, the major impediment to progress is the high level of absence that increases

as pupils move up through the school. The effect is particularly marked in Years 10 and 11 classes where absence disrupts the continuity of learning and interferes with the completion of coursework.

4. Standards of literacy are average. The contribution of subjects other than English to improving standards of literacy is satisfactory overall and there is some good practice in the school. All departments have identified key literacy objectives for each year group in Years 7–9 and these are beginning to have an impact. There are few opportunities across the curriculum for extended reading and research tasks; opportunities for discussion are frequently restricted to answering closed questions. In some departments, for example geography and history, good examples were seen during the inspection of teachers using effective methods to support pupils in reading for meaning and developing vocabulary. Key words are displayed in many classrooms and teachers regularly draw attention to them. In writing, many departments provide writing guides to support pupils in structuring their work. Pupils respond well to teachers' expectations that they will present their work neatly and accurately and examples of good work are often used as models.
5. Standards of numeracy are below average and the overall contribution of departments other than mathematics to developing pupils' numeracy skills is unsatisfactory. Some departments make a positive contribution to developing pupils' skills, for example design and technology and geography, but there is no co-ordinated strategy to develop these skills across the curriculum. Teachers in the mathematics department have had training in the implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy and the Local Education Authority plans training for the rest of the school.
6. Gifted and talented pupils make similar satisfactory progress to others in the school. More work is needed in most departments to provide demanding extension work to raise the levels of achievement of these pupils.
7. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in mainstream classes. A team of teaching assistants and integration assistants provides a generous amount of classroom support. Where support is provided, it enhances the quality of learning for all pupils in the group. Many pupils with special educational needs read fairly accurately, but with little expression and have a limited understanding. The fact that these pupils can read accurately and cope fairly well with short instructions, particularly pupils whose home language is not English, belies the fact that they have incomplete understanding of much of what is said to them and the texts which they are expected to use. Pupils need more opportunities for speaking, articulating ideas and opinions and sorting out their thoughts in response to reading or in preparation for writing, rather than being expected to answer only in one or two words. Written work is often poorly presented, demonstrating limited vocabulary and is generally short in length, there being limited opportunities for extended writing of any sort. In numeracy, simple concepts and operations prove difficult for some pupils. A lack of proficiency in basic skills limits their attainment in all areas of the curriculum and is reflected in National Curriculum test results that are below the national average for all core subjects. However, pupils who receive individual support make good progress in basic skills, particularly in reading and spelling where a range of provision combines to meet their personal targets.

8. Pupils with home languages other than English make generally satisfactory progress through the school. No pupils are at an early stage of learning English. Their apparent fluency often conceals a lack of understanding of specialist subject vocabulary and slows progress in understanding of concepts.

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

9. Pupils behave well around the school and in classrooms as a result of the consistent application of the school's behaviour policy, good relationships between staff and pupils and the high level of supervision provided by senior staff at break and lunchtimes. They show interest in school life and are keenly involved in the many activities provided by the school. They show respect for school property and are courteous and trustworthy. Pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds are well integrated into the school. Their linguistic and cultural backgrounds are respected. During the inspection, no instances of racism or oppressive behaviour were observed. In the playground, pupils talked and played together in mixed race groups. Bullying is rare and staff deal with it quickly and effectively, when it occurs. Pupils in all years form constructive working relationships with one another and with teachers. They are confident to go to staff, in their safe learning environment, with any personal problems.
10. Although an effective system for monitoring attendance and following up absences has recently been introduced, attendance is below the 90 per cent benchmark and there is a high level of unauthorised absence. Attendance has improved slightly since the previous inspection, indicating that attendance strategies are reducing absences and that the school is securing more support from parents. Pupils who do attend regularly are keen to learn and there are several strategies in place to encourage good attendance. However, high levels of absence continue to hinder the progress on many pupils. Pupils generally arrive at lessons on time and the electronic registers are completed for each lesson.
11. The school offers good provision for pupils' personal development so that, for example, the great majority show respects for opinions that differ from their own. The school's efforts to promote care and respect for others are reflected in the racial harmony evident both in and out of lessons. For example, in physical education creative teaching methods provide opportunities for pupils to work together in planning and evaluating their work. Some departments make a good contribution to personal development because of the way teachers present the work in classes. For example, in business education pupils' personal development is very good because the methods used by teachers encourage active participation in learning, develop decision-making skills and increase pupils' confidence as independent learners. The way in which many English lessons are structured helps pupils to make sense of their earlier learning. The school buildings and equipment in lessons are treated with respect. Pupils willingly take responsibility when the opportunity is offered, for example participating in the school council that operates with an elected member from each form.

## HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

12. The overall quality of teaching, and of the learning such teaching promotes, is satisfactory in all years. The quality of teaching is similar in all years. Teaching was at least satisfactory in 95 per cent of the 132 lessons observed. This figure is a considerable improvement since the previous inspection, when more than one lesson in eight was unsatisfactory, and reflects the efforts of senior management to monitor, support and develop teaching. At the time of the previous inspection, almost one-third of teaching was judged to be good or better but in this inspection more than half of all lessons seen were good or better. The most dramatic improvement is in the proportion of teaching that is very good or excellent, which has almost doubled. However, this very high quality teaching is not spread evenly across the school. It is mostly to be found in English, design and technology, geography and physical education, although occasional lessons in other departments are also taught to this standard. The small proportion of unsatisfactory teaching is in occasional lessons in a number of departments. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen in design and technology, English, geography, history, modern foreign languages or physical education.
13. In Years 7-9, teaching is good in English, design and technology, geography, history, and physical education. It is satisfactory in all other subjects. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is very good in physical education and this is reflected in pupils' particularly high levels of achievement. It is good in English, design and technology, geography, history and is satisfactory in all other subjects.
14. Teachers' good levels of expertise in their subjects help them to plan lessons that increase pupils' understanding. For example, in geography teachers communicate their interest and enthusiasm to their pupils and plan well to meet the needs of all pupils. A good feature of many lessons in English is the way in which teachers reinforce and build upon pupils' earlier learning. Planning ensures that a good balance of activities maintains pace and interest. In science, the very good lessons are presented in novel ways that capture pupils' interest and involve them in a range of activities that promote good learning. Drama is presented in ways that arouse enthusiasm and lessons are carefully planned to develop skills and build confidence. When planning is not so good, the most common effect, in otherwise satisfactory lessons is to restrict pupils' opportunities for independent learning. For example, in ICT insufficient attention is given to planning for pupils' individual needs with the result that pupils are too dependent on their teachers to find solutions to difficulties they find in their work. In art and religious education, lesson planning allows too few opportunities for pupils to talk about their work. The result is that opportunities are missed to check pupils' understanding, to reinforce learning and to set standards through discussion. Opportunities are also missed across the curriculum to identify and build upon opportunities to contribute to pupils' spiritual development by, for example, providing opportunities for reflection and for developing insights that relate their learning to wider human issues and values.
15. Although none of the pupils who have home languages other than English is at an early stage of learning English, teachers sometimes fail to plan effectively to meet their needs. Progress is slowed because teachers assume that pupils' apparent fluency in speaking and reading is matched by their understanding of technical or specialised

language used in teaching subjects. Teachers promote secure learning when they recognise pupils' needs and plan to provide specific support. For example, a strong feature of teaching in history is the way in which teachers ensure understanding of ideas, particularly by providing examples that relate to pupils' own backgrounds.

16. Teachers generally manage their classes well. The great majority of pupils are keen to learn and relationships between teachers and pupils are good. The mutual respect evident in most lessons creates a positive climate for learning. There are few occasions in well-planned lessons when progress is slowed by unacceptable behaviour. In the small proportion of unsatisfactory lessons, the common feature is that planning does not meet individual needs well enough to ensure progress. The result is a loss of pace and interest and, occasionally, difficulties in managing the consequent unsatisfactory behaviour.
17. Homework is not used consistently enough to extend classroom learning, or to promote independent learning. Pupils sometimes have too much homework and sometimes too little because teachers do not keep to the timetable. Although some departments, such as modern foreign languages, regularly set homework to reinforce learning, in others the use of homework is at best reasonable and occasionally insufficiently demanding to be useful. This is much the same as was found in the previous inspection and parents are rightly concerned about the consistency and use of homework.
18. Teachers generally pay satisfactory attention to improving pupils' literacy skills in their lessons. All departments have identified literacy objectives for pupils in Years 7-9 that are beginning to have an impact on standards. There are good examples of teachers expecting pupils to discuss their ideas and to give extended responses to questions in design and technology and physical education. However, opportunities for discussion are too often restricted to answering questions that only require brief answers. Also, teachers provide too few tasks that require extended reading and research, and the longer-term effect can be seen in the difficulty some pupils have in completing coursework in Years 10 and 11. Many departments have identified key words for their subjects that are displayed in classrooms and teachers regularly draw attention to them. Teachers provide guidelines to help pupils in planning their written work, much of which is neat and accurate as a result.
19. Insufficient attention is given to developing standards of numeracy through the teaching of subjects other than mathematics. Although there is some good practice, for example in design and technology, few departments identify opportunities to promote pupils' use and understanding of number. The result is that standards of numeracy are unsatisfactory across the school. Similarly, few departments make satisfactory provision for the development of pupils' ICT skills with a consequent effect on pupils' competence in using computers to improve the standards of their work. This is partly because appropriate equipment is not sufficiently available and partly because teachers need training in the effective use of ICT to support learning in their subjects. The school has plans for improved resources and additional training as part of the Technology College development programme but these have yet to have much impact.
20. Teachers are generally well informed about the needs of pupils with special educational needs but do not always use pupils' individual targets well enough in planning. The



exception is the science department, where teachers are conscientious in planning to meet pupils' individual targets. As at the time of the previous inspection, teachers' expertise in meeting pupils' needs varies across the school. Some have worked very hard to produce appropriate materials and adopt methods which engage pupils and keep them interested. For example, in a geography lesson pupils made a board game to reinforce the key points following a practical demonstration of the rain cycle. In general, however, there is too little planned modification of lesson content or materials used. Some teachers have a tendency to avoid tasks that pupils find difficult, for example extended writing. The generous amount of classroom support provided successfully promotes progress when teachers plan work effectively with the classroom assistants. In the special educational needs department, individual and small group teaching is well structured and tailored to meet pupils' individual needs. Good use is made of ICT. Teachers manage learning skilfully to maintain pace and give pupils some responsibility for their own learning, while also providing good individual teaching. The key skills lessons in Year 10 are providing excellent opportunities for pupils to find out about the world of work and improve their basic skills. Two members of the local business community lend their support to the project and provide valuable role models for the boys as well as giving them practical advice and moral support.

21. In planning their lessons, teachers make broadly satisfactory provision overall for gifted and talented pupils. However, less attention is given to the needs of these pupils than to the needs of other identifiable groups. Although pupils are identified, they are not always given extension tasks to enable them to make the progress of which they are capable. Teachers make their principal contributions to progress through additional activities outside lesson times, for example after-school clubs and master classes during school holidays.
22. The overall quality of teaching has improved considerably since the previous inspection. The range of teaching and learning styles has increased and planning is better. However, there is still work to be done in meeting the needs of different groups of pupils more effectively, particularly the gifted and talented. The use of homework is still inconsistent. The teaching of the basic skills of numeracy and ICT across the curriculum needs to be improved.

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

23. The curriculum is mainly broad and balanced, providing a satisfactory range of learning opportunities across Years 7-11. Schemes of work in some departments do not provide enough detail to ensure a wide range of learning opportunities, for example to develop independent learning skills through extended reading and research, although there is good practice in English, design and technology, geography, history and physical education. The amount of time spent in lessons is lower than the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) recommendation for this type of school. There is no daily act of collective worship for pupils.
24. The quality of the curriculum in Years 7-9 is satisfactory overall, including all subjects of the National Curriculum, religious education and personal, health and social education (PSHE). This is an improvement on the previous inspection when

insufficient time was available for art and design and physical education. The amount of time allocated to music is low, and this is affecting standards. The use of ICT across the curriculum is limited and this means that many subjects are unable to comply fully with the National Curriculum requirement to include ICT in their teaching. This is unsatisfactory and similar to the situation at the time of the previous inspection.

25. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. It includes a core curriculum for all pupils, physical education, PSHE and religious education, plus a choice of options. All boys follow an ICT course for one hour each week. A work-related key skills course, which also contains a Youth Enterprise component, is being piloted for the small group of pupils who are taking a single science option. Almost three-quarters of the boys have been disapplied from the National Curriculum requirement to study a modern foreign language on the grounds that they wish to emphasise another area of the curriculum. This is not in fact the case and means that statutory requirements are not met.
26. The school's provision for pupils' personal development is good. All pupils in Years 7-11 follow a well-planned PSHE course that is taught effectively and sensitively by form tutors in one lesson each week. It is a well designed programme tailored to pupils' stage of development, from induction in Year 7 to preparation for further education and work in Years 10 and 11. Similarly, the programme of drugs awareness, sex and relationship education supports pupils well as they move through adolescence into adulthood.
27. Provision for careers education is very good. The very effective careers programme prepares pupils well to make informed choices about work and further education. It is supported by very good resources and a work experience scheme that is well regarded by pupils.
28. The school has good links with commerce and industry through the Compact scheme, which provides 12 tutors as mentors and visiting speakers from local commerce and industry. This scheme sets targets for coursework, punctuality and attendance and also makes contacts between senior citizens and pupils through work-based projects in the community. The school has effective links with its partner primary schools. The school has a Joint Technology College status agreement with King Edward VI Camp Hill School for Boys. Apart from an improvement in ICT resources, there has so far been little impact on the curriculum. The principal benefit to pupils has been through joint revision and master classes. Progress is being made on the joint targets and the strategic management group meets regularly.
29. The school has improved its provision for pupils with special educational needs since the previous inspection, in terms of classroom support and small group teaching and is beginning to develop alternative courses to meet these pupils' needs in Years 10 and 11. All pupils have access to the whole curriculum: withdrawal sessions are planned to avoid undue disruption and do not significantly affect pupils' curricular entitlement. The school implements a staged response to meeting pupils' needs and meets all statutory requirements in this respect. There is a written policy that sets out the responsibility for pupils with special educational needs for all departments. However,

subject departments are not, on the whole, well equipped with resources to meet the diverse learning needs of all pupils.

30. Gifted and talented pupils have been identified, and are offered additional activities outside the classroom, such as mentoring. Last year there was a very successful summer camp for Year 6 pupils before they joined the school. Departments are starting to consider how to provide suitable challenge in lessons. Although in its early stages, this part of the curriculum is well thought out.
31. The school provides effective curricular support for pupils whose home language is other than English. Using special funding, the school has appointed a classroom support assistant to support targeted pupils in lessons.
32. Provision for developing pupils' literacy across the curriculum is satisfactory. All departments have identified key literacy objectives for each year group in Years 7-9 and these are beginning to have an impact on standards. Many departments provide guides to support pupils in structuring their written work. However, teachers provide few opportunities for pupils to write in different forms for different audiences and in some subjects opportunities for extended writing are limited. Pupils also have few opportunities across the curriculum for extended reading and research tasks.
33. Provision for developing pupils' numeracy skills across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. In a small number of lessons, teachers are beginning to use National Numeracy Strategies effectively, helping pupils to develop their mental mathematical skills and to use mathematical language. However, these opportunities are rare and, as a result, standards of numeracy are unsatisfactory overall. Although there are good examples of the use of mathematical skills in some departments, there is no co-ordinated strategy to develop numeracy skills across the curriculum. Some subjects make a positive contribution. For example, in design and technology pupils develop their measuring and estimation skills. In science, they measure liquids and weigh objects. In geography, they plot graphs and draw tables and comment on what they show. Plans are in place to develop numeracy skills in line with the National Numeracy Strategy.
34. The school makes good provision for extracurricular activities. Sport is well represented, within the limits imposed by the lack of facilities. About 40 per cent of the boys are involved in sports activities taken by eight teachers. Many subjects provide clubs for pupils to get help with homework and extend their knowledge.
35. The overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development is satisfactory.
36. The provision for pupils' spiritual development was unsatisfactory at the time of the previous inspection, and this is still the case. Although there are isolated instances when insight into spiritual issues is offered, these do not in themselves amount to a planned whole-school approach. There remains uncertainty about the nature and purpose of spiritual development within the curriculum amongst both senior managers and teachers. There are no policy statements or guidance notes available to teachers, and support for pupils' spiritual development seldom figures in lesson plans or subject

schemes of work. There are thoughtful encounters with spiritual issues in poetry and literature, and in some discussions in religious education and personal and social education (PSHE). Acts of worship in assemblies sometimes touch on important spiritual matters, such as renewal, forgiveness, ambition and compassion. In general, however, pupils are not provided with enough planned opportunities for reflecting on major questions of belief and personal commitment, for talking and writing about such issues, or for considering the personal significance of the work they do in lessons.

37. The provision for pupils' moral development is good and results in high standards of behaviour and relationships. The school motto of 'courtesy and consideration' is fully translated into everyday practice. Pupils are taught well about the nature of right and wrong, especially within the context of their family and school life. There is suitable coverage of moral and ethical issues in most subjects. For example, the morality of richness and poverty is well explored through literature, history and geography. Pupils are often able to articulate thoughtful opinions about the rights and wrongs of political, military and environmental conflicts. For example, Year 11 pupils studying the Easter Uprising in Dublin in 1916 were able to assess the ethical stances taken up by both sides in the conflict and how they affected outcomes. They then went on to link these events with recent conflicts in Northern Ireland.
38. The provision for pupils' social development is also good. There are valuable opportunities for pupils to work together within the school. For example, in physical education lessons, pupils plan activities together, perform well in teams and evaluate their achievements together after each performance. Many pupils enter the school in Year 7 with relatively poorly developed social skills. These skills are greatly improved between Years 7 and 9 as a consequence of the continuous work of teachers both in and out of lessons. Pupils often consider social aspects of subjects, as in business education, food technology, music, physical education, religious education, history and geography. For example, Year 7 pupils in geography were able to make valuable observations about the changing social conditions that would be encountered on a journey from the city centre of Birmingham to an outer suburban area based on their own experience. The senior pupils who become prefects are given valuable opportunities to develop their skills of leadership and accept considerable levels of responsibility. However, in most lessons, pupils in all years are given relatively little scope for taking responsibility for their own learning, mostly because teachers direct their work very closely.
39. The provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. There is a strong sense of racial and cultural harmony within the school. There are valuable opportunities for pupils to explore the cultural dimension of several subjects, including food technology, history, English, geography and art and design. Photographs, displays and commendations in assemblies help to celebrate the many positive features of the culture of this school. However, less is done than might be expected to help pupils appreciate the richness and diversity of cultural traditions represented in the City of Birmingham, or in European countries. There are references in some art and design and music lessons to artists and performers of other countries, but these are relatively few.
40. As at the time of the previous inspection, the school is not meeting statutory requirements to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. The assemblies

seen during the inspection had a spiritual element and represented an act of worship. Assemblies have a theme of the week, but these themes are not carried forward into times of reflection or discussion in tutorial groups on the days of the week when assemblies are not held.

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

41. The school places a high priority on looking after the pupils in its care and does so well. General procedures to ensure the welfare of all groups of pupils are good. Staff have been trained in first aid and health and safety procedures in appropriate areas of the school. The Education Safety Service completed a comprehensive health and safety audit in November 2001 and set out a draft new safety policy and an action plan. The recommendations of the safety audit have not yet been fully implemented. Child protection measures are in place and in line with the Local Education Authority's policy. The designated person has been trained and staff know the procedures. There are adequate arrangements for first aid in the school.
42. Teachers know pupils individually and the school is a safe learning environment where pupils feel confident and happy. Throughout the school, good use is made of the home-school diary, which contains curricular information and targets for personal development. Pupils are involved in setting targets that are incorporated into the diary. In addition, each pupil has a comprehensive individual annual report containing personal and academic targets. Funds from the Excellence in Cities programme pay for two mentors, who have a beneficial effect on the progress, behaviour and attitudes of pupils by providing targeted support. The headteacher has a 'Friday ring round' to make parents aware of good work and attitude or raise issues of concern.
43. There is an effective sanctions and rewards system in the school, including a code of conduct, which is very actively monitored for its effectiveness and consistency.
44. A withdrawal facility has been introduced to help to pupils with behaviour problems who do not settle easily into classroom routine and this is reducing the number of fixed term exclusions. The school has an effective programme, called the Positive Pupil Programme, that works with pupils whose progress gives cause for concern. There are effective processes to monitor the pastoral welfare of all pupils.
45. Provision for pupils' personal and social development is good. The school has a programme that includes work on drugs, sex, bullying and other aspects of PSHE, which is taught effectively and sensitively throughout the school.
46. Procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' academic progress are good. The school has appointed an assessment manager. As a result, detailed assessment information is kept on the school's administrative computer system and is now available to all staff. Some departments are beginning to use this information effectively to arrange teaching groups and to monitor attainment and progress. In particular, the design and technology department is identifying strengths and weaknesses of pupils new to the school and modifying their teaching programmes as a result, gradually extending this programme throughout the school. The physical education department is using assessment well with older pupils in their GCSE course.

The school is beginning to monitor pupils' performance, identify underachieving pupils and groups of pupils and identify the different teaching styles that will be effective with different pupils. However, the use of assessment information is in the early stages of development and some departments are making little use of it as yet. Teachers have had some in-service training on the effective use of assessment data and more is planned in the future.

47. A detailed assessment policy has been produced which includes clear guidelines on effective marking. However, monitoring systems in some departments are not sufficiently developed to ensure consistency in the quality of marking. In some books, marking is unsatisfactory, with a significant proportion of the work not marked and few comments on careless and untidy work or ways to improve.
48. Since the previous inspection, procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' progress have improved, although there is still work to be done in making effective use of the results of assessment to guide planning.

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

49. Although there is little direct parental involvement in the life of the school, and therefore little impact on the work of the school, parents have a broadly positive view of the school. Most parents are pleased with the school. Although relatively few parents returned the questionnaire and fewer attended the parents' meeting, most considered that the school expects their children to work hard and to do as well as they can. Some of the parents who returned the questionnaire and who attended the parents' meeting have concerns about the amount of homework that pupils get, about the information they receive about progress and about whether the school works closely with them.
50. The inspection team considers that in general the homework set is appropriate, but that in some subjects it is not set according to the school's homework timetable so that sometimes pupils have too much homework and at other times too little. Inspectors consider that the school does try to work closely with parents but its efforts get a limited response. However, inspectors do not agree with parents' concerns about the quality of information about progress. Pupils' reports have a clear description of what they can and cannot do and targets for improvement.
51. Discussion with school staff indicates that they feel that the school has good links with parents and parents do feel that the school is approachable. However, the evident gaps in parents' knowledge about how the school is developing, particularly in relation to its Technology College status, indicates that the school may be missing opportunities to involve parents more closely in its work. Parent governors have little information about their roles and responsibilities, although training is offered.
52. The good contact that the special educational needs department has with parents is a key feature of its provision. The home/school attendance liaison officer has good links with parents and appropriate educational professionals and works hard to encourage good attendance, although improvement is slow. The overall picture is similar to that given in the previous inspection report.

53. The quality of the general information that the school provides about itself is good. Both the prospectus and induction information for new parents are helpful; reports to parents now provide better information on pupils' progress. The school continues to try to involve parents and meets with mixed success.

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

54. The acting headteacher and senior staff provide satisfactory leadership and management. In conjunction with the previous headteacher, they have established clear direction for the work of the school. The school is at a critical point in its development. Having secured Technology College status, planning for development is well in hand but has yet to have full impact on standards or provision of resources for learning. The targets outlined in the Technology College development plan are appropriate and show understanding of the challenges faced by the school and what is needed to secure improvement. The senior staff have been successful in establishing the school as a caring community that is characterised by good relationships and a positive attitude to learning. All members of the senior management team provide a highly visible presence around the school, particularly at breaks, lunchtimes and at the change of lessons. They make a considerable contribution to maintaining a pleasant and secure atmosphere in the school that fully reflects the school's aims and values. The improvement in the quality of teaching since the previous inspection is an indicator of the effort put in by the senior management team to monitor quality and to support teachers in raising standards.
55. Overall, standards are improving steadily. However, there is a need to monitor the quality of planning in departments more rigorously, particularly to ensure that schemes of work reflect the school's policies and provide for thorough coverage of all National Curriculum requirements. There are concerns affecting standards that senior managers are aware of but have not dealt with effectively enough. For example, the teaching of numeracy across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. There are weaknesses in the development planning of music and the school's literacy policy is not fully implemented in art and design. Although the recently appointed head of religious education has made a good start in improving matters, there are long-term weaknesses that should have been dealt with earlier. Similarly, long-term difficulties in mathematics, some of which were outside the school's control, have led to deteriorating performance. Standards in mathematics are now included in the school's development planning.
56. The direction provided by senior managers is clear but inconsistencies in the quality of middle management suggest that the vision is not fully shared, or understood. In particular, the monitoring of teaching and planning of work are not as effective as they should be. Although there is strong leadership in design and technology, English, geography, history and physical education, which is reflected in the quality of teaching in these departments, there are weaknesses in the leadership of some departments. The school has a wealth of assessment data that is analysed well at senior level but is not used effectively enough in departments to monitor performance, identify individual pupils' needs, set targets or to support the planning of teaching.

57. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is managed well by the special educational needs co-ordinator who has worked hard to improve standards in the year since her appointment. Development planning is clear and has appropriate targets. The need to monitor the effectiveness of classroom support and small-group teaching is recognised and a system of performance management has been developed. However, there are not yet systems to assess the effectiveness of departments' planning to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs. Nor does the school monitor the long-term progress made by pupils who have received extra support, to ensure its effectiveness in promoting progress.
58. The school makes good use of additional sources of funds to contribute to raising standards, for example to provide support for pupils from minority ethnic groups. Financial management and control are good. The school benefits from efficient financial administration by the bursar. Costs are monitored to ensure that funds are being used effectively to support the school's priorities for development and the school consistently applies the principles of best value to its work. For example, the school's costs and results are compared with those of others in the city-wide 'family' of similar schools. The school runs smoothly from day-to-day supported by efficient administrative staff who provide a warmly approachable first contact for parents and visitors to the school.
59. The governing body is not as effective as it should be in monitoring the work of the school and holding it rigorously to account. Governors are not as fully involved in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school as they were at the time of the previous inspection. The chair of governors is well informed and very supportive of the school; he understands the challenges that the school faces. However, many of the governors are relatively recent appointments and some do not have a full understanding of their duties and responsibilities. Targets and the agenda for development are largely determined by the school and agreed by the governors. There is scope for governors to play a fuller part in shaping the direction of the school and in monitoring standards. The governing body does not meet its statutory requirements in relation to the teaching of ICT across the curriculum and the provision of a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.
60. The standard of accommodation is unsatisfactory. Many of the issues raised in the previous inspection report remain, in spite of further self-help programmes by the school. Positive features include improvements in the accommodation for special educational needs, the new ICT areas and the religious education room. Extra space in the physical education changing area, added to a new weight training room, has allowed the introduction to the curriculum of an additional option. There are still insufficient science laboratories for effective teaching. Accommodation for pottery, French, design and technology and mathematics has unsatisfactory features and conditions are poor in the music department. The library is small and inadequate for the school's needs. Travel to off-site playing fields takes up curriculum time. The sloping playground is the only large space for break times and is difficult to negotiate for some pupils. Corridors and the staircase are narrow but pupils use them sensibly and in an orderly fashion. The school has tried hard to overcome these problems but the quality of learning is affected by some of the deficient accommodation.



61. The provision of resources for learning is unsatisfactory overall because, although most departments have broadly sufficient resources for their basic work, there are some important deficiencies. The amount and quality of ICT equipment are inadequate for it to have a significant impact across the curriculum. In mathematics, the computers available are old and incompatible with the software programs available. In science, there is insufficient equipment for pupils to have access to data-logging, to display data or to simulate experimental situations. The age and condition of the equipment, and problems with the network arrangements, hinder the teaching of ICT. The ratio of newer computers per pupil in the ICT department, is below the national average. The school has recently acquired the use of a number of laptop computers but they are little used by some departments. The design and technology department has good, well-maintained resources in a new suite. Throughout the school there is an adequate supply of textbooks and the English department has a good stock of fiction and non-fiction books. The library has a good range of new books on display but the focus is mainly for younger pupils and there is little in the way of specific support for GCSE courses for older pupils. There are several computers available for pupils to use but Internet access is limited. In some departments, specific problems are preventing more effective learning. Equipment for practical work in mathematics is insufficient in quantity and is not well organised. Resources for the teaching of music are inadequate in quantity and quality and the money allocated for teaching art and design is not sufficient to allow the curriculum to be extended into work in three dimensions or using ICT.
62. The school has sufficient teachers to meet its requirements and they are generally well matched, by qualification and experience, to the demands of the curriculum. Although there is non-specialist teaching in some departments, teachers are well supported to ensure that standards are not adversely affected. The arrangements for the professional development of teachers are satisfactory. They are planned well and are linked to school and departmental development plans and to the needs of individuals. However, there are no procedures to monitor the long-term effects of training on classroom standards. The arrangements for the induction of new staff and for newly qualified teachers are satisfactory. Learning support assistants who work with pupils with special educational needs and support staff for pupils with English as an additional language are effective both in mainstream classes and when pupils receive support out of the classroom.
63. Considering the school's effective use of the funds available to it, the quality of teaching and the satisfactory progress made by the majority of pupils, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

64. In order to improve standards further the school governors, in conjunction with the headteacher and staff, should take the following actions:

- (1) Raise standards in mathematics particularly by:
  - improving the teaching of problem solving, mental and oral skills;
  - making better use of assessment information to guide planning;
  - making clear to pupils the practical applications of what they are learning.

*(see paragraphs 76,77,81,88,89)*
- (2) Improve provision, across the curriculum for pupils' spiritual development by providing planned opportunities for pupils to:
  - reflect on questions of belief and personal commitment and
  - to consider the significance to them of what they are learning.

*(see paragraphs 14, 36)*
- (3) Continue efforts to improve attendance.  

*(see paragraphs 3, 10, 68, 112, 125)*
- (4) Review the structure of the curriculum and the length of the school day to:
  - meet all statutory requirements, particularly for teaching ICT across the curriculum;
  - improve the teaching of numeracy across the curriculum;
  - improve the allocation of time to subjects.

*(see paragraphs 5, 19, 23, 24, 25, 33, 80, 99, 106, 131, 133, 137, 138, 142, 147, 152)*

As well as considering the above issues the headteacher and staff should consider the following minor issues be included in the action plan.

- The use of assessment data to support the planning of teaching.  

*(see paragraphs 46, 47, 100)*
- Improvement of library provision and ICT resources to support independent learning.  

*(see paragraph 61, 123, 139, 142, 152)*

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	132
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	45

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	5	18	30	42	5	0	0
Percentage	6	24	40	55	7	0	0

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

### *Information about the school's pupils*

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	593
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	223

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	10
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	79

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	200

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	15
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	23

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	9.3
National comparative data	8.1

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	3.1
National comparative data	1.1

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 (Year 9)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	114	n/a	114

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	63	53	60
	Girls	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Total	63	53	60
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	55(60)	46(54)	53(53)
	National	64(63)	66(65)	66(59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	21(22)	18(21)	9(21)
	National	31(28)	43(42)	34(30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	66	59	30
	Girls	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Total	66	59	30
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	58(64)	52(54)	26(38)
	National	65(64)	68(66)	64(62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	16(25)	24(27)	33(29)
	National	31(31)	42(39)	33(29)

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

**Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 (Year 11)**

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	104	n/a	104

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	30	86	96
	Girls	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Total	30	86	96
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	29(34)	83(88)	92(96)
	National	48(47)	91(91)	96(96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	29.1(32.6)
	National	39.0(38.4)

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

***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	25
Black – African heritage	3
Black – other	0
Indian	60
Pakistani	126
Bangladeshi	6
Chinese	2
White	323
Any other minority ethnic group	42

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	6	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	15	0
Bangladeshi	4	0
Chinese	0	0
White	96	0
Other minority ethnic groups	7	0

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

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	35.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.7

**Education support staff: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of education support staff	16
Total aggregate hours worked per week	510.5

**Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	71
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***Financial information***

Financial year	2000/01
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	£
Total income	1950303
Total expenditure	1903906
Expenditure per pupil	3237
Balance brought forward from previous year	-24353
Balance carried forward to next year	13788

<b>Average teaching group size:</b>	<b>Y7–Y11</b>
Key Stage 3	24.2
Key Stage 4	22.8

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	7

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	2

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

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

**Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out

593

Number of questionnaires returned

63

**Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	35	59	5	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	38	56	3	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	30	57	8	0	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	24	49	21	5	2
The teaching is good.	43	43	5	0	10
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	33	40	17	0	6
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	51	43	3	3	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	59	38	3	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	29	52	10	0	10
The school is well led and managed.	41	44	2	0	13
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	41	49	5	0	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	23	60	8	3	6



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

### ENGLISH

Overall, the quality of provision in English is **good**.

#### Strengths

- The effectiveness of teaching methods - the variety of learning activities which challenge and engage pupils.
- Teachers' management of pupils - teachers create a positive climate in which pupils behave very well.
- The very good teaching of drama - strong emphasis on collaboration, decision making and the development of sophisticated drama skills.

#### Areas for improvement

- The opportunities given for pupils to apply and develop their ICT skills in English.
- The consistency of day-to-day marking in the subject.

65. Overall standards in English are below average. In 2001, results in the National Curriculum tests for 14 year olds were below average but were above average when compared with schools taking pupils from similar social and economic backgrounds. This represents satisfactory achievement in relation to pupils' standards when they entered the school. Although the results dipped slightly in 2001, the trend since the previous inspection has been one of strong improvement. GCSE results for English were below the national average for the award of A\*-C grades in 2001. Attainment in GCSE English literature was above the national average for boys. Results in both English and English literature have been improving and performance overall in English is higher than in mathematics and science.
66. In work seen during the inspection, standards at the age of 14 are below average. In speaking and listening, the higher attaining pupils listen attentively and are confident when making oral contributions using appropriate vocabulary. Lower attaining pupils do not adapt what they say in response to the views of others. In reading, at the age of 14, higher attaining pupils have a good understanding of the key features of a range of texts. For example, Year 9 pupils working on *Macbeth* were able to discuss in detail the motives behind Macbeth's actions and to justify their comments with close reference to the text. Lower attaining pupils do not bring inference and deduction to their reading. In writing, the higher attaining pupils write in a range of forms for different purposes. Weaker writers experience difficulty with the organisation of their writing and do not have control over grammatical features. The range of punctuation used is often narrow and spelling is often inaccurate.
67. In work seen during the inspection, standards are below average at the age of 16. In speaking and listening, higher attaining pupils structure their talk clearly and show that they have listened with understanding. Lower attaining pupils do not make extended responses and their control over vocabulary and Standard English remains limited. In reading, the highest attaining pupils make critical responses to a range of demanding texts. For example, Year 11 pupils successfully considered the use of dramatic irony in

*Othello*. Lower attaining pupils find it difficult to identify layers of meaning or to summarise information from more than one source. In writing, higher attaining pupils produce work that is varied and interesting and are able to sustain an argument. For example, Year 11 pupils successfully analyse media text when comparing television police dramas and when comparing the styles of humour used in American comedy programmes.

68. There is no significant difference in the progress of different groups of pupils. Pupils in all classes make good progress during lessons. However, achievement over time is no better than satisfactory because of absenteeism, writing skills being poorer than oral skills and, in some cases, poor retention of knowledge.
69. The contribution of other subjects to improving standards of literacy is satisfactory. All departments have identified key literacy objectives for each year group in Years 7-9 and these are beginning to have an impact. In speaking and listening, there are good examples of teachers expecting pupils to discuss their ideas and to give extended responses to questions in design and technology and physical education. However, opportunities for discussion are frequently restricted to answering closed questions. There are few opportunities across the curriculum for extended reading and research tasks. In some departments, good examples were seen during the inspection of teachers using effective methods to support pupils in reading for meaning and developing vocabulary. For example, in a Year 7 geography lesson on zones of a city there was a strong emphasis on the meaning of such words as 'deprivation', 'renewal', 'detached'. In both history and geography good examples were seen of pupils being supported to summarise information from a range of sources. Key words are displayed in many classrooms and teachers regularly draw attention to them. Good practice in Year 9 personal, social and health education lessons promoted pupils' literacy when the novel *That Was Then This is Now* was used to raise issues, promote discussion and consider the author's choice of vocabulary. In writing, many departments provide writing guides to support pupils in structuring their work. Pupils respond well to teachers' expectations that they will present their work neatly and accurately and examples of good work are often used as models. Few opportunities are provided for pupils to write in different forms for different audiences and in some departments opportunities for extended writing are limited.
70. Pupils respond well to the good teaching they receive and learn well. Attitudes are good in all years. Pupils show interest in their work and are usually very well behaved. Pupils' capacity to work collaboratively and to persevere with tasks set is good. Pupils support each other and respect one another's efforts. For example, Year 8 pupils presenting group readings of the 'All's the world's a stage' speech from *As You Like It* prompted each other and applauded one another.
71. Overall, the quality of teaching is good with a substantial number of very good lessons. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is very slightly better than in earlier years. A good feature of many lessons is the way in which teachers establish new skills and knowledge, building upon pupils' earlier learning. Pupils are asked to review and revise what they already know and are told clearly how this fits in with what they are going to learn next. Many lessons are characterised by a good balance of activities and in the best lessons opportunities are given for pupils to work collaboratively and to talk before writing.

This has a positive impact upon pupils' confidence as writers and reflects the department's effective efforts to improve pupils' writing skills. For example, in a Year 10 class lower attaining pupils orally rehearsed the sequence of events in *Romeo and Juliet* in preparation for producing their own stories about a modern day feud. As a result, they were confident to begin writing and were more able to structure their own stories. Teachers present good models as both readers and writers. For example, in a Year 10 lesson on poetry the teacher offered her own poem for the pupils to analyse. Consequently, there was real enthusiasm when they started to write their own poems. Pupils read a variety of demanding texts in Years 10 and 11, which both engage their interest and challenge their abilities. For example, a Year 11 class studies classic texts alongside modern fiction and media texts.

