

INSPECTION REPORT

ESTON PARK SCHOOL

Eston
Middlesbrough

LEA area: Redcar and Cleveland

Unique reference number: 111723

Headteacher: Mr J Rogers

Reporting inspector: Mr Graeme Clarke
1547

Dates of inspection: 25– 28 February 2002

Inspection number: 199481

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 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Burns Road
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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr N Martin

Date of previous inspection: March 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
1547	Graeme Clarke	<i>Registered inspector</i>		What sort of school is it? Equal opportunities; How high are the standards? – The school's results and achievements. How well are the pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
19807	Keith Osborne	<i>Lay inspector</i>		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development; How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
12844	Michael Saunders	<i>Team inspector</i>	English.	Literacy.
12183	Paul Ingram	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics.	Numeracy.
16786	Dr Selwyn Hodge	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science.	
4689	Monica Christian	<i>Team inspector</i>	Art.	
31831	Keith Watson	<i>Team inspector</i>	Design and technology.	
11300	Barry Smith	<i>Team inspector</i>	Geography.	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
15971	Michael Pye	<i>Team inspector</i>	History.	
1578	Maureen Sinclair	<i>Team inspector</i>	Information and communications technology.	
24887	Yvonne Salmons	<i>Team inspector</i>	Modern foreign languages.	
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27226	Richard Cribb	<i>Team inspector</i>	Physical education.	
16890	Maureen Potter	<i>Team Inspector</i>	Religious education.	Key Stage 3 strategy.
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Eston Park School is a mixed comprehensive school for pupils aged 11 to 16 years in the Eston area of East Middlesbrough. Most pupils come from primary schools in the locality. Attainment in the National Curriculum tests for the great majority of pupils, who join the school at 11, are well below national averages. The number of pupils has been rising, year on year and there are now 706 on roll. More than 98 per cent of pupils come from a white UK heritage. Three pupils do not have English as their first language, well below the national average. Almost a quarter of pupils have special educational needs (SEN) and nearly five per cent have statements of special need, which is well above the national average. The local area has many social disadvantages. This is reflected in the well above average proportion of pupils, 38 per cent, who have free school meals. The school benefits from being part of an Education Action Zone (EAZ) and from the support of the Excellence in Cities initiative. Parents are very supportive of the school and this year, for the first time, there were more applications than places for admission into Year 7.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Eston Park is an effective school that has made substantial improvements in a number of areas since the last inspection. More than 96 per cent of the teaching is satisfactory or better and nearly two thirds is good. The headteacher provides extremely effective leadership. The governors and senior management share the same strong commitment to improving the education offered by the school. They have set very challenging targets, and have the capacity to succeed. Although the standards of attainment last year in National Curriculum tests and GCSE examinations were well below average, pupils presently in school are making good progress and are achieving well. Academic standards are set to improve. The standards of pupils' behaviour, personal development and relationships are very good. The school is inclusive in outlook and provides well for pupils with special educational needs. Financial planning is very good. Taking all this into account, and the very low standards on entry, the school is providing good value for money.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- Demonstrates very good management of pupils, in and out of lessons.
- Has very good arrangements for promoting good behaviour, leading to very high standards.
- Promotes very good personal development and relationships.
- Develops very constructive and effective relationships with its partner institutions, particularly primary schools.
- Provides very good opportunities for pupils' moral and social development.
- Has very good arrangements for providing effective educational and personal support and guidance.
- The headteacher and key staff provide very good leadership and management.
- The governors very effectively give direction to the school as a result of their very good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- Standards of attainment, in core subjects of English, mathematics and science particularly.
- The provision for numeracy throughout the curriculum.
- The quality of provision in information and communication technology (ICT) and religious education (RE), including meeting statutory curriculum requirements.
- Pupils' autonomy and their responsibility for their own learning.
- Attendance.
- Library resources.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in March 1998, and has improved substantially since then. There has been significant involvement in local initiatives to develop literacy and numeracy. Provision for literacy development is good. The literacy strategy is evident in most departments and involvement in the Secondary Reading Partnership over the past two years has led to very good progress for pupils. However, many subjects do not yet use number work systematically to promote learning in their subjects. The home school liaison officer has undertaken assiduous work to improve attendance, but overall it is still below average. A coherent assessment and target-setting system is securely in place but teachers' use of information from assessments to guide lessons needs further development. Clear progress has been made in ensuring that all pupils who can achieve success are entered in GCSE examinations. Provision for modern foreign languages is good. Sex education is integral to the effective personal, social and health education programme. However, changes to arrangements for information and communication technology (ICT) have not brought about improvements. Religious education (RE) provision still does not meet the requirements of the local agreed syllabus. Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is now good overall. Teaching quality is higher as a result of professional development focused on improvement. Fewer instances of unsatisfactory teaching occur and these are usually by non-specialists.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	E*	E*	E*	E

Key	
<i>well above average</i>	A
<i>above average</i>	B
<i>average</i>	C
<i>below average</i>	D
<i>well below average</i>	E

In 2001, the results of the National Curriculum tests for Year 9 pupils were well below the national average in English, mathematics and science. Results in English were in line with similar schools this year, and mathematics and science were above. Boys' and girls' improvement, especially in mathematics and science, has been better than the national trend since 1998. GCSE results lie in the bottom five per cent nationally. Although the

improvement in GCSE average points has been better than the national trend since 1998, the improvement in the proportion gaining five or more A* to C grades has been below it. Girls' results have improved much faster than those of boys over the same period. With only 12 per cent of pupils achieving 5 or more A* to C grades at GCSE, the school fell well short of its 2001 target of 20 per cent, and its average points score of 20.6 was below the target of 23. The targets set for 2002 are challenging, and appear unrealistic but they are backed up by an analysis of pupils' prior attainments. Pupils' writing now shows good achievement throughout Years 7 to 11 and their attainment approaches national expectations. Achievement in reading is good and in speaking and listening it is satisfactory. Standards in mathematics, science and most other subjects are improving above the level indicated by pupils' attainment on entry. Pupils make good progress by the end of Year 9, and satisfactory progress by Year 11. However, pupils' attainment and achievement are still not good enough in numeracy, ICT and RE, because of inadequate provision.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. The majority of pupils are enthusiastic learners. Pupils appreciate the facilities for socialising at break times. Pupils with SEN and from minority groups are well integrated.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good in lessons and around the school. Pupils are aware of the school's expectations of behaviour. Behaviour is well managed. The number of exclusions is falling. Any bullying is dealt with promptly and effectively.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils are successfully encouraged to help and care for each other. Prefects, sports captains and head boys and girls in each house willingly undertake extra responsibilities in Year 11
Attendance	Poor. Rates have improved since the last inspection but are still below the national average. Absence rates increase markedly as pupils get older.

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 proportion of lessons where the quality of teaching was excellent or very good has doubled since the last inspection. Pupils made good or very good progress in six out ten lessons. Aspects that effectively contribute to the pace of learning include very good class management, thorough lesson planning, lively and skilful questioning that focuses pupils' attention, high expectations, and high levels of individual support, particularly for pupils with SEN. The emphasis in the teaching on the development of literacy skills is having a positive effect on attainment. However, the teaching of numeracy skills across the curriculum remains weak. Pupils are not being given enough opportunities to use ICT in their curriculum subjects. Marking does not adequately inform pupils how well they are doing or help them to learn independently. In turn pupils lack sufficient experience to work independently they cannot cope confidently with examinations demands. There are few clear strategies in lessons to stretch and challenge gifted and talented pupils.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. Years 7 to 9 follow a common curriculum, and from Year 8 German is available for most pupils. Breadth and balance are satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Statutory obligations are not met for ICT and RE. Arrangements for careers and work-related education are good. There is a wide range of successful extra-curricular activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. A full and inclusive curriculum offers effective systems to develop literacy skills and additional numeracy sessions. Pupils with significant behavioural or emotional needs have counselling sessions. The quality of Individual Education Plans (IEPs) is good but in mainstream lessons they are not sufficiently well implemented.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Moral and social development are very good. Assembly themes extend spiritual development but many subjects only raise spiritual dimensions by implication. Pupils show good self-control and respect the feelings, values and beliefs of others. The house system plays a significant part in helping pupils become socially mature. Pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to develop appreciation of living in a multi-cultural society.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good The school is safe, caring and well supervised, clean and adequately maintained. Due attention is given to health and safety. Child protection procedures are good. The best aspect of the assessment process is in support of pupils' personal development but the main weaknesses are inconsistent use to inform lesson planning and unreliable marking of pupils' work. Review procedures for pupils with statements of special need are regular and satisfactorily meet requirements.

The school puts great effort into making effective links with parents. In turn, parents have a high opinion of the school. Parents make a good impact on the school, and contribute well to learning.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher's sense of purpose gives very clear direction focused on promoting the school ethos and raising achievement. Senior and middle management teams in academic and pastoral roles are equally diligent and dedicated to improvement and to the personal development of pupils.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors have a high level of commitment to promoting the interests of the school. They monitor its work, and play an important role in shaping its direction and helping all young people become well-rounded individuals. However, the statutory obligations for ICT and RE are not met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Senior staff actively monitor academic and pastoral work through direct observation and make a thorough analysis of test and examination results. A careful evaluation of strengths and weaknesses signposts key areas for the next development plan.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Earmarked funds are used very well. Financial control procedures are very good. The staff is well deployed. Accommodation and learning resources are well used. There are insufficient library resources available. Best value principles are being very effectively applied, and have been successfully extended to consultation with parents and pupils.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their child likes school. • Their child is making good progress. • Behaviour is good. • The teaching is good. • They would feel comfortable approaching the school. • Their child is expected to work hard. • The school is well led and managed. • The school helps their child become responsible. • There is an interesting range of activities outside lessons. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The right amount of homework given. • How well they are informed about how their child is getting on. • How closely the school works with parents.

Inspectors' findings partly support the concern about information on progress because there are shortcomings in annual written reports; otherwise there is a deal of helpful information in letters and meetings. Inspectors feel that the amount of homework is about right. There was no evidence at all to support the view that the school does not work closely with parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. One factor that bears upon comparisons with national and other school averages is that the school has an above average number of pupils with SEN on roll. They are counted into the calculations of results and significantly lower the proportion gaining higher grades compared with schools where the proportion of pupils with SEN is close to or below average. This is particularly so for English, mathematics and science examinations which are taken by nearly all pupils.
2. When pupils join the school in Year 7, their attainment in English, mathematics and science is well below the averages for 11-year-old pupils nationwide. The proportions of 14 year old pupils attaining the national expectation of Level 5 or higher in the statutory National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 in 2001 was about the same as in 2000. Both were well below the national average. Similarly, in 2001, pupils' attainment was also well below the national average in mathematics and science, but did improve on the previous year. The proportions of pupils reaching the higher Levels 6 and 7 were also well below the national average in all three subjects. In comparison with similar schools, the proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 in English was average, and in mathematics and science it was above average. Since 1998, the pattern of improvement in English, mathematics and science has been above the national trend, particularly for mathematics.
3. The results in GCSE in 2001 declined from the previous year. The proportions of pupils that gained five or more A* to C grades fell from 19 per cent to 12 per cent because of poor attendance at the examinations by a significant minority. In 2001, 72 per cent gained five or more A* to G grades, which is also below the 2000 figure. Each grade is allocated a points score: A* is highest. The average points score of the candidates was 20.6 this year, which is 0.7 points lower than last year. This is also very low in comparison with the national average of 39. These are very low proportions, in the bottom five per cent nationally. The pattern is quite different when compared to schools where pupils had similar prior attainments at the end of year 9 in 1999. Although the proportion of pupils gaining five or more A* to C grades is below similar schools on this basis, the proportion gaining five or more A* to G grades, and their average points scores are above the averages of this group of schools. The improvement trend for pupils gaining five or more A* to G grades has been much better than the national pattern since 1998 but has fallen behind the five or more A* to C grade figure because of the dip in 2001. Girls' results have improved much faster than those of boys over the same period.
4. Pupils' results in English language and English literature were below national averages in GCSE in 2001. Boys, unusually, did better than girls in English language, but girls obtained better results in English literature. Both boys and girls achieved better than expected results when taking their prior attainment into account. Standards in mathematics and double award science are also well below national average, but have improved at a rate slightly above the national trend since 1998. The 2001 GCSE results are in line with the National Curriculum test results of the same pupils two years previously. About a fifth of pupils, more boys than girls, were not entered for mathematics, mostly because of poor attendance. The proportion of boys gaining A*-C grades was a little higher than that of girls.

5. There were differences in the average results obtained in other subjects compared to the national picture. Results in business education and drama were better than average, but they were below average in design and technology, geography and French.

6. The school fell well short of its target for the percentage of pupils achieving five or more A* to C grades in 2001. Achieving the targets for 2002 of an average points score of 31 represents a clear challenge, as does raising the target to 37 per cent candidates achieving five or more A* to C grades. These higher targets appear to be unrealistic. However, the school is confident of clear improvement in the next few years because the targets are backed up by an analysis of pupils' attainments made by the regional Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit. Their data forecasts these expectations because the Year 6 results of the present Year 11 were significantly better than those of the pupils who took GCSE in 2001.

Standards of work seen

7. The standards of pupils' work seen in English were better than examination results would suggest. Lower-attaining pupils, in particular, are benefiting from the priority given to literacy development in English lessons. As a result of the considerable support given by teachers, on which many pupils depend, the range of attainment seen in pupils' writing is well above the standards achieved in previous examinations and is close to national expectations. Pupils throughout the ability range are making good progress and are achieving well in their writing. By the age of 14, low-attaining pupils are writing neatly and fairly accurately. Higher-attaining pupils show a clear command of spelling, grammar and standard English. By the age of 16, pupils make further good progress and their writing is well organised and has a clear sense of audience. For example, low attaining pupils use guidance effectively, and the discursive writing of higher-attaining pupils is impressive.

8. Achievement in reading is good. By Year 9, pupils can read, understand and analyse a range of stories and information from texts and video and film scripts. Teachers' support helps lower-attaining pupils improve confidence in reading aloud. By Year 11, low-attaining pupils can read with good technical understanding and higher-attaining pupils show insight and understanding from their reading.

9. Standards of speaking and listening are satisfactory throughout. Boys and girls equally are required to answer, and often to extend and justify their views and opinions. Pupils' experience in other subject areas contributes to their language development. In most departments the key words and concepts relating to subjects are displayed and consolidated through a variety of approaches.

10. Standards in work in mathematics lessons seen throughout the school are below national averages, but they are above those obtained by pupils both in Year 9 National Curriculum tests and particularly in GCSE in Year 11 last year. Good achievement is reflected by the rising proportion of pupils in Years 7 to 9 who are now working at standards in line with national averages, in comparison with pupils in Years 10 and 11, where standards are below average. For example, higher-attaining pupils in Year 7 handle proportion successfully, but for many others, algebraic and arithmetical skills are underdeveloped. By Year 9, number concepts are more secure, and they have a good understanding of concepts such as probability and prediction. Pupils do routine exercises

competently in class, where they are supported by their teacher, but make errors under examination conditions, where weaknesses in number and algebra become evident. Higher-attaining pupils include extended writing, neat tabulation of results and appropriate conclusions in their coursework, but poor attendance by some pupils has an adverse effect on their coursework marks

11. Standards of numeracy in other subjects are satisfactory in those areas where they are taught. For example, pupils develop appropriate measuring skills in design and technology. They also use number in calculations in electronics work, and when handling spreadsheets in business studies. In geography, they improve their ability to interpret graphs, and use coordinates in map work. Simple number bonds are reinforced with low-attaining pupils in their work in modern foreign languages. However, there is no clear coherence in promoting numeracy skills throughout the curriculum at present and in turn progress and achievement are below expectations.

12. Pupils make good progress in science in Years 7 to 9. Most pupils develop practical and observational skills and are able to make appropriate connections with the scientific principles they have been taught. Their attainment is close to the national average by the end of Year 9. However, attainment is below expectation in Years 10 and 11 where the majority of pupils find it difficult to retain information and to make effective links between different aspects of science. They have made satisfactory progress from a position of low attainment earlier in the school but are still working below the national average. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls in lessons. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.

13. In the majority of other subjects, pupils are making good progress in Years 7 to 9 and are achieving well. Most are making satisfactory progress in Years 10 and 11 and are achieving standards that are improving, but still below average. However, achievement is often undermined by the frequent sporadic absence of many pupils leading to difficulty fulfilling coursework requirements.

14. In art, drawing is weak and very naïve because pupils have not developed observational skills, but during Years 10 and 11, they make good progress in their knowledge of art, but less progress in their understanding of it. Pupils in Year 9 in design and technology are able to give possible solutions to problems at a level close to national expectations but work in design folders is of a lower standard. Most pupils in Years 10 and 11 have an appropriate knowledge of design and of materials and constructional techniques, leading to standards overall that are about as expected. When pupils joined the school in Year 7, their attainment in geography and history was well below the national average. During Years 7 to 9 they make good progress and by age 14 they are achieving well as a result of teaching that is never less than satisfactory, and often good. They continue to make satisfactory progress during Years 10 and 11 towards GCSE standards. By the end of Year 9 in modern foreign languages, most pupils are able to understand and respond to tape recordings of native speakers, and to teachers' questioning, and although standards are below national expectations, this represents good achievement. By the end of Year 11 standards in French and German remain below average overall. Pupils of all abilities make progress in music, showing good achievement in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory achievement in Year 11. However, few in the GCSE music class learn to play instruments and some lack basic fingering when using keyboards. Pupils' attainment in Years 7 to 9 is

in line with national expectations in games, and above in fitness, movement and dance. Most of those studying GCSE physical education are attaining average levels and above. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 who are not following the GCSE course generally perform in line with the expectations for their age group. Pupils make very good progress in business studies, where pupils show average and above average levels of knowledge and understanding.

