

INSPECTION REPORT

Light Hall School

Solihull

LEA area: Solihull

Unique reference number: 104112

Headteacher: Mr V J Scutt

Reporting inspector: Susan Chamberlain
07661

Dates of inspection: 1st – 5th October 2001

Inspection number: 199674

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Hathaway Road, Shirley Solihull West Midlands
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs G Allport
Date of previous inspection:	18 th May 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Light Hall School is a larger than average, mixed comprehensive. Its roll, 1242 pupils, continues to rise. The proportion of pupils, known to be eligible for free school meals, is 5.3 per cent, below the national average. The proportion of pupils, for whom English is an additional language, is above average at 4.3 per cent. Pupils identified as having special educational needs amount to 15.3 per cent of the population, higher than average; only 0.4 per cent of pupils have statements. When pupils enter the school in Year 7, their attainment is above average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Very good leadership and good teaching, when combined with pupils' very good attitudes, behaviour and GCSE results, means this is a very effective school. When balanced against the higher side of average income per pupil and the need to improve provision for pupils with special educational needs, the school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- The teaching is good.
- Leadership by the headteacher and senior leadership group is very good.
- GCSE examination results are very good.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour reflect the high standard of pastoral care they receive.
- Pupils' moral, social and personal development are developed well.
- There are an increasing number of very effective initiatives in place, for example, the pupils' support centre and the Key Stage 3 literacy pilot.

What could be improved

- The provision for and identification and assessment of pupils with special educational needs are unsatisfactory.
- The provision by the English department lacks coherence.
- There are insufficient resources in information and communication technology to ensure that all pupils not only receive their entitlement, but also have appropriate access to hardware across the curriculum and, consequently, are able to use IT as a tool in their schoolwork.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

This is an improved school since the previous inspection. Teaching has improved; inspectors have seen far less unsatisfactory lessons this time. Literacy has improved. A better leadership structure is in place and the delegation of responsibilities is more effective. Results have been variable but appear to be rising now. There is better provision for disaffected pupils with the development of the pupil support area. Arrangements for pupils with special educational needs are unsatisfactory but have improved a little since Easter 2001, when a new co-ordinator was appointed.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 year olds based on average point scores in GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	All schools			Similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE examinations	A	A	B	C

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

Overall in 2000, pupils' performance in Key Stage 3 statutory tests and teacher assessments for level five and above and level six and above was above the national average and often well above. The exceptions to this occurred in English, art and ICT where results were close to the average. However, preliminary results in 2001 show improved English and ICT scores and they are now above average. The below average trend evident, over recent years, has been halted and results are rising. Standards in class and pupils' workbooks are good and their achievements are above expectation.

By the end of Key Stage 4 the trend in the school's average National Curriculum points was below the national trend in 2000. However, the proportion of pupils gaining 5 or more GCSE/GNVQ passes at grades A*-C was above average and that of those gaining 5 or more grades A*-G was well above average. Over the last three years both these proportions were well above average with girls doing better than boys. When considering pupils' prior attainment the percentage of pupils achieving 5 A*-C was close to that of similar schools as was the percentage of pupils gaining one A*-G. However, the percentage of pupils achieving 5 A*-G was above that of similar schools. In 2001 results were higher than those of 2000 and indicate an improving trend. The school sets appropriate targets which it meets.

In both key stages, pupils' work in class and in their books is above average overall. In mathematics, pupils' work is well above average; this is reflected in examination results. In English and science pupils' work is above average. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Those who are gifted and talented or who have English as an additional language make good progress. Overall pupils' achievements are good.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Overall pupils' attitudes to school are very good. Pupils are eager to come to school, and are very keen to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour in and out of class is very good. Pupils are polite and courteous.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils display very good relationships with each other and with adults. They demonstrate good social skills and personal development
Attendance	Attendance is good and levels of unauthorised absence are low. Punctuality is good

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Overall teaching is good. In most lessons seen it was satisfactory or better and was unsatisfactory in only a few. In about three-quarters of lessons teaching was good or better and of these a sizeable number were very good and sometimes excellent. It was much better in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3. Pupils' learning follows a similar pattern to teaching and is reflected in very good examination results. Since the previous inspection, teaching has improved, including many new strategies. Pupils enjoy the resulting wider learning experience and respond positively to new ideas. The Key Stage 3 literacy strategy is improving pupils' basic literacy and is promoted by many teachers in a wide range of subjects. In a few subjects literacy links are fragile. Pupils who are identified as having English as additional language are taught well. The teaching of numeracy in subjects other than mathematics is satisfactory although the numeracy policy is not fully formulated yet. Teaching in mathematics, English and science is good overall. Pupils with special educational needs receive satisfactory teaching but it could be better.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The breadth and balance of the curriculum is good overall with all statutory requirements met except the provision of a daily act of collective worship. Provision for extra-curricular activities and for careers education are good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The provision for, and identification and assessment of, pupils with special educational needs are unsatisfactory. There is a need to improve the school ethos in this respect.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Identified pupils, for whom English is an additional language, often do well.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Overall provision in SMSC is good with strengths in moral and social development. However the school needs to promote the cultural and particularly, the spiritual dimensions.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Overall, this is a caring school, which has effective measures for pupil support. Child protection arrangements are excellent. Arrangements for ensuring pupils' welfare are good. Assessment procedures are good.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Leadership by the headteacher and key staff is very good. Management at this level is also very good –an extremely effective senior leadership group.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors are well led and are very effective in fulfilling their statutory responsibilities. A member with financial expertise would be a useful asset.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school is evaluated well by the governing body and senior leadership group. They compare its performance with other schools locally and nationally.
The strategic use of resources	Financial systems are robust. The governing body and senior leadership group have satisfactory control of the school's financial affairs.

The school has an adequate number of staff, except in the special needs department. Resources are enough but the library needs some updating. Accommodation is just sufficient but has areas that need repair.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school expects their children to work hard and achieve their best • Parents feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or problems. • They think the teaching is good • Most of their children like the school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of work their children get to do at home. • Information about how their children are getting on. • The school working closer with parents

Inspectors agree with the positive comments. They believe homework and report procedures are good. There are several opportunities for parents to work closely with the school, for example the parent teachers association, the parents' focus group and the school diary.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Overall, pupils enter the school in Year 7 with levels of attainment above the national average.
2. At the time of the previous inspection attainment was above national expectations in most subjects by the end of Key Stage 3. In 2000, pupils' performance in Key Stage 3 statutory tests and teacher assessments for level five and above and level six and above was above the national average in many subjects and often well above. Exceptions to this were in English, art, and information and communication technology, where results were close to the average. However, preliminary results in 2001 show improved English and ICT scores and they are now above average. Pupils' work in lessons and in their books is above average and their achievements are good at this level.
3. In 2000, the proportion of pupils gaining 5 or more GCSE/GNVQ passes at grades A*-C was above average and that of those gaining 5 or more grades A*-G was well above average. Over the last three years both these proportions were well above average with girls doing better than boys. By the end of Key Stage 4 the trend in the school's average National Curriculum points was below the national trend by 2000. However, when considering pupils' prior attainment the percentage of pupils achieving 5 A*-C was close to that of similar schools as was the percentage of pupils gaining one A*-G. The percentage of pupils achieving 5 A*-G was above that of similar schools. Although already high, pupils' work in lessons and books is above average and they continue to achieve well.
4. Pupils enter the school with above average attainment in English. By the end of Year 9 and Year 7 standards in English are above average, as they were during the last inspection. Pupils speak clearly and with confidence. They read with good understanding and most are able to write in a range of styles by the end of Year 9. Achievement is satisfactory. By the end of Year 11, standards are good and achievements are improving.
5. Standards of literacy are good. Pupils listen carefully to teachers and each other and contribute willingly and clearly to class discussions. They use technical vocabulary confidently in many subjects. Their reading skills are sufficient to cope easily with most requirements and by Year 10, for example, many pupils can read and synthesise information from source material in history. Most pupils write neatly and accurately, taking care with the presentation of their work. They develop their skills of note taking and most can write extended answers and essays by Year 10.
6. Pupils, who have been identified as having English as an additional language, usually achieve well at Light Hall. The time is right to formalise procedures for identifying these pupils. In 2001, a Chinese pupil, for whom English was an additional language, gained the best results at GCSE.
7. In mathematics attainment is above average in all years and improves as they progress through the school to be well above average by the end of Years 9 and 11. Pupils' numerical skills are good and results from the good teaching they receive. Pupils achieve a high standard of work.
8. Numerical skills are well above the national average. Pupils demonstrate good use of these skills in their work across the curriculum to enable them to progress. In design

technology, measuring and weighing skills are very good and pupils show that they can apply spatial ideas through drawing in two and three dimensions. In Science pupils also show good care and accuracy and measurement. They produce some very good graphical work both with straight-line graphs and drawing lines of best fit. Numerical skills are therefore more than adequate to ensure that all pupils have access to the curriculum.

9. Attainment in science is good overall. However, in practical investigations skills are very good. It is better than other attainment targets. This is an improvement since the last inspection and practical work is now a strength of the department particularly at Key Stage 4. Pupils achieve well in written examinations work because they prepare well and have frequent tests

10. Attainment in art is broadly in line with national expectations by the end of Year 9. By the end of Year 11 the attainment of the majority of pupils is well above average. By the end of Year 9, pupils have good observational drawing skills. They know how to carry out investigations of visual sources to support and refine their ideas. Pupils use their knowledge of European art movement, for example, Surrealism to influence their work. By the end of Year 11, pupils have refined observational drawing skills so that they are well above average. They understand the use of the visual elements like, tone, texture, pattern and time to design effective imagery. Pupils use a limited range of art materials expertly to make high standards for two and three-dimensional work

11. Standards in design and technology are above the national average at the end of Year 9 and well above at the end of Year 11. Standards are significantly above average in food, textiles and child development. They are broadly average in graphics but below in resistant materials. Achievement is good by the end of Year 9 and very good by the end of Year 11. Presentations and graphical communication skills are good overall. Use of the technical language of the subject is good. Pupils have a good understanding of the process and principles of designing. Making skills are good.

12. Attainment in geography is well above national averages by the end of both key stages. Pupils in Year 9, for example, understand the reasons for rapid population growth in this and other economically developed countries. In Year 10 they gain evidence of the impact of earthquakes on people and places from video extracts and newspaper articles. By the end of both key stages pupils achieve well.

13. Attainment in history is above average overall in GCSE results and the work seen. In 2001 most pupils gained a pass in the A* - C range. Pupils achieve well due to very good attitudes and motivation and to teaching strategies that promote individual thinking skills.

14. Pupils work across the full programme of study for ICT. Standards of attainment match the national expectations. National Curriculum requirements have been met since the last inspection. Attainment in GCSE (2001) is well above national averages (2000). Some pupils' ability to model financial information using a spreadsheet is excellent. However, there are limited opportunities for pupils to use ICT as a tool in subjects across the curriculum.

15. Attainment in modern foreign languages is well above national averages in lessons and at GCSE. This results from very effective teaching and learning.

16. Attainment in music is above national expectations in Key Stage 3 and well above in Key Stage 4. Pupils sing and play instruments well and produce effective compositions. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well as a result of good individual teaching

matched to their needs. All groups of pupils achieve well with no significant differences with respect to gender or ethnicity.

17. Attainment in physical education is well above the national expectation, due to a combination of very good teaching and highly motivated pupils. Achievement over a relatively narrow range of activities is above average in Key Stage 3 and well above average in Key Stage 4. Skilled specialist teachers use a range of strategies to fully engage highly committed pupils.

18. In religious education pupils' standards at Key Stage 3 and in GCSE courses is always good or better. Pupils achieve above the expectations of the Solihull Agreed Syllabus and pupils following GCSE religious education courses produce work of a standard above that expected.

19. Pupils with special educational needs are achieving satisfactorily, although, overall, not as well as other pupils. In some mathematics lessons, because the teacher has taken steps to know the needs of pupils' they make good progress and the well structured teaching in science acts as a general benefit to reducing pupils learning difficulties allowing them to make progress. However, in a significant proportion of lessons teachers have too little useful information about pupils with special educational needs. Learning targets expressed in individual education plans are much too vague to help teachers plan and therefore they are not used well. Pupils who for many different reasons, for example disaffection, are not progressing in mainstream classes, have very good opportunities in the pupil support centre. Here they make at least good progress.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

20. Pupils display very good attitudes to learning throughout the school. In the majority of lessons pupils concentrate on their tasks, they listen to the teacher and respond with enthusiasm. Across all subjects pupils engage in extended discussions and explore ideas in depth. They respond to challenges and show initiative. Pupils work effectively in pairs and groups particularly in science. Similarly pupils are seen playing competitive sport and complying with the rules without direct teacher supervision. After school activities are enjoyed and well supported. Parents are very impressed with the values and attitudes that the school promotes.

21. Behaviour is a strength of the school. The behaviour of most pupils is very good in classrooms and around the school. This contributes significantly to pupils' standards of attainment and academic progress. Pupils conduct themselves very well at change of lessons and negotiate well the often narrow stairways and corridors. Lunchtimes are civilised and social occasions. Pupils are very polite, courteous, and helpful to visitors. There is an absence of oppressive and bullying behaviour.

