

INSPECTION REPORT

Longford Community School

Feltham, Middlesex

LEA area: Hounslow

Unique Reference Number: 102534

Headteacher: Colin Hall

Reporting inspector: Graham Clements

Dates of inspection: 27th September - 1st October 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 707947

Inspection carried out under Section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Type of school: | Comprehensive |
| Type of control: | County |
| Age range of pupils: | 11 to 18 years |
| Gender of pupils: | Mixed |
| School address: | Tachbrook Road Feltham Middlesex TW14 9PE |
| Telephone number: | 0181 890 0245 |
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| Appropriate authority: | The governing body |
| Name of chair of governors: | John Harper |
| Date of previous inspection: | 28 th October – 4 th November 1996 |

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| Geoffrey Humphrey Lay Inspector | | Attitudes, behaviour and personal development Attendance Support, guidance and pupils' welfare Partnership with parents and the community |
| Mary Cureton | English, Drama | |
| Eric Payne | Mathematics | Staffing, accommodation and learning resources |
| David Benstock | Science | Assessment Efficiency of the school |
| David Riddle | Design and technology | |
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| Jan Boulton | Geography Physical education | |
| Valerie St. Johnston | History | |
| Anil Sinha | Modern foreign languages Equal opportunities | |
| Peter Harle | Art | |
| Elizabeth Charlesworth | Music | |
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MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- Through inspiring and purposeful leadership and strong determination to raise standards, an environment has been established where pupils' attitudes to learning are very good and there is a steady trend towards improving standards.
- In comparison with the average attainment of pupils on entry to the school, overall results achieved show significant value added, particularly in literacy, where support for pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL) and support for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is good.
- Pupils are given very good support and guidance in their learning and personal development through the dedication and commitment of teachers.
- Through rigorous review and evaluation of its progress, the school has maintained rapid improvement since the previous inspection.
- The school has established very strong links with the community that support and enrich the curriculum.
- Sixth-form students are given very effective encouragement to continue into further and higher education after leaving school.

Where the school has weaknesses

- The curriculum does not meet statutory requirements of the National Curriculum for information and communication technology and the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education.
- Provision of information and communication technology is not co-ordinated well enough and pupils do not achieve levels of competence in line with their potential.
- There is scope for improvement in the quality of teaching that builds on the good practice evident in each curriculum area.
- Subject specific strategies to raise standards and improve teaching and learning are not clearly identified in most curriculum areas.

The school has considerable strengths but also a few significant weaknesses. The governors' action plan will set out how the weaknesses identified during the inspection are to be tackled. The plan will be sent to all parents or carers of pupils at the school.

How the school has improved since the last inspection

Since the previous inspection the school has, through the vision of the headteacher and teachers' willingness to change, improved in many respects. The school has been particularly successful in raising the aspirations of pupils and greatly improving their attitude to learning. This has been achieved through the high quality of educational and personal guidance given to pupils. In 1998 the school was recognised by the Secretary of State as one of the fifty most improved schools in the country.

The school has successfully addressed most of the key issues from the previous report but it still does not satisfy statutory provision in relation to National Curriculum requirements for information and communication technology or provide daily collective worship for all pupils.

The school development plan has a strong focus on attainment and is updated annually with higher targets to achieve. The management structure has been reorganised and is now well suited to support the aims of the school.

Literacy levels have been improved and this is having an impact on gradually raising standards in most subject areas. The attainment of girls in comparison to that of boys is now similar to the national pattern in English, mathematics and science.

Some progress has been made in ensuring a better match of work to pupils' prior attainment but in mathematics, science and technology, work is often not sufficiently challenging.

Teaching and classroom organisation has been improved but some teachers do not have high enough expectations. Good behaviour of pupils is promoted by consistent application by all staff of the school's behaviour policy.

The reduction in number of GCSE courses that pupils take, and the additional support provided for lower attainers, has ensured that the Key Stage 4 curriculum is more suited to pupils' needs.

The effective leadership and very good management of the school together with the commitment and determination shown by staff and governors demonstrate considerable capacity for further improvement.

Standards in subjects

The following table shows standards achieved by 14-, 16- and 18-year-olds in national tests, GCSE and A/AS-level examinations in 1998:

| Performance in | Compared with all schools | Compared with similar schools | § | Key |
|-------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| Key Stage 3 tests | E | E | | <i>well above average</i> A |
| GCSE examination | E | C | | <i>above average</i> B |
| A/AS-levels | E | n/a | | <i>average</i> C |
| | | | | <i>below average</i> D |
| | | | | <i>well below average</i> E |

Comparisons with standards in similar schools are based on national benchmark information. The benchmark group of schools against which the school's standards are compared are schools in which the percentage of pupils on roll known to be eligible for free school meals is from 19-35 per cent. Evidence from investigations into the socioeconomic context of the local area, used to justify substantial SRB (Single Regeneration Bid) funding to the local area, strongly suggests that the school's free school meal figure of 29 per cent does not reflect the real level of social disadvantage of pupils at the school.

When compared with the level of pupils' attainment on entry to the school, the performances of pupils in Key Stage 3 tests, GCSE examinations, GNVQ courses and A-level examinations show significant value added by the school in most subjects. Since the previous inspection, performance has shown a steady trend in improvement that is significantly faster than the national trend. In 1998, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more A*-C grades at GCSE were above average for pupils in similar schools. In 1998 GCSE results were best in business studies, dance, geography, modern languages and physical education. In all of these subjects the

percentages of pupils entered that gained GCSE grades A*-C was above the national average for all maintained schools. Results were least satisfactory in mathematics and design and technology. Although GCSE performance was not quite as good in 1999 compared with 1998 in a few subjects, such as double science and drama, for those pupils entered results were very high.

Quality of teaching

| Teaching in: | Overall quality | Most effective in: | Least effective in: |
|---------------|-----------------|--|--|
| Years 7 - 9 | Satisfactory | English, history, geography, modern foreign languages, music, physical education | Religious education |
| Years 10 - 11 | Satisfactory | English, history, geography, modern foreign languages, physical education | Religious education Food technology |
| Sixth-form | Good | Art, English, GNVQ, geography, history, mathematics | |
| English | Good | | |
| Mathematics | Satisfactory | | |

The quality of teaching is satisfactory or better in 89 per cent of lessons and good or better in 49 per cent. These proportions are close to, but below, national averages. Teaching is distinctly better in the sixth form than in the other key stages. Teaching is good or better in just over four-fifths of lessons in the sixth form but this proportion falls to half the lessons at Key Stage 4 and two-fifths of lessons at Key Stage 3. The good relationships that teachers have with pupils and their commitment and determination to raise standards are strengths of the school. There is some very good teaching in almost every subject area but this very good practice is not disseminated widely enough. Overall, 16 per cent of lessons are very good or outstanding. There is excellent teaching in some art and religious education lessons where teachers persuade pupils to express their own opinions and comment respectfully on the ideas of others.

The quality of teaching in English, geography, GNVQ, history, modern foreign languages, music and physical education is consistently good. In each of these subjects teachers organise their lessons well with clear objectives which they convey with enthusiasm. They challenge pupils of all abilities with a brisk pace and raise their confidence through skilful questioning and encouragement. Teaching is least effective in religious education and in food technology where teachers new to teaching the specialist subject have yet to develop sufficient subject knowledge and understanding.

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

Other aspects of the school

| Aspect | Comment |
|---------------|---|
| Behaviour | Good behaviour and attitudes to learning as well as the high quality of relationships contribute significantly to pupils' progress and personal development |
| Attendance | The school works hard and successfully to maintain a satisfactory level of attendance |

| | |
|--|---|
| Ethos* | The school has a very strong ethos for learning and creates an atmosphere in which self-esteem and mutual respect flourish |
| Leadership and management | Very good. The headteacher provides excellent leadership and presents a clear vision for the school which is strongly supported by staff, governors, parents and pupils |
| Curriculum | The curriculum is broad and matched satisfactorily to the needs of pupils but does not meet statutory requirements in information and communication technology and religious education |
| Pupils with special educational needs | Pupils at Key Stage 3 make good progress in improving their literacy and numeracy skills. In general, across all subjects their progress is satisfactory |
| Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development (SMSC) | The school makes good provision in all aspects of SMSC development. Assemblies are of high quality and provide an inspiring start to the day. The school does not meet the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. |
| Staffing, resources and accommodation | Staff are generally well qualified and meet the demands of the curriculum but there is a shortage of expertise in religious education and food technology. Resources are adequate in most areas of the curriculum. Accommodation is good and meets specialist requirements. Imaginative design has transformed the reception area into a focal point for celebrating achievement. |
| Value for money | There has been substantial improvement in the quality of education provided by the school since the last inspection. The school gives good value for money. |

* *Ethos is the climate for learning: attitudes to work, relationships and the commitment to high standards.*

The parents' views of the school

| What most parents like about the school | What some parents are not happy about |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The friendly, welcoming and supportive environment • The interesting and motivating curriculum particularly in Years 7 and 8 • The ways parents' support groups are consulted over changes and are able to initiate change • The high level of communication between | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some class sizes are too large |

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>pupils, parents and teachers to agree individual learning targets for pupils</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The way the school listens and deals with complaints. | |
|---|--|

The positive views expressed by parents are all substantiated by the inspection. Class sizes are economical. The setting of pupils by ability has resulted in some large classes of higher attaining pupils but consequently there are smaller classes of lower attaining pupils where there is greater need for teachers to be able to give individual support to pupils.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

The school should:

Raise attainment in information and communication technology (ICT) by:

- Meeting statutory requirements of the National Curriculum at Key Stage 4
- Improving the quality of provision for all pupils both within timetabled ICT lessons and in teaching ICT through all subjects of the curriculum
- Implementing systematic assessment procedures

[Paragraphs: 3, 16, 31, 35, 36, 37, 38, 43, 63, 66, 69, 103, 119, 124, 125-129, 135]

Raise attainment in religious education by:

- Meeting requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus at Key Stage 4
- Increasing the emphasis on learning from religions which is a major component of the Agreed Syllabus

[Paragraphs: 16, 35, 37, 38, 63, 66, 148-153]

Improve the quality of teaching by:

- Making more explicit identification in lesson plans of learning objectives for pupils of differing attainment
- Raising teachers' expectations of pupils to consistent levels across the curriculum
- Developing more accurate and reliable assessment in line with National Curriculum criteria
- Making more specific reference in lesson plans to the individual education plans of pupils with special educational needs

[Paragraphs: 17, 19, 21, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 45, 95, 102, 113, 152]

Improve the effectiveness and establish greater accountability of curriculum co-ordinators in raising the quality of teaching and learning by developing, for example, subject specific development plans and individual action plans to address the priorities identified in the school

development plan.

[Paragraphs: 38, 64, 65, 69, 70, 83, 95, 103, 108, 114]

In addition to the key issues above the following less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the action plan. The school should ensure that spending on special educational needs is reported to parents as statutorily required. The school should consider establishing a whole-school literacy policy to maintain its drive to improve literacy standards.

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the school

1. Longford Community School is an 11-18 mixed comprehensive in the Borough of Hounslow in West London. The school receives most of its intake from the local area. The roll has increased since the previous inspection in October 1996 and continues to be oversubscribed. The school is above average in size and has a current roll of 1181 including 130 students in the sixth form. At Key Stage 3 there are marginally more girls than boys in the school but in Years 10 and 11 there are significantly more boys than girls. In the sixth form there are almost equal numbers of boys and girls.
2. Pupils are from a range of social backgrounds. Most live in local authority housing which is within the close proximity of the school. The proportion of Black and Asian pupils is approximately 20 per cent and has increased steadily since the previous inspection. A large number of pupils, 14 per cent of the school roll, come from homes where English is not the first language. Of these, 31 pupils receive additional English language support in school. The proportion eligible for free school meals, at 29 per cent, is well above the national average. Evidence from investigations into the socioeconomic context of the local area, used to justify substantial SRB (Single Regeneration Bid) funding to the local area, strongly suggests that the school's free school meal figure does not reflect the real level of social disadvantage of pupils at the school.
3. Attainment on entry is well below average. A substantial number of pupils have weak literacy skills. There are 41 pupils with statements of special educational need which is well above the national average and represents a small increase since the previous inspection. The school's register of special educational needs includes 268 pupils which is proportionally above the national average. There is no disapplication of the National Curriculum for any pupil.
4. The school aims to make full use of people's potential; to value, respect and support people and to create a learning environment where achievement is central to every experience and where there are expectations about performance. These aims underpin all the priorities as expressed in the targets of the school development plan.

