

INSPECTION REPORT

FAZAKERLEY HIGH SCHOOL

Fazakerley

LEA area: Liverpool

Unique reference number: 104692

Headteacher: Mr N Fleming

Reporting inspector: Denis Pittman
16976

Dates of inspection: 15th – 19th January 2001

Inspection number: 188675

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Fazakerley High School Sherwoods Lane Fazakerley Liverpool
Postcode:	L10 1LB
Telephone number:	0151 525 2870
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Rev B Ward
Date of previous inspection:	4 th October 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
16976	D Pittman	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? The school's results and achievements. How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9724	B Quest-Riston	Lay Inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
28097	S Nolan	Team Inspector	Mathematics	How well does the school care for its pupils?
3943	D Innes	Team Inspector	English	English as an additional language. Special educational needs.
1779	D Leonard	Team Inspector	Science	How well is the school led and managed?
10385	K Hopkins	Team Inspector	Information and communication technology. Design and technology	
10053	J Simms	Team Inspector	Art GNVQ Sixth form	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
20497	V Williams	Team Inspector	Geography History	
13054	M Pennington	Team Inspector	Modern foreign languages	How well is the school led and managed?
7222	A Watson	Team Inspector	Music	Special educational needs Equal opportunities
18673	R Wilkins	Team Inspector	Religious education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
13217	M Butterworth	Team Inspector	Physical education	How well is the school led and managed?

The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Fazakerley High School is a smaller than average comprehensive school of 735 pupils (375 girls, 360 boys) aged 11 to 18. The sixth form is small with only 63 students. The school is situated in a suburb of Liverpool. A high proportion of pupils come from backgrounds with severe social and economic difficulties. The overall attainment of pupils upon entry to the school, at age 11, is well below average. The school has identified about 180 pupils as having special educational needs which is above the national average. Fifteen pupils have statements of educational need, which is broadly in line with the national figures. There are very few pupils with English as an additional language. Over half of the pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is well above the national average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Fazakerley is an improving school in challenging circumstances. Standards of teaching are good overall and pupils' attitudes to work are mostly positive. The headteacher and senior management provide a clear direction for the school. Staff work well together and create a helpful and caring environment for pupils to learn and develop. Pupils make steady progress and respond well to challenge where work is demanding and expectations are high. However, attainment by the time they leave school is still well below average although standards in lessons are generally comparable to those of similar schools. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Maintaining standards in textiles, business studies and religious education.
- Progress achieved by pupils in GNVQ and vocational courses.
- Effective leadership provided by the headteacher, deputy headteacher and senior management team.
- Quality of teaching is good in many subjects and helps pupils to learn well.
- The care and support for pupils through year and form tutors.
- Personal and social development of pupils and effective careers education.
- The quality of support and provision for pupils in the Student Support Centre and for those pupils who are gifted or talented.

What could be improved

- The levels of attainment in GCSE examinations for the grades A* to C.
- The general level of attainment of boys but particularly those of higher ability.
- Levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Attainment and teaching in science.
- Standards of literacy throughout the school.
- The use of information and communication technology in the curriculum.
- The poor quality of the environment and resources in the library.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made steady progress in addressing some of the key issues from the last inspection in 1998. The constraints of a lack of stability and continuity in staffing seriously affect progress and standards in some subjects. However, the overall quality of teaching has improved – it is often good

with occasions of excellence. Higher expectations are providing more appropriate challenges for pupils in the best lessons. The improvements in teaching are the direct result of more effective monitoring and support of classroom work. Documentation and curriculum planning are better and help give more coherence to the work of departments. Subject co-ordinators are generally more effective and are involved through development groups with whole-school issues. A greater involvement with decision making is also reflected in the work of the governors on curriculum matters such as literacy and the allocation of funding for initiatives as part of the Education Action Zone. Considerable and successful efforts have been made to improve the attractiveness and security of the site which continues to have major shortcomings, many of which will be rectified by the significant rebuilding programme, beginning shortly.

Attainment in mathematics has improved; all groups of pupils are making reasonable progress across Key Stage 3 and achievement is more closely monitored. Standards of behaviour have also improved since the last inspection. There is less disruption in lessons and pupils' behaviour around the school is better and more orderly. Despite these improvements it is still a challenging and volatile environment in which to teach and learn. The Student Support Centre is having a positive impact in dealing with disruptive behaviour and re-integrating pupils back into classes. Some issues, however, remain unresolved. Attainment in science continues to be unsatisfactory, being the direct consequence of staffing difficulties. The school continues to monitor absence but attendance is still a serious problem as is punctuality for a significant minority of pupils. Computer resources have been increased recently but information and communication technology is insufficiently integrated into the work of the school. Some whole-school policies have not been consistently implemented or sufficiently developed, for example, in literacy and numeracy. Resources for learning in the library and the text and material provision in some subjects are unsatisfactory. The school does not comply with the requirement for a daily act of collective worship.

The reputation of the school in the local community is improving but links with parents are still not as strong as the school would like. The commitment to raising standards is bolstered by the improvements in staff morale.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
GCSE examinations	E	E	E*	D	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
A-levels/AS-levels	E*	E	E*		

In 2000, the school's Key Stage 3 test results were well below the national average but above those for similar schools. In English, mathematics and science, standards of attainment were well below the national average for all schools. These results are in part a reflection of the pupils' low standards of achievement on entry. However, in comparison with similar schools, attainment was above average for mathematics and science, and in line for English. The level of attainment of boys was significantly lower than that of girls. The trend in the school's test results has been declining in recent years. The

results for the tests in 2000 show an improvement in standards in science but a steep fall in attainment in English.

In 2000 GCSE results for pupils gaining five or more A* to C grades (17 per cent) were significantly below the national average and are in the lowest five per cent nationally. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades in the full range was well below the national average for all schools and below that for similar schools. The attainment on entry of this cohort of pupils was very low. The trend in improvement in the school's examination results is broadly in line with the national pattern.

National post-16 comparators for students' A level points scores show significantly below average attainment for those taking both fewer than, and more than, two A-level subjects. GNVQ scores, though, have been above the national average.

Overall examination results were still well below national expectations but there were good performances in art at GCSE and business studies at A-level and GNVQ. The school set overly ambitious targets for its GCSE performance in 2000. The target for 2001 of 38 per cent for A* to C grades is again very challenging and may need revision.

Generally standards seen in lessons are higher than national test or examination results. Improvements in the quality of teaching are having a positive effect on standards. Standards of attainment are in line with national expectations in art, textiles and physical education but are below expectations for most of the remaining subjects. Attainment in English at Key Stage 3 is well below average; literacy skills are low on entry. Pupils can read accurately but understanding the implications of what is read is difficult for many. The quality of pupils' writing is undermined by frequent errors in punctuation and expression. The standard of numeracy skills is also weak

Progress is generally satisfactory given the low levels of pupils' prior attainment. Achievement is good in English, art and design and technology, and very good in religious education. In some lessons there is insufficient challenge for higher attaining pupils, particularly boys. In most subjects, boys are under-achieving relative to girls. Pupils are also under-achieving in science.

Attainment in sixth form lessons shows students now attaining standards expected for those courses in most subjects. Achievement is particularly good in textiles, business studies and GNVQ courses. Given the relatively low attainment on entry to the sixth form, progress is predominately satisfactory and sometimes good.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Satisfactory. A gradual improvement as pupils mature; good attitudes in the sixth form.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory. Behaviour in the classroom is good when pupils' interest is caught.
Personal development and relationships	Satisfactory. Relationships are mostly positive and supportive. Pupils, particularly younger ones, can be inconsiderate of others.
Attendance	Very poor. Attendance is persistently well below the national average. There has been no significant improvement in recent years.

Many pupils show enthusiasm for their work. The majority of pupils are well behaved but in some lessons there is an unacceptable level of disruption. The orderly movement around the school is undermined by the boisterous behaviour of a significant minority of pupils, mostly boys. The number of pupils taking part in extra- curricular activities is below average. There are limited opportunities for pupils to take on personal responsibility or show initiative.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The overall quality of teaching is good. In 93 per cent of lessons seen teaching was satisfactory or better. Teaching was very good or better in 20 per cent of lessons. There are examples of excellent teaching in English, textiles, modern foreign languages and religious education. Only seven per cent of the teaching seen was of unsatisfactory quality.

Teaching is very good in textiles and religious education. The variety of learning experiences in these lessons promotes pupils' interest and involvement. Good subject knowledge and the effective management of pupils are strong features of many other lessons. Standards of teaching are good in English, design and technology, art, modern foreign languages, personal and social education and physical education. In these subjects the effective planning of activities helps to promote pupils' learning. Where teachers have high expectations pupils respond well. Teaching in science is unsatisfactory. The teaching of literacy and numeracy lacks consistency – it is unsatisfactory in science, design and technology, history and geography.

Given pupils' low level of prior attainment, their learning and the progress they make are at least sound in most subjects. Many pupils are reliant on teachers' support and direction, and are not sufficiently adept at learning independently. Progress is good in English, design and technology and physical education, and very good in religious education. The quality of learning is unsatisfactory in science. Overall, the school meets the needs of its pupils well.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The curriculum provision meets statutory requirements apart from religious education in the sixth form.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs are integrated well into normal classes. Individual education plans are not appropriately standardised to achieve consistency between departments.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Satisfactory. Moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. The focus and planning for spiritual development is unsatisfactory.

How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Effective procedures ensure pupils' welfare in the school. Child protection procedures are good. Assessment procedures for recording and monitoring progress are satisfactory.
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The school is aware of the need to maintain strong links with parents, but efforts to do this - though satisfactory - have had limited success. The response from parents to a variety of initiatives has been lower than the school would like. The personal and social education course provides relevant and challenging opportunities for discussion and study. Careers education is good; it is helpful and informative. The school makes good provision to meet the needs of the most academically able and talented; activities includes residential visits and Saturday morning 'master' classes. The GNVQ courses add an appropriate vocational element to the sixth form curriculum. The pastoral care procedures provide a sound overview of pupils' personal, social and academic development

There are weaknesses, however, in the curriculum: insufficient use of information and communication technology in subjects and inadequate time allocations for drama and music. The total time allocation for the curriculum is below recommendations and Key Stage 4 lacks a vocational focus. Curriculum planning is not addressing the significant gap in the attainment of boys and girls.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher provides effective leadership. He is well supported by a hard-working deputy headteacher and senior management team. There is now a shared commitment to school objectives by the staff.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. Governors have an informed interest in the school's work. They are taking a fuller part in strategic planning. Most statutory responsibilities are met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. The school has appropriately introduced target setting to improve standards.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Efficient and effective use of resources. Good financial management has brought the budget expenditure under control.

Educational priorities are appropriately identified through detailed development planning with a clear focus on objectives for improvement. The school efficiently applies the principle of 'best value' to its financial decisions. Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and have improved monitoring procedures. Statutory responsibilities are not met for the provision of religious education in the sixth form and of a daily act of collective worship. Most departments are efficiently managed and are monitoring their work more rigorously. The management of pastoral work and religious education are particularly effective. The management of science, history and modern foreign languages have unsatisfactory features. Generally there is insufficient use of new technology in departments. There are inadequacies in the provision for staffing, accommodation and learning resources.

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; • they feel comfortable about approaching the school about problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the amount of homework being set; • the school is badly led and managed; • the lack of information they receive about their child's progress; • the school is not helping their children to become mature and responsible; • the insufficient range of extra-curricular activities.

Very few questionnaires – only 34 out of the 735 sent out – were returned and few parents attended the meeting. The views of parents, from this small sample, were more negative than positive.

The inspection team considered that the homework set was appropriate in most subjects. There is clear evidence that teaching of the permanent staff is at least satisfactory and that problems predominantly occur with supply staff. The information parents receive about progress is also satisfactory and the school makes every effort to work closely with parents. The team concluded that the school is led and managed well, and that it makes satisfactory provision for pupils' personal development, but it agrees with parents that the range of extra-curricular activities is limited.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Standards of attainment of pupils at age 11, are well below the national average on entry to the school. The levels of prior attainment of pupils in later years have been very low. Standards of literacy and reading ages are particularly low.
2. In 2000, the school's Key Stage 3 test results were well below the national average but above those for similar schools. In English, mathematics and science, standards of attainment were well below the national average for all schools. These results are in part a reflection of the pupils' low standards of achievement on entry. However, in comparison with similar schools, attainment was above average for mathematics and science, and in line for English. Attainment of boys was significantly lower than that of girls. The trend in the school's test results has been declining in recent years. Results for the tests in 2000 show an improvement in standards in science but a steep fall in attainment in English.
3. In 2000, GCSE results for pupils gaining five or more A* to C grades (17 per cent) were significantly below the national average and are in the lowest five per cent nationally. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades in the full range was well below the national average for all schools and below that for similar schools. The trend in improvement in the school's examination results is broadly in line with the national pattern.
4. National post-16 comparators for students' A-level points scores show significantly below average attainment for those taking both fewer than, and more than, two A-level subjects. GNVQ scores, though, have been above the national average.
5. Overall results were still well below national expectations but there were good performances in art at GCSE level and business studies at A-level and GNVQ. The school set overly ambitious targets for its GCSE performance in 2000. The target for 2001 of 38 per cent for A* to C grades is again is very challenging and may need revision.
6. Standards seen in lessons are higher than the recent national tests or examination results would indicate. Improvements in the quality of teaching are having an impact on the quality of work produced by pupils. These improvements are not, as yet, reflected in results in national tests.
7. At the end of Year 9, attainment in English is well below average. Pupils generally listen attentively and communicate effectively when working in groups, but most lack confidence when speaking, which is also reflected in a reluctance to read aloud. When they do so, they read accurately, but few can interpret the sense in the manner of their reading. The weakest of the skills is writing, especially in the accuracy of written work. The quality of writing of almost all pupils is significantly reduced by the frequency of errors of sentence construction, basic punctuation and spelling, including misspelling of common words. Towards the end of Year 11, the work of many higher attaining pupils shows good progress and improving levels of confidence, especially in speaking, listening and reading. They can deliver 'reports' in an intelligent and articulate manner. However, the inaccuracy of written work prevents the majority from demonstrating fully the quality of their knowledge and understanding. At this stage, most pupils of average and below average attainment continue to lack confidence in

speech, reading and writing, although their standards of work have risen from the very low levels at which they began. Students in the sixth form are able to explore texts and develop good understanding. They can make judgements about motives and relationships and understand the need to support them with evidence. They have sound understanding of how writers achieve their effects, and attainment generally matches course requirements. The quality of the writing of some, however, continues to be reduced by the persistence of errors apparent in earlier years.