22. There have been twelve temporary and no permanent exclusions in the year to date. All exclusions are monitored with respect to gender and ethnicity. All exclusions concern boys, of which most but not all were white. The school aims to reduce the number of exclusions further. Most exclusions have occurred in response to aggressive behaviour. The school works closely with pupils deemed at risk of exclusion by ensuring that they are referred to the Pupil Support Centre. Excluded pupils are well re-integrated into the school community on their return.

23. The quality of relationships is very good. Pupils are very trustworthy and show respect for individual and school property. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into the school community. There is a strong sense of racial harmony and mutual respect. Pupils were seen volunteering to do the washing-up on behalf of others in food technology lessons, and constructive games and play were seen during break-times.

24. The personal development of pupils is very good. Classes elect captains and vice-captains to serve on the school council, where lively discussions about matters affecting pupils take place. Pupils act as prefects and older pupils participate in a 'buddies' mentoring scheme for Year 7. Other opportunities to take responsibility include form and library monitors, reading pairs, and sports team captains. Year 9/10 pupils undertake school reception duties for a day. Year 11 pupils perform marshalling and greeting duties at parents' open evenings and also supervise the car park. Demonstrations and experiments are also carried out by pupils as an integral part of the open evening presentation. Pupils demonstrate awareness of their responsibilities in the community by raising substantial sums for charity.

25. Attendance is good and above the national average for secondary schools and is similar to that at the time of the previous inspection. Monitoring and promotion of good attendance has enabled good levels to be maintained. Unauthorised absence is well below the national average. Punctuality to school and to most lessons is very good, and the school day begins and ends on time. This has a positive effect on standards.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

26. Teaching is good overall and better than at the previous inspection. In nearly three-quarters of lessons it is good or better, in nearly a third it is very good or better. In a small number of lessons teaching is unsatisfactory. It is considerably better in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3. Pupils' learning mirrors the teaching and is good overall. Pupils respond by gaining very good results in external examinations.

27. The teaching staff are an experienced and mature group with a traditional approach. This is effective in motivating the pupils who consequently learn with enthusiasm. In recent years teachers have developed a number of new strategies to enhance their teaching and consequently learning has become an increasingly positive experience for pupils. Pupils enjoy their lessons; they find them stimulating and are keen to make progress. Most sustain concentration, are invigorated by lessons with brisk pace and collaborate well with their peers.

28. Pupils respond well to activities that enhance their thinking skills. In history, problem-solving activities ensure that they have to think very clearly to be successful. In science lessons, teachers probe pupils' levels of understanding by asking pertinent questions, which extend their thinking whatever their prior attainment. Pupils are able to be creative in drama, music and art and are, generally, not self-conscious in any negative way. They are confident and self-aware and both pupils and teachers use this to advantage.

29. Lessons proceed at a brisk pace and challenge all pupils at varying levels of ability. This is particularly evident in religious education,

30. Teachers have high expectations and pupils reciprocate by reaching well above average levels of attainment. Pupils respond well to challenge. In physical education, pupils are set many activities, where the challenge is speed. Pupils enjoy pitching themselves against time and are encouraged to better their own performance. On many occasions, teachers provide special extension work for gifted and talented pupils and

generally make a good effort to accommodate the needs of pupils for whom English as an additional language.

31. Teachers use interest as an important strategy to promote learning. In geography, for example, pupils create a map of the school by walking the site and using their skills of scale-drawing and compass work. In music, pupils use soundtracks and unusual visual aids, for example, canned food, to give musical activities a fresh approach. In design and technology tasks are related to industrial practice. Pupils present their coursework to the class in history. This has multiple advantages. At a minimum, pupils' pride ensures their presentations are of a high standard; beyond that they gain confidence from the experience and the exercise ensures that they practice and reinforce their knowledge.

32. In most subjects, teachers expect pupils to learn by not only a class experience but by group discussion, paired work and individual working. In physical education, pupils observed individuals and consequently obtained a clearer understanding of factors contributing to movement.

33. Teachers are promoting literacy well in most subjects and pupils learn well. The Key Stage 3 strategy has helped both teachers and pupils focus on important elements of literacy and raise overall standards as a consequence. In English, although the teaching is generally good, there is in need for a greater consistency across the department. A clearer team approach is required.

34. The teaching of numeracy in subjects other than mathematics is satisfactory. There are examples of good work in information and communication technology where pupils use spreadsheets to analyse financial information. Good work is achieved, also, in design technology developing pupils' spatial awareness and graph drawing. In art and some other subjects opportunities are missed.

35. Teachers mark work well. In some subjects, for example, in design and technology, teachers' comments are very encouraging and helpful. Assessment procedures vary across departments, but in most areas pupils are able to check out their progress by looking at both school and departmental tracking systems. Pupils' learning is enhanced because they understand exactly how much progress they are making and can see if there is a decline in their work.

36. Pupils are good at doing their homework. Most of their homework diaries are well kept and indicate their teachers make proper provision. Some parents are worried about homework provision. Generally, these worries were unfounded but the decision to not timetable subjects has the disadvantage of pupils sometimes receiving too much homework on a particular night.

37. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory although the quality of their teaching and learning is not as good as that experienced by all other pupils overall. In many lessons pupils with special educational needs are learning well as a consequence of the general effectiveness of teaching and this is more so the case when learning is a result of practical activities. In a very well taught art lesson for Year 8, because the work was explained well and pupils were interested, the pupil with an autistic spectrum disorder made very good progress when learning proportioning and adding detail to his drawing. The additional help given by teaching assistants supports pupils well and results in good learning because pupils are helped to sustain concentration by receiving constant attention.

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

38. The school offers a good range of learning opportunities to all ages of pupils through a two-week timetable of 50 one-hour periods. In addition there is a variety of after school sporting activities and study clubs that enrich the taught curriculum. Statutory requirements are met in all subjects. A recently established pupil support centre provides for the inclusion of pupils who experience difficulties studying in the classroom environment.

39. The mainstream curriculum is broad and balanced. In Years 7 to 9 pupils study all the subjects of the National Curriculum, one lesson per week of personal, social and health education, and the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT. In Year 7 they are grouped into general ability sets on the basis of their Year 6 standardised attainment tests. In Years 8 and 9 they are set independently for English, mathematics and science, and put into humanity sets for music, drama, geography and history. This means that pupils are not always in the ideal group for music and drama. In Years 8 and 9 the more able groups are offered a second foreign language; the time for this comes from their basic skills lessons, which means that they do not have their full entitlement of ICT lessons.

40. In Years 10 and 11 pupils study a core curriculum of English language and literature, mathematics, double or single award science, design and technology, a modern foreign language, personal, social and health education, religious education, PE and an Extension Studies course. In addition two other subjects can be chosen from a range of arts, humanities, sciences, physical education, child development and vocational education. Most subjects lead to a GCSE qualification but Business and ICT lead to the General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ). There are plans to extend the number of subjects offered at GNVQ, which will provide a more balanced range of qualifications. All pupils are expected to do at least one week of work experience at the end of Year 10, organised by the school. An Asdan course, linked to local industries and South Birmingham College, provides a work-related course for a small group of pupils for whom the mainstream curriculum is not suitable. These pupils are formally disapplied from modern languages in order to take this course.

41. The school has recently developed a literacy policy, which is having a positive effect on the development of pupils' literacy skills in all subjects. Most pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 have a specific literacy lesson once a fortnight in which they make good progress. For example, a Year 9 class learned about the way writers use different styles and structure depending on the audience for whom they are writing. Teachers provide examples of writing from a range of subjects in these lessons, although links with teaching in other subjects are at an early stage. All departments emphasise the importance of literacy skills and are beginning to make an effective contribution to their development. For example, they all display key technical vocabulary in their classrooms and refer to them regularly. They provide good opportunities for discussion. In history, geography and religious education teachers often ask pupils to read aloud. In English and physical education they provide opportunities for pupils to skim and scan texts for information. Most teachers insist on neat, accurate writing. They identify spelling mistakes and most ensure that pupils correct them.

42. Very few departments have policies in place for the teaching of numeracy. The school is developing an agreed policy for teaching numeracy based upon some good in-service training and a full audit of provision across the departments.

43. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is unsatisfactory. The provision for the small number of pupils with Statements of Special Educational Needs is good. They are helped by one of two learning support assistants in some of their lessons.

44. They also have individualised help during each week from two visiting support teachers. However, for the large majority of pupils listed on the school's special educational needs register there is no extra provision beyond that provided by classroom teachers. For most, this would be sufficient if all teachers were fully informed and better supported in meeting these pupils' learning needs. However, this is not the case and there remains a minority who require extra help with their learning, for example, a pupil exhibiting serious difficulty in communicating and comprehending. Some teachers do not understand this and do not have good strategies for dealing with it. The steps taken to identify and assess pupils with special educational needs are also unsatisfactory. Relevant information is passed on from primary schools when pupils transfer and, helpfully, some schools separate this out for the attention of the special educational needs co-ordinator. When this is not the case there can be a delay in the school processing essential information on pupils' learning needs. In addition, the tests given to pupils newly admitted to the school are not sufficient in identifying a special educational need and do not provide adequate information on the nature of pupils' learning needs. As a consequence, the school is not well placed to begin planning its provision to meet their special educational needs. For those pupils who require an individual education plan the targets set for them are written in terms that are much too general to help teachers focus on specific learning objectives in lessons.

45. A good range of extra-curricular activities is provided, though opportunities are limited by the very short lunch hour (35 minutes) and the fact that many pupils have to catch buses after school. Many subjects provide after-school study clubs. Sporting activities and music are strong, with the school band giving concerts at school and community events, and a musical visit to France. Instrumental teaching is provided after school by a local LEA music centre. The science department has visited the Science Museums in London and Bristol and the modern languages department arranges an exchange visit to Germany and a residential visit to France. Pupils studying drama give performances in school and to the public, and a group of pupils has taken part in a local public speaking competition, "Youth Speaks". Due to shortage of time, visits to theatres, art galleries and exhibitions are limited. A further strength of school is the link with neighbourhood engineers.

46. The school gives satisfactory opportunities for access to the curriculum. An Inclusion Policy is in place and equality of opportunity is monitored regularly by the Curriculum Committee and the Pastoral Committee. Last year a pupil support centre was established to provide a facility to meet the needs of those who might otherwise have been excluded from mainstream education or who have been away from school for some time. It has been successful in re-establishing patterns of learning for these pupils.

47. The overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Whilst there is a policy for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education the school does not promote each aspect equally well. Provision for moral and social development is very good, is satisfactory for cultural development, but is unsatisfactory for spiritual development. There is no whole school understanding of the part that the spiritual dimension can play in the development of the whole child. As a result there are missed opportunities in many areas of the school's work to promote the spiritual dimension. Therefore pupils miss out on this entitlement.

48. The school's current system of tutor group and year group assemblies does not provide all pupils with a daily act of collective worship and therefore the school does not fulfil its statutory requirements in this respect. There are regular year group assemblies which provide valuable experiences for pupils, some offer opportunities for reflection and spiritual awareness, but others do not provide this dimension. Tutor group collective worship was rarely held during the inspection. Opportunities for pupils to reflect on issues of human

experience and existence, that draw on a broad spectrum of beliefs and values, is underdeveloped in most subjects of the curriculum. Religious education, however, does make a significant contribution to the pupils' spiritual development. In RE pupils are provided with opportunities to consider matters beyond the material and learn to appreciate some of the more complex issues about human living.

49. The provision for moral development is very good. The school effectively builds-on the well-developed code of ethical behaviour which the vast majority of pupils in the school bring with them. Pupils follow well-understood codes of conduct in class and around the school. Issues of morality are very well-promoted in the curriculum, especially in RE, PE, PSE, history and English as well as through the pastoral life of the school. Pupils know right from wrong and are provided with many opportunities to discuss dilemmas and concerns that emphasise the moral implications of human actions now and in the past.

50. The pupils' social development is very good. There are many opportunities provided in lessons to enhance and develop pupils' social skills and understanding. These include regular use by teachers of working together in pairs and small groups. The range of extra-curricular activities promotes social development including the opportunities for residential visits to France and Italy, or exchange visits to Germany for students of modern foreign languages. The variety of clubs open to pupils in PE and the activities organised by the Music department contribute positively to promoting effective social development. Personal and social education, together with religious education, provide many creative opportunities for pupils to explore contemporary social issues such as crime and punishment, drugs misuse, sex education and relationships.

51. The provision for cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils have some opportunities to widen their horizons, celebrate their own cultural heritage and traditions and explore new ones. However, the cultural dimension in pupils learning is not consistently promoted across all areas of the curriculum. Good examples of effective promotion of preparation for life in a culturally diverse society can be found in RE through teaching about the religions of Islam, Hinduism and Judaism. In Design Technology, through exploration of the diversity in food and textiles in different countries and in music through the study of world music (Japanese, Indian and South American) pupils' cultural horizons are broadened. There is, however, no consistency across all areas of the school in promoting the broader multi-cultural dimension and enabling pupils to appreciate cultural traditions other than their own.

52. Provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is excellent. A well-resourced course, covering the usual range of topics, is taught once a week by class tutors, led by an experienced co-ordinator who supports tutors in the delivery of the material and provides in-service training where it is needed. In addition, Years 10 and 11 have one lesson a fortnight of Extension Studies which brings them a range of relevant topics such as first aid, careers, money management, study skills and the law. These courses are supported by an emphasis on developing opportunities for cross-curricular delivery of aspects of the topics through other subjects of the curriculum. They also link into themes for assembly.

53. Careers education is well provided for through the PSHE and Extension Studies courses, focussed at relevant times of the year such as option choices for Year 9 and work experience for Year 10. Two advisers from Central Careers attend regularly to be available to interview pupils. A particularly good feature is the targeting of a selected group at the start of Year 9 who might have difficulty with future choices.

54. The community makes a very good contribution to pupils' learning through a wide variety of channels. A playgroup and a luncheon club for old age pensioners use the school premises. The local police and magistrates lead sessions of the Extension Studies and a large number of local clubs and organisations support the school in various ways. Local industries such as Landrover and Jaguar Cars take pupils on the Asdan course and there is wide community support for the work experience programme. Pupils raise money for charity; last year £3000 was shared between Cancer Research and the Macmillan and Marie Curie nurses.

55. Relationships with partner institutions are very strong. Feeder primary schools are visited every year and incoming pupils attend an induction day. Year 11 pupils visit Solihull Sixth Form College where most of them continue their education. Links with South Birmingham College support the Asdan course. Heads of department and senior managers meet with liaison groups from neighbouring secondary schools. Such links are useful in motivating pupils to think in terms of the future and have a positive effect on learning.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

56. The care and guidance provided by staff and the promotion of pupils' well-being is highly valued by parents and pupils. There is overall good provision for the support and guidance of pupils.

57. Staff are caring and very supportive and know their pupils well. The pastoral system involves form tutors and heads of year. Morning registration provides an opportunity for pastoral activity but it is not always used to best effect. The school maintains good academic and personal records for pupils and these are used to effectively monitor pupils' progress.

58. There are effective policies in place to promote good attendance; the educational welfare office makes regular visits to school and maintains close liaison with relevant staff. The recently installed system of computerised registers will further assist monitoring once it is fully operational.

59. Bullying is a concern of parents. However, it is comparatively rare and once detected is very well handled by the school. As part of the bullying support strategy, there is a mentoring system and sessions on feelings and anger management with counselling available for transgressors. The monitoring of behaviour is excellent. When necessary, pupils are referred by class teachers to the pupil support centre. Here individual behaviour plans are prepared and pupils work to these during a three-week placement in the centre. Very positive evaluation reports are received from parents, pupils and staff praising the work of the centre, which makes innovative use of outside agencies and resources. Incidents of racism are very rare and are properly recorded and dealt with.

60. Procedures for child protection are excellent and staff including non-teaching staff are familiar with them. There is a policy in place and staff receive appropriate training. Records are meticulously kept. There is full liaison with the local social services department. Pupils' well-being and safety are well monitored.

61. Very good health and safety practice was observed in science and physical education classes. However, the school, governors and borough council need to work together to solve health and safety issues associated with the accommodation. A formal, risk-assessment has not been carried out by, either, an independent specialist, or the local authority, for some years. This is unsatisfactory.

62. Fire drills are held regularly and properly logged. Accidents are recorded correctly. There is a medical room and three trained first-aiders. Injuries and other problems are very well handled. The school nurse visits weekly.

63. The school's procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are good. There is a well-structured policy for assessing pupils' work and recording and reporting their progress. The system fulfils the requirements of the National Curriculum at Key Stage 3 and the public examination requirements at Key Stage 4. The variations in practice between departments that were reported at the last inspection have been addressed and there is now a consistent approach across the curriculum. Procedures are good in most subjects and very good in geography, technology and ICT. They are unsatisfactory only in assessment and identification of pupils with special educational needs. Assessment information is well used to guide curriculum planning and there are good examples of this in history where the GCSE syllabus was changed in order to improve results; mathematics and modern languages where assessment is used to determine areas of the curriculum which need revision or further development; art where self assessment by the pupils is used in planning work for individual pupils and geography where careful assessment is used during the piloting of new schemes of work to monitor their effectiveness before full implementation. The procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress are good. The school has very efficient systems for recording data and tracking pupil progress. Assessment information on every pupil's progress in most subjects is stored on computer and is readily available to teachers who wish to monitor a pupil's work. It is then used effectively to set targets for the pupils. Another good feature is the review-day system where every pupil has a twenty-minute interview with the form tutor to review progress and set targets for the following year. In addition to this the subject departments may also set short-term targets, geography and technology for example, are doing this very effectively and there is good practice in other subjects. However there is little evidence of target setting in English, science and physical education.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

64. Most parents have a high opinion of the school and this is highlighted in the responses to the questionnaire, and in views expressed at the parents' meeting. Parents are pleased with the academic standards achieved and whilst there is some concern at provision for pupils with special educational needs this department is seen to be improving. Some concern has been expressed about the quantity and quality of homework, and the information that the school provides about pupils' progress; Some question that the school works closely with parents. Mainly these worries are unfounded.

65. The home-school diary is well used throughout the year groups and is a very useful conduit for the exchange of views and for monitoring the completion of homework. The diary provides an opportunity for parents to contribute to pupils' learning. The amount of homework set is usually appropriate for the year group.

66. The quality of information provided to parents and carers is good. There is an attractive prospectus, which is very informative. The Governors annual report to parents meets the requirements. There are open evenings, which are very well attended by parents. These cover such aspects as induction, Year 7 report on progress, Year 9 options, Year 10 coursework programmes and examination schedules, and Year 11 revision skills. There is an annual opportunity to discuss pupils' progress during an open evening and parents receive a brief report shortly before Christmas. The annual report to parents on pupils' progress is informative and evaluative. The format and timing of the annual report is currently under review in response to comments from parents.

67. There is a bulletin sent to parents every term and this is supplemented by additional letters.

68. There is an active parent teachers association, which raises substantial sums for the school. A recent innovation is a parents' focus group, which meets twice a term. This group, which is open to all parents, provides an opportunity for parents to scrutinise and participate in policy development. An attitude survey was recently commissioned by the school to ascertain parental views of the school.

69. The school welcomes parents into the school and the headteacher and all staff make themselves accessible to parents. Parents enjoy very positive contact with the pupil support centre, and those having children with special educational needs are involved in reviews.

70. Large numbers of parents attend sporting activities and concerts and support educational visits abroad. This support has a positive impact on pupils' personal development and standards.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

71. Leadership and management by the headteacher and key staff are very good. The well-designed, newly implemented leadership structure is working effectively and has enabled clearer delegation of whole school responsibilities.

72. The headteacher is a very knowledgeable and progressive leader who has a high profile around school. He is responsible for many new initiatives and is moving the school forward successfully. He has an open style of management, which encourages a non-hierarchical approach and enables all staff to put forward their views and problems in a trusting and trusted environment.

73. Other members of the senior leadership group are very capable and are clearly committed to raising attainment and developing the whole child. They provide very good support to the headteacher. All are clear about their responsibilities, which they pursue diligently asking for assistance from each other when required. As a team the group is cohesive and each member relates well to the others. Overall, leadership is a strength of the school.

74. The school improvement plan is well documented. It addresses the school's priorities very effectively with success criteria and costings clearly identified. It is realistic and well designed with responsibilities broken down to manageable chunks. It includes realistic examinations targets, which reflect the prior attainment of each year group but includes an element of challenge.

75. School governors are well led and represent an experienced and well-informed group. All know the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They are involved in the development of the school improvement plan and school initiatives. They are supportive but are not always compliant and will challenge any development about which they are unsure. Staff and parents appreciate the governors' hard work for the school. When possible, the group would benefit by the addition of a governor with financial expertise.

76. Middle managers are effective in their roles. They provide a strong link between the leadership group and other teachers. They ensure that departments work efficiently and that high standards are maintained. All share a commitment to improvement. However, in

the English department and the library this shared commitment is fragile and needs strengthening. In these areas there is a need to forget past problems and work to establish positive relationships that do not fragment an otherwise cohesive teaching and support staff.

77. The school has an adequate number of well-qualified teachers and support staff to deliver the curriculum except in the area of learning support. An established induction programme for new staff, both experienced and newly qualified, ensures that they receive the necessary support to carry out their roles effectively. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching is good. The senior management team has an effective rolling programme of departmental monitoring taking place in which lesson observation feedback has a strong developmental focus. The arrangements for performance management are well embedded in school practice. Team leaders have been trained in lesson observation and objective setting. All teaching staff have objectives in place and classroom observation is well underway. Professional development objectives are appropriately linked to the school improvement plan.

78. The efficiency with which the school is organised and administered is satisfactory. Since the last inspection report, which stated that financial management was good, and financial controls secure, recent auditors' reports have highlighted shortcomings. The headteacher and governing body have addressed these and all is now as it should be with the governors having a better grip on the school's financial affairs. References in the last report to the need for improved delegation have also been addressed. The school's senior management team is now organised so as to provide its members with a wider perspective.

79. The governing body's commitment to ensuring that the school's resources are used to deliver the objectives incorporated in the school's development planning is evident. Satisfactory arrangements are in place to ensure the school's performance is compared with other schools locally and nationally. The governing body also reviews spending regularly to ensure that wise use of resources and always seeks best value.

80. During the inspection the school was operating without a bursar, the previous incumbent of the post having recently resigned following a period of prolonged illness. An officer from the local education authority has provided good and valuable support. In spite of this, an extra burden has fallen inevitably upon the headteacher and other support staff. This has meant that the headteacher has to undertake relatively menial but essential financial tasks. All essential day-to-day work is being coped with but inevitably less pressing matters are not being dealt with. For instance heads of department are not receiving regular monthly accounts of the departmental spending. At the time of this writing a new appointment has been made.

81. Good use is made of computer resources in discrete information and communication technology courses throughout the school to develop basic skills in this area. Progress in planning developments of the curriculum and administration networks has been insufficient. National targets for the number of computers available for curriculum use have not been met. The administrative computer systems are antiquated and not networked. The library is also in need of updating.

82. Earmarked funding is effectively managed and administered so that its use is appropriately targeted. Teachers are benefiting, for instance, from the computer training available as a result of the "New Opportunities" funding arrangements.

83. The contribution of those staff, who are not teachers, to the good and efficient running of the school is substantial. A useful addition is made by the employment of external invigilators to oversee public examinations enabling teachers to spend more time

revising the curriculum and improving schemes of work. The caretaker works hard maintaining buildings, which are well worn in some areas. The meals provided in the canteen are wholesome, good value and of good quality. This contributes to the ethos of a school where pupils and their worth are valued.

84. Overall accommodation is satisfactory and does not significantly restrict the delivery of the curriculum. There have been considerable improvements since the last inspection; parents and pupils appreciate this. Further changes are planned. However accommodation is still a mixed picture. Some science laboratories require refurbishment and are too small for the size of the groups using them. The expanding roll is also putting pressure on a substantial number of small classrooms. The school benefits from very good external sports facilities but those for indoor sport are ageing. The school cannot at present cater for pupils, staff and visitors with mobility difficulties.

85. The leadership and management of the school's special educational needs provision is unsatisfactory. The co-ordination of the provision went into abeyance for several years as a consequence of problems in staffing this responsibility. A new co-ordinator is in post several months and has a strong commitment towards bringing provision up to an appropriate standard and demonstrates the expertise and experience to do so effectively. The school is positively supporting the need to make substantial improvements in special educational needs provision. The departmental improvement plan has already identified all of the main areas where action is required. However, the rapid recovery of provision is hampered by the limited amount of time the special educational needs co-ordinator has for her principal responsibilities.