Key Indicators

Attainment at Key Stage 3¹

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for latest reporting year:

| Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
|------|------|-------|-------|
| 1999 | 129 | 77 | 206 |

| National Curriculum Test Results | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above | Boys | 48 | 52 | 44 |
| | Girls | 47 | 28 | 27 |
| | Total | 95 | 80 | 71 |
| Percentage at NC Level 5 or above | School | 46 (55) | 39 (35) | 35 (29) |
| | National | (64) | (60) | (56) |
| Percentage at NC Level 6 or above | School | 9 (14) | 14 (11) | 12 (5) |
| | National | (34) | (36) | (27) |

| Teacher Assessments | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above | Boys | 45 | 43 | 23 |
| | Girls | 46 | 26 | 22 |
| | Total | 91 | 69 | 45 |
| Percentage at NC Level 5 or above | School | 44 (27) | 34 (37) | 22 (21) |
| | National | (62) | (64) | (62) |
| Percentage at NC Level 6 or above | School | 9 (9) | 12 (7) | 5 (3) |
| | National | (31) | (37) | (31) |

¹ Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

Attainment at Key Stage 4²

Number of 15-year-olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year:

| Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
|------|------|-------|-------|
| 1999 | 95 | 64 | 159 |

| GCSE Results | | 5 or more grades A* to C | 5 or more grades A* to G | 1 or more grades A* to G |
|---|----------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Number of pupils achieving standard specified | Boys | 21 | 75 | 95 |
| | Girls | 23 | 53 | 64 |
| | Total | 44 | 128 | 159 |
| Percentage achieving standard specified | School | 29 (34) | 81 (72) | 100 (92) |
| | National | (44.6) | (89.8) | (95.2) |

Attainment in the Sixth Form³

Number of students aged 16-18 who were entered for GCE A/AS examinations in the latest reporting year:

| Year | Male | Female | Total |
|------|------|--------|-------|
| 1999 | 12 | 16 | 28 |

| 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 | 6.8 (9.1) | 10.2 (7.7) | 8.8 (8.5) | 1.5 (0) | 5.3 (0) | 3.1 (0) |
| National | n/a | n/a | (17.6) | n/a | n/a | (2.8) |

Number in final year of approved vocational qualifications and percentage of such students who achieved these qualifications:

| | Number | % Success Rate |
|----------|--------|----------------|
| School | 31(20) | 74(90) |
| National | | n/a |

² Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

³ Figures in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

Attendance

| | | | |
|--|-------------------------|---------------------------|-----|
| Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year | | | % |
| | Authorised Absence | School | 9.6 |
| | | National comparative data | 8.2 |
| | Unauthorised Absence | School | 0.1 |
| National comparative data | | 1.2 | |

Exclusions

| | | | |
|--|--------------|--|--------|
| Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year: | | | Number |
| | Fixed period | | 71 |
| | Permanent | | 6 |

Quality of teaching

| | | | |
|--|------------------------|--|----|
| Percentage of teaching observed which is : | | | % |
| | Very good or better | | 16 |
| | Satisfactory or better | | 89 |
| | Less than satisfactory | | 11 |

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

2. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

Attainment and progress

1. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is well below the national average with substantial numbers of pupils having weak literacy and numeracy skills. The prior attainment of current Year 7 pupils, although higher than that of previous year groups, is significantly below average. At the end of Key Stage 3, the proportions of pupils reaching the national expectation in National Curriculum tests in 1998 were below average in English, and well below average in mathematics and science compared with pupils from similar schools. This represents significant value added in English and continued the positive trend since the previous inspection. In 1999, the percentages of Year 9 pupils reaching the national expectation increased in mathematics and science, but decreased in English. In English, the proportion of pupils achieving above the national expectation in the standard tests has steadily increased. Attainment in lessons reflects these standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Overall standards of literacy and numeracy are below average.
2. Over the past three years there has been little fluctuation in the relative attainments of boys and girls at the end of Key Stage 3. In both 1997 and 1998 boys achieved slightly better results than girls in mathematics and science, and more significantly lower results in English. The difference in attainment in English between boys and girls in the school is smaller than it is nationally.
3. Standards of attainment, as indicated by teacher assessment at the end of Key Stage 3, are average in art, information and communication technology and physical education, and below average in design and technology, geography, history, modern foreign languages and music. With the exception of information technology where standards of current Year 9 pupils are substantially below average, these standards are reflected in pupils' work.
4. Standards achieved by pupils in lessons confirm that the attainment of many pupils is held back by weak reading and writing skills. Where these skills are less pertinent pupils' attainment is higher. For example, pupils' pronunciation and response in French and Spanish is generally satisfactory, pupils play music with a strong sense of rhythm, and they produce creative dance compositions and artwork.
5. Overall standards of achievement at GCSE have improved significantly since the previous inspection although results in most subjects are below, and in a few subjects well below, national averages. In a few subjects, such as double science and drama, results have been well above national averages for those pupils entered. The proportion achieving five or more GCSE A*-C grades rose steadily from 17 per cent in 1996 to 34 per cent representing a trend in improvement much faster than the national trend. Although the 1998 figure of 34 per cent was below

the national average for all maintained schools of around 45 per cent, it was above average for pupils in similar schools. In general, pupils for whom English is an additional language achieve GCSE results that are at least as good as the school average and some gain outstanding success.

6. Since the previous inspection the GCSE performance of girls has improved more rapidly than that of boys but both have shown substantial improvement. In 1999 the percentage of pupils gaining five or more A*-C grades fell to 29 per cent. The much smaller proportion of girls in Year 11 in 1999 compared with 1998 is a significant contributory factor to this decrease. Non-white pupils achieved substantially better results than white pupils, especially in mathematics and French. In 1998, boys achieved much better results than girls in physical education and girls achieved much better results than boys in English, art and modern languages.
7. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more A*-G grades has fluctuated around 75 per cent over the past four years which was well below the national average. As an appropriate response to a key issue arising from the previous report the average number of GCSE subjects taken by each pupil has been reduced. Substantial numbers of pupils have taken Certificate of Achievement courses, for example in modern foreign languages and English with a high rate of success, and short courses in technology with unsatisfactory results.
8. In 1998, GCSE results were best in business studies, dance, geography, modern languages and physical education. In all of these subjects the percentage of the pupils entered gaining A*-C grades was above the national average. Results were least satisfactory in mathematics and design and technology where less than 30 per cent of those entered gained A*-C grades. Although GCSE performance was not quite as good in 1999 compared with 1998, since the time of the previous inspection there is a clear trend to improvement in school results.
9. The attainment of pupils on vocational courses is good with a high proportion gaining full accreditation at the end of their courses and most others gaining unit passes. Students following GNVQ courses have confident communication skills and are learning to work independently. Overall results at A-level are below national averages. The numbers of students entered, although small, have increased since the previous inspection. In several subjects, for example English, mathematics and geography, groups have been of an economically viable size. Results have fluctuated over the past four years and show no clear trend. In 1998, best results were achieved in English, where ten of the eleven entrants gained A-E grades, and in geography, history and sociology which achieved 100 per cent pass rates with five or more candidates. Pass rates were low in mathematics, physics and business studies where a third or fewer of those entered, gained A-E grades. With the exception of art, where all three candidates gained 'B' grades, the proportion of students achieving the higher grades was very low and reflected their prior attainment at GCSE.
10. Overall results in A-level examinations were fairly similar in 1999. The percentage of candidates gaining A-E grades increased to 78 per cent from 70 per cent in 1998

but the percentage of higher grades, A or B, fell to 7 per cent from 13 per cent in 1998. Results in mathematics and business improved but no more than half those entered in these subjects gained A-E grades. Students for whom English is an additional language gained good results in 1999. In response to the previous inspection the school has raised the attainment of girls and there has been a steady increase in numbers gaining entry to university courses after leaving the sixth form.

11. Satisfactory progress is maintained throughout the school in most subjects. Pupils make progress that is at least satisfactory in 86 per cent of lessons. Their progress is good or better in 37 per cent of the lessons in a quarter of which their progress is very good. These figures are close to, but below, average for secondary schools in comparison with national statistics.
12. Progress is good in GNVQ courses in the sixth form and English, geography, history, modern foreign languages, music, physical education and in personal, social and health education at all key stages. Progress is least satisfactory in information and communication technology at Key Stage 4 where pupils receive little teaching to improve their skills, religious education and design and technology.
13. Progress is best where pupils are strongly motivated, find the activities relevant and interesting, are actively involved in the lesson, and are challenged to express their own opinions and comment on the views and performance of others. Progress is slowest when teaching materials are not sufficiently stimulating and when pupils are not given sufficient encouragement to think for themselves and place too much reliance on individual help from their teacher.
14. Pupils with special educational needs generally make at least satisfactory progress and benefit from small classes, such as in English and mathematics. They are developing greater independence in their learning and socialising and are taking more responsibility. Many of those who join the school with very low literacy levels are making good gains in their reading ages, especially over their three years at Key Stage 3. Pupils with emotional or behavioural difficulties receive effective support both inside and outside the classroom which is helping them to concentrate better on their work and make satisfactory progress.
15. When the targets set in their individual education plans and annual reviews are clear, pupils often make good progress. However, the targets set for some pupils are too vague to allow teachers to plan and monitor progress effectively. Some individual education plans are reviewed only once a year so that targets are met and then become out of date. Targets for personal development for students with emotional or behavioural difficulties are usually more specific and so do provide a focus which enables pupils and staff to be clear that progress is being made.

Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

1. As a consequence of strong emphasis on encouraging achievement, the attitudes of pupils to learning have greatly improved since the last inspection and are now good in the majority of lessons. Good behaviour and attitudes to learning, as well

as the high quality of relationships in the school, contribute significantly to pupils' progress and personal development. For example, in the majority of English lessons pupils are enthusiastic, involved, eager to succeed and are developing independent learning skills. In the majority of mathematics lessons pupils are attentive, focused, and support each other well. In science, pupils show interest, concentrate well and have good listening skills.

2. On the few occasions where there is a lack of enthusiasm or motivation it is linked to the quality of teaching or structure of the lesson. In some mathematics lessons some pupils are unable to sustain their concentration without the constant attention of their teacher. On a few occasions in science lessons, when the pace is too slow, pupils become restless and lack the necessary commitment to learning. Overall, pupils demonstrate good learning skills, a commitment to succeed, good concentration and listening skills, and an ability to work well together when required to so do.
3. Behaviour around the school is good. Pupils are polite and considerate both towards adults and each other. There is a high level of short-term exclusions resulting from a firm policy regarding the use of bad language and a zero tolerance towards unacceptable behaviour. This policy is effective at maintaining a friendly, disciplined environment and is supported by a majority of pupils.
4. Pupils show a high level of respect for the school premises and equipment. Only minimal supervision is necessary when pupils work on computers, or in the learning resource centre, after school hours. The high quality of relationships between pupils, and particularly between adults and pupils, is a strength of the school. The strong ethos for learning creates an atmosphere in which self-esteem and mutual respect flourish. There is good racial harmony within the school. Older pupils support school presentations and open evenings with both confidence and charm and are good role models for younger pupils.
5. Pupils respond well when given the opportunity to show initiative and take responsibility. There is a pupil council within each year group and a whole-school council. The school council, composed of student representatives from each year group and representative of the many ethnic groups within the school, communicates the ideas and opinions of pupils effectively. It controls its own allocated budget targeted at the school environment and on improving school facilities.
6. There is a wide range of community service opportunities for sixth-form students to help younger pupils. This includes a 'book buddy' and 'information technology' scheme with Year 7 pupils, and a programme for supporting pupils with their GCSE coursework. The positive views expressed by parents at the pre-inspection meeting with regard to the attitudes, values and behaviour of pupils, are fully substantiated.

Attendance

7. Overall attendance is satisfactory and has improved significantly since the last inspection. The school works hard to maintain this position and is well supported by the education welfare service. Most pupils at Key Stage 3 have good attendance records and these are beneficial to their attainment and progress. Attendance for pupils at Key Stage 4 is satisfactory for the majority and for post-16 students it is good. The attendance of pupils from travelling families is unsatisfactory. Only a small minority is achieving the minimum of 200 sessions required during the autumn and spring terms.
8. Punctuality to lessons, both in the morning and throughout the day, is satisfactory. Good attendance and punctuality are promoted by rigorous class and tutor group registration procedures.

27. QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

Teaching

9. The quality of teaching is satisfactory or better in 89 per cent of lessons and good or better in 49 per cent. These proportions are close to, but below, national averages. Teaching is distinctly better in the sixth form than in the other key stages. Teaching is good or better in just over four-fifths of lessons in the sixth form but this proportion falls to half the lessons at Key Stage 4 and two-fifths of lessons at Key Stage 3. The good relationships that teachers have with pupils and their commitment and determination to raise standards are strengths of the school. There is some very good teaching in almost every subject area but this very good practice is not disseminated widely enough. Overall, 16 per cent of lessons are very good or outstanding. There is excellent teaching in some art and religious education lessons where teachers persuade pupils to express their own opinions and comment respectfully on the ideas of others.
10. The quality of teaching in English, geography, GNVQ, history, modern foreign languages, music and physical education is consistently good. In each of these subjects teachers organise their lessons well with clear objectives which they convey with enthusiasm. They challenge pupils of all abilities with a brisk pace and raise their confidence through skilful questioning and encouragement. Teaching is least effective in religious education and in food technology where most teachers have insufficient subject knowledge and understanding.
11. The quality of teaching of pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL) is good and often very good at both key stages. Consequently most of these pupils show good growing awareness of grammar rules, spelling and sentence construction. EAL teachers use well-planned schemes of work and keep detailed records of pupils' progress in language development. Collaboration between EAL support teachers is particularly effective in English and humanities and to a lesser degree in science and mathematics

where improved strategies need to be developed for effective collaborative teaching. The EAL department communicates and cooperates well with the coordinator for special educational needs to support the learning needs of bilingual pupils identified as having special educational needs.

12. Teachers are competent in their specialist subject knowledge and in their management of most pupils. They plan their lessons well and in most lessons they vary activities appropriately to maintain the interest and concentration of pupils, sustain a steady pace throughout the lesson and make satisfactory use of resources. However their use of computers could be increased considerably and better coordinated to ensure that all pupils develop the full range of desirable skills in information and communication technology. Teachers make fairly effective use of setting arrangements and set appropriate work that is matched broadly to pupils' abilities but identification in lesson plans of learning objectives for pupils of differing attainment could be more explicit. Most teachers are aware of the needs of pupils and all departments have copies of pupils' individual education plans but in general they make too little use of these plans to give specific help. Too many teachers, in their planning and delivery of lessons, pay insufficient attention to the literacy levels or to the targets set in the pupils' individual education plans. This results in work that is not always understood by pupils with learning difficulties.
13. Teachers generally use homework well to consolidate and extend pupils' knowledge and understanding, but in some subjects for example mathematics and science, the work is not always sufficiently challenging. Most teachers give pupils good feedback through marking so that they know how to improve their standards but some departments, for example technology, are less rigorous and do not use National Curriculum criteria effectively enough to help pupils assess their own progress. Display of exemplar work matched to National Curriculum levels provides some guidance to pupils on the standards they should be aiming for, but in most subjects teaching could be improved by more accurate and reliable assessment in line with National Curriculum criteria.
14. Teaching is least satisfactory when teachers' expectations are too low and there is insufficient variety of activities within a lesson to sustain their interest. In some lessons teaching is unsatisfactory because teachers do not build on pupils' skills systematically. In a few lessons classroom management is unsatisfactory and teachers do not ensure that pupils are always purposefully engaged in their work.
33. **The curriculum and assessment**
15. Since the previous inspection the curriculum has been restructured to match more appropriately the abilities and needs of all pupils. Vocational courses in the sixth form have been extended, provision has been made for pupils to study for a realistic number of GCSE courses rather than too many, and

arrangements for Key Stage 3 pupils to study a second modern foreign language have been altered so that only those Year 9 pupils capable of such a challenge are involved. The school generally provides a broad education within a curriculum that challenges pupils to raise their aspirations and promotes their personal development. The school's curriculum provides equality of access to all pupils including those with English as an additional language (EAL) and those with special educational needs. The support for such pupils facilitates their access to the full range of subjects in the school.

