

INSPECTION REPORT

CENTRAL LANCASTER HIGH SCHOOL

Lancaster

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique reference number: 119770

Headteacher: Jon Wright

Reporting inspector: David Page
1028

Dates of inspection: 15th – 18th October 2001

Inspection number: 217339

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11-16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Crag Road
Lancaster

Postcode: LA1 3LS

Telephone number: 01524 32636

Fax number: 01524 849586

Appropriate authority: Lancashire Education Authority

Name of chair of governors: Mr W S Deller

Date of previous inspection: 18-21 October 1999

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
1028	David Page	Registered inspector		The sort of school it is Standards Curriculum Leadership & management
9446	Helen Griffiths	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values & personal relationships How well the school cares for its pupils How well the school works in partnership with parents
27050	Val Blackburn	Team inspector	Science	
23082	Graham Loach	Team inspector	Mathematics	
20368	Sue Macintosh	Team inspector	English	
13805	Lynn Lowery	Team inspector	Geography	
2495	Brian Munden	Team inspector	Information & communication technology Design and technology	
17556	Michael Miller	Team inspector	Art Religious education	Equal opportunities Key Stage 4 curriculum
31525	Sue O'Sullivan	Team inspector	History Modern foreign languages	English as an additional language
4967	Robert Black	Team inspector	Music	Teaching and learning
2866	Bob Battey	Team inspector	Physical education	Special educational needs SEN assessment

The inspection contractor was:

TWA Inspections Ltd
5 Lakeside
Werrington
Peterborough
PE4 6QZ

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Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	10
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?	13
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?	15
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	18
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS	20
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	20
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	24
KEY STAGE 4 CURRICULUM	24
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	28
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	33

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Central Lancaster High School is smaller than other secondary schools and the number on roll has remained relatively stable over the last five years. At the time of the inspection there were 588 boys and girls on roll. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs, including statements, matches the average. However, the percentage of pupils with statements of special educational needs is well above the average. In 2001, the standards of attainment for pupils entering Year 7 in English and mathematics were well below the average and for science were around the average. The percentage of pupils speaking English as an additional language is lower than in most schools.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school is very effective and provides good value for money. While standards across the school are generally below the national average, pupils achieve well compared to their prior attainment. The quality of teaching is good and there was no unsatisfactory teaching observed during the inspection. Leadership and management are both very good at all levels of the organisation.

What the school does well

- Leadership and management of the school are very good. The headteacher and senior management team give very clear leadership and direction for the school. Heads of department and those with pastoral responsibilities are very good managers. The governing body provides very effective strategic management.
- Teaching is good: much of it is very good and a significant proportion is excellent.
- Pupils' behaviour is generally very good and often excellent. The teachers' management of behaviour is very effective. Arrangements to counteract bullying are very good.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is a strength of the school. The management of the school's arrangements for these pupils is excellent and they make very good progress.
- The design of the school's aims is to ensure that both pupils and staff give their best. The school meets these aims very well. Consequently, this has established a very strong sense of community, which includes all members of the school. Relationships are excellent.
- The school provides pupils with a good range of opportunities to enrich their time at the school.

What could be improved

- The management of information and communication technology (ICT) across the school to ensure consistently good provision within other subjects.
- The consistency with which the school uses its analysis of performance data to set individual targets for pupils.
- The management team should develop strategies to evaluate the effectiveness of the arrangements used to allocate pupils to teaching groups.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made very good improvements since the last inspection, which was in October 1999. It has addressed fully the serious weaknesses identified in the last report. Procedures for child protection and arrangements for health and safety are now very good. Leadership and management are now very good. In addition, the school has made significant and effective progress in: the monitoring of teaching; the provision for pupils with special educational needs; the level of technical staffing; the annual reports to parents, and the provision of a daily act of collective worship. Whilst the school has made some progress in the provision for ICT within other subjects, it has made no progress in the management of this, which remains unsatisfactory.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
GCSE examinations	D	E	D	B	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E

By the end of Year 9 in 2000, when compared to all schools nationally, pupils' attainment in English and mathematics was well below the average. In science it was below. When compared to similar schools, on the basis of the number of pupils eligible for free school meals, pupils' attainment in English and mathematics was below average. It was broadly in line with the average in science. However, the similar school comparison for pupils reaching Level 5 and above in English and mathematics was above the average. It was very high in science. The school's average National Curriculum points for all core subjects has been increasing at the same rate as the national increase. In 2001, there was a significant improvement in pupils' performance at the end of Year 9.

By the end of Year 11 in 2000, when compared with all schools nationally, pupils' attainment at 5 or more grades A*-C; 5 or more grades A*-G, and 1 or more grades A*-G was well below the average. By the end of Year 11 in 2001, there was a significant improvement in pupils' performance between the percentage of pupils attaining 5 or more grades A*-C in 2000 and in 2001. More striking improvements have occurred with the percentage of pupils attaining 5 or more grades A*-G, and 1 or more grades A*-G which have both risen.

In English, at the time of the last inspection, girls were achieving better than boys. The department has worked hard on this issue and now there is no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls. In English and science throughout the school, pupils' achievement is satisfactory when compared to their prior attainment. In mathematics, pupils' achievement is good by the end of Year 9 and satisfactory by the end of Year 11. The school sets itself challenging targets for the performance of pupils. In 2001, it significantly exceeded its target for pupils expected to achieve 5 or more A*-C grades and 1 or more A*-G. It significantly exceeded the target for the average GCSE points score.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Throughout the school, pupils' attitudes to learning are always good and often very good. They are very committed to their work and show very good levels of interest. They are mature and responsible learners and enjoy challenge.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Behaviour is consistently very good. Pupils are friendly and courteous to visitors and to staff. They are open and confident. There is an impressive degree of racial harmony and boys and girls work very well together.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Personal development is very good and relationships are excellent. There is a very strong sense of community.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Despite the school's best efforts, attendance last year was below the national average, although it is improving and currently matches the average. The high level of authorised absence last year was due to a small number of pupils whose parents condone their absences. Unauthorised absence is in line with the average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The impact upon learning of the good quality teaching is a strength of the school. This accounts, in large measure, for the high quality of pupils' achievements. Approximately eight out of 10 lessons seen had teaching that was good or better and, in more than a third of the lessons, teaching was very good or excellent. There was some excellent teaching of the highest quality in English, religious education, art and music. In modern foreign languages, physical education and GNVQ, a great deal of very good teaching was also seen. Teaching in both mathematics and science was good. In no subject was teaching unsatisfactory. Because of this consistently good teaching, pupils' learning is also good. This means that both boys and girls make good progress throughout their time in the school and achieve well. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language learn particularly well. The school works hard and successfully to ensure all pupils are included in the success of the school. The provision for the teaching of literacy is very good. The literacy co-ordinator has worked with departments, looking at ways of supporting pupils' literacy in their subjects. The introduction of the numeracy policy is due to be extended in January 2002 beyond its current application in the mathematics department. Teaching of numeracy across the school is currently satisfactory.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The school has addressed all the weaknesses mentioned in the last inspection report, with the exception of the provision of ICT within other subjects. The quality and range of opportunities for learning provided by the school are now good. The appropriate statutory curriculum is now fully in place. Overall provision for vocational courses in Years 10 and 11 is very good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. This is a school that works hard and successfully to ensure all members of its pupil community are fully involved in the life of the school.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Consequently, the three pupils with English as an additional language make good progress. One of these pupils is at an early stage of learning English.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. The aims of the school contain strong references to spiritual; moral; social and cultural development. There is a very good opportunity for spiritual reflection during the two-minutes silence, which the staff and pupils alike take very seriously. The 'Thought for the Week' makes a significant contribution to this area of pupils' development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	There are now very good procedures for child protection and ensuring pupils' welfare, and health and safety practices. Arrangements for dealing with pupils' medical conditions are very good. The monitoring of pupils' personal development is very effective. The school has taken very effective action in response to the criticism of the last inspection.

The school works well in partnership with parents. At the meeting for parents before the inspection, and in response to the questionnaire, parents were very supportive of the school. They are particularly pleased with the teaching and the leadership of the school. They feel strongly that their children make good progress and that the school helps their children to become mature and responsible.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Leadership and management of the school are very good. The headteacher and senior management provide very clear leadership and direction for the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. The governing body provides very effective strategic management.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The new headteacher has carried out a far-reaching analysis of the school's present circumstances. The senior management team has a continuous programme of monitoring departments. It has prioritised these based on the findings of the previous inspection report.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Learning resources for the school's curriculum are satisfactory in most subjects and very good in information technology and music. The school has a large number of computers, but at present there is restricted access to these resources for some subjects.

There is a good match between the number, qualifications, and experience of teachers to meet the demands of the curriculum. The appointment of three assistant head teachers to support the head has proved to be a very effective senior management structure. All members of staff helping pupils with special educational needs are experienced, but whilst learning support assistants are well trained, there are insufficient numbers to help the relatively high proportion of pupils with these needs. The school makes good use of its available accommodation and this enables effective teaching of the curriculum. The school is beginning to adopt the approaches of best value and uses competitive tendering in line with the local education authority guidelines.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The high expectations that the school has for their children; • The ease with which parents feel they can approach the school; • The good teaching; • The good progress made by their children; • The good behaviour of children at school; • The fact that their children like the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No issue received the support of more than 20 per cent of parents who responded to the questionnaire. Of the questionnaires returned, 14 per cent expressed some concern about the range of activities outside lessons.

At a meeting held before the inspection, 19 parents attended and parents returned 396 questionnaires. The findings of the inspection support the parents' positive views. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

- 1 By the end of Year 9 in 2000, when compared with all schools nationally, pupils' attainment in English and mathematics was well below and in science it was below the national averages. In comparison with similar schools, on the basis of the number of pupils eligible for free school meals, pupils' attainment in English and mathematics was below the average. It was broadly in line in science.
- 2 When compared with all other secondary schools, the percentages of pupils reaching Level 5 and above in English, mathematics and science were well below the average. The percentage of pupils reaching Level 6 and above in English was broadly in line with the average. In science it was below and in mathematics it was well below the average.
- 3 When compared with similar schools, the percentages of pupils reaching Level 5 and above in English and science were below the averages, and in mathematics the percentage was broadly in line. The percentage of pupils reaching Level 6 and above in English was above and in mathematics it was below the average. In science, the percentage was broadly in line with the average.
- 4 The trend in the school's average National Curriculum points for all core subjects was below the national trend. However, it has been increasing at the same rate as the national increase due to the recent improvements in teaching. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls in the core subjects. However, in English, at the time of the last inspection, girls were achieving better than boys. The department has worked hard on this issue and now there is little difference between the achievement of boys and girls.
- 5 The higher quality teaching since the last inspection significantly improved pupils' performance at the end of Year 9 in 2001. In English the percentage of pupils reaching Level 5 and above in 2000 was 48 per cent and in 2001 this rose to 64 per cent. Similar significant rises occurred in mathematics and science. At Level 6 and above there was similar improvement with 22 per cent of pupils reaching this level in English in 2000 and 31 per cent in 2001.
- 6 At the end of Year 11 in 2000, when compared with all schools nationally, pupils' attainment at 5 or more grades A*-C in GCSE/GNVQ was well below the national average. At 5 or more grades A*-G, and 1 or more grades A*-G, pupils' attainment was well below the national average. When compared to similar schools on the basis of the pupils' prior attainment at the end of Year 9, the performance at 5 or more grades A*-C was well below the average. At 5 or more grades A*-G, the results were below the average, and for 1 or more grades A*-G, were well below the average. When compared to similar schools on the basis of the number of pupils eligible for free school meals, the performance at 5 or more grades A*-C, and 5 or more grades A*-G, was broadly in line with the average. For 1 or more grades A*-G, the results were very low compared to the average.
- 7 The average total GCSE points score per pupil was well below the national average and below the average when compared to similar schools. The trend in the school's average National Curriculum points for all core subjects was broadly in line with the national trend.

- 8 There was a significant improvement in pupils' performance by the end of Year 11 in 2001. The percentage of pupils attaining 5 or more grades A*-C in 2000 was 30 per cent. In 2001 this had risen to 38 per cent. More striking improvements have occurred with the percentage of pupils attaining 5 or more grades A*-G, and 1 or more grades A*-G which have both risen to 98 per cent in 2001, from 81 per cent and 88 per cent respectively in 2000. Over recent years there is little difference in the performance of boys and girls by the end of Year 11.
- 9 During the inspection, the standards of pupils' work was good by the end of Year 9 and satisfactory by the end of Year 11, when compared to their prior levels of attainment. Pupils' achievements throughout the school are generally good. In English and science, pupils' achievement is satisfactory when compared to their prior attainment. In mathematics, pupils' achievement is good by the end of Year 9 and satisfactory by the end of Year 11.
- 10 The school works hard to ensure that it includes all members of its community. Consequently, pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language make very good progress. Gifted and talented pupils make good progress in most lessons when they have sufficient challenge. The three pupils with English as an additional language make good progress.
- 11 In speaking and listening in English lessons, pupils make good progress and many attain above the average for their age. From Year 7, pupils learn the techniques and skills of presenting a short talk to the class, and how to assess their peers' performance, using GCSE criteria. Higher attaining pupils in Year 7 express themselves well. By the end of Year 11, standards are still below average overall. Most pupils understand the difference between standard and non-standard English and use suitable forms of expression. They employ appropriate strategies in their oral presentations and in their writing to convince the listener or reader. Higher attaining pupils show good understanding of the characteristics of ballad poetry, which they identify appropriately. Standards in literacy across the school are satisfactory.
- 12 In mathematics, pupil attainment by the end of Year 9 is broadly in line with national expectations. Pupils develop basic numeracy skills through regular short, focused sessions on mental arithmetic at the start of each lesson. Higher attaining pupils in Year 9 were working at level 6 as they demonstrated good skills in manipulating algebraic expressions. Pupil attainment by the end of Year 11 is broadly in line with national expectations, and some pupils make good or very good progress. Pupils with special educational needs respond well to the demands of following the GCSE course at foundation level. Year 11 pupils, for example, were able to work with fractions and showed a good understanding of statistical diagrams such as bar charts and pie charts. Higher attaining pupils demonstrate a good understanding of trigonometry and are very comfortable in dealing with number, for example converting fractions into decimals and vice versa. Standards in numeracy across the school are satisfactory.
- 13 In science, standards of work seen in class were better than the results from national tests indicate, and reflect the improvements seen in the last year. In many classes in all years, pupils achieve standards in line with national expectations and sometimes above. Pupils enter the school aged 11 with attainment well below national expectations. By the time they reach the end of Year 9, they make at least satisfactory progress. By the end of Year 11, pupils' progress remains satisfactory. One group of Year 7 pupils were working at levels expected nationally by the end of

Year 9, identifying differences in fingerprints to describe variation in humans. Pupils in Year 9 could accurately use complex scientific vocabulary such as refraction and translucence to describe features of light dispersal.