86. In view of its very good standards of pupil achievement, good teaching and learning, very good leadership, management and effectiveness, together with its good level of improvement since the last inspection and some developmental needs in learning support , the school gives good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

87. In order to improve the school, governors, senior staff and staff of the school need to take the following action:

- (1) Raise the standard of teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs to the overall good level other pupils receive by:- (19, 37)
 - i) conducting a thorough screening to identify pupils with special educational needs followed by detailed analysis of their learning needs in order to plan the appropriate provision for them (63, 64, 85, 92)
 - ii) using the school's analysis of pupils' special educational needs to set challenging and measurable targets for all teachers to address (63, 85, 92)
 - iii) reviewing pupils' targets regularly and based on the progress pupils make towards their targets revise them to maintain their challenge (37, 85)
 - iv) monitoring the effectiveness of each department's and teacher's response to meeting pupils' special educational needs and taking

- effective action to ensure there is a positive contribution to these pupils' progress (37, 108)
- v) ensuring the school's provision for special educational needs is well co-ordinated and that there are at least adequate learning and staff resources (43, 44, 128)
- (2) Provision in the English department lacks cohesion and needs strengthening by:
- i) improving teamwork in the department (33, 76, 96)
 - ii) rigorously monitoring and evaluating teaching (33, 76, 96)
 - iii) setting pupils clear targets for improvement (33, 76, 96)
- (3) Improve pupils access to information and communication technology and its use across the curriculum by:
- i) increasing the number of computers (81, 149, 150, 155)
 - ii) building information and communication technology into curriculum plans more fully (81, 149, 150, 155)
 - iii) speeding up the implementation of information and communication technology developments (81, 149, 150, 155)

Subsidiary issues

There is no whole school understanding of the part that the spiritual dimension can play in the development of the whole child. (47)

The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship for its pupils. (48)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	186
	Sixth form	N/A
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		99

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	7	54	80	40	5	0	0
Percentage	4	29	43	21	3	0	0

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1242	N/A
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	66	

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	7	
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	191	

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	53

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	13
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	13

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.2
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	131	127	258

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	64	103	104
	Girls	94	99	89
	Total	158	202	193
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	61 (85)	78 (79)	75 (79)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	21 (49)	53 (50)	41 (33)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	106	92	105
	Girls	112	98	97
	Total	218	190	202
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	85 (88)	74 (79)	79 (85)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	58 (68)	42 (50)	44 (50)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	119	112	231

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	66	113	115
	Girls	66	109	111
	Total	132	222	226
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	57 (66)	96 (97)	98 (98)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	40.6([43.3])
	National	38.4([38.0])

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

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	8
Black – other	2
Indian	29
Pakistani	12
Bangladeshi	2
Chinese	8
White	904
Any other minority ethnic group	1

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian	1	
Pakistani	1	
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	83	1
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	72.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	14
Total aggregate hours worked per week	344

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78.0%
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Average teaching group size: Y[] – Y[]

Key Stage 3	23.2
Key Stage 4	20.1

Financial information

Financial year	2001
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	£
Total income	3,258,088
Total expenditure	3,277,636
Expenditure per pupil	2,641
Balance brought forward from previous year	47,117
Balance carried forward to next year	27,569

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1242
Number of questionnaires returned	495

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	29	56	11	2	2
My child is making good progress in school.	32	51	9	2	6
Behaviour in the school is good.	18	60	12	2	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	16	53	17	6	8
The teaching is good.	23	62	6	1	8
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	18	52	17	5	8
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	38	49	9	2	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	47	47	4	0.5	1.5
The school works closely with parents.	20	50	20	2	8
The school is well led and managed.	25	53	8	2	12
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	26	56	9	1.0	8
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	23	41	15	4	17

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

ENGLISH

88. Overall, the quality of provision for English is **satisfactory**.

Strengths:

- Teaching is good and pupils learn well in lessons.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning in English and behave well.
- The introduction of the literacy strategy is improving teachers' planning.

Areas for improvement:

- Teamwork and management in the department.
- The monitoring of pupils' academic performance.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunity to study literature from other cultures and traditions.

89. Pupils' results in Year 9 National Curriculum tests in 2000 were close to the national average but well below the average for similar schools. They improved in 2001 and were above the year 2000 national average. However, in both of these years, pupils attained lower levels than in mathematics and science. In GCSE English, the proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades in 2000 was close to the national average but well below the average for similar schools. Results improved in 2001 and were above the national average. Results in English literature were below the national average in 2000 and improved slightly in 2001. In both years, pupils attained lower standards in English and English literature than in other subjects. Girls attain higher standards than boys, usually in line with the difference found nationally.

90. Apart from the results in 2000, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. They enter the school with above average attainment and make satisfactory progress so that they achieve above average standards in most years. The standard of work seen during the inspection was also above average. Year 9 pupils speak confidently in class and small group discussion. Most are able to use standard English when required. Even lower attaining pupils are able to talk clearly to the whole class and others listen carefully to their ideas. Nearly all pupils can read aloud accurately and most do so fluently, with good expression. Most read with good understanding. For example, average attaining pupils can re-write an extract from Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* in modern prose. They were able to make good reference to the text to find information about Christie Brown's thoughts and feelings in the autobiography *My Left Foot*. However, even high attaining pupils have difficulty analysing what they read or watch. All could identify some differences between film versions of *Great Expectations* and Dickens's original written descriptions but few could comment on their effect. Few pupils read widely for pleasure. Standards of writing are good. Many pupils can write effectively in a range of styles. They adapt their style skilfully in diary entries, leaflets, newspaper articles, formal letters and narrative. Low attaining pupils can write at length, but in a much narrower range of styles and they often forget punctuation. Spelling is generally accurate and pupils take care with the presentation of their work.

91. In Year 11, pupils contribute willingly to class discussion. They listen to each other's views and respond confidently. For example, a group of high attaining pupils discussed the way the roles of men and women have changed since Shakespeare wrote *The Taming of the Shrew*, backing up their ideas with reference to the text and personal experience. Low

attaining pupils gave clear accounts of the plot and relationships between characters in *The Merchant of Venice*. The highest attaining pupils are able to analyse the way writers use literary devices. For example they explain clearly how Dickens and Penelope Lively build up tension in the short stories *The Signalman* and *The Darkness Out There*. All pupils understand the plot of novels and plays that they study for GCSE and even low attaining pupils attempt to analyse what they read. However, many pupils in middle and low sets still find this analysis difficult. Most pupils write confidently in a range of styles. They make good use of drafting books to improve their writing. Most present their final drafts of coursework very neatly and standards of spelling and punctuation are good.

92. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress over time, so that all pupils achieve a GCSE pass in English. In Year 7, they make good progress in small classes taught by the special educational needs co-ordinator and a support teacher. However, other teachers have insufficient information about pupils' individual needs and how to support them. This slows down their progress in some lessons.

93. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning in English but they rarely show any real enthusiasm for the subject. They take responsibility for their own learning when teachers ask them to. Pupils from different ethnic groups mix well and are equally involved in lessons.

94. Teaching is good and pupils learn well in lessons. There is no unsatisfactory teaching but it is marginally better in Years 10 and 11, often because teachers use a greater variety of teaching methods. For example a Year 10 lesson began with pairs of pupils matching newspaper headlines to figures of speech. This was followed by class discussion before pupils wrote their own headlines. They shared these in groups before further class discussion. As a result, the whole class made very good progress with an initial understanding and analysis of broadsheet and tabloid newspaper styles. By contrast, a Year 9 class began to lose interest because the teacher spent too long explaining punctuation rules without giving pupils the opportunity to practise them. Teachers manage classes very well so that pupils move smoothly from one activity to another and make the most of the available time. They have high expectations and often ask pupils searching questions to challenge them further. For example, a class of low attaining Year 11 pupils increased their understanding of religious and racial prejudice in *The Merchant of Venice* because the teacher asked them how Shylock must feel when he is always referred to as "the Jew". In the best lessons, teachers share their objectives with pupils so that they know what is expected of them. However, teachers do not yet make sufficient reference to National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades. As a result pupils are not sure about what they need to do to improve their level or grade. Similarly, teachers often provide pupils with useful advice when they mark their books but do not refer to ways pupils can achieve a higher level in Years 7,8 and 9.

95. Apart from the poor results in 2000, the English department has maintained the standards that were reported in the last inspection. There is now no unsatisfactory teaching and low attaining pupils are making better progress than before in Years 10 and 11. However, pupils do not achieve as well in English as they do in other subjects.

96. Several factors contribute to this comparatively poor achievement. The head of department provides satisfactory leadership and has identified some important areas for development. The introduction of the literacy pilot is resulting in improved curriculum planning in Years 7,8 and 9, as existing schemes of work are too vague. For example, they do not ensure that the English department meets the requirements for teaching drama or information and communications technology. However, there is a need for much greater teamwork in the department. Disagreements between some staff result in lack of commitment to the department development plan. For example, the monitoring and

evaluation of teaching in the department is insufficiently rigorous. Pupils' progress is not monitored accurately and pupils are not set clear targets for improvement. Pupils who are not achieving as well as they should are not therefore identified for extra support. Other aspects of management need improvement and a new second in department has been appointed. At present there is not enough support for non-specialist staff. Overall resources are adequate but they are not allocated efficiently to teachers and this causes difficulties for some teachers when planning lessons. The department does not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to study literature from other cultures and traditions, especially in Years 7,8 and 9.

Drama

97. Overall, the quality of provision for drama is **good**.

Strengths:

- The teaching of drama is good overall and very good for GCSE pupils.
- The drama department provides pupils with a wide range of extra curricular opportunities.

Areas for improvement:

- There is not enough continuity of staffing for the subject in Years 7,8 and 9.

98. All pupils study drama in Years 7,8 and 9 and approximately 20 pupils chooses to study it for GCSE each year.

99. Year 9 pupils achieve standards that are in line with expectations for their age. Only lower attaining pupils were observed performing in this year. Some are able to mime effectively. For example, as part of a scenario in a railway station, they performed convincing actions to show that they were buying a cup of tea and drinking it in a railway buffet. They can stay in role well for a short time but lose concentration quickly when they are not central to the action. Higher attaining pupils are able to evaluate their own performance and that of others sensitively.

100. GCSE results in year 2000 were well above the national average, with all pupils gaining grades A*-C. Results were closer to the national average in 2001 but standards of the current Year 11 are again well above average. Pupils have very high levels of concentration in performance. They are able to develop and portray emotion through still image. For example, they convincingly portrayed contrasting emotions of anger, compassion and jealousy by creating still images to represent the crucifixion and a modern day picnic scene. Their written evaluations show an ability to reflect sensitively on their thoughts and emotions, both in and out of role.

101. The quality of teaching is good overall and very good in Year 11. Teachers have high expectations of pupils. For example, in one Year 9 lesson the teacher refused to accept pupils' first rudimentary attempt to perform a dream of a character on a train journey. As a result, many pupils devised more convincing dream sequences, which related more closely to the characters they were portraying. Teachers manage classes very well and plan a variety of activities in most lessons that interest and motivate pupils.

102. The head of drama manages the department very well, in difficult circumstances. Staffing for the subject lacks sufficient continuity. This makes it difficult to plan effectively for Years 7 to 9 and different non-specialist teachers require training and support each year.

New setting arrangements this year result in some classes having a preponderance of boys or girls. This causes problems with the allocation of roles in some lessons. Drama makes an important contribution to the curriculum, which is further enhanced by the large number of extra activities organised by the department. Regular theatre visits, a drama club for the lower school, public performances of GCSE coursework and the performance of plays devised by pupils for Open Evenings all provide valuable additional experience for pupils. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection.

MATHEMATICS

103. Overall the quality of provision for pupils in mathematics is **good**.

Strengths:

- The pupils' attainment is well above average.
- The quality of teaching is good overall but lacks sparkle.
- Teachers and pupils take a pride in their work
- The department is very well led.
- Pupil behaviour is very good

Areas for improvement:

- Better use of standardised testing to identify individual pupil under and over achievement
- Make lessons more interesting and fun as well as challenging and efficient
- Enable better individual pupil access to computers during mathematics lessons

104. Pupils' results in the National Curriculum tests for fourteen year olds in the year 2000 were well above the national average, and above those obtained by pupils from similar schools. Over the years between 1997 and 2000 results were well above national averages and improving faster than the national rate. In general there is no significant difference between the attainment of boys compared with that of girls. The year 2001 results are substantially higher than those for 2000.

105. Up to the age of 14 pupils' mathematical skills show good improvement. Attainment is above the national average when pupils join the school at the age of 11. It improves over the first three years so that by the age of fourteen it is well above average. The work seen during the inspection reflected examination results. Some two pupils in every five are working towards level six or higher in National Curriculum terms. Higher attaining pupils in year nine can multiply, add and subtract using mixed and decimal numbers with accuracy. Very few make errors other than small slips with numbers to several decimal places. Many have a good grasp of using first differences to find the number patterns in sequences. Most pupils in the top set use advanced notation such as u_n , u_{n+1} with understanding. Middle attainers manipulate algebraic formulae well and recognise the equivalence of vulgar fractions, percentages and decimals, converting readily from one to the other. Lower attaining pupils can find a side or hypotenuse of a right-angled triangle using Pythagoras' theorem. They can use the appropriate formulae to find the area and circumference of a circle.

106. GCSE results in 2000 were well above national averages for pupils scoring between A* and C and showed an above average improvement since the previous inspection. Results were also better than for other similar schools. The percentage of pupils gaining a grade between A* and G was greater than that obtained nationally. All obtained a grade F or higher in 2001. Results have remained high but not risen over the three years prior to the 2001. In the last set of results, however, there was a substantial rise for those gaining higher grades. Mathematics results at GCSE are better than those for most other subject

results in the school. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls.

107. The standard of work for pupils aged over fourteen as seen during the inspection is reflected in the school's examination results. It is well above that attained nationally with over six in every ten showing the capacity to obtain grade C or better at GCSE. Almost one in every ten pupils are on course for the highest grades A*, A or B at GCSE. These show very good algebraic skills including the ability to multiply brackets and factorise quadratic and cubic expressions. Middle attainers have a secure grasp of the trigonometry of a right-angled triangle. Lower attaining pupils can use the four rules of number within the context of solving a problem. They can use formulae to find the area of a parallelogram or a triangle. Numerical skills are well developed for pupils of all abilities rendering most secure in handling fractions involving mixed numbers and denominators greater than single figures.

108. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress throughout their time in the school. Very few pupils with English as an additional language were seen during the inspection. Each of these was making good progress, although the strategies used by the teachers to support such pupils were limited to those which are effective in developing literacy skills for all pupils.

109. Overall, teaching is good. The teaching observed during the inspection was satisfactory in years seven, eight and nine and good in years ten and eleven. In very good and excellent lessons pupils were challenged by the work and by the pace at which the lessons were presented. Exposition was clear so that all, including those pupils with special educational needs, made very good progress. Year 11 lower attaining pupils were for instance able to explain how scatter-graphs could be used in real life examples. The school does not specifically identify gifted and talented pupils. Those who are strongest in mathematics are, however, making good progress because of the good teaching they receive. There was one instance of unsatisfactory teaching. This occurred with an experienced and well organised teacher who was not a mathematics specialist. The activities given to the pupils were well conceived and meant that they did learn well what was put before them. But because the teacher was not able to judge how much the pupils could be expected to do and how long it would take them, the lesson covered insufficient ground and progress was inadequate.

110. For the most part, teachers plan lessons effectively and manage the pupils well so that no time is wasted. Most lessons began with a short related activity that enabled the pupils to settle quickly into their work. Most teachers mark the pupils' work carefully. There is some very good practice within the department in this respect. In addition to indicating whether the work is right or not some teachers comment fully on how it might be improved making use of the school's reward system to motivate the pupils to do better. Regular testing informs good setting arrangements and is used also to show where lessons and schemes of work need to be changed. The test results also form the basis for setting targets for the pupils' improvement and enable them to see where their weaknesses lie. In spite of this there are still cases, particularly in the earlier years, where pupils need a clearer understanding of what they must do to improve. The use of standardised tests to indicate where pupils have or have not a greater capacity to do better is underdeveloped.

111. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is very good. In almost all of the lessons seen the pupils' behaviour was good or very good. Relationships in the classroom are very good. The quality of behaviour and these relationships does much to contribute to the pupils' progress.

112. A good proportion of the lessons seen lacked sparkle. Even good lessons, well prepared and very efficiently taught were less than interesting. In particular the spiritual dimension, which enables pupils to experience the awe and wonder of mathematics, was missing. This meant that for some pupils mathematics lacks excitement and is not their favourite subject. This does not prevent them from taking a great pride in their work and doing their best. Books are neat, well presented and well kept. Homework is completed. All these factors militate in favour of success.

113. Departmental leadership is very good. The head of department is an experienced and talented teacher, who is extremely well thought of by colleagues and pupils. In the short time since his appointment he has gained the respect and trust of his colleagues in the department and welded them into an effective team who are proud of what they do. Departmental meetings are closely focussed on improving teaching and learning. There are effective arrangements for improving teaching based on regular performance review. The need for enhanced information computer technology equipment within the department is acute. There is no direct access to the Internet from the mathematics classrooms.

114. Improvement since the last inspection in the Mathematics department has been good. All areas of concern have been addressed and improvements made. Teaching has improved, and teachers have a better grasp of the use of information and communication technology as a teaching tool with good use of the overhead projector a strong feature in some lessons. Standards have risen considerably.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths:

- Attainment at the end of both key stages is well above average.
- The teaching is good.
- Scientific enquiry is a strong feature of pupils' learning.

Areas for Improvement:

- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is generally, not a planned feature of lessons.
- The use of information and communication technology is limited in lessons due to lack of resources.
- Formal risk assessments are not included in lesson plans.
- Laboratory fixtures, fittings and services are often worn and broken.

116. At the end of Key Stage 3 pupils' performance in the 2001 National Curriculum tests was well above the national average. The proportions of pupils who obtained level 5 and higher and level 6 and higher were both well above the national average. There was little difference between boys and girls performance in relation to level 5 and above although girls tended to perform better at level 6. In comparison with similar schools pupils' performance was well above average. Pupil' performance in science was better than that for English and similar to that for mathematics. Over the last three years pupil performance has shown a slight upward trend.

117. In 2001, the proportion of pupils who obtained A*-C grades in the GCSE was well above the national average and the proportion gaining A*-G was also well above the national average. They are above average for similar schools. Pupils' performance was

slightly better in science than in English and similar to that for mathematics. Performance is now following an upward trend.

118. Pupils enter the school with levels of attainment that are above those expected nationally and by the end of Year 9 are achieving levels that are well above the national average. This good progress is sustained until the end of Year eleven.

119. The standard of work seen overall was good. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils know and understand the different types of energy and how energy can be transferred. They know that energy is wasted and can calculate quantities wasted using energy equations. Written work is well organised and well presented showing that pupils' take a pride in their work. The language used is precise and line graphs are plotted well. By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils know osmosis and the factors affecting the rate of a chemical reaction. Some pupils are able to write complex equations for displacement reactions using chemical terminology. Practical investigative work is thorough and often reaches the highest standard. Pupils are able to plan controlled experiments well. They are able to make predictions based on scientific knowledge, analyse experimental data and draw conclusions that relate to their predictions. Pupils are tested regularly in both key stages encouraging a culture of learning that contributes well to their high level of success in national tests and public examinations.

120. The quality of teaching seen was good and is strength of the department. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Three quarters the lessons seen were good or better and a quarter was very good or excellent. A high standard of teaching was seen in both key stages. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of their subject, plan their lessons well and set clear objectives that their pupils can understand. Very good and excellent lessons were well structured and delivered with enthusiasm. They often involved developing pupils' ideas through modelling or looking at real life phenomena. For example in a Year 7 lesson on growth, pupils' were all able to see how cells begin to divide by viewing a slide of cell growth on a monitor coupled to a microscope and then watching a computer simulation of cell multiplication. This enabled the pupils to learn the principles of cell multiplication very effectively and to describe what they had learnt in storyboard format. In a Year 10 physics lesson on electrical resistors, very clear objectives and instructions coupled with an enthusiastic delivery enabled pupils to build series and parallel circuits and measure and record appropriate voltages and currents with confidence. Teachers set challenging tasks for high attaining pupils. For example in an excellent year ten chemistry lesson on displacement, the teacher led the pupils through a series of timed activities starting with a carefully planned practical exercise and culminating with the derivation of reaction equations. As a result of the careful structuring of the lesson in relation to previous learning and high expectations of the teacher, pupils were able to apply their knowledge to work of the highest level. Teachers establish good relationships with pupils and capture their interest through practical science activities. This results in pupils behaving well in science and adopting positive attitudes towards the subject.

121. The statutory requirements are met at both key stages and schemes of work are in place. The curriculum is balanced with separate sciences offered to the highest attainers. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory and teachers deal with pupil needs as they arise but no formal system in terms of special worksheets or other appropriate materials, tailored to individual needs, is in general use. Provision for the teaching of literacy is good. Key word lists are in laboratories and reading material is checked for readability in lessons. The provision for the teaching of numeracy is less well developed. The provision for pupils to learn and use information communication technology, especially in offering pupils the opportunities for developing their skills in data capture and data logging, are limited by the lack of resources in laboratories.

122. The monitoring of pupils' academic performance is good. The pupils are tested regularly in both key stages and are prepared well for their examinations. Spreadsheets are used to track pupil progress and baseline testing is carried out at the beginning of year 7 to supplement the end of Key Stage 2 data. Exercise books are marked well with useful comments being written by the teachers. End of lesson evaluation is good with teachers employing skilful questioning techniques. Individual subject specific pupil target setting is not yet in place. Safety in science lessons is good. Although risk assessments are written into schemes of work they do not feature in lesson plans. Hazardous chemicals and radioactive materials are regularly checked and are stored in accordance with statutory regulations.

123. Departmental leadership is good. The head of department is an enthusiastic teacher who leads by example. Although new in post, his vision for the future improvement of science education at the school and the continuation of the raising of standards is beginning to materialise and establish improvement since the previous inspection. This vision is shared by a strong team of effective teachers and laboratory technicians whose efforts are contributing greatly to the high standards achieved by pupils. Resources are adequate for the demands of the curriculum apart from computer hardware. Whilst laboratories are generally clean and tidy with pupils' work on display, benches, fixtures and fittings are often worn and broken. Quite often a particular laboratory is too small for the size of group it has to accommodate.

ART

124. Overall, the quality of provision in art is **good**.

Strengths:

- Consistently good results in GCSE
- High standards in drawing, painting and three-dimensional work
- Good teaching

Areas for Improvement:

- The opportunities for pupils to have greater freedom to experiment and use their imaginations in making work.
- Aim at least to match the percentage nationally of pupils gaining the highest grade at GCSE
- The resources and use of new technology in the art department
- The range of art books in the library to include the wide diversity of cultures and art.

125. Different groups of pupils are fully included in art curriculum provided, except that pupils with more severe special educational needs are not helped to achieve as well as all other pupils.

126. By the end of Year 9, pupils' attainments in art are broadly in line with standards nationally. The teachers' assessment at this stage shows two-thirds of pupils at the expected level and a fifth attaining higher standards. Overall, this assessment matches closely the standards of work seen in lessons. Most pupils have good observational drawing skills and knowledge of research, which they use effectively in building up ideas for their work. They make preparatory sketches and draw upon these in composing final pieces. In the 'Dream Room' study, pupils explore discordant imagery, scale and perspective imaginatively, calling upon their knowledge of Surrealism and the art of Rene Magritte to produce a fantasy interior scene. This is executed using detailed observational drawing involving skilled use of line and tone. While more girls attain higher standards than boys, difference in performance is the same as for most schools. By the end of Year 9, pupils have made good progress in developing drawing skills and in knowing how techniques using line, tone and pattern can improve their work. This is extended into three-dimensional work, moulding forms from clay and '*papier-mache*'. A good art vocabulary has been acquired over time and an awareness of major Western artists and art movements. However, their achievements are confined to essential but tightly defined creative explorations and investigations offering experiences of a small range of art materials and visual possibilities. There is much less scope for pupils to experiment and use their imaginations more freely.

127. By the end of Year 11, the standards in art are well above the national average. In 2000, GCSE drawing, painting and graphics results in A* - C grades were well above average and this is consistent with the trend over many years. However the percentage achieving A* is below average and this reflects the narrow focus in their work. Nearly 93 per cent of girls gained A* - C grades, which is very high compared to the national average and they did significantly better in their GCSE art examination than in their other GCSE examinations. The results of boys gaining A* - C grades were above average as were the results in A* - G grades for all pupils. The difference in the performance of boys and girls is broadly in line with most schools. The large majority of pupils have technical skills in using pencils and paints that are above average. In the graphic designing of a magazine page layout the depth of research is limited but the fine control of drafting visual motifs and lettering and the finishing in colour results largely in polished presentations. The reading and note taking for a cultural study is of better quality because pupils are clearly briefed in a written statement of the range of areas possible to explore. In Years 10 and 11, pupils are achieving very well in two and three-dimensional work within a limited range of materials and techniques. Drawing skills and the control of media, for example, the use and application of colour are increasingly refined through repeated practice. The investigation of artists' techniques such as Monet's dappled brushstrokes leads to synthesising a good graphic style for designing a front page for the Radio Times.

128. Teaching is good throughout the department and learning is promoted effectively by a well-planned and established art curriculum. The three art teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject and its examination syllabuses. The work is planned well for all pupils and places a tight emphasis on drawing and observational skills. The objectives for each lesson are made clear and often these are written clearly on the board. Even better, one teacher gives detailed written guidance to her pupils on completing each coursework project, increasing the scope for their independence of action. A very good homework programme is used to bolster learning taking place in lessons. Key subject vocabulary is identified and sometimes reinforced well. Pupils quickly build a word bank of art terms and grow to understand these well by being called on to recollect and define them. In Year 8, pupils explain well, using their own words, what 'tone' and 'detail' mean before embarking on a drawing where both are key objectives. High expectations are set effectively, particularly in some Year 7, 8 and 9 groups by allowing pupils to examine good exemplars of work completed by earlier groups. When they have a clear understanding of what to aim for, pupils set about work energetically and concentrate well, acquiring good

observational and drawing skills. This is as much a benefit to pupils with special educational needs but the lack of information and direction concerning some very needy pupils means they are poorly supported and do not achieve as well as they ought to. Among older pupils, concentration and effort give way to chatter during some lessons and this is not attended to effectively. Limited ways of working; using mainly pencil or a paint brush, lacks variety and does not generate a good level of interest. There are no applications of new technology, which deprives especially the graphic design work of much of its challenge and excitement.

129. Also, during lessons, returning pupils as a group to the objectives or to show them a key step in learning does not happen enough. For example, in Year 9, many pupils needed to know to concentrate on checking that their drawing was the same as what they were seeing. However, the individual attention teachers give to pupils usually ensures they receive good advice on improving their work. A quick demonstration of how shading can describe the folds in cloth helps one Year 10 pupil raise the standard of his drawing immediately.

