

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **BARNWOOD PARK HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS**

Barnwood, Gloucester

LEA area: Gloucestershire

Unique reference number: 115720

Headteacher: Miss G Pyatt

Reporting inspector: D Driscoll  
11933

Dates of inspection: 25<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> September 2001

Inspection number: 199478

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 to 16

Gender of pupils: Girls

School address: St Lawrence Road  
Barnwood  
Gloucester  
Gloucestershire

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Telephone number: 01452 530389

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr P Nesbitt

Date of previous inspection: 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1998

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
11933	D Driscoll	Registered inspector		The characteristics and effectiveness of the school The school's results and pupils' achievements Teaching and learning Leadership and management Issues for action
9086	R Watkins	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development Pupils' welfare, health and safety Partnership with parents and carers
3687	G Bancroft	Team inspector	Physical education	
19596	B Treacy	Team inspector	English English as an additional language	
15462	C Blakemore	Team inspector	History Vocational education	
10297	D Cox	Team inspector	Design and technology Information and communication technology	Quality and range of opportunities for learning
4145	C Harrison	Team inspector	Science	
19026	B Downes	Team inspector	Special educational needs	
19905	I Kirby	Team inspector	Music	
22411	A Axon	Team inspector	Mathematics	
17868	E Metcalfe	Team inspector	Art and design Equal opportunities	
20124	J Peach	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	

1752	R Jones	Team inspector	Geography	
14516	A Skelton	Team inspector	Religious education	

The inspection contractor was:

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Barnwood Park High School for Girls is a smaller than average comprehensive school educating girls between the ages of 11 and 16. The number on roll has been rising rapidly over the past few years and now stands at 587. There are now more parents wishing to send their children to the school than there are places available. The school draws its pupils from a wide area on the outskirts of Gloucester and the socio-economic circumstances of the pupils are below average. Around four fifths of the pupils are white, with small numbers of pupils from Asian and Black-Caribbean heritage. However, there are a significant number of parents who do not wish to express membership of any particular ethnic group. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average and four pupils are at an early stage of learning the language. Each year there is a relatively large number of pupils who leave or join the school part way through the year. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school has been improving over recent years and is now well below average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is above the national average, as is the proportion who have statements of special educational needs. The range of special educational needs is wide and includes pupils with physical and hearing disabilities as well as moderate learning difficulties. The school is part of a national project to raise attainment, known as RAP.

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

This is a good school where pupils of all levels of attainment achieve well. Teaching is good and pupils leave with examination results that are better than would be expected given their levels of attainment when they joined the school. The very good leadership and management provided by the headteacher and other senior staff are ensuring that the rapid trend of improvement is continuing. Overall, the school provides good value for money.

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

- Pupils achieve well because the teaching is good.
- Pupils develop very well as responsible members of society as a result of the very good pastoral care that the school provides.
- The very good leadership is ensuring that the school is continuing to improve rapidly.
- The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 meets the needs of pupils very well and is leading to improved standards.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language learn the language very quickly.
- The teaching in design and technology, physical education and vocational subjects is very good.

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

- Standards are not high enough in information and communication technology because the teaching is unsatisfactory and pupils do not get enough opportunities to practise their skills in other subjects.
- Pupils are underachieving in music because the teaching is unsatisfactory. It places too much emphasis on fun rather than learning.

*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 very good progress since the previous inspection in 1998. Standards have risen in almost all subjects and GCSE results have improved at a rate that is much better than the national trend. The quality of teaching has improved significantly. The school's management has been rigorous in addressing the weaknesses identified in the previous report and some, such as the provision for cultural development and the curriculum in Years 10 and 11, have been converted into strengths. However, the weaknesses previously identified in information and communication technology remain.

## 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				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
GCSE examinations	D	E	D	C	well above A average above average B average C below average D well below E average

Pupils' performances in the 2000 national tests for 14 year olds were below the national average in English, mathematics and science. Results have risen at a rate that is close to the national trend since the school was previously inspected. Results in 2001 were similar to the 2000 results in English and mathematics but science results fell slightly. Results in GCSE examinations were below average but improving at a rate that is above the national average. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more passes at grades A\* to C was below average and the proportion gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A\* to G was average. The proportion of pupils gaining one or more passes at grades A\* to G was very high and placed the school in the top five per cent of schools nationally. These results represent good achievement for pupils who joined the school with levels of attainment that were well below average.

The work seen during the inspection generally confirms the results of tests and examinations. In Years 7 to 9 standards of attainment are below average in most subjects, with above average standards in physical education and art and design. Standards are average in French, Spanish and religious education but well below average in information and communication technology. Standards are similar in Years 10 and 11 with the exception of English where they are well below average as the improving standards in the earlier years have not yet fed through to Years 10 and 11. Standards in design and technology and geography are now average, but standards in religious education are below average and in music they are well below average. Pupils achieve well in most subjects: they achieve particularly well in design and technology but are underachieving in information and communication technology and music.



The school's management has revised its targets in the light of better than expected examination results in 2001 and these are now particularly challenging.

### PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils are keen to work hard and do well
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Behaviour improves as pupils move through the school. By Year 10, standards of behaviour in lessons are frequently excellent.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. There is a notable lack of any racism in the school and pupils show a high regard for the feelings and beliefs of others.
Attendance	Below average. Improved to just over 90 per cent last year.

### TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The consistency of good teaching is a major strength of the school and leads to pupils of all levels of attainment acquiring skills, knowledge and understanding at a good rate. Teaching is good in mathematics and science and satisfactory in English. Teaching is best in design and technology, physical education and the vocational subjects and is weakest in information and communication technology and music. Literacy and numeracy skills are taught well. Teaching meets the needs of most pupils well, but is particularly effective in meeting the needs of pupils for whom English is an additional language who learn particularly well.

The main strengths of the teaching lie in the way that teachers expect their pupils to do well and then manage their lessons to ensure that this is the case. Such teaching leads to pupils being interested in their work and showing a good level of concentration throughout the school. This is particularly appreciated by pupils in Years 10 and 11 who concentrate very well and show a high level of interest in their studies.

### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. Satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 but very good in Years 10 and 11 where the courses meet the needs of pupils very well. However, the curriculum is unsatisfactory overall as some statutory requirements are not met.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Teachers match their work well to the pupils needs and the support staff are very effective.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good. Pupils learn the language quickly in Years 7 to 9 and this provides a springboard for success in other subjects.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Good. The provision for pupils' moral, social and cultural development is very good and provision for spiritual development is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. Teachers monitor and support pupils well and pay high regard to their personal well-being.

The school has a good partnership with parents. The curriculum is very broad and relevant in Years 10 and 11, but statutory requirements are not met in information and communication technology. Links with businesses are strong and support a particularly effective vocational curriculum. There are many opportunities for extra-curricular activities, which play a significant part in ensuring that work is kept up to date. The school makes great improvements in pupils' behaviour and eliminates all forms of oppressive behaviour very well.

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

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The school is being driven forward and the staff are committed to improving standards still further.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors play a key role in shaping the direction of the school, but some statutory requirements are not fulfilled.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The management are quick to spot weaknesses and take very effective actions to address them.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Excellent use has been made of grants to improve standards.

The school has sufficient staffing and accommodation, and good resources. The school is outstanding in the way it reflects its values through its actions. It compares its performance with those of similar and higher attaining schools and has good systems for consulting with parents. The school has good systems to ensure it provides the best value for its resources.

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

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The high expectations of the teachers that lead to good progress and pupils enjoying school.</li> <li>• The leadership provided by the headteacher.</li> <li>• The way the school develops pupils as responsible young adults.</li> <li>• The welcome that parents receive.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The amount of homework in Year 7 is excessive.</li> <li>• The school does not work closely enough with parents.</li> </ul>
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The inspectors agree with all of the positive points raised by parents. However, there needs to be more guidance provided for pupils in Year 7 regarding the amount they are expected to do for each homework assignment. The school tries hard to work closely with parents, but some parents fail to support the school adequately. However, some aspects of communication with parents could be improved.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Pupils of all ages and levels of attainment achieve well at the school. Pupils who took their GCSE examinations in 2000 entered the school with levels of attainment that were well below average and left the school with below average standards of attainment. Parents, too, feel that their children are making good progress at the school.
2. Results in the National Curriculum tests for 14 year olds in 2000 were below average in English, mathematics and science. The proportions of pupils reaching the level expected nationally were average in English and science and just below average in mathematics. However, the proportions reaching the higher Level 6 were below average in all three subjects, reflecting the smaller than usual number of higher attaining pupils at the school. Results overall have risen at a rate that is close to the national trend since the school was previously inspected. Results in mathematics and science have risen rapidly but results in English, although still improved, have fluctuated wildly. These results represent good achievement for the pupils, who joined the school with results that were well below average. Overall, results in 2000 were above those of schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. The results in 2000, compared with similar schools, were average in English and above average in mathematics and science. Results in 2001 were similar to the 2000 results in English and mathematics but science results fell slightly.
3. Standards of work seen during the inspection confirm the results of the national tests in 2000 in English, mathematics and science, in that pupils are attaining below average standards. However, these standards represent a good level of achievement for pupils in all three subjects.
4. In the work seen in other subjects, standards are at the levels expected nationally at the end of Year 9 in French, religious education and Spanish. Standards are below average in all other subjects except art and physical education, in which they are above average, and information and communication technology in which standards are well below average. Pupils achieve well, compared to their attainment on entry to the school, in all subjects except physical education, in which achievement is very good, and information and communication technology and music where pupils are underachieving. The underachievement is a result of unsatisfactory teaching combined with an inappropriate curriculum in these subjects.
5. Standards have improved in almost all subjects since the previous inspection. They have been maintained in English but have not improved sufficiently in music, and have declined in information and communication technology.
6. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2000 were below average overall. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more passes at grades A\* to C was below average and the proportion gaining five or more passes at grades A\* to G was average. No pupil left without a qualification, an outcome that is common to only the top five per cent of schools in the country. These results are a remarkable improvement since the time of the previous inspection when the proportions of pupils gaining one or more and five or more passes at grades A\* to G were very low

and placed the school in the bottom five per cent of schools nationally. Results in General and National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ) were well above average. Results have improved at a rate that is above the national trend and the school has recently received an award for being one of the most improved schools in the country. The results in 2001 continued the trend of improvement, despite these pupils having some of the lowest levels of attainment when they joined the school.

7. The results represent good achievement given the pupils' attainment when they joined the school and their results in the national tests at the end of Year 9, which were well below average.
8. The relatively large number of subjects that are taught in Years 10 and 11 means that only five subjects entered candidates in sufficient numbers to allow comparison with national statistics. Results in design and technology were the best of these and were close to the national average. Results in English, English literature, mathematics and science were well below average.
9. The standards of work seen during the inspection bear out the levels of attainment suggested by the examination results, except in mathematics and science where the trend of improving standards has continued, and the standard of work is now below rather than well below average. Attainment indicated by the work seen during the inspection is at the level expected nationally by the end of Year 11 in design and technology, French and geography. Standards are below average in all other subjects except English, information and communication technology and music, where they are well below average, and in art and design, physical education and vocational subjects where standards are above average.
10. Pupils achieve much better standards than would usually be expected, given their levels of attainment at the start of the course, in design and technology, physical education and the vocational subjects. Pupils achieve well in all other subjects except English, where achievement is satisfactory, and information and communication technology, music and religious education where pupils are underachieving. The school has rectified the problems in religious education and this is no longer an issue for the school.
11. Since the previous inspection there have been significant improvements in standards. Attainment has improved in almost all subjects, but it has declined in information and communication technology.
12. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well and they make good progress towards their individual targets. This is especially so where their targets involve improvements in behaviour. A good indication of the achievement of pupils with special educational needs is seen in GCSE results. In the 2000 examinations, the proportion of pupils gaining five A\* to G passes was in line with the national average, but well above average when compared with schools taking pupils from a similar background. The number of pupils gaining one A\* to G pass was very high compared to both national averages and in comparison with similar schools. Higher attaining pupils, including those who are particularly gifted or talented, are now also making good progress as a result of the specific provision that is being made for them, such as taking GCSE in mathematics a year earlier than usual and the individual music tuition that is available.

13. Pupils for whom English is an additional language make very good progress. They quickly learn enough English to allow them to understand what is happening in lessons and what they should be doing. As their use of English improves rapidly their progress in other subjects really accelerates, to the extent that their levels of attainment are much better than expected by the time they leave the school. Other than this group of pupils, there is no difference in the progress made by pupils from different ethnic backgrounds.
14. Standards of reading and writing are below average. Pupils' reading skills are usually sufficiently well developed to enable them to have access to the National Curriculum, though lower attainers sometimes need support in interpreting the exact meaning of questions. Higher attainers read with fluency and good expression. Middle attainers read with fluency but limited expression, whilst lower attainers are hesitant and struggle to recognise common words. The majority of pupils possess neat and legible handwriting and use spelling and punctuation with a satisfactory degree of accuracy. In particular, pupils write good quality, lengthy narratives. However, pupils do not develop the range of writing to the extent that might be expected, particularly regarding analytic, discursive and critical writing.
15. Standards of numeracy are below average. Pupils manipulate numbers appropriately and they measure quantities with a good degree of accuracy. However, standards of mental arithmetic are below average and pupils often have to resort to calculators or pencil and paper for relatively simple sums. Pupils' ability to use graphs is also below average with most needing help with, for example, choosing the correct scale for an axis.
16. The rate at which pupils make progress is usually a result of the quality of teaching that they receive, so that where teaching is good, the standards achieved by pupils are higher than expected. However, there are some notable exceptions to this. Teaching is now good in religious education but there is underachievement in Years 10 and 11. Because of staffing difficulties last year, pupils were taught by a number of temporary teachers: they have fallen behind as a consequence. Although teaching is unsatisfactory in information and communication technology and music, there are also other factors that cause a degree of underachievement. Few teachers make use of information and communication technology in their daily lessons so pupils do not get enough opportunities to practise or develop their skills. In music there have been no schemes of work or lesson plans until very recently and the room is too small to allow pupils to play a full range of instruments.
17. The school has set appropriately high targets for its performance in the past. The targets for 2001 were exceeded by some considerable margin, which has led to the revision of future targets. These new targets are particularly demanding and, if met, will mean that GCSE results will be close to the national average next year.