16. Subject schemes of work generally provide good guidance and support continuity through the key stages and include elements of literacy, numeracy and information technology. However at Key Stage 4 the curriculum does not meet requirements of the National Curriculum in information and communication technology (ICT) and does not satisfy the Locally Agreed Syllabus in religious education.
17. At Key Stage 3, pupils follow a common curriculum, which includes drama, dance and religious education. In Year 9, pupils in higher attaining English sets are taught a second modern foreign language which may be either French or Spanish. An adequate number of lessons is allocated to permit sufficient coverage of the National Curriculum in all subjects although the time allocated to history and geography is low. The time allocated to English and mathematics is above average, and reflects the school priority of raising standards of literacy and numeracy. Provision for ICT at Key Stage 3 has been increased recently. Pupils have weekly computer lessons in Years 8 and 9 and after the first term in Year 7. During the first term in Year 7, in order to reduce the numbers of teachers Year 7 pupils meet each week, rather than have one lesson each of art, drama, ICT and music each week they have four lessons of each of these subjects for three consecutive weeks. This arrangement disrupts continuity of pupils' learning in each of these subjects and is particularly disadvantageous when pupils have two teachers for the same subject during the week. The curriculum is broadened and improved by a personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme that is taught sensitively and effectively by most form tutors supported by their heads of year.
18. At Key Stage 4 the curriculum is broad, balanced and appropriate for all pupils with the exception of ICT and religious education. There is a suitable range of option choices but too few expressed an interest in music to make a viable group in the current Year 10. Suitable provision is made for the lowest attaining pupils to study fewer options, receiving instead additional lessons to improve their basic skills. The Certificate of Educational Achievement is giving some pupils with special educational needs a more appropriate challenge and recognition of the progress they have made. All pupils follow a design technology course and a modern foreign language, either French or Spanish. The proportion of pupils taking double science has in the past been well below the national average of 85 per cent, but the percentage of current Year 10 pupils choosing this option is above this figure.
19. Provision for information and communication technology fails to meet National Curriculum requirements at Key Stage 4. The provision of modern equipment is very recent, and coverage of the statutory Programme of Study has not been co-

ordinated across subject areas. With the exception of the minority of pupils who select business studies as an option, most pupils have little opportunity to develop their skills in information and communication technology. For Year 11 pupils the religious education curriculum does not meet statutory requirements as it provides very little opportunity for pupils to 'learn from religions' which is a major component of the Agreed Syllabus. Year 10 pupils are following a revised programme which meets requirements.

20. The PSHE programme is well organised to ensure the appropriate provision of health education, including sex and drugs education, personal development and the world of work. The programme includes an effective careers education programme that incorporates other activities, such as talks given by outside agencies and a period of effective work experience at the end of Year 10. Preparation of pupils for the next stage of education is good. The school has worked effectively with pupils and their parents in order to raise educational and employment aspirations. As a result many pupils, particularly sixth form and GNVQ students, endeavour to seek employment beyond the traditional working class jobs.
21. The school offers a broad range of A-level subjects as well as GNVQ courses in business, leisure and tourism, and art and design in the sixth form. The school is responsive to students' individual preferences and does its utmost to accommodate their needs. For many subjects numbers are small and to make groups more economically viable Year 12 and Year 13 students are taught together in all A-level subjects other than English and mathematics and also dance which has only been introduced this year. These arrangements work effectively in some subjects where units of work are distinct but in sciences, where students build continuously on a broad spectrum of knowledge, teaching is made more difficult. The PSHE course in the sixth form extends issues covered in previous years and recognises the increased maturity of students. The religious education component of the course satisfies the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus.
22. At Key Stages 3 and 4 the school provides 25 hours of teaching time per week, which is in line with DfEE recommendations. Pupils are taught in mixed ability groups in Year 7 and thereafter they are placed in groups according to their abilities. These setting arrangements, although resulting in large groups of higher attainers in some subjects, generally work adequately for most subjects. Smaller class sizes for lower attainers support the progress of these pupils. Since the previous inspection the quality of homework has improved and in general it helps to raise standards but it is not always sufficiently challenging.
23. Extra-curricular provision is satisfactory with fairly large numbers of pupils involved in music, drama, dance, the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and competitive sport. The revised school dining arrangements prevent any clubs taking place at lunchtime, but more time has been made available after school. Several subjects, such as mathematics which offers GCSE statistics and homework clubs, organise extra activities after school which are aimed at extending experience and raising achievement. A good range of visits, for example to museums and places of historical interest, as well as residential visits to European cities, is organised for

pupils of all ages.

24. The school has a good, effective policy for assessment which provides a clear statement of aims and guidelines for departments. Particular reference is made to the need to involve pupils in setting targets and using exemplar material to highlight the expected standards. All curriculum areas, with the exception of ICT, undertake assessment satisfactorily in accordance with school policy and in compliance with statutory requirements. There is particularly good practice in humanities, mathematics and modern foreign languages where assessment of pupils' attainment levels according to National Curriculum criteria is consistent, reliable and accurate.
25. The marking of pupils' work has been the subject of significant, successful in-service training and development. Appropriate emphasis is given to providing pupils with constructive feedback which identifies strategies for improvement. Pupils and parents are kept well informed of assessments carried out throughout the year and this information is used effectively on 'target days', when pupil, parent and teacher meet to review progress and agree targets for the period ahead.
26. Assessment data is recorded for each pupil in a methodical co-ordinated system on the central computer network. These comprehensive records, which include reading and spelling ages, departmental mid-term assessments, National Curriculum assessments and external tests are used constructively to raise expectations and predict future performance of individual pupils. All departments are beginning to use the data in their planning and monitoring of pupil progress, although some areas, such as humanities and languages, are more advanced than others. For pupils with special educational needs the tests on entry, and those taken annually, ensure identification of their particular needs. The use of information for setting targets on individual education plans and for modifying teaching schemes is relatively undeveloped.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

1. Since the previous inspection the school has worked hard to implement an effective policy for this aspect of school life, reflecting its aim that pupils develop not only academically but also spiritually, morally, socially and culturally. Equality of opportunity is at the heart of the school's policy. Extensive planning and a designated responsibility to a senior member of staff ensures that this aspect is firmly at the fore of school activities.
2. Provision for spiritual development is good. A high proportion of assemblies give opportunities for pupils to reflect on their own experiences and to develop spiritual awareness. Some of these assemblies are very powerful and pupils respond to them very positively. Various themes, such as silence, reinforce what they experience and clear connections are made between what they feel and what they do, for example in reflecting about the effects of natural disasters. Individual departments identify where spiritual aspects can be developed, such as the consideration of infinity in mathematics and the feelings evoked by particular objects and paintings in art. Some departments are more successful than others in doing this. Pupils are encouraged to develop a better self-knowledge through such activities as studying poems about feelings and reflecting on life experiences such as death. The school fails to fulfil the statutory requirement of a daily act of collective worship for all pupils, a major factor being the lack of suitable accommodation for large assemblies.
3. Provision for moral development is good. The school is clear in its policy of teaching principles that help pupils distinguish right from wrong. The school Code of Conduct is displayed prominently in each classroom and in addition a parental contract ensures that correct modes of behaviour are understood and followed. Weekly themes such as responsibility, anger and forgiveness reinforce moral values. Units of a moral nature within the personal and social education programme such as rules and responsibilities, morality, bullying, human rights, the environment, litter and vandalism provide further reinforcement. Outside visitors, such as the police, regularly talk to pupils about personal responsibility and issues of right and wrong.
4. Provision for social development is good. Pupils are encouraged to develop positive relationships not only in the classroom but also in the many extra-curricular activities that exist outside of school time. Some assembly themes deal with human relationships, such as how fragile they can be, and how they need to be protected and valued. Citizenship figures very prominently in the school programme and there are related themes on understanding government, needs and responsibilities, emotions and relationships. Activities such as reception desk duty, the school council, acting as hosts at such events as parents' evenings and participating in staff interview procedures enable the pupils to experience and deal with responsibility. Other activities such as raising money for charities, funding a chess club, involvement in the local community and residential experiences all contribute to their social development. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme reinforces their practical experiences in exploring issues such as the Children's Act, the nature of friendship and how to handle difficult relationships.

5. Provision for cultural development is good. The school encourages pupils to take a pride in their own culture and also encourages them to look beyond it to see what can be learnt from other cultures. Regular concerts, dance presentations, visits to art galleries and theatres as well as extra-curricular activities such as film, drama and poetry clubs all add to their varied cultural experience. Pupils have the opportunity to visit European cities such as Prague, Paris and Amsterdam. The multi-cultural aspect is also promoted. During languages week Turkish, Lebanese, Indian and traditional English meals were prepared. Origami and Chinese calligraphy also feature in the school curriculum. Assemblies celebrate religious festivals and events and include not only Christmas but Ramadan and Diwali. Permanent notices around the school are in other languages as well as English. Numerous displays throughout the school, concerning refugees, various cultures and women artists, exemplify the school's commitment to equality of opportunity. Appreciation of the cultural diversity in the school population is addressed appropriately in the PSHE programme. The school's policy to promote and develop a multicultural ethos and perspective across the school community is reflected by the opportunity provided by the EAL base as a venue where parents, pupils and their teachers can socialise.

Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

6. The educational and personal guidance provided for all pupils is very good and is one of the strengths of the school. The quality of leadership by the heads of year, and the diligence of form tutors, combine to provide very good pastoral support. The quality of this provision makes a significant contribution towards the improvement in learning attitudes and the educational standards being achieved. Assessment and monitoring procedures have improved significantly since the last inspection and now make an important contribution to the personal and educational development of pupils.
7. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and make good progress. A targeted mentoring initiative, specifically focused on supporting lower and higher attainers, is helping to ensure that all pupils reach their full potential. Pupils wishing to continue with their education in the sixth form are well prepared and supported, as are those who choose to continue into further and higher education.
8. Good standards of behaviour and discipline are maintained through consistent implementation of school policy and well established strategies. Procedures for dealing with bullying and all other forms of unacceptable behaviour are effective. The school has rigorous procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance and punctuality. These have proved effective in raising attendance since the last inspection. The school is well supported by the educational welfare service and the travellers' support unit.
9. The school provides a well structured personal, social and health education programme which is taught by form tutors and supported by heads of years and various outside speakers. Procedures for implementing child protection measures

are diligent, well co-ordinated and meet statutory requirements. The school has established links with all the relevant outside agencies and all staff with pastoral responsibilities have received appropriate training. Health and safety practice is very good. All aspects of health and safety practice are reviewed on a regular basis.

10. The very positive views expressed by parents regarding the help and guidance available to pupils are fully substantiated by the inspection. The high quality of the welfare, support and guidance provision reported at the last inspection has not only been maintained but has been improved substantially.

Partnership with parents and the community

11. The quality of information provided for parents is very good. The ability to communicate effectively with parents, pupils, the local community, business organisations and institutions is a major strength of the school. A wide range of strategies for promoting its aims and celebrating success, including newsletters, a termly magazine and separate staff and pupil bulletins, is utilised. Comprehensive learning guides for pupils at Key Stage 4, induction activities for Year 7 pupils to complete in the summer holiday before joining the school, and home study packs for those who are away from school for long periods emphasise the school's commitment to raising the attainment and aspirations of all.
12. There is an excellent level of involvement by parents in their children's learning. There is a comprehensive induction programme for new parents and the first contact with potential pupils takes place during their fifth year in the feeder primary schools. Links with the feeder schools have improved since the last inspection. There is a twice-yearly target setting meeting with parents, pupils and teachers and these have a major impact on attainment and progress. By successfully sharing the overall vision of the school, and the expectations for individual pupils, the school has created an excellent environment in which a close working partnership with parents is flourishing. Most parents take full advantage of these opportunities.
13. Pupils' home language is valued and recognised. Parents who do not speak English fluently are provided with appropriate translation and interpreter support to gain access to a full range of information on the attainment and progress of their children. This has encouraged parents to get involved in the education of their children especially in after-school homework clubs. They also contribute actively to school initiatives to celebrate multicultural events and festivals under the enthusiastic leadership of the EAL co-ordinator.
14. The school calendar, which contains useful information such as details of school events, dates for the religious festivals of all major faiths, and thought-provoking themes of school assemblies is distributed to all families and helps parents to be involved in their child's education. The student planner includes a comprehensive range of information to support learning and provides the opportunity for daily contact between teachers and parents. Annual reports are detailed and provide a clear overview of pupil attitudes and attainment in each subject area. The very

positive views expressed by parents regarding the quality of information they receive and the encouragement they are given to be involved with the school are fully substantiated by the inspection.

15. The excellent links which the school has established with the business community has a major impact on the quality of the educational provision across the whole range of GNVQ courses, work experience and many other areas of the curriculum. Numerous visiting speakers, including governors, support the curriculum on ethnic, moral and social issues and there is a wide programme of curriculum enrichment visits to places of cultural and historic interest.
16. The previous inspection concluded that the high quality of community links had a positive effect on pupils' attitudes, development and attainment. Since that inspection the school has been successful in developing these relationships further.

61. THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

Leadership and management

17. The headteacher provides excellent leadership and presents a clear vision for the school. He receives respect and strong support from governors, staff, parents and pupils who all contributed to determining the aims of the school. Since the previous inspection, in response to a key issue for improvement, the management structure has been reorganised and is now well suited to support the aims of the school. Members of the senior management team work diligently, competently and harmoniously to maintain the school's improvement. The new structure provides for very good communication between staff at all levels of responsibility and reflects the open and consultative style of management introduced by the headteacher.
18. Staff and governors are fully informed of issues facing the school through calendared meetings and weekly staff bulletins which focus on school development. Governors are made to feel very welcome in the school. For example they have addressed pupils in morning assemblies, contributed to PSHE lessons and vocational courses and some have attended staff training days. Governors take an active part in equal opportunities issues such as underperformance by white boys at Key Stage 3, disproportionate numbers of transfers of disruptive boys to the school and monitoring of exclusions according to race and gender. Through their opportunities to visit and observe lessons in the curriculum areas or year groups to which they are each assigned they have become more familiar with the school. They have been given the confidence to participate more actively, and from a more informed position, in meetings and feel able to make a more positive contribution to discussions and decision making. Governors take a very active role in review and evaluation of school development. They have ensured that the school has made good progress in addressing most of the key issues arising from the previous inspection. Governors meet most of their statutory responsibilities but they have not ensured that the school meets statutory requirements for information and communication technology and religious education at Key Stage 4. Also the legal

requirement of a daily act of collective worship for all pupils is not met. In their annual report to parents they do not identify how funding for special educational needs is spent, which is a statutory requirement.

19. The school development plan is based on the clear educational direction established by the governors and the senior management team in response to key issues from the previous report and additional priorities, such as improving attendance, implementing a homework policy and improving the school environment. It is reviewed annually following evaluation and staff at all levels of seniority contribute directly to its redrafting. Each action has appropriate criteria by which success can be measured. The rationale for each new initiative, such as the introduction of target setting for all pupils, is based firmly on school priorities. The roles and responsibilities of the senior management team for monitoring and implementation of strategies for improvement are well defined and each has their own individual action plan to judge their success. This useful practice, which makes individual accountability more explicit, is not adopted by heads of curriculum areas.
20. The school development plan provides a solid foundation for further progress and is the focus of regular meetings between heads of curriculum areas and the deputy head to assess progress and decide on actions to meet identified targets. This arrangement has had the advantage that all curriculum areas focused on the same aspect of the school development plan at the same time and in a consistent fashion. However, for some heads of curriculum areas it has had the effect of reducing their own perception of their accountability and corporate responsibility for raising standards. Rather than rely on regular contact with the senior management team for direction, departments need to determine their own strategies for improvement in accordance with school priorities and in a more subject specific way, for example by constructing a departmental development plan to an agreed school format. The monitoring of teaching through lesson observation is extensive and has undoubtedly raised the general quality of teaching. However, characteristics of good teaching in each subject area have not been identified sufficiently and curriculum co-ordinators have not exploited opportunities to concentrate on specific aspects of teaching in their subject areas to ensure dissemination of good teaching practice.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

21. The composition of the staff represents the multiracial nature of the school and reflects its strong commitment to equality of opportunity. Significant senior roles are held by women and ethnic minorities are well represented at management level. The school has sufficient suitably qualified and experienced staff to effectively teach the curriculum in all areas except religious education in which two-thirds of lessons are taught by non-specialist staff, and food technology where the school has been unable to appoint any suitably qualified teachers. Both these shortages are detrimental to pupils' progress. There is insufficient technical expertise to maintain efficient use of information and communication technology resources. The increased use of learning support assistants has been very beneficial in some areas of the curriculum, particularly in targeting literacy support for pupils at Stages

3-5 of the Code of Practice. This support has, however, been provided unevenly across the curriculum.

22. The level of staff turnover has reduced in recent years. There is an effective support and induction programme for newly qualified teachers and every other new member of staff who wishes to be involved. Each newly qualified teacher is allocated a mentor and an experienced member of staff for informal support. These arrangements together with help and guidance from curriculum areas promote good quality teaching. The school appraisal scheme has identified the professional development needs of staff in both their teaching and their managerial roles. Recent in-service training has focused appropriately on whole-school priorities and has led to consistent implementation of policies, for example on behaviour. Support for teachers experiencing the greatest difficulties is strong. All teachers receive constructive feedback on their teaching through regular monitoring and lesson observation by heads of curriculum areas, governors and the senior management team.
23. The accommodation provided by the school is good and meets the requirements of the curriculum in all areas. The school hall is far too small to accommodate the whole school for a daily assembly. There is sufficient accommodation for most teachers to be assigned their own teaching room where they can work when not teaching. This enables them to maintain a high standard of display as an example of excellence to pupils. Communal areas are decorated and have good quality displays which encourage learning and achievement. The reception area has recently been refurbished imaginatively to provide an impressive area in which to display students' work and celebrate success. There is generous provision of specialist accommodation in almost all areas but changing facilities for dance lessons are unsuitable. The dining hall is unsatisfactory and inadequate for the size of the school. To reduce congestion, imaginative arrangements to spread the lunch period over three half-hour sessions with different year groups visiting the dining hall in rotation have been implemented and are working well. The system does however have the disadvantage that no extra-curricular activities are possible at lunchtime as each pupil only has a 30 minute break between lessons. Accommodation is generally maintained in a clean and safe condition.
24. Resources are adequate in most departments for the effective delivery of the curriculum. All curriculum areas, except history and science where there are insufficient books for home use at Key Stage 4, have sufficient supplies of textbooks. The school has made substantial recent investment in computers and there are sufficient computers in school for the number of pupils on roll. However most curriculum areas have insufficient ICT resources of their own and have not planned how to make best use of school facilities. The recently refurbished learning resource area is well equipped with computing facilities and has a good supply of books. It is well used before and after school during the recently extended opening hours, but somewhat under-used by departments during lesson times.

69. The efficiency of the school

25. Overall financial planning is very good and takes account of both current needs and longer term development to ensure continued school improvement. Priorities for school improvement are carefully considered in respect of financial implication and identify coherent planning for the curriculum, assessment, resources and staff development. A separate premises development plan takes full account of capital costs and building maintenance. Departments receive a budget allocation based on pupil numbers together with maintenance costs in areas such as science and technology. Further support for initiatives is available, but this has to be justified and ratified by management groups. Departments do not have clear and specific plans that allow identified objectives to be pursued. Consequently, in their financial planning, they are not able to monitor the impact of expenditure on resources on pupils' attainment and progress and then evaluate the cost effectiveness of their spending.
26. Financial control is good. Financial reports on school and departmental funding are produced regularly for review by governors and the senior management. The cost effectiveness of allocations, with the exception of investment in commercial software to improve literacy and numeracy skills, is not evaluated in sufficient detail.
27. The total income per pupil is above average as the school receives additional funding which takes into account the disadvantaged social background of pupils. The school has been successful in some of its bids for additional grants. These have been used appropriately to repair the school heating system and provide new facilities in ICT. Most recently, an independent study centre in the library and a specialist GNVQ base have been opened. Income for pupils with special educational needs is used appropriately, for example to provide for learning support assistants and to allow for smaller classes but use of these funds available for students with special educational needs is not defined or evaluated with sufficient clarity either by senior management or by governors.
28. Efficient use is generally made of teaching staff. Most staff are appropriately deployed although many non-specialists are used to teach religious education. The teaching of several classes in English and mathematics is divided between two teachers. Most classes are of economical and suitable size. Most are within the limits set by governors but in order to maintain breadth to the curriculum there are small classes in Year 11 music and A-level history, geography and music. Except in mathematics and English, Year 12 and 13 A-level classes are combined to make the size of group more viable. Overall expenditure on educational support staff, which includes those supporting pupils for whom English is an additional language and those supporting pupils with special educational needs is well above average. These staff contribute well to pupils' attainment and progress. The level of staffing for administration and clerical support has been well above average in comparison with other schools, although recent changes have brought the number more in line. Employment of additional staff to check on pupils' attendance has been effective in reducing absence.
29. The school has an intake of pupils from disadvantaged social and economic circumstances, with well below average attainment on entry. It receives above

average income per pupil which it uses well to raise attainment. The school has had considerable success in its drive to raise pupils' aspirations and develop positive attitudes to education. Considerable improvement has been achieved on nearly all aspects of the school since the previous inspection. The school gives good value for money.

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

74. ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

English

30. In previous years, the attainment in English of pupils on entry to the school in Year 7 has been well below the national average. The attainment of current Year 7 pupils, as indicated by their results in standardised national tests at the end of Key Stage 2, although higher, is still significantly below the national average. At the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' performance in English falls almost a year below the national average for their age group. In national tests at the end of Key Stage 3, in 1998, the percentage of pupils reaching the national expectation of Level 5 was below the national average, and the percentage of pupils achieving higher levels was well below the national average. From 1997 to 1998 results improved in line with the national trend. Comparison of the school's performance with national benchmarks shows the proportion of those reaching Level 5 in the tests was broadly in line with the average for similar schools. The proportion of pupils reaching the national expectation declined slightly in the 1999 tests.
31. In the GCSE examinations, the proportion of pupils achieving A*-C grades in English language almost doubled in 1998, in comparison with results in the previous year, and were just below the national average. Results dropped slightly in 1999. For the last three years all candidates for the examination have achieved A*-G grades. Too few pupils, less than half, are entered for English literature. In 1997 and in 1998 all these pupils achieved grades A*-G. About 25 pupils each year are entered for an externally validated Certificate of Achievement. All have passed the examination and increasing numbers of pupils have achieved merits and distinctions. The number of A-level candidates has increased considerably since the previous inspection. Although results are below average for all maintained schools, the number of higher grades has risen steadily. Overall these results illustrate an improving picture with good value added to pupils' standards in English, particularly in Years 7 and 8 and in the sixth form.
32. By the end of Key Stage 3, about half the pupils speak up to be heard in lessons and all listen carefully to the teacher when required to do so. Pupils do not read widely but all read fiction appropriate for their age, some of it during form time. They enjoy the non-fiction books in the school library that are written in a simple style. All pupils have tackled Shakespeare as early as Year 7 with a measure of success. Pupils write in a narrow range of styles, and much of their work contains major errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to draft and present their work using computers.
33. By the end of Key Stage 4, about a third of pupils read aloud accurately and with expression. Pupils have too few opportunities to speak in a range of social situations, except to speak at formal occasions such as school assemblies. Pupils readily identify rhythm and rhyme in simple poems and Year 10 pupils are able to

identify the form of a Shakespeare sonnet. A few are beginning to annotate their texts appropriately but most pupils have not learned this valuable skill to a high enough standard. Pupils do not eradicate all the errors in their writing when redrafting their work. Lack of opportunities to learn and practice word processing has an adverse effect on the development of pupils' writing and on its presentation.

34. In the sixth form, students enjoy the cut and thrust of discussion. A strong feature of their attainment is the wide and demanding reading they undertake to support their work. The best writing shows a clear understanding and involvement with the text, and good analytical skills.
35. Pupils make satisfactory progress at Key Stages 3 and 4 and good progress in the sixth form. The school's summer literacy programme enables some Year 7 pupils to make good progress before they enter the school. Pupils' reading and motivation improves as they read attractive books in tutor time. All Year 7 pupils have a well-planned literacy hour as part of their English provision and improve their reading skills by using a highly successful interactive video programme. The poorer attainers receive good support in small groups and make significant gains in their reading age over the key stage. Pupils do not make enough progress in speaking and listening at Key Stages 3 and 4, or in their ability to pay the close attention to text that is required for successful literary criticism.
36. Pupils enjoy lessons and they want to learn. Their behaviour is good and some pupils are capable of extended periods of concentration. At Key Stages 3 and 4, about half of them make good oral contributions to lessons. Sixth-form students work hard and their response is lively and dedicated.
37. The quality of teaching is at least satisfactory in almost all lessons and three-quarters of them are good or very good. Teachers plan their lessons carefully, and manage pupils confidently and effectively. Their assessment of pupils' work is thorough and they give pupils good guidance as to what they must do to improve. However, the expectations of teachers, particularly for pupils in the lower attaining sets, is frequently not high enough. In the more successful lessons, such as discussion in the sixth form of characters in a poem by Robert Browning and in a novel by Thomas Hardy, there is good specific teaching from an impressive level of knowledge. In the less successful lessons teachers do not teach pupils enough skills which would enable pupils to study independently. In some of these lessons the texts used, for example *Grange Hill*, are too easy and lack enough challenge to interest and motivate pupils. Teachers do not give pupils enough opportunities to work in pairs or small groups and this restricts their progress in developing collaborative skills.
38. Since the last inspection, the proportion of GCSE grades A*-C in English language has almost doubled. More students are now entered for A-level and they obtain higher grades. The department is well set to obtain even higher levels in the future. Management of the department is capable and committed. The department has been strikingly successful in the implementation of new initiatives designed to raise

standards of literacy but needs to influence more extensively the development of strategies across the curriculum to improve pupils' literacy skills.

Drama

39. Drama is an optional subject at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. At Key Stage 3 all pupils take drama for one lesson a week. At GCSE, the proportion of pupils achieving A*-C grades has been consistently well above the national average, with all those entered achieving A*-G grades. The first two A-level candidates were entered in 1999. Both achieved creditable results.

40. By the end of Key Stage 3 overall attainment is below expectation. Pupils understand freeze frame technique which they can use to illustrate a variety of activities. For example, Year 8 pupils work with total concentration to co-ordinate exaggerated movements into a sequence of actions to resemble the working of a machine. In other lessons attainment is very low with few drama skills in evidence and no use of language specific to drama. A few pupils are beginning to evaluate their own work and that of others. Attainment is also below expectation at Key Stage 4. Although group relationships and interaction are sometimes unsatisfactory pupils can co-operate and share ideas successfully, for example in the reading of 'Out of their Heads' by Marcus Rower.

In the sixth form, individual standards vary widely. Students know some of the basic drama history of the twentieth century. They can work independently, for example to plan and rehearse scenes to illustrate 'The American Dream', and to use the library to undertake further research.