8. Pupils' literacy skills are weak. Many subjects are careful to ensure that pupils use and spell correctly the words needed to show how much they know and understand. Some provide opportunities for pupils to write at length, and guidance on how to organise their material. Pupils are too rarely encouraged to read aloud. Except in English, too few subjects train pupils to recognise important details by skim reading, highlighting or making notes. Pupils have too few opportunities to work in groups and report their findings to the full class. Often, they are restricted to providing short answers to questions intended to test their understanding, rather than to develop it. There are no whole-school strategies to improve the accuracy of written work.
9. In mathematics, attainment in lessons is below national expectations at both key stages. The attainment of boys is significantly lower than that of girls. Some higher attaining pupils have good skills in investigative tasks. They are competent in routine skills in simple trigonometry and algebraic manipulation. Pupils in middle ability groups are often inaccurate in their number work. They find difficulty in interpreting information, be it graphical or written. Higher attaining pupils in Year 11 are working at levels in line with national expectations and are solving competently, for example, simultaneous equations, both graphically and algebraically. Pupils in middle ability groups are weaker in their mathematical knowledge, particularly in work involving bearings, three-dimensional tasks and scientific notation. Their data handling skills and work on angles are strongest. Many pupils in lower ability groups, as well as those with special educational needs, still have poor number skills and have difficulty in comparing measurements. However, most pupils make satisfactory progress in the development of their mathematical understanding, particularly given their low levels of prior attainment. Students studying A-level mathematics are able to apply calculus skills to solving problems in applied mathematics. They have good recall of earlier work, and are developing their ability to explain and communicate their mathematical thinking and reasoning.
10. Pupils' numeracy skills are low. The school has no whole-school policy for the development of numeracy across subjects. However, some subjects attempt to reinforce number ideas in their lessons. For example, in science, pupils use simple numerical and data handling skills to help in their experimental work on Ohm's Law. In A-level work they can use scaling competently to draw ray diagrams. There is no systematic provision to help pupils develop the necessary numerical or graphical skills. There is well-planned provision for numeracy in religious education where pupils in Year 8 learn how to make scale drawings and models of tabernacles for the Jewish feast of Sukkoth. Year 11 calculate the expected amounts of almsgiving as part of their study of Islam. They also consider the symmetry in decoration in Mosques. Although in art there is some good practice in enhancing pupils' skills, both numerically and graphically, this is not systematic. Music, foreign modern languages and physical education make a small contribution to pupils' development of numeracy skills.
11. In science, the levels of attainment in lessons at age 14 and age 16 are below national expectations. Pupils in Year 8 can handle laboratory equipment carefully and safely, as when testing nutrients in food. However, they are given too few opportunities to carry out practical work, so investigative skills are not well developed. For many pupils, lack of understanding of

key words is a barrier to learning because their ability to describe and explain their work is restricted; there is no systematic approach to emphasising the meanings of words such as 'dissolve' and 'solution'. Similarly, there is no systematic approach to the development of pupils' numerical skills. The use of information and communication technology is unsatisfactory through a lack of computer equipment in the laboratories. Overall, progress and achievement are unsatisfactory at both key stages. Few sixth form students study science; physics is the only science course running at present. Attainment is in line with that expected for the A-level course and they make good progress.

12. Attainment is in line with national expectations at both key stages in physical education. In Year 7, boys show confidence in swimming; a great majority are able to swim competently. Good attention is paid both to non-swimmers and weak swimmers. Boys show satisfactory racket skills in badminton, and dribbling and passing skills in basketball. In gymnastics, girls can perform a variety of basic movements with both style and control. At Key Stage 4, in games situations, boys and girls show developing mastery of skills in basketball, volleyball and hockey. Pupils with special educational needs perform well in terms of their previous attainment. At both key stages, pupils make satisfactory progress.
13. In art, attainment in lessons is in line with national expectations at Key Stage 3, but below average at Key Stage 4. Pupils' weak spatial awareness hampers their attainment. However, girls throughout the school do well in art compared with girls nationally, and very well considering their prior attainment. By the end of Year 9, most pupils' practical work matches national expectations, especially in two-dimensional media. Pupils' low literacy skills affect their understanding of the historical and critical aspects of GCSE art work. On balance, progress is good.
14. Attainment is below national expectations at Key Stages 3 and 4 in design and technology, history, geography, religious education, music and information and communication technology. In design and technology, with the exception of work of higher attainers, graphical communication skills are weak in both design areas. However, in food studies and textiles, a high proportion of girls produce work of a satisfactory and sometimes good standard. Pupils' skills in using information and communication technology in the development of design techniques are weak. In history, Year 9 pupils have a sound understanding of the events and the main people within the period studied. They often do not realise their significance within the overall context of the study. In Year 11, pupils do not develop interpretative skills sufficiently; they need to analyse the significance of sources more thoroughly. In geography, by the age of 14, pupils have a basic grounding in geographical skills and can use and interpret maps accurately. At both key stages, pupils are not strong at interpreting statistical data. Overall, progress is good in design and technology and satisfactory in geography and history.
15. In religious education, pupils have a good knowledge of religious words, but their understanding of more complex religious ideas is less well developed. However, pupils do have an understanding of why religious beliefs are important to those who hold them. In music pupils have a satisfactory understanding of musical notation. Those who receive guitar and percussion tuition are developing good sight-reading and performance skills. Lower attaining pupils have a limited theoretical knowledge and are unclear about the elements of music. In information and communication technology, pupils show satisfactory skills of manipulating text and images. Most have appropriate keyboard skills and can use the mouse well enough to manipulate menus and functions. Pupils make very good progress in religious education and steady progress in music and information and communication technology.
16. Overall, pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress at both key stages. Some pupils make sufficiently good progress to be moved back to lower stage of the special

educational needs register. In relation to their prior learning, progress is unsatisfactory in science, design and technology, information and communication technology, modern foreign languages and in history and geography at Key Stage 3. They make good progress in English, religious education, physical education and in art at Key Stage 3. There should be a more systematised approach to the drawing up of individual education plans to include specific and manageable targets. This will enable pupils to make better progress. At present, the tasks set for them do not always match their individual needs.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

17. Pupils' attitudes to the school and their studies are variable. They are best in response to good teaching, but satisfactory overall. There is a gradual improvement as pupils mature: attitudes are much better among sixth form students. The extent of this variation was evident comparing attitudes in Year 7. In a mathematics lesson about how to convert millimetres to centimetres, the group was restless and fidgety, especially when they had to do things by themselves. During a swimming lesson for the same year group, however, pupils could listen and appreciate their personal improvement from the teacher's carefully structured comments. Some younger pupils have difficulty in listening when other pupils speak. In a Year 11 English lesson on how writers develop characters, the teacher established interest and a positive attitude to learning so that pupils joined in and gave their views for and against the characters. Sixth form students in an English lesson studying Jane Gordam's 'The Pangs of Love' had the interest and confidence to explore meanings in the text. When teachers take a long time to establish control, or have difficulty managing them, pupils are slow to settle, reluctant to listen to others and not strongly motivated. Few pupils are actively involved in the life of the school: for many, school is a fact of life, not a matter for enthusiasm. The number of pupils who take part in extra-curricular activities is lower than average. However, an increasing number of pupils attend the after-school sessions for homework, known as Planet Homework.
18. Standards of behaviour also vary considerably, but they are satisfactory overall. Behaviour in lessons is often good. Pupils behave well when their interest in a subject is caught and held by good teaching. This was the case in a Year 10 textiles lesson when pupils were experimenting with dyes and fabric as part of a project on cushion covers. However, there are some pupils, a minority, who are restless and shout to attract attention. This disruptive behaviour occurs mainly among boys with weak listening skills and short concentration spans. Standards of behaviour as they move around the school are satisfactory, though pupils can be boisterous and noisy. Pupils interviewed acknowledged that there was some bullying, but did not think it serious and considered the school dealt with cases promptly. However, they did say there are fights among pupils. The number of exclusions has been falling. During the year 1999/2000 the number of permanent exclusions, mainly for behaviour, was still higher than average for a school of this size, though the number of fixed term exclusions had fallen below average levels. It is significant that there have been no exclusions of either type since the support unit opened in April 2000. Standards of behaviour have improved since the last inspection. There is less disruption in lessons; pupils' behaviour around the school is better and more orderly.
19. Pupils' response to the provision for their personal development is broadly satisfactory. Some pupils, especially younger ones, are inconsiderate and unaware of the effect which their actions and activities have on others. The ability to show respect for others' feelings and values improves as pupils mature, especially in such areas of the curriculum as religious education where this respect is expected as a matter of course. Many pupils are reluctant learners who lack the confidence or the desire to show initiative and take responsibility for their work. They make little individual use of the library in their studies. Relations within the

school are satisfactory. In lessons characterised by good relations between pupils and members of staff, pupils work well together in pairs and groups. This was particularly evident in textiles lessons; pupils do well as a result. Good relations help pupils to gain confidence and to take a greater part in lessons; an example was seen among the sixth form students who made a sustained intellectual effort, working on their own initiative and collaboratively with each other, in a unit on Judaism. Relations among pupils themselves vary from good to confrontational.

20. Pupils with special educational needs have positive attitudes towards the school and their work. Behaviour is satisfactory even when the work is not pitched at a level appropriate to their needs. In the smaller teaching groups they collaborate effectively and work well with the teacher and support staff.
21. Attendance is very low in comparison with other schools. The rate of attendance for the year 1999/2000 was 84.17 per cent. Authorised absence was 14.19 per cent. Unauthorised absence is 1.64 per cent, which is above the national average of 1.1 per cent. Attendance was below the national average of 91 per cent in all year groups. In the autumn 2000 term the overall rate showed little change, but the attendance rate for Year 7 was marginally above 90 per cent. Punctuality is also a problem in all year groups. A significant minority of pupils do not come to school on time and arrive late for lessons. There has been no improvement in levels of attendance since the last inspection. Irregular or low attendance, often condoned by parents, means that pupils miss work and have difficulty catching up. This inevitably affects the standards they attain.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

22. The quality of teaching is good. In 93 per cent of lessons teaching was satisfactory or better. Teaching was very good or better in 20 per cent lessons. Most of the unsatisfactory teaching came from a core of supply teachers, which the school is obliged to use because of long-term, unfilled vacancies. The quality of teaching is particularly strong in English, textiles, modern foreign languages and religious education. In these subjects, pupils respond very positively to the opportunities provided and learn well. Teaching is at least satisfactory and often good in most other subjects. The overall quality of pupils' learning is satisfactory; they require more confidence and support to take responsibility for their own learning. The range of pupils' learning and the quality of teaching are unsatisfactory in science.
23. Teachers have good subject knowledge; this is used well in religious education and information and communication technology to motivate and interest pupils. In a range of subjects, such as physical education and design and technology, the teachers' enthusiasm promotes a positive climate for learning. In modern foreign languages, teachers use the spoken language helpfully to familiarise pupils with sound, and set the right expectations. This practice ensures that pupils concentrate hard and helps develop their confidence. In mathematics lessons, the expertise of staff provides good support for pupils in clarifying difficulties. In geography, there is good use made of local features to stimulate pupils' interest. In science unsatisfactory teaching and learning often occur because short-term supply teachers have difficulty in judging the stages reached by pupils in their previous lessons.
24. Detailed lesson planning is an effective feature of most subjects. In English, teachers plan lessons well, ensuring that each lesson comprises a number of linked units of work with intended time limits and relevant practice. This provides variety for pupils and, perhaps of particular benefit to boys, helps them to sustain their concentration. The detailed planning in

design and technology gives pupils a good appreciation of the design brief for projects; this is a strong feature in textiles. The design worksheets used provide clear guidelines with extension tasks which effectively challenge and extend the higher attaining pupils, in particular the gifted and talented pupils. In physical education the planned objectives, shared with pupils at the outset, ensure that these lessons proceed with pace and clear purpose.

25. In modern language lessons pupils gain confidence in achievable steps, carefully adapting the questioning to the level of the pupil and expertly balancing support and challenge - and all with enthusiasm and a sense of humour. This teaching promotes good, and sometimes very good, learning. However, sometimes top set pupils are not given enough opportunities to practise speaking with each other. Mathematics lessons appropriately reflect the National Numeracy Strategy by using methods which help pupils' understanding of number. Some science teaching does not effectively use questioning, often allowing a minority of boys to dominate question and answer sessions while others (particularly girls) are not included. The teaching of art to low ability Year 9 pupils showed good differentiation and patient explanations which had a positive effect on pupils' learning about style, design and fashion.
26. The teaching of basic skills in lessons is satisfactory at both key stages; it would be promoted further by co-ordinating strategies for literacy and numeracy. In some lessons, there are good examples of the effective reinforcement of skills. In the best history lessons the structure and clear focus provide good opportunities for developing literacy skills, involving pupils in their own learning and, in particular, developing historical enquiry skills. In modern foreign language lessons literacy skills are taught well, emphasising accuracy of articulation and pronunciation. Mathematics lessons include the use of writing frames to help pupils record their work and place emphasis on language in mathematics.
27. Most teachers have appropriate expectations of pupils' performance. In religious education teachers have very high expectations. For example, in Year 11 pupils were challenged by good questioning and well-structured worksheets which led to an understanding of prejudice and discrimination. Similarly, the better geography lessons are challenging, have brisk pace and are designed to meet pupils' needs. These lessons include demonstrations and exercises that have a good visual impact and enhance pupils' understanding. In physical education, demanding tasks accelerate learning; this is further enhanced by opportunities provided through extra-curricular activities. In history, expectations are not high enough; they fail to provide appropriate challenge for higher attaining pupils. In general, however, there are satisfactory levels of productivity in most lessons and learning proceeds at an appropriate pace.
28. Most permanent staff have good control and management strategies. For example, in English lessons, although necessarily very firm with some classes and individuals, teachers are quick to praise and usually establish very positive working relationships with pupils. They ensure that pupils contribute to their own learning by working in groups, as individuals and as full classes. These combine well together to encourage pupils to work harder. In design and technology, good humour prevails, and a positive working atmosphere is created. Most pupils respond well to this approach; they show satisfactory levels of interest in their work. Lapses in pupils' concentration are dealt with effectively; pupils are kept on task for most of the time. Class control in some science and geography lessons is unsatisfactory. In information and communication technology lessons, teachers provide good levels of individual support and guidance, working well with pupils at their computers. This helps to promote confidence, and provides a basis for more independent learning.

29. Most teachers use time and resources appropriately. Local resources are used well in geography. For example, 'fieldwork' undertaken in central Liverpool greatly enhances study at Key Stages 3 and 4, and real enrichment is evident. In most subjects, lessons have a time plan for activities, which effectively sustains pace and productivity. The productivity of pupils is not as evident as it should be in science and history. The use of the library and computer facilities to support pupils' independent work is poor and insufficiently developed in most subjects. Pupils' progress would be enhanced if more attention were given to this aspect.
30. The day-to-day assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory in most subjects. Assessment in art has improved, with good mechanisms for tracking pupils' progress. In modern foreign languages marking is frequent and positive. Marking follows agreed school policy, but it is not based on National Curriculum levels and does not set specific targets. The procedures for recording assessment data in information and communication technology are effective in tracking progress and attainment in timetabled lessons, but assessment of information and communication technology work in other subjects is unsatisfactory. The school does not have a profile of pupils' computer skills. In religious education teachers help pupils to understand how to raise the standard of their work through regular and supportive marking. Most subjects have appropriate arrangements for setting homework but there are inconsistencies in the way it is followed up and checked. The setting of homework is unsatisfactory in science and information and communication technology. However, the homework set in religious education is meaningful and extends work done in class. For example, Year 9 pupils increased their understanding of the challenges faced by Moslem pupils through writing a letter to a friend explaining their experiences.
31. The quality of teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. Thorough planning, careful use of time and resources, and high expectations all create an ethos of trust and success. Small teaching groups and the effective deployment of literacy and numeracy consultants have made a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning. Classroom support assistants make a significant and important contribution to English, mathematics and science lessons: this provision should be extended to other subject areas.
32. The standard of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection, with a greater emphasis on adding variety to teaching methods, and concentrating attention on how pupils learn. This focus now needs to be better reflected in motivating under-achieving boys and providing suitable challenges, particularly for the higher attainers.