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

18. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good and their behaviour and relationships towards others are very good. This is an improvement on the already positive situation seen at the previous inspection. Parents are generally happy with the good attitudes and the standards of behaviour developed by the school. A small minority of pupils is less keen to learn and find too many excuses to miss school. This contributes to the way attendance remains unsatisfactory.

19. Pupils show good attitudes and very good behaviour across the whole range of school activities, regardless of their different levels of attainment and backgrounds. Their interest and willingness to learn are good or better in three out of four lessons and are seldom less than satisfactory. In two out of five lessons they are very good or excellent. They are at their best when the teacher expects a lot in terms of good behaviour and hard work and keeps pupils really busy and interested with tasks that deepen their knowledge and understanding. Even Year 7 pupils, still new to the school, work very well when stimulated by good teaching. For instance they were very attentive and eager to do their best as they learnt how to use colours to express their feelings about one another's character in an art lesson.
20. Year 11 pupils are particularly well motivated and often tackle their work with marked enthusiasm, even on occasions when teaching is more mundane. Others are not quite so mature in their approach but join willingly in the tasks so long as they are a reasonable match to their needs and the teacher is skilful in upholding expectations of good behaviour. When, occasionally, these factors are missing, pupils tend to chatter, do not concentrate properly, and may even begin to show frustration at their own lack of progress, as happened in one language lesson. A few pupils find it very hard to control themselves and occasionally show really poor behaviour, involving at times defiance of staff or even physical violence, even when good efforts are made to help them behave properly. This has resulted in a number of short-term exclusions and even a few permanent ones. The rate of exclusions has fallen since the previous inspection, and is now around the average seen in other schools.
21. Away from lessons, good attitudes are readily apparent in pupils' enthusiasm for out-of-school activities, especially opportunities in physical education and sport. Year 11 pupils make grateful mention of the voluntary after-school lessons and clubs that teachers organise in a wide range of subjects. Attitudes to homework vary. Many pupils recognise that it helps their progress and say how they persevere with it on occasions when it takes longer than the allocated time. Some Year 7 pupils find it rather overwhelming compared with what was expected in their primary schools. Year 10 pupils just starting examination courses are inclined to complain that homework takes too much of their free time. Year 11 pupils however have generally passed this phase because they have developed a better grasp of the benefits of working hard to gain success in their studies.
22. Behaviour benefits from teachers' clear expectations and apt reminders to pupils about what is expected. Pupils understand that good behaviour makes it easier for themselves and others to learn and they also know that misbehaviour will result in sanctions. They nearly always remain pleasant, sensible and orderly, even when away from direct supervision. There is occasional crowding in doorways as pupils do their best to move promptly between lessons but their consideration for others prevents this from causing any real problems. There is a high degree of racial harmony in the school, with pupils from different backgrounds working amicably together and readily offering help to each other. Racist comments or incidents are almost unknown. Muslim parents, in particular, are pleased about this aspect of the school and feel that their children are safe from any form of racism. Similarly, bullying causes few problems, although insensitive name-calling occasionally worries pupils. However, such unkindness is viewed as unacceptable in the school community and there are plentiful routes for informing staff, who investigate any incidents thoroughly and resolve the problem. Pupils take good care of school equipment, for instance tidying it away efficiently after a science practical session. A

degree of disregard for the environment is evident in the amount of litter they leave around the grounds, though pupils say this problem has decreased somewhat.

23. Relationships and other aspects of personal development are very good. Helped by the example and expectations of teachers and other staff, pupils are friendly and readily co-operate with each other and with adults in the school. They are eager to answer teachers' questions and work together well, for instance planning together for improvement in physical education lessons. This all contributes to the good atmosphere for learning and aids their progress. Older pupils grow well in confidence to express themselves and make increasing contributions to their school community. When the form teacher prompted a Year 11 group to discuss ideas for their representative to take forward to the school council, they quickly became involved in a relevant and lively discussion of matters such as the provision for school meals. In lessons self-confidence and independence are less consistent. There are times when lower attaining pupils in particular lack assurance and are very dependent on their teacher's help and reassurance. Many take an obvious pride in their school, and some are able to pick out features they think specially important, for instance they believe its distinctive nature as an all girls' school contributes to the way it supports their learning.
24. Attendance remains below average. An increase noted at the previous inspection has been consolidated by the continuing efforts of staff, but with only a slight further improvement. In 1999-2000 attendance just reached 90 per cent. In the most recent year it dropped slightly lower again and most year groups failed to reach the 90 per cent benchmark. Year 11 attendance was particularly low. Many pupils in all age groups come to school regularly and do not stay away without good reason but a significant minority attends erratically. Last year one in every 12 pupils missed school for an average of at least one day a week. A few hardly ever attend. Pupils in the lower attaining groups are more inclined to miss school but there are absentees in most groups and from the range of ethnic cultures represented in the school. Occasionally, there is a marked effect on pupils' learning, notably in modern foreign languages where it is hard for them to catch up on missed practice in speaking the language, but teachers are generally very good at ensuring that work is made up. Recorded rates of unauthorised absence (truancy) have fallen and are now close to average, because parents usually respond to the school's insistence that they explain every absence. The school is aware that at times parents supply excuses, such as illness, when the pupil could really be in school.
25. There are various reasons for pupils' absence, apart from genuine medical causes which are of short or long duration. A few long-term absences are recorded when pupils move away but for administrative reasons are not removed from the register by the education welfare service. A few pupils stay away from time to time because they are needed to help at home. Others stay away because of low confidence in their own ability, or from lack of commitment to education. Staff work hard to maintain the attendance of such pupils and also introduce new initiatives, well judged to bring about improvements. The alternative curriculum now offered to older pupils is helping to encourage the attendance of those who follow it because of the way it matches their needs.

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

26. The quality of teaching, and of the learning that such teaching promotes, is good in all years. Two out of three lessons are taught to a standard that is at least good.



The consistency of good teaching is a major strength of the school and leads to pupils acquiring skills, knowledge and understanding at a good rate. Almost all of the teaching that fails to reach a satisfactory standard is in information and communication technology.

27. In Years 7 to 9, teaching is good in all subjects except information and communication technology and music, in which it is unsatisfactory, and in physical education where teaching is very good. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is good in all subjects except information and communication technology and music, in which it is unsatisfactory, English, where it is satisfactory, and in design and technology, physical education and vocational subjects in which teaching is very good. The quality of learning matches the quality of teaching in all subjects.
28. The greatest strengths of the teaching lie in the very good way that teachers manage their pupils and the expectations that they have of the pupils' attainments and behaviour. They are adept at keeping pupils working hard simply by reinforcing the high expectations of the way that they expect pupils to behave in lessons. If a pupil starts to stray off task, a quick glance from the teacher is all that is required to remind the pupil of the standards expected. Many teachers are quick to have a quiet word with pupils in such a way that pupils do not lose face in front of their friends. The same quiet but firm approach is used by learning support workers when dealing with pupils with behavioural difficulties and is equally effective. Pupils respond well to such methods and settle back down to work immediately.
29. Teachers also have high expectations of their pupils in terms of what they are able to achieve. In vocational subjects, for example, many of the pupils are low attainers or have special educational needs but teachers still demand the same quality of presentation and the breadth of work that higher attainers produce. Each assignment has a comment sheet from the teacher that points out exactly what is missing and which pieces of work are not up to standard and need to be done again. This expectation – that pupils can and will perform well – is observed in many subjects and teachers are not satisfied with pupils simply meeting their targets for GCSE grades: they must be exceeded. Pupils respond with a good level of productivity and, as a result, achieve better examination results than would be expected from their attainment when they joined the school. In most subjects the teachers expect the most from all pupils, but in English in Years 10 and 11 and in information and communication technology, the highest attainers are not fulfilling their potential. In one information and communication technology lesson, for example, the highest attainer in the class simply watched the others work as she had already covered the work in her primary school. In some cases, expectations are too high. In one Spanish lesson, for example, the work was too difficult for the pupils and this was one of the few occasions when they started to misbehave. AA
30. Teachers are good at planning lessons that use a variety of activities to keep pupils interested and maintain a good pace of learning. In one religious education lesson, for example, the teacher had the homework written on the board, so that early arrivals had something to get on with. When the lesson proper started there was discussion, reading aloud, written work and a role-play on an aspect of the life of Buddha. The girls threw themselves into the activities and worked extremely hard to meet the tight deadlines imposed by the teacher. The results of the role-play were so moving that one girl was almost in tears. In another information and communication technology lesson, however, the teacher talked to the class for 50 minutes, ending by telling the pupils that she had “bored them silly this lesson”. The

girls very politely agreed. In music, the emphasis has been placed on enjoyment rather than raising standards, so that while the pupils' enthusiasm for the subject has rocketed, they are still underachieving. BB

31. Although the whole-school strategy for teaching literacy skills is still in its infancy, the teachers are very good at improving pupils' reading and writing in individual lessons. Teachers in geography, for example, consistently use glossaries, word lists and reading aloud as part of their everyday lessons. When a pupil does read aloud, others listen attentively and so develop their powers of concentration. This was seen, for example, during a history lesson in which pupils read about the role of women in Tudor society. Whilst opportunities are provided for pupils to use their reading for research, for example in English, art and religious education, such opportunities are rare and pupils in Years 7 to 9 are still dependent on their teachers for information.
32. In a number of subjects, pupils are provided with ample opportunities to develop their writing skills. In most subjects pupils are required to produce longer pieces, but much of this is in Years 10 and 11 and less is set for pupils in Years 7 to 9 than might be expected. Also, the work set often requires descriptive rather than analytic or discursive writing. In most subjects, teachers pay appropriate attention to accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar, and this is carefully reinforced through their marking. In one, notable design and technology lesson, the teacher combined several of these elements. The class was made up of pupils either with special educational needs or who were learning English as an additional language and the teacher wanted them to learn the names of tools that they would be using in their electronics work. The pupils had to match the tools to laminated labels, reading them aloud to the class, and then match the labels to outline drawings. Both writing the names and a short spelling test at the end reinforced spelling. By the end of the lesson, all were confident in identifying, reading and writing the names of all of the tools.
33. There is no whole-school approach to the teaching of numeracy but the teachers do well. In science, there are limited opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their skills in solving numerical problems and doing calculations, and pupils' graphical skills are under-developed. In geography, on the other hand, pupils' numeracy skills contribute well to their learning, especially skills involved with handling data. They create bar and line graphs of climatic change, and data collection and processing contribute well to their GCSE coursework. In art, pupils develop their measuring skills when dealing with the proportions of features on faces and limbs. In Years 10 and 11, they apply those skills to work on perspective. Pupils' number skills are developed a lot in vocational studies. They undertake calculations of quantities of foods for an assignment on pizzas and, when investigating the toy preferences of small children, they present results graphically so that results can be analysed.
34. Marking is generally satisfactory, but there are significant variations. In the vocational subjects, for example, the work is marked in such a way that the pupils knows how well they have done and, more importantly, what they need to do to improve further. In other subjects, marking can be a little too congratulatory or rely too heavily on ticks with no explanations. The result of this is that, while teachers have a good idea of how the pupils are progressing, the pupils themselves have only a limited understanding of how well they are doing. In physical education on the

other hand, pupils know exactly how well they and each other are doing because a part of every lesson is devoted to evaluating performance.

35. Teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good and they make good progress. Teachers know their pupils well and generally provide work that is challenging and at an appropriate level. However, it is not consistently good across all teachers and all subjects. There is very good practice in some departments, such as mathematics and physical education, in extending the pupils' individual education plans into subject-specific targets that enable a greater focus on pupils' individual needs in these subjects. This leads to very good progress. These examples of very good practice need to be extended to cover all the areas of work in the school. There is effective teamwork between teachers and learning support workers in planning lessons, so support workers are well prepared for lessons and as a result pupils with special educational needs learn well.
36. Pupils who are learning English as an additional language make very good progress in a short time. Support workers, who are sensitive to their needs and get the balance between help with the language and developing independence just right, support them very well. Teachers are fully aware of who these pupils are and are constantly checking to make sure that they are able to play as full a part as possible in the lessons. Support workers are used well throughout the school, as are most other resources. However, teachers do not make enough use of computers in their day-to-day teaching. This means that pupils are unable to practise their skills and this is partly responsible for the underachievement in information and communication technology as well as not meeting statutory requirements.
37. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subjects that they teach. In design and technology, the teachers' knowledge of the examination syllabus is particularly effective in allowing them to target lessons at specific elements of the course. This allows pupils to achieve well in examinations. Homework is used appropriately across the school. There is some variation in the amount set each week, but less than is usually seen. The main concern of parents is that there is too much homework for Year 7 pupils when they join the school and it comes as too great a shock to them. Many of the problems are caused by the conscientious nature of the girls who don't know when to stop because there are sometimes no clear guidelines for the amount required for each task. However, in general, the setting of homework gets pupils into good habits in terms of working hard to improve their standards and their conscientiousness reflects well on their attitudes to study.
38. There have been significant improvements in teaching since the previous inspection and there is now a greater consistency of teaching that is good or better. Teaching strategies, which were heavily criticised in the previous inspection, are now good.

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

39. Despite some significant strengths, the curriculum is unsatisfactory as it fails to meet statutory requirements. It meets the needs of the diverse range of pupils at the school well and is a considerable improvement on the time of the last inspection.
40. The breadth and balance of the curriculum is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. In Years 7 to 9 all subjects of the National Curriculum are provided together with religious education and the opportunity to study two foreign

languages. In Years 10 and 11 a number of imaginative schemes have been introduced resulting in the alternative curriculum for a group of approximately 30 pupils. The alternative curriculum meets the needs of pupils very well. These schemes are helping to raise the self-esteem of pupils, and many pupils who had been disaffected are now showing a willingness to continue with their education. A small group of pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not follow a course of study that includes information and communication technology and therefore the school is in breach of statutory requirements. There is insufficient use of information and communication technology within subjects and this limits the ability of pupils to work on their own and restricts the development of research skills.