- 14 In design and technology; ICT; history; geography; physical education and modern foreign language, standards are satisfactory throughout the school. Standards throughout the school in art and design, music and religious education are good.
- 15 The school sets itself appropriately challenging performance targets for its pupils. In 2001, it significantly exceeded its target for the percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more grades A*-C; and 1 or more grades A*-G. It significantly exceeded the target for the average GCSE points score.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

- 16 Throughout the school, attitudes to learning are always good and often very good. Behaviour is consistently very good. Personal development is very good and relationships are excellent. Parents at the meeting, and in response to the questionnaire, felt strongly that their children behaved well and were encouraged to be mature and responsible. These findings are an improvement on those of the last inspection.
- 17 Pupils are very committed to their work and show very good levels of interest. They are mature and responsible learners and enjoy challenge. They respond very positively to their teachers' enthusiasm and knowledge. They are very well motivated and show high levels of concentration. They enjoy sharing ideas and are prepared to get involved in open debate. A purposeful working atmosphere pervades lessons. Pupils work well together in groups and show a good level of independence in their learning.
- 18 Behaviour is very good, in lessons, at break times, assemblies, and when pupils are moving round the school. Pupils are friendly and courteous to visitors and to staff. They are open and confident. There is an impressive degree of racial harmony and boys and girls work very well together. Pupils do not see bullying as an issue. They understand the procedures. They feel confident that when bullying occurs the school will deal it with quickly and effectively. They feel that the school treats them fairly and they appreciate the system of rewards and sanctions. The incidence of exclusions has now fallen, thanks to the school's approach to discipline.
- 19 Relationships within the school are excellent, between staff and pupils and among pupils. There is a very strong sense of community. Pupils feel that teachers are keen to help them to do their best. They understand the impact of their actions on others and have respect for one another's feelings. They are supportive of one another: for example, in a Year 7 swimming lesson, pupils spontaneously applauded a pupil who reached the deep end for the first time. Teachers offer pupils very good examples of courtesy and honesty.
- 20 Pupils' personal development is very good. This is a significant improvement on the last inspection. The school provides many good opportunities for pupils to take responsibility. The paired reading scheme matches up readers in Years 7 and 8 with pupils in Years 10 and 11 and has proved beneficial to the self-esteem of both age groups. The school council draws from representatives of each year council and provides very good opportunities for pupils of all ages to contribute. Prefects monitor behaviour at lunch times. Pupils in Year 11 choose the colour of their

uniform sweatshirts. The Young Enterprise scheme and work experience encourage older pupils to take responsibility for their own actions. The Compact Club acts as a very good support for pupils taking extended work experience.

- 21 Despite the school's best efforts, attendance last year was below national average and authorised absence is very high. Unauthorised absence is in line with national averages. Figures in the present year show attendance is currently satisfactory. The high level of authorised absence last year was directly due to a small number of pupils whose parents condone their absences. The majority of pupils are keen to come to school and punctuality is good. The teachers take registration quickly and effectively.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

- 22 The high quality of the teaching is a strength of the school. Teaching was good overall throughout the school. Up until the end of Year 9, 100 per cent of teaching was at least satisfactory or better, 82 per cent good or better and 45 per cent very good or excellent. By the end of Year 11, 100 per cent of lessons were at least satisfactory, 78 per cent good or better and 33 per cent very good or excellent. In no lessons was teaching unsatisfactory. Teaching has improved since the last inspection when, overall, 98 per cent of lessons were satisfactory or better and 51 per cent good, very good or excellent.
- 23 This consistently good teaching successfully promotes good learning. Behaviour is overall very good and the teachers' management of the pupils in class is a particular strength, as also is the motivation of the pupils, who show considerable enthusiasm for their work. Because of this good teaching, pupils concentrate upon their tasks well.
- 24 Teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subject is good and is often a key factor in the equally good learning by the pupils. The very good teaching of modern languages by the end of Year 9 is characterised by the teachers' confident and fluent use of the language. In music, the teacher's instrumental skills underpin the very effective pupil improvisation in the Year 10 GCSE work and in physical education the excellent progress of pupils in developing rugby skills, is similarly supported by the teacher's own skills.
- 25 Relationships between pupils and teachers are very good and the basis is mutual respect and good humour. Solid planning and well paced delivery support these very good relationships in lessons. Pupils generally try hard in their work, as they are keen to please. It is a feature of many subjects that all pupils achieve something and feel successful. The very good teaching, in art, for example, gains mature and responsible responses from pupils.
- 26 Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language have particularly good teaching. The learning of these pupils, which is very good across all years, is a strength of the school. In almost all lessons, work is appropriate for them, and the pupils' achievement is often excellent. In music, in a lower attaining Year 9 class, pupils showed unusually good ability to co-ordinate their playing. Their attainment, in producing convincing improvisations within a 12 bar blues piece, was quite remarkable. There is much evidence, in many subjects, of the good help provided by the learning support assistants, who work well and effectively with the teachers in adapting work for the pupils' individual needs. However, not all pupils with special educational needs benefit from such levels of help.

- 27 Although the learning of lower attaining pupils is a strength of the school, there are occasions where higher attaining pupils do not have sufficient challenge. In geography, for example, extension activities for higher attainers do not have sufficient impact upon developing the higher level skills. In science, within many mixed gender groups teachers are not using enough strategies to involve girls in lessons.
- 28 In most subject areas, particularly by the end of Year 9, teachers have high expectations of what pupils might achieve and make them aware of this. Challenging work is a feature of many lessons. However, by the end of Year 11 there are areas, for example in geography and modern foreign languages, where the expectations of the quantity and depth of pupils' work is sometimes not high enough.
- 29 Members of staff are aware of the importance of developing standards in teaching and learning and of the usefulness of sharing good practice. To this end, a group of teachers is now producing a monthly newsletter in which colleagues can share "interesting and innovative ideas." One member of staff is researching thinking skills in history learning. The religious education department has involved classes in agreeing learning contracts and the English department has installed new whiteboards for displaying lesson objectives. All this is evidence of the teachers' efforts to build further upon the already good standards of teaching within the school.
- 30 With very good assistance from support staff, teachers modify teaching methods and resources appropriately for pupils with learning needs. For example, pupils with learning difficulties in literacy successfully discussed their work with their support staff and completed partly prepared scripts with good levels of understanding and accuracy. This input enabled them to make progress that was similar to the rest of the class who were able to write unaided.
- 31 Overall, teachers use assessment satisfactorily to inform their planning, although there is a need for further development of this in modern foreign languages. It is used particularly well in design and technology, physical education, and religious education. However, in some subjects, marking is somewhat variable. Sometimes, for example in mathematics, marking lacks clear information to the pupils on what they should do to improve their work. The school has appropriate procedures to recognise and provide for pupils with special educational needs. It effectively uses test results, target setting, and concerns expressed by class teachers to decide where to introduce extra support. The school does not always consistently record pupils' progress across all departments as they are taught in lessons. However, it does use the available assessment information well to plan further tasks matched to these pupils' needs.
- 32 The teaching of literacy is very good throughout the school. The introduction of the numeracy policy is due to be extended, beyond its current application in the mathematics department, as a coherent part of the school's launch of the government's Key Stage 3 Strategy in January 2002. Teaching of numeracy across the school is currently satisfactory. The use of information and communication technology in teaching varies across the school. This is because of the unsatisfactory arrangements for managing this aspect.

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

- 33 The school has addressed all the weaknesses mentioned in the last inspection report. All pupils now follow the National Curriculum. The quality and range of opportunities for learning provided by the school are now good because the appropriate statutory curriculum is now fully in place, and there is good breadth, balance and relevance.
- 34 The exception to these improvements is the management of information and communication technology (ICT) across the school, which is still unsatisfactory. Therefore there is too much variability in the use of information and communication technology in other subjects. The newly qualified teacher responsible for the delivery of separate information and communication technology courses has made a very good start. However, the school needs to demonstrate its commitment to this area. It should ensure that the management and coordination of ICT across the school is carried out at a sufficiently high level in the school's management structure, to bring about the changes necessary in departments. There are clear plans in place to address this by September 2002.
- 35 Provision for pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language is very good and equality of access and opportunity for all is very good. This school works hard, and successfully, to include all members of its pupil community. The provision for extra curricular opportunities is good. The provision for personal, social and health education is very good. Targeted pupils have a well established provision of extended work experience. The school has evaluated this provision and found that helps pupils' maturity to develop, and in many cases the pupils find talents which lead to employment. The attendance of these pupils has improved because of their growing self esteem. Outcomes from this experience are used in role play in English lessons and as a stimulus in the accredited work within Key Skills.
- 36 The contribution of the community to pupils' education and the relationships with partner institutions are good. The school provides a very effective programme of citizenship, which includes personal, health, and social education. The well-structured programme has very good clear links to the curriculum. It is taught in timetabled lessons as well as assemblies and tutor periods, and emphasises healthy lifestyle and incorporates drugs and sex education. There is very good input from visitors, among them the local rector, the community police officer, the school nurse and the local member of parliament. Church youth workers take assemblies and the local rector teaches religious education weekly. Further plans include visits to the local police station and courts. The whole school took part in an impressive Holocaust memorial day. Pupils monitor their own progress well. Each year group has its own nominated charity and pupils raise very good sums, for example, for the local hospice. There are good residential visits as well as trips to museums and art galleries. The school offers a good range of extra-curricular activities, especially sports and music.
- 37 The provision for careers education is very good. The very good careers programme introduces pupils to opportunities in further education and work. Pupils in Year 9 discuss the kind of areas in which their interests lie and there is further good work in Year 10. Carefully planned work experience at the beginning of Year 11 offers pupils very good opportunities, including workshops and practice interviews with members of local businesses. An extended programme of work related experience for a small number of pupils has proved very successful.
- 38 The school has an effective programme for setting and reviewing individual pupil targets known as TRAIL, (Tutoring to raise achievement and improve learning). This

provides a good opportunity for pupils to work in small groups setting short term targets and reviewing them on a 6 week cycle. These targets address both academic and behavioural issues. The quality of this experience is variable depending on the counselling skill of the teacher. Where counselling skills are high, questioning challenging and well focused, pupils receive good help to keep track of their progress and staff push them effectively to strive for their best. In one Year 11 session, staff supported pupils effectively to reflect on the learning from their recent work experience placements. Discussion was mature and well focused and contributed positively to the careers guidance for the pupils.

- 39 Relationships with local businesses are extensive. Members of local businesses and some sponsorship very well support the Young Enterprise scheme. Pupils have been involved in a training day with the Army. A good number of pupils go each year on exchanges to schools in Hungary, Austria, and France.
- 40 The transfer of academic and personal information from local primary schools is effective. There are good links through drama workshops and joint foreign exchanges. Links between special educational needs co-ordinators are very effective. Links with colleges of further education and sixth forms are good. The school has a very good relationship with the local teacher training college, which sends large numbers of its students to the school for teaching practice. Very good numbers of teachers have been trained as mentors.
- 41 A second modern foreign language is available to pupils although they do not opt for this in large numbers. The GNVQ provision has been rationalised. Leisure and Tourism, which did not provide well for the pupils' needs, will be dropped by the end of the year. The school feels it serves pupils' needs better through its geography provision. The school remains highly committed to the continuation of GNVQ Health and Social Care, and GNVQ Business Studies, both of which are popular with pupils, and are proving successful at enriching the curriculum. The development of these courses has had a beneficial effect on other parts of the curriculum through encouraging increasing levels of pupil independence.
- 42 The development of curriculum links with primary schools is significant with a very high level of analysis of need and well targeted activities planned across the year. The European-funded Comenius project has helped to enrich the range of link activities with partner primary schools.
- 43 The rationale behind the complex grouping arrangements is largely historical. Some departments wanted to try single sex grouping and shared their experiences with others. The school has built in the flexibility for departments to group in this way, or to set, within the 2 broad bands of ability specified by the school. The management team has no strategy for evaluating the effectiveness of these arrangements and clearly needs to develop one. Some heads of department, for example in mathematics, are carrying out data analysis to review their grouping strategies. The management team see performance management providing a possible route through this. However, the school needs to take positive action to ensure that the management team form a clear view as to the effectiveness of these arrangements.
- 44 The aims of the school contain strong references to spiritual; moral; social and cultural development. Moral and spiritual development are particularly strongly represented. The school's planning and arrangements for spiritual development are good. Since the last report, there have been significant improvements in the provision for spiritual development. A working party including two local clergy, and many school staff, have produced a policy, extensive guidelines, and teaching

resources. This has led to individual departments carrying out an audit of planned opportunities and writing their own policies. There is a very good occasion for spiritual reflection during the two-minutes silence, which staff and pupils alike take so seriously. The school provides training for reflection for all pupils within the religious education lessons. This has been effective in creating the potential for a very moving experience for many pupils, staff, and visitors during the two-minutes silence. Some very good work by pupils in citizenship lessons, focusing on the holocaust, made a very effective stimulus for 'Thought for the Week', and made a very positive contribution to spiritual development.

- 45 Collective worship has also benefited from a specific working party, which has led to the reintroduction of the 'Thought for the Week'; weekly faith meetings, which benefit from visiting speakers, and very detailed guidance for staff. This provides effective support for their work with the 'Thought for the Week' within tutor times. This level of priority, and the support given through tutor times, ensures that the school provides a very effective opportunity for a daily act of collective worship.
- 46 Provision for pupils' moral development is very good. The school has addressed pupils' moral development particularly well through the themed weekly thoughts, which have a high profile in the school. They are printed in the pupils' daily planners; are on prominent display within the reception area, and are used to drive the introduction to the two-minute silence within tutor time each day. Many of these themes have a broadly Christian basis and many specifically address moral issues. Due to the high level of planning and auditing which the school has carried out, these developments are effectively addressed within the curriculum. For example, in English, where the study of the play 'An Inspector Calls' focuses on the lies told and the moral issues which flow from these. Teachers are good role models for moral development, and the excellent relationships, which they promote within the school, ensure that pupils readily adopt these models. Assemblies contain well presented examples of honesty and courtesy and provide good models for pupils' behaviour.
- 47 Provision for pupils' social development is excellent. The tangible sense of community, which pervades this school, and some of the weekly themes, both actively encourage pupils to reflect on their place in society and their effect on others. One GNVQ lesson on Health and Social Care showed this clearly. Pupils listened actively to each other, demonstrating high levels of empathy with their peers. Pupils with widely differing levels of prior attainment were treated well, the gifted had their skills appreciated, and patience and considerable encouragement were extended to those with difficulty reading. Well planned lessons for personal social and health education make clear links with other areas of the curriculum. The issues tackled in these lessons make a significant contribution to pupils' social development. Each year group has a named charity for which they work assiduously.
- 48 Provision for pupils' cultural development is good. European funding through the Comenius project help to provide good opportunities for cultural development through establishing links with other schools in Europe. Some very good work by pupils in citizenship lessons, focusing on the holocaust, made a very effective contribution to cultural development. Work in modern foreign languages helps foster effective cultural development and leads to mature reflection in pupils. In mathematics, pupils are encouraged to reflect on other cultures, such as the use of Islamic patterns in work on symmetry.
- 49 The school has a very good and effective approach to ensuring equality of opportunity for all pupils. This is a school where pupils from a wide range of

backgrounds have the opportunity to achieve well and learn effectively. There is a very good recognition of any barriers the pupils might face, whether personal, social, community, or academic. There is a determination to provide pupils with the skills and confidence to overcome them. The work of the various school counsellors as well as the pastoral system supports this approach well. In this there is very good provision for the pupils' personal development. There is a strong emphasis on giving the pupils a future.