72. The great majority of lessons have a clear structure beginning with a focused, often interactive activity. For example, in one Year 7 lesson each pupil was given a different photograph of a person and asked to think of an appropriate metaphor for some aspect of their subject's appearance. Their response involved very good use of figurative language. A review session at the end is a well-established feature of English lessons in which pupils productively reflect on their learning. Teaching in Years 9 and 11 is focused on examination requirements and the development of skills in the context of stimulating reading and writing activities. Teaching is supported by well-produced materials that provide effective frameworks for pupils. Teachers have high expectations of all pupils and this is linked to good knowledge of pupils' performance. As a result, teaching is equally effective for all pupils. Less effective teaching is characterised by a lack of pace and a lack of clarity as to the purpose of the activities, as a consequence of which pupils easily become distracted.
73. The teaching of drama is of a consistently high standard. Drama is presented in ways that arouse pupils' enthusiasm. Lessons are carefully planned to build pupils' confidence and develop their skills. Excellent opportunities are given for pupils to work collaboratively and to show initiative. Pupils of all abilities respond very well to such opportunities. A Year 11 GCSE group, when improvising, demonstrated excellent ideas and very effective use of spoken English.
74. The head of department provides effective and efficient leadership. The department is committed to development and has taken a sensible approach to the introduction of the Key Stage 3 English Strategy. Schemes of work have been appropriately reviewed and revised to incorporate the new national recommendations. The need for more multicultural texts identified in the previous inspection report has been dealt with satisfactorily. Although only two members of the department are full-time teachers of English, the department is well organised and demonstrates a consistent and corporate approach.
75. A common curriculum is now in place for pupils of all abilities including those with special education needs. It is a reflection of the good work within this department that results in National Curriculum tests and at GCSE have improved considerably since the previous inspection. The use of ICT in English remains unsatisfactory.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is **unsatisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress.

### Areas for improvement

- Standards of numeracy skills in mathematics and numeracy across the curriculum.
- Meeting statutory requirements for the provision of ICT in mathematics including resources to meet these requirements.
- Use of assessment information to monitor standards of marking.
- Opportunities for pupils to use and apply mathematics in Years 7-9 including practical work.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language.

76. Pupils' results in National Curriculum tests at the age of 14 have been well below national averages for the last few years. The number of pupils attaining the average level or above is well below national averages. Over the period 1998 to 2001, results have fallen against the national trend. The schools' performance is below that of similar schools.
77. In GCSE examinations, pupils' results have been well below national averages. Trends have been below the national trend of improvement. Standards are below those in English and science.
78. By the age of 14, standards of work seen in books and lessons are higher than in tests but are still below average. The standards of attainment of pupils on entry to the school have improved significantly over the last four years. Partly as a result of the National Numeracy Strategy in primary schools, pupils are entering the school with much better number and estimation skills. They make satisfactory progress in most areas of mathematics.
79. Some pupils are beginning to develop their mental skills through short activities at the beginning of lessons and are able to use number effectively when solving problems. However, the National Numeracy Strategy is not fully implemented and opportunities to develop these skills are limited.
80. There are other areas of relative strength in pupils' work in Years 7-9. For example, lower attaining Year 8 pupils show good understanding of shapes and their properties when enlarging different shapes. Higher attaining Year 7 pupils have very good understanding of time graphs and can describe what is happening on the graphs. Pupils are beginning to understand algebra and solve simple problems. Some pupils have good skills in estimating measures, which they developed in their primary schools. They can estimate lengths with a good degree of accuracy. However, their skills in estimating weights and capacities are less secure. There are insufficient planned opportunities for pupils to extend their weighing and measuring skills, to use mathematics in problem solving and to use computers in their work.

81. Standards of Year 11 pupils' work are well below average. However, pupils make satisfactory progress and develop confidence and competence in most areas of mathematics. Some higher attaining Year 11 pupils demonstrate higher level algebra skills when working with equations and plotting graphs, using graphic calculators to check their answers. Lower attaining pupils show clear gains in knowledge and understanding of shapes and how to work out their areas. However, they have little understanding of how this might be used in real problem solving. Pupils develop satisfactory levels of independent working and problem-solving skills through their coursework tasks. Some Year 11 pupils show good mental skills when multiplying decimal numbers in their heads. In general, however, mental and oral skills are less well developed because of a lack of opportunities. Estimation and an understanding of weights and capacities are less well developed than in younger pupils. Few are able to estimate weights and capacities with any degree of accuracy and as a result are unable to recognise answers that cannot be correct. There are insufficient planned opportunities for pupils to extend their weighing and measuring skills and to use computers in their work. The quality of presentation in some books is unsatisfactory, particularly those of lower attaining pupils.
82. The attainment and progress of pupils with special educational needs are satisfactory. However, in some lessons, teachers' planning lacks detail, insufficient use is made of assessment to find out what pupils understand and to use this as a basis for planning. There are no short-term targets to give these pupils incentives to learn. Most lessons lack a practical emphasis and links to real situations. For both pupils with special educational needs and pupils with English as an additional language, there are insufficient opportunities to develop mathematical language.
83. Higher attaining pupils make satisfactory progress in some lessons but some work is not sufficiently challenging. There are insufficient planned opportunities to extend the thinking of these pupils. In some lessons, the work is too easy and they coast along rather than moving forward at an appropriate pace.
84. Teaching is satisfactory overall. There were only two unsatisfactory lessons observed during the inspection and teaching was sometimes good and occasionally very good. When teaching is good, staff explain clearly. Planning caters for the range of attainment in classes, with easier work for lower attaining pupils and challenging extension work for the higher attaining pupils. Lessons move forward at a good pace. Whilst pupils are working, teachers monitor their work, picking up any problems as they arise and stopping the group to explain where necessary. Marking is thorough, identifying errors and helping pupils to improve. Discipline is good and any instances of misbehaviour are dealt with quickly. Homework is used to support and extend the work in class. These teaching methods ensure that pupils waste little time in lessons and they make good progress. In those lessons where teaching is not so good, planning lacks detail including work to meet the needs of all pupils. High standards of behaviour are not always expected. A significant amount of marking is superficial, with some work not marked and few comments on ways to improve, or on careless and untidy work. No comment is made when pages are missed, torn out of books or scribbled upon. In most lessons, computers are not used to enhance pupils' learning.

85. Most pupils enjoy mathematics, are well behaved and enthusiastic and concentrate well. The positive attitudes in lessons have a significant impact on the quality of work but the cumulative effect of the limited range of techniques pupils are taught and the interruption to learning caused by absence hinders overall progress.
86. In a small number of lessons, teachers are beginning to use National Numeracy Strategies effectively, helping pupils to develop their mental mathematical skills, to develop speaking and listening skills and mathematical language. However, these opportunities are rare and standards of numeracy are unsatisfactorily low overall. Although there are good examples of the use of mathematical skills in other subjects, there is no co-ordinated strategy to develop these skills across the curriculum. Some subjects make a positive contribution. For example, in design and technology pupils develop their measuring and estimation skills. In science, they measure liquids and weigh objects. In geography, they plot graphs and draw tables and comment on what they show. Plans are in place to develop numeracy skills in line with the National Numeracy Strategy.
87. The long-term absence of the head of department since November has resulted in several groups of pupils having a succession of temporary supply staff. The second in department has concentrated on keeping the department functioning and planning an extra set of lessons every day for the supply teachers. There has been little opportunity to move the department forward.
88. Progress since the previous inspection has been unsatisfactory. As a result, leadership of the department has to be judged as unsatisfactory. Standards of attainment in national tests were below national averages at the age of 14; now they are well below. Performance in GCSE examinations continues to be well below national averages. Results were above those of similar schools, now they are below.
89. There are a significant number of areas highlighted in the previous report that have not improved or that have deteriorated. Attainment in using and applying mathematics is below the standards of other aspects of mathematics. Pupils rarely use ICT to support learning in lessons and it is not part of a clear scheme of work. Standards of numeracy are unsatisfactory. There is no numeracy policy. Estimation skills to check the accuracy of answers are underdeveloped. There is no reference to mathematics of different cultures. Resources are inadequate overall. Practical equipment is lacking and disorganised. There is little computer hardware and software. Accommodation is inadequate. Some rooms are shabby. One room is cramped with little room for manoeuvre when larger groups are in it. Teachers have no access to their classrooms when not teaching since a shortage of rooms means that other teachers use them. Some lessons are taken in non-specialist rooms. There is no access to water. There is little opportunity for practical work, to use and apply mathematics or to investigate problems. Assessment information is not used well to guide teachers' planning, let pupils know the level at which they are working, monitor the performance of particular groups of pupils or set targets for improvement. Marking is inconsistent. In a significant number of books, large sections are not marked. Where work is marked, few comments are made on ways to improve. Careless and untidy work and frequent blank pages escape comment and there are no short-term targets set for improvement. Although there is clear progress in pupils' skills and knowledge, the understanding of a significant

number of pupils is unsatisfactory. For example, they can work on problems involving large numbers and decimals but do not understand basic facts about decimals. They can work out problems involving measures, but cannot make sensible estimates of real lengths, weights and volumes. As a result, they will not be able to spot answers that are not sensible.

90. Some improvements have been made and other developments are planned. New textbooks have been purchased and teachers have been trained in their use. New schemes of work are planned. Plans are in place to improve the provision of computer resources and train staff in their use. Teachers in the department have had training in the implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy and further training is planned by the Local Education Authority for the rest of the school. A marking policy has been developed. The school provides detailed assessment information. Senior managers are aware of the underachievement of pupils in mathematics and have identified mathematics as a key focus of the school development plan.

## SCIENCE

Overall, the quality of provision in science is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Teachers' lesson planning.
- Good relationships between teachers and pupils.

### Areas for improvement

- The accommodation for teaching science.
- The provision and use of ICT.
- The use of statistics to monitor the department's performance.

91. Standards are below average in science. They are not as good as standards in English but better than in mathematics. Pupils enter the school with below average levels of attainment. They make steady progress through the school but are still at below average levels when they leave. In the National Curriculum tests at the age of 14 in 2001, a below average proportion of pupils gained the level expected for average 14 year olds nationally. While the national average increased over the previous two years, the school's results in science were static. However, compared with schools taking pupils from similar social and economic backgrounds, results were above average in both years. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, particularly when they have additional support in the classroom. Teachers' assessments of pupils' levels of attainment at the end of Year 9 have been significantly below their actual test results and have been falling since 1999 until, in 2001 they were almost half the actual result obtained. This difference is an indication that teachers may have too low expectations of their pupils.
92. About 80 per cent of pupils take the double award examination and the rest are entered for the single award. In the GCSE examinations in 2000, the proportion of pupils gaining a grade A\*-C in the double award examination was slightly above the national average and the proportion gaining grades A\*-G was close to the average. In 2001 the proportion gaining grades A\*-C fell below the national average by about five per cent while the proportion gaining grades A\*-G was again close to the average. In both 2000

and 2001 the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C in the single award examination was significantly below the national average and in 2001 almost one in five pupils failed to gain any grade.

93. In work seen during the inspection, pupils at the age of 14 are attaining levels below the national average overall. While some attain high levels, there are more pupils whose attainment is below average. Most pupils across the attainment range produce neat, legible writing and exercise books are clean and free from graffiti. At this age, higher attaining pupils draw diagrams well, especially those of a biological nature such as the human skeleton. They write chemical equations in words and symbols and draw excellent optical ray diagrams. There are good examples of extended writing after pupils have researched a scientific topic. However, lower attaining pupils sometimes take less care when drawing diagrams, doing them freehand and in ink. They write chemical equations in words only and optical ray diagrams often show reflected or refracted rays at incorrect angles.
94. By the age of 16, higher attaining pupils have a good knowledge across a wide range of scientific topics. The best diagrams are meticulously drawn. Pupils use and manipulate a range of formulae and perform calculations accurately. They understand the structure of the atom and can calculate the relative proportions of elements in a compound, have a good knowledge of the human body and use scientific terminology accurately. Lower attaining pupils often produce neat, careful work but spellings of scientific terms are not as accurate and calculations are less complex. Over the whole attainment range, graph-drawing skills are poorly developed. Pupils do not show evidence of knowing what is meant by, "a line of best fit", or what to do if a plotted point is anomalous.
95. Teachers had marked all pupils' work seen. In most cases any comments made were brief and lacked specific information on what the pupils needed to do next to improve the quality of their work. Where pupils had been instructed to do something more, such as complete a piece of work, there was no evidence that the work had been completed or that the teacher had checked for completion. In some instances, especially with older middle attaining pupils working on a physics module, the homework set was not sufficiently demanding and several lines of work were accepted as successful completion of the task.
96. Pupils enjoy their lessons. They learn new facts, refine manipulative skills and extend their understanding of scientific concepts as they progress through the school. Relationships between teachers and pupils are relaxed but respectful. The atmosphere in classrooms is workmanlike. Pupils enjoy lessons when they are involved in a range of activities and the teacher takes care to present material in a novel fashion. Experiments in chromatography are routine but a hypothetical murder story and the possibility of catching a villain by correctly identifying the constituents of different samples of fluid captured the imagination of one Year 10 group. They were keen to get on with the experiment and catch the murderer. In another lesson, the teacher explained, in mime, what pupils were to do in an experiment. The class was fascinated and pupils understood a skilful description of potential hazards and appreciated the humour of the situation.