41. The very good curriculum in Years 10 and 11 provides a wide range of courses for pupils. Most follow a core curriculum enhanced by choices from various options. The choice of subjects is particularly broad for a school of this size and allows pupils the choice of either specialising in a certain area or retaining range of subjects as wide as possible. In Year 10 approximately one-third of pupils follow an alternative curriculum. This consists of two and a half days per week following a core curriculum and then two and a half days out of school on a work-related placement for two days and a further half a day at an external agency receiving key skills teaching. These pupils also follow a course of study leading to GNVQ.
42. The arrangements for the teaching of both literacy and numeracy skills are satisfactory. Teachers place a good deal of emphasis on improving pupils' skills within the context of the subject. In a number of subjects, pupils are provided with ample opportunities to develop their writing skills. Pupils are given good opportunities to practise and improve their skills in reading aloud in, for example, English, history, geography and religious education, but not in others, such as science. The school recognises that the teaching of literacy across the curriculum needs to be co-ordinated and that best practice needs to be more widely shared. To that end a literacy co-ordinator has recently been appointed. A similar situation exists in numeracy. A co-ordinator has been appointed and there are plans to improve the co-ordination of numeracy across all curriculum areas.
43. The curriculum experienced by pupils for whom English is an additional language is very good. In lessons they receive well-targeted support. Out of lessons, they also receive support in the club that meets over lunch hours. Besides receiving very good support in their academic learning, pupils receive very good personal support. They learn of British culture and other cultures. It is also recognised that pupils may need time to reflect and facilities are provided for pupils to pray.
44. The curricular provision for pupils with special educational needs matches that of the overall provision. Where pupils are not studying all National Curriculum subjects, the alternative provision is good and meets the need of the individual pupils well. There are satisfactory individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs. The school's policy of providing general individual education plans for subjects to develop is not yet fully established and this detracts from their effectiveness to some extent.
45. The school provides a very good range of extra-curricular activities. There is good provision for sports and after-school clubs such as the homework club. Many subjects provide additional clubs to support pupils with their studies. There are catch-up clubs for those pupils who fall behind with their work or those pupils who join the school part way through the year. Three staff give freely of their time to

provide extra-curricular sporting activities and one-third of pupils regularly participate.

46. The arrangements for teaching personal and social development are good. The work that is planned includes all the required aspects of health education, sex education and drugs awareness and these plans provide a good experience for the pupils. The school gives the course a high priority in recognition of the need to improve pupils' self-esteem. Careers education is of a good quality. It starts in Year 9 but most of the work is focused in Years 10 and 11.
47. The school has very good links with the local community. Significant numbers of pupils have links with local businesses. These businesses provide valuable support and experience for pupils through the work-related curriculum. All pupils have two weeks work experience during Years 10 and 11 and many have regular opportunities to apply their knowledge to a real business context. The school has satisfactory links with partner institutions. It has good pastoral links with the large number of feeder primary schools but curricular links are not so well established. There are good links with post-16 institutions and training organisations that provide good information when pupils are making choices about their future pathways.
48. The school makes good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. However, it is not co-ordinated or planned across the curriculum and therefore opportunities to improve further are still being missed.
49. The provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. It is confined mainly to religious education where there are planned opportunities for pupils to appreciate what religious faith can mean and to reflect upon their own experiences and place in the world. Some assemblies have a Christian focus and create opportunities to experience awe and wonder but pupils attend only one act of collective worship each week. There is no provision in form time on the other four days. Islamic festivals are recognised in assemblies and during Ramadan the school is sensitive to the needs of Muslim pupils and provides prayer facilities. Younger pupils attend services in local churches to celebrate Harvest Festival and other events. Some activities in form time, and displays around the school, challenge pupils to consider the significance and value of human life in times of disaster. There are also items on display such as the aims of the Eden Project and a world map of current affairs which underline the community of people across countries and faiths.
50. The provision made for pupils' moral development is very good. The school makes clear its standards of right and wrong through the use of a code of conduct, a home/school contract and well-displayed 'ground rules' for both pupils and staff. Staff provide very good role models and consistently expect high standards of behaviour in lessons and around the school. The pupil support unit is effective in preventing vulnerable pupils falling into patterns of bad behaviour. Good work and behaviour are rewarded whilst teachers use sanctions sparingly. The fabric of the school is attractive and well maintained which in turn encourages pupils to respect it. All pupils participate in the well-planned programme of personal and social development which is taught by a specialist team of experienced staff and closely related to the work done by form teachers. As part of this there are visits by drama groups from local colleges to give presentations about alcohol and drug abuse. Assemblies feature moral teaching, and religious education in Years 10 and 11 is based on the attitudes to moral issues taught by Christianity and Islam. In child

development and science lessons pupils discuss ethical issues, and geography, history and art feature moral issues associated with their subject.

51. The school makes very good provision for pupils' social development. Most subjects encourage pupils to collaborate in their learning. Personal and social development and religious education stress the importance of sensitivity in relationships and there are opportunities in most years for the development of team-work. For example there is a highly regarded course for older pupils at an army camp, and induction activities for Year 7. Civilised social behaviour is promoted through breakfast and homework clubs and through the provision of attractive seating around the school and its grounds. A small 'Youth Action Group' arranges for older pupils to be trained as peer advisors. Opportunities exist at all stages for pupils to take responsibility as form captains and prefects. There are school and year councils which pupils see as being effective. However, there are few opportunities for pupils to develop initiative and take responsibility for their own work, especially in Years 7 to 9. Vocational courses for older pupils give such opportunities and are very successful in maintaining pupils' motivation and helping them towards maturity.
52. Citizenship education forms a prominent part of the personal and social development programme and the school has received local recognition for its work in combating racism in the community. The head girl and her deputies have been elected through a fully democratic process in which all pupils and staff had a vote. Pupils in the Youth Action Group are developing close links with the crime prevention scheme and a vocational group for pupils with special educational needs has organised a number of whole-school charity events such as Christmas hampers. There are frequent non-uniform days to raise money for charities proposed by pupils; recently pupils were generous in their sponsorship of staff who took part in a sponsored swim.
53. The provision for cultural development is also very good. The National Curriculum for English and art is supplemented by drama. There have been recent visits by artists, dancers and a stone mason from the local cathedral. Artwork is displayed well around the school. Work in physical education, design and technology, geography and religious education gives pupils insights into other faiths and cultures. Pupils participate in visits to art galleries, museums and local sites of interest but currently not enough use is made of the abundance of religious sites and communities in the locality. There has recently been a musical production and pupils participate in activities associated with the Cheltenham Festival. A small but very active English as an Additional Language Club organises activities which celebrate Black-Caribbean culture and brings these to the attention of the whole school through initiatives like the sale of an Afro-Caribbean cookery book and a whole-school celebration of Eid. The cookery book was put to good use in design and technology and proceeds from its sales have been used to purchase library books by authors from non-European cultures. The club has also been involved with publicising the plight of refugees and supporting asylum seekers. The school has links with a French school and with the local language college and pupils participate in regular visits to Europe. During the week of the inspection excellent material was on display showing aspects of Japanese life and culture and the school is looking forward to a visit of a teacher from Japan.
54. Through its curriculum, ethos and initiatives the school is doing very good work in combating and preventing racism.

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

55. There is very good support and care for pupils and generally very effective encouragement for them to work hard and to make progress with learning. There are satisfactory arrangements for assessing and recording pupils' gains in knowledge and skills, and for using this information to plan for their further progress with learning. Good steps are taken to encourage attendance. The high quality of care has been upheld since the previous inspection, and assessment procedures have improved.
56. The friendly atmosphere helps Year 7 pupils to settle quickly in their new school. Pupils are made welcome. For instance they are allowed onto the site well before the official start to the school day and can buy breakfast there. Form teachers throughout the school develop a successful supportive relationship with their groups, making good use of time set aside to meet with them. Support is also available from several other pastoral staff, through the good personal and social development programme as well as on a one-to-one basis. There are various successful mechanisms for pupils to support each other; for instance, those in younger forms can turn to the prefects attached to their groups, and sixth form pupils come from a neighbouring school to mentor a number of the younger pupils. Pupils show a good level of confidence that help is available to overcome any problems. Staff keep up good links with a range of relevant outside support agencies that they call on when an individual has particular needs for support. Pressures of work mean that the input of some agencies, such as the education psychology service, is more limited than the school could use. The school's very good attention to the needs of different individuals or groups of pupils includes taking careful account of the religious needs of pupils. There is sensitive provision, across the whole range of school activities, to meet these needs. Good support for pupils with statements of special educational needs ensures that the requirements of their statements are met well.
57. Management of behaviour is very good. Staff make sure pupils understand clearly how they should behave in lessons and around the school. Helped by relevant arrangements for their own professional training, teachers successfully encourage good behaviour, and generally use the well-structured, easily understood system of sanctions very effectively if any misbehaviour sets in. Rarely, a teacher does not use suitable management strategies in a lesson and behaviour in the class deteriorates. Occasionally a pupil's behaviour in the classroom or around the school becomes really poor and when this happens short-term exclusion plays a part in the sanctions system, with permanent exclusion only used for the most serious breakdown in behaviour. While the school has made reasonable use of exclusion, it is active in exploring ways to provide further, positive help. There are appropriate individual plans in place for those pupils who have particular behavioural difficulties and these often help them to make good improvements. After careful consideration, a support centre was opened, to help meet the range of pupils' needs even better. This is well planned to allow pupils to continue their learning if for any reason, such as pastoral concerns or difficulties in controlling their own behaviour, they need to be supported for a time away from their classroom.
58. Procedures to monitor and promote attendance are good. Through the persistence of staff in following up absentees and their good efforts to meet the pastoral and learning needs of each pupil, good gains in attendance levels have been consolidated since the previous inspection, although the further increases aimed at

by the school are still to be achieved. An education support manager plays a very important part in maintaining and raising attendance. She contacts pupils' homes on the first day of any unexplained absence. On occasion she makes home visits to talk to pupils and parents about reasons for absence. She meets weekly with pupils from each year group who are judged to be particularly in danger of losing motivation to come to school because of low self-esteem or any other circumstances. The new pupil support centre is also well placed to contribute to efforts to increase attendance, though it is too early as yet to evaluate its impact. Another initiative, the alternative curriculum offered to pupils in Years 10 and 11, is proving successful in motivating them to attend. A few pupils in Years 10 and 11 benefit from being placed on relevant college courses that boost their motivation and attendance. Even with all these efforts, there is still a need for more direct impact on the homes of those pupils in all age groups where the family has low regard for education or where other factors, such as the demands of younger siblings, act against regular attendance. Some help in dealing with absentees comes from the education welfare service but this is limited by the number of hours of support allocated by the service to the school. Procedures for recording attendance are good in that they give pastoral staff prompt and accurate information about absentees. However, the drawback is that they include a mix of manual and computerised systems, and make heavy demands on the time of clerical staff without full benefit being gained from the computerised records because no use is being made of the optical mark reader to enter data into the computer.

59. Provision for other aspects of pupils' well-being is good; for instance, if they become sick or injured in school they receive good care and attention. Very good guidance about child protection procedures, provided by the named member of staff, is in place and staff follow this carefully when any possible issues arise. Careful attention is given to ensuring social services have proper involvement in such matters. Health and safety routines, criticised at the previous inspection, are now good. They are well organised and generally result in a safe environment and safe conduct of learning activities. However, some misgivings about pupils' well-being arise because the toilets remain an uninviting area despite the ongoing efforts made by staff. The mix of pedestrians and vehicles sharing a site exit after school also causes some concern but this is due to be remedied by the inclusion in the planned building project of a new pedestrian route into the site.
60. The school's procedures for monitoring pupils' progress and the use made of information gained from assessment to guide curriculum planning are both satisfactory.
61. Good, whole-school systems are in place to give the school information about each pupil's potential attainment. The school collects and records a substantial amount of assessment data on its pupils when they enter the school. This information is communicated to teaching staff for their guidance and informs the process of placing pupils into classes based on their attainment potential. Only limited use is made of National Curriculum levels within subjects to record pupils' progress through Years 7 to 9. At the end of Year 9, National Curriculum assessments and further standardised test results are used to assess each pupil's GCSE potential and to inform their choice of curricular options.
62. Between Years 9 and 11, whole-year academic monitoring is carried out twice a term allowing each pupil to be tracked effectively using a colour-coding system that makes it possible for teachers to identify where pupils are performing below their



potential in relation to targets that have been set. This information is communicated to pupils through an effective one-to-one mentoring system in Years 10 and 11. However, not all subject departments operate assessment procedures consistently well. Assessment is very good in vocational courses, good in design and technology, mathematics, history, physical education, art and geography, but unsatisfactory in information and communication technology and religious education. In all other subjects it is satisfactory. In physical education the involvement of pupils in their own assessment of progress is well developed. No system is in place for monitoring the progress and attainment of pupils from ethnic minorities as a group, but the school is fully aware of the progress made by each individual and many parents do not wish to identify their child with any particular ethnic grouping.

63. Arrangements for using assessment information to identify pupils with special educational needs are good. There is a good flow of data from teaching staff to the special educational needs co-ordinator that is used effectively to check pupil progress towards targets in their individual education plans and, where necessary, to set new targets.
64. At a whole-school level, there has been good progress in refining whole-school systems for making assessments, and tracking and recording pupils' progress but as in the last report, it is still more effective at the whole-school level than within departments where there is still some variable practice.