- 50 The response and approach of staff to educational inclusion, and to recognising and overcoming barriers to learning, is good or better in most subjects. It is very good in English, religious education, art, modern foreign languages, music and physical education. It is excellent through the special educational needs teaching. Consequently, the teaching has high expectations of pupils, offers challenges in learning and effectively promotes and encourages the development of independent learning skills.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

- 51 At the time of the last inspection the school was found to provide satisfactory support in the monitoring of pupils' academic progress and personal development. However, the report stated that the school failed to meet its statutory obligations and did not provide a safe and secure learning environment. The school has made major improvements in all these areas. Procedures for child protection and ensuring pupils' welfare are now very good.
- 52 The existing procedures for child protection have been extended so that all staff are clear as to what they should do. Two teachers have been trained recently, although the newly appointed designated person is awaiting training. All staff, including support staff, have been trained. A very good system of serious incident reports is monitored carefully. The school counsellor is very well involved, as is the Educational Welfare Officer.
- 53 Health and safety practices are very good, especially in physical education, design and technology, art and science. Arrangements for dealing with pupils' medical conditions are very good. The school has a good number of staff trained in first aid and names are displayed prominently throughout the school. Procedures for dealing with accidents are very effective, as was seen during the inspection. All staff are aware of good health and safety practice. Very thorough risk assessments are carried out for trips and visits. Formal risk assessments are carried out regularly by governors, the health and safety officer and the caretaker. Fire drills take place regularly and all equipment is checked. Supervision at break times and at the beginning and end of day is good. Security is as good as is practicable on an open site. The school has taken very effective action in response to the criticism of the last inspection.
- 54 The monitoring of pupils' personal development is very effective. Form tutors and year heads maintain extensive records, including pupils' responsibilities, achievements and commendations, as well as attendance and details of infringements of rules. Form tutors regularly monitor pupils' planners. The TRAIL system, (Tutoring to raise achievement and improve learning), is very effective in ensuring that pupils have an opportunity on a regular basis to discuss concerns with their tutors and this effectively underpins academic and personal development. Pupils with English as an additional language are well supported through sensitive tutoring and because the size of groups is small.

- 55 The well-established assertive discipline programme, found to be inconsistent in the last inspection, is now applied consistently and very effectively throughout the school. Teachers and pupils alike are clear about what is expected and what the consequences are of any breaking of the rules. Citizenship lessons have made a good contribution to pupils' understanding. The "time out" card and isolation room have proved very effective in dealing with pupils with particular problems. Behaviour is very carefully monitored through a very effective system of incident slips and logs by the assistant head teachers, form tutors and heads of year. Pupils' planners also maintain good records, for pupils' benefit, of rewards and sanctions. There is a very good system of awards and certificates, combined with naming of a 'person of the half term', term and year. The anti-bullying system is equally effective. The school has carried out surveys of pupils about bullying, in which they were asked to list their concerns and name the bullies. Parents have been contacted to discuss the issues.
- 56 The school's arrangements for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are good. Marking of pupils' work is regular and frequent and used to inform teachers' planning of what should be taught next. In English, marking is consistently good, giving pupils constructive support and clear guidance on how to improve. Assessment is carried out conscientiously in geography and the results are carefully analysed to ensure pupils are achieving their full potential. Assessment is a strength of the history department where it is closely related to National Curriculum requirements and well focused to help pupils improve. In science, assessment needs to be used more frequently to set individual targets for pupils. The annual reports to parents fulfil statutory requirements. They are informative, set targets and include comments on behaviour. They give parents comparative grades for their children. They also offer opportunities for parents to comment. Parents appreciate the information they are given about the progress of their children. Mid-term assessments are very helpful and include grades for behaviour and for effort in all subjects. The arrangements for monitoring the attainment and progress of pupils with special educational needs are very good.
- 57 The monitoring of attendance is carried out effectively by form tutors, year heads and the headteacher, in collaboration with the Educational Welfare Officer. The school tries hard to promote good attendance. At assemblies, awards are given to pupils and classes achieving 100 per cent attendance. Improved procedures have meant a fall in the rate of unauthorised absence, although authorised absence has risen. Various schemes are under consideration to raise attendance among the small number of pupils whose parents condone their absence.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- 58 At the parents' meeting and in their responses to the questionnaire, parents were very supportive of the school. They are particularly pleased with the teaching and the leadership of the school. They feel strongly that their children make good progress and that the school helps their children to become mature and responsible. They are comfortable about approaching the school with problems and feel that their children receive the right amount of homework. A few parents did not feel well informed about progress and felt that the school did not provide a good range of activities outside lessons. The findings of the inspection support the parents' positive views. However, inspectors found that information on pupils' progress is very good and the school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities.
- 59 The school has effective links with parents. The information provided for them, criticised in the last report, is very good. The prospectus is very attractively

presented and its loose-leaf format makes it easy to use. It contains a number of useful information leaflets on behaviour, bullying and homework. The governors' annual report to parents is also well presented. Both now comply with statutory requirements. Pupils' planners are a very effective means of communication between school and home. Each contains a weekly opportunity for parents to sign the homework diary and make comments. They include the home/school agreements, which are signed by most parents. Newsletters are regular and friendly in tone and they keep parents well informed of events, as well as on changes in mentoring schemes.

- 60 Parents of children with special educational needs are very well informed on the progress of their children. They can make contact with teachers and support staff at any time they wish. Reviews of individual education plans and the yearly reviews of statements give further comprehensive information. Parents are invited by letter to all reviews.
- 61 There is a good range of consultation meetings and parents feel free to consult teachers on an informal basis. The annual open evening provides a good opportunity for parents to see their children's work. Workshops have been held for parents on behaviour, numeracy and literacy and have been reasonably well attended.
- 62 Although there is presently no Parents' Association, parents support the school very well at performances, visits, sports events and on residential trips. Induction for new pupils and their families is effectively organised in the summer term before entry. There is an attractively presented and lively booklet for new pupils and their parents.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- 63 Leadership and management of the school are very good. The head and the management team provide very clear leadership and direction for the school. Heads of department and those with pastoral responsibilities are very good managers. The governing body provides very effective strategic management. The school has made excellent choices in its recent priorities for development to help move the school forward. There was good action to meet these priorities. The school's shared commitment to improvement and capacity to succeed are both excellent.
- 64 The new head has a clear view of the future development of the school. He has managed to strike a very good balance between having ideas of his own, based on his wide previous experience, and actively seeking to find solutions, well matched to the needs of this school. He has rapidly carried out a far-reaching analysis of the school's present circumstances and has already begun to formulate appropriate priorities for development. Many of these are in tune with the findings of the inspection. The processes he has set in motion for developing an effective school improvement plan are consultative, and are likely to involve effectively all the key personnel. The head sees shared vision for the future as crucial and has already taken effective steps to ensure this comes about through such activities as whole staff meetings. The contribution of the management team to this shared commitment for a particular direction of development is already clearly discernible. The management team has clear roles and responsibilities and uses its complementary talents to very good effect. The relationships within the management team are excellent and contribute to the effectiveness with which they work so well together.

- 65 The governing body fulfils its responsibilities well. The chair of governors has a clear view of the school's present circumstances, and of the role of governors in the strategic management of the school. The governing body widely shares this view. The presence of senior staff at the committee meetings of the governors makes a significant contribution to the extent to which governors are able to interrogate the performance of the school. The curriculum committee with the active support of the appropriate assistant head carries out data analysis in detail. Governors are attached to the cluster groups of the school, which comprises number of departments. The school bursar, attached to the governors' finance committee, is well placed to enable it to monitor the finances closely and effectively.
- 66 The school's governing body has a good balance of representation from the local community. This includes a wide range of experience and skills, which embraces education, through the local education authority advisory service; university and college representatives; the local residents and community associations; the local press; local churches and the magistracy. However, the school is aware of an ethnic imbalance and has sought to redress this through co-option.
- 67 The annual cycle of financial planning takes good account of the timing of the academic year. Spending development priorities from the school's improvement plan and national strategies effectively drives this. The suitable allocation of capitation is by a formula with approximately 5 per cent held back for special bids. These are made on clear and explicit criteria. Both the school and governors target and monitor well specific funds. The school uses competitive tendering in line with the local education authority guidelines on best value. The recent audit found no significant problems and the school has carried out in full the minor recommendations.
- 68 The school uses suitable information and communication technology to plan and monitor the use of resources. It has incorporated recent updates to software and organised suitable training for staff. In particular, improvements, by the adoption of some new software to collate and present pupils' performance data is due to the school's use of performance data to support target setting for individual pupils. The management team has had training in the use of this and all middle managers will have received training and use this software by September 2002. The best heads of department are analysing data by gender and therefore keeping grouping arrangements under review.
- 69 The previous inspection report identified serious weaknesses in leadership and management. The school has fully addressed these. A working party comprising all levels of school management, and advisers from the local education authority, steered the development work. Consequently, there was an increase in the number of the management team, with job descriptions rewritten for them to ensure effective identification of roles and responsibilities. There was clarification and strengthening of links with middle managers. The management team now holds frequent, regular, scheduled meetings with open agendas, and minutes published in the staff room. Middle managers, similarly, do this. The agendas for these meetings benefit from common themes decided by the management team. This assures strong and effective leadership, while middle managers contribute effectively to the agenda. The effective working of the meetings, which comprise a number of departments, considerably enhances the flow of information. This facilitates good discussion of whole school issues and the sharing of good practice. The school widely and warmly acknowledges the contribution of the previous head teacher, particularly to the establishment of a remarkable sense of community within the school.

- 70 The introduction of performance management has helped to increase the level of monitoring of teaching and learning by the management team and is starting to impact positively on other managers' ability to monitor. In addition, there is much observation of teachers by their peers, funded directly by the school in order to support dissemination of good practice.
- 71 The management team has a continuous programme of monitoring departments and has prioritised these based on the findings of the previous inspection report. The management team has had training in self-evaluation strategies and techniques. Raising standards of attainment is an explicit focus for the role of the management team in monitoring the work of the school. The management team has a regular programme of monitoring pupils' work and provides feedback to heads of department. The team plans to identify by the spring whole school themes from this monitoring. The management team is well involved in monitoring the curriculum through its link responsibilities and has a clear view on the school's present circumstances and development needs. The exception to this is where there is no current strategy to form a view on the effectiveness of grouping arrangements.
- 72 The school has addressed the previous poor examination entry rates. All departments have written policies, which ensure the entry of all pupils for suitable examinations and nationally recognised accreditation. Technical and other support has increased significantly since the last inspection and well-qualified personnel make a significant and positive impact on the effective running of the school.
- 73 There is excellent management of the provision for pupils with special educational needs. An assistant head teacher, who is the special educational needs co-ordinator, effectively leads this. Management, teaching and support responsibilities for pupils with special educational needs are very effectively delegated to a highly experience, well-trained team of five area learning managers, five support teachers, and six support assistants. The school employs a trained counsellor, who is also a qualified teacher and social worker. She plays a most successful role in offering counselling across the school to pupils who have social and emotional needs. The governor for special educational needs has good information and effectively oversees provision. There are very effective procedures for the identification and teaching of pupils with special educational needs. However, there are too few support assistants employed by the school, given that the number of pupils with statements of special educational need is well above average.
- 74 There is a good match between the number, qualifications and experience of teachers to meet the demands of the curriculum, with significant staff strengths in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, information technology, physical education, art, music and business education. The appointment of three assistant head teachers is very effective in providing an effective management structure, enabling the realisation of the school aims. All members of staff supporting pupils with special educational needs are experienced. The provision for technician support has improved overall and there is some particularly effective support provided for design and technology and information technology. However, in some cases the time available is limited because posts are only part time. Effective instructors support the work of the physical education department.
- 75 The school has good arrangements in place to support newly qualified teachers and staff new to the school. The well-structured procedure for supporting newly qualified teachers has a programme of in-service training activities. Personal advice from more experienced colleagues supports this very well. This enables all new teachers to have a very good induction into the life of the school. Arrangements for the

professional development of staff are good. The school monitors the needs of staff. Opportunities for in-service training are closely linked to these needs and whole school requirements. The school provides a very good programme for the initial teacher training of graduates. The students and colleges regard highly this well-established programme, which has provided a number of teachers on the present staff.

76 The school makes good use of its available accommodation and this enables effective teaching of the curriculum. Although the building has continuing maintenance problems with the roof, the replacement of windows and rewiring has significantly improved the condition of the building. The provision for design technology continues to be good and the addition of another information technology room will further improve the access to computers across the school. The addition of a sports hall has improved the accommodation for physical education. Indoor provision is satisfactory overall. However, the problems with drainage of the sports field persist and the surface of some hard play areas, together with the size of netball courts. This means that aspects of outdoor provision are unsatisfactory. The school has sufficient science laboratories but the working environment in these areas is barely satisfactory. The grouping of rooms for some subjects is effective in making the best use of available resources but the decoration of most areas needs attention.

77 Learning resources are satisfactory in most subjects and very good in information technology and music. The school has a large number of computers but, at present, there is restricted access to these resources for some subjects. The school should address this need as part of a more co-ordinated whole school programme for the use of computers. The provision of instruments and other equipment, including electronic and computer-supported equipment for music is very good. Although the library has been developed into a resources area by the addition of a number of computers, the stock of books and other reference materials is limited and needs to be enhanced to deal with the demands of the school's work on literacy; art; religious education, and vocational courses.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

1. The management of information and communication technology across the school should be improved, in order to ensure that the provision for this within other subjects is consistently good.
2. The consistency with which analysis of performance data is used to set individual pupil targets should be improved.
3. The management team should develop strategies to evaluate the effectiveness of the arrangements used to allocate pupils to teaching groups.

Key Stage 4 Curriculum

Overall provision for the GNVQ and related courses in Years 10 and 11 is very good.

Strengths

- Courses are well chosen and matched to the identified needs and interests of the pupils.

- The courses provide very good levels of motivation and challenge.
- The marked improvement in GNVQ examination success, particularly at merit and distinction level.
- The success of the key skills course in motivating pupils and raising their self-esteem.
- The way in which the additional courses enable pupils to take responsibility for their own learning.

Areas for improvement

- Standards in the GCSE Office Applications course.
- Continue to reduce the numbers of pupils who do not fully complete the GNVQ courses.
- Learning resources for GNVQ courses.