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

33. The quality and range of learning opportunities throughout the school are satisfactory. With the exception of religious education in the sixth form, all statutory requirements are met. The provision of appropriate facilities for pupils to practise and apply their information and communication technology skills across all subjects is a weak aspect; insufficient provision is made for students in physical education post-16.
34. The governing body now has a curriculum sub-committee to oversee and manage curriculum matters alongside the senior management team. This has given governors a more focused approach to curriculum matters; each governor plans to become linked to a school year group, in order to develop their understanding of issues for individual years. The impact of the Education Action Zone on the school's curriculum is yet to be fully felt; like many areas of the school, curriculum issues are undergoing profound review in the light of these new

circumstances. Community involvement, links with partner institutions, the nature of the sixth form curriculum and its links with the needs of its partner sixth form, and the impact of these decisions on the Key Stage 4 curriculum, are all in a process of transition, development, and improvement. The governing body recognises that the science curriculum is still very adversely affected by the weaknesses in staffing which undermined the school's ability to provide a satisfactory quality of education at the time of the last inspection. No other areas of the curriculum are affected in this way now, except on a short-term basis. The school also recognises that the short, final afternoon lesson still leaves the curriculum marginally short of the recommended time allocation of 25 hours. Recent reorganisation of Key Stage 4 options has ensured appropriate equality of access to all.

35. Currently, the breadth and balance of pupils' curriculum at Key Stage 3 meet requirements and, with the exception of minimal provision of drama during these years, prepares pupils satisfactorily for their mainly GCSE-based Key Stage 4 years. There is insufficient time allocated for drama in Years 7 to 9; this is an inadequate foundation for the good, added provision of drama at GCSE level. Also, too little time is allowed for music to fulfil the requirements of the statutory programmes of study. Information and communication technology is now well provided for through discrete lessons in pupils' Key Stage 3 curriculum. The provision of modern foreign languages is differently affected by an adverse timetable 'blocking' organisation at Key Stage 4. Many difficulties are still apparent in the remaining setting arrangements still operating in some years, but these arrangements are changing as pupils gradually pass through the school.
36. A few pupils in Years 10 and 11 have an alternative curriculum, individually arranged, for example being off-site at local colleges or on part-time work placements. Otherwise, current provision for Key Stage 4 is relatively narrow, lacking the degree of vocational focus from which many pupils would benefit. The school recognises this and working parties are addressing these considerations. Imminent decisions about the nature of the school's post-16 future, and the needs of the joint sixth form, will impact upon the resolution of these questions. Current plans are for a much more appropriate, vocationally oriented post-14 curriculum range. This is in recognition of the unsuitability of the current match between some pupils' needs and the curriculum provided at Key Stage 4. Timetable arrangements, which leave art with single periods at Key Stage 4, restrict learning and progress, particularly of boys. Some teachers sharing the teaching of classes, again art is an example, is also unhelpful for pupils' continuity and progression. The recent provision of a learning centre for pupils with specific behavioural and educational needs has been central to improving the curriculum for these pupils. Strengths of the Key Stage 4 curriculum lie in textiles, and in business studies where standards are also good. Discrete information and communication technology provision is, again, good at Key Stage 4, and the careers provision remains a strength.
37. In the relatively small sixth form, A-level and GNVQ options are both provided. Some A-level groups are not viable, for example, art and business studies, but the school has striven to retain the range offered in preparation for larger cohorts to come. Other subjects show viable numbers, with students well on course to attain average standards, indicating the relevance of the provision: English, textiles and religious education are among these subjects. Popular GNVQ options in business studies and health and social care showed sufficient take-up to run, whilst others, such as art and design, did not.
38. In most respects the school successfully provides equal opportunities for all and the curriculum is socially inclusive. Good provision is made for all pupils, meeting their particular needs in terms of race, gender, background and ability. The under-performance of boys is an issue the

school has identified and is addressing. Students in the sixth form and pupils in the Student Support Centre are not receiving the religious education to which they are entitled. There is inequality in the adequacy of provision and use of information and communication technology. For example there are no computers in music. The Student Support Centre reflects the school's commitment to supporting all pupils. The school must make strenuous efforts to encourage regular attendance so that all pupils receive their entitlement to education and benefit from it. The school is committed to raising the literacy levels of pupils so that they can all have access to the educational opportunities offered.

39. The school is making good provision to meet the needs of the most academically able and talented pupils. Excellence in Cities funding, for the most gifted and the most talented pupils, is being used effectively across each key stage. Fifty-three gifted and 19 talented pupils have been identified and are making satisfactory progress in art, music, sport and other subjects. The progress of these pupils is carefully monitored.
40. A variety of teaching strategies and learning opportunities are used to challenge pupils and enrich curriculum experiences. For example, Year 7 pupils have made a residential visit to an outdoor centre in the Lake District. Pupils in Year 8 have visited Hadrian's Wall and Year 9 pupils have visited Stratford-upon-Avon. Year 10 pupils are receiving extra science course work. In addition, there are after-school lessons in mathematics, science, textiles and information and communication technology, and Saturday morning master classes. Each department is responsible for providing appropriate extension work; this effectively enriches the curriculum for these pupils. For example, a visiting drama group added an extra dimension to a technology lesson and pupils with a musical gift receive instrumental tuition. High quality art and design and textile work, on the theme of Heaven, was inspired by a visit to the Tate of the North Gallery by sixth form students. Extra-curricular provision is satisfactory in physical education and sport, but is inadequate to support pupils' taught curriculum in most other areas. The poor library/learning resources centre exacerbates this already unsatisfactory provision.
41. The school makes good use of the information from primary schools to identify pupils with special educational needs and to build up a profile of attainment to measure the progress of cohorts and of individuals. In mainstream classes, the curriculum is socially inclusive; pupils are assessed in accordance with the school's and the department's policies.
42. The combined contribution of all subjects of the curriculum to raising standards of literacy is unsatisfactory. The school is part of the national pilot scheme, introduced this year, to extend into secondary schools the teaching and learning strategies now established in most primary schools to improve standards, but this is not yet having an impact. Some good features are evident in the work of most subjects but their effectiveness is reduced by a lack of consistency in implementing agreed strategies. The library is very poorly stocked: it fails to attract pupils to reading for pleasure, or to provide them with reference texts from which they can gain information and develop their learning and language skills.
43. There is no co-ordinated programme or policy across the whole curriculum to support and enhance pupils' numeracy skills. An audit of how each curriculum area is using and enhancing numeracy is yet to be completed. There is a limited number of areas of good practice, but, overall, this cross-curricular provision is unsatisfactory. Within mathematics, however, there is improved provision to develop pupils' numeracy skills. The mathematics department is making increasing use of the National Numeracy Strategy to improve the number skills and mental

agility of pupils in Years 7 to 9. This practice is gradually influencing, positively, strategies to improve pupils' attainment in other year groups.

44. The programme which the school has planned for pupils' personal and social education is good. Tutors teach the programme in the lower school; they are replaced by specialist teachers in the upper school. The topics selected are appropriate for the pupils' needs and they are returned to in different year groups, so that, for example, friendship problems may be studied in different ways as pupils move through the school. However, this sensible planning is constrained by the current need to use supply teachers and others who do not know the pupils well; this makes the overall quality of provision no more than satisfactory.
45. The school's provision for careers education and guidance is good. The co-ordinator who plans it is both trained and experienced, and teaches a substantial part of the programme, with support from other specialist teachers. The quality of the school's work in this area has been given an award from Merseyside, the Recognition of Quality Award. Support from the careers service concentrates on pupils in difficult circumstances. There is a good spread of work on careers across year groups. In Year 9, as pupils prepare to choose their GCSE options, there is a careers convention and a new, practical module about the choices which have to be made in working life. In a lesson seen during the inspection, pupils took a notional job with a fixed salary and learnt to plan their spending within their budget. This approach came across well. Pupils in Year 10 have two weeks work experience organised with the help of Liverpool Compact. In Year 11, the emphasis is on the transition from school to further study or work.
46. The school has made good progress in most issues related to the criticisms of the last report. Staffing problems, with the exception of science, are largely resolved. Curriculum planning has improved enormously, with pupils now benefiting from most departments' improved schemes of work, assessment methods, and homework scheduling. Unsatisfactory continuity and progression, especially that resulting from the science carousel arrangements, has been largely eradicated, except where split classes exist, as in art. The curriculum is now starting to be monitored, both at department level, through heads of department, and by members of the senior management team. National Curriculum requirements are now met in full, and the breadth and balance of the curriculum is now satisfactory. Sixth form religious education remains an issue, but the school has very recent plans to resolve this. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is much better. Individual education plans are now in use, but they need further refinement. Grouping arrangements, which result in imbalances of boys and girls in some groups, have been the subject of much consideration and experiment, for example, through single-gender teaching in some subjects, which has been abandoned. Some of these issues still remain and are discussed in subject sections of this report. The single key issue which has not been fully, or satisfactorily addressed through the school's curriculum planning, is the unusually wide gap in attainment between boys and girls, which remains a challenge for the school.
47. The school makes satisfactory provision, overall, for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Within that context, however, its provision for their spiritual development is still unsatisfactory. It has not adequately addressed a key issue of the previous inspection, concerning its statutory responsibility to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. Pupils attend a year group assembly once a week, and on other mornings meet in their tutor groups. The school takes the conduct of year assemblies seriously; they have good, Christian and spiritual content. Form tutor time, however, is used for pastoral and organisational purposes, and lacks any spiritual dimension.

48. There is no whole-school approach to pupils' spiritual development in the classroom. Where there is good practice, it is as the result of individual departmental initiative. This is the case in science, where, for example, pupils are led to reflect on the vastness and mystery of the universe. History helps pupils to appreciate how mediaeval peoples' lives were shaped by their transcendental world-view. In geography, the study of the origins and formation of volcanoes challenges pupils with elemental power of nature. In creative work in textiles, pupils explore questions of self and identity. Religious education makes a particularly strong contribution through, for example, the study of forms of worship, and concepts of God. In the majority of subjects, however, opportunities are missed to promote pupils' spiritual development.
49. The school makes satisfactory provision for the moral development of pupils. It has clear values, based on respect and caring for the individual, and teachers provide very good role models for pupils. The behaviour of most pupils reflects the school's commitment to developing them as moral beings. Pupils give practical expression to the value of caring through support for charities such as the RNIB, and in organising Christmas parties for senior citizens.
50. The programme of personal and social education affords pupils some opportunities to explore moral issues, such as those arising from relationships. Moral issues are also addressed in some other subjects in the classroom. It is a strength of religious education, where, for example, pupils encounter issues of gender, prejudice, discrimination and racism. In history, pupils are challenged by anti-Semitism and the Holocaust, and in geography by ethical issues concerning the environment and irreplaceable resources. Animal rights are explored in science. However, the lack of a whole-school approach again results in opportunities for promoting pupils' moral development being missed in a range of subjects.
51. The school makes satisfactory provision for the social development of pupils. Pupils' achievements are publicly recognised through the effective 'credits' system, which does much to raise their sense of self-worth and esteem. They are given some opportunities for developing their social skills through field trips organised by the humanities subjects, and in the case of some, but not all, Year 7 pupils, through residential experience at an outdoor centre. The School Council, the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, sports teams, and in the case of sixth form students, the Young Enterprise Scheme, provide pupils with opportunities to learn to take responsibility and develop leadership skills. Older pupils mentor younger in the 'Buddy' scheme. On balance, the school provides pupils of all ages with too few opportunities to exercise initiative and take responsibility in its daily life and work. There are also fewer than normal opportunities in lessons for developing the skills of collaborative working in pairs and small groups.
52. Social issues are addressed well in the programme of personal and social education, for example, those relating to Citizenship. Religious education makes a very strong contribution to developing pupils' social understanding through exploring how the beliefs of the major faith communities shape their adherents' social customs and traditions. History helps pupils to understand the forces that have shaped present day society, for example, the impact of industrialisation on housing and working conditions in the 19th century. Geography challenges them with the contrasting life styles of advanced and developing nations. Such planned provision is, however, little evidenced in most subjects.
53. The school makes satisfactory provision for pupils' cultural development. Pupils are provided with opportunities to develop skills in the creative and expressive arts, through music and

drama, and to develop the skills of performing for an audience in school productions. The study of modern foreign languages enhances their awareness of European culture, although the school has yet to establish links with other countries. Some subjects promote pupils' awareness of cultures other than European. Religious education makes a particularly strong contribution through the study of world faiths. In music lessons, pupils meet music from other cultures, including African, Chinese and Indian. Art and textiles introduce them to different cultural traditions. The school does not do enough to make pupils aware of the multicultural nature of contemporary British society, or of the contribution of cultures other than the Western European to the development of present day civilisation.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

54. There are good procedures to ensure pupils' welfare within the school. Heads of Year and tutors move through the school with their groups and come to know them well. There are good procedures for child protection. A detailed policy on health and safety has recently been approved, which is an improvement since the last inspection. Considerable changes have been made to ensure that the school provides a safer and more secure environment for pupils. Two safety issues have already been brought to the attention of the school during the inspection. In addition, the condition of the lavatories is just satisfactory; the need to keep them locked to maintain this condition is regrettable. Aspects of health education are included in the personal and social education programme. After the last inspection the school made it a priority to concentrate on improving behaviour, both within lessons and around the school, and revised their procedures accordingly. Greater emphasis is now given to acknowledging and rewarding achievement and improvement in academic work, attendance, behaviour and effort. Subject departments now have responsibility for managing pupils whose behaviour in lessons can affect the learning and progress of others. When lessons change, at break and at lunchtime, members of staff, both teaching and non-teaching, are very visible and consistent in their approach to maintaining standards of behaviour. These new procedures are doubly effective: behaviour outside lessons has improved to a satisfactory standard; because of this improvement, the school is now a safer and more secure environment for pupils. Boisterous and oppressive behaviour has not been eliminated, but those incidents which come to the staff's attention are dealt with promptly and there is greater control. There have been no exclusions since the support unit opened last year.
55. The school's many efforts to improve attendance and punctuality have not yet been as effective. Attendance is monitored efficiently, but despite the school's persistence, attempts to improve rates have had little impact, though there have been successes in individual cases. A member of staff now has responsibility for contacting parents on the first day of absence, but the appointment is too recent to judge how well it works.
56. The school has satisfactory arrangements for assessing pupils' attainment and progress. There are now sound systems to collect base line information about pupils on entry into the school, and other assessment information throughout their school career. Generally, subject departments build on this data by adding the results of unit tests and examinations, although there are, presently, no interim assessments in science. Subject assessments, guided by the recently reviewed and agreed whole-school assessment guidelines, are mostly accurate. However, in a few areas such as history and modern foreign languages at the end of Year 9, the assessment of pupils' progress is not linked to National Curriculum levels. There are good systems, both in religious education and English, where pupils clearly understand how well they are doing and how they can improve.