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

65. The school is rising rapidly in parents' regard. Since the previous inspection there has been a dramatic upturn in the numbers who come to the annual open evening and also in the numbers applying for their daughters to join the school. Parents are happy with the way teachers expect their daughters to work hard and help them to make good progress in learning. They appreciate the way that staff are welcoming and helpful if they want to talk about any queries or problems. A growing number show willingness and confidence to get more involved in their daughters' learning: for instance, more now come to talk to teachers on parents' evenings. However a large minority still usually stays away from such meetings. A substantial proportion of parental questionnaires pick up on the fact that there is still room for the partnership between the school and parents to grow closer. Staff recognise that more could be done, for instance by getting parents more involved during the induction process when pupils first join the school.
66. Pupils' homework diaries give parents the chance to monitor the homework they do. Tutors generally have good routines for inspecting these diaries themselves and for encouraging pupils to make sure their parents see and sign them. Parents also receive a good flow of information about pupils' progress, through the regular academic monitoring sheets that they receive as well as the full annual reports. Full reports are satisfactory. They include a good range of detail about what has been studied and about gains in knowledge and skills, though some sections, for instance sometimes in mathematics, are rather vague, without any detail about what the pupil has learnt in the subject. Information about how the individual is doing in comparison with her peers and with national expectations is also too thin in some reports. Staff readily contact parents by letter or phone call when any concerns arise, and find that parents are generally becoming more ready to work amicably to overcome difficulties, for instance with behaviour. Staff take careful account of

parents' cultural values and religious beliefs, to ensure that Muslim parents, for instance, can feel happy with the activities their daughters follow in school. Parents of pupils on the special educational needs register are appropriately informed about individual education plans and usually take the opportunity to contribute to the annual review of any statement of special educational needs.

67. General information available to parents is satisfactory in its quality. The prospectus is an attractive document and is informative on a satisfactory range of matters. However, the governors' annual report to parents omits some key information, including the arrangements for disabled pupils to join the school and the progress made by the school on the action plan from the previous inspection. The occasional newsletter is relevant but lacks flair in its presentation and in breadth of its content. For instance, recent ones have no contributions from pupils about their activities.
68. A few parents give practical help with school activities; for instance, they help to make sure pupils can attend after-school sporting fixtures by offering transport to different venues. However, a substantial number actually undermine the school's efforts because they give low priority to education and encourage their daughters to grow up with the same views, for instance by letting them stay away from school without any acceptable reason.

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

69. The school is very well led and managed by the headteacher and senior staff. The very good leadership provided by the headteacher has led to a rapid rise in standards since the previous inspection. In particular, the proportion of pupils leaving with a qualification has risen from the bottom five per cent nationally to the top five per cent. She has provided a very clear direction that has led to a good level of commitment to improve among staff. At the heart of the school's success lie its commitment to providing the best for each individual pupil and the way that this is reflected in its work is quite outstanding. Just a few examples to illustrate are: the curriculum has seen considerable changes in Years 10 and 11 to respond to the needs of small groups of individuals; a support centre has been set up for pupils who need help of any sort; a room has been set aside to provide pupils from different faiths with a place for prayer or quiet reflection; and, specific provision is made for pupils who need to catch up on any work missed.
70. The headteacher is strongly supported by the other members of the senior management team. They not only carry out their own roles very effectively but are also prepared to offer constructive criticism when required and together they form a formidable vehicle for change. The role played by middle managers is satisfactory overall. Most subjects are led and managed well, with significant strengths in subjects such as physical education and the vocational subjects in which the rate of improvement has mirrored that of the whole school. There are weaknesses, however, in the management of information and communication technology, music and religious education. In the first two of these subjects there has not been enough emphasis on raising standards; consequently pupils are underachieving. In religious education there is no clear management structure or definition of roles so nobody is taking responsibility for the long-term planning for the subject.
71. One of the most important reasons for the school's improvement is the very good way that the school monitors and evaluates its performance. There is a good

system for monitoring teaching and ensuring that individual teachers are aware of how to improve, which is backed up by a rigorous but fair application of disciplinary procedures. It is a measure, however, of the affection in which the headteacher is held that many teachers want to do their best for her. Where teaching is found to be unsatisfactory, teachers are monitored and supported more closely. Heads of departments play a full role in the monitoring so they have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in their departments and all teachers have the opportunity to learn from their colleagues. In many cases this strategy proves to be highly successful, not just in improving unsatisfactory teaching but also in raising the standard of satisfactory teaching to a good or very good level. The overall effects of these approaches are observed in the dramatic improvement in teaching since the previous inspection, when one lesson in four failed to ensure that the pupils made sufficient progress in Years 7 to 9.

72. The other important strand to the monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance is the reviews of departments that take place three times each year. These reviews each have a specific focus, such as examination results and progress towards the targets identified in the departmental development plans. The reviews are rigorous and searching, leading to carefully constructed plans for improvement, and play an important role in supporting the school's priorities for development.
73. Each year the management team reviews the progress that has been made by the school, draws up priorities for the next year's work and initiates plans to address them. The priorities are thought through well and are always firmly rooted in raising standards. The actions taken to meet these targets are very good. With the exception of information and communication technology, the management team has identified the most important elements that will have the biggest impact on standards and have tackled them with enthusiasm. A good level of financial planning supports this process. Resources have been targeted well and when specific grants have become available, such as the RAP funding, the school has made excellent use of the opportunities. In the case of the RAP funding, the amount available to the school was not huge but the impact has been immense. It has provided a curriculum that pupils, who may otherwise have become disaffected with school, enjoy and made them want to learn. Through its good financial planning, the school's managers have been able to save sufficient money to pay for the rapid increase in the number of pupils at the school. This has been very important as the school receives its money well after the academic year has started.
74. Governors play a good role in shaping the direction of the school. They know its strengths and weaknesses, and their individual talents have been used well. For example, their expertise with planning, finance and the law has allowed the school to dictate the sort of building programme that is required for its expansion. Together with the headteacher they have ensured that the school always has sufficient funds in hand to compensate for the time lag between more pupils arriving at the school and the funding for them. However, governors have had to spend too much of their time on the issue of buildings and this has held back the school's progress. The plans for the building programme have dragged on for years and each time the governing body thinks it has met all the requirements some higher authority changes the rules. Although the governors fulfil their responsibilities well, they do not meet all their statutory requirements and this aspect of their performance is unsatisfactory. Pupils are not receiving their entitlement to be taught the full National Curriculum programmes of study in information and communication

technology or to make use of information and communication technology in other subjects. The frequency of acts of collective worship does not meet requirements and there is important information missing from the governors' report to parents.

75. The school's management team is good at ensuring the school is providing the best value for the money it receives. Its performance is compared with other schools, both of a similar type, and also with a local Beacon School, to see how improvements are made. The targets for improvement have recently been modified to be even more challenging as a result of better than expected examination results in 2001. The school consults with parents over changes and questions them to gain their opinions about many aspects of the school's performance, although the response from parents is usually very limited. Overall, the school is providing good value for money.
76. The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis and makes appropriate use of new technology, particularly for communications. However, the manual entering of attendance data into the computer is laborious and inefficient.
77. The school has sufficient teachers to meet its requirements and in all subject areas they are well matched, by qualifications and experience, except in science. Here, there is a shortage of physics specialists to fully meet the demands of the curriculum. The number and expertise of the support staff are strengths. The school has responded to the relatively high numbers of pupils with special educational needs or who speak English as an additional language by ensuring that there are enough staff to provide them with a good level of support. The arrangements for the professional development of teachers are good. In-service training of teachers is planned well to meet school, department and individual needs. Records are kept and regularly reviewed. Newly qualified teachers and other staff new to the school are supported well through the schools' good induction programme.
78. Most subjects are well resourced and the library has a good stock of up-to-date books. There are sufficient computers in the school for its current needs, but these are not used effectively to raise standards. The accommodation at the school is satisfactory. Most subjects are housed in attractive areas with good size rooms but the library is rather small and there is not enough space for additional small groups of pupils when it is booked for a class. One room is too small for music; pupils cannot use the full range of instruments available to them.
79. The management of the school has improved significantly at all levels since the time of the previous inspection. The weakness in staff development, identified as a key issue, has been addressed most successfully.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

80. In order to raise standards and the improve the quality of education still further, the school should:

- (1) Improve achievement in information and communication technology by ensuring that teachers use methods that meet the needs of pupils and all teachers make appropriate use of information and communication technology in their lessons. (Paragraphs: 4,16,27,39,62,149,151,153,155,157,158,161).
- (2) Improve achievement in music by ensuring that teachers focus their planning sufficiently on the technical aspects of the subject rather than just promoting enjoyment. (Paragraphs: 4,16,27,171,173,175-178).

The school also has the following minor weaknesses:

- The management of religious education is currently unsatisfactory. (Paragraphs: 62,74,191,196).
- Attendance is below average. (Paragraph 18)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	139
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	67

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	6	27	60	39	5	2	0
Percentage	4.3	19.4	43.2	28.0	3.6	1.4	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

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	587
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	105

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	21
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	138

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	52

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	21
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	31

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	9.3
National comparative data	7.7

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.7
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	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2000	0	79	79

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Girls	48	44	45
	Total	48	44	45
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	61 (51)	56 (39)	57 (49)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	16 (7)	33 (17)	16 (5)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Girls	51	42	38
	Total	51	42	38
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	65 (71)	53 (42)	48 (53)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	14 (19)	34 (17)	20 (8)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	0	38	38

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	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Girls	12	35	38
	Total	12	35	38
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	32 (20)	92 (80)	100 (97)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	31 (26)
	National	38.4 (38.0)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	37
	National	
		89.2
		n/a



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

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	10
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	5
Indian	12
Pakistani	4
Bangladeshi	7
Chinese	0
White	434
Any other minority ethnic group	33

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

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	36
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16

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

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	362

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

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	70
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	27
Key Stage 4	20

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	10.5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	20.5

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	1	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	35	2
Other minority ethnic groups	5	1

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

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	1304519
Total expenditure	1215203
Expenditure per pupil	2436
Balance brought forward from previous year	207043
Balance carried forward to next year	296359

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

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	587
Number of questionnaires returned	83

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	43	49	6	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	43	47	6	0	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	28	47	10	4	11
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	27	40	24	6	4
The teaching is good.	34	53	2	1	8
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	41	40	13	4	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	58	37	2	0	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	57	36	2	1	4
The school works closely with parents.	28	49	18	2	2
The school is well led and managed.	29	54	6	0	11
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	35	51	7	0	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	39	43	10	0	8

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

### ENGLISH

81. Overall, the quality of provision in English is **satisfactory**.

#### Strengths

- Pupils make good progress in Years 7 to 9.
- Basic skills in reading and writing are taught well. In particular, pupils are taught to re-draft their work as a matter of routine in order to improve it.
- Provision for pupils who speak English as an additional language is very good; they learn the language quickly.
- Pupils are very well behaved and co-operative and this helps to create a good atmosphere for learning.

#### Areas for improvement

- Assessment data are not being used effectively to determine what and how pupils will be taught.
- Higher attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 are not being sufficiently challenged.
- There is not enough use made of information and communication technology.

82. Results in the 2000 National Curriculum tests for pupils in Year 9 were below the national average for all schools and close to the average for schools taking pupils from a similar backgrounds. The results in English were similar to those in mathematics and science. Results obtained from 1997 to 2000 were broadly consistent, except for 1999, when they dipped. Results in 2001 were similar to those obtained in 2000. Results in GCSE examinations in 2000 in both English and English literature were well below the national averages. In 2001 results were similar to those in 2000. Results from 1998 to 2000 show a steady improvement. Pupils performed as well as they did in most of their other subjects.

83. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that examination results accurately reflect the standards currently being attained in the school. Pupils in Year 9 attain standards that are below average, but this is a good level of achievement as they joined the school with well below average levels of attainment. Pupils in Year 11 are attaining standards that are well below average, which represents a satisfactory level of achievement because their standards were well below average when they were in Year 9. Achievement is better in Years 7 to 9 than it is in Years 10 and 11 because teachers pay greater attention to ensuring that the higher attaining pupils are being stretched. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is similar to that of other pupils.

84. Pupils for whom English is an additional language make very good progress in the school. In lessons they receive well-targeted support. Out of lessons they also receive support in the club that meets over lunch hours. Besides receiving very good support in their academic learning, pupils receive very good personal support. They learn of British and other cultures. It is also recognised that pupils may need time to reflect and facilities are provided for pupils to pray.

85. Pupils' skills in speaking and listening are a relative strength at all levels in the school. Most pupils enjoy taking part in oral work and do so confidently. Higher attainers possess a good vocabulary and use language flexibly. They are also

careful listeners, being ready to accept the views of other pupils or to challenge them. This was seen in a Year 11 lesson on the poetry of Ted Hughes when the interaction between pupils contributed well to the depth of their understanding. In a Year 7 lesson pupils were eager to pool information on Hrothgar's Hall in order to construct a diagram of it as part of their response to Rosemary Sutcliffe's version of 'Beowulf'. Most pupils are keen to respond to teachers' questions and many are ready to ask questions of teachers in order to clarify particular points. Some middle attaining pupils have a restricted vocabulary and the lower attainers express themselves briefly, but such pupils are in a relatively small minority in the school. Pupils have the opportunity to improve their speaking and listening skills in drama but do not have the opportunity to participate in practical activities, such as improvisation, to the extent that would be expected.