- 78 The courses on GNVQ Business Studies, Health and Social Care, and Leisure and Tourism are well chosen, enhance the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 and are very effectively matched to the needs and interests of the pupils. Overall, standards in these additional courses are broadly average for both boys and girls, but pupil achievement is good and often better. The quality of teaching and learning was never less than satisfactory and were good or better in 88 per cent of lessons seen. They were very good or excellent in half. Overall improvement since the last inspection is good.
- 79 Pupils' response and commitment to these courses is good, and often very good or excellent. This is because these additional subjects provide very well for the pupils' personal development and they effectively raise their self-esteem. GNVQ and key skills in particular encourage pupils to take responsibility for their own learning; pupils appreciate this and respond accordingly. However, library resources for the GNVQ and related subjects require improvement to properly support independent learning outside the classroom. Some courses do not have sufficient textbooks for all pupils.
- 80 Whilst the majority of pupils get a great deal out of studying these courses, there is still a relatively high proportion who do not fully complete them. This percentage has been reduced significantly since the last inspection. This reflects the success of these courses and there have been good overall improvements in examination standards in the three years from 1999 to 2001.
- 81 All pupils currently studying the GNVQ Business Studies course are able to do so at intermediate level, although it was also taught at foundation level up to 2000. Results show a significant improvement in 2001. Merit standards improved from 25 to 45 per cent and distinctions from 0 to 30 per cent in the same period. In lessons seen, teaching and learning were good. Standards were average, but achievement was good. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in lessons were good.
- 82 Teaching and learning are good because the teacher consistently reinforces previous learning through effective reviews of work. Questioning is also good because it is phrased in terms which enable pupils of different prior attainment to contribute. This gives them confidence and promotes independent learning. Pupils take a serious approach to the subject and concentrate well on their tasks. They also co-operate very well in groups, with all members making a positive contribution, for example, when discussing a new assignment brief. Pupils are able to recognise different types of business organisation, whether for profit or other organisation such as charities, and explain the differences clearly. They understand the key features of marketing strategies: product; price; promotion and place, and can give relevant examples in context. Work in pupils' folders is well organised and indicates

thorough preparation. Pupils show a good familiarity with ICT and the use of computers is integrated well into everyday lessons. For example, graphs are well used for analysis of surveys, which often contain interesting and well-considered questions. However, although it has adequate word processing and spreadsheet programs, the department lacks presentation software. This is an area for improvement in the department's resources.

- 83 GNVQ Health and Social Care is currently studied at both foundation and intermediate levels. Since the last inspection, pass rates at foundation level have improved from 58 per cent in 1999 to 77 per cent in 2001. Merit and distinction passes rose from 42 to 70 per cent over the three-year period. At intermediate level, pass rates improved from 81 to 94 per cent, with merits and distinctions rising from 50 to 78 per cent.
- 84 In the lessons seen, teaching and learning were very good overall. Attainment was above average and achievement very good. Attitudes and behaviour were very good and the pupils' personal development sometimes excellent.
- 85 Teaching and learning are very good because teachers work effectively with pupils. Learning is evaluated well through questions posed in class as well as through marking. This provides good guidance for pupils who are also encouraged to self-evaluate their work in a highly structured way. Teaching strategies are therefore focused on enabling independent learning; consequently pupils' case studies are well organised. Pupils show good, thoughtful consideration of issues discussed and their folders provide good evidence for extensive research. This purposeful approach enables them to make good progress, for example in the production of health plans as part of the unit on primary health care. Group presentations are of good quality and further demonstrate the high levels of achievement and involvement of pupils in the course. They listen to each other attentively. Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language are totally integrated into the life and work of the class. Learning objectives are well focused and drive the lessons. Relationships between teacher and pupils are excellent and enable the pupils to feel secure but challenged in their work.
- 86 The GNVQ Leisure and Tourism course has been withdrawn this year and pupils are encouraged to take geography GCSE. No overall examination results were provided. However, in 2001 15 pupils were entered. Ten pupils gained passes in all three units, two passed two units and three dropped the subject for extended work experience. Therefore, two-thirds of pupils opting for the course gained a pass grade. The last 16 pupils, in Year 11, to be entered for the examination are due to complete the course in 2002.
- 87 In the single lesson seen on publicity and promotion in leisure and tourism, teaching and learning were satisfactory. Attainment was average or in line with expectations for a group of pupils of whom half had special educational needs. Achievement was satisfactory and pupils' response to the lesson was good.
- 88 The teaching engaged the pupils, who listened well, but some opportunities for discussion and review were missed. However, the pace of the lesson was good and pupils were clear as to the work they should do. The teacher's clear planning and structure of the unit of work, further underpinned this. Information and communication technology was used satisfactorily including word processing, scanned images and clip-art to enhance presentation. However, the programs available provided insufficient challenge for the more able pupils. Pupils with special

educational needs were well supported by additional teachers and consequently made good progress.

- 89 In contrast to the success of the GNVQ courses there has been a decline in results for GCSE office applications. Whilst all pupils entered over the past three years have gained an A*-G grade, overall A*-C passes have declined from 89 per cent in 1999 to only 56 per cent in 2001. However, data analysis by the school shows that this represents good achievement for those pupils entered. The relatively small entry numbers, averaging only 19 pupils over the three-year period, lead to significant fluctuations in performance each year. In the single lesson seen, on evaluating the use of information and communication technology in a company, standards were significantly better than recent examination results would indicate. Teaching was excellent because the lesson was very well planned and showed a very good awareness of the pupils and their level of personal development. There was very good subject knowledge which was used very well to guide pupils and enable them to apply their information and communication technology skills effectively. Consequently, learning was very good. For example, the teacher's questions enabled pupils to effectively evaluate the different types of desktop publishing software they may meet in a typical office. In this, their level of attainment was above average. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour were excellent in response to the quality of teaching.
- 90 Key Skills courses are provided for lower attaining or disaffected pupils who are given the opportunity to undertake extended work experience. This is very good provision. Classes are operated as 'Clubs' where pupils are very much encouraged to organise themselves and take responsibility for their own learning. These lessons are successful because pupils, who see more relevance in work than school, come to value the opportunities provided through extended work experience. In discussion with pupils it was clear that they appreciate the usefulness of the course in preparing them for leaving school at the end of Year 11, for example, in their understanding of health and safety. They were quite open about how the course had helped them to combat poor attendance and detentions in Year 10. Pupils also talk with enthusiasm and interest about their work placements. In the words of one pupil *"It helps me feel more professional"*.
- 91 In the lessons seen, overall teaching and learning is very good and achievement is very good. Pupils' attitudes are also very good.
- 92 In one outstanding lesson with the "WoW" (World of Work) Club, standards of attainment and pupils' attitudes were excellent, as were the teaching and learning. Pupils took the lead of the lesson when making a co-operative presentation about their work experience to date. They became very effective peer educators themselves and were enabled to do this because of the high levels of mutual trust and respect established between teacher and pupils. There was excellence in the real maturity of the pupils and their high level of enjoyment in learning. There was excellence in the way the pupils reflected on and evaluated their own performance, for example, in recognising the need for eye contact with their audience in a presentation. Excellent progress was made during the lesson in the development of their key skills, particularly when working with others, communication, problem solving and improving their own learning. Pupils listed points on the board, for example, the importance of working together for mutual support when things get tough. This was a teaching and learning partnership of the highest order and showed the real impact of the school's approach to social inclusion.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	102
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	51

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	13	27	42	20	0	0	0
Percentage	13	27	41	19	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. [When the total number is substantially less than 100, add] Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one [two, three, etc] percentage point[s]. [Where the total is close to or greater than 100, use only the first sentence.]

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	588
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	150

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	43
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	169

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	20
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	24

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	9.9
National comparative data	7.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	61	59	120

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	39	41	41
	Girls	42	35	33
	Total	81	76	74
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	68(48)	63(50)	62(42)
	National	64(64)	66(65)	66(59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	33(22)	29(22)	14(18)
	National	31(28)	43(42)	34(30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	41	45	30
	Girls	43	41	22
	Total	84	86	52
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	70(61)	72(48)	43(36)
	National	65(64)	68(66)	64(62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	28(13)	28(23)	13(13)
	National	31(31)	42(39)	33(29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	58	62	120

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	26	57	57
	Girls	19	59	60
	Total	45	116	117
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	38(30)	97(81)	98(88)
	National	49.8	88.8	94.5

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	34.4(29.5)
	National	39.1

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	46	91
	National		n/a

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	0
Indian	32
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	547
Any other minority ethnic group	5

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	40.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	14.4

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	13
Total aggregate hours worked per week	319

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	79.8
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	22.7
Key Stage 4	18.5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	7.5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	7
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0.4
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	47	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
	£
Total income	1805629
Total expenditure	1764427
Expenditure per pupil	2941
Balance brought forward from previous year	-48734
Balance carried forward to next year	-7532

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	485
Number of questionnaires returned	396

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	35	53	7	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	39	50	2	0	6
Behaviour in the school is good.	37	51	5	0	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	32	53	8	2	3
The teaching is good.	39	50	3	1	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	29	48	12	3	5
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	54	38	3	2	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	63	32	2	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	29	49	10	3	6
The school is well led and managed.	36	48	3	2	11
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	39	48	4	1	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	29	41	11	3	14

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is at least good and sometimes very good or excellent.
- The very good leadership and management.
- The very good relationships between staff and pupils.
- The department carefully sets individual literacy targets and supports the development of pupils' literacy in other subjects.
- The quality of marking of GCSE course work with positive comments and guidance on how pupils can improve their work.

Areas for improvement

- Improve the attainment of pupils, particularly at GCSE.

93 By the end of Year 9 in 2000 National Curriculum tests, standards were well below the national average, but close to the average for similar schools. The three previous years' results had been in line or above the national average. At the higher levels, however, pupils' performance in 2000 was close to the national average and above those in similar schools. The test results in 2001 show improvement over the 2000 tests, so that the school's results are again in line with the national average. There has been no significant difference in attainment between boys and girls over the past five years.

94 The standards of pupils on entry to the school are well below that typical for their age. Therefore, pupils make good progress in their first three years in the school to attain the national average and above in the Year 9 National Curriculum tests, which they have done in four out of the last five years.

95 At the end of Year 11, the GCSE results in 2000 were below the national averages for English and English literature. In English, 46 per cent of pupils obtained an A*-C grade against a national average of 56 per cent. In English literature, 51 per cent of pupils obtained an A*-C grade against a national average of 61 per cent. The results in 1999 were very similar. In 2001, results in English were lower than the previous two years, with 34 per cent of pupils entered achieving an A*-C grade, well below the national average. Results for English literature were close to the previous two years at 50 per cent A*-C grades. In both examinations in 2001, boys performed better than girls. This was due to a number of girls performing less well than expected, achieving grade D where they were expected to achieve a grade C. At the time of the last inspection, boys were performing less well than girls. The department has worked hard and successfully to address this.

96 The department has been teaching the higher attaining girls and boys in single sex groups since 1998. This was initially to raise the attainment of boys, but also because some year groups had a minority of girls. The higher attaining pupils in the present Year 11 are taught in single sex groups. While celebrating the improved performance of boys, the department is keeping its systems and strategies under constant review to further improve the standards of all pupils.

97 One area of improvement in 2001 is the increased percentage of the cohort entered and achieving a grade in GCSE English. This was 99 per cent in 2001, compared to 87 per cent and 80 per cent in the previous two years. Additionally, 91 per cent also achieved a grade in GCSE English literature. These percentages for 2001 are

above the most recent national average. The department remains committed to enter as many of the cohort as possible for the GCSE examinations.

- 98 Inspection evidence from lessons seen and work analysed indicates that standards are close to average by the end of Year 9. In speaking and listening, pupils make good progress and many attain above the average for their age. From Year 7, pupils learn the techniques and skills of presenting a short talk to the class and how to assess their peers' performance using GCSE criteria. They ask pertinent questions of the speaker that show both how well they listen and also the skill of the speaker in maintaining the interest of the listener. They justify the grade they award their peer using appropriate language. Higher attaining pupils in Year 7 express themselves well. They explain meanings in the text they are reading together, for example that 'a small hiccup' is 'a slight problem'. Another explains that 'alternative' means 'a different type of method'.
- 99 Pupils' reading skills develop well by the end of Year 9. Higher attaining pupils in Year 8 use CD ROM's and the Internet for research purposes, as well as reference books, and are able to select the information they need and write it up in their own words, showing a good level of understanding of the texts. Lower attaining readers develop their understanding of what they read and the different types of text and their features. They develop further reading skills when preparing and presenting a play to the class. They read clearly and fluently, with good expression and in character, showing how well they understand what they read. Higher attaining pupils in Year 9 write in a range of styles and for a range of purposes with a very good sense of audience. There are positive comments from teachers with pointers for improvement. Lower attaining pupils develop their basic skills well. However, extended writing still lacks structure or punctuation or a good range of vocabulary, though showing an increased understanding of what is required.
- 100 By the end of Year 11, pupils make progress in all aspects of the subject and standards are broadly in line with national averages. Progress in speaking and listening is particularly good, with firm foundations being laid by the end of Year 9. Most pupils understand the difference between standard and non-standard English and use them properly. They employ suitable strategies in their oral presentations and in their writing to convince the listener or reader. Higher attaining pupils show good understanding of the characteristics of ballad poetry that they identify correctly. Lower attaining pupils show a good understanding of the importance of lies in 'An Inspector Calls' by J.B.Priestley. They enjoy discussing the intricacies of the plot and the role that lies play. They justify their views with reference to the text, some with support. With encouragement most pupils contribute to the discussion. Two particularly insightful comments were, '*The lies basically make the whole story*', and '*The lies wreck lives in the story*'.
- 101 Pupils engage in a wide range of types of writing by the end of Year 9. For example, they compare poems in the same genre and different poems by the same poet. The quality of the writing is greatly improved in some cases by the very helpful and practical comments made by the teacher on the draft. Pupils make good use of the comments to improve the quality of their writing and so achieve a higher grade. With lower attaining pupils there are comments about careless punctuation and paragraphing which helps improve their writing.
- 102 Since the last inspection, all the issues raised in the report have been addressed. The percentage of pupils entered and achieving a grade for English GCSE has increased from below the national average, at the time of the last inspection, to above the national average in 2001. Reports to parents now report on all aspects of

English with respect to what pupils know, understand and can do, and thereby meet requirements.