57. Examination results and the outcomes of assessment tasks are analysed and used satisfactorily to assist teachers in their task of raising pupils' attainment. Pupils who have special educational needs, as well as those who are gifted with special talents, are also identified clearly. Increasingly, this is helping to provide well-matched work and opportunities to benefit pupils. The school, through both academic and pastoral staff and its learning mentors, is now beginning to use assessment data to identify under-achievement. Targets for pupils are set and reviewed to help them make progress. Although there is now a comprehensive data-base, its access for teachers is still hindered by the lack of a computerised system. The school recognises the need for staff training in the use of data to raise standards. As yet, there has been little use of assessment to adjust the curriculum, but there is good use of assessment information to plan lessons in several subject areas such as mathematics, design and technology, English and religious education.
58. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' progress across the range of subjects of the curriculum are sound. The present yearly progress checks are soon to be replaced by termly checks across all subjects. Those pupils identified as under-achieving are now supported well through mentoring within school, awareness-raising parents' evenings, study support and out of lesson sessions. Most teachers mark pupils' work supportively, giving them helpful guidance.
59. Since the last inspection the school has made reasonable progress in developing its assessment practices and monitoring and support procedures. It now has a new assessment and marking policy to aid consistency between and across departments. Mentoring of pupils has been extended, as has the tracking of each individual's progress. In most subjects, assessments are now linked to National Curriculum levels and examination grades.
60. The school provides satisfactory support and advice for all pupils. Until recently, monitoring pupils' progress and personal development concentrated on those pupils causing concern and those considered to be making less progress than they should. Following the progress of all pupils is a recent development; procedures are not yet completely in place to do this each term. The school has identified groups of pupils who would benefit from extra support, and set in place a range of projects designed to raise their achievement. These include mentors to help pupils with perceived barriers to learning, some of whom take part in work-related schemes, and sessions on building confidence. There are initiatives to improve behaviour in pupils thought to be at risk of exclusion (this is additional to the support unit) and a study support scheme intended to encourage independent learning. Other measures include support to raise pupils' self-esteem, which runs at lunchtime, after school and during holidays; extra support for gifted and talented pupils in the form of personal targets; and special activities, including residential trips. These initiatives are recent developments and have not been in place for long enough to judge whether they are effective. The exception is the support unit, which works well.
61. Class teachers and support staff take good care of the pupils with special educational needs. Their attainment and progress is carefully monitored against the targets set in their individual education plans and formal statements of their needs. Effective support is provided by the special educational needs co-ordinator for this work. The co-ordinator, teachers and support staff give the highest priority to raising the self-esteem of pupils with special educational needs, which they see as the crucial factor in raising pupils' achievement. Statements and reviews are up to date and the provision for these pupils fully complies with the recommendations in the Code of Practice.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

62. Parents' views of the school are more negative than positive. Very few questionnaires – only 34 out of the 735 sent out – were returned, and few parents attended the meeting. These figures by themselves indicate a lack of interest and involvement. The majority of those parents who did return the questionnaire thought the school expected their children to work hard and said they would feel comfortable to approach the school if they had problems, though a significant number disagreed with this view. Parents had a number of concerns: about the amount of homework set; the standard of teaching; and the information they receive about progress. They do not think the school works closely with them; some consider the school is badly led and managed; some doubt whether the school is helping their children to become mature and responsible; some did not consider that an interesting range of extra-curricular activities was provided. The inspection team considers that the homework set is appropriate and that teaching in the school is good overall. The information parents receive about progress is satisfactory; the school tries hard to work closely with parents. The school is effectively led and managed and makes satisfactory provision for pupils' personal development. Inspectors did agree with parents that the range of extra-curricular activities is limited.
63. The co-ordinator effectively involves the parents of pupils with special educational needs in reviews of their children's progress and communicates regularly with many of them.
64. The school is aware of the need to maintain strong links with parents, but efforts to do this – though satisfactory – have had limited success. The response from parents to a variety of initiatives has been lower than the school would like. An exception to this low level of interest, which took place during the inspection, was a very successful and well-attended meeting to tell parents of pupils in Year 11 about revision skills. The range of information the school provides for parents is satisfactory. The booklet on study and revision skills produced for the Year 11 meeting is a good and useful addition to this range. In addition to consultation evenings, parents are given information about the progress their children make through a helpful interim report and a full report each year. These full reports vary in the amount of information they provide – some subjects comment very specifically on how children are doing in the subject and suggest how they can improve, while others refer mainly to attitudes to work. Parents have little impact on the work of the school and their contribution to their children's learning does not reach a satisfactory level. In some cases they have an adverse effect by not ensuring their children come to school regularly and on time. Fewer parents than average come to consultation evenings and they make insufficient use of pupils' planners. Few parents are involved in the new 'Friends Organisation' so far. The work of the school with parents is similar to that noted in the last inspection report, but the level of parents involvement would appear to have declined since many more returned the questionnaire last time.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

65. The quality of leadership and management in the school is good. The headteacher provides good leadership and is fully committed to raising standards in the school. He is enthusiastic and hardworking and has established a clear direction for the school's work. The school's aim is to create a 'learning community' within and outside its boundaries. The development of teaching and learning is clearly related to these aims and values. There is a strong commitment to good relationships and equality of opportunity. The headteacher is very well supported by other members of the senior management team whose individual skills complement those of their colleagues. The management structure operates well and enables strengths to be recognised and areas for development and improvement to be identified.

66. The quality of leadership at middle management level is generally satisfactory. Most middle managers have established a clear direction for their subject through improvements in the quality of departmental documentation. However the monitoring of work in departments is less consistent; it is in need of improvement in history, geography, music, modern foreign languages and, particularly, in science. The management of religious education is excellent and very good in English and textiles. Pastoral staff are very supportive and instrumental in helping to meet the objective of changing the culture of the school to one of greater participation and involvement by pupils. The management and co-ordination of the work in science is unsatisfactory and there are similar inadequacies in history and modern foreign languages. In general, however, there is a shared and focused commitment by staff to improve standards in all subjects, within the school.
67. The co-ordinator of work with pupils who have special educational needs performs her duties very effectively. The department is led and managed well. Good quality documents have been produced for the Student Support Centre together with a draft policy for special educational needs. National funding is being used to best effect to support pupils with learning difficulties and challenging behaviour. A detailed and up-to-date register of the pupils concerned is made available to all staff. Representative staff from each subject should be involved in drawing up and reviewing individual education plans at frequent intervals. Classroom assistants are effectively deployed but should be increased in number and be suitably trained to cover each subject area. There are effective, cross-phase arrangements with neighbouring schools and good support from the back-up services.
68. The governing body has a good working knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses and supports the school well. It takes an increasingly active role in monitoring the work of the school through its various sub-committees. The curriculum committee has taken the initiative in promoting literacy as a focus for development. An effective programme of subject reviews keeps governors informed about departmental issues. The governors work well with the school's management team in identifying areas for development, setting targets and monitoring progress towards those targets. The governor association with specific subject areas is not strong but appropriate provision is made for links with special educational needs and arrangements for performance management. The governing body does not meet its statutory responsibilities for the curriculum provision of religious education in the sixth form and a daily act of collective worship.
69. The monitoring and support of teaching at senior management level is satisfactory. These procedures have become a successful strategy for implementing change in the school. The school has made good progress in improving teaching since the last inspection report. There is a programme of classroom observations carried out by the headteacher, the curriculum line managers and some heads of department. Subject performance reviews are arranged regularly, examination results are discussed and action plans are drawn up to support subjects. The results of this approach are clear in the improvement in teaching and the gradual improvements in pupils' progress and learning.
70. Development planning at a whole-school level and at department level is satisfactory with carefully identified priorities appropriate to the needs of the school. These priorities are the focus for the work 'development groups', which have been constituted as a forum for discussion and action planning. While this is a good strategy for staff involvement in decision making, the number of groups is too large and requires modification. The work of the school is monitored closely by the school management team and the governors. Systems are being

introduced to compare the performance of departments in examinations with each other. The effective use of performance data is not sufficiently developed. The standards which pupils achieve are being improved by target setting.

71. Financial planning and the designated use of funding and grants are good. The school manages its budget efficiently. Financial priorities are to consolidate spending and to continue changing the school culture in response to financial management. Additional funding from the Educational Action Zone initiative is designed to achieve these aims. The intention now needs to be more reflected in practice. The current school strategic planning is good and covers both short and long-term financial implications of the relevant priorities for development. These documents provide a suitable basis for the long-term improvement of the school. The governing body plays a full and active role in the financial planning. They have taken a constructive role in the discussions and planning for the major refurbishment and building programme which is due to begin shortly at the school.
72. Routine administration of the school's budget is satisfactory. The issues identified for action in the last auditor's report have now been addressed and a number of checking systems have been adopted to ensure strict accountability. The head teacher has been very successful in acquiring additional funding for the school. The school does not make sufficient use of new technology to improve the information exchange around the school. There are well-defined procedures for obtaining quotations and tenders before placing orders. The school appropriately evaluates a range of different spending options in order to secure best value for money.
73. Given the improvements in the quality of teaching, the progress most pupils make in their work given their prior attainment and the continuing commitment to raising standards by the staff, the school provides satisfactory value for money.
74. Staffing is unsatisfactory overall. At the time of the inspection the school was using two supply teachers to cover long-term absences in science. Frequent changes of supply teacher have resulted in discontinuity in science lessons for a large number of students, adversely affecting their progress. Peripatetic music teachers are very effective in raising standards. Experienced and well-qualified staff in information and communication technology are raising standards, but non-specialists teach too many lower attaining classes in mathematics; this restricts the progress of a significant number of students. Development of pupils' research skills is limited because there is no school librarian. In art and in design and technology there is lack of technical support staff, while in science the technician has insufficient time to manage the department's resources effectively.
75. Newly appointed and newly qualified staff are effectively supported by a well-structured induction programme; they comment positively on this experience. As at the time of the last inspection the school provides good initial teacher training for a large number of trainee teachers across a wide range of departments. The income received is used well to enhance learning resources for students.
76. There has been some improvement since the last inspection in the provision of learning resources for subjects. As a result of spending which currently matches the national average, most subjects now have sufficient equipment and material of the necessary quality to teach the National Curriculum effectively. For example, shortages of equipment in design and technology, music and physical education have now been rectified, and there are new dictionaries and text books in modern languages. Provision for information and communication

technology has been greatly enhanced. When new connection work is completed, the 80 computers in the school will provide much needed support for learning across the curriculum. However, there has been no progress in overall provision since the last report. There are still deficiencies, which severely affect the capacity of some subjects to provide an adequate curriculum. Shortages in science restrict the range of teaching and learning, and in art resources for three-dimensional work are poor, and artefacts uninspiring. There are still not enough texts or CD-ROM's in English, or enough text books in English, science, modern languages or physical education, to allow pupils to have their own copies.

77. The provision of books is very poor. Stock in the depressing and largely under-used learning resource centre is outdated and unappealing. The lack of a modern resource base, which would adequately support the whole curriculum, encourage pupils to read and enjoy using books for research, and provide appropriate support for computer-based information retrieval, remains a key issue. Urgent action to address this issue is fundamental to the necessary raising of standards of literacy and independent learning in the school.
78. Considerable efforts have been made to upgrade accommodation since the last report. Many classrooms have been redecorated and efforts made to increase the attractiveness and security of the campus. There is a new, pleasant rest area for pupils which has seats and flower tubs. Substantial perimeter fencing has been provided, adding significantly to the security of the campus. A new Student Support Centre is well appointed and is functioning effectively. Major rebuilding, due to commence in July 2001, will rectify some current shortcomings. Some subjects do, however, still have to be taught in facilities which leave much to be desired. Science, for example, has insufficient laboratories, one being at a considerable distance from the rest. Modern foreign languages, English, drama, geography and music face problems caused by accommodation which is too small and cramped. There is only one, inadequate, practice room for music. Art is taught in small rooms which, at times, are cold and contain quite inappropriate furniture. The games barn, used for teaching physical education indoors, is very cold and some changing rooms and toilets in this department are in a very poor state of repair.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

79. In order to raise standards the headteacher, governors and staff should address the following issues :

- Improving attainment in GCSE examinations for the grades A* to C by:
 - using assessment data to identify more precise targets for pupils.(Paragraphs: 3,5,93,101,110,124,131,138,152,169,176)
- Improving standards of attainment and improve the quality of teaching in science by:
 - securing a team of permanent staff;
 - supporting and monitoring of the work of the department.(Paragraphs: 11,22,23,34,46,74,116,117)
- Monitoring and improving the general level of attainment of boys but particularly those of higher ability by:
 - identifying boys who are under-achieving through review procedures;
 - amending teaching strategies and methods to motivate boys.(Paragraphs: 2,46,70,93,119,139)
- Raise levels of attendance and punctuality by
 - improving administrative systems to follow up absenteeism quicker.(Paragraphs: 21,38,55,101,141)
- Improving standards of literacy throughout the school by
 - identifying literacy as a whole-school priority;
 - appointing a co-ordinator;
 - devising a strategic plan;
 - monitoring implementation rigorously.(Paragraphs:8,26,42,77,113,120,134,158)
- Improving the use of information and communication technology across the curriculum by
 - conducting an audit of computer use;
 - improving the assessment and recording of pupils information and communication technology skills;
 - continuing staff training.(Paragraphs: 29,30,33,38,72,76,86,113,123,126,1344,147,150,172)
- Improving the poor quality of the environment and resources in the library by
 - conducting a survey of departmental requirements;
 - allocating financial resources.(Paragraphs: 42,77,86)

In addition, the school should give consideration to the following minor issues:

- Provide a clearer focus for spiritual, moral, social and cultural themes in the curriculum with better opportunities for spiritual and cultural development – multi-cultural education is not strong. (Paragraphs: 47,48,53)
- Provide more opportunities for independent learning and for pupils to take responsibility and show initiative. (Paragraphs: 19,22,51,85,163)

- Develop a numeracy strategy and the co-ordination of its implementation. (Paragraphs: 10,26,43,103)
- Use standardised approaches to the writing of individual education plans. (Paragraph: 16)
- Improve the level of textbook resources, and the poor conditions in changing rooms. (Paragraphs: 78,173)
- Extend the range of extra-curricular activities. (Paragraphs:17,40,62)
- Continue to develop links and involve parents with the work of the school. (Paragraphs: 62,64)
- Make provision for religious education in the sixth form and evaluate the cost-effectiveness of some classes. (Paragraphs: 33,37,46,68,84)
- Ensure the length of the school day meets recommendations. (Paragraph: 34,35)
- Comply with requirements for an act of collective worship. (Paragraph:68)

SIXTH FORM

80. Numbers in the sixth form have fallen in recent years, with 60 students in total at present. Year 12 is bigger than Year 13. The local education authority has recently designated Fazakerley to be the area's location for joint post-16 provision with another local school, from where only four students currently attend courses. Through both Private Funding Initiatives and Educational Action Zone action, the whole nature and rationale of all aspects of the sixth form are changing. Evidence from inspection shows good progress and development, even since that very recent report.
81. National, post-16 comparators for students' A-level points scores show significantly below average attainment for those taking both fewer than, and more than two A-level subjects. GNVQ scores, though, have been above the national average. Attainment in lessons seen across the range subjects and courses in the sixth form show students now attaining standards expected for those courses in most subjects. Given the relatively low attainment on entry to the sixth form, progress is predominately satisfactory and sometimes good; progress seen in lessons reflected that picture.
82. Teaching is good, and leads directly to good learning, and to the progress described above. Subjects particularly notable for good and very good teaching are in design and technology textiles, in GNVQ areas of leisure and tourism and business studies, and in English and religious education. Teachers have a good understanding of their students' difficulties, for example, with literacy, when they come into the sixth form, and have effective methods of redressing these so that students can derive maximum benefit from their lessons. A good key skills programme further reinforces this improvement. These factors contribute significantly to the relatively better attainment and progress for sixth form students than for those in the main school.
83. Students' attitudes to their post-16 experience differ considerably between Year 12 and Year 13. In lessons observed, attitudes were never less than satisfactory, and mostly good or very good. Some excellent attitudes are evident in textiles and English. The weaknesses in students' behaviour patterns relate principally to attendance, and to an inconsiderate attitude towards punctuality, particularly notable amongst Year 13 students. They have brought these unsatisfactory habits with them from the lower school, but Year 12 is beginning to discard these, motivated, in part, by the financial incentives they receive for attending school.
84. The post-16 curriculum offers alternatives to A-levels in Year 13, AS/A2 levels for Year 12, and vocational options of GNVQs. More of the latter were offered last year than are currently running; for example art and design was available, but is not running because of insufficient numbers. More than the average proportion of students 'drop out' of their courses, although

evidence suggests that this will be less so for the present Year 12. The curriculum is one major area under current review, as various local and financial initiatives will influence these developments significantly. Several post-16 groups are uneconomical to run because of low numbers in classes, but the school has wisely sought to retain these where possible. This is for the future, when numbers rise as local initiatives produce greater post-16 numbers from September 2001 onwards. At present there is a single student in art A-level, and three students in business studies A-level. While this gives these students a very good contact ratio and almost personal attention from their teachers, it provides an unhelpful environment where students get insufficient group interaction to be fully effective in A-level terms. It is also a very expensive use of senior staffing. Students now also take the European 'driving licence', an information and communications technology examination which is helping to pull up the standards of their computer skills. Young Enterprise runs regularly as an extra-curricular activity, with students successfully providing a Christmas disco for the lower school, and seen on inspection developing ideas for Valentine's day. A planned trip to New York in February, for many to attend an Educational Convention, is currently the subject of pleasurable anticipation. Personal and social education is included in the post-16 curriculum, but at present this does not include the statutory requirement for religious education. The curriculum does not include the 'best practice' option of a core physical education provision. These omissions need urgent reconsideration.