97. The overall quality of teaching is good. More than nine tenths of the teaching seen during the inspection was satisfactory or better with much more than half of it good or very good. The quality of pupils' learning matches the quality of the teaching and in almost all lessons teachers are able to teach well because they prepare their lessons carefully. The school does not have sufficient laboratory space for its needs in normal times. Unfortunately, while the inspection was taking place one of the three laboratories was being refurbished and was unusable. As a result, a large proportion of lessons was in classrooms, most of them unsuitable for teaching science. Teachers exercised great ingenuity in planning their work so that the effect on pupils' learning was minimised and technicians worked extremely hard ensuring that equipment was provided and collected from classrooms around the school. One group of pupils were very tolerant of the noise from dust extracting machinery and the number of people walking through the room while they were trying to present work they had prepared on smoking.
98. Pupils behave well in the great majority of lessons. Relationships between pupils and teachers are relaxed and pupils learn well as a result. In this supportive atmosphere, pupils with lower levels of attainment make good progress. Teachers encourage them to read out loud to practise their pronunciation of scientific terminology and questions are asked in such a way that pupils are keen to answer, or put their suggestions forward, knowing that their efforts are valued even if their answers are not correct. In one lesson with older pupils, despite good planning and an interesting practical experiment for the pupils to perform, the unacceptable behaviour of a small group of pupils spoilt the lesson for all. Little progress was made and the majority of pupils learned little as a result.
99. Provision for the use of ICT in science is limited although there are plans for an increase in the near future. Pupils make little use of word processors to enhance the presentation of their own work, have little opportunity to use data-logging equipment and computers are not used to display data or simulate experiments in the laboratory.
100. Management of the department is satisfactory. Although the scheme of work and department handbook have not been updated for several years, the recently appointed head of department has produced a clearly focused development plan with costs and target dates. The work of colleagues is directed well, especially at a time when a laboratory is out of use, and the department runs smoothly. There are plans to increase the inadequate amount of space available for technicians' work. At present, little use is made of assessment data to monitor the effectiveness of the department.
101. Improvement since the previous inspection has been unsatisfactory. There has been no significant improvement in examination results in the intervening years and in 2001 one fifth of pupils did not gain a grade. The scheme of work has been allowed to become out of date and the provision and use of ICT is unsatisfactory.

## ART AND DESIGN

Overall, the quality of provision in art and design is **satisfactory**.

Strengths
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- Discipline and lesson organisation are good.
- Staff develop good relationships with pupils.
- Studio accommodation, whilst less than ideal for ceramics, creates a good learning environment.
- The open-door policy at lunchtimes and after school offers pupils a valuable opportunity for extra study.

#### Areas for improvement

- Teaching does not make enough links between what the pupils do and what artists do.
- The use of sketchbooks needs a clear focus for the purposes of homework and research.
- The teaching of subject language needs to be planned better.
- Levels of attainment in the GCSE higher grades need a full analysis.

102. Standards overall are average. In GCSE examinations in 2001, the proportion of pupils awarded grades A\*-C was well below average, and considerably below results of previous years. The size of the option group was 50 per cent smaller than in 2001, as many of the more talented pupils chose to study other subjects, leaving only pupils of lower attainment to form the examination group. The present groups in Years 10 and 11 are now back up to strength.

103. In relation to their earlier learning, the achievement of most pupils is satisfactory throughout the school. Pupils with special educational needs and those with home languages other than English make satisfactory progress overall. Pupils who show talent and interest in art and design are identified by the art teachers and given every encouragement with their work and provided with opportunities for extra tuition, enabling them to make appropriate progress.

104. In work seen during the inspection, standards by the end of Year 9 are broadly average. In Years 7-9, pupils have an opportunity to engage in a variety of practical activities designed to increase their practical skills and an understanding of the visual and tactile elements of art. Portrait and figure drawings by Year 8 pupils show a sound understanding of proportion and skill with drawing materials. Pupils in Year 7 make good line drawings in ink of a still-life arrangement of domestic objects, illustrating an understanding of shape and proportion. However, there is insufficient attention to exploration of texture and experimentation to widen their skills with a variety of materials. There is no evidence of pupils making connections between what they do and what artists do, or of expressing opinions about the work of artists or their own work, thereby increasing their knowledge of and about art. Sketchbooks are not used sufficiently well for planning and experimenting. Most of the books seen do not indicate a development of skills, knowledge or understanding of the subjects and topics.

105. Standards by the end of Year 11 are broadly average. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have opportunities to develop their ideas on a variety of projects in drawing, painting, textiles and ceramics. Skills are undeveloped in terms of technique in drawing, painting and ceramics, and little value is placed upon references to the work of artists, craftworkers or designers to inform their work as it progresses. However, silk-screen printing on fabric by Year 10 pupils, based upon patterns derived from observed drawings of natural forms, achieves a good standard of finish and presentation. Allowing for the limited experiences of art and design that the pupils have prior to starting secondary

education, their achievement by the age of 14 is satisfactory, especially in observational drawing. Achievement by the age of 16 shows limited observational skill and technical limitations generally, but satisfactory improvement is currently shown in textile work in Year 10 and experimental work in Year 11, overall reaching a satisfactory level.

106. In all years, ICT does not make a significant contribution to what and how pupils learn about art and artists. Much of the evidence in sketchbooks of pupils' use of ICT is of downloaded images, which do not appear to inform the practical work.
107. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Staff plan and organise their lessons satisfactorily, and use the studio spaces effectively in relation to the practical tasks. Resources are prepared to make the most of the short lesson periods. For example, in a Year 7 lesson, cartridge paper and graphite sticks for use in line and tonal work were distributed quickly so that the pupils could start drawing soon after the introduction to the task. Good relationships are established with the boys in all classes, creating a positive working atmosphere. Pupils get on well together and there is no evidence of racial tension during lessons in the studios. The majority of lessons seen during the inspection were at least satisfactory and only one lesson was judged to be unsatisfactory. Discipline is low-key and effective, which engenders mutual respect and allows lessons to proceed without disruptions and confrontations. Both teachers spend a lot of time and energy working with and encouraging individual pupils, ensuring that they can cope with the tasks. There is little opportunity afforded by staff to allow pupils to respond verbally to lesson stimulus, to show an understanding of the lesson's objectives and to encourage interest in all aspects of the work. Pupils are generally told what to do, or what has happened, and have insufficient opportunity to show an understanding of the task or to express an opinion on the outcome. One lesson used technical language that the pupils did not understand and had little to do with the immediate task, which adversely affected their attitude to the work.
108. The quality of learning is satisfactory overall. Most pupils in Years 7-9 listen to and act upon instruction in a satisfactory manner. Some pupils show little interest in their work and are easily distracted. In one lesson with a difficult Year 8 group, the activity was given over to writing down ideas rather than using pictorial devices to describe spatial effects and pupils' response was very poor. By contrast, a Year 7 group began their practical work after minimal but effective instruction and retained interest throughout the lesson. Some pupils in Years 10 and 11 respond slowly to learning opportunities and make minimal progress in lessons. However, one Year 11 group was required to produce a series of images using different materials in a short space of time; they responded with enthusiasm and imagination to the pressure and pace required by the lesson. Some of the pupils stayed behind to continue with this work, such was their motivation. Pupils have unsatisfactory knowledge of artists from different times and cultures and consequently their work shows little evidence of research into the work of artists, although it is an examination requirement.
109. The management of the department is unsatisfactory. Although the level of funding is low, the resources for practical work are of a reasonable quality, and are in good condition. However, as at the time of the previous inspection, the provision is for a limited range of practical activities and this affects overall standards. Displays of work are well organised and celebrate a range of achievements by pupils. Assessment is

satisfactory, but is not used directly to set targets or to inform the planning of teaching. There are no agreed criteria between the staff to guide assessment in Years 7-9 in a consistent manner. Meetings between staff tend to be informal and without a clear direction for monitoring programmes of study and pupils' progress. The departmental development plan is narrow in its content. In planning programmes of study, there is a need for a clear focus on how pupils develop practical skills. Although the curriculum meets statutory requirements, the units of study do not encourage independent learning in Years 7-9. There is no provision for pupils to make gallery visits to enrich and inform their practical and contextual work. Books and artefacts to enrich and develop an understanding of art and crafts from other cultures are limited in amount and range.

110. Since the previous inspection, the work of the department now complies with National Curriculum requirements. However, the weaknesses identified by the previous report in relation to planning, assessment and the scope of pupils' work are much the same. Teaching has improved and standards are higher. Resources have improved but accommodation for three-dimensional activities is still unsatisfactory for teaching and learning, as the building is not equipped with display facilities or adequate ventilation, and is generally in a poor state of decoration and repair.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in design and technology is **good**.

### Strengths

- Technology College status.
- Assessment of pupils' skills on entry to the school.
- Graphics results at GCSE.
- The commitment and team work of the teaching and technical team.

### Areas for Development

- The use of National Curriculum standards to improve motivation.
- Improving attitudes to meeting examination deadlines in Years 10 and 11.
- Providing extension work for gifted and talented pupils.

111. The results of teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment at the age of 14 in 2001 were in line with standards for boys nationally. These standards were confirmed by work seen during the inspection and scrutiny of past work. GCSE results in 2001 were well above average in graphics and below in other elements. Graphics is a particular strength of the department. Pupils' performance in design and technology has improved since 2000 with pupils equalling their performance in other subjects in 2001.

112. In Years 7-9, pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language respond well to the practical and experimental work, which strengthens their literacy, communication and comprehension. Their achievement is good. Gifted and talented pupils' achievement is only satisfactory as there is less attention given to this group in planning to meet individual needs. In Years 10 and 11, the achievement of all groups is just satisfactory because problems such as their attendance and difficulty with reaching deadlines for projects, impedes progress.

113. In Years 7-9, progress is good overall because pupils enjoy the well-planned programme of study that covers a wide range of materials. The booklets produced for each unit of work aid progress. In Year 7, a battery of useful tests that analyse the skills, knowledge and understanding that pupils bring from their primary school provides the basis for good department records. All planning from this point builds on pupils' experience. Challenging, experimental group work develops problem-solving skills in teams. For example, in a Year 8 class, building and strengthening a tower in a construction lesson led to intense discussion. Some structures failed and were later modified; this helped pupils to prove that 'triangulation' was the most effective solution to the problem. Unit booklets used in all modules have helped to overcome issues raised in the previous inspection. The department now has planned homework, technical word banks and writing guides to improve presentation and content in Years 7-9, all contributing to improvement. Good opportunities to collect and manipulate data improve pupils' accuracy. Designing and making prepares pupils to make independent decisions. For example, Year 9 pupils experiment with bakery products, adding new ingredients to a basic recipe that is then evaluated by the group. Assessment is clear and informs effective reporting to parents. Reports have clear targets for improvement. The use of National Curriculum levels is planned to be reintroduced into the unit booklets to promote self-motivation and independence.
114. In Years 10 and 11, pupils of all levels of attainment make good progress in lessons. During the two-year course, the regular absence of some pupils and the failure to meet project deadlines slow overall achievement. Staffing difficulties have had a negative impact on the less well-motivated pupils. Increasingly effective use of the examination board marking criteria and good teacher feedback, both written and verbal, are helping to focus pupils on what they need to do to improve. The improvement in ICT facilities is helping to improve standards. Pupils use manufacturing principles effectively in their studies because they benefit from teachers' industrial experience.
115. Attitudes in Years 7-9 are very positive. Food technology in particular was mentioned as a high point when pupils with special educational needs were interviewed. In Years 10 and 11, attitudes are more variable and some pupils struggle to complete their projects. Clear expectations from all teachers set a high standard for behaviour that most pupils meet. Personal development is very good because teachers use methods that demand pupils become independent decision-makers. Teachers are good role models. Good opportunities for pupils to give feedback to the class raise their self-esteem.
116. Teaching is good overall with about half the lessons seen being very good or excellent. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, in most cases from industrial experience. All teachers are consistent in referring to the large 'Q' painted on the wall in each classroom. This is regularly linked to terms such as 'quality', and 'questioning' as the basis of good product design. Planning gives good coverage of National Curriculum programmes of study, but there is inconsistent reference to individual learning needs in written lesson plans. Basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT are integrated into all teaching, which is generally raising standards. Additional staff, such as technical support and learning support assistants, are valued by the teachers and respected by the boys. They make good contributions to teaching and learning with their interest and

experience. Teachers work hard to encourage creativity and imagination. Limited availability of artefacts and videos restrict opportunities to inspire pupils with a range of ideas from other designers. Where artefacts are available, for example in the ‘table centre project’, resulting designs are exciting and cover a range of cultural and spiritual aspects in design and technology. The issue of meeting project deadlines remains a challenge to the department.