41. Progress is satisfactory at Key Stage 4, but is unsatisfactory at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form. In half the four lessons at Key Stage 3, pupils are interested, obedient and concentrate on their work. In other lessons their behaviour is poor. Some pupils do not take the lesson seriously and fail to co-operate with the teacher. Attitudes are satisfactory at Key Stage 4, although some pupils argue with the teacher on matters of fact before they are prepared to settle. Attitudes and behaviour in the sixth form are good and students are eager to succeed. Students take part in lively discussion, for example on Brecht, and make pertinent points and good contributions. They take responsibility for their own learning as they plan and rehearse independently.

42. The quality of teaching is good in half the lessons at Key Stage 3 and unsatisfactory in the other half. Where lessons are good the teacher has clear aims and good class control. Expectations are high and assessment made by the teacher is reliable and useful to the pupils. Where lessons are unsatisfactory, discipline is poor and not enough skills and dramatic techniques are taught to make listening to the teacher worthwhile. At Key Stage 4 teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan conscientiously but class management is unsound and not enough ground is covered in each lesson. Teaching in the sixth form varies from good to

unsatisfactory. Teaching is good when tasks and supporting worksheets are well matched to the varied abilities of students. In the unsatisfactory lessons, inexperienced teachers do not have enough management techniques to teach Years 12 and 13 simultaneously.

43. Staff and management are well qualified and they work well together as a team but they are, as yet, inexperienced. Newly qualified teachers, although well supported by the school, have too little subject-specific help, and need additional professional advice. Links with English at Key Stage 3 are not sufficiently developed to improve pupils' standards of speaking and listening. The school provides good opportunities for public performance. A new and interesting programme of trips and visits is being developed to improve knowledge and understanding.

88. ***Reading, writing, speaking and listening***

44. The levels of literacy of higher attainers are sufficient to support their learning. Lower attaining pupils are held back in their learning by their very low literacy skills. Pupils are not confident speakers or careful listeners and generally they have few opportunities in lessons to improve these skills. All pupils can read the simple texts put before them in lessons. All pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4 read a range of simple leisure fiction but read little beyond that. Sixth-form students read a wide range of challenging books. Research skills are weak, although the library is adequately stocked and pupils, with help, use the CD-ROM resources. The ICT resources of the school are not sufficiently used to improve the standard of pupils' writing, spelling or presentation. This currently detracts from their attainment. The initiatives to improve literacy set up by the English department are already raising standards in Years 7 and 8. Reading is usefully promoted in form time. Although most departments teach subject-specific vocabulary, the absence of a unified school literacy policy is a significant weakness in the school's approach to raising levels of literacy.

Mathematics

45. Overall attainment in mathematics is well below average at Key Stages 3 and 4 but there are small, but significant, signs of improvement. On entry to the school, many pupils have mathematical skills that are well below the national average. As at the time of the previous inspection, attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is well below the national average. The percentage of Year 9 pupils reaching the national expectation of Level 5 in the end of Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests has slowly but steadily increased from 32 per cent in 1997 to 35 per cent in 1998 and to 39 per cent in 1999, compared with the national average of 60 per cent in 1998. This improvement is slightly faster than the national trend. Comparison of the school's performance with national benchmarks shows the proportion of those reaching Level 5 in the tests was well below the average for similar schools. The percentage of pupils exceeding the national expectation is also very low. For example in 1998 11 per cent of pupils reached Level 6 or above compared with the national figure of 36 per cent. In 1999, by the end

of the key stage most pupils met, or exceeded, their predicted Key Stage 3 level based on their Key Stage 2 performance. About half of the pupils experience difficulty with basic number work and are only able to solve the simplest algebraic equations. Most pupils show reasonable knowledge of shape and space and of data-handling but few pupils are confident in using algebra. Higher attainers in Year 8 recognise equivalent fractions and are able to reduce them to their simplest form.

46. GCSE results gained by pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 are well below national average but there was a steady upward trend since the previous inspection until a small decline in 1999. The percentage of pupils gaining grades A*-C rose from 17 per cent in 1996 to 25 per cent in 1998 but fell to 21 per cent in 1999. The results of girls and boys are similar but there are noticeable ethnic differences. Non-white pupils achieve significantly better results in mathematics than white students. The number of students choosing to study A-level mathematics has increased steadily in recent years. A-level results improved considerably over the last two years from 22 per cent A-E grades in 1998 to 50 per cent A-E grades in 1999 but are still well below national averages. No students in either year achieved the highest grades. The work of current A-level students reflects average standards. They have, for example, a satisfactory understanding of statistical processes such as the calculation of correlation coefficients.
47. While overall progress at each key stage is satisfactory, some pupils make rapid progress whereas for a minority of pupils, particularly those with low standards of basic numeracy, progress is slow. For example, pupils may be unable to solve simple equations because of their weak number skills. Most progress is made when teachers have high expectations and when work is closely targeted to take account of pupils' prior attainment. Pupils make good progress in understanding probability when they use suitable practical resources, for example a pack of playing cards. At Key Stage 4, higher attainers learn to deal confidently with complex algebra and trigonometric problems and progress well. The good progress made by pupils with learning difficulties is promoted through specially targeted work and, for some pupils, by additional classroom support. Progress is unsatisfactory when pupils are poorly motivated by repetitive numerical tasks such as rounding numbers to decimal places. Some students attempt advanced courses in mathematics without the advantage of having completed the higher paper GCSE course. This leads to some difficulty for these students at the start of the advanced course, in some topics such as factorisation and simplification of algebraic expressions, and hinders their progress.
48. Most pupils have a good attitude towards their work. In some classes there is much enthusiasm, but in a few classes some pupils become disinterested and inattentive. Where work is sharply focused and directed by the teacher, pupils usually work well. At Key Stage 4 many pupils adopt a mature approach. They work conscientiously on problems, when necessary seeking help and advice after school and at lunchtimes from their teachers. Some,

however, are less well motivated and only work satisfactorily with close teacher supervision. In the sixth form students are keen to learn and regularly attend after-school sessions to improve their skills.

49. The quality of teaching is almost always at least satisfactory and lessons are well structured. Teaching is good or better in 40 per cent of lessons. The best teaching occurs where teachers direct the pace and depth of the work accurately to the pupils' needs. For example, in a Year 8 lesson on equations when after explanation by the teacher involving productive questioning, groups of pupils were set problems from challenging worksheets appropriate to their current level of attainment. Sixth-form teaching is good. Teachers build carefully on students' previous knowledge with the use of prepared worksheets and exemplar material. The encouragement given to students to question the basis of mathematical concepts leads to good understanding. Students with special educational needs are well catered for by the production of specifically targeted work sheets and resources, the occasional help of learning support assistants and close adherence to the pupils' individual education plans. Calculators are used effectively by pupils with special educational needs in mixed ability Year 7 classes to ensure that they are not disadvantaged and able to complete the work set to the whole class on long multiplication. The detailed knowledge that the teachers have of the strengths and weaknesses of individual pupils and the caring way in which they help and encourage them over their difficulties is a great strength of the department. Teachers give pupils good support through marking their work regularly and by giving prompt oral or written feedback on their homework but opportunities to give pupils more constructive advice through marking are not always exploited effectively enough.
50. The curriculum meets National Curriculum requirements. The department is well managed with a clear department handbook specifying policy and procedures aimed at raising attainment. Procedures are in place within the department to monitor pupils' progress but some targets set for pupils could be more challenging. Teachers meet regularly to discuss pupils' progress and teaching strategies, but there is a need for the best teaching practices to be identified and implemented by all teachers. The poor level of numeracy of many pupils is a cause for concern and is being addressed by the use of specialist commercial software in lessons with pupils in greatest need. All mathematics teaching takes place in eight specialist rooms where the varied displays of exemplar work, mathematical posters and charts provide a stimulating environment which helps pupils to learn.

Numeracy across the curriculum

51. Pupils have some opportunities to improve and apply their numeracy skills in other areas of the curriculum, but these opportunities are not extensive. For example, in geography and history Year 10 pupils can interpret bar charts accurately and use them to display information. In geography, Year 7 pupils

learn to use six-figure grid references which improves their understanding of coordinates. Pupils make appropriate use of calculators for simple calculations in science and to help investigative work in mathematics lessons. Numeracy worksheets prepared by mathematics teachers are used effectively by form tutors as a numeracy improvement initiative throughout the school.

Science

52. On entry to the school, the level of attainment is well below that of pupils nationally. At the end of Key Stage 3, the percentage of pupils reaching the national expectation of Level 5 or higher in the standard National Curriculum tests in 1998 was well below the average in comparison with all maintained schools and with schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. The performance of boys was marginally better than that of girls and similar to the difference found nationally. In 1999, the percentage of pupils reaching the national expectation increased and a greater number exceeded this level than in the previous year. Similar levels of attainment are demonstrated by pupils in their class work. For example, Year 9 pupils can make appropriate observations, record data and offer simple explanations for their experimental results but only a small number use precision in their measurements and have the depth of understanding necessary to give scientific explanations, for example of the role of enzymes in the process of digestion.
53. At the end of Key Stage 4 attainment is below average. In 1998, the proportion of Year 11 pupils gaining an A*-C GCSE grade was below the national average, although the results of the minority of pupils taking double award science exceeded national figures. The pattern was similar in 1999 with the overall percentage of pupils gaining A*-C grades being below expectation but performance in the double award option being very good. The performance of boys was similar to that of girls in both years. In Year 11, a minority of pupils have a secure knowledge and good understanding of basic processes, but only a few can extend their knowledge to explain behaviour or predict the outcome when experimental conditions are changed, for example when investigating the extension of a spring under different loads or the rise of a bubble in a column of liquid.
54. The numbers of students entered for GCE A-level in science subjects have been small. In 1998 the percentage of candidates gaining A-E grades was below national average in biology, chemistry and physics, although in chemistry and biology most students achieved grades commensurate with their prior attainment. In 1999 the entry was extremely small with one candidate in each subject gaining an A-E grade. The attainment of students currently studying A-level sciences in the sixth form is higher. Chemistry students have a good understanding of ionisation energies, physics students have a sound understanding of laws of motion and biology students have satisfactory knowledge of cell division.
55. At Key Stage 3, progress is at least satisfactory in the majority of lessons, and in about one third of lessons, it is good or very good. In a small number of lessons,

progress is unsatisfactory. Where progress is good, pupils build on previous knowledge and begin to realise connections between the three attainment targets, life and living processes, materials and physical processes. Their skill in observing and recording is developing at a good pace, and they are beginning to analyse their experimental measurements using simple graphs. At Key Stage 4, progress is at least satisfactory in most lessons and good in about a quarter. Pupils make good progress when they are inspired by lively, informed teaching, for example when developing the concept of food webs and pyramids of numbers. Where progress is unsatisfactory science is taught at a slow pace without much excitement, pupils are unclear about the objectives for the lesson and show little motivation to gain understanding. At both key stages, a significant number of pupils make insufficient progress due to the lack of challenge in the teaching or too little consolidation of basic knowledge such as the structure of atoms. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress where the task matches their attainment or where extra support is provided in the classroom. In the sixth form, progress is satisfactory, with students being clear about expectations, but needing considerable support to reach the required standard.

56. Attitudes of pupils are mainly good, and at least satisfactory across both key stages and the sixth form. Pupils usually listen quietly to instructions and generally concentrate on the activities provided. They respond to the teacher's questions, but show little initiative or willingness to raise questions themselves. In practical work, pupils carry out experiments safely and purposefully. They collaborate well and share ideas in investigative tasks. Behaviour in class is generally satisfactory, although in a minority of lessons, when teaching is uninspiring, pupils are restless and inclined to be noisy.
57. The quality of teaching is at least satisfactory in about nine-tenths of lessons. The teaching is very good in one in six lessons and good in just over a fifth. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the subject and a range of expertise and experience which they use confidently to explain scientific principles and to make topics, such as plate tectonics and the formation of crude oil, interesting to pupils. Where teaching contains unsatisfactory features, the level of planning is insufficiently detailed and teachers do not match tasks sufficiently well to the attainment level of pupils, including those with higher ability and those with special educational needs. In several lessons, such as when investigating friction, teachers' expectations are too low and pupils are not required to suggest their own ideas. They allow the lesson to proceed at a slow pace and do not challenge pupils to explain their results scientifically. Where teaching is good, teachers actively involve the whole group by directing their questions to individuals, they reinforce key facts and principles and encourage pupils' curiosity through their own enthusiasm and suitable practical activities. Some teachers help pupils to make good progress by giving clear advice for improving the quality of work when marking their exercise books.
58. The curriculum satisfies statutory requirements and increasing use is being made of information and communication technology, for example in data-logging. Teachers use assessment procedures effectively to help pupils identify weaknesses and to set targets for improvement. Laboratory accommodation is good and stimulating display

celebrates pupils' work and provides additional resource material for reference. Resources for experimental work are adequate, although a shortage of textbooks at Key Stage 4 limits the range of work that pupils can do at home. The department is managed satisfactorily with staff working well together to develop the curriculum and improve the quality of provision. Good progress has been made on sharing teaching expertise through lesson observations. Since the last inspection, overall standards of attainment have improved, although Key Stage 3 and GCSE results remain well below national averages. Progress made in lessons has improved but weaknesses in aspects of teaching and resourcing continue to contribute to lower standards.

OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

Art

59. Attainment at the end of each key stage is close to the national average. At Key Stage 3 pupils demonstrate a wide range of ability in their painting and drawing skills. Some pupils in Year 8 can use charcoal effectively to indicate shape and texture and higher attainers in Year 7 can use crayons to create a variety of tone and colour. Year 9 pupils are capable of very astute verbal responses to the work of Pollock, Klee and Kandinsky. GCSE results have steadily improved since the last inspection. In 1998 the percentage of pupils gaining A*-C grades at GCSE, at 49 per cent, was well below the national average of 59 per cent. However, 95 per cent of all the pupils entered gained A*-G grades. Both these percentages increased in 1999 with 53 per cent gaining A*-C grades. Many pupils at Key Stage 4 have good observational skills and drawing techniques. Most can use charcoal to indicate tone, shape and texture. In general, girls demonstrate better fine drawing skills than boys. The numbers of candidates entered for A-level are small. In the past two years all entrants have passed and most have gained either B or C grades. The average point score per student is above the national average. In the GNVQ Art and Design course at Intermediate level nine students gained the full award in 1999 and two others gained unit passes.
60. Most pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form make satisfactory progress in consolidation and extension of their skills in using different media and also improve their design skills, for example in using shape to indicate physical emotion. When inspired some groups, for example a lower attaining set in Year 11 working on a three-dimensional project, can make much faster progress. Many pupils, particularly at Key Stage 3, find portrait work very difficult, which limits their progress. Pupils generally make faster progress when they are allowed to use their creativity to express themselves freely in their art work rather than attempt to copy the work and style of famous artists.
61. The response of pupils of all ages and abilities is satisfactory and on occasions, when they are strongly motivated and challenged to express their own ideas, it is excellent. Art is a popular option at GCSE and the numbers studying art in the sixth form have increased substantially. Pupils work well independently, and are mutually supportive, valuing the opinions of others about their work. Their behaviour is almost always

good, but occasionally they lose concentration when tasks are technically too difficult for them to be satisfied with their own work.

62. Overall, teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 3, and good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Teaching is very good in about a fifth of lessons. In these lessons the teacher communicates enthusiasm and passion for art to all the pupils, establishes excellent relationships, raises pupils' own self-image by valuing their responses to questions and maintains a fast pace throughout the lesson. Teachers have extensive subject knowledge and cite relevant examples from the work of traditional artists to illustrate technical points. They plan thoroughly and their class management is generally good. However some teachers do not allow their vitality and enjoyment to show through and their expectations of pupils are not high enough. Teachers give good, instructive feedback to pupils during lessons both in art techniques and in the use of colour and texture. This has a positive impact on attainment and progress. Teachers set varied and challenging homework tasks such as sketchbook exercises and research into the work of mainstream artists, that help to raise their knowledge, skills and understanding.
63. The curriculum satisfies National Curriculum requirements but it could be modified to better suit the abilities and interests of pupils. Management of the department is too informal and consequently the differing views on curriculum development are not shared constructively by all art teachers. Although drawing from observation is a fundamental skill, too much classwork is based on already existing paintings and photographs, rather than first-hand experience. Abstract and non-representational art, at which more pupils can feel successful, is not fully developed. The timing of the portrait element of the curriculum, early in Key Stage 3, acts as an inhibiting and demotivating factor for the lower attainers as they do not have the necessary skills to draw portraits to their own satisfaction.

Design and technology

109. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is below national expectations. Pupils have satisfactory skills for cutting and joining materials, which they do with due regard to health and safety. However, they have little understanding of the materials and processes required for product design and their graphic skills are undeveloped. In textiles, pupils' attainment is well below the expected level as they are not taught to develop skills beyond a very basic level.
110. Overall standards of attainment in design and technology at Key Stage 4 are well below the national averages for all maintained schools and have not improved since the previous inspection. In the GCSE full course examinations the proportion of pupils obtaining A*-C grades in 1998 was slightly higher than in previous years, but was well below the national average. Over recent years, the percentages of pupils entered that have gained A*-G grades have remained constant and below national averages. Results in 1999 show decreases in the percentages of pupils gaining A*-C and A*-G grades, with results for both resistant materials and for food technology being very low. Results for graphic products in 1999 were substantially higher than for other areas of design and technology. In graphic products there has been a steady rise in attainment over time, with recent course work including a good range of well made models and associated products. For pupils taking short courses in resistant materials or graphic products, results in 1999 were very low. In resistant materials no pupils attained A*-C grades and two-thirds of those entered failed to obtain an A*-G grade. In both short courses, pupils' results were generally below the grades they gained for their other subjects. In resistant materials and food technology pupils have a poor grasp of associated knowledge, for example they are unable to name the major nutrient groups, and their design folder work is undeveloped. In A-level graphic communication, half of the students entered in 1998 obtained an A-E grade. Results improved in 1999 when all five students entered gained A-E grades in line with national expectations.
111. The overall progress made by pupils at Key Stage 3 is just satisfactory. At Key Stage 4, their progress is satisfactory in the long course for graphics, but unsatisfactory in all short courses and in long courses for resistant materials and food technology. Progress in designing skills and in the acquisition of specialist vocabulary is slow at both key stages, although it is slightly better in Year 7 where it is aided by vocabulary lists in their planners. Pupils make satisfactory progress in their practical skills, for example in Year 8 electronics when learning how to solder. Pupils following a food technology course at Key Stage 4 make unsatisfactory progress in testing and modification of food products and in the study of industrial methods. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to other pupils. Students following the A-level graphic communication course make satisfactory progress, for example in their understanding of the principles of different methods of projection.

112. Pupils respond well when given opportunities to take part in discussions and when working to deadlines, as in Year 9 food technology. Pupils usually behave well, but when they do not, ineffective behaviour management inhibits their learning. At both key stages there is inadequate provision of resources to allow pupils to carry out research independently, leading to an over-reliance on the class teacher as a source of further information.
113. The quality of teaching varies from very good to unsatisfactory, but it is predominantly satisfactory. Successful elements of lessons include: teachers' good knowledge of the subject requirements and course content, for example in an A-level graphics class when studying complex projections; good relationships between pupils and teacher which enable consolidation of knowledge; marking which encourages pupils and indicates how they can improve; satisfactory provision of resources. Teaching is unsatisfactory when teachers have low expectations and when they spend too long on introductions or demonstrations, and consequently limit pupils' opportunities for practical experience as in Year 10 food technology. Overemphasis on applied decoration at the expense of teaching the principles of product design, as for example when making a storage rack, and inaccurate marking of pupils' work that gives insufficient guidance for the improvement of techniques such as colour rendering, are other characteristics of unsatisfactory teaching.
114. In several respects departmental management and development planning to raise the attainment of pupils is unsatisfactory. The department lacks clear educational direction. As identified in the previous inspection report, there are few textbooks to support courses in Key Stages 3 and 4. The curriculum meets statutory requirements, but course planning puts too little emphasis on product design and is not successful in raising pupils' levels of subject knowledge as it takes insufficient account of pupils' prior attainment. Teachers do not make sufficient use of assessment information to take account of pupils' different levels of attainment when planning and there is no rigorous method of ensuring that all teachers' interpretations of assessment criteria are similar. Courses in food technology lack appropriate content. Although there has been a small amount of training to enable existing staff to continue with food technology the level of expertise in the department is inadequate. There has also been insufficient training, for example in textiles, to enable teachers to develop their own expertise. There is insufficient provision or planning for information and communication technology to support courses at all levels.

114. **Geography**

115. At the end of Key Stage 3, the attainment of most pupils is below the national expectation. As at the time of the previous inspection, their deficiency in basic skills continues to be a major contributory factor. Pupils have difficulty recalling and using geographical terminology. In map work, most Year 7 pupils recognise selected symbols but only about a third of them are able to use six-figure grid references. In Year 9, they have a clear understanding of the migration factors affecting developing and developed countries. By the end of Key Stage 4, attainment is close to the national average. Pupils are able to extract evidence from a range of sources, as shown in their work on the quality of life in urban areas, and most use geographical language appropriately. Overall their oral and graphic skills are better than their written responses. GCSE results have gradually improved since the previous inspection. In 1998, 53 per cent of pupils entered for GCSE achieved A*-C grades, which was just above the national average of 52 per cent for pupils in all maintained schools. In 1999, 46 per cent of those entered achieved A*-C grades. Standards of students on A-level courses, as confirmed by recent module results for Year 13 students, are above the national average. Students are able to make good connections between physical, human and environmental geography, for example, in their study of rain forests. In 1998, as in previous years, all A-level candidates gained A-E grades but the percentage attaining the highest grades was below the national average. The 1999 results showed a similar trend with two students gaining higher grades than predicted.
116. Most pupils enter the school with skills in using maps which are lower than expected. For example, some are unable to use four-figure grid references. Pupils begin geography with below average attainment and make good progress throughout the school. Broad setting in Year 9, where pupils work in two ability bands, supports the good progress of all. At Key Stage 4, where pupils are taught in ability groups, pupils build effectively on their Key Stage 3 work. Most become competent in map work and confident when using atlases. They also make good progress in writing independently from a variety of source material. Average and low attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress. Learning support assistants provide useful support to pupils with special needs, for example in helping Year 7 pupils to succeed in understanding four-figure grid references. However, many pupils have poor memories of the location of places, of the identity of capital cities and of geographical terminology. Students in the sixth form continue to develop their expertise in analysing data. They understand the necessity for well informed strategies in the management of rain forests.

117. The large proportion of pupils that opt to study geography at GCSE level shows the high level of enthusiasm that pupils have for the subject. Most pupils listen carefully and concentrate well on their work. They enjoy discussions and readily question their teachers for clarification. They take care with their written work and their standards of presentation, particularly the quality of their graphs and diagrams, are good. Several pupils access the Internet for information which they use well to improve their display and extend their written work.
118. The quality of teaching is always at least satisfactory. Most teaching is good and one third is very good. This consistency is a strength of the provision in the subject and the three specialist teachers work well together. Strong, firm pupil management and good classroom strategies are positive features of the department. All teachers have a secure knowledge of the subject and use a range of materials and resources to support their teaching. Sometimes the relevance of lesson content to pupils could be improved by more regular use of primary sources of information and more up-to-date materials. Teachers set homework that is appropriate to support pupils' learning. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and give pupils guidance to help them improve their work. The display of examples of pupils' work on which the levels attained are clearly described, illustrates the standards expected and encourages pupils to raise their own expectations.
119. The time allocation for geography at Key Stage 3 is low. Although visits are organised in Year 8, Year 10 and the sixth form, pupils have relatively little time for field work. Most teaching takes place in the designated rooms which provide stimulating learning environments. The subject makes a good contribution to the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy. The use of information technology is planned and the department has a considerable amount of software. However lack of access to a reliable system prevents this aspect of the curriculum being developed. Positive leadership of the department has met many of the action points of the last inspection. Overall standards have been maintained, pupils make good progress and assessment procedures are well established. Extending the use of information and communication technology remains as a major priority for future development.

119. **History**

120. Although there has been a steady improvement in standards at GCSE since the last inspection, attainment at all levels is well below the national average. By the end of Year 9 many pupils still have severe deficiencies in basic skills particularly in reading and comprehension and the proportion of pupils reaching the national expectation is well below average. Most pupils are weak on identifying different types of causation, for example on the First World War, and only a minority of higher attaining pupils can evaluate the reliability of evidence. At GCSE in 1998, 40 per cent of pupils achieved A*-C grades compared with the national average for all maintained secondary schools of 54 per cent. Results improved marginally in 1999, when 42 per cent of pupils entered achieved A*-C grades. There are no clear trends in the relative performances of boys and girls. Whereas in 1998 boys performed better than girls, this was reversed in 1999 when girls outperformed boys by a wide margin. At the end of Year 11 attainment remains well below national standards. Most pupils have limited writing skills and weak factual recall. Most find it difficult to develop balanced explanations, such as for Germany's resentment of the terms of the Versailles Treaty. At the end of their A-level courses, students can analyse factors, for example the differences between communism and capitalism, but their limited literacy handicaps both their reading and extended written arguments. At A-level in recent years, from relatively small numbers of students entered, all candidates have successfully gained A-E grades but none have achieved the highest grades.
121. Pupils make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 3 as a result of imaginative teaching strategies and firm classroom control. They sustain satisfactory progress in Years 10 and 11, and make good progress in the sixth form based on teachers' sound academic knowledge. Year 7 pupils can devise simple time-lines as on the life of Muhammad and can extract information from sources on medieval life. Their understanding of chronology extends only slowly during the succeeding two years, but a few begin to compare sources and become more skilled in problem solving. Most pupils understand key historical terms and are writing at greater length. Pupils with special educational needs make comparable progress. At Key Stage 4 pupils use structured notes and extend their written explanations, such as on the rise of Nazism, but only a small number offer more developed conclusions with evaluative comment. Progress is variable on examining sources critically. Pupils develop skills in handling statistical evidence through their local study on Hounslow. Sixth-form students improve their understanding by participating in informed class discussion and by reading more sophisticated material but most are too reliant on their teachers and have yet to develop the skills of independent research.
122. Most pupils are attentive in class and are eager to answer questions and offer ideas. They work well either individually or in groups, for example when collaborating on drawing conclusions from anonymous collections of evidence. History is a popular subject and the numbers opting to study GCSE are relatively high. External visits such as that of Year 9 to the Imperial War Museum are valuable supplements to the curriculum and increase pupils' interest and knowledge.

123. All teaching is at least satisfactory and in over two-thirds of lessons it is good or very good. Teachers are secure in their knowledge which is especially wide-ranging in the sixth form. Teachers challenge pupils of all ages and abilities with a brisk pace, sophisticated language and stimulating tasks. They elicit answers from their classes by skilful questioning and diplomatic prompting which increases pupils' confidence. They plan their lessons thoroughly according to clear schemes of work and they match work well to the abilities of pupils, for example by giving higher attainers extension exercises which often demand a more reasoning approach. They make effective use of resources, such as integrating observation of a video programme into a Year 10 lesson on Black Civil Rights in the USA. Teachers mark pupils' work thoroughly with valuable constructive comments, though much of this is directed to literacy problems rather than to factual omissions or faulty lines of argument.
124. History retains its clear identity and provides a positive learning environment within the humanities curriculum area. The curriculum meets statutory requirements, but at Key Stage 3 assessment tasks do not adhere to the National Curriculum criteria, nor are pupils aware of the correct levels and this hinders their progress. The need for pupils to have more opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning, that was identified in the previous report, has not been addressed. The shortage of sufficient textbooks for pupils to use for homework and the limited number and range of appropriate books in the school library discourage both class teaching in the library and sixth-form research. Since the last inspection information technology has been made more accessible but the department has as yet too few relevant CD-ROMs for the development of information technology in the history curriculum.