85. The different 'cultures' evident in Year 12 and Year 13 lead to little effective integration of the two years. Despite the school's mixing Years 12 and 13 in tutor groups, Year 12 is a much more cohesive group; students have felt the benefit of provision such as the 'new' common room from the start. Year 13 had nowhere to gather when they started in the sixth form, so were unable to develop the cohesiveness usual in these years. These differences should not remain as the sixth form develops. The school could do much more to develop sixth formers' social contributions to the general everyday life of the school by offering them opportunities to take responsibilities. At present very little of this happens; students lack this social dimension to any great extent. Some students do help younger pupils with reading, some sit on the School Council, but this social aspect is under-developed.

86. The new head of sixth form only took up post in September, and has had little time, particularly with two inspections since then, to implement the changes the school wants to see in its post-16 provision. The positive effects of this new appointment are apparent, though, and sixth form management is good. A strategic view of developments is growing, despite the frustrations of having so little provision within the infrastructure of the school. Accommodation, despite the recent advent of a small, pleasantly refurbished sixth form common room is unsatisfactory for post-16 education. No small seminar rooms exist in the school, preventing the development of the closer working styles students require in many subjects. No sixth form library exists, nor do students have access to an appropriate range of main-school library facilities, as these are poor. No discrete sixth form computers are available, and the lack of Internet access puts students at a serious disadvantage in any research they need to do. No other resources for sixth form exist, and resourcing is unsatisfactory. Staffing is appropriate at present, but the head of sixth form is also currently head of the GNVQ courses, a double responsibility which is already putting a very heavy workload on one individual, despite good support from colleagues. Time to fulfil properly the responsibility of head of sixth form is further eroded by the need to take a tutor group, which is an inappropriate additional load. Staff benefit greatly from development opportunities provided locally, and have attended useful in-service training related to sixth form provision.

87. The sixth form is clearly in a state of transition and development. Evidence from inspection shows all major indicators for teaching and learning, and for attainment and progress, better in the sixth form than elsewhere in the school. It is a costly provision, though. Effectiveness is improving, and positive changes are already evident.

Student Support Centre

88. Good use is being made of Excellence in Cities funding in the Student Support Centre. The centre provides effective, separate, short-term teaching and support programmes for pupils with special educational needs and challenging behaviour. For the five Key Stage 3 pupils in the centre, attainment is well below the national expectation but pupils make satisfactory progress in relation to their prior attainment. For example, in a geography lesson on weather, pupils effectively identify the three coldest and the three warmest places in the British Isles.
89. Pupils have a satisfactory attitude to lessons and relate well to the teachers. The centre is bright, stimulating and welcoming and quiet areas are available for the occasions when pupils need individual attention.
90. The quality of teaching is satisfactory; pupils experience a wide range of teaching styles. Lessons are well prepared, with clear teaching objectives and expected learning outcomes. Work is appropriately differentiated to meet the pupils' individual needs. For example, in a mathematics lesson on multiplication and division of number, good quality work sheets were used effectively to support pupils' learning. Pupils' work is effectively assessed as the lesson proceeds. Control of pupils is firm and friendly.
91. Since the centre opened in April 2000, there have been no all day exclusions from school. The curriculum, which is broad and balanced, is delivered effectively by the special needs co-ordinator and subject specialist teachers, with significant help from the full-time learning support assistant.
92. Additional help is provided by a member of the National Teaching Advisory Service. Pupils are not receiving their religious education entitlement. Good use is being made of five computers and Success Maker software and pupils successfully access the Internet. The centre is effective in re-integrating pupils into mainstream classes, with additional support being provided by a learning mentor.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

151

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

30

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4	16	39	34	5	2	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	672	63
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	305	

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	15	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	180	0

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	4

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	37
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	41

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	14.0
National comparative data	5.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	2.6
National comparative data	0.4

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	73	76	149

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	10	19	19
	Girls	32	38	26
	Total	42	57	45
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	28 (48)	38 (50)	30 (28)
	National	64 (63)	62 (62)	54 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	7 (14)	17 (18)	10 (3)
	National	28 (28)	38 (38)	23 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	29	19	20
	Girls	58	30	27
	Total	87	49	47
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	58 (56)	33 (45)	32 (39)
	National	64 (64)	64 (64)	59 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	26 (8)	18 (20)	11 (18)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	30 (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	62	71	133

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	5	50	57
	Girls	18	49	60
	Total	23	99	117
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	17 (19)	74 (75)	88 (91)
	National	49 (46.6)	89 (90.9)	94 (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	22 (23)
	National	38.4 (38)

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

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	9	12	21

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	10.3 (11.4)	11.75 (7.5)	11.2 (9.3)	1.5 (3.8)	--- (1.0)	1.5 (2.0)
National	17.7 (17.7)	18.6 (18.1)	18.2 (17.9)	2.6 (2.7)	2.9 (2.8)	2.7 (2.8)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	30 (inter) + 9 (advanced)	67 (Inter) 78 (Advanced)
	National		N/A

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	3
Indian	0
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	724
Any other minority ethnic group	3

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	1	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	40	7
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	42
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	295

Deployment of teachers: Y7– Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76.0
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	22.7
Key Stage 4	25.5

Financial information

Financial year	2000
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	£
Total income	2202690
Total expenditure	2284662
Expenditure per pupil	3108
Balance brought forward from previous year	193899
Balance carried forward to next year	111927

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	735
Number of questionnaires returned	34

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	41	38	16	3	3
My child is making good progress in school.	38	44	13	3	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	34	48	9	6	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	41	13	19	3
The teaching is good.	31	44	13	9	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	22	44	16	16	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	56	13	13	13	6
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	56	34	0	10	0
The school works closely with parents.	22	38	16	13	11
The school is well led and managed.	34	38	13	6	10
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	34	44	13	10	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	19	31	22	10	19

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

ENGLISH

93. Results of tests taken by pupils aged 14 in 2000 were well below national levels but matched the average for similar schools. The results were also below those of earlier years, when there had been a rising trend of improvement, and reflected lower levels of attainment on entry into the school. Girls performed better than boys by a wider margin than is the case nationally. Standards at Key Stage 3 are below those of both mathematics and science. At GCSE, in examinations in English, English literature and drama, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C was well below average but the proportion of those gaining grades A*-G was above average. Results in English were in line with those of similar schools. Girls attained more highly than boys. Results at advanced level were below the national average but good by comparison with earlier achievements; almost all students gained pass grades.
94. The evidence of the inspection shows that pupils enter the school with well below average attainment which improves during the two key stages to narrow the gap, but not sufficiently to close it. At the end of Year 9, attainment is well below average. Pupils listen attentively to teachers with quick understanding and listen more carefully to each other than they did when they entered the school. They communicate effectively when working in groups but the majority lack confidence when speaking to the full class, apart from when providing very short answers to questions. A similar lack of confidence makes pupils reluctant to read aloud. When they do so, they read accurately, but few can interpret the sense in the manner of their reading. When reading in pairs or small groups to gain understanding, pupils reach satisfactory levels of understanding because they have been taught to recognise main ideas and important details by highlighting the texts they have read. The weakest of the skills is writing, especially in the accuracy of written work. Pupils draw upon wider vocabularies and use a more ambitious range of sentence constructions than they did on arrival. Almost all understand the need to write differently for different purposes and, particularly when given appropriate advice by teachers, most can organise their material sensibly when writing at length. The quality of the writing of almost all pupils, including some with otherwise good skills, is significantly reduced by the frequency of errors of sentence construction, basic punctuation and spelling, including misspelling of common words. Some errors of grammar and spelling reflect features of local speech.
95. Towards the end of Year 11, the pattern of strengths and weaknesses is similar in each of the main skills of the subject to that found earlier. The work of many pupils shows good progress and improving levels of confidence, especially in speaking, listening and reading. This is evident in the work of pupils at all levels of attainment in Year 11 and was noted, particularly, in the work of a class of high attainers. These pupils worked very well in groups discussing a selection of poems by Simon Armitage. Because they were well experienced in this kind of work, and were confident with each other, they were able to explore the poems and agree what ideas to report to the full class. Delivery of the reports was intelligent and articulate, and attainment was above average. Even in this group, however, the inaccuracy of written work prevents the majority from demonstrating fully the quality of their knowledge and understanding. At this stage, most pupils of average and below average attainment continue to lack confidence in speech, reading and writing although their standards of work have risen

from the very low levels at which they began. Pupils in drama classes show good skills of planning and evaluation. Skills of performance are less well developed because pupils have too little experience of the subject in the first three years.

96. Students in the sixth form are able to explore texts and develop good understanding, for example, of the short stories by Jane Gardam, or poems of Robert Frost. They can make judgements about motives and relationships and understand the need to support them with evidence. They have sound understanding of how writers achieve their effects, and attainment generally matches course requirements. The quality of the writing of some, however, continues to be reduced by the persistence of errors apparent in earlier years.
97. Pupils in all years and at all levels of attainment make good progress in lessons by comparison with their earlier learning. The quality of learning is occasionally reduced by the poor behaviour of a minority, but only rarely to unsatisfactory levels. Most pupils have positive attitudes to their work and, because they like and respect their teachers, they seek to meet their high expectations of behaviour, effort and achievement. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory because teachers understand their difficulties and when learning assistants are available they are skilfully helpful. High levels of absence from lessons reduce the progress of many pupils and, despite the efforts of teachers, lead to gaps in the understanding of those concerned.
98. The quality of teaching and learning is good. It is often very good, occasionally excellent and very rarely less than satisfactory. Teachers plan lessons well, usually ensuring that each lesson comprises a number of linked units of work with intended time limits and providing practice in each of the main activities of the subject. This provides variety for pupils and, perhaps of particular benefit to boys, helps them to sustain their concentration. Teachers link lessons to previous and future work so that pupils understand their relevance. Although necessarily very firm with some classes and individuals, teachers are quick to praise and usually establish very positive working relationships with pupils. They ensure that pupils contribute to their own learning by working in groups, as individuals and as full classes. They set appropriately challenging tasks and are skilful in using a variety of questions to ensure that pupils are able to demonstrate understanding and also to extend it.
99. In general, good progress has been made since the previous inspection. The department has very good leadership and represents a strong team. Its work benefits from the sharing of experience and adoption of successful practice. Marking of pupils' work identifies strengths and indicates the means of further improvement. Examination results and other data are analysed to identify needs. Successes are restricted by a shortage of texts in some important areas such as a structured course to improve basic levels of accuracy, lack of an adequate resource centre to encourage reading and the lack of methods consistently employed across the curriculum to raise standards of literacy.

MATHEMATICS

100. On entry to the school, pupils' standards of attainment are well below average. Standards achieved in the national tests for 14 year olds have been consistently well below the national average over recent years, with the exception of the 1999 results which were closer to, though still below, national averages. Results in 2000 again fell to well below national averages, reflecting the prior attainment of the year group. Teachers' assessments mainly match the

standards which pupils achieve in the tests. When compared with similar schools, standards at the end of Year 9 are currently above those for similar schools. For this year, test results in mathematics are similar to those in science and better than those in English. Over several years, boys' and girls' results show fluctuating differences in attainment. In 2000 boys' results are lower than those of the girls. The overall pattern of these mathematics results shows an underlying upward improvement.

101. Current and recent attainment in GCSE mathematics is well below the national average in the achievement of grades A* to C. Pupils' results at grades A* to G are also below national averages, particularly for girls. The 2000 results show a small deterioration from the 1999 results and are lower than expected, based on what the pupils achieved at the end of Year 9. This is accounted for mainly through aspects of teaching within the department and the under-achievement of higher attaining boys. The apparent discrepancy between boys and girls in the GCSE mathematics results appears greater than it is and masks the non-attendance and consequent non-entry of a considerable proportion of the girls. However, overall, GCSE results are close to, but just above, national averages for similar schools. Results in GCSE mathematics are better than those achieved by pupils in both English and science.
102. There is a very small number of A-level students. However, they consistently attain satisfactory standards which are closely related to their previous attainment.
103. Pupils enter the school with very weak numeracy skills. Many Year 7 pupils, for example, are weak distinguishing inches and millimetres on a ruler. By the end of Year 9, all but the highest attaining pupils still struggle with number and, for some pupils, weak linguistic skills have a detrimental effect on their achievement in numeracy. These pupils still have difficulty in appreciating the patterns in numbers, comparing measurements and calculating without a calculator. Weak spatial skills hinder their work in representing three-dimensional shapes through two-dimensional diagrams. Pupils of all levels of attainment have a poor understanding of work involving positive and negative numbers. Pupils preparing for GCSE at all levels find difficulty in multiplying or dividing without a calculator. They lack confidence in using mental methods to assist them. Some higher attaining pupils in mathematics show confusion in routine tasks involving powers and indices, particularly standard form. A-level students have a sufficiently high level of numerical skill to enhance their work in mathematics and science
104. From the work seen during the inspection, standards of attainment are below the nationally expected levels by the end of Year 9. Attainment observed in lessons, however, varies widely with sets; the higher groups reach at least average standards. Pupils with special educational needs and those of lower attainment achieve appropriately when there is careful attention to their misunderstandings and misconceptions as in a Year 7 lesson on measurement. Some higher attaining pupils have good skills in investigative tasks. They approach tasks systematically and are able to spot general patterns, though less well able to explain them. They are competent in routine skills in simple trigonometry and algebraic manipulation. Pupils in middle ability groups are often inaccurate in their number work. They find difficulty in interpreting information, be it graphical or written. Pupils across the whole attainment range find working with positive and negative numbers difficult.
105. By the end of Year 11, standards in mathematics remain below average. There is again a wide disparity in achievement in lessons, depending on the sets in which pupils work. The highest attaining groups of pupils in Year 11 are working presently at least in line with expectations and are solving competently, for example, simultaneous equations, both

graphically and algebraically. Pupils in middle groups show a weak understanding of many areas of their mathematics, but particularly in work involving bearings, three-dimensional tasks and scientific notation. Their data handling skills and work on angles are strongest. Many pupils in lower ability groups, as well as those with special educational needs, still have poor number skills and have difficulty in comparing measurements. They work well with money, with the aid of a calculator. There is a difference between the achievement in the work seen during the inspection and that shown by pupils in their GCSE mathematics. In 2000, those pupils who had attained average levels at the end of Year 9, under-achieved, partly as a result of non-specialist teaching and partly because of insufficient tracking of their progress. The under-achievement of the highest attaining boys in this year group is closely related to particularly challenging local conditions.