86. By the end of Year 9 pupils read novels and poems that are appropriate for their age group. Higher attainers read with fluency and good expression, as was seen when a group of Year 7 pupils read extracts from 'Beowulf', clearly enjoying the resonant quality of the language. Middle attainers read with fluency but limited expression, whilst lower attainers are hesitant and struggle to recognise common words. By the end of Year 11 pupils go on to study more complex literature. Many display an enjoyment of what they read, reflect upon it and are ready to relate it to their own experiences. They enjoy considering social issues, as was seen, for example, when a reading of JB Priestley's 'An Inspector Calls' in a Year 11 lesson led to a discussion on the differences between social classes in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, higher attainers are not able to analyse and evaluate the effectiveness of language to the extent that might be expected. Pupils are expected to read in many subjects and reading aloud is encouraged in several, most notably religious education and design and technology.
87. By the end of Year 9 pupils write in a variety of styles, including narratives, descriptions and letters. The majority of pupils possess neat and legible handwriting and use spelling and punctuation with a satisfactory degree of accuracy. By the end of Year 11 pupils further develop the skills they learnt earlier. In particular, pupils write good quality, lengthy narratives. However, they do not develop the range of writing to the extent that might be expected, particularly regarding analytic, discursive and critical writing. Although there is some inconsistency, most pupils, at all levels in the school, re-draft their work in order to improve its quality, but they rarely use information and communication technology. In a number of subjects, pupils are provided with ample opportunities to develop their writing skills. In most subjects, including English, science, history, geography and design and technology, pupils are required to produce extended writing. However, a large proportion of the extended writing set is for pupils in Years 10 and 11 and less is set for pupils in Years 7 to 9 than might be expected. It is also the case that the work set often requires descriptive rather than analytic or discursive writing. In most subjects teachers pay appropriate attention to accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar.
88. The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 7 to 9 and is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. When teaching is most effective, a number of features are in evidence. In the majority of lessons, teachers maintain good discipline and pupils' behaviour is very good. An atmosphere is created in which pupils show respect for each other and are willing to listen to various points of view. This was seen in nearly all lessons in which pupils discussed a range of topics including Shakespeare, modern poetry, contrasting genres of films and various aspects of the media. Basic

skills in literacy are taught well. For example, the introductory part of most lessons is dedicated to some aspect of spelling, punctuation or grammar and this enables pupils to improve their standards. This approach contributes significantly to the good levels of achievement in Years 7 to 9. When lessons are planned well, pupils are given a sense of continuity and feel they are making progress. This was seen, for example, in a Year 10 lesson. In an earlier lesson pupils had undertaken research into the historical background of literature they were studying and were then, in the lesson seen, required to summarise it using word processing. The summary, in turn, was to be used as notes for giving a talk to the class. When a variety of tasks is introduced into the lesson and a good pace is maintained, pupils become engaged in the work and make a good intellectual and creative effort.

89. When teaching is less effective, the teacher does not exert effective discipline and pupils lose concentration and behave inappropriately. When the level of challenge of the work is not appropriately matched to their prior attainment, pupils make limited progress. Examples of work being insufficiently challenging for the highest attainers and too challenging for pupils with special educational needs occur in Years 10 and 11. Although there is some inconsistency, much of the marking is of good quality and gives pupils guidance on what they need to do in order to improve. The vast majority of pupils are polite, well behaved and mature in their outlook, which undoubtedly contributes to their progress.
90. The management of the department is satisfactory. The very recently appointed acting head of department has already had a positive impact upon the work of the department and has clear ideas on how pupils' standards might be raised. However, the department has gone through a difficult period which has seen major staff changes. Whilst information is available on pupils' attainment, it has not been used to determine what pupils will be taught so they can achieve their full potential. In particular, higher attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 need to be challenged to a greater degree. In Years 10 and 11, pupils are not made sufficiently aware of the requirements of each grade for GCSE and what they need to do to move from one grade to the next. There is insufficient use of information and communication technology in the classroom. The acting head of department and her colleagues recognise the deficiencies and have a positive attitude towards improvement.
91. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. Standards at end of Year 9 have been maintained and results at GCSE have seen a steady improvement.

## **MATHEMATICS**

92. Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Strengths**

- Pupils are now achieving well as a result of the good teaching.
- Standards are improving because the department is led well.
- Pupils with special educational needs receive good support.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Teachers make insufficient use of information and communications technology in their teaching.

93. Results in the National Curriculum tests in 2000 for pupils in Year 9 were below the national average for all schools. When compared with schools taking pupils from similar backgrounds, results were above average. Results in mathematics were similar to those in science and English. The results have improved significantly since the previous inspection and the proportions of pupils who achieved the higher levels have increased. Results in the National Curriculum tests in 2001 were similar to those in 2000. Over the last five years the trend in results has been well above the national trend.
94. Results in the 2000 GCSE examinations were well below the national average. The results in 2001 were close to those of the previous year. Since the previous inspection, there has been an improving trend broadly in line with the national trend. Pupils performed as well as they did in most of their other subjects, but not as well as they did in design and technology.
95. Attainment at the end of Year 9 is below average. Nevertheless, this represents a good level of achievement for all pupils, whose levels of attainment were well below average when they joined the school. High attaining pupils possess good techniques for carrying out investigations. They identify well the information they need and record results in a clear way. Numeracy skills are generally sound. Higher attaining pupils use the appropriate function notation well and plot graphs of linear functions in all four quadrants. Low attainers have a sound understanding of equivalent fractions but have difficulty in comparing the sizes of fractions. Middle attainers calculate the volume of cubes but have a weaker understanding of how to work out the area of circles.
96. Standards at the end of Year 11 are below average. This is a better standard than that suggested by the GCSE results and represents a good level of achievement as these pupils joined the school with well below average levels of attainment. The improvement in standards is a result of more effective teaching and learning, the recruitment of specialist mathematics teachers and an enthusiastic curriculum leader. High attaining pupils carry out their own investigations very well. They use information and communication technology effectively in analysing results and arriving at conclusions. They not only use symbols and mathematical language to describe patterns, but also present good, reasoned arguments to explain why the patterns exist. These pupils are beginning to develop a good foundation for more advanced work, for example when calculating properties of vectors. Middle attaining pupils have a sound recall of the trigonometric ratios and Pythagoras' theorem, but can only apply them to simple problems in two dimensions. Some pupils have difficulty in identifying the names of sides of triangles when applying trigonometric rules. Low attainers need the support of multiplication table squares when calculating fractions of amounts, but the most able in the group calculate fractions of amounts. When handling data, low attaining pupils demonstrate a sound understanding of the different types of correlation and have a basic understanding of probability.
97. Standards of presentation are good in all years. Pupils set their work out clearly and structure their answers well.
98. Most subjects make a good contribution to developing the skills of numeracy. In geography, pupils' skills in handling data are developed particularly well. Pupils create bar and line graphs of climatic change, while data collection and processing contributes well to their GCSE coursework. In art, pupils develop their measuring

skills when measuring the proportions of features on faces, body and limbs. In Years 10 and 11, pupils apply these skills to work on perspective. In science, there are limited opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their skills in solving numerical problems and doing calculations, and pupils' graphical skills are underdeveloped. There is a good emphasis placed on developing number skills on the vocational courses. Pupils undertake calculations of quantities of foods for an assignment on pizzas and, when investigating the toy preferences of small children, they present results graphically so that results can be analysed.

99. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to other pupils. They receive a good level of support from learning support workers who work well with their teachers so that pupils stay on task and receive help in understanding difficult concepts. In the best lessons, work is modified to take account of their specific needs and this contributes well to their progress. Gifted pupils are supported well with extra lessons and more difficult work so that they make the best progress. The school is planning to enter such pupils for GCSE a year early so that they can go on to study statistics in Year 11. The pupils who are at the early stages of learning English benefit from individual support in lessons so that they make similar progress to other pupils.
100. The quality of teaching and learning is good in all years. There are several new mathematics teachers whose good teaching has not yet had time to show in terms of better than average achievement in Years 10 and 11. Learning is good because of the pupils' complete involvement in lessons and the good quality of questioning and explanations. This encourages pupils to explain what they are doing and monitors their understanding. Underpinning the good teaching is the teachers' enthusiasm for mathematics, good subject knowledge and high expectations. Teachers structure questions so that pupils have to think about applying skills they have learnt previously; for example, when they were investigating the rule for the  $n$ th term of a sequence. They quickly progress from finding the rule using one operation to two operations. Teachers plan their lessons well. There are clear learning objectives and effective structures to lessons so that pupils know what is expected of them. Teachers use an effective combination of explanation, discussion, and individual work that maintains the interest and motivation of pupils. Resources are generally used effectively to enhance teaching. There is good use of overhead projectors to provide clear demonstrations and effective use of individual whiteboards that motivate pupils to want to answer questions. However, insufficient use is made of information and communication technology as a part of everyday lessons. Teachers emphasise key mathematical terms during lessons and ensure that the majority of pupils spell these accurately.
101. The management of pupils is generally good in all years and pupils respond accordingly, which produces a positive atmosphere for learning. Behaviour is very good and pupils work well with each other. Praise and support are very effective in raising confidence. This leads to an atmosphere of respect and a good understanding of the needs of pupils. Consequently pupils want to learn and this is an important contribution to raising standards. When carrying out work, pupils are encouraged to engage in discussions and ask each other questions so that they really understand the work. Pupils usually listen attentively to their teachers but, in a minority of lessons pupils do not fully concentrate when working by themselves. Homework is set regularly and supports the work pupils do in class very well. Teachers plan homework well so that it consolidates and extends learning. The quality of marking is inconsistent. The marking of investigation work is good and

pupils can see what they need to do to improve. In other areas of mathematics, marking does not always assist improvement.

102. The department is led and managed well, and staff show a very good capacity for improvement. The staff work very well together and they are keen to raise achievement in mathematics. The performance of pupils is monitored well through regular testing and there are procedures in place to track pupils' attainment from these tests.
103. Progress since the previous inspection has been good. In 1997, results for 14 year olds were in the bottom five per cent nationally. Results have risen substantially and are now below average. GCSE results have been maintained broadly in line with the national trend. There has been significant improvement in teaching.

## SCIENCE

104. Overall, the quality of provision in science is **good**.

### Strengths

- Pupils achieve well; they gain better results in the National Curriculum tests for 14 year olds and in GCSE examinations than might be expected, given their test results when they enter the school.
- Teaching is good; teachers use a variety of activities to hold pupils' concentration.
- Teachers and technicians work well together as a team and share a determination to raise standards.

### Areas for improvement

- Pupils do not achieve as well in 'physical processes' as they do in other aspects of the science curriculum.
- The department does not make enough use of information and communication technology to help pupils learn.

105. Results in the 2000 National Curriculum tests for pupils at the age of 14 were below the national average but better than the average for schools taking pupils from similar backgrounds. Results in 2000 were similar to those in mathematics and English. Results improved between 1996 and 2000 at a rate that was faster than the national trend, but dipped in 2001.
106. Results in the 2000 GCSE examinations were well below the national average. In 2001 the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\* to C increased, notably in the double award examination. Results have improved since the previous inspection. Pupils performed as well as they did in most of their other subjects.
107. Standards at the end of Years 9 and 11 are below average and match the attainment indicated by recent National Curriculum test results and the 2001 GCSE examination results. This represents good achievement by these pupils. They do better than might be expected, given that their attainment is well below average when they join the school.
108. Most pupils have a satisfactory basic knowledge and understanding of the topics they are studying. Pupils in Year 9 know the relationship between cells, tissues and organs and can identify the major features of cells. Higher attaining pupils in Year 11 understand how variation and selection may lead to evolution. Pupils present



their work carefully so that their notebooks and folders are easy to use for revision. However, many pupils find it difficult to recall detailed information from earlier in the course. Their written answers are often imprecise because they do not use 'ordinary' words successfully to say exactly what they mean. Pupils' practical skills are average for their age; they work sensibly and carefully. Their investigative skills are weak in Years 7 to 9 but improve quickly in Years 10 and 11.

109. The quality of teaching and learning is good in all year groups. Teachers have good knowledge of their subject and plan their lessons carefully. They emphasise the correct use of important scientific words. In most lessons, teachers use a wide variety of activities to hold pupils' interest and concentration. For example, in a Year 10 lesson on breathing, pupils worked as a group to label a diagram of the lungs, watched a demonstration, answered questions on a worksheet and watched a video. All the activities were chosen well to reinforce the essential facts about breathing so that pupils gained a secure understanding of the process. When teaching is good or better, teachers make particularly effective use of the beginning and end of the lesson. Pupils are told at the beginning exactly what they should learn during the lesson. Then, at the end of the lesson, there is quick questioning to check whether the aims have been achieved. Pupils gain satisfaction and confidence from knowing that they have made progress.
110. In an excellent lesson for Year 7, the teacher established a very calm, controlled atmosphere, gained pupils' interest in the division of yeast cells by using models and then very quickly moved on to pupils making and viewing their own slides and seeing the division for themselves. The teacher's own enthusiasm for her subject was clearly shared by the pupils; they worked with unwavering concentration and were fascinated by what they saw. Their skills in making slides and using a microscope developed very quickly, along with their understanding of cell structure and behaviour.
111. For lower attainers, teachers usually provide plenty of reinforcement of basic ideas so that these pupils build up a secure knowledge of the essentials. Pupils with special educational needs, and those with English as an additional language, are supported well by teachers and, where appropriate, by learning support workers. They are enabled to take a full part in lessons and to keep up with written work so that their progress is as good as that of other pupils in the group. Higher attainers are provided with detailed information and teachers give clear explanations. However, in a few lessons that are otherwise satisfactory, the pace is rather slow and pupils find it difficult to maintain concentration. They remain quiet and well behaved but do not listen as carefully as they should and do not always take in all that they need to remember.
112. Although all the teachers in the department are science specialists, none of them has physics as the main subject in their qualifications. The teaching of the 'physical processes' topics is not as good as that in other aspects of science. Few lessons in these topics were seen during the inspection but scrutiny of pupils' written work shows that, while such topics are covered, the depth and detail of the coverage, the quality of the learning activities and the interest and challenge they present are all substantially poorer than those provided for the 'living things' and 'materials' sections of the curriculum. The result is that pupils do not like physics topics, particularly those relating to electrical circuits, find them more difficult and do not achieve as well in the physics modules of GCSE examinations.