130. The art department is led satisfactorily. The three art teachers work together closely and steadfastly pursue high standards and examination successes. They profess strongly through practice the value of an education through art and act with commitment to ensure pupils learn the fundamentals of its knowledge and skills. The amount of improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. The high standards pupils attain have been maintained as has the good teaching they receive. The three art rooms are on the verge of being brought together in much improved accommodation. However, nothing has been achieved in developing resources for information and communications technology in the art department. The books in the department are largely concerned with Western art and while some GCSE pupils are making good critical studies of more diverse art there is generally a paucity of attention to the wider forms of art. The quality of art books in the library is poor. They are outdated and too narrow in their range of knowledge. The contact pupils have with art and artists, beyond the school, is too limited. Overall, while high standards are achieved, they are within a narrow range of creative work.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

131. Overall quality of provision in design and technology is very **good**.

Strengths:

- GCSE results are significantly above the national average
- Teaching is very good and never less than satisfactory
- Pupils' presentation and graphical communication skills and their use of the technical language of the subject are good
- Almost all pupils have a very good attitude to learning and show very good behaviour in all lessons.

Areas for Improvement:

- Ensure pupils are more fully aware of what National Curriculum levels of attainment
- Mean in terms of what they can and cannot do throughout Years 7 to 9
- Extend the use of information technology across all material areas. Provide greater opportunity for pupils to experience the use of control technology at both Key Stages
- Adopt strategies to ensure that pupils with special educational needs are fully supported in all material areas e.g. project worksheets are not sufficiently modified to meet the needs of all levels of attainment
- Insufficient technical support time in food technology.

132. Overall standards in design and technology are above the national average at the end of Year 9 and well above at the end of Year 11. Standards are significantly above in food technology, textiles and child development. Standards are broadly average in graphics and below average in resistant materials. Given pupils' average attainment on entry in the subject this represents good achievement by the end of Year 9 and very good achievement by the end of Year 11. GCSE results have improved year on year since the last inspection and were significantly above average in 2000. The number of pupils achieving the highest grades in 2000 was significantly above the national average. The schools results in 2001 were very similar to those of 2000. Boys attain above the national average for boys and girls attain above the average for girls. Girls outperform boys in the subject particularly at the highest grades of GCSE. Pupils attain as well in the subject as they do in their other most successful subjects.

133. In work seen by Year 9, attainment is above average and shows good improvement from work in Year 7. Pupils' are therefore achieving well. Most pupils understand the design process and their knowledge and skills in designing and making products are successfully developed. However the use of the Internet and other electronic data storage devices to research topics is underdeveloped. Higher attainers convey their design ideas very well with very good graphical communication skills. Average and lower attainers, including those with special educational needs have somewhat weaker skills of presentation and graphicacy but produce work of a satisfactory and sometimes good standard for capabilities. All pupils produce practical work of a good standard as seen in the preparation of a simple pudding in a Year 7 food technology lesson and the 'decorative bookend' project in a Year 8 resistant materials lesson. In these lessons pupils readily select and use the appropriate tools and equipment and work accurately seeking a high quality outcome.

134. Work by Year 11 is well above average. Standards are significantly above the average in food and textiles and child development where design folders show high levels of creative imagination, very good research skills and often-excellent presentation and graphical communication skills. Pupils have a very clear understanding of the design process and principles. Standards are broadly average in resistant materials and graphics. Most pupils in graphics show a very good understanding of 2-point perspective with very good spatial awareness skills. In all design subjects' pupils show much pride in their work. Across all subjects a significant proportion of boys and girls are achieving at the highest levels. The presentation and graphicacy skills of average and lower attainers are generally satisfactory and often good. There is no marked difference in the achievement between boys and girls or pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. Pupils with special educational needs show much interest in their work and make satisfactory progress achieving appropriate standards for their capabilities. In textiles a significant proportion of the pupils use computers well in the production of their design folders. However the use of the computer as a research and drawing tool and to produce work using control machinery is underdeveloped.

135. Pupils' attitude to learning and their behaviour are never less than good being more often very good or excellent in a high proportion of lessons. In all years a significant proportion of pupils work hard and show a sense of pride in their work. The great majority of pupils are very well motivated and show very good levels of enthusiasm for the work. As a result overall learning is never less than satisfactory being good or better in almost every lesson.

136. The good achievement is attributable to teaching which is never less than satisfactory being very good overall with some outstanding. The teaching methods and styles adopted are successful in assuring that pupils understand the design process and principles. In all material areas projects are generally well matched to pupils interests and

capability and relate well to industrial practice enabling pupils to see the relevance of the design processes and principles taught. Teachers' produce design worksheets that provide pupils with clear guidelines to support their work although not all worksheets are sufficiently modified to meet the needs of all levels of attainment. The development of pupils' literacy skills, particularly the technical language of the subject, is well implemented across all design areas. Teachers provide a technical vocabulary list that is associated with each new task to guide pupils and always insist on the use of correct terminology whenever pupils describe a process. Teachers provide pupils' with high levels of individual support and guidance, which assures that all pupils are clearly aware of what they are required to do in lessons. In many lessons good humour prevails and an atmosphere conducive to positive learning is established. Most work is marked to a good standard and teachers write constructive comments to explain to pupils what they need to do to improve their work. Individual targets are set for each module of work and are evaluated to determine if the targets have been achieved. Assessment procedures and practice are good. However, although pupils are aware of what National Curriculum levels they achieve at the end of Year 9 they are unclear about what this means in terms of what they can and cannot do throughout Years 7 to 9. Homework is regularly set and effectively extends the curriculum time with appropriate tasks. In some practical classes larger than usual numbers reduce the amount of individual support and attention teachers are able to provide which can affect standards for some individuals. Teachers are effective in promoting safe working practices and ensure that pupils' safety is a principal factor in all lessons. The technicians provide an invaluable contribution to the pupils' learning by helping them whenever possible with their tasks. However there is insufficient technical support time overall in food technology.

137. The separate strands of the subject are well led with an ethos where teaching staff is well focused on raising standards. Since the last inspection standards have improved and continue to improve. Issues in relation to the accommodation have been remedied effectively. Most of the accommodation is now of a very good standard and has a very positive affect on learning and standards.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths:

- Standards are maintained at consistently high levels
- Teaching and learning is good overall, and very good in one in four lessons
- Pupils' response to the subject is very good
- Very good systems of assessment
- Very good leadership and management

Areas for Improvement:

- Specific provision for pupils with special educational needs
- Written comments on pupils' work need to explain more what they have done well and how they can improve

139. Geography has made good improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils achieve well above expectations by the end of Key Stage 3. Girls do better than boys, especially at higher levels. At the end of Key Stage 4 pupils attain well above average. In 2000 75 per cent gained A*-C grades (national average 58 per cent), and all received grades A*-G. Pupils achieved over half a grade better on average than in their other subjects. This shows good progress in this key stage. Girls gain a higher proportion of A*-C grades than boys, particularly A* and A grades. Girls' do especially well in coursework that requires independent enquiry (25 per cent of the GCSE assessment). Boys' attainment,

however, is above boys' attainment nationally by a much greater margin than that found in a similar comparison for girls. Attainment has been at these levels for the past four years. The most recent GCSE results for 2001 (still to be confirmed) continue the pattern: A*-C 72 per cent and A*-G 99 per cent.

140. Evidence from pupils' work and contribution in lessons, shows that their achievement continues to be well above national expectations. They express themselves well in writing and in speech. They take care with handwriting and presentation. They listen well and show openness to the opinions of others. Pupils in year 7 skilfully use compass points and scale for locating places and measuring distances on maps. Lower attaining pupils in Year 8 locate and name major British towns well. A few do not understand that average winter temperatures in Britain are higher in the south than in the north. More able pupils have very good understanding of how weather instruments measure elements such as sunshine and wind. Year 9 pupils handle concepts on a world scale very well. For example, they interpret graphs successfully to explain the explosion in world population. They use terms such as *migration* confidently. Following group discussion they present to their class a range of factors that influence population movements. In Key Stage 4 pupils have deeper understanding of physical processes and use subject terms freely to explain, for example, why earthquakes and volcanic eruptions occur. They use a number of skills for collecting and analysing first hand evidence. For example, they investigate the changes that occur along Stratford Road from the centre of Birmingham to the outer suburbs. They use indicators such as housing, shopping facilities and traffic. Pupils use ICT well for word-processing reports and the presentation of statistics in tables and graphs, but it is little used as an analytical tool. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall. Progress could be improved if more information was provided for teachers on pupils' needs and how to meet them. Pupils with English as a second language make good progress.

141. The quality of teaching is good overall, and in one lesson in four it is very good. Pupils respond very well to teachers' high expectations of them. They have good recall of previous work and use appropriate subject terms with little prompting. For example, in a Year 10 lesson, a pupil referred to an earthquake's effect on a Japanese city's *infrastructure*. Pupils' attitude to learning is very good and teachers stimulate thinking by thorough questioning. Able pupils especially enjoy being questioned rapidly with questions that extend them. For example, "How can areas prepare for earthquakes?" a teacher asked. Quickly a host of ideas flowed from the class. There is respect for learning and pupils collaborate well in groups to pool their explanations, and take advantage of listening to another point of view. In a Year 8 lesson, for example, pupils excitedly examined weather instruments to discover what and how they measure. Then they shared their thoughts with the whole class, who recorded the answers on a prepared sheet. Lower attaining pupils show eagerness to learn where lesson planning responds well to their needs. In a Year 8 lesson the teacher made good use of a text book map of land temperatures and an overhead transparency of sea temperatures in January to help pupils see a relationship. In those lessons where a learning support assistant is present, pupils with special educational needs receive appropriate assistance. Generally, however, teachers do not plan work specifically for these pupils. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly. They give grades and often a brief comment, such as "a good try" or "try to improve your spelling" (to a pupil with an obvious difficulty and not just carelessness). Some work does receive fuller responses that acknowledge what the pupil has done well. Other comments guide pupils towards improving an aspect of their next piece of work. This approach, however, is not practised widely.

142. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department is clear about where improvement should be made. He is part of a team that is leading the project on transforming teaching and learning in Key Stage 3. He is moving the department forward in the use of ICT in geography. The department's documentation is comprehensive and well organised. The geography staff has a commitment to continued improvement. A number are senior staff with whole school responsibilities but they support the department by undertaking delegated tasks. The assessment system is very good and is used effectively to track pupils' progress. The information that this provides is also used when revision of schemes of work occurs. The geography section in the school library is a little improved since the previous inspection. Books for older pupils need further improvement, although the department has a collection of reference materials that pupils use.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Attainment was above average at GCSE in 2000
- Teaching is good overall, leading to a good standard of learning
- The attitudes, motivation and behaviour of pupils are very good, which contributes to their good standard of learning

Areas for Improvement:

- Insufficient provision of fieldwork means that practical investigative skills are not well developed
- Insufficient use of IT as a tool for teaching and learning limits the development of related skills
- Planning for pupils with special educational needs does not take into account their individual learning needs

144. Standards of attainment overall are above average. Teacher assessments of National Curriculum levels at the end of Year 9 were broadly in line with the national average in 1999 and 2000, with an improving trend into 2001. A higher percentage of girls than boys reach Level 5 and Level 6. Standards of work seen were above average, particularly for more able pupils. GCSE groups for the last three years have been too small for meaningful comparisons with national results to be made. However, in 2000 all but one pupil gained a pass in the A* to C range, and results have improved overall during the last three years. Girls consistently do better than boys. In 2000, results were in line with the results in other subjects in the school. In 2001 the numbers opting for the subject have increased.

145. The standard of work seen in lessons and in samples of work is, overall, above average. Pupils achieve well in all year groups partly due to their very good attitudes and motivation, partly due to teaching strategies, which promote individual thinking skills at every opportunity. From Year 7 onwards pupils learn about the importance of historical evidence by analysing documents, maps and pictures. The more able know about the importance of considering bias and how to take into account the attitudes of the age when considering evidence. However, the less able and pupils with special educational need achieve less well because work is not always matched to their needs and there is insufficient classroom support. Standards of literacy are high among all levels of ability in Years 7 and 8, but in Year 9 this only applies to the more able; in one Year 9 set 5 many pupils had difficulty reading the source materials. Numeracy skills are used when needed, as in interpreting population graphs, but not well developed. Because of difficulties accessing facilities there is no evidence of the use of IT in pupils' work other than the use of websites for home

research. There is no evidence that pupils have experience of gathering and interpreting their own historical data, due to a lack of fieldwork expeditions in the recent past.

146. Overall, the quality of teaching is good which results in good learning for most pupils. Most lessons were good or better and there was only one unsatisfactory lesson. Teachers have a wealth of background knowledge and experience, which they use well to extend the information in text books. Skilled questioning promotes learning by linking new information to pupils' own background knowledge, for example in a Year 7 lesson about using census data when the teacher's constant positive encouragement ensured that pupils made every effort to contribute to the discussion with their own experiences of the 2001 census. Resources are often imaginatively used, as in a Year 11 lesson investigating aspects of the culture of the U.S.A. in the 1920s, when pupils had to research in groups and then write worksheets for other groups, and a Year 9 lesson about trench warfare which included the use of popular songs of the time to illustrate the changing morale of the troops. All the weaker teaching was characterised by a lack of suitable provision for pupils with special educational needs. Resources and teaching methods were not well-matched to their abilities and there was no individual support to help them to overcome their difficulties. Almost without exception pupils are well motivated and interested in their work, which is an improvement on the last report. This is a tribute to the standard of teaching and contributes to good learning. Another improvement is the high standard of oracy, with the girls playing as strong a part as the boys in discussions.