106. Students studying A-level mathematics are able to apply calculus skills to solving problems in applied mathematics. They have good recall of earlier work and are developing their ability to explain and communicate their mathematics. Their modular results so far, are promising.
107. Teaching in mathematics is satisfactory; many pupils make steady progress in their learning of mathematics. However, there is some variation in the quality of teaching in the department. There were some good and very good lessons seen, and only one unsatisfactory lesson. In all lessons, teachers show good subject knowledge, manage pupils' behaviour well, are supportive of individuals and give good, immediate, oral feedback. In the best lessons, there is well-planned use of stimulating visual material and resources, and a very clear understanding of how pupils learn mathematics. These lessons cater successfully for the different ways in which pupils learn mathematics. In such lessons, pupils learn mathematics very well as in the Year 8 lesson on polygons where a middle group of pupils achieved much. In a similar Year 9 lesson, pupils worked very purposely and productively to spot a pattern involved in summing angles. Other strong features of the best teaching include the use of writing frames to help pupils record their work with an emphasis on language in mathematics. However, although most teaching observed was at least sound, there are missed opportunities to assess what each pupil has learned in the lesson. In lessons such as that for a small group of Year 10 pupils, on conversion graphs, the too great emphasis on written methods limited their learning. Teaching within the department is positively influenced by the National Numeracy Strategy, so that in many lessons, teachers use methods to help pupils' understanding of number and their use of mental methods.
108. Since the last inspection, the mathematics department has made satisfactory progress. The departmental team is now soundly led. Teaching has improved. All groups of pupils are making reasonable progress across Key Stage 3 and pupils' attainment is more closely monitored. New resources support the reviewed scheme of work and the department shows a strong drive to improve. With the improved facilities for information and communication technology now in place, the department is in a position to use them more to enhance its teaching programme. However, much still remains to be done to raise pupils' attainment, particularly at Key Stage 4, including planned progression for numeracy and planned activities to improve pupils' recall of earlier work.

SCIENCE

109. In 2000 the results of National Curriculum tests in science at the end of Year 9 were well below the national average, as they have been since the last inspection. However, they were similar to those in mathematics and better than in English, and were a little above average in comparison with similar schools.

110. At the end of Year 11, the proportion of pupils gaining the higher, A* to C, grades in GCSE examinations in 2000 was well below the national average but just in line with the average for similar schools. The results were similar to those in English, though lower than in mathematics. Boys' results were much lower than those of girls for the higher grades, but boys gained a higher proportion of A* to G grades. Fewer girls than boys were entered for the examination.
111. When pupils enter the school in Year 7 their attainment in science is below that expected for their age. Most need significant help in making simple predictions about the outcomes of experiments. Their overall attainment as seen in written work and lessons observed during the inspection remains below average at the ages of 14 and 16, and is lower than it should be. However, a small number attain more highly; in Year 11, for example, these pupils can explain variations in the rates of chemical reactions in terms of collisions between particles. Performance in lessons is rather better than is reflected in National Curriculum tests and GCSE examinations because middle and lower attaining pupils have difficulty in recalling factual information for examinations. Too many make unsatisfactory progress because their interest is not engaged and they prefer to chat to each other rather than listen to the teacher. In Year 9, higher attaining pupils spent too long using a simple formula to calculate the force acting on a spring, and pupils in Year 11 – particularly girls – were inattentive while the teacher explained the enormity of distances between planets. In a small number of lessons pupils do make good, and occasionally very good, progress when challenged to think about their work rather than copy notes.
112. Very few sixth form students study science subjects; there were no examination entries in 2000. Physics is the only science course running at present; students' attainment is in line with that expected for A-level and they make good progress.
113. When given the opportunity, pupils handle laboratory equipment carefully and safely, as in Year 8 when testing nutrients in food. However, they have too few opportunities to carry out practical work, partly because limited resources often results in them working in large groups; their investigative skills are not well developed. For many pupils, lack of understanding of key words is a barrier to learning because their ability to describe and explain their work is restricted; there is no systematic approach to emphasising the meanings of words such as 'dissolve' and 'solution'. Similarly, there is no systematic approach to development of pupils' numerical skills. The use of information and communication technology in science is unsatisfactory because there is no computer equipment in the laboratories.
114. Pupils with special educational needs make insufficient progress. The classroom assistant attached to the department is not yet effective in supporting their learning because teachers do not plan their lessons with support in mind.
115. Behaviour in lessons is mostly satisfactory, although many pupils need frequent reminders to stay on task. They behave well when teachers' expectations are clear and inattention is dealt with firmly at an early stage. In some lessons, teachers accept inattention while in others late arrival of students, particularly girls in Years 10 and 11, causes disruption and restricts learning opportunities for all in the class.
116. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory overall. Teaching was unsatisfactory in about a quarter of the lessons observed while learning was unsatisfactory in nearly half. However, there were a few very good lessons, and teaching and learning were good in the small number of sixth form lessons seen. Unsatisfactory lessons occur when teachers are unable to gain

pupils' attention because the work is not matched well enough to their interests or abilities. Pupils leave too much work unfinished because they are unable to keep up with the pace of the lesson or they copy information and learn little because they are not required to think for themselves. Pupils in Year 7 listed types of mirror but did not learn how uses are related to the mirror's properties, while in Year 11 higher attaining pupils copied relevant information but were then unable to use it in explaining why thick wires conduct electricity better than thin. Unsatisfactory teaching and learning often occur because short-term supply teachers have difficulty in judging the stage reached by pupils in their previous lessons. Teachers do not always use questioning to best effect, often allowing some boys to dominate question and answer sessions while others (particularly girls) are not included; the result is that marginalised pupils lose interest in the work. In the small number of very good lessons pupils learn well because the work is related to their own interests, as in Year 11 when the teacher asked pupils to explain television reception by satellite when introducing a lesson about the positions of planets. Pupils usually respond well when the work requires effort yet is within their capability; for example, in Year 8 they had to think carefully when using an analogy to predict the effects on current flow of adding components to an electrical circuit. Opportunities for raising pupils' attainment are often missed because marking of their day-to-day work is inconsistent and measurable targets for improvement are not set. Homework is not used effectively to extend and consolidate pupils' learning.

117. Leadership and management of the science department have been unsatisfactory, but a newly appointed acting head of department is beginning to give a sense of direction and develop teamwork. For example, teachers support each other in dealing with poor behaviour, and there are plans to introduce more suitable courses and make greater use of assessment in raising pupils' attainment. Discontinuity in staffing and insufficient opportunity for the head of department to monitor teaching and learning are barriers to further improvement. The laboratories are not stimulating places to learn science, partly because displays are not used to show what can be achieved by students of all abilities. The laboratory technician provides effective help for teachers when pupils are carrying out class practical work, but has too little time to manage the department's resources.
118. Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory overall, though there are signs of recovery following the appointment of a new acting head of department. Teaching remains unsatisfactory. The results of National Curriculum tests for 14 year olds are still well below the national average, although GCSE results have improved slightly.

ART AND DESIGN

119. The school's national GCSE grades for art in recent years have included the very good textiles results discussed under design and technology in this report. With these removed, whilst below the national average, A* to C results for art in 2000 showed pupils achieving good results overall when judged against their previous attainment. The difference between boys' and girls' results, however, is double the national average, with boys, particularly higher attaining boys, under-achieving. This pattern is also discernible in work seen in current GCSE work. A-level numbers have been too small of late to make statistically valid comparisons.
120. Pupils enter the school with weak spatial awareness, which hampers their attainment in art. The current curriculum, newly in place this year, recognises these weaknesses and provides projects, which now improve these skills through Key Stage 3. By the end of Year 9, most pupils' practical work matches national expectations, especially in two-dimensional media. Very few pupils are above that level. Lower attaining pupils' work improves significantly by

Year 9, but is below expectations in key areas, especially those which rely on underlying weak literacy and writing. Pupils who take GCSE art retain these literacy difficulties, as expected. Crucial weaknesses remain, therefore, in their understanding of the historical and critical aspects of GCSE work, and in pupils' abilities to reflect these in a sufficiently personal, individual way in their practical work. This is particularly so for boys. Girls throughout the school do well in art compared with girls nationally. Boys, though, are particularly adversely affected by two additional major factors, which also have negative impacts on all pupils. These are, firstly, school timetabling at Key Stage 4 allows pupils only single, 50-minute art lessons, and secondly, the meagre, unstimulating resources available. Boys in particular need more time to consolidate learning and these boys require more imaginative media, which remove the current constraints for them to work in two-dimensional media. This is most often with drawing and painting media – not, generally, their strengths. The lack of computers for pupils' frequent use in the department exacerbates these constraints further.

121. All these factors, combined with the lack of a department technician to assist with organisational and practical aspects of the subject, and pupils' own frequent lateness to lessons, place additional obstacles in the way of progress. That pupils progress as well as they do is due to good, effective teaching in the department, and to pupils' own enjoyment of the subject. They often find success in art, and most lessons show pupils working purposefully, if not always quietly. Many, particularly younger pupils have very great difficulties in listening to teachers when they try to talk to the class, and are quieter and more focused when teachers are facilitating pupils' progress at a one to one level as they work. An underlying volatility in some pupils', mostly boys', behaviour erupts occasionally; most often it is effectively defused by teachers.
122. Teaching is good. Many of the criticisms in the last report relating to curriculum, lesson and homework consistency have been resolved. Teachers now have a good structure within which they plan their lessons well, and have common aims for their pupils. Although this structure helps teachers to provide good continuity and progression for all, the fact of some classes being taught by two teachers still makes this difficult to achieve in practice. Homework is now systematically planned into the new schemes of work. Assessment is much improved, with good mechanisms for tracking pupils' progress being trialled successfully this year. Teachers' and pupils' 'considerable achievements', referred to in the last report, can now be monitored well, and confirm the good progress most pupils make. The exceptions to this are higher attaining boys, whose progress needs to be equally ensured. Some very good teaching of very low ability pupils in Year 9 showed good differentiation and patient explanations from the teacher having very positive effects on pupils' learning about style, design and fashion. Art teaching contributes well to pupils' understanding of key skills, particularly in the spatial aspects of mathematics, but teachers could very usefully make these links more overt to pupils, so that they understand more effectively the reinforcements they are experiencing.
123. Department management remains good and most criticisms from the last report within the remit of the department to improve have been addressed successfully. Accommodation remains unsatisfactory, though, and resources, including information and communication technology, are unsatisfactory, and do not meet the needs of these pupils.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

124. Over the past three years the proportion of pupils achieving an A* to C grade at GCSE in all of the design and technology subjects combined is well below the national average expectation. In textiles the proportion attaining an A* to C grade was well above the national

average in 1998, above it in 1999 and significantly above it in 2000. In addition, all pupils entered for the examination in textiles attained an A* to G grade which is well above the national average. Over the past three years the proportion of pupils attaining A* to C grade in food technology has been below the national averages but is broadly in line for A* to G grades. During this period, the proportion of pupils attaining an A* to C grade in resistant materials and in graphics last year was significantly below the national averages. It was also significantly below national averages for A* to G grades. Girls achieve significantly better than boys overall and in textiles they achieve above the national average for girls. Boys achieve significantly below the national average for boys. Pupils' attain better in textiles than they do in any other subjects at GCSE.

125. By the end of Year 9, attainment is below the national average in food studies and textiles and well below the standards expected in resistant materials. However, most girls and a very small minority of boys attain in line with the national average in textiles and food technology. In resistant materials pupils do not always practise the principles and processes of designing. With the exception of the work produced by higher attaining pupils graphical communication skills are weak in most design areas. In the work of too many pupils the indiscriminate use of felt-tip colour pens does nothing to enhance it. In food studies and textiles, a significant proportion of the girls produce work of a satisfactory and sometimes good standard. Pupils of all levels of attainment are hesitant and unsure of the correct terminology when explaining their ideas and the processes involved. Most pupils have satisfactory skills in using tools and equipment to make their products in food technology and textiles. In resistant materials, skills are variable. Computer aided designing techniques and the use of computer aided manufacturing equipment to produce design outcomes are underdeveloped. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, show satisfactory interest levels in their work and make satisfactory progress for their capabilities.
126. By the end of Year 11, attainment is below the national average. A very small minority attains in line with expectations in food and above them in textiles. In food and textiles the literacy and graphical communication skills seen in most pupils' coursework is variable, but satisfactory on balance. It is often good for a significant proportion of middle to higher attainers. The design process is effectively used in their work and they are able to explain their ideas confidently and competently, with most of the higher attainers using the correct terminology fluently. In food technology, pupils are successfully developing a satisfactory understanding of the nutritive, sensory and physical properties of food. The converse is true for most pupils studying GCSE in resistant materials. In all design areas, skills in using the computer to support pupils' learning are weak. The high level of absenteeism affects the standards achieved in all design areas.
127. Students following the A/S level courses in textiles attain in line with the national average, but attainment in the A-level course is well above average. The coursework produced by students is of a very high standard indeed, with outcomes showing considerable flair and imagination, involving a very broad range of innovative techniques.
128. Teaching was predominantly good or better in the lessons observed. Teachers use a growing range of exemplar material successfully to guide and support pupils. The quality of teaching is successfully enabling most pupils, particularly in textiles and food studies, to improve and develop their design and realisation skills. The design worksheets used provide clear guidelines for design projects, with extension tasks to challenge and extend effectively the higher attainers and, in particular, the gifted and talented pupils. However, some worksheets are insufficiently modified to meet fully the needs of all attainment levels. The development of

literacy skills, particularly the technical language of the subject, is not universally supported and developed in all design areas by appropriate strategies such as the display of key technical terminology, or the use of writing frameworks to guide pupils efforts in evaluating their work. The quality of teaching ensures that most pupils are appropriately motivated and clearly aware of what they are required to do in their projects. The teaching styles and strategies adopted enable most pupils to make satisfactory progress in the great majority of lessons.

129. In many lessons good humour prevails and an atmosphere conducive to positive learning is established. Most pupils respond well to the teaching methods adopted and show satisfactory interest levels in their work. Lapses in pupils' concentration are dealt with effectively and pupils are kept on task for most of the time. The new assessment and monitoring procedures enable teachers to effectively monitor and support pupil's progress towards their predicted attainment targets and beyond. Homework is set regularly and effectively extends the curriculum. In some classes unusually large group sizes for a practical subject reduce the amount of individual support and attention teachers are able to provide for pupils. This affects standards and raises some concern about safety when large numbers are present. The lack of any form of technical support is an unusual and unsatisfactory feature.
130. Since the last inspection good leadership now provides a clear educational direction for the department. The new head of department has efficiently and effectively managed the many changes needed in amalgamating three separate design areas. There is a developing sense of corporate identity for the subject. Design staff now plan and work as a team ensuring that a consistent approach to designing and making are being adopted in all design areas. Assessment and monitoring of pupils' academic progress in the subject has been greatly improved. The very effective management and predominantly good teaching has facilitated an improvement in the standards for a greater proportion of pupils since the last inspection. Resources have been greatly improved especially in the provision of specialist control equipment although there is an insufficient provision of computers within the design area and the use of information and communication technology remains underdeveloped. The major improvement to the accommodation that is due to be implemented this term will resolve the deficiencies reported last time.

GEOGRAPHY

131. Recent GCSE A* to C grades have fluctuated but are generally well below the national average. The results in 2000 were a slight improvement on those of previous years but very few pupils attained the highest grades. When compared with other GCSE subjects within the school geography results have been below the average for the school. Recent A* to G results have been broadly in line with the national position.
132. Most pupils attain standards that are below the national averages at the ages of 14 and 16, but standards are improving, particularly at Key Stage 3. Standards in the sixth form are satisfactory. Given the low prior attainment, progress is satisfactory throughout. However, in many mixed ability classes, high attainers are not stretched enough and low attainers are not provided with suitable and manageable tasks. By the end of Year 9, pupils have a basic grounding in geographical skills. Most can use and interpret maps but need more practice, and earlier in the course, in the construction and analysis of graphical representation of statistical data. Knowledge of place is sound but understanding of spatial patterns is weak and needs developing. Class teachers give pupils with special educational needs at Key Stage 3 good support, but there is very inadequate learning assistant support in classes. By the end of Year 11, pupils have a general knowledge of physical and human processes, but only the higher

attainers have real understanding of these processes. The best individual, investigatory project work undertaken for GCSE, based on fieldwork, is of a good standard. Emphasis needs now to be given to this element of the course for a number of pupils who, due to absenteeism and low aspirations, under-achieve.