- 103 Standards have improved in pupils' speaking in formal situations. Many of the strengths mentioned in the previous inspection two years ago, such as the teaching, the leadership and good relationships between staff and pupils, remain consistent strengths of the department.
- 104 Overall, the quality of teaching in English is good and accounts for the good progress made by pupils and the recent improvements in attainment. Teaching in most lessons is at least good, sometimes very good or excellent and never less than satisfactory. Teachers link new learning to prior learning seamlessly, constantly recapping and reinforcing. Teaching is explicit, so pupils understand what they are doing and why and make good progress. Presentation is lively and varied and well paced so that pupils remain involved. Lessons start at a brisk pace with a quick activity, such as vocabulary extension or a spelling test. This pace is maintained with timed activities throughout the lesson.
- 105 Teachers are confident with good subject knowledge and expertise and use a wide range of effective teaching strategies. They have high expectations of the pupils, which increases pupils' confidence in their own ability to achieve well. The impact of the good and better teaching in these lessons is that pupils are learning at a good rate. In lessons with pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language, there is a good balance between whole class teaching and completing tasks in small groups with support, which enables pupils to learn very well. In all lessons there is evidence of good planning and organisation and good relationships based on mutual respect. Teachers manage pupils well and praise their efforts. They share with pupils what the learning objectives are for the lesson and usually review these at the end of the lesson. In the very few instances where teaching is less strong, the planning for the individual lesson is over-ambitious.
- 106 Pupils' learning is good throughout the school. The standards of pupils on entry to the school are well below the national average. Therefore, they make good progress in their first three years in the school to attain the national average and above in the Year 9 National Curriculum tests. Overall, progress by the end of Year 11 is satisfactory. Generally, pupils continue to make good progress and meet or exceed expectations in GCSE examinations. Higher attaining boys in single sex teaching groups make particularly good progress throughout the school due to good teaching strategies. There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs with teaching geared to meet their needs. Support staff are effectively deployed in these lessons so pupils make good progress towards their individual learning targets. Most pupils' attitudes are very positive in their English lessons. They listen very attentively and respond enthusiastically to the teacher. They are keen to show what they have learned, such as points for persuasive writing in Year 9, or 'the four things we comment on when listening to others reading' in Year 8. They collaborate well together in a group, whether planning a talk, putting forward opposing points of view, or solving the problem of how to reach the other side of a river.
- 107 Leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of department is extremely hard working and very ably supported by a Key Stage 3 co-ordinator for English and the literacy co-ordinator. There have been several initiatives within the department since the last inspection two years ago. By the end of Year 9, pupils have a progress book, which forms an effective record for pupil and teacher alike of the range of their work in speaking and listening, reading and

writing, as well as their progress. For example, it ensures that pupils read a range of different types of books to give them a wider experience as readers. Pupils understand its purpose and see how they are progressing as they move through Years 7 to 9.

- 108 Teachers' marking of coursework is consistently good, giving pupils constructive help and clear guidance on how to improve the quality of their work. To support pupils' knowledge of their own learning and how to improve, the department has recently initiated individual short-term learning targets in Year 7 to 9. Pupils are familiar with them and understand them, but are not sure how frequently they are reviewed or when they have achieved their targets. A more systematic approach shared with pupils will have greater impact on their learning. There should be a clearer connection between teachers' weekly planning and the very thorough termly planning recently implemented in Year 7.
- 109 The department makes very good use of the library, with most Year 7 to 9 classes timetabled once a week. Pupils change their books frequently and enjoy the environment. There is a popular homework club at lunchtimes with access to computers. Approximately half the pupils in the school had taken books out of the library the week of the inspection. The librarian is used well as a resource for pupils looking for books to support topic work.
- 110 The literacy co-ordinator has been involved in working with departments and looking at ways of supporting pupils' literacy in their subject. This has been very effective in most departments, creating opportunities for creative writing, as in science for example, '*A dream about the lack of gravity*' which took place in Year 7. Key words are identified at the start of a piece of work. Pupils have the opportunity to produce a group presentation on 'The Planets' and an evaluation of their work in design technology in Year 8. Generally, word banks, word walls, word clouds, and key words are displayed in many classrooms throughout the school and many are incorporated into lessons, which supports pupils' literacy effectively.

Drama

Overall, the quality of provision in drama is **good**.

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good.
- The very good quality written reviews at the end of every topic.

Areas for improvement

- Raise standards in the subject.

- 111 Standards by the end of Year 9 are broadly in line with the national average. Pupils are effectively taught to use a variety of dramatic techniques to explore ideas and issues. They learn to improvise a scene, using movement as well as dialogue to convey the action and the feelings. Pupils enjoy their lessons and relate well to the subjects chosen, for example a runaway leaving home. As a result, pupils make good progress in lessons.
- 112 In 2000 the GCSE results in drama were significantly below the national average for grade C or above and in line with averages for A*-G grades. All pupils entered achieved a grade. In 2001 the GCSE results in drama were below average for grade C or above, with 95 per cent of pupils achieving a grade A*-G. Standards, particularly at the higher grades, should be improved by further developing the good

features of the teaching, such as encouraging pupils to take greater responsibility for their learning.

- 113 Standards by the end of Year 11 in lessons are satisfactory. Pupils develop the skills learned in earlier years further and focus effectively on the requirements of the GCSE syllabus. As a result, their performance and interpretation skills develop satisfactorily.
- 114 The quality of teaching in drama is good. In these good lessons, the teachers use a variety of techniques and demonstrate good subject knowledge. They help pupils well so they practise and improve. For example, a teacher uses the 'hot seating' technique which builds empathy with the main characters so pupils know what to do in the improvised drama to follow. Teachers circulate round the groups helping pupils effectively and reinforcing the main learning points.
- 115 There is a brisk pace to the lessons and teachers are very clear about what they want pupils to do. Learning objectives for the lesson are shared with the pupils and referred to during the lesson, as are key words. The teachers use good techniques to manage pupils and encourage them to take responsibility for their learning. For example, pupils set their own targets for working faster and listening better and evaluated others' work using agreed criteria. Written reviews on pupils' performance and skills development are provided by the teacher at the end of every topic. These are of high quality and particularly helpful in this subject with a performance and presentation element. This individual critique of their work allied to good teaching helps pupils to be aware of their own learning so they know how to improve and to make good progress.
- 116 Pupils' learning in drama is good. They make good progress in lessons and over time. Their attitude is positive. They enjoy the subject and therefore, work hard in lessons. They respond quickly to the teacher's directions. Most are enthusiastic and involved in the situations presented by the teacher.
- 117 The department is well organised. At the time of inspection there was an acting head of department. Drama makes a good contribution to pupils' social and moral development. Pupils learn to work in different combinations in the lessons, sometimes by choice, sometimes directed. They explore issues in a dramatic context, such as deprivation and injustice.

Media Studies

Overall, the quality of provision in media studies is **good**.

Strengths

- The good quality teaching which ensures all pupils make good progress.
- The high quality of marking of pieces of coursework that helps pupils to improve the standard of their work.

Areas for improvement

- Raise standards in the subject.

- 118 The first group of five pupils to take GCSE in this subject was in 2001. All achieved a grade, two at grade A*-C. One pupil achieved a grade A and a pupil with a statement for special educational needs achieved a grade D. The numbers in each year group are small, with nine pupils due to take GCSE in media studies in 2002.
- 119 Standards by the end of Year 11 for both boys and girls are satisfactory. Pupils develop a good understanding of the language and concepts used in the different media, such as photography, video work, television, and advertising, through analysis and interpretation. They also learn about the practical skills involved, for example different camera shots and their effect, by storyboarding a news programme and eventually produce their own projects.
- 120 The quality of teaching in media studies is good. The teacher has good subject knowledge. Learning objectives are discussed at the beginning and end of the lesson with reminders about time limits for their ongoing work, so pupils are clear about their own progress. After initial discussion, the teacher gives pupils individual support and teaching, so they make good progress. He checks pupils' understanding and pupils are given good written guidance so they know how to improve the standard of their coursework. Pupils work enthusiastically in class and enjoy the lessons. Some Year 10 pupils initially found the vocabulary and ideas hard to understand, but now they enjoy lessons as they understand more.
- 121 Pupils' learning in media studies is good, supported by the good relationship between teacher and pupils. Pupils make good progress in lessons and over time. In Year 10, pupils can talk in detail about features of the media. They have made good progress in starting to understand the role of the media in advertising and have already undertaken their own piece of research. They discuss what they have done so far showing a developing understanding as a result of good teaching. One pupil with special educational needs in the group is working well with good support from the well-informed teacher and is making good progress as a result. Year 11 pupils talk confidently about their storyboarding projects. They explain well what they have done on the course to reach where they are now and how they have developed their skills and awareness.
- 122 The 'Media Mania' school magazine has strengthened the status of media studies. With the help of the media studies teacher and the information technology department, pupils have now produced three editions. With each one the standard of display, layout, photographs, organisation and content has improved. The magazine gives pupils a real opportunity to practise their developing media skills and techniques, as well as affording other interested pupils the opportunity to contribute and be involved. It also allows pupils to develop their desktop publishing and word-processing skills.

MATHEMATICS

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is good.

Strengths

- The very good leadership and management.
- The good quality of teaching.
- The high teacher expectation.
- The shared commitment to raise attainment.

Areas for improvement

- The quality of marking.
- The use of information and communication technology.

- 123 Standards attained in Year 9 National Curriculum tests in the year 2000 were well below the national average and also below average when compared with similar schools. The trend in results over the past four years, although below the pattern of the national trend, shows a steady rise in standards. In 2001, the standards attained were the highest that the school has recorded and the percentage of pupils achieving Level 5 or above is broadly in line with the national average.
- 124 The percentage of pupils obtaining a GCSE grade A*-C in the year 2000 was well below the national average, although the percentage obtaining grade A*-G was broadly in line with the national average. Boys performed slightly better than girls in 2000, with the percentage of boys achieving A*-C being nearly 3 per cent higher than that for girls. In 2001, the results were markedly improved and the percentage for all pupils obtaining grades A*-G reached a new record for the school. The proportion reaching grades A*-C has improved markedly and is now broadly in line with the national average.
- 125 In work seen during the inspection, pupils' attainment by the end of Year 9 is similar to national expectations and this is reflected in the 2001 results. Pupils make good progress to reach such levels because levels of attainment recorded on entry to Year 7 are below national averages. Basic numeracy skills are developed satisfactorily through regular short, focused sessions on mental arithmetic at the start of each lesson. Pupils are set work that is suited to their needs, an example being the work done on probability in a Year 9 lower band group. This class contained a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs, who made real progress in the understanding of probability theory and were able to estimate the likely outcome of an event and express the result as a fraction. Higher attaining pupils in Year 9 are working at Level 6 as they demonstrated good skills in manipulating algebraic expressions.
- 126 In work seen during the inspection, pupils' attainment by the end of Year 11 is broadly in line with national expectations and some pupils make good or very good progress. Pupils with special educational needs respond well to the demands of following the GCSE course at foundation level. Year 11 pupils, for example, are able to work with fractions and show a good understanding of statistical diagrams such as bar charts and pie charts. Higher attaining pupils demonstrate a good understanding of trigonometry and are very comfortable in dealing with number, for example, converting fractions into decimals and vice versa. Higher attaining pupils in Year 10, while investigating volumes of solids, displayed excellent insight; they were able to identify dimensions of different solids having the same volume. Pupils share ideas and demonstrate the capacity for independent learning.
- 127 Previous departmental policy has resulted in no Year 11 pupils being entered for the higher tier paper. The department has now addressed the issue of preparing pupils for the highest levels of attainment, with the current Year 10 being the first to benefit from this change in policy.
- 128 Teaching within the department is good. All lessons observed were at least satisfactory, the majority were good and a significant proportion judged to be very good or excellent. The majority of pupils at all levels are motivated by the enthusiasm of their teachers and willingly contribute to class discussion and

questioning. Relationships between pupils and their peers, and between pupils and teachers, are very good and are built upon trust, respect and good humour. Lessons are well prepared, teachers have high expectations of the pupils and demonstrate good classroom management skills, which as a result of pupils behave very well and acquire new skills and knowledge. Lesson objectives are made clear at the start of each lesson and key words are identified. Good classroom displays also contribute to effective learning. Teachers recognise the differing needs of individual pupils. They are aware of individual education plans that are provided for pupils with special educational needs; good practice exists in the use of support staff. In order to further improve the opportunities for pupils the school is looking to expand the provision of support assistants in mathematics.

- 129 Pupils throughout the school demonstrate a sound understanding of mathematics with the majority taking a pride in the appearance of their work. Marking of pupils' work is regular, although the feedback to pupils should be more detailed. Pupils receive praise for good work, but there is a lack of constructive written advice that pupils could reflect upon in order to improve future performance.
- 130 Leadership of the department is very good. The head of department has been in post for one year and leads a team of experienced and talented teachers, all being mathematics specialists. Issues raised in the previous inspection report have been addressed and all statutory National Curriculum requirements met. Expectations have been raised for both staff and pupils with a shared commitment to the raising of standards. The departmental handbook is detailed and helpful, it contains policies and effective guidance for good teaching. Initiatives introduced by the head of department support the sharing of good practice; these include paired lesson observations and a 'bright ideas' box in which teachers enter details of particularly successful lessons. Particular ideas are often the subject of meetings between teachers of mathematics to continually look for ways to improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- 131 The mathematics department makes a valuable contribution to pupils' development in spiritual, moral, social and cultural areas. For example, patterns in Islamic Art are used to illustrate symmetry and the examples used in statistics include Third World debt, mortality rates and rain forest depletion.
- 132 Detailed analysis of pupils' performance has been established and this should now be extended to include the sharing of targets with pupils. Further areas for development include the assessment pupils' work and providing them with guidance on how to improve and the extension of the use of information and communication technology. Although the statutory requirements for information and communication technology within the mathematics curriculum are being met, its use in the classroom should be extended at the earliest opportunity. The accommodation for the teaching of mathematics is satisfactory and the department has good resources with regard to books, materials and equipment.
- 133 The department has responded with enthusiasm to the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy, which they believe will help to raise standards beyond its present level, which is satisfactory. The scheme of work for Years 7 to 9 has been rewritten to comply with the numeracy framework and a co-ordinator has been appointed. Mathematics lessons in these years commence with short mental arithmetic sessions and finish with reviews of progress towards stated objectives. The department has introduced a numeracy club, which is open for two lunchtimes each week. The head of mathematics currently provides guidance on an informal basis for colleagues in other departments and, along with the co-ordinator, is poised

to lead whole school development. Arrangements are in place for staff training during the spring term 2002.

- 134 Evidence from lesson observations during the inspection shows that pupils are able to apply numeracy skills in other areas. For example, in science, pupils are able to analyse data and interpret statistical diagrams. In design and technology, pupils are able to produce three-dimensional drawings, use algebraic formulae and calculate areas and volumes. In geography, pupils use and understand scale bars and grid references and are also able to interpret graphs and statistical diagrams.
- 135 The department has many strengths and there is a clear commitment to the raising of standards. There have been significant improvements since the last inspection report and there is every indication that attainment in mathematics will continue to improve.

SCIENCE

Overall, the quality of provision in science is good.

Strengths

- Committed hard-working team, well led by the recently-appointed head of department.
- Improving exam results.
- Very many improvements made since the last inspection.
- Very good relationships between staff and pupils.

Areas for improvement

- Use of assessments and marking to set individual targets for pupils.
- The provision of science at GCSE, particularly to increase the number of girls taking double award science.
- Standard of presentation of work by many pupils, particularly of scientific diagrams.

- 136 Standards in national tests and examinations are rising. By the end of Year 9 the number of pupils reaching the level expected in the national tests has increased each year since 1999. In 2000, compared to all schools nationally, results were well below average for those attaining level five and below for the higher grades of level six. However, results attained in 2001 by the school have improved greatly. The percentage of pupils attaining level five and above has increased by 20 per cent. When results in 2000 are compared to those from similar schools attainment is below the national average at level five and above, but attainment at the higher levels is in line with the national average.
- 137 At GCSE, all pupils take single award science, with about one third of pupils taking the optional double award science. These numbers do not follow the national trend where nine tenths of all pupils take double award and this makes comparison with national figures difficult. The number of pupils taking single award science was an issue at the last inspection and has not been addressed. Results for both single and double award science have been below national averages since 1999, but there has been an increase in the number of the higher grades A*-C each year, with 2001 results showing a significant improvement. In 2000 results for single award science were significantly better than those for other subjects in the school. More boys than girls chose to take double science and their results are slightly better than the girls particularly in 2001. In single award science, more girls than boys take the subject and achieve slightly more of the higher grades.