117. Leadership in the department is very good. The team leader has an inclusive style of deploying his team, despite the many and varied additional roles they hold in the school. Monitoring is effective but its informality limits the wider sharing of good practice. There are few links with school governors despite the recent success of the Technology College bid. Staffing has improved within the last few months. Accommodation, despite the improvement in the ICT area, is too small for the class sizes and restricts progress as well as requiring additional attention to safety considerations. A good library resource is available in the department. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection as all issues have been tackled.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

### **Strengths**

- Standards reached at age 14 are improving each year.
- Good use is made of the locality for fieldwork and enquiry work.
- The quality of teaching is good, as is pupils’ response to the teaching.
- Teachers are successfully applying new approaches to the teaching of thinking skills and to the setting of learning targets.
- Schemes of work and assessment arrangements have been fully revised and modernised.
- Leadership and management of the subject are good.

#### Areas for improvement

- Too few pupils aged 14 are reaching the higher levels in National Curriculum assessments.
- The proportion of pupils gaining GCSE A\*-C grades has fallen since the previous inspection.
- Some pupils are not completing homework or coursework tasks on time or to a suitable standard.
- There are insufficient computers and no digital projection facilities.

118. The standards reached by pupils aged 14 are below average. This is also the case for the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C grade in GCSE examinations and the proportion gaining at least a G grade. Pupils enter Year 7 with low standards in geography. In particular, they have a weak factual knowledge of key places and features and poorly developed mapwork skills. They initially find descriptive writing and note-taking hard. All pupils make satisfactory gains in knowledge and understanding from the beginning of Year 7 to the end of Year 9. Middle and lower ability pupils generally make the best progress relative to their starting points. Fewer pupils reach above average standards than might be expected. Partly because of this pattern, a high proportion of pupils with low point scores in National Curriculum tests choose to study geography in Years 10 and 11. At the time of the previous inspection, 50 per cent of pupils entered for GCSE geography gained grades A\*-C. This proportion fell to 21 per cent in 2001. The principal reasons for this were an increase in the proportion of pupils taking the subject from the lower half of the school's ability range, some pupils inappropriately entered for the higher paper and a period when Year 11 classes were taught by supply teachers. There was no significant difference in the pattern of GCSE results of pupils from different ethnic groups.

119. In work seen during the inspection, pupils in Years 7-9 are being given clear guidance about what they must do to raise their standards. This increased awareness of the levels that they are currently working at and what is needed to reach the next level is having a marked effect on motivation and achievement. This was readily apparent, for example, in an assignment being carried out by Year 8 pupils about Niagara Falls. In order to ensure that they got an improved mark, some pupils had undertaken individual enquiry work using the Internet and tourist literature. Pupils with special educational needs are given intensive support and most are working at a higher standard than might be expected as a consequence. Just over half of pupils in Year 9 are attaining at or above the level of the national benchmark standard for pupils aged 14. Relatively few pupils undertake extended work to enable them to reach higher standards. This is mainly because teachers keep within the limits of a single textbook or worksheet, so reducing the flow of images, information and ideas available for pupils to absorb. There are impressive examples of individual pupils using ICT to undertake enquiry work and to present project work, but opportunities for all pupils to use new technology in lessons are too few. When ICT is used, learning is greatly enriched. For example, in a Year 9 lesson when pupils studying Equatorial rain forest environments used web-sites that illustrated the wildlife, vegetation and farming in the Amazon Basin. Compared with the time of the previous inspection, pupils are now undertaking more locally based fieldwork. This is leading to improved capabilities in map-reading, measuring, analytical and recording skills.

120. Two groups of pupils are studying geography in both Years 10 and 11. The National Curriculum test scores of these pupils when they were aged 14 shows that only one in three has a strong probability of reaching a GCSE grade C at the age of 16. Approximately 30 per cent of pupils in Year 11 were seen to be working at a standard that would be likely to result in a GCSE grade between A\*-C. Whilst this figure is well below the national average, it represents an appropriate target based on pupils' previous test results. In 2001 GCSE results were adversely affected by a lack of data on pupils' progress. This has been rectified and pupils currently following GCSE courses know clearly how well they are succeeding and what more they need to do to reach their target grades. In 2001 there were difficulties in getting some pupils to complete their coursework. This meant that they did not qualify for a GCSE grade or for a Certificate of Achievement. This problem is now less severe, but it has not been fully solved. Year 11 pupils are being given improved help with examination techniques compared with previous years. This was evident in a lesson where pupils were being prepared well to answer a question about the impact of the closure of steelworks in South Wales.
121. Pupils are pleasant, co-operative and keen to learn. They do what is asked of them willingly and are sometimes prepared to ask interesting and pertinent questions of their teachers. For example, in a Year 7 lesson on the features of inner city environments, pupils were able to draw from their own experience to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of living in a Victorian terraced house. They are prepared to work quietly on their own or productively within groups when asked to do so. Relatively few instances were seen where pupils were given the chance to give extended, structured spoken answers to questions. Pupils have been especially well motivated as a result of the recent introduction of clearer personal learning targets linked to National Curriculum level descriptions. When given the opportunity to show initiative and creativity, many pupils respond well, as happened with a project on soils. Homework is not always set to a systematic timetable and some pupils are reluctant to complete homework tasks on time, or at all.
122. The overall quality of teaching is good, and in some lessons it is very good. Teachers have a keen interest in the subject themselves and are able to communicate that enthusiasm well. Teaching meets the needs of all pupils, but does so especially well for lower and middle ability pupils. Teachers are very good at supporting pupils with special educational needs, but are less sure of how to deal with the very different requirements of pupils for whom English is an additional language. Teachers have been very effective in developing pupils' literacy skills. Less work has taken place to support the equivalent development of their numeracy skills. The subject makes a valuable contribution to pupils' social and cultural development and teachers are preparing to provide a significant contribution to education for citizenship.
123. Leadership and management are good. The two geography teachers have undertaken training to teach thinking and reasoning skills more effectively and have accumulated considerable expertise in the use of ICT. That expertise can not be deployed well at present because of insufficient computers within the department and a lack of access to digital projection facilities. Teachers mark exercise books methodically and their marking of coursework assignments is very precise and accurate. The subject development plan, schemes of work and lesson plans are all well produced and are



based on a secure understanding of the syllabus, the examination requirements and the learning needs of pupils.

124. There has been a satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. The proportion of 14 year olds reaching the level expected for their age has increased. Improved curriculum arrangements have been introduced and assessment and target-setting procedures are much better than in 1998. As a consequence, pupils now make better progress in Years 7-9 than previously. Pupils now have a better understanding of the objectives of lessons and teachers' expectations of them are higher. Further work remains to be done to enable gifted and talented pupils to perform at a higher level, to ensure that homework and coursework activities are completed on time and to widen the use of learning resources, especially ICT.

## HISTORY

Overall, the quality of provision in history is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Standards at the age of 14 are improving each year and are now in line with the average for all schools nationally and above the national average for boys.
- Standards in GCSE examinations have improved since the previous inspection and are now closer to the national average.
- Considerable progress has been made in supporting pupils' literacy development.
- The quality of teaching is good, as is pupils' response to the teaching.
- The subject is making a valuable contribution to pupils' personal development.
- The leadership and management of the subject are good.

### Areas for improvement

- Some average attaining pupils are not sufficiently motivated to achieve as well as they should, especially with regard to completing assignments and coursework tasks.
- ICT is not used sufficiently to support learning.
- In some lessons there is too much reliance on a single textbook or worksheet as the prime source of information.

125. Standards reached by pupils aged 14 in 2001 are in line with the national average for all pupils and above the national average for boys. This represents a very considerable achievement as standards were below average when pupils entered the school. The proportion of pupils gaining GCSE grades A\*-C and the proportion gaining at least a G grade has improved since the previous inspection, but both figures are still below the national average. Pupils at the start of Year 7 have shortcomings in their ability to interpret historical information and events. They initially find descriptive writing and note-taking hard as many have relatively weak literacy skills. The majority make good gains in knowledge and understanding from the beginning of Year 7 to the end of Year 9. The boys at the top and bottom of the ability range generally make better progress relative to their starting points. Some pupils, particularly in the middle ability range, tend to make less rapid progress, often because they are not prepared to do sufficient work outside lessons. There is some difference in the patterns of attainment of pupils from different ethnic groups by age 14. Boys of Indian and Chinese ethnicity tend to

perform particularly well in relation to their ability level at the start of Year 7. Some pupils achieve below their best because of sporadic absences.

126. Only one group of pupils takes GCSE history each year. This means that pupils in GCSE classes are drawn from the full range of ability. One-third of the pupils in the current Year 10 and 11 history classes have a strong probability of reaching or exceeding a GCSE grade C result based upon their performance in National Curriculum test when they were aged 14. The 2001 results, in which nearly 40 per cent of pupils reached a C grade or above represented a significant achievement in relation to pupils' standards when they began the course.
127. In work seen during the inspection, pupils in Years 7-9 are making good overall progress. In Year 7, they use information about the Roman emperor Augustus to consider the qualities of a strong leader. They make effective use of their textbook and the teacher's narrative, but are in need of more background information on the expectations that Roman society had of an emperor. In a Year 8 lesson, pupils made a thoughtful study of the Gunpowder Plot. Pupils asked some perceptive questions about the nature of the doctrinal differences between Catholics and Protestants that led to such animosity at the time. They went on to ask whether this was comparable to the sectarian conflict seen today in Northern Ireland. Year 9 pupils are able to identify major changes in the political maps of Europe between 1914 and 2002. They can also recognise the nature of bias within images of national stereotypes as portrayed in political cartoons drawn in 1914. In some lessons in Years 7-9, pupils require more access to a wider range of learning resources such as images from computer software, video clips or other textbooks.
128. In work seen during the inspection, most pupils in Years 10 and 11 are making considerable gains in their factual knowledge and understanding. They are taught well and are able to make comprehensive notes. They are weaker when evaluating and analysing causes and trends, and when justifying conclusions. Teachers make sure that pupils write key points into their exercise books accurately, but do not always give enough time to discussion. This restricts pupils' ability to articulate an argument or to justify a conclusion. Whilst pupils are prepared to work hard and follow instructions closely in lessons, some are unwilling to complete their coursework tasks on time, or to a suitably high standard. Most pupils in Year 11 are on track to reach their predicted GCSE grades, but there are a few who are in danger of failing to qualify for a grade because of lack of completion of coursework and because absence hinders their progress.
129. Pupils are co-operative and work productively in lessons. They do what is asked of them cheerfully and often raise interesting questions about comparisons between past and present conditions. For example, in a Year 10 lesson on the settlement of the American Prairies, pupils asked many interesting questions about how homesteaders travelled to their plot, why they decided to move West and how they built their houses. Pupils are prepared to work attentively on their own and also to collaborate well with each other during group activities.
130. The overall quality of teaching is good. Teachers have a secure subject knowledge and communicate it well to their pupils. Teaching supports most pupils well, but in some

cases more attention needs to be given to the learning needs of a minority of pupils who are reluctant learners, many of whom have moderate levels of ability. Teachers are very good at supporting pupils with special educational needs and work effectively with learning support teachers. Teachers often provide well the specific literacy support required by pupils for whom English is an additional language. A particular strength is the way in which pupils are helped to understand the cultural features of British history by being given parallels from their home cultures. Teachers have been very effective in developing pupils' literacy skills through historical contexts, particularly in 'reading for meaning'. Less work has taken place to support the equivalent development of their numeracy skills. The subject makes a very valuable contribution to pupils' moral, social and cultural development and teachers are preparing to support education for citizenship. There are also some instances where spiritual development is promoted, for example in considering the power of religious beliefs in shaping peoples' actions. Teachers give pupils relatively few opportunities to give extended spoken answers or presentations, though some are asked to read passages from textbooks to the rest of the class. When given the opportunity to undertake investigative work, many pupils respond well, as in an assignment on slavery.