133. Teaching overall is satisfactory. There was much good teaching at Key Stage 3 by specialists, but also some weak teaching from a non-specialist. Teachers work well with pupils, and do so with commitment and understanding. Management and control of pupils is sound. The best teaching is underpinned by a very secure knowledge of the subject taught. In these lessons work is challenging, has brisk pace and is designed to meet pupils' needs. Weak teaching occurred when a teacher, new to the school and subject, had difficulty in controlling a class intent on undermining and disrupting the lesson. Good teaching was well exemplified in a Year 9 lesson with average ability pupils where the teacher, using a globe and atlases, explained very well Greenwich Mean Time and how, using lines of longitude east and west of the Prime Meridian, time throughout the world can be calculated. This difficult concept was well understood by pupils. It was also evident in a Year 7 mixed ability class where a well-designed work sheet, a map of settlements, was used successfully to explain how physical and human features affect the course of routes in real life.
134. Learning would, however, be further enhanced by lesson aims being shared with pupils at the beginning of lessons, and tested at the end of lessons to ensure that learning is effective, together with a greater consolidation and reinforcement of the main teaching points written on the board. There is a need for the use of actual examples and case studies, rather than models in class teaching, and more investigatory, resource-based learning, including fieldwork, particularly at Key Stage 3. The regular use of a standing display map and atlases to develop pupils understanding of geographical patterns and place is necessary. GCSE examination results do not fully reflect the good teaching quality and this is partly due to teachers, who provide challenge in other ways, not expecting enough of pupils in their written work. The lack of a consistent literacy strategy in the school does not help this. The limited progress in extending writing skills at Key Stage 3 produces a literacy lag which affects pupils' performance and therefore the results in national examinations at the end of Key Stage 4. The department needs to target pupils' performance more rigorously in particular in this area and upgrade the significance of GCSE course work. Numeracy skills are limited and there is no school strategy for its development. Fieldwork undertaken locally around the school and in central Liverpool greatly enhances study at Key Stage 3 and 4 and real enrichment is evident. However, there is insufficient fieldwork at Key Stage 3 where the study of physical landscape and of an area outside the local area is necessary. Information and communication technology has yet to be planned as a coherent programme of study linked to curriculum topics.
135. Pupils' attitudes to learning are mainly positive and some pupils show a real interest in their work. Many work conscientiously, but there are a number of pupils at Key Stage 3 who find concentration for long periods difficult; these pupils are easily distracted. Behaviour is satisfactory and often good, although a small minority of pupils seek attention and their interruptions reduce the pace of class learning. Pupils generally form good relationships with their teachers and trust them and generally relate well to each other in class. Pupils' individual answers to questions are often good but whole-class responses are rare and need nurturing.
136. The department is soundly led and managed by the head of department, and a good ethos exists. Recent examination results have been weak, but there is clear intent to improve performance and this must be the main priority. The capacity to do this is sound and can be achieved with sustained effort. Documentation overall is satisfactory but there is need to

draw up the subject development plans as a three-year operational plan, fully costed and evaluated annually. There is currently no monitoring and evaluation of the impact of teaching on pupils' learning, or of the standard of performance in external examinations. A rigorous assessment policy needs to be established with pupils' work targeted to the development of knowledge, understanding and skills. Most teaching occurs in specialist rooms which are small for large classes and somewhat restrictive for independent, resource-based learning. Resources are satisfactory overall but there are some serious shortfalls such as the need for a video monitor, overhead projector and a standing display map in both specialist teaching rooms as well as a fieldwork budget.

137. The department has made satisfactory improvements since the last inspection but a sustained effort is now needed to consolidate on this.

HISTORY

138. Recent GCSE A* to C grades results have been below or well below the national average. Results in summer 2000 were very low and showed a continuing downward trend against a rising national one. No pupils attained the highest grades. GCSE results in the subject are now well below average for the school. Recent A* to G grades have also been well below the national average, with little evidence of any significant improvement.
139. Most pupils attain levels that are below the national average at the ages of 14 and 16. However, there is clear evidence of improved standards at both key stages. By the end of Year 9, pupils have a sound understanding of events and the main people within the periods studied, but they often do not realise their significance within the overall context of study and the chronological framework. Pupils with special educational needs at Key Stage 3 and lower attaining groups in Year 9 receive inadequate support for their learning. By the end of Year 11, pupils have further developed their skills of using historical evidence, and start to analyse the reasons for, and the results of events in, the courses studied. Higher attainers do not develop interpretative skills sufficiently; they need to analyse the significance of sources more thoroughly. Average and low attainers have sufficient knowledge in their course work to do well but the level of understanding and the placing of events in a wider context is unsatisfactory. Sixth form students organise themselves satisfactorily but need to contribute more in lessons.
140. Teaching overall is satisfactory at all key stages. There was some weak teaching by a temporary teacher, but teaching by regular specialist staff was often good at Key Stage 3. Teaching was always at least satisfactory at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Teachers are very committed, caring and supportive of pupils. Permanent staff manage and control even potentially difficult pupils well, but others find challenging pupils difficult to manage and disruptive elements hold back the pace of learning considerably. The best teaching is characterised by lessons that are very carefully and imaginatively planned and is underpinned with very secure knowledge of the subject matter taught. These lessons are structured well and have a clear focus. This teaching provides opportunities for developing literacy skills and uses questioning skilfully, involving pupils in their own learning and, in particular, developing historical enquiry skills. Together with lively presentations these qualities resulted in productive learning and a good standard of work. This was well exemplified in a Year 11 lesson where the teacher introduced transport development, including the Liverpool to Manchester railway, and, using a range of well-selected sources, considered the relative importance of Robert Stephenson and Isambard Kingdom Brunel in this. Pupils were helpfully provided with a writing frame to develop their writing skills more effectively. Weak teaching was due to a non-

specialist having to motivate disaffected and disruptive pupils without the necessary management and control skills needed.

141. Learning requires a clearer focus in lessons on outcomes in determining materials and tasks in mixed ability classes, and the use of more stimulus materials, particularly film and visual aids, including the overhead projector. There is also a need for more challenging, written assignments for all pupils, particularly high attainers. More links need to be made with local history and everyday events. The department has already established a good local study in Year 8 but there is, as yet, no programme of visits outside the school. With appropriate injection of books on selected themes in the library, and the regular use of computers, pupils need to be given more project work so that they can develop their personal enquiry skills more effectively. Pupils' learning does not wholly reflect the teaching quality of permanent staff. A factor inhibiting this learning at Key Stage 3 is the deficiency in literacy skills, due to below average prior attainment in this area. Many pupils also have great difficulty in the retention and recall of knowledge; this requires a sustained study skill programme. A major obstacle to improving examination performance at Key Stage 4 is the well above average absenteeism rate that still exists, despite the best efforts of the school, which results in pupils failing to complete course work and significant under-achievement at GCSE. Often, poor motivation and a low work rate further reduce performance in some classes. It will require a concerted effort from the teaching staff, who work well and conscientiously as a team, to improve overall standards of pupils' performance in external examinations. They have the competence and capacity to do so successfully. To this end, there is need to monitor pupils' performance more rigorously, and continue to mark work thoroughly and in a developmental way.
142. Pupils' attitudes to learning vary considerably. Pupils show a greater interest in the subject at Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3 and in higher bands in Year 9 than elsewhere. Pupils, on the whole, are attentive and, in most classes, work conscientiously throughout the lesson on tasks set, although work rate is often very slow. This is due to low aspirations and a general reluctance to write. Behaviour is usually satisfactory and often good. However, in a lesson taught by a temporary teacher, pupils were blatantly un-cooperative, unresponsive and disaffected, so that little learning took place and there was considerable under-achievement. Pupils generally establish good relationships with their teachers.
143. The management of the subject has been placed under the control of the head of humanities. However, although an improvement on the previous situation, leadership of the subject curriculum and developments is unsatisfactory. It is now essential that the management and curriculum needs of the subject are drawn together effectively by a specialist historian who works closely with the head of humanities. There are insufficient formal meetings to discuss subject developments and the development plan needs to be reviewed and evaluated annually. There is currently no monitoring of the impact of teaching on learning outcomes, especially the standards of performance in external examinations. The permanent staffing within the department is good; there is need to replace the vacancy with a specialist in the humanities. Specialist rooms are a good teaching resource which, with colourful wall displays, including pupils' work, provide a pleasant learning environment. Resources are satisfactory overall but there is a serious shortfall in that there is need for a video monitor and an overhead projector in both specialist teaching rooms so that more film and video extracts can be incorporated regularly as visual stimulus materials in lessons
144. Some of the concerns raised at the previous inspection about standards and monitoring have yet to be fully addressed.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

145. National average comparisons for GCSE are not possible since there have been no examination courses over the past three years.
146. By the end of Year 9, most pupils attain below the national average in all strands of the subject. There are developing strengths in pupils' attainment in the strand of communicating information through word-processed text, which sometimes incorporates images imported from electronic sources, with the exception of the Internet. Pupils show satisfactory skills in manipulating text and images. They show satisfactory levels of spatial awareness in setting up the presentation of a published page. In the timetabled lessons observed, pupils used a spreadsheet to carry out simple calculations. There is little evidence, at present, that these skills are used and built upon in other subjects across the curriculum. Apart from the lower attainers, most pupils show satisfactory, although very hesitant, keyboard skills; most pupils use the mouse well enough to select and manipulate menus and functions. Higher attainers use the technical vocabulary of the subject satisfactorily but lower attainers find the concepts difficult to grasp and do not readily use appropriate technical terms. Pupils with special educational needs show considerable interest in their work and make satisfactory progress.
147. Attainment at the end of Year 11 is below the standard normally seen at this stage. In Year 10, a small cohort of pupils studies information and communication technology as a GCSE option. However, the lack of opportunities in the past to use computers regularly, together with a high level of absenteeism, is reflected by standards that are below national expectation for the great majority of pupils. In some classes, unusually large group sizes for a practical subject reduce the amount of individual support and attention teachers are able to provide for pupils; this affects the standards achieved. Across the curriculum there is some evidence of the use of computers for word processing, desktop publishing and for handling information, but the standards achieved are well below the standards of work normally seen in schools. Currently, there is little evidence of the use of the computer for work in the National Curriculum strands of modelling, measuring and control. Whilst opportunities are provided in some subjects to use information and communication technology to research and present work, it is not fully integrated into the schemes of work of all subjects. There are several subjects that have yet to identify how information and communication technology is to be used and developed in their subjects.
148. Sixth form students attain standards that are broadly similar to expectations in using the computer to communicate information through word processing and desktop publishing. Students do not readily turn to computers to complete coursework. In the GCSE option, which is studied by eight students, standards are in line with those normally seen at this stage.
149. Teaching was satisfactory in all lessons observed. Teachers are enthusiastic about their subject and effectively stimulate pupils' interest. Tasks are generally well matched to pupils' interest and the problems posed build effectively on pupils' prior knowledge and skills. Teachers provide high levels of individual support and guidance, working with pupils at their computers. The new system of assessment is effective in assessing attainment and progress in the discrete lessons, but assessment of information and communication technology work across the curriculum is inconsistent. The teaching styles and strategies adopted impact positively on pupils' learning. As a result, most pupils show satisfactory interest levels, sustain their concentration spans for appropriate lengths of time and make satisfactory progress in developing their information and communication technology skills in all lessons. Worksheets, produced within the information and communication technology department, successfully

identify learning objectives, but not all written instructions are sufficiently modified to suit the needs of all attainers. The technical support provided ensures that all equipment works effectively in the discrete lessons.

150. The very recent provision of timetabled information and communication technology lessons for all pupils at both key stages and the considerable investment made in the provision of resources for information and communication technology, are clearly beginning to impact positively on standards throughout the school. In addition, the effective leadership and management of the subject by the new head of department is ensuring that the requirements of the National Curriculum are now planned for in the timetabled lessons at both key stages. As a result, standards are improving. Issues remain in relation to the provision for and development of information and communication technology across the curriculum.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

151. At the age of 14, pupils' standards in French, the core language, are below average. Since 1997 standards in the National Curriculum Key Stage 3 assessments have risen faster than the national trend, although in 1999 teachers assessed many pupils at levels which were too high. Results in 2000 showed nearly half the Year 9 pupils at Levels 4 and 5, fewer than in typical schools elsewhere, but much closer to actual standards.
152. At Key Stage 4 the school enters a high proportion of the year group for GCSE in a foreign language, above the national average. The A* to C success rate in French is well below average, and has remained static since 1998, in contrast with the improving national trend. There are, however, encouraging features in the latest results. In 2000, of the four A* grades in all subjects, two were in modern languages. Pupils performed better in French than in their other subjects. Results from a small entry of higher attaining pupils for German were excellent, with three-quarters achieving the higher grades, including three A*/A grades. Although girls under-perform significantly in comparison with girls in other similar schools, boys do marginally better in comparison with their other subjects than is the case elsewhere. Results across the full A* to G range in French improved to just below the national average.
153. Standards in class and in the samples of work at each key stage reflect those of tests and examinations. Currently, in Year 9, a few higher attainers are at Level 5, on course for average and above average standards by the end of the key stage. They can write paragraphs about their school day, and give accounts in the past tense, making agreements of verb and adjective and including negatives. But average attainers are only at Level 3 in writing and saying sentences; they are not able to extend these confidently. Some pupils recognise words and short phrases in speech and text, and can write sentences, with support. Few can speak independently of text, or pronounce French confidently. Working from memory is a major difficulty. Pupils need more frequent testing without their books.
154. In Year 11, standards are well below average because there are so few higher attainers securely above the average grade of C. One or two gifted pupils are on course for grade B or above, but most of the top set are only at foundation level. They can typically write past tenses, but within a limited range of structures. They succeed through effort and commitment, and learning their rehearsed phrases. Of the other pupils, in the lower grades, few have built on prior learning, not having been assessed regularly enough in the past. They know and recognise vocabulary in practised topics, but have little ability to construct the language for themselves. Receptive skills are generally stronger, so that most pupils can extract relevant detail from short tape extracts and text. In many cases, attainment is low because of limited

literacy skills. The provision of broad ability classes for all but the highest attainers is not appropriate for pupils' needs. High levels of absence further reduce overall standards.