15. Standards in ICT at the end of the current Year 9 are unsatisfactory. In Years 10 and 11, the attainment of those taking the GCSE course is satisfactory. However, the majority of pupils of this age do not take GCSE. Their standards of attainment are below expectations as ICT knowledge and skills are incompletely developed through only a few subjects. In religious education standards in Years 7 to 9 have not improved since the last inspection. They remain below the expectations of the local agreed syllabus because of two aspects of teaching. Non-specialist teaching is of unsatisfactory quality because of frequently missed opportunities to develop religious concepts fully. However, pockets of very good specialist teaching scattered throughout Years 7 to 9 promote standards that are in line with and often above expectations but this is not enough to influence standards overall. The subject is not taught in Years 10 and 11 contrary to statutory requirements.

16. Overall, progress by gifted and talented pupils is satisfactory. Very good opportunities are given to very able pupils to extend their learning in mathematics, design and technology, modern languages and physical education (PE) and, consequently, they make good progress. In most other subjects, this is not the case and the highest-attaining pupils make less progress than they should.'

17. Detailed assessment information clearly shows very good progress of pupils with special educational needs in their reading and spelling skills. Assessment of numeracy skills is developing through a newly appointed learning support assistant with a specific focus on numeracy. Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) make good progress in mathematics.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

18. The majority of pupils are keen and enthusiastic to come to school. They begin to arrive well before the doors open in the morning, and many stay to after-school clubs and activities. They are enthusiastic learners, and respond very well to additional learning opportunities, for example the Year 11 pre-GCSE booster sessions at weekends and holidays are over-subscribed. Older pupils respond well to the challenge of being prefects or members of the school council. Pupils appreciate the facilities for socialising at break and lunch times, for example the house areas where they congregate, and the library where they use the computer banks to play games. Pupils from minority groups are well integrated.

19. Behaviour around the school and in lessons is very good and well controlled. The number of exclusions is falling, though the number of days lost increased during the last school term compared with the same time last year. There is some bullying, but it is dealt with promptly and effectively through the house system. Pupils are aware of the school's expectations of behaviour, and that it will not tolerate disruptive behaviour.

20. Personal development and relationships are very good. Pupils are encouraged to help and care for each other. For example, pupils in Year 7 are helped to settle quickly by being paired for the first half term with a *buddy* from Year 8 onwards, and older and younger pupils take part in paired reading initiatives to help less confident pupils. Years 8 to 11 have pupil representatives on the school council, which is beginning to take the lead in valuable initiatives such as a peer mentoring system, and undertaking customer surveys. The school

should review its reasons for not involving Year 7 pupils from this important contribution to school democracy. Prefects, sports captains and head boys and girls in each house willingly undertake extra responsibilities in Year 11.

21. Attendance rates have continued to improve since the last inspection but attendance is still well below the national average for comprehensive schools. The attendance rate of 88.6 per cent in the last complete school term is an increase of more than 6 per cent on the last inspection. Unauthorised absences are down to 2.5 per cent. However, as pupils get older, absence rates increase markedly. In the autumn term 2001, Year 7 pupils achieved 93.6 per cent attendance, but in Year 10 this had reduced to 86.8 per cent, and in Year 11 to 82.5 per cent. On an average day, only 4 out of 5 pupils in the GCSE year were at school, which adversely affects their learning at this important time. Twelve pupils did not attend school at all, or hardly at all, during this term. Poor attendance is a feature of the lower ability groups where almost one in five pupils had attendance below 80 per cent. Absence and lateness disrupt their access to programmes of learning and leave gaps in their knowledge and skills. In turn, this considerably affects their chance of obtaining qualifications, and therefore their life chances at 16. The school has not done detailed research into the reasons why so many pupils only attend sporadically.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

22. Overall, the quality of teaching is good and has improved considerably since the last inspection. Of the 150 lessons seen, the quality of teaching was unsatisfactory in only five, (3 per cent), compared with 7.5 per cent at the time of the last inspection. Over the same period, the proportion of excellent or very good lessons has doubled to 18 per cent, and the proportion of lessons where the quality of teaching was good or better has increased by more than 20 points to 64 per cent. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 made good or very good progress in 57 per cent of their lessons where 61 per cent of the teaching was good, very good or excellent. In Years 10 and 11, pupils made good or very good progress in 64 per cent of lessons where 69 per cent teaching was good or better.

23. The strongest teaching seen during the inspection supports pupils' learning in very clear ways, and often leads to them making good progress in relation to their prior attainments. The best teaching enabled pupils to make good progress. Very good classroom management enabled teachers to maintain good order in the classroom. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good and these contribute to a good working atmosphere in lessons, for example good relationships in a Year 11 physical education lesson encouraged the girls to participate more actively. Thorough lesson planning matches work to the abilities of pupils. The inclusion of opportunities to develop speaking and listening, leads to improvement in key skills in literacy. Teachers use their good subject knowledge and expertise in lively, skilful questioning that focuses pupils' attention and encourage them to listen to each other's answers. In art and business studies, for example, teachers emphasise the importance of using technical vocabulary. Teachers have high expectations and set challenges for pupils that enhance their interest and understanding, as in music, where the teacher's carefully chosen extracts and patience, skill and determination ensure high expectations are realised with classes of both high and low attaining pupils. Pupils feel valued as a result of teachers and classroom assistants giving high levels of

individual support. Lower-attaining pupils are encouraged in this way, and higher-attaining pupils are stretched. Teachers are well organised and use time and resources effectively to contribute to the pace of learning, for example modern languages teachers combine the use of the whiteboard, overhead projector and support sheets.

24. The school is working effectively to improve teaching and learning since the last inspection, which reported concerns that undermined progress in lessons, particularly about the limited extent of consistent marking and supportive comments to help pupils move forwards. Since the last inspection, the quality of marking has improved in art, business education and physical education for example, where marking is diligent and constructive comments are given. In all subjects marking indicates errors of spelling and expression. Nevertheless, marking practice is still inconsistent in English, mathematics, and science especially. Here particularly, there are inconsistencies and insufficient guidance provided for pupils to know how well they are doing, to increase their and their parents' awareness of the required standards in national examinations, and what they need to do to improve.

25. There are other aspects of teaching that require further attention but the situation is diverse. Information that is gathered about pupils' performance is recorded carefully and analysed, but is not used with enough rigour or consistency to inform lesson planning. For example, lesson planning in English and science often fails to take sufficient account of what pupils already know. Questioning is not always skilful enough; it is often insufficiently challenging and demands little more than simple factual recall. In planning and in lessons and there are few clear strategies to stretch and challenge the more able. The work is often too closely directed by the teacher, and results in leading pupils to have a passive approach to their studies, and offers too few opportunities for pupils to deepen their understanding and develop their own ideas, and to learn from making mistakes. Pupils do not have sufficient experience to work independently, often waiting for the teacher, and in turn they cannot cope confidently with the demands of timed examinations.

26. The isolated instances of weak class management were associated with an inappropriate start to practical lessons. Inadequate contact at the beginning, inappropriate and unchallenging activities, and presentation without enough pace unsurprisingly leads some pupils to becoming confused and undisciplined which in turn dampens the enthusiasm of others and hinders learning.

27. Although ICT facilities are being extensively improved, effective use is being made of them only in only a few areas to improve pupils' learning. For example, in English, word processing is used in Years 10 and 11 for editing and presentation but not in Years 7 to 9. Conversely, ICT is used successfully in Years 7 to 9 to support mathematics, for example in spread sheet work, but pupils have less access to computers in Years 10 and 11. A lack of facilities in science laboratories hinders pupils' investigations that depend on data logging and remote sensing. Pupils in art are taught to use computers to research, scan, save and print out images, in order to give them ideas before starting a project. In design and technology, they are encouraged to use ICT to enhance their portfolio work. Pupils following the business studies course in Years 10 and 11 are well supported to effectively apply ICT skills. The special needs department uses computers and appropriate software but more staff training is required. However, the use of ICT is in need of urgent development widely elsewhere. Certain aspects of the National Curriculum for ICT are not developed for all pupils as a result of inconsistent teaching throughout the curriculum, and consequently the attainment of many pupils is unsatisfactory.

28. There is a good programme of support for pupils with special educational needs. Heads of department and subject teachers work effectively with learning support staff to put the school's policy of inclusion into practice. Individual Education Plans give good guidance

to subject teachers, although more use could be made of them in lessons. Many subject teachers act as additional support assistants in lessons where there may be large numbers of pupils or a high proportion of ones with special educational needs (SEN.) This arrangement helps pupils to make progress and keeps them focused on work. Special needs staff give good support to the pupils with special educational needs (SEN), which helps them to make good progress.

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

29. At the last inspection the school did not satisfy statutory requirements in four areas: modern foreign languages in Years 10 and 11, sex education, the Agreed Syllabus for religious education and ICT in Years 9, 10 and 11. Following the inspection, appropriate provision was put in place for sex education and modern foreign languages. However the school still does not satisfy statutory requirements with regard to ICT and religious education.

30. In Years 7 to 9 ICT is no longer taught in discrete lessons, it is taught instead through other subjects of the curriculum which are also responsible for assessing progress. The time saved has been used to provide extra English in Years 7 to 9. However, the new scheme is not working satisfactorily and although there are areas of good practice, as in business studies, a uniformly high standard of ICT is not being taught to all pupils throughout the school. Some subjects, notably English and science, are not covering previously agreed elements. In addition, delays in installing hardware and providing suitable training for teachers have restricted progress in putting effective arrangements into place. Religious education is not taught in Years 10 and 11, contrary to statutory requirements.

31. The school's philosophy of providing an inclusive education is reflected in the arrangements for the curriculum. All pupils have equality of access. As at the last inspection, the school continues to offer an acceptably broad and balanced curriculum, with an adequate allocation of time for all subjects, except in ICT and religious education. The school teaches all National Curriculum subjects plus religious education in Years 7 to 9, and from Year 8 German is available for most pupils. Pupils in Years 10 to 11 have a basic core curriculum of English, mathematics, science, a modern foreign language, a technical subject and PE, together with lessons and guidance in citizenship and careers. Through the options system there are opportunities to study from a range of subjects including geography, history, art, business studies and drama. Physical education can be studied at GCSE Level. Those pupils on the special needs register follow a full curriculum. No one is disapplied from the National Curriculum, hence all can be entered for a full range of subjects. For the small number for whom a full GCSE course would be too demanding, there is an opportunity to follow a combined studies course, which is accredited as a Youth Achievement Award.

32. The school has a good system for annual review of its curriculum needs and provision. Staff and governors are closely and actively involved in monitoring curriculum development in subject areas through regular visits and presentations. Governors are well aware of current shortcomings with regard to statutory requirements and, through a list of priorities for action, are moving to address them. The chair of the curriculum committee has a good knowledge of the school, its staff and the curriculum.

33. Despite present shortcomings, the curriculum is a dynamic one. New elements are added and less successful ones are often identified by the reactions of pupils and parents. New ideas are beginning to have an impact. These include the way ICT is offered through business studies in Years 10 and 11, and the additional statistics course offered by mathematics after school. The school is continually assessing the value of elements of the

curriculum, whilst keeping the needs of pupils paramount. For example, in English, the department is currently looking at providing media studies as an alternative to literature for some pupils, and the excellence of provision in drama justifies the school's plans to develop a creative arts programme in the school.

34. A wide range of extra-curricular activities is available, for example in sport, music and drama and enhancement lessons in other subjects that take place after school. A lunchtime French club, a drama club a chess club and a Christian Union club run by the youth officer from the local church add to the range. Pupils in the four school houses visit their named cities of Lincoln, Ripon, York and Durham each year and also make visits abroad and to museums and art galleries. In music choirs, and instrumentalists in two large bands from the schools in the Education Action Zone (EAZ), hold rehearsals in the school hall. The drama department has put on an ambitious performance of *Macbeth* and the drama and music departments have combined to successfully mount a performance of *The Wizard of Oz*.

35. The gifted and talented pupils are identified on entry to the school through a broad range of test data. Relevant information is circulated to all staff, and appropriate funds from the Excellence in Cities initiative are allocated to departments for purchasing resources, equipment, or additional teaching staff in order to provide for the particular learning needs of these pupils. For example, funding has purchased coaching for pupils talented in a range of sports, textbooks for extra study in modern languages, and an extra teacher for a group of very able pupils in mathematics. Extra-curricular provision for gifted and talented pupils is very good. For example, the pupils are given the responsibility of running *The First Class Club*, a special club which gives them excellent opportunities for developing social, personal, and business skills through organising community events and raising funds for charities such as Cancer Research. The school is aware of the growing number of very able pupils entering the school and, in close consultation with the local education authority's (LEA's) consultant for gifted and talented pupils, has devised a comprehensive plan which is to be implemented in September 2002. This aims to develop the potential of very able pupils through enhanced teaching methods and resources in subjects, and the systematic monitoring of pupils' progress through individual educational programmes.

36. Very good links exist with the main feeder primary schools and through an Internet link with a school in Belfast. Liaison between subject departments and the primary schools to discuss and agree work to be covered is well developed. Some staff make a timetabled teaching contribution to the work in primary schools. Regular visits of pupils in Years 5 and 6 for preparatory lessons further strengthen the process of transfer and curriculum continuity. Primary and secondary pupils have useful opportunities to join together in sporting events and school shows.

37. Good links exist between the personal and social education programme and careers guidance in Years 9,10, and 11. The careers co-ordinator and local careers service together effectively provide advice on future careers. The programme in Year 9 offers a useful introduction to careers education for pupils and parents, and includes advice on options for study in Years 10 and 11 and in Post 16 education. All pupils in Year 10 benefit from a well structured and carefully documented work experience programme. Pupils complete a personal profile of their interests and preferences. They are well briefed and encouraged to find their own placements and to keep good records in the form of a personal diary of experience. Teachers monitor placements closely. Employers provide objective assessments of the pupils' work which both enable pupils to gain from the experience and enhance their records of achievement. A careers adviser supports all pupils in Year 11, including those with SEN, and helps them to formulate a personal action plan. There are

many opportunities for pupils to listen to visiting speakers from further education, industry, training initiative providers and the armed forces, and to make visits to local industry. A major locally held careers convention contributes to the school's careers education programme by providing further support and effective guidance to help prepare pupils for employment, training, further and higher education.

38. The levels of personal development and relationships within the school are very good. The overall programme for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is good. It includes careers education, sex education and advice and guidance regarding drugs misuse and is enhanced by the contributions of external agencies such as the police and the army. The various topics that include moral and health issues are taught through various subjects but particularly religious education. The PSHE area of the curriculum contributes well to pupils' awareness of social issues and helps build their moral values. Relationships between pupils are very good in class and around the school. As a result teachers are able to introduce team and group work into lessons and the pupils respond by working very constructively together. There is evidence of pupils listening carefully to each other with interest and then showing their appreciation of the contributions of others. They have respect for adults and for learning resources as well as showing very good levels of respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others.

39. There are too few opportunities given to pupils to exercise initiative in the course of their work. In many lessons, learning is over prescribed and there are not enough occasions when pupils can exercise initiative about how they might set about their work and extend their own experiences. In turn, they tend to adopt a rather passive approach to their studies and their independence as learners is underdeveloped. When an opportunity for responsibility is offered, pupils respond very positively to it. This is particularly noticeable in the house system and the school council. The houses play a very significant and successful part in providing positions of responsibility and encouraging initiative. Pupils are able to become heads of house, prefects or hold various other monitor posts. Significantly, pupils do act with a sense of responsibility as they go about carrying out their duties in a mature manner. The school council, for example, is highly effective in giving pupils a voice in the school. It gives pupils the opportunity to elect their representatives. They discuss real issues of concern, and have been involved in the recent whole-school evaluation which involved them meeting with the governing body to contribute their perspective to this important aspect.

Spiritual Development

40. Provision for the pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. It stems from the school's strong ethos and clear set of values. These are reflected in the pupils' day-to-day life in school, in supportive relationships, mutual respect and the enthusiasm of teachers and pupils to succeed. Daily acts of worship in house and family tutor-group gatherings provide effective opportunities for pupils to reflect on ultimate questions and to consider the inspirational qualities of exemplary figures, both religious and secular. A weekly theme is selected largely to mirror events in the Christian calendar. For example, the theme during the week of the inspection on *Death* raised pupils' awareness of the Christian values in prior to the festival of Easter. The headteacher creates a sense of occasion in assemblies that encourages pupils to regard these times as an important focus for their work and life in school. Provision through subjects in the curriculum is not so well developed. In geography pupils in Year 8 listened in rapt attention to inspiring teaching on the formation of earth's

crust, and pupils in PE were given the opportunity to appreciate their physical self in a dance activity. Otherwise, subjects at best raise the spiritual dimension by implication and at worst pay scant regard to the opportunities available. Provision for pupils' spiritual development has improved since the last inspection. The capacity to improve further will require more explicit planning and representation through subjects of the curriculum.