147. Leadership and management in the subject are satisfactory. Assessment is good and individual pupil progress can be tracked. However, pupils are not yet given clear guidance as to how to improve their grades. The accommodation is poor; some rooms are too small for the groups that use them and one teacher works in isolation from the rest of the department, which is not satisfactory.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

148. Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **satisfactory**.

Strengths:

- Attainment in GCSE Information Technology is very high
- The emphasis in lessons on GCSE/GNVQ assessment criteria, enabling pupils to have a clear understanding of how to improve their performance, is a significant strength in teaching Key Stage 4
- Very good systems have been developed to record pupils' progress, monitoring their progress against predicted national curriculum levels in Key Stage 3 and predicted grades at GCSE/GNVQ in Key Stage 4

Areas for development:

- The levels of resources is poorer than the national average. Although plans are in place to meet national targets for access to ICT resources, progress to date has been insufficient
- The use of ICT to support teaching and learning in subjects across the curriculum has yet to develop significantly
- Not all pupils in Key Stage 3 have access to an ICT curriculum and those not following a GCSE or GNVQ course in Key Stage 4 do not achieve a qualification at a sufficiently high level

149. Standards in ICT are satisfactory overall. Since the previous inspection statutory requirements are now met across both key stages with pupils being offered a broader curriculum including some access to using ICT for measurement and control. Pupils now work across the full programme of study in Key Stage 3 with standards of attainment meeting national expectations. They are able to use a word processor, spreadsheet and database to present written and numerical information for a variety of audiences and model simple financial information. In science pupils develop an understanding of measurement using sensors. The use of control technology in design & technology, however, is still underdeveloped due to a lack of resources. Pupils who undertake two modern foreign languages in Years 8 and 9 cannot attend weekly discrete ICT lessons. These pupils have significantly fewer experiences with ICT across Key Stage 3 and many do not reach the nationally expected standard in ICT across all aspects of National Curriculum requirements.

150. In Key Stage 4 standards in GCSE Information Technology have improved significantly since the previous inspection. In terms of the proportion of pupils achieving grades A* - C standards were above national averages in 2000 and improved to well above the average for 2000 in 2001. In 2000 both boys and girls attainments were above national averages, with girls achieving at a significantly higher level than their average in other subjects. Current standards of work in both GNVQ, including in GNVQ Business and GCSE courses continue to be above average overall. Higher ability pupils, both boys and girls for example, are able to use a spreadsheet to model numerical information in the context of providing a financial quotation for a hotel to hold a wedding reception. ICT provision for pupils who do not follow a GCSE or GNVQ examination course is less well developed. Pupils follow a combined ICT and religious education course leading to a certificate in Computer Literacy & Information Technology. This does not reflect the capability of pupils and national curriculum requirements for this key stage.

151. The use of ICT to support teaching and learning in other subjects across the curriculum is in need of further development. Good use of ICT is made in the GNVQ Business course. Pupils are able to combine text, graphics and numerical and financial information produced in a spreadsheet in a PowerPoint presentation to give examples of business in different industrial sectors. There is satisfactory use in modern foreign languages and in mathematics where pupils in Key Stage 3 use Logo, Omni graph and a spreadsheet for problem solving. Use is developing in science, design & technology and in geography where pupils use ICT to produce coursework and for displaying information. The use of ICT in English, religious education, physical education, history and music is significantly underdeveloped and is poor in Art. There has been little or no improvement in these subjects since the previous inspection.

152. The quality of teaching is good, particularly in Key Stage 4 and continues to have a positive impact on pupils' learning and their attitudes towards using ICT. Lessons are well organised with a clear introduction focussing pupils on learning intentions. Teachers' very good subject expertise, their expectations of, and good relationships with, pupils provide an effective environment for learning. This enables pupils to make good progress in developing their skills in using a word processor, database and spreadsheet. A particular strength in teaching in Key Stage 4 GCSE and GNVQ Business and ICT courses is the clear, consistent references made to assessment criteria, indicating how pupils can aim to achieve higher grades in the context of the work they are completing. This is very effective in supporting pupils' learning and high levels of attainment. Pupils behave well in lessons. They are confident working individually, in pairs or in small groups and continue to demonstrate interest and enthusiasm in using ICT. Many make use of computers at home to produce homework or project work.

153. Learning is less effective when activities are insufficiently differentiated in the classroom. Some lower ability pupils in both key stages are less motivated and engaged by the curriculum activities planned for them, prompting an unsatisfactory pace of learning and off task chatter during some aspects of pupil centred activity. Pupils with special educational needs receive good individual support from the class teacher and generally achieve in line with their abilities. They integrate effectively with other pupils in class activities and respond well to questions. Teachers have limited information on these pupils' specific individual learning difficulties however, and are unable to plan more appropriately to support some individuals' needs. Teaching overall in Business and ICT discrete courses makes a good contribution to the development of pupils' numeracy and literacy skills.

154. Schemes of work follow national guidelines and reflect Exam Board and National Curriculum requirements. Plans have been developed to improve the use of ICT to support teaching and learning in subjects across the curriculum. Major pieces of work in ICT in Key Stage 3 are assessed against National Curriculum levels and a system established to monitor the progress of pupils against a prediction of their likely capability across the key stage. Monitoring of pupil progress is particularly effective in Key Stage 4 GCSE and GNVQ ICT and Business courses. The scheme of work for pupils in Year 7 has been influenced by the experiences gained from Year 6 induction activities in the school. Monitoring pupil progress in the context of their potential level of attainment is a developing strength of the Department contributing significantly to improvements in standards.

155. The Department is well managed with an effective team of teachers responsible for discrete ICT and Business courses. Expertise across all staff in the school is developing effectively. Structures are in place to promote the use of ICT in subjects across the curriculum. Technical support is insufficient, however, restricting the use of infrastructure to support curriculum activity in some areas and the capacity of the Co-ordinator to focus on teaching and learning issues. Although resources for ICT have been improved since the previous inspection they are currently inadequate to support the use of ICT in subjects across the curriculum and the full range of discrete ICT courses offered. The ratio of pupils to each computer is above the national average. Plans already in place aim to meet national minimum requirements in June 2002, but progress to date has been insufficient.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

156. Overall the quality of provision in Modern Foreign Languages is **good**.

Strengths:

- Overall quality of teaching is very good.
- Leadership by head of modern languages is very good.
- Teachers work very well as a team, producing good materials for learning.
- Teachers take pupils on visits to France, Germany and Spain so that pupils can use their languages.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils could improve their listening skills if the teachers spoke even more in the foreign languages in lessons.
- Pupils need to check their written work more carefully to avoid basic errors.
- The department lacks sufficient textbooks, readers, magazines, and whiteboards.

157. Half the pupils study French as a first foreign language in Year 7, and they continue with this language until the end of Year 11. A quarter of the pupils do German and a quarter do Spanish in Year 7, and they continue with this language until the end of Year 11. In Year

8 the more able French pupils also begin Spanish or German, and they continue with this language until the end of Year 9. In Year 8 the more able Spanish and German pupils also begin French, and they continue with this language until the end of Year 9. A few study French as a second foreign language as well as Spanish or German in Year 11, but there were too few to run this option in the current Year 10. A few pupils are disapplied in Years 10 and 11 to follow a different curriculum.

158. French GCSE results were well above national standards in 2001. GCSE results in French were higher than standards in similar schools in 2001. They were also higher than most other subjects in the school. Teacher assessments at age 14 were above national standards in French in 2001. A significant number of pupils in the current Year 9 in October 2001 have already reached level 5 in French in listening, speaking, reading and writing, above national standards. Performance in the lessons seen in Years 10 and 11 showed pupils working above national standards. Throughout the school pupils are stronger in listening, speaking and reading, and weaker in writing. Pupils in a Year 7 French class could listen to a tape and identify different classroom objects. When working in pairs, pupils in another Year 7 class were able to ask their partner politely for classroom objects in French. Year 11 pupils were able to read French sentences, which had been cut up, and understand them well enough to reconstruct them into a paragraph in the correct order. Another class of Year 11 pupils were able to write long sentences stating where they had gone, with whom, and what they had done.

159. German GCSE results were well above national standards in 2001. GCSE results in German were higher than standards in similar schools in 2001. They were also higher than most other subjects in the school. Teacher assessments at age 14 were above national standards in German in 2001. A significant number of pupils in the current Year 9 in October 2001 have already reached level 5 in German in listening, speaking, reading and writing, above national standards. Performance in the lessons seen in Years 10 and 11 showed pupils working above national standards. Throughout the school pupils are stronger in listening, speaking and reading, and weaker in writing. When listening to a German tape, Year 10 pupils heard details about different people, and could then decide if statements about them were true or false. In a Year 10 class 5 pupils stood at the front holding up a mixture of German words and pictures: other pupils were able to create sentences orally from the 5 items. Year 8 pupils were able to read information about 5 horoscope signs and decide to which they referred. Year 10 pupils were able to read a letter and write down answers to questions about it in German.

160. Spanish GCSE results were well above national standards in 2001. GCSE results in Spanish were higher than standards in similar schools in 2001. They were also higher than most other subjects in the school. Teacher assessments at age 14 were above national standards in Spanish in 2001. A significant number of pupils in the current Year 9 in October 2001 have already reached level 5 in Spanish in listening, speaking, reading and writing, above national standards. Performance in the lessons seen in Years 10 and 11 showed pupils working above national standards. Throughout the school pupils are stronger in listening, speaking and reading, and weaker in writing. When listening to a Spanish tape, Year 9 pupils could understand different problems occurring in a hotel, and they could write down words as the teacher spelled them out letter by letter in Spanish. Pupils in a Year 10 spoke to each other in pairs, and they could give their partner detailed information about the local area in Spanish. Pupils in a Year 8 class read 4 different texts in groups, and then sent representatives to other groups to give them information about their own text.

161. Overall, there is a satisfactory amount of written exercises and sustained writing in French, German and Spanish: however, pupils make unnecessary errors in grammar and spelling. Pupils do not check their written work carefully enough: the errors pupils make in

written work are preventing pupils from achieving higher standards. Girls usually attain better results than boys. There are no significant variations between pupils of different ethnicity, background, nor ability. Pupils have regular reading sessions: these contribute to their general literacy and develop their French, German and Spanish skills and knowledge, including the use of dictionaries. Pupils spend most of their time using the foreign languages in listening, speaking, reading and writing: this contributes to their literacy skills, but these are at lower levels than they would be in English. Numeracy activities have been incorporated successfully into schemes of work, and are used by teachers. Pupils have good access to computers, and use them well when they have the opportunity. The department has set up e-mail links with its partner school in France.

162. The overall quality of teaching is good. In French the quality of teaching is often very good, and one lesson was excellent. In German it is often good. In Spanish it is often very good. Four fifths of the lessons seen were good or better. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. The quality of teaching is improving standards and ensures satisfactory or good progress.

163. In French, German and Spanish the teachers are proficient in the foreign language, have good accents, and project their voices clearly. They use the foreign language for parts of the lesson, but sometimes use too much English. They plan a well organised sequence of activities, which involve the pupils in their learning. Some use overhead projectors well, but others do not use them sufficiently. They use other resources effectively to increase learning. Standards of discipline are generally good, but a few pupils find it difficult to concentrate sufficiently. Time is used well, and teachers are good at encouraging oral work in pairs: this improves listening and speaking skills, and develops confidence in the pupils. Staff display pupils' work, maps, posters, and other authentic material, which increase the pupils' knowledge of the languages and countries concerned. However, more maps and display are needed in some classrooms. Pupils' work is assessed regularly, and results inform subsequent teaching. Useful homework, which consolidates learning, is set regularly. The teaching of those with special needs is good, and meets the needs of these pupils as well. Teachers manage classes well, and give pupils a variety of experiences in the classroom, including songs, role plays, videos and class surveys, which extend and consolidate their learning.

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

165. The organisation of the curriculum meets statutory requirements. The head of modern languages monitors the progress of pupils in French, German and Spanish. The department is very well led and organised, has prioritised development plans, and works very well as a team. The department lacks sufficient text books, readers, magazines, and whiteboards. Visits to France, Germany and Spain encourage social interaction and personal responsibility, and improve language competence. The text books and other materials used, together with the visits abroad, help develop awareness of the diversity and richness of other cultures. The quality of most teaching, the attitudes of most pupils, visits abroad, and the leadership of the head of modern languages have a positive effect on standards. However, insufficient use of pair work and the foreign languages by teachers,

lack of resources, and the errors pupils make in written work are preventing pupils from achieving higher standards.

166. The department has addressed most of the issues raised in the previous report and standards have risen. Pupils are using structures and verbs better in Years 10 and 11. Schemes of work are now being used by teachers. However, use of the foreign language by teachers still varies and resources are still lacking.

MUSIC

167. Overall the quality of provision in music is **good**.

Strengths:

- Consistent standard of teaching. Never less than satisfactory mostly good or better.
- GCSE results consistently above national average.
- Good teaching.
- Good departmental leadership

What could be improved:

- Use of information and communication technology.
- More use of staff notation to reduce dependence on letter names.
- More use of tasks matched to the individual needs of pupils.