131. The subject is well led and managed. There is plenty of evidence of determined, thoughtful and effective direction of the subject. A very well produced subject development plan successfully blends whole-school priorities and the results of departmental self-review. Priorities for improvement are aimed at raising standards and can be tracked back to perceptive audits of strengths and weaknesses in the subject. Good use is made of assessment data to guide future subject planning. National Curriculum level descriptions are beginning to be used as a means of defining individual learning targets for pupils of differing ability to reach. At present very little use is made of ICT to support learning. Teachers are keen to acquire computers and digital projection facilities to enhance whole-class teaching.
132. The improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Standards at the end of Year 9 have improved significantly and there has also been a rise in the proportion of pupils gaining a grade C or above at GCSE. Improved curriculum arrangements have been introduced and assessment and target-setting procedures are much better. Pupils now have a clearer understanding of the objectives of lessons and teachers' expectations of them are often higher. Further work remains to be done to enable gifted and talented pupils to perform at a higher level and to ensure that all coursework assignments are completed on time. There is also more to be done to increase the range of learning resources available to pupils in lessons and to make much fuller use of new technology to enrich learning.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in core information and communication technology is **satisfactory** but cross-curricular provision is **unsatisfactory**.

### Strengths

- ICT developments in design and technology and special educational needs.
- The opportunity provided by the 60 new laptops.
- The new units of work introduced in September 2001

### Areas for development

- Standards in cross-curricular ICT.
- Providing time for the ICT co-ordinator to establish procedures for teaching and reporting on ICT.

133. The school's policy is to teach ICT through one lesson per week in Years 7-9 and to offer a range of GCSE options for Years 10 and 11. The school does not meet the statutory requirement to teach elements of ICT in all subjects of the curriculum. Application of ICT is limited to departments such as design and technology and special educational needs where work is well-planned and supported by appropriate hardware and software.
134. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2001 indicated well below average standards. Work seen during the inspection confirms the judgement but there has been a slight improvement from a very low base in previous years. Results in GCSE examinations were below average for the award of A\*-C and A\*-G grades, but a small number of pupils did achieve a pass in the Certificate of Achievement.
135. Pupils with special educational needs in Years 7-9 reach good standards in ICT in relation to their earlier learning. The special educational needs co-ordinator has introduced an independent learning system to support pupils' development of mathematics, English and their use of the computer as a problem solving tool. The achievement of pupils with English as an additional language is satisfactory. They have good practical communication skills but literacy difficulties hold them back. Gifted and talented pupils' achievement is satisfactory in Years 7-9. In Years 10 and 11 their standards improve in subjects like design and technology where they use their computer skills to solve complex problems.
136. In Years 7-9 pupils' progress overall is unsatisfactory. Their standards are not measured when they enter the school. Consequently, planning does not build upon their prior learning and pupils often repeat topics. For example, exciting primary school work on spreadsheets involved pupils in data collection on subjects they enjoy such as the football league, costing food for a party and cataloguing their CD collection. Repeating the spreadsheet teaching in Year 7 did not significantly add to their learning. There is no system to monitor pupils' individual progress, which makes it difficult for them to understand what they must do to improve. Pupils have basic communication skills but there are limited opportunities to develop a full range of competencies including using databases, using the Internet and refining their searches. In Years 10 and 11, progress is unsatisfactory because pupils are frustrated and disenchanted by the

lack of up-to-date equipment and secure systems. For example, several pupils lost their project work when there was a change over in the school network system. Pupils lack basic ICT skills that they can use independently in some areas of communication, control, modelling and measuring, which has dampened their enthusiasm and slowed progress. Their skills are satisfactory in word processing. For example, there are some opportunities to develop a newspaper page in English and research for subjects such as science on the Internet. Pupils have limited experience in using search engines and are not confident in refined sort and search techniques. Many pupils have inefficient keyboard skills and the complex skills of control and modelling are restricted to work in design and technology. Since September 2001, new well-planned units of work and a new team of ICT teachers have given pupils more confidence, but Year 11 are in a difficult position with so little time before the examinations to raise their standards and complete their projects.

137. Attitudes in Years 7-9 are good. Despite the age of the equipment there is a good take-up of extra ICT in the lunchtime and at break. In Years 10 and 11 attitudes are negative because pupils become frustrated with equipment that fails and hinders their progress. Behaviour is satisfactory until problems with equipment lead to deterioration. In Years 8 and 11 there are small groups of boys who make the crises with equipment more difficult because of their immature behaviour. Personal development is limited because of the lack of opportunities for the independent application of ICT across the curriculum.
138. Teaching is satisfactory overall in core ICT, which promotes satisfactory learning in Years 7-9 but in Years 10 and 11 out of date equipment and staffing difficulties have diminished pupils' interest and, as a result, learning is unsatisfactory. The new ICT team is made up of a group of dedicated but non-specialist ICT teachers from a range of backgrounds. Lesson planning is generally satisfactory. Lack of technical support was a contributory factor, however, in the small proportion of unsatisfactory teaching seen during the inspection. Even when recently acquired laptops are being used, there are problems with equipment and software. These difficulties upset the lesson plan and restrict learning. Literacy and numeracy are integrated satisfactorily into teaching and learning; for example, spreadsheet work requires accurate calculations and some understanding of formulae. Time is also invested in teaching the correct technical terms such as 'cells' when developing spreadsheets. Teachers are not giving sufficient attention to planning for pupils' individual needs. In addition, lack of resources, such as help sheets at different levels, makes pupils too dependent on their teacher for solutions to problems. Limited homework is set and recorded. Few subjects have introduced ICT into their schemes of work. Most departments mention difficulty with booking the ICT suites, unreliable equipment and lack of training, as factors that inhibit their use of ICT. Where computers have been part of the departmental planning, for example in design and technology, English, special educational needs and science, pupils' learning and confidence improve rapidly.
139. There are no clear management structures for ICT, which makes management unsatisfactory and lacking direction. The ICT co-ordinator has a number of additional responsibilities that are difficult to manage in the time available. Unsatisfactory resources are severely limiting development of ICT in the school. Since September 2001, the co-ordinator has successfully introduced a 'wire-less' infrastructure, to

improve the network. There has also been the introduction of 60 new laptops and negotiation for a room of good quality second-hand equipment. The new design and technology suite and the units of work introduced in Years 7-9 are additional improvements. The technician lacks a structure to his working day to make most efficient use of his time in supporting teachers, maintaining the network and linking with partner institutions. Despite these weaknesses, improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory as the school has moved forward from a very low base. Issues such as unsatisfactory provision for cross-curricular ICT and the quality of hardware and software continue to restrict improvement in standards.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall, the quality of provision in modern languages is **satisfactory**. French is the only foreign language taught.

### French

#### Strengths

- Pupils' positive attitudes.
- Good behaviour management.
- Teachers' commitment to improve standards.

#### Areas for improvement

- Provision for ICT.
- Provision for all pupils in Years 10 and 11.
- Wider range of teaching styles and more consistent use of French.
- A scheme of work for Year 7-9.

140. Standards are below average in Years 7-9, in which all pupils study French. Standards are broadly average in Years 10 and 11 for a small group of pupils who choose to study French. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall.
141. At the end of Year 9, teachers' assessments show that pupils were working above the nationally expected level in 2001, but this was not confirmed by work seen during the inspection where pupils were not confidently using tenses or expressing opinions. GCSE results over recent years have been well above the national figures for boys gaining A\*-C grades. Boys do better in French than in their other subjects, with results that are about three-quarters of a grade higher than their average grade. However, only about one in four boys study French at GCSE level, compared with the national figure of over 90 per cent.
142. In work seen during the inspection at the age of 14, standards in listening and speaking are average, but standards in reading and especially writing are below average. This is because there is not a consistent approach to the development of writing skills. Writing is often confined to copying short phrases, or completing exercises, with few examples of extended writing at this level. As a result, more able pupils cannot reach the higher levels. By Year 9, most pupils can use and understand basic language to describe themselves and where they live. They can use the present tense in descriptions but have

not covered past and future tenses in sufficient depth to reach average standards. Progress in lessons is satisfactory, with pupils showing particular enjoyment in speaking, especially in role-plays and reading aloud. There are no significant differences in the standards of boys from different ethnic backgrounds. Standards in literacy and numeracy are satisfactory. Teachers insist on well-presented work and accuracy in spelling. Role-play is used to develop speaking skills. However, there is no whole-class use of ICT because teachers have not yet received training. The single available computer is occasionally used for individual work in lessons.

143. In work seen during the inspection at the age of 16, standards are average. Much attention is given to developing grammatical skills in Year 10 and consequently more time is spent on preparing written work than on speaking. Pupils' confidence grows through frequent drafting and re-drafting of coursework but their progress in oral work is not as good and this needs to be redressed.
144. Pupils show interest and enthusiasm in their work in most lessons. Behaviour is good and pupils and teachers work well together. Pupils are usually well motivated. The foreign language assistant works well with some groups to encourage the development of speaking skills and adds a pleasing cultural dimension to lessons.
145. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. All lessons seen during the inspection were satisfactory and this shows a considerable improvement in teaching standards since the previous inspection. Teachers manage pupils well through the good relationships they share. In some lessons, there is not enough use of French by the teacher for this to be the main means of communication in class. As a result, pupils in these classes do not have enough opportunity to listen to the language or develop confidence in speaking. When the opportunity is provided, pupils respond well. For example, a Year 9 class undertook role-play work seriously and made good progress. Pupils co-operated well with each other and took pride in reading their conversations aloud for others to hear. The best lessons have a range of activities that cover the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. A good lesson in Year 8 enabled pupils to make good progress in their learning because there was a range of activities, it was conducted at a fair pace and gave pupils the chance to consolidate work they had done before. Pupils took their work seriously and enjoyed the lesson. The teacher made considerable use of gesture to convey meaning and the class appreciated his humour. Teachers assess pupils' work well in lessons and pupils know the levels at which they are working. They need more information on what they need to do to reach the next level so that they can concentrate their efforts. Homework is set on a regular basis to reinforce learning.
146. The quality of learning is satisfactory. Pupils make progress that is at least satisfactory in lessons because they are interested in the work and enjoy good relationships with their teachers. Pupils with special educational needs, and those with English as an additional language, make similar progress to other pupils. Gifted and talented pupils are identified but not always given extension tasks to help them make more progress.
147. Since the previous inspection, there have been several staff changes and a change of textbook in Years 7 and 8. Teaching and progress have both improved, although teaching styles continue to lack variety and planning is variable. Many boys no longer study French in Years 10 and 11. Although they are officially disappplied from the National Curriculum in order to emphasise other subjects, this does not in fact happen

and these disapplications are therefore inappropriate. The head of department has worked hard to improve the quality of teaching and shows a clear understanding of what needs to be done to improve standards. He lacks sufficient time to fulfil his management role.

## MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision in music is **unsatisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Teachers' knowledge and musical skills.
- Good relationships between teachers and pupils.
- The opportunities music provides for pupils' cultural development.

### Areas for improvement

- Standards.
- Schemes of work and assessment.
- Curriculum provision and time for the subject.
- Learning resources and accommodation.

148. Standards are below average at the ages of 14 and 16. Teachers' assessments in 2001 showed that no Year 9 pupil achieved the standard expected of average 14 year olds nationally. However, this is not matched by the evidence of pupils' work seen during the inspection where a number of pupils are on course to achieve at least the expected standard by the age of 14. Over recent years, GCSE results have been low. Only small numbers of pupils take the examination at the age of 16 and their results are lower than those in other subjects.
149. In work seen during the inspection, pupils' standards are below average in Years 7-9 but showing signs of improvement in all three years, especially in Year 7. Pupils perform confidently on a limited range of instruments. Few pupils achieve very high standards of accuracy or fluency, especially on keyboards, because their technical skills are not well developed. However, pupils in Year 7 sing well, with generally good intonation and lively enthusiasm. They perform rhythm and pulse pieces with increasing fluency. Pupils' improvising skills are often satisfactory but are sometimes hindered by their lack of understanding of key concepts. Some pupils in Year 9 for example confused E flat with E natural when devising short Blues scale melodies. When talking about music, pupils do not naturally use accurate technical vocabulary.
150. A small group of pupils is studying GCSE music in Year 10 but none in Year 11. The majority of these pupils are amongst the lower attainers. Very few have developed more than basic technical or musical skills and vocabulary; their overall attainment is low.
151. Pupils' response to music is satisfactory. Many pupils settle quickly, concentrate well and apply themselves to make improvements to their work. The majority are confident and enjoy the work. Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory. However, there is a small minority whose poor behaviour in class disrupts the learning of the majority.