- 138 Standards of work seen in class are better than the results from national tests indicate and reflect the improvements seen in the last year. In many classes in all years pupils are attaining in line with national expectations and sometimes above. Up to the end of Year 9 in half the lessons seen pupils were attaining levels above that expected and were in line with expectations in the remainder of the lessons. At GCSE in two thirds of lessons pupils were attaining in line with expectations and in the remainder below expectations.
- 139 The department holds much data on pupils' prior attainment and can predict levels for each pupil based on their results in national tests aged 11 and 14. A start has been made in monitoring individual pupils so that they can be targeted for additional support. The development of this system is crucial in moving the department towards further improved examination results. Pupils enter the school aged 11 with attainment well below national expectations. By the time they reach the end of Year 9 they make at least satisfactory progress. As indicated by the improved 2001 results progress is now good. By the end of Year 11 pupils' progress is satisfactory.
- 140 There is a direct relationship between the progress pupils make and the expectations made of them by the teacher. When teachers make realistic and attainable demands of pupils the pupils respond and achieve well, attaining levels above those expected for their age. One group of Year 7 pupils were working at levels expected nationally by the end of Year 9 in the context of identifying differences in fingerprints to describe variation in humans. Year 9 pupils accurately use complex scientific vocabulary such as refraction and translucence to describe features of light dispersal.
- 141 Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language make good progress when supported by specialist staff, or when the subject teacher uses resources specifically matched to their needs. For example, a large print worksheet is used to help one pupil with dyslexia. The effective use of resources was a weakness at the time of the last inspection and this has significantly improved. There is still room for further development. The needs of all identified pupils are known through their individual education plans and effective subject-specific targets are drawn up. However, in groups containing many such pupils progress is not as good as it might be unless teachers provide small attainable steps linked to each activity. In one year 10 class containing many pupils with special needs and with a specialist support teacher, learning would have been better than satisfactory if pupils had been clear of the link between each section of the lesson. Having worked individually on ways the body responds to being too hot or too cold the worksheet designed to reinforce pupils' ideas had ambiguous titles, difficult vocabulary and was not fully explained by the teacher.
- 142 In two-thirds of the lessons seen throughout the age ranges, the teaching was good and the remainder was satisfactory. This is a marked improvement on the previous inspection. There is now much good practice and since the last inspection a system of monitoring of teaching has been instituted.
- 143 All lessons are well planned with a variety of activities, including practical work, to reinforce a particular topic. The excellent support of the technician in the smooth running of practical lessons must be highly commended. However, because of the short lesson time activities are often rushed and this leads to insufficient opportunities at the end for pupils to reflect on what they have learnt.
- 144 Teachers usually share the aims of each lesson with pupils and frequently place the lesson in everyday contexts. This has the effect of inspiring pupils by identifying the

relevance of science. For example, one lesson entailed applying a separation technique to identify the writer of a footballer's ransom note; another used a range of household appliances when calculating fuse values.

- 145 Within many mixed gender groups teachers are not using strategies to involve girls sufficiently in lessons. There is little evidence of opportunities for discussion and reporting back, and boys dominate many question and answer sessions.
- 146 Information technology is employed well to enhance the teaching of science but is limited because there is not enough hardware. Pupils are given opportunities to learn how to record and analyse data from experiments, research science topics via the Internet and produce word-processed reports and scientific investigations. The identification and display of key words encourage the development of scientific vocabulary. There are also occasions when writing about aspects of science has allowed pupils to produce creative pieces of work such as poems about planets or an account of a dream without gravity.
- 147 Pupils' attitudes to science are good, as is their behaviour. Pupils are clear about what is expected and follow safety instructions and procedures well. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good. The written work produced by pupils is of variable quality and quantity with presentation skills, particularly of diagrams, in need of improvement. The detailed marking policy introduced since the last inspection is applied well by most staff and marking now contains grades, corrections and comments, and some suggestions for improvement. Development of specific targets is needed to help individual pupils improve further. The range in the tasks set for homework does not always provide sufficient intellectual challenge for some pupils, or give them many opportunities to develop skills of independent learning.
- 148 The last report contained many areas that were specified as weaknesses. With the appointment of several key staff, including a new head of department, there has been very good improvement particularly in the last year. The team has worked well together to address matters of health and safety, documentation and marking, as well as improving the laboratories visually with colourful displays. Since her appointment, the experienced technician has worked hard, together with the teachers, to organise the laboratory and preparation areas. The storage and labelling of chemicals and the identification of risk assessments specifically mentioned in the last inspection report have also been addressed.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- The very good leadership and management.
- The department's drive for, and commitment to, continued improvement.
- The very good quality of the teaching and learning.
- The pupils' very good attitudes and the way in which teachers treat them as artists.
- The improved standards by the end of Year 11.

Areas for improvement

- Information and communication technology resources and the contribution the subject makes to pupils' learning in information and communication technology.
- Technician support.

- Library resources.

- 149 GCSE results A*-C in 2000 were well below the national average. However, significant work on analysis and targeting for improvement over the past couple of years led to a doubling of results at this level from 30 per cent in 2000 to 66 per cent in 2001, and this represents a significant improvement. The consolidation of these standards is supported by lesson observations. The three-year trend from 1999 to 2001 shows a steady improvement for both boys and girls, but particularly for boys. Consequently, there was little difference between the achievements of boys and girls in 2001. Good numbers of pupils, averaging over 40, are now taking art as a GCSE option. Over the three years since the last inspection, all pupils entered for art gained a pass.
- 150 Teachers' assessments in 2000 for pupils at the end of Year 9 show attainment below the national average, particularly for the higher levels. In 2001, however, 99 per cent gained Level 4 or above, 85 per cent the expected Level 5 and above, and 38 per cent a higher Level 6 or 7. This again shows good improvement, which was supported by inspection evidence. Standards in lessons seen were above the national average for pupils by the end of Year 11. Achievement for pupils is very good in all year groups.
- 151 Standards in Year 11 confirm the trend for improvement and the teachers' predictions of pupils' potential examination grades for summer 2002. The analysis of pupils' performance and data is good and enables both teacher and pupil to set realistic, but challenging, targets for improvement. Consequently, pupils' critical and self-analytical skills are above expectations; pupils know what they must do to improve. Pupils also have fun in learning because they are valued by teachers as fellow artists. This approach is encouraged right from the start of their course, for example, in Year 7 where pupils were coming to the end of their first assessment unit. This work is based on observational drawing and re-interpretation work such as in paint and collage. The unit is well designed to capture the new pupils' interest and enthusiasm, as well as providing teachers with valuable information about pupils' standards and experience in a range of media. This work is methodical, reinforces key artwork skills and techniques successfully and gives pupils the confidence to make good progress.
- 152 One of the core elements in the department's success is its emphasis on the use and maintenance of sketchbooks as real working documents. These are not only used for homework and class-work, but for the collection of a wide range of image resources. Visual images, draft ideas and experimentation work is also very well annotated to explain the pupils' creative thinking. The overall standard and use of sketchbooks by pupils are of high quality. Consequently, by the end of Year 9, pupils developing ideas for the design of a CD cover are able to provide themselves with a wealth of visual information and sketch-work ideas. Such work also illustrates the way in which pupils can sustain their investigations.
- 153 By the end of Year 11, pupils are very technically competent in handling a range of media through graphics and art and design courses. This was evident in a lesson developing ideas for a project on insects. There was some very fine sketch-work by pupils using, for example, ink, watercolour, pencil and pastels, which was also extremely imaginative. Pupils were well prepared to translate their two-dimensional ideas into three-dimensional realisations. The self-confidence and sense of achievement experienced by the pupils through their artwork was well illustrated by one Year 11 girl who stated: *'You know, when I first started here I couldn't draw ... faces or anything ... now I can!'*

- 154 There is a strong emphasis on the personal and individual development of pupils. Consequently, the needs of those with special educational needs and English as an additional language are well met and they make very good progress in the subject. For example, in a Year 9 lesson, where all but one pupil was identified with special educational needs and although technical artwork skills were below average, there was a real creative 'buzz'. This high quality provision resulted from a thorough understanding by the teacher of the pupils' strengths and weaknesses. Pupils had the confidence to be involved in open discussion and were fully included in the range of artistic activities expected of those in upper sets. This resulted in excellence in the pupils' attitudes and in their quality of learning. Although gifted and talented pupils are not yet specifically identified, the department's approach is such that all pupils are encouraged to challenge themselves effectively, and the progress made by higher attainers is also very good.
- 155 Art makes a good contribution to the development of pupils' literacy skills and its strategy is well considered. Teachers emphasise the correct use of specialist vocabulary in written as well as spoken form. From Year 7, pupils create their own glossary of art terms in their sketchbooks. The subject also contributes well to numeracy development, although at present this is incidental rather than planned. In one Year 9 lesson, for example, the terms circle, radius and diameter were being used naturally when illustrating the use of a circle cutter.
- 156 The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good and is a strength of the department. This in turn engenders very good attitudes and behaviour on the part of the pupils. Teaching and learning are at least good and very good or better in 80 per cent of lessons. They were good in a third of the lessons seen by the end of Year 9 and very good or excellent in the remaining two-thirds. By the end of Year 11, half the lessons were very good and the other half excellent. There are very good working relationships between teachers and pupils. There are high expectations and, consequently, pupils show high levels of involvement and commitment. They make very good progress because they are self-motivated. Introductions to lessons are clear and objectives shared. Pupils' understanding is assessed through expert questioning techniques. In the best teaching there is a flexibility of approach which allows the exploration of potentially rich seams of artistic discussion. There is a very good approach to individual teaching on a one-to-one basis and close attention is paid to the needs of the individual. Pupils understand what it is they have to do and the teaching provides them with the skills and techniques to successfully complete the task.
- 157 The head of department is very good at analysing the demands of the examination and designing a programme of work that effectively matches its requirements and benefits the pupils. The chosen scheme of work clearly provides pupils with significant personal rewards as artists and pupils are now going on to study the subject in further education in increasing numbers.
- 158 Leadership and management of the department are very good. The department is well focused on enabling pupils to achieve well and improve their standards. There is both the determination and capacity to succeed. Improvement since the last inspection has been good and the department is well placed to improve further. An excellent example of improvement is in the development of three-dimensional work through the establishment of a school 'sculpture trail' using millennium funding to support the work of pupils alongside visiting artists. However, the department still lacks technician support and the everyday preparation of materials detracts from time available for teaching tasks. The range of art books in the library requires

development to support fully independent learning and research; better reference material is required on major artists and multicultural art. Although pupils are provided with sound opportunities to use information and communication technology within the subject, the capacity of the department's hardware and software to meet the demands of the National Curriculum is insufficient and requires updating.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- All pupils are achieving well.
- All pupils make progress because of the well-structured courses provided.
- Programmes of work address both designing and making.
- Teaching is good with a good range of effective methods being used.
- Teachers' commitment to enabling pupils to produce their best work.
- Pupils have a very positive attitude to their work.
- Assessment methods are developing well and being used to guide future planning.

Areas for improvement

- Raise standards in the subject.
- Continue to improve the use of ICT.
- Develop the use of literacy and numeracy.

159 Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 were in line with the national average in 2000, but have been consistently below this level in recent years. From inspection evidence, standards are still below the national average, but improving. This is because of the improved courses now being offered and good teaching. Overall standards at GCSE have been consistently well below the national average for A*-C grades, but have fluctuated between the different design and technology subjects. For example, in 2000, results for GCSE resistant materials improved considerably, and textiles maintained a position closer to the national average. However, in 2001 there was a decrease in the number of A*-C grades in these two subjects and, although the results for electronics and food technology improved slightly, overall the proportion of A*-C grades was well below the national average. Very few pupils achieve the higher grades, but the percentage of A*-G grades is consistently high and this indicates that most pupils are supported by the structured courses being followed and therefore achieve well.

160 Attainment in the lessons seen was satisfactory and this, together with folders of pupils' previous work, indicates that overall attainment is satisfactory throughout the school. All pupils, including those with special needs, develop knowledge and understanding of the design process and are keen to make practical projects in all of the design and technology subjects. A structured approach is now being used consistently across design and technology subjects. Together with the good teaching, this is very supportive of all pupils. Consequently, pupils with learning difficulties and English as an additional language achieve well. Both designing and making are taught well through the recently developed course for Years 7 to 9. All pupils in Years 10 and 11 are following carefully guided courses that cover the examination requirements. Most pupils produce well-structured coursework folders and the work of higher attaining pupils is good and sometimes very good.

- 161 All pupils achieve well as they move through the school because the curriculum for all of the design technology subjects is well structured and well taught. The focused tasks set enable knowledge to be gained about safe working practice, materials, components and ingredients and how these are used in practical work. For example, in Year 7 pupils are able to identify potential health and safety hazards in a kitchen, make judgements and write their own notes. Pupils do market research about take-away food, carry out sensory analysis of pasta and investigate fabrics in Year 8. Good use is made of a number of recording techniques, for example spider diagrams, and results of investigations are often recorded well in chart and graph form. Written work and drawing skills vary with pupils' ability, but are satisfactory overall. The structured approach used by teachers to address coursework by the end of Year 11 enables all pupils to access the requirements of the examination and achieve well. In the best folders the quality of research, analysis, and development and evaluation of ideas is good. Presentation of finished folder work is often good. Practical work is often good across the range of materials. Overall, all pupils, including those with special educational needs and pupils of lower prior attainment, make good progress because they are very well supported through individual help and advice. This encourages and enables them to use their technical abilities well.
- 162 Overall, teaching is good. All teaching is satisfactory or better and sometimes it is very good. Teachers have very good technical knowledge and a clear understanding of National Curriculum requirements. Their knowledge and understanding enables focussed teaching, including demonstrations, that sets high expectations of pupils' work. Demonstrations are very effective in guiding and reinforcing pupils learning. For example, in a Year 8 textiles lesson pupils were given very good guidance about the evaluation of existing products before they prepared and delivered a good oral presentation to the rest of the group. Overall, planning is good. In the majority of lessons, time is used well and a range of teaching methods are used very effectively. A particular strength of good teaching is the individual support that pupils receive in most lessons, which enables pupils of all abilities to focus their learning and make progress. Some basic skills in the use of language, numbers and computers are being included in pupils' work, but there are still insufficient opportunities for pupils to practise these skills in a progressive, planned programme of work. Marking of work is good and regular written assessment of pupils' work, particularly by the end of Year 11, is effective in enabling pupils to improve their work.
- 163 Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Most pupils respond well to teachers' high expectations of behaviour and are keen to do well in their work. Most concentrate very well in lessons and many Year 10 and 11 pupils spend considerable time and effort outside of lessons in improving their work. The progress made by all pupils, including those with special needs and lower prior attainment, is a positive reflection of the effort and concentration that they give to their work.
- 164 Pupils work well in groups when investigating existing products in textiles, which results in very effective verbal presentations of their evaluation to the whole class. Elements of the design process are developed in Year 9, when pupils carry out research for the electronic circuits and neck warmers. Use of computer-generated work is included when researching the Internet, using electronic sewing machines and the making of electronic circuits. Therefore, pupils have good opportunities to use computers, although this is still an area for further development. The use of exercise books enables a good record of work to be kept, but restricts the development of drawing and presentation skills.