168. GCSE results for 2001 were well above the national average with eighty per cent of pupils entered gaining passes graded A* to C. Only a small number were entered so comparisons should be treated with caution but this maintains the standard set in recent years.

169. In Years 7 to 9, standards in work seen are above national expectations. Pupils sing well and are able to hold independent parts, for example a Year 7 class sang a round in two parts over a third part singing a repeated phrase. They are able to control keyboards and percussion instruments well and use them to produce effective compositions exploiting tone colours and rhythmic texture. However their reading of music is over dependent on the use of letter names rather than staff notation as required in the National Curriculum. The emphasis in the department on the use of key words as part of the school's literacy policy means that the pupils have a good knowledge of technical vocabulary and use it well. In Years 10 and 11 the pupils perform well on instruments and with their voices. They play with confidence and sensitivity, showing the ability to work independently of the teachers. For example, three string players in Year 11 rehearsed and performed music by Mozart with good ensemble technique and feeling for style. Compositions show a good variety of instrumentation and pupils are encouraged to use twentieth century composition techniques such as the whole tone scale. Listening skills are good, pupils can identify rhythm and pitch in their aural work. In Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 to 11 all groups of pupils are achieving well and there are no significant differences between the performance of boys and girls or different ethnic groups. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well and particularly in Years 10 and 11, where the smaller group sizes mean that they profit from a high level of individual attention.

170. The quality of teaching and learning is good, almost three quarters of lessons seen were good or very good and remainder were satisfactory. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen. The teachers know their subject well and use their musical skills very effectively for demonstration and illustration. Good use is made of a variety of resources. The management of pupils is very good and this combined with the pupils' very good attitude to the subject means that behaviour is very good and pupils are able to work productively on

their own or in groups. The way the pupils collaborate during group work is impressive, they discuss and negotiate well and are very courteous when listening to each other's performances. The teaching focuses on practical work and this helps pupils with special educational needs to make good progress particularly as the tasks are usually designed to enable pupils to perform at different levels. However more provision of tasks, which match the previous attainment of the pupils would enable higher attaining pupils to make even more progress. The teachers' explanations are very clear and pitched at the right level but sometimes become overlong and reduce the time available for practical work. The curriculum is broad and balanced, fulfils statutory requirements and features music from other cultures such as Japanese and Indian music. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to make music out of the classroom, for example choir and orchestra, and these activities are well supported. Instrumental teaching is available after school at the local education authority music centre and a good number of pupils take advantage of this. Through these activities and participation in concerts and festivals and workshops given by visiting musicians the department makes a strong contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils.

171. The department is well led and has maintained the high standards of attainment and teaching, which were reported at the last inspection. There is now more emphasis in the curriculum on composition. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress as a result of being given individual attention but there is still insufficient work designed especially for them. Although the department now has more computers than at the last inspection, technical difficulties have delayed their incorporation into the teaching and there are still few opportunities for pupils to use them.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Specific Strengths:

- Pupil behaviour, attitudes and motivation
- Very skilful specialist teaching
- Examination results well above the national average
- Very good resources for learning.

Areas for Development:

- The focus and detail of the department development plan requires sharpening
- Assessments should clearly inform curriculum planning and development.

173. Results at GCSE have exceeded the national average for all schools in 2000, the first two years that the subject has been offered at examination level. Though the cohort is relatively small at about twenty percent of the year population, more pupils do well in physical education than they do in most other subjects. It is likely that pupils will achieve better results in 2002.

174. Results for the whole year group in the year 9 teacher assessments exceeded the average expected nationally.

175. Pupil's standards in the subject on entry to the school at age 11 are at the average reported nationally, but rates of progress in learning are high due primarily to a combination of very high levels of pupil motivation, excellent resourcing, and good experienced teachers. As a result, attainment improves over years 7 to 9 to be above the national average standard at age 14. During Years 10 and 11, pupils continue to make appreciable progress,

so that standards are still above average at age 16. Overall standards have risen marginally since the last inspection, and remain at a high level.

176. In the work seen in Years 7 to 9, there is no discernible difference between the attainment of boys and girls. The same is true of different groups of pupils. The achievement of all pupils is good. In almost all lessons, many individual pupils perform at higher levels and are able to modify their ideas and their performance methodologies in response to changing circumstances. In all lessons, pupils demonstrate increasing control and levels of accuracy in a full range of games including hockey for girls, rugby for boys, and soccer for both sexes. They have a good understanding of health related fitness and of the effects of exercise on the body. They know how to warm up before strenuous activity, and can very effectively carry through the process themselves. They are confident and willing to express their views when asked. They have ample opportunities to observe and analyse their own and others' work, to comment on performance against specific criteria, and then to modify their activities accordingly. A Year 8 gymnastics lesson for girls demonstrated all of the above as the pupils strove to develop innovative and challenging modes of flight.

177. In Years 10 and 11, the work seen shows a relatively narrow range. Many pupils work at a standard well above the national average, with a number of pupils being capable of exceptional performance. Pupils consolidate the strong foundations laid in Years 7 to 9, and apply advanced principles of games play effectively and proficiently. Many pupils achieve success both individually and in teams, gaining a range of local and regional honours in a full range of activities. In lessons, pupils work very hard to develop their knowledge and understanding of the subtleties of high quality games play, they are tactically aware, and they can select and apply advanced skills and techniques with consistency and precision. This is best exemplified by a Year 11 boy's hockey lesson in which after expert coaching, the whole group was fully and successfully involved in a very high paced and technically difficult conditioned game. The boys were able to correctly apply advanced reverse stick techniques in combination with subtle development of space, and a very high work rate.

178. In all years, pupils with special needs make good progress. They are supported in an unobtrusive manner with differentiated work where appropriate. Higher attaining pupils also make good progress. Their advanced skills are used to good effect in demonstrations. Pupils from ethnic minorities show no signs of disadvantage and make similar progress to other pupils in the school. There is insufficient evidence to judge the progress of those pupils who speak English as an additional language.

179. Attitudes to learning are very good at ages 11 to 14, and excellent at ages 14-16. Pupils respond very well in lessons to the challenging environment created by the purposeful approach used within the department. They are exceptionally well turned out for all activities, they are enthusiastic, and demonstrate a real enjoyment of the subject. They are unfailingly polite and well behaved and work in a co-operative and supportive manner. They react very positively to the high expectations of their teachers. They are attentive and listen carefully, their capacity to sustain concentration is exceptional, and their confidence is high. Relationships between teachers and their pupils are uniformly good. In all lessons seen, pupils worked very well both independently and collaboratively in groups of varying sizes.

180. Teaching is very good overall, and very good or better in two thirds of the lessons seen when specialist teachers were in charge of classes. All specialist teachers have good knowledge of the subject, pay due regard to all aspects of health and safety, and plan their lessons carefully. They have very high expectations of their pupils and give clear and

precise explanations and demonstrations. The use of shared learning objectives, together with brisk pace and appropriate levels of challenge, ensures that class management is uniformly very good. The full use of technical vocabulary contributes strongly to the promotion of literacy skills within the school. There is a positive atmosphere of successful participation for all, based on challenge combined with support, and a clear ethos of hard work and mutual respect. Improvements in already high standards could be secured by: engaging pupils more actively in their own assessments, closer and critical monitoring and evaluation of class teaching, ensuring that really challenging extension work is always available for higher attaining pupils.

181. Leadership and management of the department are good. The teachers form a well-balanced, stable and experienced team. Their skills are complementary, they support each other well, and they are efficiently deployed to meet the needs of the curriculum. Their extensive involvement in a wide range of extra-curricular activities sends a strong message to pupils about the values of personal commitment and endeavour. Schemes of work are detailed and extensive, but the departmental handbook is out of date and does not properly reflect the needs of the department. Assessments are related directly to the schemes of work, but are under used in relation to curriculum planning and development. The departmental development plan lacks robustness, and has insufficient detail. There are extensive outdoor and indoor facilities. The outdoor facilities are generous and well looked after, but the indoor facilities are showing signs of age. The changing facilities are unsatisfactory, though not yet a barrier to learning. The department is very well equipped as a result of careful long-term attention and quite generous ongoing funding. In the course that all pupils follow, the curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant, and meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. Across the school, a very extensive range of extra curricular activities, and fixtures with other schools, provides a great many opportunities for all pupils to further enhance and extend their knowledge, skills and understanding. There is a strong ethic of adherence to high personal standards of behaviour and department.

182. Improvement in standards since the last inspection is marginal, but this is from an already high baseline. Areas identified for improvement in the previous report have been successfully tackled, and strengths have clearly been maintained. This is a strong and successful department well placed to make further progress.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

183. Overall, the quality of provision for religious education is **good**.

Strengths:

- Teaching and learning in Key Stage 3 and Religious Studies courses
- Leadership and management of the department
- Quality of specialist teaching staff

Areas for Development

- The standard of the RE/ICT course at Key Stage 4

184. By the end of Key Stage 3 standards are above what is expected by the Solihull Agreed Syllabus for religious education. Standards by the age of 16, as measured by GCSE examination results over the last four years to 2000, have always been above the national average. GCSE examination results in 2001 did not reflect this trend. However, inspection evidence indicates that the department is now back on track to achieving above average standards in GCSE full and short course examinations. Pupils following the combined RE/ICT course do not achieve the expectations of the Solihull Agreed Syllabus

because the RE element of this ICT focussed course is below the expected standards for pupils at Key Stage 4. Throughout the year-groups at Key Stage 3 and in examination courses, there are good, and very good examples, of thoughtful and mature oral and written work. Pupils with special educational needs show a good grasp of the areas studied. Pupils from different ethnic backgrounds show a good insight into the issues where the implications of living out a faith are discussed.

185. Pupils make very clear gains in their knowledge and understanding of Christianity and the teaching of other world religions at Key Stage 3. They also greatly improve their ability to evaluate the implications of religious teachings on peoples' lives. Progress is good from Years 7 to 9. Pupils are able to explain differing concepts of God in Year 7. In Year 9 they demonstrate competency in their conceptual understanding of the effect faith and belief has upon the actions of people involved in the work of the Samaritans and Tear Fund charities. Pupils in Years 10 & 11 follow examination and non-examination courses in religious education, which fulfil either GCSE or agreed syllabus requirements. With the exception of the RE/ICT course pupils improve their knowledge of a range of different religious beliefs and increase their understanding of contemporary moral issues (such as euthanasia and animal rights). Pupils make good progress in discussing and evaluating religious practices from Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism. They produce GCSE coursework that shows a good understanding of how different religions view moral and social dilemmas. Pupils literacy skills are well-promoted through written and oral tasks.

186. Pupils work hard in religious education lessons and sustain interest and concentration in the topics being covered. They respond well to the range of differing activities provided for them and co-operate with each other in group-work tasks. They are enthusiastic and very well-behaved. The attitude of pupils to religious education in the majority of lessons observed was good or very good. They are keen to learn and tolerant of classmates of differing religious beliefs. The take-up for religious studies GCSE courses, at the end of Key Stage 3, has been high for a number of years with pupils of different ethnic minority backgrounds being well-represented in these numbers.

187. The quality of teaching at both key stages is consistently good and occasionally very good. Preparation and planning are meticulous with pupils experiencing a range of different teaching and learning techniques in lessons. This provision of well-structured lessons with different strategies being used to engage pupils of all abilities and backgrounds is effective in driving pupil attainment forward. Good subject knowledge on the part of specialist teachers, combined with effective questioning, makes pupils think and builds upon their previous knowledge and understanding. Appropriate strategies and resources are used to ensure that content and approaches are matched to pupil needs. Teacher expectation of their pupils is high with special educational needs pupils being well-provided for through classroom organisation, teacher-support and use of varied learning materials. In one Year 9 lesson video footage of the plight of children in parts of Africa evoked excellent and mature reflection on the pupils own lifestyles and subsequently reinforced their understanding of why peoples' beliefs affect their actions. In a Year 11 GCSE Religious Studies lesson exploring euthanasia, pupils' understanding of the concept of pre-destination was helped by the teacher's clear explanation and analysis. The department is developing good practice in assessment against the agreed syllabus expectations and in using assessment to inform teaching.

188. The religious education department was enthusiastically and effectively led and efficiently managed at the time of the last inspection and this is still the case now. There is a very clear sense of purpose and direction in the department and a commitment by the very well-qualified team of religious education teachers to raising standards. The leadership,

management and staffing of religious education is a strength. Religious education continues to make a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The statutory requirement to teach religious education to all registered pupils is met at both key stages and is supported by very good schemes of work and policies for all aspects of the teaching of RE. The staff use their specialist bases effectively to enhance learning. Resources have been bought wisely and are used to good effect in lessons. Although it had no areas for development at the last inspection the department has not stood still. The maintaining of standards, as well as the development of new initiatives, including; the starting of a GCSE short course for all pupils; the creation of assessment, recording and reporting procedures against the expectations of the new Solihull agreed syllabus, lead to the judgement that good progress has been made since the last inspection.