155. The few gifted pupils attain highly and achieve well throughout. In view of the low base at which most pupils enter the school and their continuing difficulties in literacy, they achieve satisfactorily. This is because teaching promotes positive attitudes and is effective in enabling them to reach GCSE examination standards. Achievement and progress are particularly good in Year 7, where German is currently the first language. Here, one class is reaching average levels and achieving very well. After only one term, pupils can already distinguish between endings and apply simple rules in saying what pets they have. Some pupils with special educational needs remember vocabulary in the short term, and can match word to meaning. However, achievement overall is not better at either key stage, for two reasons. Firstly, grouping arrangements are unsuitable at Key Stage 3 and in Year 10, limiting the progress of pupils with special educational needs in particular; the spread of ability in classes is too broad for teachers to plan effectively for individual needs. Secondly, pupils are not assessed regularly enough or required to work enough from memory; their skills do not fully develop because they are not trained well enough to memorise what they learn in order to recall it later.
156. Teaching remains a strength, as it was at the last inspection. It is good overall, slightly better at Key Stage 4, good in half the lessons observed, and very good or excellent in a quarter. No unsatisfactory lessons were observed. It is good teaching which ensures that pupils learn well enough to compensate, to some degree, for their weakness in literacy. The strength is the successful management of behaviour through calm authority and purposeful, well-designed tasks. As a result, pupils are interested, co-operate and participate responsibly. Teachers use the spoken language helpfully to familiarise pupils with sound, and set the right expectations. They teach literacy skills well, emphasising accuracy of articulation and pronunciation. Methods in some lessons, for example in Years 7 and 10 German and a Year 11 top set French, are very good. In these lessons teachers demanded a high level of accuracy and provided individual challenge. The best teaching helps pupils gain confidence in achievable steps, carefully adapting the questioning to the level of the pupil and expertly balancing support and challenge – and all with a sparkle and sense of humour. This teaching promotes good, and sometimes very good learning.
157. In other respects, teaching could be better. Expectations of behaviour are high, but sometimes top set pupils are not given enough opportunities to practise speaking with each other, a point made in the last report. Where teaching is too dominant, pupils are not nearly so interested and do not learn to be independent. Resources and their use have improved. Lessons move at a good pace, and student teachers are an asset in helping present dialogues and monitor work. There are now more books, but still not enough for each class or to allow each pupil to have their own copy. Year 9 pupils in second language Spanish, for example, work from sheets and black and white illustrations, which do little for motivation. The new television and video player is an important stimulus, but overhead projectors are under-used. More attention should be given to the visual presentation of meaning.
158. Teachers are more secure in assessing standards than three years ago, but still do not use National Curriculum levels enough. For example, marking is frequent and positive, and follows agreed school policy. However, it is not based on National Curriculum levels and does not set specific targets. Pupils are unsure about what they need to do to improve. Pupils throughout the school remain very reliant on teachers' support. Nevertheless, the most significant factor in pupils' slow acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding remains their low level of literacy.

159. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Experience in teaching the modular GCSE course has paid dividends in the 2000 results. Schemes of work are now being rewritten to a satisfactory standard. The department has an enthusiastic approach to teaching and learning which ensures a positive ethos. However, information and communication technology is not used as a required part of writing, or for e-mail, and there are no foreign links. Most importantly, the head of department has too many other responsibilities and thus insufficient time to manage the department as effectively as is needed. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and the curriculum need to be more regular and more thorough, and limited resources are not maximised because too many languages are offered.
160. In order to raise standards the school should improve pupil grouping arrangements at each key stage in order to enable pupils to achieve as well as they can. The department should set higher expectations of what all pupils can achieve in working with each other and independently. Further improvements are needed, in particular in writing and speaking from memory; in the use of data to amend the curriculum appropriately for individual pupils, and to keep them informed of how they are progressing.

MUSIC

161. On balance, standards of attainment are below national expectations. By the age of 14, the attainment of the substantial majority of the pupils is below that of pupils of a similar age nationally. However, progress is at least satisfactory and often good. By the age of 16 standards of attainment are below national expectations and pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress in relation to their prior attainment.
162. Pupils in Year 7 have a satisfactory understanding of the need for notation and are able to play the Cowboy Chorus on the glockenspiel to a good standard. Pupils who receive guitar and percussion tuition are developing good sight-reading and performance skills. Year 8 pupils have a satisfactory understanding of timbre as an element of music. They have a sound appreciation of minuet as a dance form, and listen well to Mozart's 'Eine Kleine Nachtmusik'. Singing should be improved. Woodwind players make significant progress in developing correct posture and performance skills. Pupils in Year 9 effectively use the notes E, D and middle C to perform 'In the Light of the Moon' on the keyboard to a satisfactory level. They have a limited understanding of the names of the notes on the treble staff and note values. Higher attaining pupils are able to follow staff notation and are able performers on such instruments as flute, clarinet, guitar and snare drums. Lower attaining pupils have limited theoretical knowledge and are unclear about the elements of music.
163. In the 2000 GCSE examinations, from four entries, one pupil gained grade B, one grade C and two grade D passes. This effectively represents the trend of entries and pass grades over the last three years. Pupils in Year 10 have a satisfactory understanding of baroque dance and the instruments which were played during this period. Pupils listen attentively to examples of pavane and galliard by Orlando Gibbons. They make good links with religious education when comparing the sackbut, psaltery and cornet with their modern equivalents. There are no music lessons in Year 11. Pupils make satisfactory progress over time in their ability to listen and identify harpsichord, string and woodwind instruments from the sounds they produce. Pupils are given insufficient opportunities for independent learning. Wall displays, including key words, make an important contribution to the development of literacy skills.

164. Pupils have a satisfactory attitude towards music and enjoy lessons. The substantial majority are well behaved but a small number of pupils, at Key Stage 3, are disruptive and hold back progress for the majority who want to learn. Pupils collaborate effectively, particularly when playing instruments in pairs. Relationships between pupils and with their teachers are satisfactory.
165. The quality of teaching, including instrumental tuition, is satisfactory and in almost half of lessons it is good. Teaching staff, including six visiting instrumentalists, are accomplished musicians with good subject knowledge and high level performance skills. They successfully impart much of their enthusiasm to the pupils who, in most instances, respond positively. The scheme of work is up to date and based on the National Curriculum attainment targets. A small number of lessons have insufficient content; planning lacks detail with a consequent loss of pace and rigour. Clear teaching objectives and expected learning outcomes are features of the best lessons. Pupils' work is assessed effectively as the lesson proceeds, but individual target setting should be improved. The quality of teaching makes an important contribution to pupils' social and cultural development. Teaching is less effective when group activities are not well managed.
166. At Key Stage 3, insufficient time is allocated for the effective delivery of the National Curriculum. Twenty-three pupils benefit from instrumental tuition and this makes a significant contribution to their progress. There are 15 pupils in the choir and others will be involved in the planned production of 'The Wizard of Oz'. Extra-curricular music should be improved. Resources are satisfactory but there should be sufficient full-size keyboards and glockenspiels for each pupil to play. The main teaching room is cramped and uninspiring and the practice room unsuitable for instrumental tuition. Information and communication technology is conspicuous by its absence and should be developed. Option arrangements at the end of Key Stage 3 operate against the effective expansion of the subject. With no pupils studying music in Year 11, every effort should be made to develop the subject at Key stage 4.
167. The management of the department is satisfactory. Since the last inspection overall standards have begun to improve but some issues have yet to be addressed, such as improving computer resources, including class singing in lessons and safety issues relating to trailing electric wires to the keyboards.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

168. By the time pupils reach the age of 14 attainment and progress in practical aspects of the subject are satisfactory and occasionally good or even very good. Where they are very good, as in girls' gymnastics in Year 7, most pupils can perform a variety of basic gymnastic movements with both style and control, most being able to control body weight on their arms. Year 7 boys show confidence in swimming, the great majority being able to swim competently on both front and back. Good attention is paid both to non-swimmers and weak swimmers who are all taught in separate groups. This ensures that all ability levels make good progress. Boys show satisfactory racket skills in badminton, and dribbling and passing skills in basketball. Pupils with special educational needs attain well in games and swimming and always integrate comfortably into lessons. As a result, they make good progress.
169. At the end of Key Stage 4 attainment during lessons is satisfactory and occasionally good. In practical terms, Year 10 GCSE classes show good racket skills in badminton, with boys and girls both performing the high serve and the clear with form and consistency. They progress well in learning to perform new skills such as drop shots. In basketball, boys and girls control

the ball well enough to dribble effectively and to use different passing techniques in game situations. Some boys exhibit advanced skills so that basketball games often contain much effective play. In a range of games, including basketball, volleyball and hockey, the great majority of boys and girls have satisfactory skills. Again, pupils with special educational needs make good progress and perform well in terms of their previous attainments. Occasionally they perform well enough to be used by teachers to demonstrate skills in lessons. Attainment in the GCSE has, however, been poor and well below the national mean. In 2000, 14 students took the examination, with only one gaining an A* to C grade. The proportion of pupils gaining a grade in the A* to C range is significantly below the national average. There are indications in written and oral theoretical work produced by some pupils currently taking the course which suggest that this low figure will improve. In many lessons numbers are considerably affected by absenteeism.

170. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers, all specialist trained, have good subject knowledge. The best lessons are delivered with enthusiasm and drive. Planned objectives, shared with pupils at the outset, ensure that these lessons proceed with pace and clear purpose. Occasionally, when teachers use a variety of styles and pupils are deliberately encouraged to plan and evaluate their work and that of others, this undoubtedly raises levels of attainment and progress. Teachers have appropriately high expectations and they effectively encourage pupils' efforts and attainments. Marking of written work for GCSE is thorough and up to date.
171. Boys' and girls' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Sometimes, these are excellent at both Key Stages 3 and 4. Arrival at lessons is reasonably prompt. Pupils clearly enjoy physical education and remain interested and motivated throughout lessons. When teachers use questioning techniques, they mostly meet with sensible and constructive replies. Pupils respond particularly well when teachers vary teaching methods, creating opportunities for co-operation and collaboration. Standards of dress of boys and girls are good. All special educational needs pupils behave well and integrate into lessons. It is unfortunate, however, that attendance is not better, for some lessons have significant numbers of pupils absent.
172. Girls' and boys' departments both have separate administrative heads. Leadership and management are satisfactory, with teachers working effectively as a team. Joint meetings are held regularly which ensures that all teachers have opportunities to be involved in departmental decision making. There is no information and communication technology in the department, either for teaching or administrative purposes. One CD-ROM is available for the GCSE course. Reference facilities are very poor. There are no books in the library either for reference or borrowing. It is also clear that there are insufficient textbooks for the examination course.
173. Since the last inspection, efforts have been made in some lessons, particularly at Key Stage 3, to encourage pupils to plan and evaluate their work, although this is certainly still not a feature of all lessons. Some schemes of work have been revised and now relate to the National Curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4. These particular examples are better presented and more up to date. Other schemes, however, still remain to be updated. Assessment needs adjustment so that it more clearly indicates what pupils have achieved. Serious weaknesses remain in accommodation not least in the heating system for the games barn where the temperature is often so low as to be a health and safety hazard. Some toilets and showers, particularly in the gymnasium, remain totally unsuitable for use. This is a feature mentioned in the last inspection.

174. Extra-curricular provision for boys and girls is adequate; it includes practice sessions and competitions against other schools in the area.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

175. Pupils aged 11 to 16 follow a course of study based on the Agreed Syllabus for Liverpool. Between the ages of 14 and 16 they may also choose to pursue either the full or short course GCSE examination as an option. With effect from the current Year 10, all pupils not opting for the GCSE full course will fulfil the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus through studying for the short course examination. Religious Studies is available in the sixth form as an AS-level option. There is, however, no provision for the Agreed Syllabus to be taught to sixth form students.
176. In the Year 2000 GCSE full course examinations, the proportion of pupils gaining grade A* to C passes was well below national norms for the subject in similar schools. Their average point score was also significantly lower than the national average point score. Their performance was, however, higher than their average performance in other comparable subjects for which they were entered. The proportion of pupils gaining grade A* to C passes in the GCSE short course examination was well above the national norms for the subject in similar schools. In the Year 2000 A-Level examinations, the proportion of students gaining grade A to E passes was well above national norms for the subject in similar schools, although the proportion gaining the highest grades was below the national average.
177. In work seen during the inspection, pupils at age 14 and 16 were attaining standards below the expectations of the Agreed Syllabus for their age. Their knowledge and understanding of the richness and diversity of religion, and of the place of Christianity and other principal religions in the country, has good breadth, but lacks depth. They have a sound knowledge of religious language, but their understanding of religious concepts is less well developed. Their skills in applying religious insights to ethical issues are under-developed at age 16. However, their understanding of why religious beliefs are important to those who hold them, and how they shape their lives, is a strength.
178. Pupils pursuing the GCSE examination course were attaining standards below national expectations at age 16 in their study of Judaism and Islam. However, the attainment of students pursuing the AS-level examination course in Judaism and Ethics was broadly in line with expectations for age 18. Pupils start from a very low base on entry to the school. In reaching the standards that they do, all pupils, including those with special needs, make very good overall progress, and achieve very well in relation to prior attainment. They achieve very well because of very good teaching, and the very positive attitudes they bring to the subject. The subject also makes an exceptionally good contribution to the development of pupils' literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills.
179. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall. There is a very small element of unsatisfactory teaching in Key Stage 4. Otherwise, the quality of teaching is at least satisfactory, and is good or better in over three-quarters of lessons, and very good or excellent in over half of lessons. Where teaching is strongest, teachers have an excellent grasp of their subject and very high expectations of pupils. They know clearly what they wish them to learn, and plan their lessons effectively to achieve their aims. Thus Year 11 pupils were led step by step through clear explanations, good questioning and well-structured worksheets from an understanding of the general concepts of prejudice and discrimination, to a grasp of the teaching of Hinduism, Islam and Christianity on racism.

180. Teachers engage and hold pupils' interest through a variety of imaginative, interesting and challenging activities and tasks, which are well matched to their individual needs. Playing and singing of traditional Jewish songs helped Year 8 pupils to understand the different ways in which Jews celebrate Passover. Role-play brought alive for Year 9 pupils the challenges faced by Muslim girls in trying to follow the Islamic dress code in secular schools. Year 10 pupils made very good gains in understanding the characteristics of the Torah and its importance in Judaism through hands-on experience in using the Hebrew alphabet and script. Teachers make very good use of time, and maintain a brisk pace in lessons. They make very good use of praise to raise pupils' self-esteem. They enjoy very good relationships with their pupils and manage their behaviour very well. They create a secure environment in the classroom in which learning can flourish, and in which sensitive issues such as those relating to gender, sexual ethics or race can be explored.
181. Teachers set meaningful homework that extends work done in class. For example, Year 9 pupils extended their understanding of the challenges faced by Muslim pupils through writing a letter to a friend explaining their experiences. Year 10 pupils extended their understanding of the suffering of Jews during the Holocaust through writing diaries from the contemporary viewpoint of the victims. Teachers help pupils to understand how to raise the standard of their work through regular and supportive marking. Where teaching is less strong, teachers have good generic teaching skills, but their command of the subject is less secure; lessons are overly-directive in style and lacking in sufficient challenge to catch and hold the interest of less well motivated pupils.
182. The attitudes of pupils of all ages towards the subject are very good overall, reflecting the high expectations of their teachers. They are very well motivated, come to lessons keen to learn and take pride in their work. Year 10 pupils having their first encounter with the Hebrew language would have willingly stayed on through break to complete the work. They are attentive, responsive orally, and listen with respect to each other's views and opinions, as was well evidenced in a Year 7 lesson on parables. Pupils were keen to contribute as a student teacher held their attention with a lively modern version of the parable of the Good Samaritan. The behaviour of the majority is good; they enjoy very good relationships with each other and with their teachers. There is, however, a minority of pupils in Year 11 whose attitudes and behaviour are less than satisfactory. This is a consequence of unsatisfactory, long- term supply teaching in Year 10, which de-motivated them, and has made them demanding to teach.
183. Improvement since the previous, very good inspection report has been satisfactory overall. The school has not addressed the need identified in the previous report to meet its statutory responsibility to make appropriate provision for the Agreed Syllabus to be taught in the sixth form. It has, however, improved learning opportunities for pupils through the introduction of a GCSE short course at Key Stage 4. The quality of leadership and management of the subject is excellent. There is a clear vision of the educational direction the subject should take if standards are to be further raised. If this vision is to be achieved, however, the school should review staffing provision, with a view to increasing the proportion of specialist teaching in the subject.