165 Programmes of pupils' work are being developed well and statutory requirements are fully met. However, the use of computers for control, computer-aided design and manufacture requires further development. Leadership and management are good and close co-operation between teachers is enabling good courses to be developed and standards to be raised. Departmental documentation is good and there is a positive approach to monitoring the development and improvement of the subject. Schemes of work are well planned and being developed, but could be improved by further consideration of the progressive use of numeracy, literacy and the use of computers to help pupils improve their basic skills. Staffing is good and teachers make very effective use of the good accommodation and resources.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- The teaching is good.
- The interesting activities.
- The effective management.
- The increasing popularity of the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Raise standards, particularly of girls by the end of Year 11.
- Pupils need more detailed advice on how to improve their work.
- Activities need to be more carefully matched to the needs of the highest and lowest attaining pupils.

166 The 2000 teacher assessments of pupils at the end of Year 9 indicate that attainment is below the national average. The provisional results for 2001 show an improvement, with standards much closer to the national average. Girls perform less well than boys, which is the opposite of the national situation. The school is aware of the problem and has implemented appropriate strategies to overcome this.

167 The scrutiny of pupil's work and observation during the inspection indicates that the number of pupils achieving Level 5 at the end of Year 9 is now close to the national average. There are fewer pupils achieving levels above this than is the case nationally. However, this represents satisfactory progress, since attainment on entry to the school is well below the national average. Pupils of all abilities quickly acquire mapping skills at a good rate. They are able to use them to good effect in subsequent years. By the end of Year 9, pupils understand the features that are typical of less economically developed countries. During the inspection, they discovered that judgements could be made about a country's stage of development based on birth rate and life expectancy figures. Higher attaining pupils can compare features of underdeveloped countries with their own. However, they need to be able to suggest reasons for these differences in order to achieve the highest levels.

168 The number of pupils achieving A*-G grades in the 2000 GCSE examinations was broadly in line with the national average. However, the number achieving A*-C grades was well below the national average. Boys achieved higher standards than girls. Observation of lessons and an examination of coursework indicate that standards are improving. Year 11 pupils are on target to achieve standards slightly below the national average this year. The standard of coursework is improving and pupils are showing a pride in the presentation of their work. The new head of department has carefully analysed the reasons for pupils' underachievement in the

past. Improved coursework guidance, more informative assessments of pupils' work, frequent opportunities to practise past examination questions, and revision classes after school are all having a positive impact on pupils' learning. The department is on track to raise standards of all pupils.

- 169 Pupils have a sound factual knowledge of all the topics covered because teachers are secure in their own subject knowledge and provide clear explanations. Pupils' enquiry and analytical skills are less well developed and this prevents them achieving the higher grades in the GCSE examination. The new scheme of work and more varied teaching methods are ensuring that pupils now have more chances to develop these skills. Pupils do a lot of work in the time available and present it neatly and accurately.
- 170 Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language make good progress due to the extra help they receive from teachers, support teachers and specially designed worksheets. Teachers consciously plan work, which will enable these pupils to achieve success and an understanding of the basic geographical skills and knowledge required to tackle the geography examination. Higher attaining pupils are regularly given extra work, but would make greater progress if they were asked to take more responsibility for asking their own questions about the topics being studied.
- 171 Overall, the quality of teaching is good. It is never less than satisfactory and some of it is very good. Teachers are keen to increase the popularity of the subject and have canvassed pupil's opinions to find out what interests them most and which teaching methods they prefer. They have adapted their teaching styles taking these preferences into account. Consequently, far more pupils have opted to study GCSE geography this year. Similarly, the number of Year 9 girls intending to opt for geography at the end of this year is much higher than in the past. Teachers have planned to include fieldwork in all years, rather than just in Year 11. Pupils say this has made the subject more interesting and enjoyable. As a result, their motivation is high and consequently, their work is carefully presented and they achieve a lot in the time available. Teachers manage pupils well. The result is a quiet and purposeful working atmosphere in all lessons.
- 172 Teachers are fully aware of the contribution the subject can make to the development of literacy skills in the pupils. They consciously plan a good range of activities to achieve this and they are successful. Geography also makes a positive contribution to the development of pupil's numeracy skills.
- 173 Teachers carefully plan work so that it is matched well to the different teaching groups. However, they are aware of the need to further refine this so that lower attaining pupils receive more tightly structured activities, which enable them to achieve the intended learning outcome in a series of small steps. Similarly, higher attaining pupils need more challenging activities, rather than additional work at the same level. The teaching is sometimes too didactic, which prevents pupils using the higher level geographical skills.
- 174 Teachers conscientiously mark all pupils' work following the school's guidelines. However, they have realised the need to develop their current good practice. This needs to ensure that pupils are made aware of exactly how they can improve their work. Homework is set regularly and is always relevant. The teachers are very conscientious and freely give their time to provide after school revision classes and support with the completion of coursework.

175 There has been a good level of improvement since the last inspection. The geography rooms are now close together and both teachers are appropriately qualified specialists. The department is effectively managed. The new head of department has correctly identified the strengths and weaknesses in the subject. The strategies introduced to improve results and the popularity of the subject are already showing clear signs of success. Schemes of work have been written following recent national guidance and these are ensuring a consistency of approach across the department. The quality of teaching has improved and increasingly meets the needs of pupils of different prior attainment. Assessment is now conscientiously carried out on a regular basis. The results are carefully analysed so that the department can target areas of potential weakness and ensure pupils are achieving their full potential. Further refinement is planned in order to increase its effectiveness. The department is well placed to improve further.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Teaching is generally good or very good.
- Pupils' learning in history is good; sometimes it is very good.
- Pupils' achievements in history at GCSE are now very good.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- The leadership and management of the department are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Seek ways of stimulating reasoning skills through discussion and debate in which pupils play a more active part.
- Work with other subject departments to develop pupils' ability to communicate formally, both orally and in writing, using appropriate historical language.

176 In lessons, standards in history are generally in line with national expectations throughout the school. Pupils with higher prior attainment achieve good standards. They show well-developed skills of research, of evaluating and using sources, and of drawing inferences from evidence. Standards of communication and presentation of reasoned argument are developing satisfactorily for some pupils, but could be better if all pupils were given further opportunities to extend these skills.

177 Pupils' achievements at GCSE are very good, although the number of pupils taking history by the end of Year 11 remains small. In the two years since the last inspection, the percentage of pupils achieving an A*-C grade has risen from 45 per cent to 71 per cent in 2001. Many of these pupils achieved A or B grades.

178 Teaching is very good in Years 7 to 9 and generally good by the end of Year 11. The head of department has established strong teaching routines, with materials to support them, which are used effectively by the other teacher of history. Lessons are well structured with clear objectives that focus on what pupils are expected to learn. Skilful use of questioning helps pupils to recall knowledge and demonstrate their understanding of events and causes. The planned development of knowledge and skills is very thorough and is supported by excellent materials. As a result, pupils build well on their knowledge within lessons and over time.

179 Pupils enjoy history lessons and respond with interest and concentration. They use the writing frames and sources of evidence provided with increasing confidence and

grasp of their significance. Pupils' skills of interrogating and evaluating evidence are particularly strong as a result of good teaching and many pupils can give cogent, albeit informal, explanations of what the evidence shows and how far it is likely to be valid. Their skills of communication are less well developed and, on occasion, there are too few opportunities in lessons for them to develop their understanding through group or class discussion and debate. This hinders the less confident pupils, whereas pupils of higher prior attainment respond readily to the teachers' questions.

- 180 Leadership and management of the department are very good. Documentation is thorough and policies are consistently applied. A strength of the department is the assessment process, which the head of department has developed and is used by both teachers. This is closely related to National Curriculum requirements and helps pupils to focus well on what they need to do in order to improve. Samples of written work seen confirm that these procedures are effective in securing improvement and raising standards. The head of department has recently been awarded a government grant to carry out active research on how to develop thinking skills. This will meet the needs of pupils very well.
- 181 Pupils experience a good range of curricular activities, including surveys involving local history. They use information and communication technology in a variety of ways, searching for relevant information on the Internet and CD-ROM, generating graphs and word processing pieces of extended writing. Overall, the department has made very good improvement since the last inspection in standards, teaching, learning and management.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology is good.

Strengths

- The standards of all pupils in the 2001 examinations and the continuing high standard of use of computers in office applications and GNVQ courses.
- The pupils are achieving well.
- The good teaching.
- Pupils have a very positive attitude to their work.
- Good use of accommodation.
- The number of computers available and the good work of the technician, which supports developments well.

Areas for improvement

- Raise standards by the end of Year 9.
- Increase the use of computer based work carried out in other subjects.
- Increase pupils' opportunities to experience measurement and control.

- 182 The results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 have been well below those reported nationally. Current work indicates that standards are improving, but are still below the national average. GCSE results for information and communication technology have been well below the national average for the percentage attaining

A*-C grades, but improved considerably in 2001 to be in line with the national average. Results for A*-G grades have been consistently better than the national average and this indicates that most pupils are achieving well. More boys take the GCSE course and as a consequence get most of the A*-C grades, but very few pupils get the highest grades. Pupils taking the GCSE office applications course have been consistently successful. The three and five year averages for A*-C grades at over 70 per cent is well above the national average and the 100 per cent record for A*-G grades for the last three years indicate that all of these pupils are achieving well.

- 183 Attainment in the information and communication technology lessons seen in Years 7 to 9, together with work folders of pupils' previous work, indicate that attainment overall is still below the national expectation, but improving. By the end of Year 9, pupils are developing knowledge and skills in the use of word processing, desktop publishing, spreadsheets, and databases. However, there is not enough use of measurement and control. Most pupils, including those with special needs, demonstrate confidence when using computers. They can remember procedures and use their knowledge well in set tasks. Year 7 work includes successful word processing of text. Year 8 use desktop publishing skills well when producing newspapers with imported pictures and word-processed text. They also use spreadsheets, gain experience in entering data and use formulas to make calculations. Some pupils progress to simple modelling if they reach the extension task. The 'Dracula Project' in Year 9 provides the opportunity for research and to present this information for a specific audience as well as creating and interrogating a simple database. All pupils, including those who have special educational needs and English as an additional language, make satisfactory progress because they are following a well-structured course and receive good individual teaching in lessons. More able pupils work through tasks more quickly, attain higher standards and make better progress. However, when work is not sufficiently well planned to match their prior attainment some lower attaining pupils find it difficult to relate to, and engage in, the work set.
- 184 Current work in the Years 10 and 11 course indicates that attainment is improving in the GCSE information and communication technology course and being maintained at a high level in GCSE office applications. Pupils build on their satisfactory achievement in previous years. They continue to extend their knowledge and skills in set projects. Year 11 coursework indicates that pupils are able to demonstrate some individuality through interpretations of the work. Pupils follow sound strategies for identifying and analysing problems. They word process their notes well and identify equipment and computer software that are most appropriate for their individual projects. They include applications of spreadsheets, databases and desktop publishing to enhance the content and presentation of work. Pupils of all prior attainment, including those with special needs, make good progress because they have access to structured courses, which are taught well.
- 185 There is good use of word processing skills and desktop publishing in English and modern foreign languages. Aspects of measurement and control are included in both science and design and technology. There is increasing use of research through use of the Internet and CD-ROM in subjects, such as history and religious education. Word processing is carried out in surveys for geography and the results are presented effectively by using computer-generated graphs. Both music and art use computer equipment effectively to support their creative work and specific programmes for supporting literacy and numeracy are used by pupils with special educational needs. Good key skills are developed in GNVQ courses and the wide variety of work carried out in office applications is particularly strong. The use of

computers is clearly developing with some specific activities in the majority of subjects. However, at present this developing good practice is not embedded enough in the overall planning of all subjects. Management arrangements for the whole school co-ordination of information and communication technology are unsatisfactory.

- 186 The overall quality of teaching is good and as a consequence learning is good throughout the school. Teaching is never less than satisfactory and in some lessons it is very good. Teachers have very good technical knowledge, which enables them to deliver good class presentations and provide technical support to pupils during lessons. An appropriate range of teaching methods is used and in better lessons there is more detailed planning to focus the work of individual pupils. Good levels of individual support are built into all lessons and this, together with the structured approach to project work, provides a very good framework for pupils' learning. Pupils of lower prior attainment and those with special educational needs are particularly well supported. Management of pupils and expectations of behaviour are very good and result in a very positive working atmosphere in lessons. Attitudes and behaviour are very good. Marking and assessment procedures provide regular guidance, which enables pupils to improve their work. Homework is set, but in some cases is not substantial enough with the result that it does not provide good support for class work.
- 187 Pupils develop their computer skills and show good knowledge of computer procedures. They are developing confidence in using a number of computer programmes with increasing independence. They work at a good pace and show interest and good concentration throughout most lessons. Pupils respond positively to the structured approach being used and most pupils engage enthusiastically in the tasks set and are keen to use computers. They show respect for their work, the facilities and other pupils in the class.
- 188 The present programme for information and communication technology lessons provides good coverage of National Curriculum statutory requirements. Aspects of the use of computers for measurement and control need further development. There is also good use of computers in a number of other subjects. However, at present this work is insufficiently planned and co-ordinated into a progressive experience for the application of computers across the school.
- 189 The school has continued to maintain good resourcing for information and communication technology across the school. The number of computers available is very good, being above the national average. Access to these is currently being extended through the development of a new computer room. However, the poor access to computers reduces the computer-based work in a number of subjects. Teachers currently teaching and supporting the formal programme of information and communication technology lessons, including office applications, continue to provide a substantial programme for information and communication technology development. However, the school has still not established a coherent and detailed plan that provides ways of co-ordinating, monitoring and evaluating whole school curriculum development and use of staffing and resources. This situation is unsatisfactory and needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Pupils' achievements at GCSE continue to be well above the average for the school and are close to the national average.
- Teaching is very good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory to very good by the end of Year 11, in both French and German.
- Pupils' aural understanding of French and German is very good.
- Inclusion of pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- Leadership and management of the department are very good.

Areas for improvement

- The development of the use of National Curriculum criteria in assessing pupils' progress, linking this to the identification of clear learning objectives in the planning.
- Review the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 in order to provide a wider range of stimulus materials.