Moral development

41. Provision for pupils' moral development is very good, and the pupils are seen to respond appropriately. This constitutes good progress for the school over recent years. Respect for each other is promoted by the approach of the teachers and reflected in the behaviour of the pupils. Teachers are good role models and send out clear messages of what is acceptable and what is not. Pupils work responsibly, for example, in practical lessons and are seen to obey safety rules and care for equipment. Strong and effective moral messages are given in assemblies, for example concerning the issues surrounding human mortality and the consequent need to make the most of opportunities in life that are offered. Pupils struggle with the notion of right and wrong and the place of relative values in society. They are helped to consider them as some subjects explore moral issues, such as the conservation and exploitation of the rainforests of Brazil in geography, genetic engineering in science, and drug abuse in PE.

Social Development

42. The provision for pupils' social development is very good, with the development of the house system playing a significant part. In many subjects, pupils have the opportunity to work positively in pairs and small groups, and as a result good social skills develop. In physical education and drama, extra-curricular provision involves very good number of pupils, giving opportunities to work together. Pupils work well together to create performances. The buddy system enables pupils to assist others. Through the house system, pupils are presented with numerous good opportunities to work together. For example, the annual visit by Year 7 to their house city, Durham, York, Ripon or Lincoln, is a very good opportunity for pupils and staff to get to know each other and at lunchtimes, the pupils mix socially in their house areas. Pupils make good progress towards becoming socially mature because of the encouragement they receive from teachers to conduct themselves in an appropriate manner. The pupils' response to the provision of the effective school council is good and the process allows them to develop their social and negotiating skills. The programmes for personal, social and health education (PSHE), religious education and assemblies provide further opportunities for pupils' social development.

Cultural development

43. The school provides a satisfactory range of opportunities for pupils to understand some aspects of their own culture through subjects such as technology, history and geography. Pupils willingly participate in musical and dramatic productions. Visits to local museums and art galleries, and abroad to France, all make important contributions to cultural development. Pupils benefit from aspects of world art and music in lessons, and elsewhere in design and technology, the cross-curricular global village project includes aspects, of bakery products of France and Italy, the Chinese influence in the birdcage module, American and African clock design. Although these make an effective contribution in developing pupils' awareness of cultures different from their own, little progress has been made in increasing pupils' appreciation of living in a multi-cultural society.

Citizenship

44. The school has conducted a comprehensive and useful audit of existing opportunities through which they intend to deliver a framework of citizenship elements, including sex education and drugs misuse, through PSHE and appropriate subjects of the curriculum. The new programme has been carefully planned and co-ordinated and meets requirements. From September 2002 it is intended to add further elements to curricular objectives already embedded in subjects such as English, history and religious education. The school recognises the importance of citizenship in the curriculum and has prepared a *Certificate of Citizenship* that can be awarded to pupils following the completion of each strand of the framework.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

45. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are good. They have been improved since the last inspection by the appointment of two attendance officers, who work closely with the education social worker to try to improve attendance rates. Registers are examined early each morning, and telephone calls made immediately to find out why absent pupils are not in school, or home visits are made where this is necessary. Reasons for absence are summarised in the registers. Because of the parallel manual registration systems for each session (in house groups) and then in each lesson, the school cannot easily monitor and analyse the total situation because it does not yet have access to computerised monitoring systems, which would make it easier to identify absence patterns quickly. However, teachers' personal knowledge of the pupils is very good, and is used effectively to target those pupils whose attendance is most likely to improve with help. There are very good systems for supporting the small number of pupils who need home tuition or reintegration into the school.

46. The school's very good procedures for monitoring behaviour and personal development have continued since the last inspection. They are based on the pastoral system of four houses, with mixed-age tutor groups, which provides continuity of contact between tutors and pupils. The school has introduced a detailed monitoring and target setting system, the Eston Park Pupil Information System (EPPIS), where grades for response to school and achievement in all lessons are collated each term, discussed with pupils by senior staff, and targets set for the next term. This is a valuable step forward.

47. Where pupils' behaviour or attitudes are not good enough, there are appropriate sanctions taken which effectively involve heads of House or more senior staff in helping resolving and improve matters. Serious misbehaviour, including bullying, aggression to other pupils or hostility to staff is punished by exclusion. Permanent exclusion is always a last resort, and the numbers of such exclusions are reducing year by year. Governors are fully involved in ensuring that the school's behaviour policies and practice are fair and effective. Procedures for supporting excluded pupils are effective. An inclusion unit successfully provides a respite from whole-class situations for pupils who cannot cope. Behaviour management courses are provided in Year 8, and are effective, and the school now sensibly surveys pupils to gain their opinions of provision, for example teaching styles and the level of challenge, to give a basis on which to plan in future.

48. Procedures for health and safety are good. The expertise of the local education authority (LEA) is used for a twice-yearly health-and-safety inspection, which ensures that legal requirements are met, and risk assessments are in place. However, the chemical storeroom in the science department does not meet ventilation standards, and was a design fault when the school was remodelled before the last inspection.

49. Senior staff help promote sensible behaviour and safety through close supervision when pupils are moving around school between lessons.

50. Child protection procedures are good, as they were at the last inspection. Each house has a named child protection reference point, and one head of House is the school's co-ordinator and link with other agencies. Procedures are clear and comply with the local authority's guidelines. The school attends case conferences when appropriate. Appropriate training has been provided for staff, and the school is aware of the new framework for child protection. The school nurse holds valued and useful drop-in sessions once a week, where she advises pupils on health-related matters.

51. The school's assessment policy has been revised since the last inspection. Systems have now been introduced that allow for a more consistent approach in all subjects. Departments are required to review regularly how well pupils are achieving and to make this information available to the school's assessment co-ordinator. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are well co-ordinated across the school. Systems are managed effectively and are understood by both teachers and pupils.

52. The analysis of pupils' attainment and examination results has improved since the last inspection. This now includes the scrutiny of reading ages and cognitive ability levels, as well as drawing upon Year 6 and 9 National Curriculum test scores and GCSE results. The school participates in the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) *Value Added Pilot Project* which gives useful data based on pupils' prior attainments. Effective use is also made of comparative data from schools in the surrounding area. As a result, a range of reliable information has become available. Information about pupils' progress through the school, based upon their prior attainment levels, is being used to evaluate the performance of individual subjects by the end of Year 9 and Year 11, but this is an aspect that still requires further development.

53. Departments are beginning to use analysed information in a satisfactory way to guide their planning, but at present, access to some of the information is limited. The school recognises the need to make this data more available for all staff. The priority now is to introduce a computer system that allows better transfer of information and to provide training in its use.

54. The school has introduced effective procedures for target setting. The availability of reliable and appropriate data has enabled more realistic goals to be agreed for both individual pupils and subject areas. The EPPIS allows information on pupils' progress to be collated and shared with parents three times a year. Form tutors use the system to set improvement targets with individual pupils and to monitor their progress. The headteacher and senior staff also interview each pupil individually and provide valuable additional support and encouragement. These arrangements are generally working well thus far, but more attention now needs to be given to ensuring that effective liaison is maintained between form tutors and subject teachers.

55. Teachers generally make satisfactory use of procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress. Monitoring is good in art, history, mathematics and physical education; in music, where procedures are not yet in place to set targets for individual pupils, it is unsatisfactory.

56. Overall, the on-going assessment of pupils' work in lessons is satisfactory throughout the school. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Assessment is good in art, but is unsatisfactory in science, geography, music and modern foreign languages. The major weaknesses are found in the marking of pupils' work. In common with the findings of the last inspection, marking does not always support pupils' progress effectively. In these instances, teachers provide insufficient guidance and make comments in pupils' books that are too general. At present, the school policy now requires clear guidance on how to manage the links between assessment and teaching and learning. The school is aware that more rigorous use of assessment information is required if the diagnosis of pupils' individual learning difficulties is to be fully effective.

57. The assessment of pupils' attainment and progress in comparison with national expectations is satisfactory overall. It is good in history, mathematics, art and physical education and very good in business studies. It is unsatisfactory in modern foreign languages, English, music, information technology and geography. The main weaknesses identified include unreliable marking of pupils' test work and insufficient use of National Curriculum attainment levels.

58. Teachers' make inconsistent use of assessment information when planning their lessons and modifying the arrangements for subject teaching. For example, this aspect is very well managed in business studies, where coursework is used very effectively to determine the appropriate levels of work for individual pupils. It is particularly unsatisfactory in science and in relation to information and communications technology.

59. A range of assessments is used to support the progress of pupils with SEN. Review procedures are thorough and are carried out effectively. The assessment of the progress of pupils with SEN in lessons is satisfactory. However, the use of Individual Education Plans (IEPs) in mainstream lessons requires further development.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

60. Parents' views of the school are very positive, and are reflected in responses to the parents' questionnaire and to the school's own survey of parents. Although only a small number of parents attended the meeting with the registered inspector, they were very supportive.

61. A high proportion of parents, more than 90 per cent replying to the questionnaire, feel that their child likes school, that children make good progress and are helped to mature. They know that behaviour in school is good. They consider that teaching quality is good and that the school is well led and managed. They like the information provided about their children's progress. A very high proportion knows that the school expects hard work, and that the teachers are approachable if they have a problem to discuss. Several offer additional positive comments about the good arrangements to help pupils make the transfer into Year 7 from their primary school, about how they value the pastoral support given, and the good range of out-of-school activities. Some parents are concerned about the amount of homework given, but their views are mixed about whether they think that too much is set or not enough. A small, but noticeable minority, of parents wish that the school worked more

closely with them, and would like more information, such as knowing more about what their child can do. The inspection team agrees for the most part with parents' views. They agree that the amount of homework set is about right and also agree that information about pupils' attainments in reports could be enhanced. Although inspectors feel that the school could do more to make parents feel part of the school community, it already does more than many other schools.

62. Parents make a good impact on the school, and contribute well to learning. Parent governors fulfil an important role, for example in the working party which looks at pupils' welfare. Some parents give help with the reading programme, which is a good and valued development. Others help by contributing to art, and design and technology lessons. Parents' contribution to homework is variable in its effect, but is in line with other comprehensive schools. The *Friends of Eston Park* organise social events to raise money towards the school minibus.

63. The quality of information provided for parents about their children's progress is satisfactory. There are termly reports that give grades for both attitudes and achievement. Teachers' written comments relate to these two strands, but sometimes emphasise more the pupils' response to the teaching, rather than what pupils have learned and what they need to do next – which is just as important. Newsletters are regular and concise. The school's prospectus and governors' annual report meet the spirit of the law, but are incomplete. Good procedures are in place for introducing parents of Year 5 and 6 pupils to the school, and showing the quality of provision. Parents' evenings and celebration assemblies are well-attended occasions, where information is available and shared effectively.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

64. The leadership of the school by the headteacher is extremely effective. His commitment, conscientiousness and clear sense of purpose have been significant factors in improving key aspects of the school. He provides very clear direction focused on promoting the school ethos and raising achievement. Members of the senior management team are equally dedicated and diligent in promoting the aims and values of the school and have a particularly close association with heads of house and group tutors. Senior managers' involvement in review meetings with tutors boosts their knowledge of pupils' pastoral and academic development and adds to their grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.

65. Middle managers in academic and pastoral roles carry out their responsibilities efficiently and effectively. Some especially good and productive working relationships are established within subject departments, particularly in English, where roles and responsibilities are clear and good support is given to less experienced teachers. Good departmental management is notable in design and technology, history, PE and business studies. New departmental managers in art, music and religious education are establishing themselves and making an impact upon standards, despite limitations in provision and facilities. Leadership and management in ICT, modern foreign languages and religious education is satisfactory overall because, although there is a strong commitment to improvement, there are weaknesses in the range of opportunities provided for some pupils that need to be resolved. The development and co-ordination of work in the science department is ineffective. The pastoral team very successfully meets the demands of day-to-day administrative matters, and their pastoral support makes a very substantial contribution to the personal development of pupils.

66. The governors have a high level of commitment to promoting the interests of the school and are directly and actively involved in monitoring its work. The committee structure is well defined with appropriately clear terms of reference. The headteacher and other members of the senior management team keep governors well informed. Governors are very appreciative of the extent of work that the senior management team has undertaken and value the openness in their working relationships with them.

67. Governors are well aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. This knowledge is gained primarily through their active involvement in a programme of visits and meetings. The governing body has a commendable, proactive strategic role, in partnership with the senior management, in the drive for further improvement. They see the value of observing aspects of the school's work at first hand, and to relate them to how well targets are being achieved. In this way governors extend their knowledge of the quality of work in school, and in consequence have confidence in their opinions. They receive and consider reports, ask questions of the staff who make presentations to them about the work of the school, and in turn offer suggestions for further action. Governors are well informed about the significance of test and examination results, and about targets for each year group and how they relate to the Local Education Authority's targets.

68. The governing body understands that the school is not fulfilling all its statutory obligations in relation to the National Curriculum at present. Specifically, the arrangements for information and communication technology do not meet requirements because pupils throughout the school do not have sufficient scope to develop their ICT capabilities or to use ICT to help them learn throughout the curriculum. At present governors are not meeting their responsibility, shared with the headteacher and LEA, to ensure that all pupils, particularly those in Years 10 and 11, have sufficient opportunities to cover the Agreed Syllabus for religious education.

69. The school has a comprehensive approach to development planning. There is a clear focus on raising achievement, usefully incorporating an audit of economic data into a three year plan (1999-2002) for improvement in four clear strands – community, curriculum, management and pastoral. The school has undertaken a careful analysis of its strengths and weaknesses to signpost key areas for the next plan, which is set to be implemented during the next school year. The school is an active partner in initiatives funded by Excellence in Cities, and the Education Action Zone, as well as Redcar Local Education Authority's *Quality in the classroom* project which focuses on raising achievement. There is a clear association between the objectives of these initiatives and those of activities to implement the school's development plan.

70. The match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum is good. The number of full time teachers has been maintained since the last inspection and new teachers have been appointed to replace ones who retired or left the school to take up other posts. The profile of teaching experience is broad. Of the 49 teachers on the staff, 30 have taught for more than 20 years, and of these, nearly half have over 30 years experience. The headteacher is very proud of his staff and supports them strongly. Loyalty to the school is very strong, as over half the teachers have only taught at this school. A clear indication of commitment is that three-quarters of the teachers have had less than a week's absence in two years.

71. All teachers are suitably qualified and most teachers teach their main subjects. Standards of work are not adversely affected where non-specialists take a few lessons in subjects other than their main one, except in religious education, where standards are lower than they should be.

72. All members of staff attend relevant training courses and conferences to help them in their professional development. Newly appointed teachers, including those who are newly qualified, are closely helped by more experienced colleagues. As part of their monitoring role, heads of department observe lessons taught by colleagues. This helps teachers to review and improve their performance, but there is insufficient evaluation and development after the observations. The governors' arrangements for performance management are securely in place and are being followed in accordance their schedule and timescale.

73. Technical help is highly valued, for example in science, in the management of resources or to deal with difficulties with ICT equipment. There is no qualified librarian on the staff. The administrative, cleaning and catering staff all work hard and contribute well to the smooth running of the school.

74. Accommodation is satisfactory and provides an atmosphere conducive to learning. The school buildings are all on one site, surrounded by extensive playing fields, playgrounds and carefully maintained gardens. The site superintendent is well regarded as a key member of staff in maintaining the fabric of the building and making the environment an attractive one for the pupils and staff. Accommodation is well managed and organised, very clean and clear of litter and graffiti. The foyer is smart and welcoming. The hall and circulation areas have extensive displays to celebrate pupils' successes, and arrangements of flowers and plants. Most departments have enough rooms that are placed together so there is easy communication between teachers and access to resources. There are too few small rooms for group work and instrumental practice in music. Some areas would benefit from refurbishment, for example, the fitness room in the physical education department, the sports hall and the food and textiles areas. The hall is used extensively for assemblies, dining, physical education, drama and examinations, which means that lessons are disrupted when the chairs and tables have to be set out. The most serious problem concerning accommodation is the high cost of maintaining the flat roof.

75. Improvements have been made to the library since the last inspection, but more are needed. The library is now staffed throughout the school day, and at lunchtime and after school, to enable pupils to use it for homework. The careers collection is well maintained in partnership with the careers' service. The number and range of computers has been increased but pre-booked sessions for English and Business Studies lessons prohibit their use by other pupils or groups. It is unsatisfactory that these reservations are not always taken up. Library staff have some expertise in ICT, but no experience or qualifications in librarianship. The range of printed and multi-media resources is inadequate to meet pupils' needs in reading widely for interest, in following up work done in lessons, or in developing the whole range of information retrieval skills. The budget for maintenance and development of the stock is below ten per cent of what is needed. The need now is for a development plan which clearly sets out how the library resource centre can contribute to pupils' knowledge and understanding across the curriculum, and what materials in relation to departmental collections are needed to meet these goals. This is a significant weakness to be addressed.