113. Teachers make occasional use of computers in lessons. They sometimes use a projector most effectively to display a computer screen to the class. Occasionally they use temperature sensors with data-logging equipment. Nevertheless, the department is aware that it does not make enough use of information and communication technology to support teaching and learning in science.
114. The leadership and management of the subject are good. Three of the four teachers in the department are new to the school but teachers and technicians are already working well together as a team. There is a strong commitment to raising standards and a real enthusiasm for the subject.
115. The department has made good progress since the previous inspection. GCSE examination results and the test results for 14 year olds have both improved. Teaching is better than it was. Pupils now do an appropriate amount of practical work and experience a wider range of learning activities.

## ART AND DESIGN

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

### Strengths:

- Standards are above average because teaching is good
- An above average proportion of pupils chooses to study GCSE art because they enjoy the subject.

### Areas for development:

- There is no provision for pupils to use information and communication technology in lessons.

117. The number of candidates entered for the GCSE examination in 2000 was too low to allow statistical comparisons to be made.
118. In the work seen during the inspection the standards that the pupils achieve by the end of Year 9 are above average and they are achieving well. There is a significant difference in the standard of work from last year and the standard of work seen in lessons. The standard of work from last year is below average but may not fully represent the range of work covered throughout the year. There is a limited range of work available from last year, mainly because temporary or supply teachers taught the subject, only one of whom remains as a part-time teacher of art and design.
119. By the end of Year 9, pupils working on portraits achieve accurate proportions for the features. They mix and blend colours to achieve flesh tones and develop their work further to create characters and expressions and use shading well to achieve rounded effects. Some lower attaining pupils are unable to create meaningful expressions. Middle and higher attaining pupils have a good sense of the importance of line, and can blend colours well to represent the texture and translucence of glass when working on still life drawings from observation, but lower attainers cannot observe closely enough when drawing and painting from still life. Pupils get inspiration from examining how great artists used the human figure in expressive works; studies based on the human figure are good with regard to composition. Pupils understand how to use warm and cool colours to create mood. However, despite very good illustrations by the teacher a minority does not fully

appreciate the essential nature of watercolour painting and does not experiment with mixing or overlapping colour.

120. Standards in Year 11 are above average. Pupils' work shows they have achieved well given their average attainment at the start of the course. By the end of Year 11 pupils understand how to develop ideas from their own observational drawings in a range of ways. They use enlarged sections of their drawings to create bold and dramatic compositions enhanced by good use of tone and texture. Pupils understand how to carry out research on the work of great artists to gain inspiration for developments of their own work. Pupils use their sketchbooks well to gather ideas and to experiment in a range of media including wire, string and soft fabrics. With guidance, they develop their ideas into sculptures. Most pupils have a good sense of the dramatic and are aware of the impact of negative space. The best work is large-scale, bold and dramatic. In all years pupils demonstrate a good recall of the ideas and skills learned, including the work of major world artists.
121. All pupils make good progress. They are given individual attention and appropriate encouragement, help and support. Skills in drawing and painting are taught formally from Year 7 onwards and this leads to good progress. They are encouraged to work on a large scale from Year 7 onwards and this increases their confidence in the use of line and in composition and enables them to make good progress.
122. The quality of teaching and learning is good. There are some excellent features in most lessons such as teachers' demonstrations on the board. Both teachers have excellent class management skills and create a good climate for learning in all lessons. Pupils are helped and encouraged to think for themselves, experiment and be creative. They respond well and show considerable confidence in presenting their own ideas. Lessons are planned well to ensure that pupils build systematically on their skills, step by step and from lesson to lesson within each unit of work. Both teachers are practising artists and show energy and enthusiasm for the subject. They work hard to make lessons interesting for the pupils. Assessment is good. Pupils' knowledge and understanding is examined at the beginning of each lesson and this ensures that they are able to build on their previous learning. Pupils' work is marked carefully and they are given good written guidance on how to improve. Teachers display pupils' work at the end of all lessons so that pupils become adept at evaluating their own work and that of others. This enables them to gain further knowledge on how to improve on their own work. Although both teachers have good information and communication technology skills there is little use of information and communication technology in lessons. However, there are plans to book the information and communication technology rooms for specific units of work so that pupils can manipulate images on the screen and print in a range of ways, aided by good, formal teaching as a basis for this unit of work. Aspects of literacy and numeracy are taught well.
123. Pupils enjoy art in both key stages. They are serious and listen attentively to their teachers. They are polite and well behaved and share materials readily. They ask and answer questions appropriately and show confidence in their own skills and opinions. Pupils' enjoyment in art and their good behaviour can be attributed in great part to the skill, expertise and care displayed by their teachers.
124. There has been a lack of continuity in the teaching of art over the past two years. However, there is evidence of good teaching in the past, particularly in the sketchbook experiments of pupils in Year 11. A new head of department was

appointed at the beginning of this academic year and is now in the third week of teaching in this school.

125. Leadership is very good. The new head of department, assisted by the part-time teacher, has created a good working environment in a short space of time. There is good teamwork which is a strength of the department. Both teachers make generous, extra-curricular provision for art. There are lunchtime and evening clubs for each year group in turn. Displays of art around the school enhance the environment and encourage and enrich pupils' perceptions of art. Art makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils look at how art can express emotions and feelings. The moral and social aspects of artists' work are considered. Pupils study art from different cultures including African, Aztec and Islamic art.
126. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection. The recent staffing difficulties have been resolved with the appointment of a new head of department. Standards have improved since the previous inspection, as has the quality of teaching.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Very good teaching is leading to pupils achieving very well.
- Examination results are improving rapidly because the quality of leadership and management is good.

### Areas for Improvement

- Not enough emphasis is placed on developing pupils' technical vocabulary.
- Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to use computer-aided design and manufacture.

128. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2000 were close to the national average and were the best in the school. Since the previous report there has been a rapid rise in results and improvement in standards.
129. Standards of work seen at the end of Year 9 are below average but this represents a good level of achievement given pupils' levels of attainment on entry to the school. Practical skills are broadly average; pupils use tools with an appropriate degree of accuracy. Some practical skills, such as measuring and marking materials are above average but pupils tend to be a little clumsy and unco-ordinated when carrying out tasks that require a degree of delicacy. Pupils are good at choosing the correct method for completing tasks. This was seen to good effect in a Year 9 textiles class when pupils were producing a sample of weaving. Higher attainers complete tasks well but middle and lower ability pupils do not always pay sufficient attention to detail. Pupils do not always evaluate their work against criteria; lower attainers do not understand fully what a design specification is. Written work is neat and well presented but often contains spelling errors. Lower and middle attaining pupils do not always use the correct technical vocabulary when describing their activities.

130. Standards pupils attain by the end of Year 11 are average. This level of attainment is reflected in the examination results and represents a very good level of achievement given the earlier work of the pupils concerned. Some pupils produce work of a high standard in graphics that demonstrates a great deal of flair and attention to accuracy. Pupils demonstrate below average skills in the use of information and communication technology to enhance their work in all material areas. Pupils of all ages do not make effective use of information and communication technology; there is little evidence of information and communication technology being used to analyse results or to present information in a graphical form. There are few opportunities for them to develop the skills of computer-aided design and manufacture. Pupils remain weak at evaluating their products in a precise manner, tending to use terms such as "I liked it", rather than identifying what worked well, what went wrong and how improvements could be made. Practical skills, on the other hand, are generally good with pupils fully aware of what tools and processes to use for a given task.
131. Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make very good progress because they receive good, individual support from the teacher.
132. The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Lessons are consistently well planned to provide an opportunity to review the previous lesson and a summary of the key points at the end of the current one. This helps pupils to consolidate their knowledge and gives them some impression of how well they are achieving. This last factor is considerably enhanced by the marking of work, which not only carefully corrects errors in written work but also provides good feedback to pupils so that they are aware of exactly what they need to do in their next topic in order to improve. The difference in the quality of teaching between Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11 lies in the teachers' knowledge of the examination syllabus. In Years 10 and 11, all teachers match work and marking closely to the GCSE syllabus so that each objective is carefully covered and all pupils are able to maximise their marks.
133. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject, which they use very effectively to provide helpful hints for pupils and to guide pupils through coursework. This was evident in a Year 10 class when the teacher was helping pupils to consider what makes a good toy and what materials they might use. Teachers have high expectations of pupils. Tasks are challenging and teachers are demanding with regard to homework which they use well to extend pupils and to develop pupils' ability to work on their own. Teachers manage pupils exceedingly well. In a Year 11 graphics class, the teacher was firm but friendly and there was a good deal of mutual respect between the teacher and pupils. Teachers create a very good environment for learning where all pupils are valued.
134. The department is led and managed well. The monitoring of teaching is good and is leading to a consistently high standard of teaching across the department. The school has good accommodation although there are insufficient information and communication technology resources, which restricts pupils' knowledge and understanding of computer-aided design and manufacture.
135. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection. The standard of teaching has improved and standards have risen at a rapid rate.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

136. Overall, the quality of provision in geography is **good**.

Strengths

- Pupils achieve well as a result of the good teaching.
- Pupils are well motivated because of the good relationships they have with their teachers.

Areas for improvement

- Not enough use is made of information and communication technology in Years 7 to 9.
- The head of department does not spend enough time in geography because of the current temporary staffing difficulties in English.

137. The number of candidates entered for the GCSE examination in 2000 was too low to allow statistical comparisons to be made.

138. Pupils' attainment in geography on entry to the school is well below average. By the end of Year 9, pupils' standards are below average and they have achieved well. Pupils have a good understanding of maps of various scales and can construct and interpret graphs with confidence. A key weakness is that pupils in Years 7 to 9 do not get enough opportunities to develop their skills in using information and communication technology so they are unable to apply them in a geographical context. For example, pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the role of National Parks within England and Wales and the processes affecting weather and climate within the United Kingdom but this could be even better if pupils made use of materials from CD-ROMs and the Internet.

139. As pupils progress through Years 7 to 9, they make good gains in their geographical knowledge understanding and skills. This is a result of good quality whole-class teaching with a strong emphasis on improving pupils' basic skills. This good progress is true of pupils of all attainment levels and across all ethnic groups. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is a second language, make good progress within the lower attaining groups because they receive good quality help from learning support workers. The good gains in learning through Years 7 to 9 are consolidated and developed further in Years 10 and 11, allowing pupils to achieve well and reach a level of attainment that is broadly average by the end of Year 11. This is a result of good teaching that focuses on teaching pupils how to carry out research and investigations and how to apply their understanding when answering examination questions. As a result, pupils are particularly good at identifying the reasons for, for example, social changes in a country and can prioritise the reasons in order of importance. Some aspects of understanding, such as why granite rocks are distributed in a particular way, are much less secure. Pupils make much more use of information and communication technology in Years 10 and 11 so their skills in processing data are much better than in Years 7 to 9.

140. The quality of teaching and learning in all years is good. In Years 7 to 9, the dominant approach to teaching is teacher-led, whole-class teaching. This allows teachers to deliver lessons at a pace appropriate to the learning needs of the pupils, who are placed in classes of similar levels of attainment. It also allows teachers to set work of a satisfactory level of difficulty, although in one very good lesson the task was more challenging and the pupils responded particularly well. The lesson was for lower attaining Year 9 pupils and involved identifying and mapping the location of National Parks in England and Wales. The task encouraged pupils to

apply their mapwork and enquiry skills in order to complete the task. The pupils responded with gusto, discussing results and arguing their points extremely well.

141. The development of enquiry skills in the majority of lessons in Years 7 to 9 is inhibited by lack of access to information and communication technology facilities and of opportunities to make use of the school library as a teaching resource. This would allow the fuller development of pupils' skills and make them less teacher-dependent. In Years 10 and 11, pupils are given stimulating opportunities to develop their research skills through well-planned fieldwork experiences that build upon skills of data collection and processing learned in the classroom. Unlike Years 7 to 9, information and communication technology is used well, allowing Year 11 pupils to use a range of computer software to enhance the quality of presentation of GCSE coursework. Pupils processing the results of an enquiry task on Gloucester docks talked enthusiastically about their work and showed a pride in their work through high quality presentation of data. Throughout the school, pupils' work is marked frequently and in the best cases advice is given as to what they need to do to improve their work. Homework is used well to reinforce and extend the work that has gone on in school. The major strength in the teaching in Years 7 to 9 is the strong emphasis that is placed on improving pupils' literacy skills through the use of presentations, word lists, glossaries of geographical vocabulary and regular opportunities for reading aloud.
142. The department is soundly managed on a day-to-day basis but the present staffing arrangements are inhibiting longer-term development. The head of department spends much of her time teaching English at present, which takes her away from her duties in geography. The effect is showing in the failure, for example, to bring schemes of work in Years 7 to 9 up to date and the rate of progress made by the department over the past few years has now slowed.
143. Since the previous inspection the department has made good progress. Standards have got better as the quality of teaching has improved.

## HISTORY

144. Overall, the quality of provision in history is **good**.

### Strengths

- Teaching is good and leads to pupils achieving well.
- Pupils' make good progress in improving their reading and writing because teachers emphasise these skills in lessons.

### Areas for improvement

- Teachers do not make enough use of information and communication technology in lessons.
- There are not enough opportunities for visits and fieldwork.
- Teaching methods in Years 7 to 9 do not allow pupils' to develop initiative and independence.

145. The number of candidates entered for the GCSE examination in 2000 was too low to allow statistical comparisons to be made.
146. By the end of Year 9 standards are below average. This represents good achievement because their standards on entry to the school were well below

average. Pupils develop appropriate skills in using a range of sources of evidence and gain knowledge of a wide range of history topics. In many cases however, pupils struggle to remember specific terms, and their depth of understanding is weak, often demonstrated by written and oral answers that are too descriptive and short. Most pupils are able to sequence events in time and have good understanding of everyday life, such as in Roman society, and have a good knowledge of the effect of people such as Richard Arkwright in bringing about industrial change in Britain. Most pupils write clearly and accurately, but pupils with special educational needs often have work that is marred by weaknesses in writing, particularly spelling, while higher attaining pupils write accurately but without sufficient explanation. By the end of Year 11 standards are below average but this represents good achievement as these pupils started the course with standards of attainment that were well below average. Most pupils gain knowledge and understanding of the change to peoples' lives, such as those resulting from the enclosure of land in England. The highest attainers independently record ideas about the winners and losers in the enclosure of land, but others find difficulty in obtaining information from books. Most pupils discuss and record their ideas, with sound grammatical accuracy, but for many retention of knowledge is weak and they do not analyse evidence fully or give sufficient explanation. For example, pupils make good progress in knowledge about developments in medicine over time. They understand terms like 'physician' and use evidence to develop ideas, but there are not enough explanations in their written work and they do not use examples. Good progress is seen in acquiring knowledge of farming in Staffordshire in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. Pupils express ideas about the written accounts of the time but their answers are factual and they do not interpret the information available.