Information and communication technology (ICT)

64. Attainment of the majority of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 is below national expectations. Pupils are able to word process text and can use a spreadsheet to enter data and make calculations, for example of the cost of items bought from a tuck shop. They can produce graphs from the data and make posters in which they combine text and clip art graphics. Pupils in Year 9 have used sensors in science to produce data, for example on cooling curves, and have used a data-logging program to display this information graphically. They have experienced some control technology when they wrote a sequence to control a machine making a small artefact. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is also below average. The school continues to be in breach of the statutory requirement in respect of ICT at Key Stage 4. There is no ICT other than that which is taught as part of business studies courses. In Years 12 and 13, those pupils who follow GNVQ courses are taught ICT as a core skill. Most students in these courses attain levels in line with the course requirements.
65. Pupils come into Year 7 with varying ICT skills and knowledge. Some have used a computer frequently in the primary school and a few have access to one at home. Some pupils have very little experience with ICT and do not know how to use the mouse. Many pupils are unfamiliar with the layout of a keyboard. Overall progress in ICT is unsatisfactory at Key Stage 3. Most

pupils make satisfactory progress in lessons but over time their progress is too slow because of the limited time available for them to learn new skills and practise those they already know. Lower attaining pupils are given extra support by teachers and often helped by the pupil with whom they share a machine. Higher attainers do not make satisfactory progress because they often repeat what they already know. Every pupil completes the same exercise in ICT lessons. Progress through Year 8 is satisfactory and pupils consolidate their skills to become familiar with the common applications.

66. The attitudes of pupils to ICT are generally good. Pupils enjoy using the computers and they share them patiently and fairly. They help each other well and share their knowledge. They have too few opportunities to use their own ideas as their work is rigidly defined by teachers. Pupils make little autonomous use of ICT mainly as there is a lack of cross-curricular use of computers. Their behaviour in lessons is nearly always good. Despite some frustration at the waste of time caused by network faults, pupils show a degree of tolerance and they generally co-operate well with teachers when lesson plans have to be changed. Behaviour is unsatisfactory in a small minority of lessons.
67. The majority of teaching is at least satisfactory and it is good or very good in about a third of lessons. In the best lessons, learning objectives are shared with pupils and teachers use good questioning techniques, for example about the ways in which some of the applications are used in a commercial context. Teachers plan their lessons in detail and their relationships with pupils are nearly always good. In general teachers do not match work sufficiently to address pupils' different skills and knowledge and the teaching material used has too little relevance to their interests. In particular, their expectations of higher attainers are too low. Assessment is unsatisfactory. Tick sheets are used too extensively and there is an acceptance that completing an operation once amounts to capability even when the pupil has been given support. Teachers do not give pupils' sufficient advice on improving their work as they do not give guidance about their current levels of attainment in their marking.
68. The school has made a significant investment in computers and the pupil to computer ratio of 8:1 is satisfactory. The new network is not yet running to capacity due to a number of problems both with the hardware and the software. The fact that the school cannot provide sufficient technical expertise leads to additional cost and delay in making efficient and effective use of this investment. The weakness of technical support was highlighted in the last inspection report. Management of ICT continues to be weak in terms of the integration of technical and curriculum matters and the lack of co-ordination of ICT across the school. Current Year 9 pupils have the advantage over previous years in that they are taught ICT for one lesson each week but some other arrangements of time and resources inhibit good progress. For example, sharing of computers reduces the time that pupils spend in learning practical skills. The arrangement in Year 7 so that all their ICT lessons for a term are condensed into three consecutive weeks with longer periods without

lessons is disruptive to pupils' progress.

Modern foreign languages

69. Since the previous inspection, the range of languages has been rationalised to French and Spanish, with the phasing out of German. By the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is average for all maintained schools with many pupils achieving above the national expectation. The attainment of pupils in speaking and listening is at a higher level than their reading and writing. Most pupils can understand and respond to normal greetings and classroom instructions in the relevant foreign languages. When responding, their pronunciation and intonation is generally satisfactory. Most pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 can extract information from short, written passages, often with the help of a dictionary. The attainment of girls is generally greater than that of boys.
70. GCSE results indicate a steady improvement in the attainment of Key Stage 4 pupils since the last inspection in 1996 until 1998. For those pupils entered in 1998, results compared favourably with those pupils' results in other subjects and were close to modern languages results nationally. In 1998, almost all pupils entered gained A*-G grades, with 47 per cent gaining the higher A*-C grades compared with national averages of 43 per cent, 44 per cent and 51 per cent in French, Spanish and German respectively. Girls achieved much better results than boys. In 1998, approximately half the year group took the Certificate of Achievement rather than the GCSE. These pupils achieved good results with 80 per cent gaining distinctions in either French, German or Spanish. GCSE results declined in 1999. Again almost all the pupils entered, 82 out of a year group of 164 pupils, gained A*-G grades but the percentages gaining A*-C grades fell to 40 per cent in French and Spanish and to 30 per cent in German. As at Key Stage 3, pupils' speaking and listening skills are better than their reading and writing. Many pupils preparing for GCSE examinations can sustain dialogue in the relevant language at normal speed and in a variety of contexts and respond easily to the substantial amounts of the target language used by their teachers. Significant numbers of Year 10 pupils lack confidence and accuracy in reading short texts and in their writing have not progressed beyond copying short phrases.
71. Progress for most pupils in modern languages is at least satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress at both key stages. At Key Stage 3, progress in French and Spanish is generally good and occasionally very good. Year 7 pupils quickly acquire familiarity with social greetings and the necessary vocabulary for everyday activities. In the written aspects of their work, most pupils make sustained progress during their lessons and have also made creditable progress over time. As a result of the recent introduction of GCSE short courses and setting by ability which have helped teachers to match activities more closely to the needs and interests of pupils, most pupils sustain progress at Key Stage 4, especially during lessons. Nevertheless, there are significant numbers of pupils at Key Stage 4 who have not made adequate progress, even in pronunciation of simple French vocabulary. At both key stages pupils make good use of dictionaries and textbooks to support their progress.

72. Pupils generally behave well. They respond eagerly to teachers and participate effectively in whole class and individual activities as well as in collaborative work. The attitudes of pupils to foreign languages are generally mature and they are developing a sound appreciation of the associated French and Spanish cultures and institutions. Most pupils show a sense of pride in their work. In some lower attaining groups, most frequently at Key Stage 4, pupils' concentration is often short lived. Sometimes this leads to mild disruption which slows down the progress of pupils in the class.
73. In almost all lessons the quality of teaching is at least satisfactory, while nearly a third of teaching is very good, particularly in French at Key Stage 4. Teachers generally have high expectations and they establish good relationships with pupils which facilitate good progress and achievement. Teachers mark homework regularly and provide appropriate feedback and encouragement to all pupils. Their planning is consistent and they employ a variety of strategies to involve and encourage pupils of all abilities. Since the previous inspection teachers have improved the balance of the four language skills in their lesson planning. In a very few cases, such as in a Year 10 short course Spanish lesson, the content of the lesson is not sufficiently varied or stimulating and causes undue anxiety among lower attainers. Teachers use assessment information effectively, especially with pupils with special educational needs. Pupils

for whom English is an additional language and pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated into the modern languages curriculum.

74. Leadership and management of the modern languages department is good. All language teachers are appropriately qualified and they collaborate willingly. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and all planning is co-ordinated across the two languages, French and Spanish. Development of language-related information and communication technology is at initial stages. Resources and accommodation are both adequate and suitable. Almost all language lessons are taught in specialist rooms, which provide a congenial atmosphere. Displays in classrooms and in the school offer a linguistically stimulating backdrop to pupils' modern language work.

Music

75. Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is broadly in line with what is expected nationally, maintaining the standard at the time of the previous inspection. By Year 9 pupils can read music and perform well together as a class. The playing of all pupils is marked by a strong sense of rhythm, borne out of the teachers' insistence on listening carefully to one another. In recorded music they can describe what they hear using appropriate technical terms and can distinguish between the roles of different orchestral instruments. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is not their first language enjoy the practical nature of the work and make a valued contribution to class and group performances.
76. Very few pupils study music at Key Stage 4 as GCSE courses do not recruit sufficient candidates each year to make viable teaching groups. The current Year 11

GCSE group is small for the size of the school and no GCSE music group in Year 10. No pupils were entered for GCSE in 1998. In 1999 all of those entered gained A*-G grades but the proportion gaining A*-C grades was well below the provisional national average. The performance of current Year 11 pupils is above expectations with most pupils playing or singing sensitively and with technical command. As a result their composition, usually for their own instrument, demonstrates melodic development and a sense of form. Although most have a good hand-written style and produce accurate scores, all pupils, but particularly lower attainers, would benefit from the opportunity to use a sequencer to produce their scores. Of the three components of the course, listening is the weakest. Their written notes are extensive but not supported by regularly listening to a range of music which develops understanding. There were no A-level candidates in 1999 but the two entrants in 1998 both achieved high grades. The present students are in the second year of their course. Many are accomplished performers playing in school and in the local area wherever opportunities arise. They use computers and recording equipment confidently for their composition but still have a lot of work to do on composition, particularly on form and instrumentation to reach the standard expected. Their knowledge of historical periods and styles is governed by personal interest and, for instance, they can discuss the development of jazz better than they can identify the main features of Romantic piano music.

77. Pupils make good progress through Key Stage 3 because they follow a well-structured course which enables them to build skills and knowledge progressively. They are introduced to music reading initially through graphic scores and Year 7 pupils, many with little experience of work of this type, readily associate sounds and symbols both by listening to recorded extracts and also making music themselves. Year 8 pupils apply their knowledge of scales by moving from pentatonic and diatonic to creating their own Raga before going on to compose a complete piece. They can explain and use terms such as 'ostinato' and 'drone' and understand the textural significance of these techniques. Where support is given to pupils with special educational needs increased self-confidence enables them to make good progress. The present Year 11 pupils and students in the sixth form continue this good rate of progress which is under-pinned by their progress in instrumental playing. This would be of even greater benefit if they made more connection between performance and the study of style and period in music.
78. Pupils enjoy music and behave well in lessons. Most have developed the capacity for working on their own or in groups to practise and refine their ideas. They take good care of instruments and contribute to the teachers' high standard of orderliness in the music area. The showband and upper and lower school choirs are popular with instrumentalists and singers who work together to give performances in school and in the local community.
79. All teaching is at least satisfactory with half being good. Teachers foster good relationships with their pupils. Teachers plan their lessons well and achieve a suitable balance between the teaching of skills and their application. By using their skill in music to accompany, they inspire pupils to greater effort and success. They check pupils' progress regularly in lessons so that they can adjust the pace of

learning where necessary; and give suitable help to individuals and to groups working on composition. However, a less rigid approach to composition would allow pupils to be more creative, allowing higher attainers greater freedom to explore imaginatively. The good teaching by peripatetic instrumentalists makes a beneficial contribution to pupils' attainment, especially at Key Stage 4.

80. The Key Stage 3 curriculum meets statutory requirements. Adequate time is allocated at Key Stage 3, but the allocation of just two hours per week is low in comparison with other schools. Occasionally time is lost during lessons in setting up keyboards with power packs. Music is housed in the performing arts building where the facilities are adequate for full classes and for individual tuition. The studio at present is only for the use of A-level students. There is a need to expand this facility for the benefit of all pupils. The health and safety issue of trailing wires to keyboards has been addressed but in turn created a further problem of crowding the keyboards together in one part of the room making it difficult for pupils to hear themselves playing.

Physical education and dance

81. At the end of each key stage, attainment meets national expectations. Some individual pupils reach very high standards in particular sports. At Key Stage 3 girls are developing good passing skills in basketball and netball and many boys play football with well developed dribbling and heading skills. In 1998 GCSE physical education examinations the percentage of pupils gaining A*-C grades, at 64 per cent, was well above the national average of 49 per cent. For many pupils their result in this GCSE was better than they achieved in any other subject. In 1999, 39 per cent of pupils entered gained A*-C grades. Pupils in Year 11 are maintaining, and some are exceeding, these standards. Their attainment in GCSE basketball is above national expectations. Students in Years 12 and 13 show a wide range of ability. Many are confident in their presentation skills and most have a good knowledge of fitness, including the dietary requirements for athletes. In A-level examinations, from a small cohort each year, most students pass but few gain the higher grades. In 1998, one student gained an A grade. All pupils understand the principles of health and fitness and many are able to warm up and stretch independently. The attainment of some individual pupils and teams is very good. They achieve good results and win representative honours in national and county competitions in many sports, for example in gymnastics, volleyball, basketball, girls' hockey and boys' football. Attainment levels at all key stages have been maintained at a similar level to those reported at the last inspection.
82. In dance, most pupils at Key Stage 3 are creative and understand some components of composition, but some pupils, particularly boys, are limited in the quality of their movement and lack confidence. At Key Stage 4, 57 per cent of pupils entered for dance GCSE in 1998 gained A*-C grades compared to the national average of 47 per cent. In 1999, 47 per cent of pupils entered gained A*-C grades which compared very favourably with their results in other subjects. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are

working to average standards. They use imagination in composition but need to improve their quality of movement. A/S-level examinations will be taken for the first time in 2000. In Year 12, the majority of students are attaining standards which match national expectations for this course.