76. The amount, range and quality of resources are satisfactory and have improved since the last inspection, when a number of departments had insufficient textbooks for pupils who were taking GCSE. The school expenditure on resources is around the national average and the allocation to subject areas is fair. The arrangements for funding departments is well understood by the teachers, and there are additional monies available so that heads of department can plan for new initiatives in the curriculum, and to cope with emergencies. Most departments in school have good supplies of books, equipment and consumables to

interest the pupils and assist them in their studies. Only a few departments report deficiencies such as computer and reprographic equipment, and textbooks. The resources to teach aspects of multi-cultural and multi-faith education are now good and are particularly well used in art, English and religious education.

77. Since the last inspection, the level of ICT resources has improved, except that the value of the new interactive whiteboard is yet to be exploited. The ratio of computers to pupils is now good and at the national average for a school of this type. Internet-linked computers are accessible throughout the school in most subject departments, and the departments that do not have their own computers have easy access to ones throughout the school. Following staff training, and to warrant the expenditure on equipment, more activities to develop ICT and use it to enhance learning should be included within subject lessons.

78. Strategic financial planning is very good and considerable improvement has been made since the last inspection. The governing body's resources sub-committee ensures that the priorities of the school development plan are reflected in the yearly budget, before it is placed before the whole Governing body for final discussion and ratification. Very good financial decisions are being made and very good management of the school's finances by all who are involved ensures that expenditure is in line with the school development plan.

79. The management of departmental funding is good and departments are required to justify how their spending raises pupil's attainment and progress. The school makes very good use of financial resources, including specific grants. Analysis of the value added to pupils' attainment and achievement is being developed, and this could usefully be developed further to show whether spending decisions have been cost-effective. Effective management of funds is seen in outcomes. For example, Pupil Retention Funding helps reduce exclusion from school; SEN funding effectively helps pupils to be taught in small groups; Excellence in Cities funding is well used to support gifted and talented pupils in mathematics, drama and sports. There appears to be a significant balance of income over expenditure in the school's budget, but much of it is committed to spending on repairs and refurbishment, as well as being held to address issues emerging from the inspection. Nevertheless, the school should ensure that money is not lying unused for too long.

80. All issues raised in the most recent internal audit report (February 1996) have been successfully addressed. Good financial administration by the well-led office team ensures that a clear audit trail is established for all funds managed within the school.

81. The governing body applies principles of best value to good effect. A very thorough review of expenditure takes place to make sure that the school gets best value in purchasing services. For example, employing an independent consultant helped save an estimated £20,000 in replacing a defective flat roof, which released this amount money for other developments. Senior staff and governors are very aware of how applying best value principles in future planning is going to raise achievement in national test and examination results. The school makes effective use of the Tees Valley strategy unit in drawing comparisons from information about similar and local schools' performance. It has drawn upon the analysis in setting clear challenges in the GCSE targets, which are part of the drive to raise attainment. A very good scheme is established for consulting with parents to identify strengths and weaknesses in the school's provision for the pupils. This provides an effective way to check what parents think about the quality of the education pupils receive and informs the next school development plan.

82. The overall effectiveness of the school is good. The school is situated in an area with many socio-economic disadvantages and caters for a significant number of pupils whose attainment on entry has been very low. The school has high aspirations that are well-founded. It adds good value to pupils' personal development, and in turn their academic achievement is good. Although expenditure per pupil is relatively high, the school gives good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

83. The school should plan and act to:

- raise standards of attainment, in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science particularly;
- develop consistent provision in numeracy throughout;
- meet statutory requirements for ICT and religious education in the curriculum;
- increase pupils' autonomy and responsibility for their own learning;
- foster further initiatives to improve attendance;
- enhance the library resources.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

KEY STAGE THREE STRATEGY

84. The school has appropriate plans to develop and co-ordinate its initiatives to improve the transition of pupils from Year 6 in primary schools into Year 7 in its work in literacy, numeracy, and target setting. All elements of the planning are appropriately aligned with the nationally developed Key Stage strategy for pupils in Years 7 to 9. The school has been well supported by the LEA's literacy consultants, and through involvement in the local Education Action Zone (EAZ) initiatives.

85. The literacy element of the school's strategy has been in place for some time and there are notable areas of success. The Secondary Reading Partnership, involving classroom assistants working with pupils in a ten-week intensive programme, is showing excellent results. The pupils make an average gain in their reading age of 8 months, and their comprehension skills are considerably improved in turn. This aspect of Eston Park's literacy strategy is regarded as exemplary good practice and it is used to promote the initiative in other schools.

86. There is a strong liaison with feeder primary schools. Together they are involved in developing transition units to meet recommendations in the national Key Stage 3 strategy. For example, the Better Reading Partnership forms a bridging unit to teach more effective decoding and comprehension skills. The primary-secondary partnership has produced a range of initiatives to support transition. These include the transfer of pupils' performance data, the use of data to inform setting in Year 7, joint planning on literacy, numeracy and science and the development of a shared understanding of level descriptions to assess the National Curriculum.

87. The school has set challenging targets throughout Years 7 to 9, and has put monitoring and pupil tracking arrangements in place. There is still a gap however, between the tracking of pupils' attitudes and behaviour through EPPIS and their academic performance. Heads of departments in the core subjects take responsibility for setting and monitoring academic targets but these are not shared sufficiently widely throughout the school to influence a similar approach in all subjects.

88. A clear and sound beginning has been made. Planning to implement all the recommendations in the DfES Key Stage 3 strategy is at a formative stage. There is a clear capacity in the school to implement them further.

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (SEN)

89. The school currently has 159 pupils on the special educational needs register. This represents over one fifth of the school population. Thirty-two pupils have a statement of special educational needs, with about the same number in each year group. Sixty-seven pupils have emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD). The disruptive effect these pupils have in some lessons has a significant impact on their learning, and to some extent upon the learning of other pupils in the class. The proportion of pupils with these needs joining the school has increased over the years, hence there are more pupils presenting with EBD in Year 7 and progressively fewer in the upper school. The school is committed to inclusion,

and to improving provision for these pupils. In addition to the support provided within the school's pastoral arrangements, a full time teacher has been appointed to work with pupils at risk of exclusion. Additionally, a fully trained counsellor works with pupils with emotional and behavioural needs.

Assessment

90. The overall procedures for the assessment of pupils with special educational needs are good, and those within the learning support department are very good. Detailed assessment information clearly shows that these pupils make very good progress in their reading and spelling skills. The assessment of numeracy skills is being developed by a newly appointed learning support assistant with a specific focus on numeracy. Any assessments to identify particular needs are carried out by a visiting specialist. Assessment systems linked to the termly reviews and annual reviews of statemented pupils are thorough and effective and fully meet statutory requirements.

91. The quality of Individual education plans is good. They provide appropriate guidance to subject teachers for planning teaching programmes and setting targets. However, there is inconsistent use of assessment information to guide lesson planning or devise individual subject learning programmes, with an over-reliance on schemes of work rather than planning work based on what the pupils know, understand and can do. As a result, some lessons are pitched at too high a level and pupils find the work too difficult.

Provision and progress

92. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good overall. Significant improvements have been made since the appointments of the learning support team. These include the setting up of the Learning Support Centre and the production of a learning support handbook. Systems are in place to develop literacy skills, which include the Better Reading Partnership, paired reading between older pupils and pupils with reading difficulties, the Secondary Reading Partnership, and Toe-by-Toe sessions. Parents are more involved in the learning of their own children through at-home support and in some school sessions. Pupils have additional numeracy sessions. Pupils with significant behavioural or emotional needs have counselling sessions with a trained counsellor. Meetings, though mostly informal, are now held regularly between most of the staff dealing with pupils with special educational needs and as a result communication is improving. However, day-to-day communications are informal and there are insufficient planned opportunities for all learning support staff to meet on a regular basis. All adults and parents interviewed are very positive about the improvements within the learning support department and the provision made there for pupils with special educational needs.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	150
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	47

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	25	69	49	4	1	0
Percentage	1	17	46	33	3	1	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	2001/2002
Number of pupils on the school's roll	706
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	268

Special educational needs	2001-02
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	32
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	94

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	3

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	22
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	16

Attendance

Authorised absence	%	Unauthorised absence	%
School data	8.6%	School data	3.5%
National comparative data	8.1%	National comparative data	1.1%

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	78	50	128

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	31	40	42
	Girls	26	22	21
	Total	57	62	63
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	45(42)	48(40)	49(40)
	National	64(63)	66(65)	66(59)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	15(15)	23(23)	15(9)
	National	31(28)	43(42)	34(30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	31	47	9
	Girls	26	34	14
	Total	57	81	23
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	45(50)	63(49)	18(45)
	National	65(64)	68(66)	64(62)
Percentage of pupils	School	15(16)	28(22)	2(16)
	National	31(31)	42(39)	33(29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	73	59	132

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* - C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	9	49	60
	Girls	7	46	52
	Total	16	95	113
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	12(19)	72(78)	86(83)
	National	48(47)	91(91)	96(96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	21
	National	39

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

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	3
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	2
Chinese	1
White	663
Any other minority ethnic group	3

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	49	4
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes**Qualified teachers and classes:****Y 7 – Y11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	46.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.2

Education support staff:**Y 7 – Y11**

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	277

Deployment of teachers:**Y 7 – Y11**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	71.8
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Average teaching group size:**Y 7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	22.1
Key Stage 4	20.2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000-2001
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	£
Total income	2,240,609.00
Total expenditure	2,230,282.00
Expenditure per pupil	3329.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	182,690.00
Balance carried forward to next year	193,017.00

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	4
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2

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.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out
Number of questionnaires returned

706
145

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	48	43	6	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	57	35	2	3	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	43	44	5	1	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	39	44	12	3	1
The teaching is good.	48	43	3	1	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	57	37	6	1	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	68	29	1	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	73	25	1	1	0
The school works closely with parents.	49	39	6	3	3
The school is well led and managed.	63	31	2	1	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	52	40	3	2	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	46	44	1	0	8

Other issues raised by parents

Parents' additional positive comments emphasise:

- the good arrangements made to help pupils transfer from their primary school to Eston Park School;
- how they value the pastoral support given;
- the good range of out of school activities.

With regard to the amount of homework given, most are satisfied with the level, but a minority comment that too much is set, and others that there is not enough.

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths:

- Good relationships between teachers and pupils;
- The impact of the national literacy strategy on pupils' progress;
- Teachers' good knowledge of their subject;
- Pupils' knowledge of technical vocabulary;
- Support and challenge for lower-attaining pupils.

Areas for improvement:

- Strategies to develop the work of higher-attaining pupils;
- The precision and consistency of marking and target-setting;
- The use of ICT to develop pupils' work at Key Stage 3.

93. Key Stage 3 English results in the 2001 National Curriculum Standard Attainment Tests were well below the national average but in line when compared to similar schools. Girls did better than boys. Boys' results have improved steadily since 1999 but the pattern of girls' results has been more erratic. Overall, however, the trend of improvement is slightly better than the national trend. Good progress is made during Years 7 to 9.

94. In the 2001 GCSE examinations in English Language, results were well below the national average for both boys and girls. 10.4 per cent of pupils were in the A*-C category, compared to a national average of 60.8 per cent. Boys, unusually, did better than girls. Taking pupils' prior attainment into account, boys and girls achieved in advance of expectations however. They make good progress during Key Stage 4. Results for English Literature were also well below the national average. 18.9 per cent gained A*-C grades compared to a national figure of 56.1 per cent. For A*-E grades, results were closer to the national average in both language and literature.

95. Levels of achievement observed during the inspection were better than these examination results would suggest. The explicit objectives and motivating activities of many lessons enabled pupils to make obvious good progress. Lower-attaining pupils in particular benefited from the priority given to literacy development in English lessons.

96. Pupils' writing showed good achievement and progress across the ability range. Drafting procedures allow pupils to revise and extend their work so that final versions are the best they can do. However, too little use was made of ICT in Years 7 to 9 to edit and present pupils' writing. By Year 9 low-attaining pupils are writing effectively in a range of forms. They write neatly and fairly accurately. Spelling and expression are often uncertain to begin with but improve in the light of teachers' marking. There is sometimes a distinction to be drawn between the neatness and commitment of boys and girls. But generally, equal progress is made. Higher-attaining pupils show secure command of spelling, grammar and Standard English. They comment incisively in response to literature. In *Macbeth*: 'Nature and natural feeling seem dead'. A piece of original writing begins: 'I looked out of my bedroom window at

the car. They had just pulled up. The new neighbours.’ This is writing which makes an immediate impact.

97. By the age of 16, further good progress is made. All pupils, including the low-attaining, are able to argue, research, inform and tell stories in well-organised ways and with a clear sense of audience. For example, writing frames for the analysis of media texts led to effective pieces from low-attaining pupils. Average pupils produced witty advertisements, which demonstrated an awareness of audience and technique. A drink was promoted, for example, with the slogan ‘You’ll like it but you won’t know why!’ The argumentative writing of high attaining pupils is impressive. For example, an extended essay on capital punishment drew the reader in with ‘Imagine living without a life. This is what Death Row convicts face everyday.’ Pupils in Years 10 and 11 use ICT for word processing in their work.

98. The range of attainment seen in the writing of pupils throughout Years 7 to 11 approaches national expectations, and is well above the standards achieved historically in public examinations. This is because the work seen is the result of considerable support by teachers, on which many pupils depend. They are not sufficiently independent learners and writers to meet the challenges of timed examinations with confidence.

99. Achievement in reading is good. By the end of Year 9 pupils can read, understand and analyse a range of stories, information texts, video and film. For example, low-attaining pupils were brought by a very carefully phased series of activities to give close attention to an episode from Jan Needle’s *The Bully*. Their reading aloud was hesitant and uncertain to begin with. The teacher’s praise, support, and the task of converting the incident into the form of a script allowed pupils to progress in confidence and understanding. Higher-attaining pupils’ reading aloud is also less advanced than their silent reading. In one lesson, for example, pupils read each other’s descriptive writing. They used technical vocabulary accurately and easily to advise and criticise their partners’ work. It was done sympathetically and well and implied very effective teaching. Subsequent reading of *The Machine Gunners* was reasonably fluent but not commensurate with pupils’ achievement in other aspects of reading. By the age of 16, further progress in reading is evident. Lower-attaining pupils, on account of energetic and knowledgeable teaching, read film texts with good technical understanding. Higher-attaining pupils, as in a Year 11 revision lesson, comment upon texts in sharp and insightful ways. Enjoyment and understanding are key features of their response to narrative, theatre and media texts.

100. Standards of speaking and listening are satisfactory throughout Years 7 to 11. Teachers use questions well. Pupils are targeted skilfully and are kept alert. Boys and girls equally are required to answer and often to extend and justify their views and opinions. In some lessons, there is an astute use of pair and group work for pupils to discuss and refine what they want to say. Boys and girls are sometimes paired, for instance, in order to benefit from each other’s perceptions. This is not a common feature however and is seldom seen in lower sets. When control and behaviour management is a priority this is understandable. It does mean however that practice in using talk for collaborative learning is relatively undeveloped and gives a partial explanation for pupils’ relative lack of autonomy.

101. Pupils’ experience in other subject areas contributes to their language development. In most departments the key words and concepts relating to subjects are displayed and consolidated through a variety of approaches. In Business Studies, for example, the good use of role-play encourages purposeful and extended speaking. In PE pupils’ accurate use of technical vocabulary is required and developed. In all subjects the marking of written work gives attention to errors of spelling and expression.

102. Standards of teaching are good overall at both Key Stages. Teachers' subject knowledge is very secure and is made available to pupils through sound planning and effective teaching. All lessons seen were satisfactory or better. Two thirds were good and very good in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11, four fifths of the lessons seen were good or very good. Pupils are made aware of the objectives of each lesson. Teachers provide a variety of activities to consolidate learning and help pupils make progress. For example, the structure and momentum of a Year 7 lesson brought low-attaining pupils to a secure understanding of the function of adjectives in descriptive writing. Through a mix of whole-class, paired and individual teaching, with a learning support assistant wholly integrated into the lesson, pupils considered the use of adjectives in *Harry Potter* and in their own writing. It was energetic, purposeful teaching to which pupils, both boys and girls equally, responded with a genuine sense of enquiry. Similarly, an average-attaining set of Year 10 pupils was asked to consider the question 'How do film makers communicate their ideas?' To very tight deadlines, pairs discussed ideas, shared them with the class, noted technical terminology, and used the information to analyse the opening sequence to *The Lion King*. It was beautifully managed teaching leading to well-informed involvement. Pupils knew they were making progress and enjoyed it. This very good practice is not always reflected in the detail of lesson plans. Matters of procedure, grouping, progression and intended outcome should be recorded and announced as a matter of course in order to give specific frameworks for learning and to enhance pupils' understanding of the methods, as well as the content, of lessons. Such developments would reduce the number of occasions when too much teacher talk leaves insufficient opportunity for pupils to amplify and develop their own ideas.

103. The point about sharing best practice applies to also to marking. At its best it is full, supportive and clear targets for progress are set. Lower-attaining pupils in particular benefit from close comment and specific pointers for development and improvement. Higher-attaining pupils however, are not given such clear feedback. In lessons and planning, there are fewer clear strategies to stretch and challenge the more able. In marking there is often little to indicate how pupils' might improve the quality and range of their written work.

104. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in English lessons are good. Teachers are trusted, respected and appreciated. The courtesy, good humour and sense of purpose which teachers communicate to pupils are reflected back in the treatment they in turn receive.

105. Curricular provision in English is satisfactory. Schemes of work cover the requirements of the National Curriculum straightforwardly and well, though ICT requires a higher and more specific profile in Years 7 to 9. Links with primary schools provide a coherent transition from Key Stage 2 to 3. A variety of extra-curricular opportunities are offered: for example through revision classes, poetry competitions, and reading clubs. The central emphasis on literacy development within the curriculum is impressive and appropriate to the needs of pupils.

106. The leadership of the department is good. The handbook and schemes of work are comprehensive and useful. Roles and responsibilities are clear. Stock and resources are well-managed. Accommodation for English is of high quality: spacious, well-kept, bright and motivating. There are good systems for assessing pupils' progress, analysing results, and making subsequent adjustments to the composition of groups and the teaching programme. New colleagues are inducted into the department supportively and professionally. Time is tight, given the number of initiatives currently underway, for monitoring the work of the department, and limits the impact of the best practice of its members.

107. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Literacy is now central to the work of the department. Lower-attaining pupils respond positively to teachers' high expectations. Pupils' progress and achievement is carefully monitored and promoted. Most

of the major points for development from the last inspection have therefore been addressed. Two matters remain: the consistency of both marking and precise target-setting, particularly

for higher attaining pupils. The connection between the present marking system and the National Curriculum levels, or the GCSE grade criteria is not sufficiently transparent. Pupils still do not have enough opportunity to use ICT to draft, revise, edit and present their writing in Years 7 to 9.

108. Pupils are well served by the English teaching they receive. It is coherently planned, energetically delivered, and hugely supportive. Achievement is good and improving. Targets for the improvement of attainment are challenging, but given the commitment and professionalism of the current team of teachers, capable of being met.

Literacy

109. Provision for literacy development is good. The school has given high commitment to raising standards in literacy over a number of years: well before the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy. For example, involvement in the Secondary Reading Partnership over the past two years has led to very good progress for pupils taking part in the programme. The school has worked closely with the LEA in promoting literacy through staff training. A co-ordinator has been appointed and a literacy link group established with representatives from each department. The school's literacy action plan is sensibly progressive and detailed. For each week there is a school wide literacy focus which teachers and pupils take seriously. The literacy framework is central to the planning and conduct of English lessons and its impact is also evident in most other departments. However, the literacy co-ordinator has insufficient designated time at present to undertake a monitoring function across subject departments.

DRAMA

110. Overall the provision for drama is **satisfactory**.

Strengths:

- Extracurricular opportunities for pupils;
- Achievement at GCSE.

Weaknesses:

- Insufficient time for the subject in Years 7 to 9;
- Insecure grasp of drama disciplines in Years 7 to 9.

111. In 2001 attainment at GCSE was well below national expectations. Achievement however was good. The proportion of pupils entered for the examination was much greater than the national average, and within school comparison shows pupils' points scores in drama were considerably higher than in the average of their other subjects.

112. Standards of teaching are satisfactory overall. Of the three lessons seen the one in Years 7 to 9 was unsatisfactory. In Years 10 and 11, one lesson was satisfactory and one was good.

113. These standards relate directly to the degree to which pupils' progress was supported by the manageable challenge of the activities they were asked to undertake. For example, the unsatisfactory lesson aimed to give pupils practice in concentration. A series of mirror exercises did not produce work of sufficient focus. Nevertheless, pupils were asked to carry

out improvised scenes of their own choosing. These became increasingly ragged and undisciplined because pupils' abilities and understanding had not been properly judged and consolidated. Boys' poor behaviour compromised the quality of work of the whole class.

114. By contrast good teaching at Key Stage 4 had Year 11 pupils making clear and accelerated progress. At the beginning of the lesson pupils very quickly revised the concepts which might frame their practical performances in the GCSE examination. The teacher split the class into mixed working groups explaining the reasons for doing so. They then were asked to devise scenes from a visual stimulus (a surrealist painting) to very tight deadlines, using the concepts identified at the beginning of the lesson. The teacher circulated to advise and encourage, but kept interventions to a minimum. The principal aim was to demonstrate to pupils that they were capable of working successfully and independently under constraints of time. The careful preparation and the clarity of the lesson's objectives led to work of high quality.

115. The schemes of work for drama show sensible long and medium term planning. However, because drama only appears on the timetable in Year 8, there is insufficient time or continuity to establish a strong foundation of knowledge and understanding for the GCSE option in Years 10 and 11.

116. The extracurricular contribution of drama to pupils' enjoyment and achievement is very good. There are annual, inclusive, school productions of musicals and plays. The drama club is successful and popular. There are regular, well-attended, public cabaret performances. Smaller scale productions, (*Macbeth* in the drama studio, and *Under Milk Wood* at the Local Authority Learning Centre) give real challenge, and are part of the schools' provision for gifted and talented pupils.

117. Leadership of the department is satisfactory. Accommodation for the subject is well-maintained. The curriculum and syllabus for Years 10 and 11 is being changed in order to put more emphasis on performance skills and to connect with drama provision in other schools in the area. Liaison and collaboration with other arts subjects in the school, particularly in respect of extra-curricular provision, is good. This shows committed and thoughtful leadership. It is important however to make general the best practice in lesson planning in order to promote pupils' further progress in the subject.

MATHEMATICS

118. The overall quality of provision in mathematics is **satisfactory** with many good features.

Strengths:

- Experienced teachers ensure that teaching is good overall.
- Teachers promote good relationships with pupils, behaviour is good and learning is good in classes.
- Provision for information and communication technology in Years 7 to 9 is good.
- Teaching is modified to take into account the National Numeracy Strategy.

Areas for improvement:

- The raising of standards particularly in Years 10 and 11 by:
 - * the use of a wider range of teaching styles to give pupils greater opportunities for independent learning in preparation for examination work
 - * the grading of class and homework in terms of national standards in Years 9 and 11 on a regular basis.
 - * Full provision of ICT in Years 10 and 11.

119. Standards in mathematics are well below national averages for all schools as measured in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9. Standards were good in comparison with similar schools in 2001. Between 1997 and 2001 standards have improved faster than the national trend. Standards for boys and girls have been comparable during this period but the improvement for girls is greater than that for boys during 2000 and 2001. The proportion of pupils obtaining the higher Level 6 in National Curriculum tests is higher in mathematics than English or science but the proportion obtaining the normally expected Level 5 is slightly lower in mathematics than in English or science. Although standards of pupils on entry to the school have risen in 1999 and 2000 they are still well below national averages. Achievement of pupils between Year 7 and Year 9 is good.

120. Standards in GCSE were well below national averages for all schools in 2001 for the higher grades A* to C. Standards have improved at a rate slightly above the national trend between 1997 and 2001, with a decline in 2001 related to lower standards in National Curriculum tests in Year 9 in 1999. Approximately 80 per cent of pupils are entered for GCSE. Some pupils are not entered because of poor attendance in school and others are entered for the certificate of achievement examination in numeracy. The different entry rates for mathematics, English and science makes it difficult to compare the results but they would appear to be better than in English and not as good as those in science. Similarly, the proportion of boys entered for GCSE is less than the proportion of girls being entered in 2001 giving an higher standard for boys in comparison with girls overall. Achievement during Years 10 and 11 is good in relation to the lower standards in National Curriculum tests in Year 9 up to 1999.

121. Standards of work seen during the inspection are below national expectations overall. These standards are above those reached by pupils in National Curriculum tests in Year 9 and particularly in GCSE in Year 11. Evidence from the scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that pupils perform well on routine exercises in class but make errors under examination conditions. Higher-attaining pupils in regular attendance present good course work with extended writing, neat tabulation of results and appropriate conclusions. Poor attendance by some pupils has an adverse effect on their course work marks and for other pupils it leads to them not being entered for GCSE. Average and lower-attaining pupils produce few examples of extended writing and there are few opportunities for the development of written work in other years in the school.

122. An increasing proportion of pupils in Years 7 to 9 produce work at standards in line with national expectations in comparison with Years 10 and 11. In a class in Year 9 working on the probabilities of throwing different numbers with dice, fractions were worked out accurately and pupils appreciated the difference between their results and those which were predicted theoretically. In a higher-attaining class in Year 7, pupils used fractions, decimals and percentages successfully in dividing quantities into certain proportions. However, number and algebraic skills are not secure for many pupils. Weaknesses in number work spoil diagrammatic work in geometry so that incorrect answers are obtained. ICT is used successfully in Years 7 to 9 to support mathematics and develop computer skills. For example, a Year 7 class used spreadsheets successfully to find the total cost of items when both the number and cost of individual items are changed. Pupils have less access to computers in Years 10 and 11 and this aspect of work needs further development, given that pupils do not have separate lessons in ICT. Attainment by pupils with special educational needs is good in comparison with their prior attainment. These pupils are given targets for development in their individual education plans.

123. Pupils' attitudes to mathematics are good. They behave well in classes and keep their exercise books tidy. Recently bought textbooks are respected. Pupils listen to teachers' questions and to other pupils' answers. In most lessons, pupils work individually with occasional opportunities for discussion in pairs. Relationships between teachers and pupils and between pupils are good.

124. Teaching is good overall. Teachers have good knowledge of mathematics and plan their lessons thoroughly. They use good questioning techniques to develop learning in a structured way and ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to answer questions. In most lessons, key words are listed on the board with particular reference to terms used in statistics and ICT. They care that pupils succeed in mathematics. For example, in a Year 8 class of lower-attaining pupils, pupils gained greater understanding in the use of decimals because of good planning by the teacher and the use of appropriate materials. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 makes increasing use of approaches in the national numeracy strategy, using mental arithmetic tests as starter activities, and this is producing higher standards of number skills than in the current Years 10 and 11. Pupils with special educational needs are taught in small groups by experienced teachers, and occasionally with support teachers who are fully aware of the aims of the lesson.

125. During the week of the inspection there were few opportunities for pupils to work independently, make mistakes, be able to correct them with teachers' support and develop a greater understanding of mathematics in the process. This lack of a deep understanding is the main reason for mistakes made under examination conditions. Teachers need to develop a wider range of teaching styles which promote independent learning, using the secure structure which they have at present. For example, in a Year 9 lesson about the relationship between the sides of figures the teacher fully discussed higher attaining pupils' mistakes on an individual and class basis leading to greater understanding. Conversely, in a Year 8 class, pupils found the total cost of items by multiplying decimal quantities by whole numbers, but this lesson lacked reinforcement of basic skills because every step was structured by the teacher.

126. Teachers set and mark homework, which is related to lessons. This work is marked and work is given a letter grade. Pupils' work is not graded often enough according to National Curriculum Levels in Year 9, nor to projected grades in GCSE in Year 11. Pupils' work is graded on a termly basis but more frequent grading is needed to increase pupils' and parents' awareness of the required standards in national examinations.

127. Leadership and management of the department are good. The mathematics department has addressed the issues in the last inspection report and has made good progress in dealing with them. Teaching approaches include mental mathematics on a regular basis and teachers have responded to the national numeracy strategy as part of the school's numeracy policy. Standards have risen by Years 9 and Year 11. An analysis of standards within the department draws upon termly and yearly tests and has been used to set challenging targets for GCSE in the next two years. The review of pupils' work has led to more demanding work being set for pupils in Years 7 to 9 and to the introduction of GCSE statistics for higher-attaining pupils in Year 10. The department has the capacity for further improvement.

Numeracy

128. The provision for the development of numeracy skills is unsatisfactory overall. Apart from mathematics only business studies, design and technology, and geography up to Year 9 use number work systematically to promote learning in their subjects. Many subjects do not have a clear policy statement for number nor is number work written into their schemes of work.

129. The recently formed link committee of departmental representatives has made good progress in carrying out an audit of the present position. The committee is now chaired by the school's numeracy co-ordinator who has accepted responsibility from a local authority adviser. The committee has drawn up policy statements for the use of calculators, the provision of posters around the school on the use of number, common practice in the construction of graphs, and has taken advice following lesson observations by the adviser. Support is provided from extra funding for pupils who are not expected to reach the appropriate levels in Year 9 in mathematics and for higher-attaining pupils in mathematics in Years 9 and 10. A larger number of pupils now reach Level 6 in mathematics in Year 9, and statistics has been introduced as a subject for higher-attaining pupils in Year 10. The work of the link committee has not had time as yet to influence all departments in the use of number work to develop learning.

130. Mathematics teachers are using the National Numeracy Strategy successfully. There are examples of good use made independently elsewhere. The strategy is also used well in design and technology, for instance in the measurement of ingredients, the calculation of resistance and voltages in circuits and the accurate measuring of materials. Number work in French was observed to stimulate lower-attaining pupils' interest in learning vocabulary and to speak the language. In geography, pupils are able to interpret pie charts and graphs in work about tourism and climate, and can use co-ordinates to fix a position on a map. The need now, however, is to draw together all contributions in other subjects into a coherent and co-ordinated approach to implementing the National Numeracy Strategy.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths:

- Teachers' have a good knowledge of their subject.
- Target setting in Years 7 to 9 helps pupils know what they need to do to improve.
- Good relationships exist between teachers and pupils.
- Pupils behave well in lessons.
- Health and safety matters are well managed.

Areas for improvement:

- The level of work in some lessons is inappropriate. Teachers' planning takes insufficient account of what pupils already know.
- Not enough links are made in lessons between the various aspects of science.
- Teachers need to ensure that all pupils fully understand the work they are doing.
- Too little use made of ICT.
- Teaching is not monitored adequately.
- Management arrangements in the department need to be reviewed.

132. By the end of Year 9 in 2001, the percentages of pupils at Levels 5 and 6 in the National Curriculum tests were well below average for all schools. Over the previous three years, standards had improved and were closer to national averages. Compared with similar schools in 2001, the percentage of pupils at Level 5 was above average and was close to average at Level 6. Average point scores were also above average when compared with similar schools. Boys' attainment was higher than that of girls in 2001. Over the previous three years, the attainment of boys improved at a faster rate.

133. By the end of Year 11 in 2001, standards were well below average. In the GCSE examinations, the percentage of pupils gaining A*-C grades in double-award science was significantly below average. The percentage of pupils gaining the highest grades (A* and A) was very low. The attainment of boys was higher than that of girls. Pupils' attainment in these examinations was higher than would have been predicted from the levels they achieved in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9. Pupils' attainment in science was better than in many other subjects in the school.

134. Standards have improved since the last inspection. Levels of attainment in science on entry to the school are well below the national average. Inspection evidence shows that, by the end of Year 9, attainment is close to the national average and pupils make good progress. Most pupils are developing practical skills that they use effectively when making experimental observations. Many pupils are able to make appropriate connections between these observations and the scientific principles they have been taught. The majority of pupils in Year 11 are working below the national average. They find it difficult to retain information and to make effective links between different aspects of the subject. The attainment of these pupils in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 was below average. Progress in Years 10 and 11 is therefore satisfactory. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls in lessons. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.

135. Throughout the school, pupils display satisfactory attitudes to learning. Behaviour is good and is fostered by productive relationships between teachers and pupils. In Years 7 to 9, many pupils respond well. They concentrate and are keen to learn. Pupils respond best when teaching enables them to relate to the work they are doing and provides opportunities for them to become actively involved. As was recognised in the last inspection, many pupils are passive in lessons and wait for the teacher to provide information. This is particularly the case in Years 10 and 11, where some pupils are reluctant to answer questions. Pupils' interest is aroused when teaching challenges and excites them. This was the case in a very good Year 7 lesson in which average-attaining pupils measured voltages in electrical circuits. Circuits were chosen so that pupils could learn the basic principles, while being provided with opportunities to extend their understanding. Supportive teaching enabled them to carry out the practical work successfully. Effective questioning challenged them to relate their results to the ways in which the electrical components were connected. Pupils persevered well and developed a very good understanding of the topic.

136. Most teaching is satisfactory. During the inspection, a third of lessons in Years 7 to 9 were good or very good. In Years 10 and 11, half of the lessons seen were good, but one was unsatisfactory. Where teaching is successful, lessons are developed effectively and pupils understand what is required of them. For example, in a good Year 9 lesson on the classification of elements, the teacher's clear explanation allowed pupils to relate their earlier work on electronic structures to the arrangement of elements in the periodic table. They were able to use this to predict the properties of unfamiliar elements. Teachers are

well qualified and have a good knowledge of their subject. In general, their expectations of pupils' capabilities are higher than at the time of the last inspection. They know their pupils well and provide good support and encouragement, but teaching is less satisfactory when the work is too directed by the teacher.

137. Although procedures are satisfactory, the actual assessment of pupils' progress needs to be improved. The marking of pupils' work is inconsistent. In some cases, not enough guidance is provided to help pupils determine how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Although attainment at the end of each module of work is assessed adequately, assessment of understanding during lessons is unsatisfactory; this was a weakness identified in the last inspection. Lesson planning often fails to take sufficient account of what pupils already know. As a result, the work in lessons is sometimes inappropriate; either pitched at too high a level, or, as also reported in the last inspection, lacking in challenge. Questioning is not always skilful enough and homework, while set regularly, does not always provide an effective means for judging progress. The department has a large amount of information relating to pupils' attainment, which is being used to set targets for individual pupils. These targets help them to recognise what they need to do to improve. The process is particularly effective in Years 7 to 9.