147. Throughout the school there is good improvement in writing due to careful guidance and good attitudes to learning, so that by Year 11 work is neatly presented, usually well organised and helps to raise standards in other aspects of the pupils' work. Pupils with special educational needs are helped by good quality resources, particularly the written sheets that match their reading ability, while pupils for whom English is an additional language make good progress because of the quality of support they receive from learning support workers. In work seen, however, teachers make insufficient demands of pupils, particularly the higher attainers when they fail to analyse information and show initiative.
148. The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school. Teachers plan their lessons carefully and manage pupils well. This ensures that lessons proceed smoothly, pupils are kept on task and good progress is made. In a Year 8 lesson, for example, pupils made good progress because the teacher set challenging tasks about the role of women in Tudor times that encouraged pupils to develop ideas about marriage arrangements at that time and allowed pupils to contrast this with their own experiences. Teachers place great importance on improving pupils' writing. Key words and terms are identified and specific help given to lower attaining pupils. Marking is rigorous in the correction of errors in spelling. Careful planning of a Year 9 lesson enabled many lower attaining pupils to achieve well in tasks leading to gains in business terms such as 'patent', and to place events of industrial development in time. Teachers are not effective in developing pupils' research skills. There is too much reliance on the teacher, opportunities to show initiative and independence are limited and insufficient use is made of the library and computers to find information. In Years 10 and 11 pupils' skills in answering examination questions are improving as a result of teachers giving more attention to training pupils in writing answers. Teachers manage pupils well and stress good standards



of presentation. Guidance is given on writing notes about topics and stresses the importance of spelling, punctuation and grammar; this results in good standards in books. Pupils' knowledge base is improving and standards in tests are rising as a result. The marking of work tells pupils about their strengths and weaknesses, but guidance on how to improve is not consistent across the subject.

149. The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory with clear planning that has resulted in improvements such as the better resources to support the needs of different attaining pupils. Good support is given to newly qualified teachers. The current absence of opportunities for fieldwork, however, narrows the range of learning experiences. The absence of planning to use information and communication technology is unsatisfactory and the schemes of work are in need of revision to address both of these deficiencies.
150. Since the previous inspection satisfactory progress has been made overall. The GCSE results have improved and teaching continues to be good but the provision for fieldwork is now a weakness.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

151. Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology is **unsatisfactory**.

### Strengths

- The school has good information and communication technology facilities which are used well outside normal school hours.

### Areas for development

- Pupils are underachieving as a result of the unsatisfactory teaching and not having enough opportunities to practise their skills in other subjects.
- The quality of leadership and management is poor. There is no clear vision for the development of information and communication technology within the school.

152. The number of candidates entered for the GCSE examination in 2000 was too low to allow statistical comparisons to be made.
153. The standards that pupils attain by the end of Year 9 are well below average and this represents an unsatisfactory level of achievement given their below average attainment on entering the school.
154. By the end of Year 9 pupils have a basic understanding of software applications. In one lesson pupils were inputting data into a simple database. Most pupils did not know the meaning of a 'field' in information and communication technology terms. Lower attainers are unable to name databases and do not understand how they may be used. Pupils present information in different forms, but do not show any real awareness of changing their work to meet the needs of a specific audience. Many pupils do not remember sufficient technical vocabulary to be able to describe what they are doing in the correct terms. Pupils produce basic PowerPoint presentations and import text and images from clipart libraries. Whilst pupils control a screen turtle using Logo, they do not have any opportunities to learn about computer-aided design and manufacturing.
155. By the end of Year 11, the standards that pupils attain are well below average and this represents an unsatisfactory level of achievement. Pupils acquire some information and communication technology skills through other subjects, such as office applications, where standards are well above average as a result of very good teaching. However, the skills of those pupils following the information and communication technology GCSE course are well below average. This group of pupils has little knowledge or understanding of input devices and only the higher attainers can provide a basic description of storage devices. In a Year 10 business class pupils made effective use of the desktop publishing package to produce a case study based on the location of a new fast-food outlet. Currently, there is a small group of pupils that does not follow a course of study with information and communication technology related content, which is a breach of statutory requirements. Pupils organise presentations and produce computer slide shows that combine text and graphics. They are beginning to use more advanced features of software, such as animation, but are not able to analyse the requirements of a particular audience in order to match the presentation to the needs of the audience, a skill that is expected of higher attaining pupils in Year 9. There is little use made of e-mail and pupils' knowledge of how information and communication technology is used outside school is particularly weak.

156. Most pupils make little use of their skills in other subjects and this has a significant impact on the standards that they attain. Subjects have not built information and communication technology into their schemes of work and there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to practise skills. Where pupils do make use of computers, notably in geography in Years 10 and 11, it has a very positive impact on their learning. However, pupils clearly enjoy using information and communication technology, as they are often found using the facilities outside normal school hours.
157. Pupils with special educational needs make unsatisfactory progress because teachers do not match the work closely enough to the needs of all pupils. Those pupils that receive targeted in-class support make satisfactory progress because of the good support they receive from the learning support workers. Pupils from different ethnic backgrounds make similar progress to that of other pupils. Higher attaining pupils are not challenged sufficiently; as a result they make unsatisfactory progress. In a Year 7 information and communication technology lesson, one of the highest attaining pupils did very little in the lesson; she had covered this work previously and was not set any other work.
158. The quality of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory in all years. Teachers have a satisfactory knowledge of the technical aspects of the subject but do not use appropriate teaching strategies. This results in pupils not progressing as fast as they should do. Classroom management techniques are weak. In a Year 8 information and communication technology lesson, the teacher failed to gain the attention of all pupils when making a specific point; this resulted in some pupils not being able to save files. Teachers do not know how to match the work closely enough to meet the needs of all pupils; this results in higher attainers not being sufficiently challenged. This was seen in a Year 7 lesson in which the very highest attainers achieved very little. The pace of lessons is unsatisfactory, often being either too slow or too fast. In a Year 10 information and communication technology lesson the teacher gave a 50-minute talk on various input devices, which was completely over the heads of the pupils and resulted in pupils not having a clue about such devices.
159. Pupils have satisfactory attitudes and, when the teaching is good, they respond well and enjoy the session. Low attainers are more difficult to manage because they quickly become distracted and, when the teaching is less than satisfactory, very little learning occurs. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from being helped with their basic literacy skills. However, new terms and technical vocabulary are not reinforced sufficiently by, for example, writing them on the board. Teachers are poor at spotting when there is a need to stop the whole class to make a particular point or to reinforce a new way of working. Most classes in Years 7 to 9 contain more pupils than there are computers available, which means that pupils have to share. Most pupils organise themselves well in groups, but some pupils, particularly in Years 7 and 8, need more guidance on organising their work so that all pupils play an appropriate part in activities.
160. The quality of both leadership and management is poor. There is no clear vision for the development of information and communication technology within the school. There is a lack of monitoring of cross-curricular aspects of information and communication technology and this results in many subjects not providing sufficient opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology which, in turn, results in poor development of skills.

161. Unsatisfactory progress has been made since the previous inspection. The quality of teaching was good; it is now unsatisfactory. Standards have fallen. They were below average: they are now well below average. The school has worked hard to provide a good range of facilities but these are not being used efficiently or effectively.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

162. Overall, the quality of provision in modern languages is **good**.

### Strengths

- Pupils achieve well as a result of good teaching.
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in improving their listening and writing as a result of the good emphasis that teachers place on these aspects.
- Teachers make pupils keep their work tidy and accurate so that they can refer to it later.

### Areas for improvement

- There are not enough opportunities for pupils to practise longer conversations.
- Higher attainers could be extended further in reading and writing.
- Not enough use is made of information and communication technology in lessons.

163. The number of candidates entered for the GCSE examination in 2000 was too low to allow statistical comparisons to be made.
164. All pupils study either French or Spanish in Years 7 to 9, with higher attainers studying both. No pupils currently study Spanish in Years 10 and 11, but there is an after-school GCSE Spanish club, which was not seen during the inspection.
165. Standards attained by pupils at the end of Year 9 are average in both languages. This represents good achievement as pupils enter the school with weak literacy skills but, through the carefully planned lessons and the support they receive, they make good progress. The higher attainers study two languages and make satisfactory progress in both. Lower attaining pupils concentrate on just one language and do well in this. By the end of Year 9, most pupils improve their listening and reading skills in both languages and understand a range of topics such as descriptions of people and talking about what they did at the weekend. Most writing is short but accurate and very well presented. Pupils are able to hold short conversations with good pronunciation and understand at least two tenses but fluency is limited by lack of practice. Higher attainers make satisfactory progress in writing but are not often asked to write at any length from memory. Although there are a few good examples of pupils writing postcards and letters, there is little imaginative work done. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in writing because they are given carefully structured tasks.
166. Pupils are attaining average standards in French by the end of Year 11. This represents a good level of achievement given these pupils' below average standards when they were in Year 9. Pupils attain appropriately on a range of topics such as holidays and descriptions of themselves and members of the family. They occasionally write at length but this is an area that still needs further emphasis for higher attaining pupils. Speaking skills are weaker for the highest attaining pupils than they should be because they do not practise holding sustained conversations often enough in class. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress,

especially in writing and speaking because of the good individual support provided by teachers.

167. The quality of the teaching is good in all year groups and this brings about good learning. Teachers plan lessons well, they have good strategies to manage the behaviour of pupils, and consequently relationships between staff and pupils have improved markedly since the last inspection. At times when the work is too difficult, such as when pupils in Year 8 had to write out a long dialogue with very little help available, pupils become restless and can misbehave but this only happens in isolated cases. Instructions are clear; pupils know exactly what they have to do. Teaching, in French and Spanish, gives pupils a good model to follow and leads to good pronunciation by pupils. Teachers use a range of well-designed materials: in the best lessons teachers move swiftly between a variety of activities which are all centred around a common theme, such as personal identification, providing support for those who need it. Pupils with special educational needs are given some very effective help to improve their writing. For example, they are helped with spellings by having key words written on a sheet that they can stick in their books. They are also given personal reminders using brightly coloured notes about particular things that they need to improve including using capital letters or checking accents on words.
168. In the best lessons the higher attainers are encouraged to work at a quick pace from memory. Pupils enjoy and respond very well to lessons in which they are allowed to ask each other questions to which they genuinely do not know the answer. An example of this was seen during the survey work in Year 9 French when they had to interview people about whether they were permitted to wear make-up, smoke or go into town alone, which they did eagerly. Homework is set regularly and frequently and helps to reinforce what has happened in class. It is also used to challenge the higher attainers who are given extra work to do. Pupils file their work very carefully and much attention is paid to encouraging pupils to present their work in such a way that they can use it for reference later. Pupils frequently remind themselves about work they have done before by looking it up in their exercise books or files and some pupils are developing the ability to check and redraft their work carefully. Marking is satisfactory but does not always suggest how the work in books could have been improved. Pupils are given much more helpful feedback about their performance during tasks in lessons. The weaknesses in teaching are not widespread but include too much English being used to give instructions so pupils miss opportunities to hear the language. Sometimes pupils are not given enough time to practise new language that they have learnt and so their speaking skills often remain at a low level. While they can answer individual questions, they find it difficult to hold more sustained conversations. Currently very little information and communication technology is used in lesson time.
169. The department is led and managed very well. The head of department has worked on improving pupils' attitudes to languages to the point where this is now a strength of the department. The expectations that teachers have of their pupils have improved dramatically. For example, the abolition of the certificate of achievement course means that pupils in Years 10 and 11 are now preparing for a GCSE and a large proportion are on course to achieve good grades. All staff are committed to working hard to improve still further and there are plans to increase the opportunities to use information and communication technology. Assessment of pupils' performance and using this information to target specific areas for pupils to

improve has only just begun in the department and there is further work to be done in this area.

170. The department has made very good progress since the previous inspection. The poor attitudes to learning languages have been overcome and standards are rising rapidly as a result of improved teaching.

## MUSIC

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

### Strengths

- Pupils respond enthusiastically in music lessons.
- There is a good range of extra-curricular activities and instrumental lessons.

### Areas for development

- Pupils do not achieve standards that are high enough as a result of unsatisfactory teaching.
- The accommodation limits the range of activities available to pupils.

172. The number of candidates entered for the GCSE examination in 2000 was too low to allow statistical comparisons to be made.
173. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards that pupils achieve by the end of Year 9 are below average and this represents an unsatisfactory level of achievement given their average attainment on joining the school.
174. By the end of Year 9 pupils sing enthusiastically but not with a full range of technique and tone control. In keyboard work, pupils play rhythmically but do not use an appropriate technique, often performing hesitantly, with just one or two fingers, which leads to an inability to perform more difficult pieces or to combine both hands fluently. Compositions for the majority of pupils are very basic and this area of the music curriculum is underdeveloped. Pupils use information and communication technology for research purposes, such as when finding out about great composers, and to improve written presentation, but not to support musical performance and composition.
175. By the end of Year 11 the standards that pupils attain are well below average and this represents an unsatisfactory level of achievement. Pupils are trying to gain skills that should have been learnt in earlier years and this restricts their access to higher GCSE grades, particularly in performance and composition. The exception is those pupils who benefit from peripatetic instrumental tuition. For the majority of pupils, the standard of presentation is poor and they do not compose music for a range of instruments or use extended forms and structures. Their knowledge of the history of music is limited and their limited musical knowledge restricts the depth of answers in listening work.
176. Those pupils with special educational needs also make unsatisfactory progress because work is not closely matched to their needs. Pupils from different ethnic backgrounds make similar progress to other pupils. Except for pupils who receive

peripatetic instrumental lessons, higher attaining pupils are not sufficiently challenged.