83. Progress in most Key Stage 3 lessons is satisfactory. Pupils develop a good knowledge of fitness and, in dance, begin to compose well together. Pupils' progress at Key Stage 4 is good. They develop their performance skills well in dance, volleyball and basketball. In Junior Sports Leaders Award (JSLA), trampolining and dance, pupils learn to work more independently and take on more responsibility. In Years 12 and 13 progress in physical education and dance is good. Students clearly build on prior learning and those taking part in the Community Sports Leaders Award (CSLA) develop good leadership skills. Even further progress at all key stages would be promoted if the tasks set by teachers were more varied and ensured that all ability levels within each group were fully challenged. Boys and girls make progress at the same rate. This is particularly noticeable in dance where ability levels are very different. Very occasionally, the poor behaviour of a few boys limits their progress.
84. Pupils at all key stages have an interested approach to their lessons. They look smart and are well equipped for the various activities. The introduction of a school physical education uniform this year has been a successful initiative. Most pupils are confident, help willingly and safely with equipment and volunteer readily to answer questions. Pupils participate regularly in their lessons and they have very good relationships with their teachers. Their keen interest in the subject is demonstrated by the high proportion of pupils, almost a third of the school roll, who regularly participate in extra-curricular physical education activities. In addition many girls and a few boys enjoy and benefit from the extra dance activities. The large number of pupils opting to study dance and physical education at GCSE level shows the enthusiasm which pupils have for these subjects.
85. The overall good teaching standards reported in the last inspection have been maintained. All teaching is at least satisfactory. It is good in half and very good in one eighth of all lessons. All teachers have good subject expertise as evidenced by their high standard of demonstration in dance and their theoretical knowledge of sports physiology. In the very good lessons, the teachers address all strands of the National Curriculum, use questions and answers effectively and give pupils opportunities to take responsibility and make decisions for themselves. The management of pupils, through use of established routines and the high expectations of teachers is a strength of the department. Teachers make appropriate use of varied equipment and intervene effectively during activities to help pupils of all abilities to progress at their own pace and level. Teachers use National Curriculum assessment criteria accurately to assess pupils' performance skills. They raise pupils' motivation by teaching them to recognise and understand the levels. A further development to assess pupils' planning and evaluative skills would allow teachers to assess all strands of the National Curriculum.
86. The leadership of the physical education department is strong and forward thinking. New schemes of work, which are comprehensive and provide good support for

teaching, are in place. Appropriate initiatives to improve all aspects of teaching and learning and, for example, to increase the participation of girls in extra-curricular sport, have been introduced but there has not yet been time for these actions to have a significant impact on pupils' attainment. The curriculum is broad and balanced, meets statutory requirements and is organised in a manner to benefit all pupils in compliance with the school's equal opportunities policy. Dance is a discrete part of the curriculum at both key stages and is taught in mixed gender groups. Older pupils, both boys and girls, provide excellent role models for younger pupils through performance of classical dance in assemblies. A large contribution to pupils' awareness of social, moral and cultural issues is made through African dance themes, pair and group work, leadership activities and the many extra-curricular fixtures.

Religious education

87. At the end of Key Stage 3, overall standards of attainment are below the standards outlined in the Locally Agreed Syllabus. In 10 per cent of lessons attainment is above expectation, but it is unsatisfactory in a majority of lessons. Where attainment is above average, pupils have good knowledge and understanding of religious practices and beliefs and can relate what they are studying to their own personal lives. Where attainment is unsatisfactory, pupils have some knowledge and insight into various activities and practices of world religions but it is of a very limited nature. Often attainment is limited to the knowledge aspect of the Agreed Syllabus at the expense of evaluation and reflection and learning from religions.
88. By the end of Key Stage 4 attainment is very much restricted to knowledge about various aspects of religion and aspects of several ethical issues and is below expectation. No pupils were entered for the GCSE examination in 1998. Results in 1999 were very low. Of the 17 pupils entered for GCSE one gained grade C, five gained F-G grades and the remainder were unclassified. Attainment in the lessons is below the standards outlined in the Locally Agreed Syllabus. Pupils have some knowledge of world religions represented in Great Britain but it is fragmented and they often have no overall understanding of these religions, particularly of their belief structures. Pupils can understand and use some religious language but their learning from religions as opposed to learning about them is weak.
89. Overall progress at both key stages is unsatisfactory. Progress at Key Stage 4 is unsatisfactory in about 70 per cent of the lessons and satisfactory in the rest. In the majority of lessons there are some general gains in knowledge and understanding of religions and beliefs but these are of a limited nature. Progress in Year 10 is more positive as all aspects of the Agreed Syllabus are being implemented. Progress in Year 11 is more restricted to an examination of various ethical issues. Across both years pupils make more progress in knowledge and understanding than in reflection and evaluation. Progress at Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory in about 60 per cent of the lessons, satisfactory in about 30 per cent and very good in the rest. In the very good lessons, progress is clear and purposeful both in knowledge and understanding of the two main aims of the syllabus, namely learning about and learning from religions.

Pupils are also making good progress in developing their spiritual responsiveness. At both key stages, the progress of pupils identified as needing support because of special educational needs is satisfactory as class work is adapted to meet their needs. Higher attainers are not always given the additional work they require in order to fulfil their potential.

90. At Key Stage 4, the response of pupils is satisfactory in a majority of the lessons and unsatisfactory in the rest. Where their response is satisfactory, pupils are pleasant, polite and well behaved. Relationships between teacher and pupils are positive and constructive. Pupils arrive promptly and quickly settle down to their work. Pupils show an interest in their work, participate willingly in question and answer sessions and are able to sustain their concentration. Where the response is less than satisfactory, pupils lose concentration, their productivity drops and their behaviour deteriorates. At Key Stage 3, the response of the pupils is satisfactory in the majority of lessons and good in the rest. Pupils are well behaved, they participate willingly in the lessons and are keen to please. They are usually able to sustain their concentration though at times their attention may waver. In lessons where the response is good, pupils are more energetically involved, their motivation is high and consequently they complete more work in the time available.
91. The quality of teaching is unsatisfactory in about 60 per cent of the lessons, satisfactory in about 20 per cent and good, or occasionally excellent, in the rest. In the lessons that are good, teachers are confident in the subject, use a variety of teaching strategies, and plan their lessons well to include a distinctive religious and spiritual dimension. These good lessons are also characterised by a broad range of teaching objectives including knowledge, understanding, evaluation, spiritual reflection and learning from religions and well as learning about them. Teachers encourage pupils to give personal responses to the specifically religious issues raised and there is a significant amount of reflection. Relationships are very positive and the pupils feel secure enough to discuss issues that are relevant to their own personal lives. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, the religious and spiritual content of the lessons is not very marked. Teachers are insecure in the subject matter and they focus on teaching factual knowledge and restrict lesson activities to information gathering and processing. Their expectations in terms of pace and depth are limited and the quality of relationships is less positive. Consequently pupils lose interest and concentration and their progress is unsatisfactory.
92. Although there has been some progress since the last inspection in that the Agreed Syllabus has been implemented at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form, it has not been implemented fully at Key Stage 4 so statutory requirements are still not being met. Year 10 pupils have started a new course which is in line with the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus but the course covered by Year 11 pupils includes too little reference to the spiritual dimension or learning from religions. The scheme of work at Key Stage 3 does not give sufficient emphasis to learning from religions, the spiritual dimension, beliefs about Christianity and skills and attitudes, particularly reflection and personal response. The staffing situation is unsatisfactory and is detrimental to the attainment and progress of the pupils. Between them, ten non-specialist teachers cover more than 70 per cent of the teaching of religious education. The department

contributes to the cultural aspect of the school in its study of world religions.

Business studies

93. The school offers GNVQ courses in business at Advanced and Intermediate level to the sixth form and has just introduced Part 1 GNVQ in Year 10. Year 11 pupils are following a GCSE course in business studies. Pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 has fluctuated considerably. In 1998, GCSE results exceeded the national average. Almost all pupils entered gained A*-G grades and the percentage gaining the higher A*-C grades, at 54 per cent, was just above the national figure of 50 per cent for pupils in all maintained schools. In 1999, although again most pupils entered gained A*-G grades, the proportion gaining A*-C grades, at 32 per cent, was much lower. Year 11 pupils understand the terminology associated with salaries and are able to complete calculations of net and gross pay. Year 10 pupils are more dependent on teacher support but they are able to carry out graphical analysis of employment statistics. Students' performance at A-level business studies has been consistently well below national averages and the grades achieved have been below expectations. In 1998 only one of the three students entered gained a pass grade. Results improved in 1999 when three out of seven gained A-E grades. Students taking the GNVQ course at Intermediate level have achieved satisfactory results with most gaining the full award and others gaining unit passes.
94. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, in general the progress made by higher attainers is good and the progress of lower attainers is satisfactory. Year 10 pupils make satisfactory progress but lower attainers would benefit from tasks that are matched more closely to their needs and abilities so that they can engage with their work for a sustained period before having to ask for help. Year 11 pupils are developing good understanding of the organisational structure of an educational establishment through study of the roles and responsibilities of all staff in the school. Sixth-form students on the intermediate level GNVQ course are making satisfactory progress in developing communication and analytical skills such as making oral presentations to small groups and then evaluating each other's performance against set criteria. Advanced level students are making good progress at improving their data-handling skills. All pupils are increasing their confidence at working independently.
95. At Key Stage 4 most pupils have positive attitudes towards their work, they behave responsibly and show determination to do well. They listen attentively and raise their own relevant questions. They work cooperatively with each other and are patient when they have to wait for their teacher's help. A small minority of Year 10 pupils do not concentrate well enough on their work and lack perseverance. Most show initiative, for example in compiling information from national and local sources on employment statistics to produce graphs and commentary to complete their assignments. Sixth-form students have a mature approach to their work and respond well to challenge. They work well together to share ideas and to make constructive evaluations of each other's presentations.

96. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is consistently good. At Key Stage 4 teaching is always at least satisfactory and is occasionally good. Teachers are appropriately qualified and they motivate and encourage students through their high expectations and careful planning of properly structured assignments. They set challenging tasks which match the abilities of most students but they do not always cater for the lower attainers at Key Stage 4. Teachers make special provision for pupils with special educational needs, for example by providing a visually impaired student with a specially equipped computer to help his written communication. Teachers also work closely with EAL teachers to provide support for bilingual students having language difficulties. Teachers mark work thoroughly giving a clear indication what the student needs to do to improve their grade and performance. Through consultation with students and parents they raise students' self-expectation when setting and monitoring performance targets.
97. The management and co-ordination of vocational business education is good. The school has developed effective links with local businesses and industries whose support has led to an improved standard of teaching and delivery of GNVQ provision. Through these links all students on GNVQ courses gain valuable work experience during two-week work placements relevant to their interests and studies. The new GNVQ suite has good computer facilities and provides very good accommodation which is conducive to high attainment.

Other sixth form courses

Sociology (A-level)

98. Attainment in sociology is satisfactory. In each of the last two years, although the numbers entered have been fairly small, all students have gained A-E grades, and most have exceeded expectations based on their prior attainment at GCSE. Attainment in the present A-level groups is also satisfactory. The numbers taking the subject are increasing, with seven in Year 13 and ten in Year 12. They are taught a modular course as a single group, but the Year 12 students benefit from a separate half-term foundation course. The quality of teaching is very good. The teacher has a secure knowledge of the subject, which is rendered stimulating by the use of relevant analogies and anecdotes. Students are encouraged to read widely and quickly expand their use of specialist terminology. They are making very good progress.

Leisure and tourism (GNVQ Foundation level)

99. Leisure and tourism at foundation level is a popular sixth-form option with 18 students following the course. They are developing good independent learning and enquiry skills and they show a willingness to support one another's learning by sharing knowledge and ideas. Students are well motivated through links with the community, for example a local restaurant, which add relevance to their studies. The work they have produced is of a high standard. Pupils have already made very good progress this term towards covering their first two units of the course. Teachers help students to understand how they can improve both through individual discussion and by regular constructive marking of their work. All students are enthused by the very good teaching, clear organisation and the ethos of the course which encourages

them to take responsibility for their own learning and not rely on constant supervision.

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

100. The inspection was carried out by a team of fifteen inspectors. During the inspection period this team spent a total of 58 inspector days in school and observed 213 lessons, 21 registration sessions and 9 assemblies. All full-time and part-time teachers of National Curriculum subjects, vocational courses and religious education present during the week were observed at least once, and many several times. The teaching of every A-level and GNVQ subject offered by the school was observed at least once. Planned discussions were held with more than 22 members of staff, including all senior teachers, heads of all departments, all heads of year groups, the coordinator for English as an additional language (EAL), the coordinator for special educational needs (SEN), the chair of governors and three other governors, the deputy headteacher and the headteacher. A variety of extra-curricular activities was observed.
101. Inspectors examined all the available work of a broad sample of pupils from each age group and inspected the written work of many pupils during lessons. Inspectors held discussions with pupils from Years 7-13. Informal discussions took place with other pupils and non-teaching staff. A large amount of relevant documentation provided by the school was analysed both before and during the inspection. The Registered Inspector held an evening meeting attended by 34 parents prior to the inspection. The team considered 351 responses from parents to a questionnaire about the school.

DATA AND INDICATORS

Pupil data

| | Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent) | Number of pupils with statements of SEN | Number of pupils on school's register of SEN | Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals |
|----------|---|---|--|---|
| Y7 - Y13 | 1181 | 41 | 268 | 289 |

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers (Y7 - Y13)

| | |
|---|----|
| Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent) | 65 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher | 17 |

Education support staff (YR - Y6)

| | |
|---|----|
| Total number of education support staff | 1 |
| Total aggregate hours worked each week | 50 |

PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:

Number of questionnaires returned:

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school | 32 | 61 | 5 | 2 | 0 |
| I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren) | 44 | 50 | 4 | 2 | 0 |
| The school handles complaints from parents well | 27 | 56 | 11 | 6 | 0 |
| The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught | 29 | 61 | 7 | 3 | 0 |
| The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress | 44 | 51 | 2 | 3 | 1 |
| The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work | 37 | 56 | 4 | 2 | 1 |
| The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons | 34 | 57 | 7 | 2 | 1 |
| I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home | 24 | 60 | 7 | 7 | 1 |
| The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren) | 29 | 58 | 10 | 2 | 1 |
| The school achieves high standards of good behaviour | 29 | 56 | 10 | 4 | 1 |
| My child(ren) like(s) school | 38 | 46 | 9 | 5 | 1 |