138. The provision for ICT is limited by a lack of computer equipment in laboratories, although some use is made of whole school facilities. No facilities exist for data logging and remote sensing, which reduces the scope for investigational work. Some teachers lack the confidence to make full use of ICT in their lessons and training has yet to be provided. Overall, the use of ICT in science is unsatisfactory.

139. The co-ordination of the work of the department is satisfactory. However, there are a number of areas requiring development. Work in classrooms is not regularly monitored. At present few opportunities exist for teaching to be evaluated and for teachers to observe first hand the good practice which is identified. This would help address the small amount of unsatisfactory teaching in the department and encourage the introduction of a greater variety of approaches. Management arrangements are inadequate. There are two main areas for concern. Firstly, teachers do not have enough control over their designated areas of responsibility. As a result it is difficult to ensure that changes are introduced swiftly and effectively. Secondly, the division of responsibilities along subject lines (physics, chemistry and biology) is hindering the co-ordination of work across the whole subject. In some lessons, particularly in Years 7 to 9, pupils are not making effective links between key areas of science. Although health and safety issues are well managed, there are concerns about chemical storage, which was also reported in the last inspection.

140. Overall, the science department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection and has the capacity to improve further.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths:

- Pupils have very good attitudes to the subject as they try hard and behave well in lessons.
- Art makes a very good contribution to pupils' cultural and social development.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are good, and there are good working practices.
- Pupils gain confidence and skills from the good one-to-one help and encouragement they receive.

Areas for development:

- The curriculum, although broad, needs a better balance between fine art and applied art.
- Standards in drawing and painting are low throughout the school and need improving.
- Work done in sketchbooks, especially for homework, needs structuring.
- Computer-aided art needs developing to help pupils who have weak drawing skills.

142. When pupils enter the school their skills in art are well below average. Drawing and painting are both weak, as pupils have few experiences in their former schools to do extensive artwork. They know a little about mixing paint to gain different colours but application of paint is poor. They have some skill in making models, but mainly in paper and card. Their knowledge of art and artists is thin. Pupils name some of the famous artists, such as Vincent Van Gogh, and recall his painting of 'The Sunflowers', but know little of his life. Although by the end of Year 9, pupils' levels of attainment are below average, it represents good achievement over the three years in school, as pupils make good progress in skills from a low starting point.

143. The results of National Curriculum teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2001 showed that the percentage of pupils attaining Levels 5 and above was well below average for similar schools. Work seen during the inspection shows that standards overall in drawing and painting by the end of Year 9 are well below average and coincide with the results of the teachers' assessments, but work in three-dimensions is sometimes better than average. Pupils in Year 9, for example, are working well in groups to create large banners, shields, totems and heads. They have a good grasp of proportion and visual effects and are producing some very interesting well-constructed and durable pieces. Drawings in sketchbooks are very varied. Some of the younger and the lower-attaining pupils, mainly boys, spend little time on their homework and their results are scrappy. In lessons, pupils' drawing is weak because they have not developed observational skills nor built up the knowledge of how to represent shape, tone or texture in objects. Their imaginative drawing is very naïve as a direct result. Pupils are generally careful when painting and gain the colours they need, but many of them are unsure of the depth of colour and use paint inappropriately. Printing is good. Pupils in Year 9 understand how to transfer simple drawings into prints and effective repeat patterns. Many pupils use the computers successfully to search for information about artists and art in different countries, but they are unskilled in computer-aided art. Their knowledge of the work of their chosen artists and cultures is good. Pupils sometimes write about their findings, but the pupils who have difficulties with literacy often struggle to use words, even though they have word banks given to them. Overall, from Year 7 to 9, pupils make good progress in skills and the pupils who are more talented in art make good progress in their knowledge of art. During these first three years in school, all pupils make the best physical efforts with their work.

144. Results in GCSE examinations in art and design over the past three years show some fluctuation, but in 2001 the percentage of pupils attaining grades A* to C doubled. The percentages of pupils gaining A* to C grades and A* to G grades are below average when compared with similar schools. Many pupils gained their best grades in art, as overall results were the fourth highest in school. Most pupils who take art in Years 10 and 11 have some interest in the subject, but not all of them show artistic ability. Many pupils find drawing without copying pictures very difficult. Boys tend not to do much work in sketchbooks and most pupils have not grasped the difference between a sketch and a drawing. Few pupils develop individual styles. Pupils paint very carefully and colour mixing is good, but overall, painting is below average, except for a few of the higher-attaining boys and girls. By the end of Year 11, pupils understand the value of research to give them ideas before starting a project. Most of them easily find something useful by using computers to scan, save and print out images and they use library books to help them with writing. In activities such as these, pupils' literacy, ICT and cultural development are enhanced at appropriate levels. In general, work in three-dimensions is weak, as pupils have fewer opportunities to work with clay or modelling materials. Overall, during Years 10 and 11, pupils make good progress in their knowledge of art, but less on understanding it. In these years, the most talented pupils make the greatest creative efforts with their work. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in practical work, but less in theory.

145. Most pupils have very good attitudes towards art. They try hard, keep busy in lessons and want to do well. Behaviour is good. Most pupils listen to the teacher, enjoy watching demonstrations and obey instructions, and the oldest ones also act upon advice. Pupils get on well together. They share fairly, show interest in what others are doing and appreciate their efforts. All pupils are responsible for preparing their own workspaces and for storing their work, which aids their personal development, but many rely very heavily on the teachers as they lack confidence. Only the higher-attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 show some measure of independence. These pupils show pride in their efforts and are confident in showing them to adults for approval.

146. The quality of teaching in art is good and leads to good quality learning. In the 13 lessons seen during the inspection, there was one unsatisfactory lesson and the rest were graded as satisfactory to very good. In the unsatisfactory lesson, the teacher failed to make good contact with the class at the start of the lesson, so class management was poor; the given task was inappropriate and unchallenging, pupils were confused and little learning took place. All other lessons showed much better practice and quality of learning. Teachers pass on their good subject knowledge to the pupils. They give demonstrations, mainly to show techniques, but also to help the many pupils who want to do well but lack the confidence to try. By using the language of art and giving pupils word banks, teachers help pupils to extend their vocabularies. Lessons usually begin with some form of review, or appraisal of homework, to focus pupils' attention and ensure they understand what they have to do. Pupils receive information and instruction and have sufficient time for their own practical work. Teachers move well in lessons to speak to each pupil in turn. This makes pupils feel valued and the teachers get a clear impression of how well pupils are doing, and how much effort they put into their work. It serves to encourage the lower-attaining pupils, helps those who are struggling and stretches the higher-attaining ones. At the end of lessons, teachers give praise if warranted, and sometimes give homework to extend the topic. Teachers put marks or comments on all pieces of work to inform pupils how they could improve it. They value pupils' work and display it in the studios and around school, which raises pupils' self-esteem.

147. Leadership is good and there has been good progress made since the last inspection. The new head of department has made a good impact on standards and the work of the department in general. The scheme of work has been rewritten to give more opportunities to explore and use different art materials. Visits to art galleries and work linked to other countries, cultures and religions make a good contribution to pupils' cultural education. Marking and assessment now comply with requirements and the results of assessments are used to help in planning lessons and for checking pupils' work against targets. Accommodation has been rearranged and better quality resources have been purchased. The development plan is realistic. The curriculum follows the requirements of the National Curriculum, but the time allocated to the subject in Years 7 to 9 is below recommendations and is at present too heavily biased towards drawing and painting. The use of ICT is good, particularly for research, but computer-aided art needs strengthening. Sketchbook work needs restructuring throughout the school. Occasional lessons are taken by non-specialist teachers, and although the head of department produces packs of support materials to help them, some classes taught by the non-specialists are performing worse than others.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths:

- Teachers have a secure knowledge of the subject;
- Pupils respond positively to the subject and have good relationships with other pupils and with their teachers.
- ICT is used well as a resource within pupils' study;
- A well organised provision for electronics in KS3 and systems and control in Key Stage 4.

Areas for improvement:

- Boys' and girls' standards and achievement are not high enough in the study of both resistant and compliant materials.
- A more organised approach to the content of design folders and their organisation in both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.
- To provide strategies to enable lower-attaining pupils in Key Stage 4 to approach designing and making tasks in a more confident and informed way.

149. Pupils enter school often having had varied experiences of design and technology in their primary schools. In 2000 GCSE results were below average and girls outperformed boys. In 2001 results were below average and the proportion of both boys and girls gaining the higher grades fell significantly. However, most pupils gained at least a grade G.

150. Standards of work seen during the inspection were average overall by the end of Years 9 and 11. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 make useful progress as a result of enthusiastic and organised teaching. They develop an understanding of the basic skills of designing and making. In Years 10 and 11, these skills are further extended as pupils become more familiar in dealing with investigative problem-solving tasks in, for example, Year 11 textiles and Year 10 food studies. Pupils with special educational needs also make sound progress and are helped by the attention and endeavour of their teachers.

151. Pupils at the end of Year 9 are reaching standards typically expected of pupils at that stage. They are able to consider problem-solving situations in a structured and logical way and can make use of simple analytical and investigative strategies in formulating a variety of

possible solutions. They are given interesting and well thought out tasks to study, enabling pupils of all levels of attainment to develop a variety of skills and gain an understanding of new materials and information in the fulfilment of their work. Pupils develop relevant skills in electronics, demonstrate good concentration and maintain interest when undertaking theoretical and practical tasks. In graphical work, pupils are acquiring techniques to present and explain designs. Design folders however need improvement in their presentation and organisation. There are some pupils who are unsure as to how to express a variety of design ideas and make decisions about them. Their work often does not fully illustrate the links between initial ideas and their development towards final realised outcomes. Pupils gain some basic skills in textiles and food study, although work in these areas is under-developed. Pupils in all years have the opportunity to make use of a variety of ICT applications including Internet research in their project work.

152. Standards of attainment by the end of Year 11 are average in resistant materials, textiles and systems and control. Attainment in food studies has been undermined by the regular absence of many pupils who are having difficulty fulfilling coursework requirements. Pupils following studies in child development show a simple understanding of the theory of the subject in their portfolio work, and in many cases in their child study. Standards of attainment are satisfactory where the child study is thoroughly researched and well presented but reduced where the studies are basic or incomplete. Oral work is often good and pupils participate actively in all discussions. Written work is well presented but more able pupils do not write in sufficient depth. The use of ICT enhances portfolio work.

153. Higher-attaining pupils produce some detailed design folders that include relevant research with focused analysis and investigational work, extended writing and evaluations. Pupils have an appropriate knowledge of the design process, sound working knowledge of materials and constructional techniques and incorporate this information into their design work. There are some examples of accurately-made and well-finished practical work in all subject areas. At a lower level of attainment, pupils lack the confidence to work independently and are only able to offer a limited number of design ideas. Some pupils are uncertain in their approach to making decisions about their project work and are apprehensive and sometimes reluctant to fully participate in design-and-make activities. Their design ideas are superficial, as is the analysis and development. They lack experience in handling and understanding the requirements of a range of materials and the skills necessary for effective manufacture. This often results in inappropriate and poorly made practical projects. Pupils concentrate well in class, are attentive, and work hard. They enjoy their time in design and technology and show a sensible approach to safety and correct working techniques.

154. The quality of teaching in the department is satisfactory. Teachers have secure subject knowledge, lessons are adequately planned and teachers make maximum use of the resources available. In Years 7 to 9, there is a shared approach to design and technology and useful opportunities for pupils to discuss and apply their design and making skills. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well in class and are able to work individually. Support staff make a valuable contribution to their progress. The common approach to design and technology study continues in Years 10 and 11, although the organisation, challenge and use of the time available are more variable across the subject areas. In years 7 to 9 pupils are encouraged to discuss their work in general conversations using technical terminologies. Pupils' opinions and judgements are encouraged and analysed, for example in Year 8 food studies.

155. The management of the department is good. The head of department is keen to bring about improvements and has some clear plans for the future. Valuable developments are taking place in the use of ICT, electronics, systems and control. Assessment and the monitoring of progress in the department is regular and effective. Staff work well together as a team and share an enthusiasm for the subject. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths:

- Teaching;
- Provision for the lowest attainers;
- Relationships, attitudes and behaviour.

Areas for improvement:

- The continuing lack of ICT and fieldwork in curriculum;
- The lack of community links;
- To concentrate on literacy skills and the development writing styles to improve understanding and retention of knowledge.

157. Standards at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are below the national average.

158. Attainment on entry at age 11 is well below the national average, but pupils make progress in Years 7 to 9, so that even though attainment at the end of Year 9 is still below average, this, nevertheless, represents good achievement. Teachers' formal assessments of attainment at the end of Year 9 show an improvement trend from 1999 to 2001. In 2001 the proportion of pupils gaining the GCSE grades A*-C was well below the national average. However, there has been a steady upward trend in the proportion of pupils achieving A*-C grades and apart from a particularly good year in 1998, these were the best results for nine years. The figures for A*-G grades are better, and the department in 2001 gained results consistent with the national average. Again there has been a steady trend upwards and these grades are the best for ten years.

159. Progress has been at least satisfactory in lessons and work seen, and is good in two out of three lessons. Pupils learn basic number skills in Years 7 to 9 and are able to measure, present and interpret data graphically and use coordinates in mapping work. For example, in a Year 7 class in which all pupils were on the special education needs register, all but one were able to locate places using four figures references. Written skills are not fully developed. Books contain a good volume of work and notes and worksheets are completed and presented well. Although extended writing increases through years 7 to 10, there needs to be more individual work incorporated into enquiry and investigative exercises. Through the constant encouragement of teachers, pupils slowly improve their use of a technical vocabulary, but they are not confident in use and they would benefit from more opportunities to read aloud and for discussion.

160. Levels of understanding are low in some groups, although much of the teaching is directed at improving retention and understanding. Some success can be seen in Year 9, where pupils in the higher-attaining groups demonstrate in their books a clear understanding of geographical processes and patterns. By Year 10 many pupils have gained an

understanding of more complex ideas, such as how a megalopolis is formed, and are able to conduct surveys in fieldwork and take part in decision-making exercises such as 'Can the Earth Cope?' Too often, however, pupils do not retain sufficient knowledge to help them show understanding of important geographical concepts.

161. A major gap in pupils' experience is the continuing lack of information communication technology and the resulting inability to use this valuable tool to improve skills, understanding and presentation. Although girls' work is presented with greater care than that of boys, the standard is about the same.

162. Teaching is never less than satisfactory and is good or very good in two out of three lessons. Preparation is good and pupils are made aware of what they are expected to learn. Pupils are constantly involved in the work by good question-and-answer sessions and levels of interest and concentration are maintained through good use of audio-visual aids, as in a Year 8 lesson on the earth's crust. The preparation and use of materials for pupils of all levels of attainment, including those with special educational needs, are very good. SEN pupils make good progress, particularly in Years 7 to 9, with good support from teachers and learning support assistants. Teachers provide a friendly, non-threatening atmosphere in which all pupils are given an opportunity to flourish, where lessons are linked to pupils' experience, and where learning is constantly reinforced. However, the quality of teaching would be improved by providing more opportunities for fieldwork in Years 7 to 9, by making more use of the school environs to extend practical work, and by ensuring that all lessons are delivered at a good pace.

163. Behaviour is good and pupils show a positive attitude towards the subject and their teachers. Pupils' responses are good and they demonstrate an element of competition in their eagerness to contribute to lessons. Relationships between pupils and pupils and staff are good and everyone works well in pairs and groups, helping each other and sharing information. Pupils are friendly and happy to talk about their work. Pupils gain confidence from the teachers, but are still very dependent on their guidance. Pupils with SEN work well in small groups and persevere in their tasks.

164. Since the last inspection, many aspects described as good have been maintained, such as developing pupils' understanding and making progress, and the work of pupils with SEN. In addition, examination and test results have improved. Teaching has remained good and long term assessment and monitoring of progress have improved, though, National Curriculum Levels are still not used enough when grading pupils' work in Years 7 to 9. It is an improving department. There is a new management structure in humanities and a new awareness of what is possible in geography and how to see through the continuing process of improvement.

HISTORY

165. The overall quality of the history is **satisfactory**.

Strengths:

- No unsatisfactory, and often good teaching;
- Pupil's behaviour and attitudes to work are positive;
- Good management with clear and appropriate educational aims for the subject;
- Some good procedures for assessing pupil's achievements and progress;
- Good progress in Years 7 to 9.

Areas for improvement:

- The identification in the humanities course of common skills that can be jointly taught and reinforced in history and geography in Years 7 to 9;
- The identification in curriculum planning of what different pupils should learn so as to provide appropriate challenge in lessons;
- The provision of information and communication technology in history courses;
- The provision for visits and visitors in the history.

166. The standards of work observed during the inspection are below the national average in both key stages. Pupils enter the school well below the national average and make good progress in their learning during Years 7 to 9. Teacher's assessments for pupils at the end of Year 9 show that the majority of pupils have improved to below average with a minority remaining well below average. Such standards are achieved because the teaching is never less than satisfactory, and, often good. In Years 10 to 11 pupils achieve and progress satisfactorily. In 2001 ...the proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-G in the GCSE examination remained below the national average. The proportion of pupils achieving A* to C grades is rising but still well below average?