177. The quality of teaching and learning over time in all years is unsatisfactory, although the individual lessons observed during the inspection were satisfactory. This is due to the fact that until very recently, there was no long-term curricular planning or short-term lesson planning. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject but too much emphasis has been placed on fun and not enough on teaching the technical aspects of the subject. This results in pupils not progressing as fast as they should. In a Year 9 lesson, for example, this lack of technique meant pupils did not have any idea how to improve their playing, so could only partly achieve the aims, and they became bored and distracted. In a Year 8 lesson on the other hand, in which pupils were encouraged to use an appropriate technique, the teacher had the rapt attention of all pupils and they achieved well, making good progress in a short space of time. Some lessons are planned well, with activities that are clearly related and matched to the needs of the pupils. In a Year 8 lesson on Rock 'n' Roll, for example, the mix of singing, playing and improvising at good pace led pupils to respond with energy and enthusiasm and they achieved well. However, when tasks are not well matched and they do not feel challenged and skills are not sufficiently reinforced, the pupils can, as in a Year 9 lesson, become bored and spend too much time chatting and too little working. In all years, progress is limited by the accommodation. The room is too small for pupils to spread out and use the range of instruments available to them so that work is limited mainly to keyboards with headphones.
178. The quality of both leadership and management is unsatisfactory. The department has, until recently, focused too much on the extra-curricular activities and instrumental opportunities in order to improve pupils' enthusiasm for the subject. As a result, the long-term planning for lessons in the classroom has suffered. There is now a clear vision for the development of music across the school that should address this weakness. This lack of focus on the classroom has resulted in the department making unsatisfactory progress since the previous inspection. The area that was praised last time was the instrumental work. There was, however, a criticism of a lack of confidence in terminology and composition, and unsatisfactory progress over time. This is still the case.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Pupils achieve very well as a result of very good teaching.
- Pupils have very good attitudes and their behaviour is excellent.
- There has been rapid improvement in recent years, resulting mainly from the strong leadership and management provided by the head of department.

### Areas for improvement

- There are no opportunities for pupils to study the subject to GCSE examination level and build on the existing high standards.

180. By the end of Years 9 and 11 pupils attain standards that are above average. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is not their first

language achieve well and make good progress. The school successfully includes all groups of pupils in the full range of activities it offers.

181. Pupils in all year groups and of all abilities achieve well and make good progress in gymnastics. Their basic skills are developed effectively. Balances and movements are performed with skill, finesse and with good body tension. Pupils combine balances and movements smoothly into sequences that are structured well. They do this on their own, with partners and in groups. Pupils take great pride in their work and admire each other's efforts. They plan their work effectively, constantly searching for ways to make their work better and making significant improvements during lessons.
182. Pupils in all age groups are becoming increasingly independent in their work. Because they are taught well they are able to conduct their own warm up activities, teaching exercises to each other correctly. They also make informed decisions about applying tactics in games, such as netball, and provide coaching and guidance for each other. When injury or illness prevents pupils from participating, they are involved effectively in lessons by their teachers. They officiate and coach during games, and complete detailed written evaluations during gymnastics. These evaluations reveal very good critical awareness of the quality of the work they are observing.
183. Throughout the school pupils attain high standards in netball. Their basic skills of moving, passing and receiving the ball are developed well. They apply these skills very effectively during practices and games. Pupils also respond well to opportunities to discuss and plan the tactics they will use during games. When this happens pupils show considerable understanding of the rules and structures of the game.
184. The high standards seen during the inspection are based on very good teaching. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. At the start of lessons they explain what is going to be taught and review what pupils have learned towards the end of each lesson. This helps pupils to understand how well they are succeeding and what they need to do to improve further. Teachers are particularly adept at involving pupils in these processes. Pupils show they understand the activities well. This is due mainly to the frequent opportunities provided for them to observe and evaluate their own work and that of other pupils. Teachers have very high expectations of how well pupils will achieve and of how they will behave in lessons. Pupils respond well to these expectations and their behaviour is excellent.
185. The curriculum provided for the subject contains an appropriate range of activities, including athletics, dance, games and gymnastics. A strong programme of extra-curricular activities and inter-school fixtures enhances this provision. This programme includes dance, gymnastics, netball and a club for association football, led by a parent who is a qualified coach. In recent years, pupils have experienced considerable success in fixtures against other schools and in county tournaments, particularly in netball. Several pupils form part of county teams for this sport and others play for adult teams in the local community.
186. The department is very well led and managed. The department functions efficiently and is very well organised with documentation that supports teachers' work effectively. Sufficient time is wisely allocated to the teaching of each activity. This means pupils have good opportunities to acquire and apply the skills they are



taught. Arrangements to assess their attainment and progress are good. The head of department has undertaken extremely detailed risk assessments for all activities, helping to ensure that pupils are safe when they participate. The school is not yet exploiting the success of the department by allowing pupils to follow an examination course.

187. Improvement since the time of the previous inspection is very good. Since this time standards have risen and the quality of teaching has improved. More time is allocated for teaching the subject and this contributes to the rising standards. The tennis and netball courts, previously judged to be unsafe, have been resurfaced and provide a good facility for teaching these activities. Overall, the subject has moved from being one of the worst subjects in the school to being one of the best.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Pupils have a positive attitude to the subject as a result of the commitment and enthusiasm of teachers.
- Pupils feel secure in sharing their values and beliefs because teachers manage lessons very well.
- The provision of frequent opportunities for reflection makes very good provision for pupils' spiritual development.

### Areas for improvement.

- Pupils in Year 11 are not achieving standards that are high enough because of staffing problems in the past.
- The absence of a management structure is impeding the development of the subject.
- ICT?

189. Results in the GCSE examination in 2000 were below the national average and declined in 2001.

190. The standard of work seen in Year 9 is satisfactory. It is similar to that expected in the Gloucestershire Agreed Syllabus. This represents good achievement because when these pupils entered the school the standard of their work was below average. Most pupils know the basic beliefs and practices of the faiths that they have studied and understand how these beliefs can affect people's attitudes, for example, how Buddhists view suffering. Higher attaining pupils can give a good explanation of the effect of religion on people's lives and can compare the religious beliefs and practices of different faiths. Some can draw differences between the practices of Christian denominations. Notable is the ability of some pupils to appreciate and express the spiritual experiences of believers. For example, a Year 7 pupil described what she felt that a person praying was feeling and experiencing. Most are beginning to relate faith and moral teaching to their own lives.

191. The standard of work seen in Year 11 is unsatisfactory as it is below the level expected in the agreed syllabus. This represents an unsatisfactory level of achievement. There have been considerable staffing difficulties in the past year: this has led to pupils currently in Years 10 and 11 having an insecure grasp of the subject. Pupils' background knowledge of the Bible is insecure which means that, although they are now making good progress in lessons, they are having to make

up for time lost in the past and they do not have the depth of knowledge that would allow them to go on to higher levels. For instance, whilst they can state what Jesus' teaching is on a person's attitude to enemies, they cannot relate this to the way he forgave his enemies at his crucifixion nor suggest possible Christian attitudes to recent world events.

192. The standard of most pupils' spelling, grammar and presentation is good but there are few examples of extended pieces of original writing.
193. Most pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make progress similar to that of other pupils. Language and learning materials are matched well to the different teaching groups and teachers give individual support where they see it is required. The support for some individuals is not sufficiently well informed; more attention needs to be given to their individual education plans.
194. The quality of teaching is now good. All teachers are enthusiastic and committed and the two specialist teachers have a good grasp of the subject. This enables them to develop understanding and appreciation of topics as well as giving factual information. Their relationship with pupils is friendly and professional and class management is very good. This results in pupils expressing their beliefs and opinions secure in the knowledge that they will be respected. In all lessons the pace of learning is rapid and time used fully. Where homework is scheduled by the school it is used regularly to provide imaginative tasks which challenge pupils to reflect on what they have learnt and to express their responses. For example, a task was set for Year 9 pupils studying Buddhism in which they were asked to write a poem imagining a world without suffering, compared with one in which people suffer. A wide range of activities and teaching methods is used in lessons, which maintains pupil interest and takes account of different ways of learning. Teachers reinforce points of learning and understanding as lessons proceed, helping pupils make secure progress. Differing stimuli are employed to encourage pupils to reflect, thus making very good provision for spiritual development.
195. Work is marked frequently and regularly with grades and comments, which assist pupils to improve their work, but there is no scheme of assessment that helps them to compare their standards with those expected or to gain a picture of their progress. Teachers have high expectations of all pupils. Because of this, higher attaining pupils are fully challenged whilst the majority and those with special educational needs make good progress. In the best examples of teaching, planning is extremely detailed with every strategy and activity clearly focused on the learning planned for that lesson. In less satisfactory lessons these objectives are not sufficiently specific; this leads to the lesson not fully achieving its aims and progress being less secure. Currently pupils are not given opportunities to visit places of worship or to meet members of religious faiths and communities, which would add realism to their learning. No use is made of information and communication technology. The quality of teaching in the vocational course is good but the subject matter is not sufficiently closely related to the locally agreed syllabus, therefore pupils are not making sufficient progress in religious education.
196. The leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory. There is no management structure which means that good teaching and commitment to succeed are not being supported by adequate quality control, and there is no overall planning aimed at further improving standards. There is no development plan and

no agreed strategy for remedying unsatisfactory standards of attainment caused by past difficulties. Parents' concerns regarding the impersonal nature of reports are justified because temporary staff, who did not know the pupils, have completed some reports in recent years.

197. Progress since the previous report has been satisfactory, mainly as a result of the good progress made in the years immediately following the previous inspection. The standard of teaching has improved and there are now better resources for illustrating the teaching of world faiths. Pupils have a better understanding of what religion is and can apply it more readily to their own lives. The subject still lacks an assessment scheme related to the expectations of the agreed syllabus.

## VOCATIONAL COURSES

198. Overall, the quality of provision in vocational courses is **very good**.

### Strengths

- Results in GNVQ are well above the national average.
- Teaching is very good and leads to the achievement of high standards for the course.
- There are many opportunities to experience real working environments.
- Morale among pupils and teachers is high because the subject is led and managed very well.

### Areas for improvement

- Pupils make insufficient use of computers to support their studies.

199. The school provides GNVQ courses in manufacturing and health and social care Part 1 in Year 10 and at GNVQ Intermediate level in Year 11. A small group of pupils in Year 11 follow the ASDAN award scheme.

200. GNVQ Foundation results in 2000 were well above the national average. Good results have been maintained over recent years and into 2001.

201. Standards of work seen during the inspection were above average for the courses and pupils are achieving very well given their level of attainment when starting the course. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of topics studied. In work about healthy eating, for example, most pupils accurately plan the preparation of food and estimate the quantities of ingredients required when catering for a reception, although this work was the exception rather than the rule for pupils improving their numeracy skills. Year 10 pupils in health and social care understand well the significance of fat levels of different foods and why it is important to have a balanced diet. In manufacturing, pupils know about the different purposes and qualities of packaging materials. Most pupils have knowledge of the working environment and are able to apply theoretical knowledge to real situations. The practical application of their knowledge is good, but many pupils do not make good use of computers to research and present their work. In the ASDAN course, pupils attain below nationally expected levels but they achieve well in skills of personal organisation and in speaking to others. They are competent in the use of first aid and have basic skills in using computers.

202. Many of the pupils on the vocational courses have special educational needs and they make very good progress. Higher attaining pupils develop planning and organisation skills to a high level. They evaluate the effectiveness of projects and say how the work could be improved. In manufacturing, all pupils know about the principles of the 'production process' and write accounts about how technological change can affect the manufacturing process, but they do not understand how the price influences demand and supply of products. Lower attaining pupils make very good progress in designing a soft toy for children aged four to six, and draw diagrams and graphs to illustrate plans, but methods to seek information do not always match the children's age and stage of development. In health and social care pupils with special educational needs made good progress because the teacher's lesson planning enabled the extra support available to be effective and the practical focus of the work led to progress being made through discussion. In the ASDAN course, pupils made excellent progress in the lesson due to the expertise of the teacher who motivated the pupils well, set high standards and

planned relevant tasks for them. This brought the best out of the pupils, resulting in high achievement.

203. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers are enthusiastic and give very good support to meeting pupils' needs. This raises pupils' self-esteem and leads to very good, and often excellent attitudes to learning. In a Year 10 manufacturing lesson, for example, substantial progress was made because the teacher managed the pupils very well, raised their self-esteem and gave very good support to ensure they understood the principles about food sensory testing. Teachers expect pupils to work hard and to make every effort to achieve their best. This is successful both in lessons and in homework so that assignments are finished to a high standard in terms of presentation and organisation. Diagrams are drawn carefully, and information is used well to illustrate writing. Occasionally work is improved through the use of computers but generally teachers give insufficient attention to the use of information and communication technology. The majority of teachers are experienced in the GNVQ processes; this has a very good impact on learning. On the other hand some teachers are new to the courses and are not fully confident in the assessment process. Consequently, the progress that some pupils make is slower than in other classes. Support and guidance are being provided, however, and this enables teachers to meet pupils' needs satisfactorily. Teachers' marking and assessment are excellent and they provide pupils with full information about the quality of work and how they can improve. This has a very good influence on attitudes and leads to progressive improvement in knowledge, basic language skills and personal development.
204. The vocational courses are led and managed very well. Teachers are supported well and morale is high. There are clear plans to develop the vocational curriculum and build upon its success. There are many links with local businesses, industry and other educational establishments that provide a wide range of experiences for the pupils and an opportunity to put their knowledge into practice.
205. There was no report on vocational studies at the last inspection.