152. The quality of teaching and the learning it promotes is satisfactory. It has improved since the previous inspection. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject. They have good relationships with their pupils so that, in all years, teaching engenders a positive working atmosphere and praise is used well to encourage pupils. Individual lessons are well structured and activities are often explained clearly. Many pupils benefit from individual targeted support from teachers who use their knowledge and skills to enable them to improve their work. The result is that, from a low base on entry into the school, most pupils are steadily, if slowly, acquiring musical skills and knowledge. In Year 10, some tasks, especially those using ICT, are well matched to pupils needs. In singing activities, teachers' attention to detail enables pupils to improve their vocal responses. Pupils are exposed to a broad range of music from different cultures. Some lessons suffer from slow pace, especially when keyboards are set up or put away during the lesson. In all years, there is insufficient attention given to teaching specific keyboard skills. Teachers' medium and long-term planning of the work given to pupils is insufficiently detailed. As a result, the rate of progress is not rapid enough. More needs to be done to provide pupils with focused instrumental and vocal skills throughout Years 7-11. Although progress in individual lessons is usually satisfactory, pupils' overall achievement is unsatisfactory. This is because the amount of time allocated for music in Years 7-9 is low so that pupils do not cover enough ground in sufficient detail. Also there is a shortage of quality musical instruments and ICT equipment to enable pupils to achieve higher standards.
153. Highly skilled instrumental teaching provided by the local education authority's music service enables a small number of pupils to enhance their standards through additional tuition. They are achieving well and beginning to perform with some style and musicianship. However, the accommodation provided for individual tuition is poor and affects standards.
154. The quality of management in music is unsatisfactory. Although there is a sense of purpose and direction in the subject, long-term curriculum planning and assessment arrangements are weak. Accommodation for music remains poor. The two practice rooms are very poor and prevent pupils from working successfully in groups.
155. Since the previous inspection, the quality of teaching and learning and the attainment of pupils in Years 7-9 have improved. The overall rate of improvement is unsatisfactory. Pupils' overall standards, the quality of planning, assessment, resources and accommodation remain weaknesses.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in physical education is **good**.

### Strengths

- Teaching is very good in Years 10 and 11.
- Pupils achieve very well in Years 10 and 11.
- Pupils reach very high standards in GCSE examinations.

### Areas for improvement

- To improve gymnastic standards.
- To develop the use of ICT.

156. In work seen during the inspection, pupils attain average standards by the end of Year 9. This is lower than the level of teachers' assessments in 2001. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory in Years 7-9, although there is some variation between activities. The rates of progress in soccer and rugby are greater than in gymnastics. Pupils demonstrate good passing and positional play in soccer, good tackling and rucking ability in rugby but underdeveloped basic skills in gymnastics. Volleyball skills are being introduced but are not yet at the expected level because Year 9 are only in their third session. In many classes, pupils plan their own warm up and teachers provide feedback at the end of the lesson summarising what the class have learnt. Pupils are given the opportunity to evaluate their work and they have a good understanding of tactics and strategies. There is no significant difference in standards between pupils from different backgrounds. Pupils' standard of dress for physical education is very good and few pupils do not participate in lessons.
157. In 2001, the Year 11 GCSE examination groups gained a well above average proportion of A\*-C and A\*-G grades. Approximately 50 per cent of pupils in each year choose to follow the examination course and many of them show effective literacy and numeracy skills. The present Year 11 groups are above average in theory work and well above the standard required in practical skills. Standards in Year 10 are similar to Year 11 in theory work and pupils demonstrate a good knowledge of soccer and table tennis. Similarly, other 14 to 16 year old non-examination classes show a very high standard in soccer and table tennis, where advanced skills are mastered and a quality game can take place. A few pupils have reached County standard in table tennis and four boys have signed apprenticeships with professional football clubs. Pupils with different practical competencies are developing satisfactory basketball skills and fitness schedules. Overall, the Year 11 pupils are a talented group of boys who enjoy their physical education sessions.
158. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are positive and are very good overall. Behaviour is very good in lessons and around the changing areas. Relationships between pupils are good. They co-operate well with each other during lessons and work collaboratively in mixed ability groups. Motivation is high in lessons and the few non-participant pupils officiate or help with the organisation of the lesson. Pupils take responsibility for their own learning in paired and small group work. They plan and evaluate each other's work sensitively but accurately.

159. The overall quality of teaching is good. In lessons seen, it was never less than satisfactory and sometimes excellent. In Years 7-9, teachers' knowledge is very good in basketball, volleyball, and soccer. In gymnastics, there is a lack of subject knowledge, which is a factor in pupils' below average standards. Relationships are good; pupils and teachers show respect for one another and pupils are given the opportunity to take responsibility for their own learning. They are shown how to plan and evaluate their work. The preparation of lessons is very good and feedback at the end of the lesson reinforces learning. Safety issues are thoroughly covered and general class management is very good. The use of ICT to support learning is being developed and video feedback was used in one lesson. Good use of praise and demonstrations in many lessons increase pupils' confidence and understanding. Teachers' technical expertise in soccer and table tennis helps pupils to progress at a high level. Coaching through the game and the contribution of pupils' ideas have a positive effect on learning. Challenge, rigour and clear but brief instructions are features of the excellent lessons and pupils make rapid progress. Teaching methods in practical sessions provide creative opportunities for pupils in pairs and small groups. The collaborative working involves pupils from different backgrounds in planning and evaluating their work together. These teaching strategies, together with strong relationships have a positive effect on learning. The local rugby club coaches add specialist expertise to Year 9 sessions.
160. The curriculum meets statutory requirements but the range of activities is narrow because of the small indoor space and the lack of on-site playing fields. In Years 10 and 11, the GCSE course is a popular option and standards are very high. Extracurricular sport is good and about 40 per cent of pupils take up the offer in the cramped conditions. All staff in the department and four staff from other departments contribute to the sessions. Assessment procedures and schemes of work are up-to-date and in line with National Curriculum 2000. Reports to parents are objective and targets are set for the GCSE groups. The staff work well together and their teaching is monitored and supported by the head of department. Leadership and management are very good and are major factors in the department's success. The resources for games and gymnastics are good. Accommodation for indoor physical education constrains the opportunities for indoor games such as volleyball and basketball. The outdoor hard areas are poor. Travelling to the off-site playing fields is expensive and reduces the timetabled time by 30 minutes per visit. There are no facilities for tennis and options for Years 10 and 11 are sought at nearby sports centres. In spite of these deficiencies, pupils show a commendable attitude to the subject.
161. Standards have improved since the previous inspection. Teaching is very good in Years 10 and 11; pupils achieve very well overall. Areas for future improvement include improving gymnastics standards and developing the use of ICT.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- The broad and balanced curriculum.
- The department makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development.

### Areas for improvement

- Expectations of pupils' performance.
- The range of teaching and learning styles.
- Monitoring of planning and quality of teaching.

162. Standards for the majority of pupils by the end of Year 9 are broadly average and as expected by the local Agreed Syllabus. GCSE examination results show an improving trend since the previous inspection, and represent satisfactory achievement. The number of pupils taking examinations varies from year to year and is too small to make meaningful comparisons with national standards. Pupils achieve well compared to their results in other GCSE subjects.
163. In work seen during the inspection, standards by the end of Year 9 are average and pupils' response to learning is positive. Listening and reading skills are incorporated well into lessons. Pupils in a Year 8 class were encouraged in active reading, and their learning was reinforced by a sequencing exercise that analysed the gospel stories from the perspectives of Mary, Joseph and the visitors to the stable. Behaviour is managed well, pupils feel encouraged and relationships between teachers and pupils are good. Pupils respond sensitively to cultural and religious diversity. For example, a class of Year 9 pupils explored Christian and Muslim approaches to violence and personal violence. Pupils in a Year 7 lesson explored the impact of injustice and persecution on minority groups, and related biblical examples to contemporary events. In Years 7-9, resources for learning are generally matched to pupils' individual needs so that, for example, higher attaining pupils develop a deeper understanding of the significance of events, such as the Exodus. Pupils are courteous and polite, co-operate on tasks, and mix well across religious and ethnic groups. By the end of Year 9, the progress of lower attaining pupils is better than that of higher attaining pupils. Opportunities for speaking and extended writing are underdeveloped. As a consequence, pupils with English as an additional language make better progress in developing their oral rather than their written skills. The narrow range of stimulating and challenging learning activities slows progress and learning is not sufficiently reinforced in homework tasks.
164. All pupils in Years 10 and 11 have at least one lesson of religious education a week. This arrangement is an improvement since the previous inspection. A short course in religious education has also been introduced. In work seen during the inspection, standards by the end of Year 11 are below average, which shows an unsatisfactory level of achievement in relation to pupils' prior attainment. Oral work is good, but little opportunity is given to pupils for extended writing or reflection and pupils are not always sure of the standards expected of them from the guidance they receive in class. The lack of challenge of some written tasks limits religious understanding and the

opportunity to develop literacy and ICT skills. Following the Agreed Syllabus, pupils encounter and explore religious teachings on contemporary moral and social issues, such as crime and punishment, poverty and the work of Aid Agencies. Using video and worksheets, pupils compare the effectiveness of different approaches. Careful questioning by the teacher in a Year 10 lesson on Christian Aid demanded sophisticated responses from higher attaining pupils, all pupils were aware of a range of different views, but lower attaining pupils expressed opinions without evaluation.

165. The standards of pupils following the full and short GCSE courses match course requirements, and achievement is good in relation to pupils' earlier learning. Pupils are positive, and are provided with different versions of textbooks in Year 10 to support the learning of both lower and higher attaining pupils. A lesson on the complex concept of the Trinity was reinforced using text and diagrams, and pupils were encouraged to devise their own visualisation of this belief. This helped them to make good progress in understanding. Pupils from minority ethnic and religious groups contributed their experience. Higher attaining pupils confidently explained specialist terms like 'Messiah' and supported answers with reference to biblical texts. Pupils' response to learning is positive but progress is sometimes slowed by the lack of stimulating and challenging learning activities.
166. The quality of teaching is generally satisfactory and has improved since the previous inspection. Classroom management and behaviour are good. When teaching is good, planning is clear, pace is brisk, and expectations of pupil participation and response are clear. On one occasion, Year 8 pupils reviewed the previous week's work through generating and answering their own questions on the Incarnation, when they had correctly responded to the previous question. They enjoyed this, and demonstrated a range of verbal and conceptual skills. On other occasions, too much direction by the teacher results in insufficient opportunity for pupils to work independently and to have time to complete extension activities. Lessons have too much emphasis upon listening, rather than discussion and writing activities. When teaching is less effective, the range of teaching and learning styles is limited. Across all year groups, some tasks are insufficiently demanding and fail to stimulate pupils, slowing the progress of pupils of all levels of attainment. For example, some worksheets on crime and punishment, the Exodus and the birth of Jesus simply require the filling in of gaps and provide inadequate opportunities to improve writing skills.
167. The department makes an effective contribution to pupils' moral, social and cultural development. However, the narrow range of teaching and learning styles misses opportunities to contribute to pupils' spiritual development by encouraging reflection on their own beliefs in relation to important human issues. Teachers are positive in their approach and set a good example. The curriculum creates opportunities for pupils to explore issues like racism, poverty, punishment and justice.
168. The recently appointed head of department has made satisfactory progress in raising the profile of the subject within the school and has produced a development plan. Leadership of the team is supportive, given that non-specialist teachers teach a number of lessons, but schemes of work, and the monitoring of standards and quality in the curriculum are as yet underdeveloped. The department has identified the need to be more effective in reviewing its development plan and targets. The department follows

the school's assessment policy and almost every piece of work seen during the inspection was marked and graded, a not inconsiderable achievement in the teaching of religious education. However, there were few examples of commentary to enable the pupils to improve their work.

169. The department makes effective use of its small budget in developing its resources for learning, and has benefited from additional money to provide some texts matched to different levels of attainment to promote progress. The department suffers from a lack of artefacts and there is insufficient use of visitors from faith communities or agencies to enhance learning. Accommodation is good, and there is evidence that the department is planning to increase opportunities to use ICT to support learning. A small number of pupils attend an after-school club, which contributes to the school's provision for gifted and talented pupils.
170. Since the previous inspection, the department has made satisfactory progress by raising its time allocation for the subject, introducing a short course for pupils in Years 10 and 11 and by raising achievement at GCSE. Resources for learning and accommodation have also improved, which impact positively on teaching and learning.

## **BUSINESS EDUCATION**

Overall, the quality of provision in business education is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- The emphasis on practical activities.
- Contribution to personal development.

### Areas for improvement

- Opportunities for extended writing.
- Completion of coursework.

171. Business education is a new subject provided as an option in Years 10 and 11. Attainment is below average with few pupils gaining the higher grades in the subject. Compared with the national picture, numbers of pupils entered are high because this is a popular subject that attracts pupils of all levels of attainment. Progress is good from a low starting point and the emphasis on discussion in lessons establishes clear understanding of business terminology.
172. Pupils have a good attitude to the subject and behaviour is good. Personal development is very good because the teaching styles used by teachers encourage active participation in learning with pupils taking personal decisions and becoming confident in independent learning. Topics are well structured with good opportunities for reflection and putting business education into the practical context of local industry, as seen in the transport and logistics topic being taught. Deadlines, revision, attendance and extended writing present problems for many pupils with a consequent effect on the examination grades.