167. During Years 7 to 9 pupils learn at satisfactory rates. In Year 7 they extend their knowledge of Roman history and the Norman invasion of 1066, and high-attaining pupils show good factual recall. In Year 8 pupils add to their knowledge and understanding of the events of the English Civil War, and the rule of Oliver Cromwell. In Year 9 the lower-attaining pupils can answer basic questions about who were the leaders of Britain and Germany, the names of British planes and the levels of pilot deaths during the Second World War. For a significant number of pupils, the degree to which they can evaluate and expand upon the information that they have is weak: they have only an insecure idea about what Hitler was planning and why the Battle of Britain was so important.

168. During GCSE courses, pupils learn about the Vietnam War and discuss the Tet Offensive in some detail. In Year 11 pupils extend their knowledge about the rule of Diem and the unrest surrounding in South Vietnam at that time. Pupils produce satisfactory coursework, but many rely on the teacher to guide their thinking about the more difficult analysis of the reasons behind South Vietnamese attitudes to the Americans.

169. Pupils throughout the school learn make generally satisfactory progress in acquiring the skills associated with the subject. In Years 7 to 9 pupils are learning about myths in history and the need to identify facts. However, in the development of skills there is evidence of insufficient challenge and progress. Although pupils in Years 10 and 11 carry out research and answer questions from written sources, the more difficult skill of raising questions about evidence is insecure.

170. Pupils have good and regular opportunities to write lengthy pieces of work on the subjects they have studied. Overall, pupils are confident when they describe the events they study, but struggle to go beyond the basics when asked to evaluate and analyse. Below average literacy levels do not help pupils who are attempting to write detailed accounts about their studies. In Years 10 and 11 pupils do not consistently weave facts and analysis into their work that explain the wider context and they make statements that are not backed up with the necessary evidence. Given that history is taught as part of the humanities programme in Years 7 to 9 there is an urgent need for the subject to identify where common skills can be developed and reinforced across all the humanities subjects.

171. Teaching is never less than satisfactory and often good. Teachers manage behaviour well and enable pupils to learn and contribute to the lesson. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to work together. They co-operate well together and their work usually shows that they take pride in what they do. Teachers often make good use of resources and set a variety of different tasks for pupils, so as to maintain their interest. While many pupils respond positively to questioning by teachers, the nature of these questions, both oral and in worksheets, is often insufficiently challenging. They concentrate on testing the pupil's knowledge of facts rather than being more open and allowing pupils to speculate and extend their views. Whilst some good opportunities exist for pupils to research their extended writing topics, the degree to which they take responsibility for their own learning is insufficiently developed in class and pupils often have a passive approach to their studies. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in the subject, mainly as a result of teachers using information about them which enables them to plan work appropriately.

172. The management of the department is good with satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Appropriate targets for development are identified and set as a result of monitoring and analysis of examination results, and standards of work are improving... However, there is no opportunity for the head of department to observe other history teachers in the classroom. Schemes of work and good assessment procedures have been put in place. The department makes a satisfactory contribution to the development of literacy through the use of extended writing tasks and key words but the numeracy aspect needs to be more clearly identified. The use of ICT within history is in need of urgent development. The department offers only a limited range of visits and visitors, but makes a good contribution to the moral and social education of the pupils. Resources are generally satisfactory although a shortage of textbooks often results in an over-reliance on worksheets.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

173. Overall, the quality of provision is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths:

- Good use of ICT in art, design and technology, and mathematics to extend skills and to aid learning,
- Very good teaching of ICT in GCSE Business Studies;
- Opportunity for pupils to gain additional qualifications in Information Studies;
- Good support is given by technical staff.

Areas for improvement:

- Meeting statutory requirements for the National Curriculum.
- All subjects playing their allotted role in teaching the programmes for ICT
- Improving unsatisfactory progress and attainment for all in Years 7 - 9 and for those in Years 10 and 11 pupils who are not following an accredited course.
- Ensuring the rigorous use of monitoring and assessment to evaluate and review teaching and learning.

174. National Curriculum teacher assessments of the attainment of Y 9 pupils in 2001 indicated that about 20 per cent reached the standards expected, which is well below the national average. The results for 2000 were much higher, and those for 1999 much lower. No Year 11 pupils were entered for an accredited examination in 2001.

175. Standards at the end of the current Year 9 continue to be unsatisfactory and are in line with the 2001 results. A number of factors account for the slow progress made by pupils in Years 7 to 9. Although there are plans to incorporate primary school assessment data for ICT into the schools system, this has not yet happened. The lack of time allocated for the specific teaching of ICT makes it very difficult to discover what the pupils can do, to build on their prior learning and meet their individual needs.

176. Subject departments are expected to use computers as a tool to aid learning and to teach the details of the National Curriculum programmes of study for ICT. However, with the exception of mathematics, art, and design and technology, subjects do not sufficiently reinforce and extend pupils' ICT capability. Some aspects of the National Curriculum for ICT are not taught. Not all pupils have learnt to use e-mail. Pupils do not benefit from opportunities to complete tasks that highlight how ICT can help log data and monitor changes. Little work on creating and using databases has been done. The school is aware of these omissions and there are strategies to solve the problems. Nevertheless, Year 9 pupils have not benefited from a coherent programme from Years 7 to 9, which is needed to systematically enhance their ICT capability. Scrutiny of work in Years 7 to 9 shows that pupils' acquisition of knowledge and understanding, especially in Year 9, is unsatisfactory. However, there are pockets of good work, for example electronic circuit design and control in design and technology, exploring the value of spreadsheets when working with figures in mathematics, and using digital scanners in art. A bank of computers and appropriate software supports pupils with special educational needs, although further training for SEN teachers is recognised as a priority for development.

177. A recent innovation has allowed pupils who are studying GCSE business studies to also take GCSE information studies, although without an extra time allocation. Pupils are keen and, bolstered by very good teaching, they are making good progress and reaching satisfactory levels of attainment. However, the majority of Year 10 and 11 pupils do not take GCSE. Reliance on other subjects to reinforce and extend pupils' knowledge of ICT is unsatisfactory because there is no consistency of approach. Consequently, statutory requirements are not met and attainment is unsatisfactory.

178. The good participation of pupils throughout the school in a range of ICT related extra-curricular activities is a reflection of the positive attitudes that pupils have towards ICT.

179. No discrete teaching of ICT was seen during the week of the inspection although there was good teaching in a number of business studies lessons where ICT skills were being well taught as an integral part of the course. Pupils benefit from the teacher's good understanding of ICT and a structured approach to its delivery. Carefully prepared resources make learning easier and the willingness of teachers to help at lunchtime and after school increases pupils' understanding. Consequently, pupils have sound knowledge of the applications of ICT within business, including word processing, the production of business documents and the use of databases and spreadsheets. Elsewhere, there are missed opportunities to enhance pupils' capability in ICT. For example, in a Year 8 science lesson, pupils were told to access a specified website and make notes on the information about risks to health from smoking. However, the advantages of this method of research compared to others were not discussed, and there was no reference to the use of search engines and a variety of search terms.

180. A new head of the department has been recently appointed who has a vision of how the National Curriculum requirements for ICT can be taught through other subjects. Progress has been made in overcoming the problems associated with the installation of new networks and staff training. There are regular meetings with teachers representing all subject areas. The potential for using ICT across the curriculum has been identified. Subjects have been allocated responsibility for teaching particular aspects of ICT. However, these good initiatives are not yet embedded in practice and the rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning is in its infancy. Further development work is required before a successful ICT department exists. ICT rooms are booked but reservations are not always taken up, which is an inefficient and ineffective use of computers. Except for the ICT taught within the GCSE business studies, there is no systematic assessment of pupils' learning. This inhibits the school's capacity to plan the curriculum to reflect learning needs or to produce targets to extend the attainment of individual pupils. These areas for development are recognised and there are plans to address them.

181. Some improvements have taken place since the last inspection. The school greatly benefits from the work of the technical staff, especially from their expertise in assembling and maintaining computers. Just under half of Year 10 and 11 are well taught and are now preparing for an ICT examination. The school has begun to examine how ICT might be taught throughout the curriculum. However, many of the concerns expressed in the last report remain. Pupils of all ages are not experiencing the full National Curriculum for ICT and statutory obligations are not met. Assessment has not been addressed. Attainment at the age of 14 is still below national expectations, as it is for the majority of 16 olds. Less time is spent teaching the subject in Years 7 - 9 than previously. Overall, progress since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

182. The overall quality of provision is **satisfactory**.

Strengths:

- The very good subject knowledge of all teachers;
- The large proportion of good or very good teaching;
- Teachers' strong shared commitment to raising pupils' attainment;
- The achievement of the able pupils in French and German;
- The achievement of boys and their good attitudes to language learning;
- The excellent contribution of the modern languages assistant.

Areas for improvement:

- giving all pupils in Years 7 - 9 more opportunities to develop speaking and writing.
- continuing to raise the attainment of middle and lower-attaining pupils;
- revision and implementation of schemes of work, linked to assessment procedures and national targets;
- consistently applying the policy for use of the foreign language in lessons;
- raising pupils' awareness of national standards in lessons, and through a coherent and consistently implemented marking policy;
- ensuring that most pupils have their own text books.

183. French is the main language taught at the school. In 2001 GCSE results in French were well below the national average. Although this continues a trend of well below national average performance in French, in 2001 an increased number of lower-attaining pupils was entered for French, which lowered the overall percentage of those gaining above average grades. Against the national trend in modern languages, the boys performed significantly better in French than the girls. Over half of the pupils in Years 8 and 9 study German as an additional foreign language for one lesson a week, and subsequently as an option in Years 10 and 11. In 2001 in German, pupils' GCSE results were well below the national average, but pupils achieved well considering the more limited time available for studying German. This continues a trend of low attainment but good achievement over the past few years in this subject. Standards seen during the inspection in Year 11 in both French and German suggest an improvement on those of the previous year.

184. By the end of Year 9, standards in modern languages are below national expectations for this age group overall. Most pupils join the school with well below average standards in literacy, and little or no prior language knowledge, and their achievement overall by the end of Year 9 is good. In both French and German, the standards of the able pupils have improved substantially since the last report due to the very good teaching of these groups. In French, able pupils in Years 7 to 9 achieve well and by the end of Year 9, many reach standards in line with, and in some cases above national expectations for this age group. Middle and lower-attaining pupils reach standards which are below or well below national expectations, and their achievement in French is satisfactory. In German, most of the pupils reach standards in line with national expectations and achievement in this language is good.

185. By the end of Year 9 standards in writing, speaking and listening, in both French and German, are below average expectations overall. Able pupils attain average or above average levels in both languages. They use vocabulary and main tenses confidently to express opinions and write paragraphs and letters. Middle and lower-attaining pupils can write sentences confidently in French and German using a sound topic-based vocabulary and a range of tenses, but are heavily dependent on teacher guidance and work sheets. This is due mainly to a tendency in Years 7 to 9 in both languages for teachers to control the self-expression of pupils in middle and lower sets with writing frames, which give few opportunities for pupils to develop personal language. Many pupils of all abilities, and especially the boys, respond very well to the teacher's questions and to structured role-play activities; however, middle and lower-attaining pupils often lack confidence in expressing themselves in unpredictable situations. Standards of listening range from above average to below average, with most pupils able to understand and respond to taped exercises of native speakers, and to teachers' questions. In reading, pupils reach standards below national expectations because they lack practice in reading extended texts.

186. By the end of Year 11, standards in French and German are below average overall; the standards seen during inspection ranged from very good to well below average. Achievement by the end of Year 11 is good overall in both languages. The written course work and routine writing of the able pupils is often above average, and sometimes well above average; the most able pupils can express themselves well, recalling confidently their well-developed vocabulary and a range of tenses, due to teachers' increased focus on examination requirements. The routine written work of middle and lower attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 is often not well presented and errors in basic language persist. The pronunciation of most pupils is satisfactory. They perform role plays well, recalling language at a level appropriate to their ability, for example, expressing opinions and undertaking simple transactions in a French restaurant, or asking the way in a German town. Boys

particularly show confidence and perform well in structured speaking tasks. Listening skills in Years 10 and 11 are satisfactory to good. Standards in reading are generally below average. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are disadvantaged in both languages by not always having personal textbooks, and, consequently, their progress in reading and independent learning is limited.

187. In almost all of the lessons seen, pupils were keen to learn and well behaved; there are very good relationships between pupils and teachers.

188. The languages department supports the development of pupils' literacy well through careful attention to accurate copying and phrasing of pupils' response to teachers' questions.

189. Gifted and talented pupils achieve well in all years because they are set appropriately challenging tasks and the pace of lessons is brisk. This was seen in an excellent Year 7 French lesson about sports in which the teacher's good selection of challenging tasks enabled pupils to move rapidly from acquiring new vocabulary, to expressing their personal opinions in French in speaking and writing.

190. Pupils with SEN make good progress overall and are well integrated into lessons, because the teachers match their lesson content to the needs of all the pupils and teaching support assistants give well targeted help to pupils who have special needs in literacy, personal organisation, or concentration.

191. The teaching of information and communications technology through modern languages is unsatisfactory overall due to lack of staff training; however, departmental displays and GCSE course work show that many pupils of all abilities successfully use word processing and graphics for the presentation of written assignments.

192. Teaching is good overall. All the teaching seen was at least satisfactory, and over two thirds of the teaching seen was good or very good. In one case the teaching was excellent. Teachers use questioning very well to revise, practise and extend pupils' learning. Resources are well used to support pupils' learning. The overhead projector and support sheets were used well in many of the lessons seen, contributing effectively to pupils' motivation and supporting the teacher's introduction of key language. For example, in a successful Year 9 German lesson about food preferences, the teacher used clear information sheets to guide pupils in their paired conversations. The teachers have very good subject knowledge and all are fluent or native speakers of at least one of the languages they teach; almost all can teach the two languages. However, some teachers do not consistently use this foreign language expertise in lessons and pupils in different classes have uneven access to good models of natural spoken language. Consequently pupils' development in speaking and listening skills is inconsistent across the department. In some lessons, pupils have few opportunities for quiet absorption of the language, due to teachers' prolonged use of English. The French assistant makes an excellent cultural and linguistic contribution to pupils' learning through effective liaison with teachers, good personally produced learning resources, and very good relationships with the school. Although teachers support pupils well with half-termly testing in listening reading and writing, they are not consistent in the way in which they grade or comment on pupils' progress in routine written work, or in raising pupils' awareness of the national levels at which they are working in particular lessons. Nevertheless, one example of excellent practice was seen of grading pupils' work in Year 10 French according to GCSE criteria, giving some pupils very good awareness of their attainment and progress.

193. The leadership and management of the department is satisfactory overall. There is a strong departmental commitment to improvement; assessment information is used to target

areas for improvement and teachers give willingly of their time for after-school classes and lunchtime clubs to support pupils in their learning. There are weaknesses in teaching for some pupils; movement of pupils between sets and bands is too limited; and the setting of pupils on entry to the school according to general testing does not give opportunities for pupils to find their own level in language learning before being grouped according to attainment. The monitoring, evaluation and promotion of professional development is satisfactory overall; however, the monitoring and sharing of teaching expertise is unsatisfactory. Work has begun on revising the schemes of work in both languages. These now need to be rigorously reviewed to include clear links to the departmental assessment policy and national standards. The departmental policies on use of the French or German in lessons and on marking require reviewing and implementing consistently. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory overall, but although pupils' speaking and writing skills have improved they still require attention and independent learning remains an area for development.

MUSIC

194. Overall, the quality of provision in music is **satisfactory**.

Strengths:

- Teachers' good subject knowledge;
- Good listening skills are being developed;
- A programme of extra-curricular activities is now in place.

Areas for improvement:

- Development and use of ICT;
- Effective methods to broaden the curriculum for Years 7 to 9;
- Assessment and monitoring.

195. Teachers' assessments show that pupils' attainments at the age of 14 are below average compared with the nationally expected levels, although inspection evidence suggests that standards are rising. There were no GCSE music candidates in 2001 but the three candidates entered in 2000 gained A* - G grades. All groups including those pupils with special educational needs and gifted and talented pupils achieve well.

196. By the time pupils are 14 standards seen during the inspection are below average. Considering the very low level of attainment of pupils on entry to the school, this represents good achievement with progress being made by pupils of all abilities. No pupils are studying music in Year 10, and although standards of work seen in Year 11 are below average, this represents satisfactory achievement over time for all pupils. Few pupils in the GCSE class learn to play instruments and some lack basic fingering when using keyboards. In the work observed, all pupils have equal opportunity to develop their musical skills and there are no gender differences. The programmes of study are covered but the curriculum has insufficient breadth to give pupils in Years 7 to 9 a wide, creative base in preparation for GCSE later on. Work on computers was not seen but hardware and software have recently become available and composing using computer technology is about to be introduced.

197. Since the last inspection standards have begun to improve. Extra-curricular activities are being developed and a number of pupils now have instrumental lessons. There is a senior choir for staff and pupils, a junior choir and a small group of instrumentalists that joins with the combined schools' band that rehearses in the school hall each week, all of which are an improvement on the situation at the time of the last report. General certificate of

Secondary Education is now timetabled during the school day. The need to broaden the curriculum and the use of assessment was highlighted at the last inspection and these still need attention. Gifted and talented pupils are encouraged to play instruments, join music groups and take part in the school shows.

198. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall and good in half the lessons in Years 7 to 9. The teacher has good subject knowledge and this has a marked impact on pupils' musical thinking and skills. For example, in a Year 8 lesson, pupils explored musical elements by focusing on timbre, texture and dynamics and because of the teacher's wise choice of musical extracts pupils were able to recognise and explain symbolism suggested by the music. Here concentration and good listening skills reinforced pupils' learning. A repeat of this lesson with the bottom set in Year 8 proved equally successful because of the teacher's patience, skill and determination that there would be no compromising of standards. The support assistant worked very effectively with the teacher in moving learning forward for this class, the majority of whom had IEPs. A Year 7 lesson in which pupils matched words and keyboard sounds for a space age soundscape was less successful because the ideas came from the teacher and allowed little opportunity for individual creativity. Higher-attaining pupils show understanding of tasks and how to tackle them. For example, in one Year 9 class, they were able to compose two lines of a short melody effectively by using a composing chart and keyboards effectively. The remainder of the class found this difficult even though there was much help and reinforcement from the teacher. Good listening skills were demonstrated when examples of pupils' work were played to the class but there was little opportunity for pupil to appraise their work: this was done by the teacher. In all the lessons seen, progress, however small, was made by all groups, including pupils with special educational needs. Good behaviour was due to careful management of pupils' and the positive relationships which were developed. Very little homework was set.

199. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Year 11. Although standards are below average the teacher's high expectations and constant reinforcement of basic musical conventions help to motivate most pupils and lead to improved learning for this group of ten pupils. All pupils play keyboards, two pupils also sing and two pupils play clarinet and baritone respectively. The scrutiny of work showed that many published worksheets had been used dealing with composers and musical history but there was little evidence of a selection of compositions built up over Years 10 and 11. By listening to Mozart's rondo higher-attaining pupils were able to make an attempt at preparing their own composition in this form. The other pupils found difficulty in starting because they lacked practice in composing. However, one pupil with special educational needs successfully produced a flowing melody for his first section, which demonstrated that some good learning had taken place.

200. There is satisfactory leadership and management of the department. The head of music has only been in post since September 2001 and is in the process of rewriting the scheme of work to produce a broader and more balanced curriculum with a greater variety of learning tasks throughout both key stages. The development plan is in place and has achievable targets; teaching has been monitored by the deputy headteacher. During the inspection there was no singing in Years 7 to 9 and ICT was not being used. Because of fixtures in the keyboard room and having to share the other music room with the PE department, no group work is being attempted. Lack of practice rooms does not help the situation. The assessment of pupils' work and the monitoring of progress are not being used effectively to move learning forward. Teachers do not relate their marking to National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades, consequently pupils do not know what progress they are making. The department has good resources that include a wide selection of books, CD's, keyboards, recording equipment and classroom instruments. The library has a small selection of books on music which have rarely been taken out,

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

201. The quality of provision in physical education is good.

Strengths:

- Good standards of attainment and achievement;
- Good teaching and the teachers' sound knowledge.
- Gymnastic movement/dance and health related fitness programmes.
- Very good relationships between teachers and pupils.
- Pupils' good interest and positive attitudes towards physical education.
- Very good extra-curricular activities and access to sports.

Areas for improvement:

- Lesson planning and pace at the start of sessions.
- Reporting to tell pupils how they can improve their performance and written work.
- Consistency in the marking comments made about pupils' work.

202. Standards of attainment and achievement are good; with higher-attaining pupils working at National Curriculum Level 7 by Year 9, and a majority of pupils are reaching Level 5 or above. Substantial improvement has been made in the level of performance in girls' gymnastics and health related fitness since the last inspection. Pupils' attainment in Years 7 to 9 is in line with national expectations in games, and above in health related fitness, movement and dance. High-attaining pupils in Year 7 show considerable gymnastic agility, developing very good sequenced movement. Hockey skills in Year 7 and 8 are satisfactory. Rugby ball handling skills in Year 7 are sound. Pupils of all ability levels are knowledgeable about issues relating to training methods and their own fitness.

203. A large number of the pupils taking the GCSE examination attain the national average. Lesson observation, work samples and mock examination results indicate that half the Year 11 group is in line to attain at Grade C or above. Most year 10 pupils work at, or slightly below expectation, although nearly half are working close to or above the standards necessary to attain a Grade C or better. Non-GCSE pupils in Years 10 and 11 generally perform appropriately for their age group and skill level in soccer, badminton and trampolining. Pupils can now evaluate performance using sports' terminology. They make judgments about their own and others' level of performing skills, using relevant technical terms, which shows a satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

204. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Their needs are well understood by their teachers and this promotes sound improvement. In all years, higher-attaining pupils compete with considerable success at local, regional and national level. Links with Cleveland Harriers leads to coaching by a qualified Athletics Coach. A large number of pupils represent the county cross country and athletics teams, as a consequence.

205. Teaching is good overall. No lessons were unsatisfactory. More than half the lessons observed were satisfactory or good, and eight were very good. Teachers have a sound knowledge of invasion games and good knowledge of health-related fitness and dance. This is a significant factor in helping pupils to learn new skills and improve existing ones. Where tasks match pupils' different levels of attainment, learning is good. In Year 7, group work allows the teacher to set appropriate work on sequence building and very good learning occurs. Emphasis on developing knowledge and understanding of physical fitness in Years 7

to 9 gives pupils of all ability levels the chance to gain a good grasp of their personal fitness. However, the start of practical lessons across both key stages lacks pace, hindering immediate learning opportunities and dampening the enthusiasm of a small number.

206. A good assessment process determines pupils' level of performance in all areas of PE on their entry to Year 7. Knowing that pupils perform either above or below Level 4 helps target setting by teachers and this supports sound learning. In GCSE work, teachers need to give clear guidance on where improvement can be made in pupils' class and homework assignments, so as to assist them in raising their grades. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good. This creates a positive working atmosphere, particularly amongst Year 11 girls. Allowing Year 10 GCSE pupils to organise a feeder primary school competition is a good example of encouraging independent learning because it develops decision-making skills and allows pupils to risk failure. Almost all pupils act appropriately and have a clear understanding of what their teachers expect. Most pupils in both key stages are keen participants. However, attainment for a significant minority of pupils is poor because they do not participate or attend school sufficiently often. Absenteeism and numbers not taking part are decreasing, but learning for too many of these pupils is poor.

207. Management is good in this improving department. It has clearly addressed the issues raised in the last inspection. The curriculum now matches requirements and provides pupils with a very good range of activities which engage the majority. Extra-curricular provision has improved from a good starting point to very good since the last inspection. Dedicated teachers help pupils perform at higher levels in many areas than are noted in the previous inspection. Teamwork in the department is a strength and sharing good practice through mutual observation of lessons will strengthen this further, particularly in GCSE work.

208. Health-related fitness and gymnastic movement work for girls, criticised in the last report, are now a strength of the department. Very good links with the community strengthen pupils' attainment and interest in PE in Years 7 to 11. Facilities are adequate but the waterlogged school pitches make ball games difficult for participants.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

209. Provision for religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths:

- Very good teaching by the head of department that enables the pupils to learn creatively and make good progress.
- Strong support for the exceptionally high number of non-specialist teachers.
- Learning and achievement of lower ability pupils and those with special educational needs.

Areas For Improvement:

- Appropriate provision for religious education Years 10 and 11.
- Opportunities for all pupils to acquire essential skills of reflection and evaluation.
- Challenge for more able pupils in classroom activities and writing assignments.
- Marking to include diagnostic comments and information to support pupils' progress in the subject.
- Assessment arrangements and the use of performance data to set and monitor individual pupil targets,
- Information and communication technology to support pupils' learning.

210. Standards in Years 7 to 9 have not improved since the last inspection. They remain below expectations of the local agreed syllabus. The explanation lies in a significant minority of unsatisfactory teaching in each of Years 7 to 9, combined with frequent opportunities missed in non-specialist teaching to fully develop religious concepts. The pockets of very good specialist teaching, scattered throughout Years 7 to 9, promote standards that are in line with and often above expectations, but these instances are insufficient to influence standards overall. Pupils in Year 9 have a reasonable grasp of factual information and knowledge associated with the ritual and practice in the religions they study, although recall from previous learning is often weak. Pupils do not show sufficient understanding of important religious concepts such as belief and deity and few pupils are able to make appropriate links between religious beliefs and the customs and practices that underpin them. Important skills of reflection and evaluation are under-developed. Many of the pupils have difficulty in appreciating, for example, that beliefs and values influence action and behaviour.

211. In contrast to the previous inspection, the majority of pupils achieve less well in Years 7 to 9 than can be expected. Much of this is associated with the pockets of unsatisfactory learning in each year group. Pupils are provided with narrow, undemanding activities that do not appropriately take into account the development of thought or offer scope to make connections with the religious ideas in the content explored. More able pupils in Year 9 lesson, for example, spent too much time copying from a text book on Hinduism at the start of a piece of project work. They were given insufficient opportunity to develop research skills or work independently, as might be expected of pupils of this age and ability. These were issues raised at the time of the last inspection in which no discernible improvement has taken place. As a result, most pupils by the age of 14 are achieving below their capabilities. This is most apparent with more able pupils, whose learning is capped through the lack of challenge in questioning and in writing assignments. There are notable exceptions. The

creative learning promoted in a scattering of lessons enables pupils to achieve to a high level, for example in a Year 7 lesson where more able pupils were encouraged to express their understanding of the nature of God in a variety of ways, spoken, written and picture form. They made progress at a rapid rate and quickly learned to use fluently religious vocabulary such as 'transcendent' and 'immanent'.

212. Lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are well supported. They achieve well within their capabilities. A good example was seen in a Year 7 lesson where pupils were engaged in an interesting activity that enabled them to express their understanding of symbolic representations of deity when making a spirit mask. The teacher engendered an enthusiasm for the task and the pupils responded with good ideas.

213. The subject is not taught in Years 10 and 11, which means that the school is failing to meet its statutory requirement to teach the local Agreed Syllabus to all pupils throughout the school.

214. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory overall. Learning objectives in the department's lesson notes are clearly identified. Pupils settle promptly to their work. Lessons are well managed and structured. Pupils are given appropriate support and guidance to complete their tasks. In almost all lessons relationships are good. Teaching is clear and most teachers help pupils to consolidate their learning. In spite of this there are weaknesses associated with unsatisfactory teaching where the teacher's expectations are too low. This is characterised in questioning that requires little more than simple factual recall and a dependence on low-level task sheets with little variation in activities, method or pace of learning. The non-specialist teachers closely follow the lesson notes provided by the head of department. They lack the subject knowledge to expand on religious ideas or introduce potentially thought provoking questions on religious teaching. These lessons are saved from being unsatisfactory by the overall enthusiasm of the teachers and their good skills of communication. The significant minority of very good teaching is attributed to excellent subject knowledge and an effective understanding of how to widen pupils' religious perceptions. Pupils are engaged in interesting and challenging activities that promote their thinking and reasoning skills appropriately, for example in a year 8 lesson where pupils applied their learning in a writing activity requiring their own response to the question, 'Who is my neighbour?' The pupils made good progress in their understanding of the importance of religious language to symbolise abstract ideas.

215. In lessons, the results of assessment are not generally used to inform planning and teaching. Marking in exercise books tends to focus on presentation, with insufficient comments and information provided to improve pupils' achievement and learning in the subject.

216. Most pupils show good attitudes and behave well. At times, pupils are excited by their learning and show a pride in their achievement. Written work, although more often than not undemanding, is well presented and shows a commendable effort by pupils of all abilities. An excellent piece of written work with the title 'A Special Person' by a pupil in Year 8 exemplified the general commitment to present work thoughtfully.

217. The lesson content looking, for example, at beliefs and values in faith communities contributes by implication to the promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Overall, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to enhance their skills of reflection and empathy to support fully their personal development or spiritual insight. There

are few opportunities for enrichment on offer such as, for example, visits to religious sites of interest in the local community. Visitors that reflect the multi-faith traditions in the locality are not generally invited to lessons to support the pupils in gaining first-hand experiences of religious and cultural diversity.

218. The curriculum interprets the local agreed syllabus appropriately although opportunities for reflection are not identified in the units of work. Assessment procedures have improved in line with whole school development since the previous inspection. The criteria for marking assignments however are not firmly linked to progression statements in the local agreed syllabus. Performance data is not used to set individual targets for pupils and arrangements to monitor their progress are not firmly established. There has been a noticeable improvement in the range and quality of resources since the last inspection although they are not always used to advantage in lessons. Artefacts, for example, were rarely seen in use. Information and communication technology continues to be under-used to support the pupils learning.

219. The department is well led and managed within the limitations of the inadequate provision. The head of department provides strong support for non-specialist teachers through lesson plans, notes and informal discussion. It is to the credit of her leadership that the department functions as well as it does. Even so, the exceptionally high number of non-specialist teachers, 11 from a total of 13 teachers, is unwieldy and undermines the overall management of performance. Teachers are assigned to religious education following the completion of the timetable for other subjects and vary from year to year. This places significant limitations on the head of department to create a shared approach to the subject or to plan ahead constructively.

220. There has been little improvement since the time of the last inspection. The capacity to improve is dependent on a major review of provision at a whole-school level and the response at departmental level to plan and implement appropriate action.

BUSINESS EDUCATION

221. Overall, the quality of provision is very **good**.

Strengths:

- Very good teaching.
- Very effective use of resources.
- Good management of the subject
- Systematic and structured delivery of the curriculum.
- The assessment and monitoring of pupils' work.

Areas for improvement:

- More challenge to the higher-attaining pupils.
- A greater use of visits and visitors to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding.

222. The percentage of A* to C grades obtained in the summer GCSE examinations was well below the national average. However, results vary from year to year and form no discernible pattern. Pupils generally perform far better in business studies than they do in their other subjects and the school's analysis shows that pupils achieve higher grades than

their prior attainment had indicated. This year, the school is entering nearly a fifth of Year 11 for the higher paper, reflecting the continuous improvement in the teaching of the business education curriculum, teacher's high expectations and the confidence and hard work of the pupils.

223. Pupils make very good progress in business studies. Attainment is satisfactory overall in Year 11 with some pupils demonstrating good levels of knowledge and understanding. For example, the Year 11 group made very good progress because of an exemplary team teaching activity that centred on the issue of air pollution from a local factory. About a fifth of the group were able to make logical and knowledgeable comments that demonstrated a good understanding of the functions of trade unions.

224. Most pupils learn easily in class as the result of teaching that is very good or better in 60 per cent of the lessons. They benefit from the teachers' good subject knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject. A range of teaching and learning strategies, many with an emphasis on pupil participation, engages pupils' interest. Pupils responded well when excellent references to local industry personalised the teaching of 'Just in Time' production methods. They were stimulated to ask a range of questions and contributed to a good discussion, thereby increasing the understanding of the whole class. Well chosen textbooks and videos, as well as good teacher-prepared materials, promotes very good learning by pupils, many of whom had begun the subject with attainment profiles that showed average or below average ability. A particular feature of many of the lessons, and of the good extra-curricular activities, is the sense of a purposeful partnership and mutual respect shown by staff and pupils in the learning process.

225. Pupils gain access to the computers and to skilled help in their approach to their course work. In all lessons, the teacher's good knowledge of ICT was used to enhance pupils' computer skills, and they benefited as the teacher circulated continuously, offering help and advice. Pupils increased their understanding of how to apply ICT skills effectively within a business environment. They were aided by well-structured tasks such as setting up a database or using spreadsheets to look at costs and prices. Although teachers stress business vocabulary and the importance of punctuation and spelling, many pupils are handicapped by poor literacy skills. The quality of their oral contributions is frequently better than that of their written work. Numeracy skills are extended well. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well in such circumstances.

226. The curriculum is taught at a brisk pace. End of unit tests, and a range of assignments and tasks, allows pupils to reaffirm their understanding and extend their knowledge. Coursework assignments are marked well. Pupils are greatly helped by comments that require them to evaluate the business outcomes, instead of merely describing them, although many find this difficult. Teachers are aware of the need to extend the higher-attaining pupils, and the good "fact and revision booklets" that they produce do refer to some additional activities. However, opportunities are missed to continually highlight an overview of business activity and the relationships between different aspects of business behaviour. Such an approach would have stretched the higher-attaining pupils and enabled them to make substantial links between business finance and external factors, such as world interest rates or globalisation.

227. Management of the department is good; ensuring the delivery of a well-structured curriculum that focuses on real life problems, which the pupils find interesting. Work experience is used to enhance business studies and the head of department makes very good use of contacts in further and higher education to support pupils. Assessment is a strength of the department and the subject makes a good contribution to literacy and numeracy. The departmental handbook is a competent document but it does not specifically

refer to the many opportunities to consider moral, social and cultural issues. The department is aware that too little use is made of local industry and commerce as a resource to improve pupils' knowledge and understanding. They have already identified the learning needs of higher-attaining pupils as a priority issue for attention. The business studies department continues to improve.