- 190 Standards overall are at least satisfactory and are sometimes very good in both languages. By the end of Year 9, standards of attainment are in line with national expectations for the majority of pupils. In Year 9, the standards achieved by pupils of higher prior attainment, who are just beginning to learn German, are well above national expectations and are very good.
- 191 Standards in French are below national expectations in Year 10, but are in line with them by Year 11, as are those in German. Over the last three years, the level of attainment of grades A*-C in GCSE has remained between 41 and 43 per cent of those entered. In 2001 the level of attainment of grades A*-D is 75 per cent. This is a substantial rise on previous years. However, the standards seen in some lessons by the end of Year 11 suggest that some pupils are not yet achieving their full potential.
- 192 Teaching is generally very good. The department is a close-working group in which teachers share ideas and routines with a consistency that leads pupils to learn very well. All teachers use the foreign language throughout lessons at a natural pace, which helps pupils develop very good aural understanding. Excellent classroom routines are established to ensure that all pupils use the foreign language throughout. The use of English by a pupil is pounced on by other pupils who then set a forfeit for the offender, always requiring him or her to speak in the foreign language. The lively and enjoyable atmosphere these routines create, together with the zest and energy shown by the teachers, are strengths of the department.
- 193 As a result of expert, well-planned and often exhilarating teaching, in both French and German, pupils of all abilities learn to speak with confidence within familiar topics. The department's implementation of a TALK project, aimed at encouraging confident, spontaneous speech, is already having a positive impact. In a group of Year 7 pupils with special educational needs, all pupils spoke simple phrases and successfully matched colours to classroom objects. Their level of concentration throughout the lesson was a direct result of the teacher's skilful use of varied strategies and pace. In a Year 9 German lesson for boys who began learning this term, the pupils' interest and enthusiasm led them to speak without self-consciousness and to attain a very good level of aural understanding.
- 194 Pupils are provided with a rich variety of experiences throughout the school and are beginning to use information and communication technology effectively, especially when making presentations. However, by the end of Year 11 the curriculum is, sometimes rather narrow because of its focus on familiar topics and pupils need to experience a wider range of stimuli.

- 195 The department is very well led and managed. This is a key factor in the cohesiveness of the department and in the continuing interest of all its teachers in developmental work. The link with a local teacher training college is proving of good use to teachers and to the students they mentor. Documentation is thorough and policies are consistently followed. Assessment of pupils' progress is conscientious, although further development is needed to ensure that pupils take greater responsibility for their own progress. Resources are well managed.
- 196 The department makes a valued contribution to pupils' social and cultural development through the school's links with schools in Hungary, France and Austria, and through associated visits and exchanges. Overall, the department has made a good improvement since the last inspection.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Teaching is very good; it both challenges and inspires the pupils.
- Pupils show great enthusiasm for the subject and are very well motivated.
- The department is well managed and led with vision.
- Very good level of resources.
- Many pupils are taking up the opportunity to learn instruments.

Areas which could be improved

- Ensure practice rooms are adequate for the purpose of instrumental teaching and for small group music making.
- Opportunities for pupils in Years 7 to 9 to use computers.

- 197 The pupils' attainment by the end of Year 9 is good. Many pupils are attaining National Curriculum Levels 5 and 6 and most attain at least Level 4. There is little information about pupils' attainment levels on entry to the school in Year 7, but inspection evidence suggests that pupils' achievement by the end of Year 9 is good to very good. By the end of Year 8, pupils are able to handle chords on a keyboard with commendable accuracy and confidence, as shown in a class performance of a popular song. By the end of Year 9, pupils listen to a recording of their own group performance and, using appropriate language, intelligently discuss what they should do to improve their performance next time. Behaviour is very good and almost all pupils show a very positive attitude towards the subject.
- 198 Attainment by the end of Year 11 is also good. The numbers of pupils studying music by the end of Year 11 has been very small for a number of years; consequently, it is inappropriate to make any comparison with national standards.

However, all pupils taking music GCSE within the last four years have achieved a grade C or higher. Standards in the present Year 11 are good.

- 199 Improvements since the last inspection are good. Good use of available funds has enabled the department to purchase a considerable number of new keyboards, guitars and percussion instruments. The considerable investment in resources has had a very significant influence upon the standards of teaching and learning. The overall attainment by the end of Year 9 has improved to be now at least, or even above, national expectations, and lower attaining pupils do particularly well. They have a good understanding of the technical requirements of tasks and the achievement of many pupils is very good. In the present year 10 there has been a significant increase in the number of pupils taking music and several of them show excellent instrumental competency in group music making.
- 200 The standard of teaching in music is always very good and is sometimes excellent in all years. Lessons are skilfully planned, move at a good pace and equipment is well used so that pupils are engaged in purposeful and interesting activities all the time. The key to this very real success is the teacher's very good subject knowledge and his technical skill on keyboard and guitar. His own enthusiasm has a very strong effect upon the pupils' learning. In a project about using basic chords, a Year 8 class of higher attainers showed clearly that they knew how to build chords and could recognise the sound of different chords. They could find them quickly on the keyboard and then use them effectively in a performance of 'Rock around the Clock'. In a lower attaining Year 9 class, containing several pupils with special educational needs, there was much evidence of the very competent development of skills in playing tuned percussion. The pupils' concentration and co-ordination was remarkable. In a performance of a 12 bar blues song 'Let's dance' the ability of all the pupils to improvise effectively without hesitation was excellent. This was evidence of the high level of teaching. The activity is well structured so as to give encouraging results. These pupils are making very good progress and their achievement is excellent.
- 201 There is clear evidence of considerable teacher-led development of musical skills throughout the school. In a Year 10 improvisation session, rehearsing for an assembly performance the following day, the teacher showed very good ability in encouraging individual pupils' technical understanding of the processes of improvisation. The pupils were very responsive to the quiet but authoritative lead in specifically targeting individuals with tasks that were within their technical grasp. As a consequence, the standard of the performance noticeably improved throughout the rehearsal.
- 202 The provision of facilities for using information and communication technology by the end of Year 11 is very good. In Years 10 and 11 a clear progression in the development of skills is evident in the use of musical software. The pupils show considerable competency and independence in using the program as a tool in shaping their musical compositions. These compositions have a maturity that is certainly influenced by the pupils' experience of both using the excellent equipment within the department and of the very good, well informed, teaching. The number of computers available in the department, however, is too small, nor has the department any suitable software for the development of information and communication technology skills in Years 7 to 9. The very good performance work at this stage, much of it using excellent technology, ought to be enhanced by an appropriate scheme for developing the use of computers as a part of the learning experience.

- 203 The music department is very well managed and led. It is well organised and there are many chances for pupils to take part in musical activities. A growing number of pupils are taking advantage of the school's own arrangements of employing teachers of instrumental music and singing. Standards of instrumental teaching are good. Excellent standards of kit-drumming were heard and particularly good standards were attained by a Year 8 brass group, which acquitted itself excellently in an assembly performance. Another, equally excellent, assembly performance was given by the school choir, whose members benefit from the considerable skills of a visiting singing teacher. The joyful enthusiasm and the well-developed tone of the choir were most noteworthy and are an excellent testimony to the quality of the teaching.
- 204 This very good level of teaching is achieved despite the very poor accommodation available for instrumental instruction. The rooms are so small that it is sometimes impossible for the teacher to be actually in the room with the group being taught and, consequently, has to direct from the corridor instead! The resultant exposure of the sound can be distracting to other areas of the school. However, accommodation for music as a class activity is excellent and the arrangement of the very good equipment within the room is visually striking. It is a particularly strong element in engendering a strong enthusiasm for music making within the pupils and in the promotion of the high standards of learning which are evident within this department.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Standards at GCSE examination and other issues from the previous inspection report have been improved considerably.
- Excellent relationships.
- Teaching is good.
- A wide range of good quality experiences in lessons, which are well supported by extra curricular activities.
- Leadership and a very good team approach amongst staff.

Areas for improvement

- Drainage of the field.
- Surface of the hard court area.
- The newly surfaced area needs to be further improved to make it suitable for use for ball games.

- 205 By the end of Year 9 and Year 11, pupils' standards match national expectations and are sometimes higher. This is an improvement since the last inspection. It is due to better planning and consistently good teaching, which is matched to the pupils' needs and ensures that their learning is effective.
- 206 The year 2000 GCSE examination results were in line with national averages. All 30 pupils who took the examination gained a pass grade, with nearly 54 per cent attaining the higher A*-C grades. The standards of work of current pupils studying GCSE are also at average levels. Attainment has risen considerably over the last two years from well below average to the present average levels. In lessons seen, pupils are doing well as a result of effective teaching. The lesson structure and activities are effectively matched to the pupils' individual needs. Targets to influence

their further learning are shared with them. There is a good balance between teacher and pupil input. Well-prepared worksheets and reference to relevant texts help pupils to investigate and add to their understanding.

- 207 The school has recently improved the standards of girls physical education by arranging for them to be taught together for certain aspects of the work. They can follow the same sports that the boys do, for example football. The school also provides the more traditional range of sports for girls and boys, for example netball and rugby respectively.
- 208 In their practical studies of physical education, pupils across the school are achieving well. They are given a good range of opportunities to develop their skills. The good lesson evaluations by teachers and support staff uphold their learning very effectively. In a Year 7 swimming lesson, the pupils could all swim at least a length of the pool using a chosen stroke. They showed a very good awareness of the use of legs, arms and position of face and body in the water. Above average standards were attained. Learning was accelerated by the very good organisation and teamwork between the teacher and the support member of staff. This enabled the pupils to employ a range of strokes to improve their techniques very successfully. An example of the excellent relationships, seen across most lessons, was illustrated at the end of this lesson. A boy who had never managed to get himself out of the pool from the deep end before, managed to do so. His achievements were celebrated by all the pupils, who spontaneously clapped his effort. These excellent relationships are a significant reason for the very good attitudes shown by all pupils across the school.
- 209 One Year 9 football lesson was organised in an excellent manner with pupils striving very hard to improve their standards, encouraged by the praise and congratulations they received. Here, the very good teaching included an evaluation of their skills. There was an excellent team approach with the boys demonstrating good control and fluency, improving and developing their performances as the lesson progressed. In a Year 11 badminton lesson, boys and girls made very good progress due to very good teaching. Across the school, pupils are always attentive and work at a very good pace with high degrees of enthusiasm.
- 210 There are many chances, both in lessons and through extra-curricular activities, for girls and boys to work together. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make very good progress. This is due to the high levels of help all pupils receive coupled with the very good identification of need. The school's policy of inclusion is very well implemented.
- 211 Overall, teaching is at least good and as a result pupils learn well. In all lessons seen during the inspection it never fell below satisfactory and some were very good and sometimes excellent. Lessons proceed at a good pace with clear objectives matched to the pupils' needs. Lesson planning is good and contains details which help to ensure that teaching is mostly of a good quality. Expectations are high and teachers and support staff use a wide range of good methods and explanations to support the good learning and achievements of the pupils. Teachers show very good applied subject knowledge.
- 212 Leadership and management of the subject is good, which is a significant improvement on the unsatisfactory position at the last inspection. This good leadership well supports the good teaching and learning of the pupils. A good scheme of work and well-planned and assessed lessons support the good teaching effectively. Health and safety checks, which were criticised at the last inspection,

are now carried out regularly by the head of department. Overall, there has been a very good improvement since the last inspection. This is due to the head of department's effective leadership and the very good teamwork and efforts amongst all the staff.

- 213 Resources and accommodation are satisfactory. However, over many years the playing fields have not been suitably drained and for part of the year they cannot be used as they are too wet. The hard court area also has an unsuitable surface. In dry weather it easily breaks up and in wet weather water pools too easily. The newly surfaced area intended for use as a netball court and for other ball games still has to be suitably completed. It is to the credit of the school that it has played its competitive netball matches always away from home, yet in competition with other schools it has still succeeded in being champions or finalists from Years 7 to 10 over the past few years.
- 214 Pupils leave the school having received a wide range of good opportunities to succeed at physical education. This is seen in the large number of successes boys and girls achieve across a wide range of sports and in competition with other schools. Over 50 per cent of pupils go on to a local college to study some kind of sport and leisure course. A significant number then continue their love for sports by pursuing courses leading to sports related careers, for example teaching or training instructors. Others successfully pursue a particular sport, for example joining a soccer academy, or competing in national competitions. These successes provide impressive examples of the excellent relationships the school generates. They also illustrate the successful efforts of the staff to help all of their pupils to realise their talents and achieve their best.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- The good design and management of the course for religious education up to Year 9.
- The good opportunity for pupils to study full or short GCSE courses.
- The inclusive approach of the department in enabling pupils of all abilities to succeed.
- The very good quality of teaching and learning.
- The very good leadership of the head of department and commitment to continued improvement.

Areas for improvement

- Review of the subject policy to ensure more direct links between religious education and whole school policies.
- Information and communication technology resources.
- Religious education library resources.
- Provision for display outside the main religious education room.

- 215 In Years 7 to 9, standards in lessons seen were above the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Achievement is good. This is due to the introduction of critical skills strategies into the religious education course. This approach has a firm focus on encouraging independent learning in pupils through, for example, problem solving, decision-making, critical and creative thinking, communication, organisation, and leadership opportunities in collaborative group work. This is being successfully achieved through target setting, problem and 'challenge' based learning and teacher guidance. For example, one Year 9 group was setting targets for both classwork

and homework in order to meet the challenge set by the teacher for the next lesson. Pupils see themselves as a 'quality audience' and frequently use the words 'learning' and 'achievement' in their discussions. The department's approach is clearly improving standards by the end of Year 9. These improvements are gradually making a difference throughout the rest of the school.

- 216 Performance in the GCSE full course A*-C was below the national average in 2000 and well below in 2001. However, analysis shows that the 21 pupils who sat the GCSE short course in religious education and taking additional units in their own time depressed these results. The 15 full course pupils attained A*-C passes broadly in line with the national average. Whilst the low numbers make it hard to establish a pattern, boys achieved better than girls with half gaining an A*-C as opposed to one-fifth of girls. There is a three-year trend of steady improvement in boys' results. Pupils from minority ethnic groups did particularly well with 83 per cent gaining A*-C grades. The department's approach in entering all pupils of all ability levels who show an interest in taking the examination is a very good example of its approach to equal opportunities. Whilst this may not necessarily be good for examination results, it is entirely in the spirit and intention of the locally agreed syllabus and plays a major part in raising pupils' self-esteem. As a consequence, even more pupils have opted to enter religious education at GCSE in 2002. There are now three groups taking the short course in one year in Year 10, with the option for an additional module to convert to the full course in Year 11.
- 217 GCSE short course results A*-C in 2000 were well below average. This represented a significant dip in the school's performance. However, standards rose again in 2001 to the levels at the time of the last inspection report. Whilst this is still below average, nearly one-third more pupils are opting for the course and this again represents success for the department.
- 218 Standards in lessons by the end of Year 11 are broadly average and in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. However, achievement is good. Therefore, there is a difference between standards in lessons and GCSE performance. In lessons there are good levels of informed discussion and debate. The teaching enables pupils to take good, summary notes of such discussions, which are well designed to help revision. Pupils also make their own personal notes. Consequently, there is a good balance of teacher directed, class generated and individual work in exercise books.
- 219 Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language are helped well by the department. Support teachers and assistants develop good working relationships with the pupils and this enhances learning. Pupils make good progress and respond positively to adult's exhortations. In a Year 10 group, when discussing euthanasia, one higher attaining pupil commented quite forcefully, "Everybody is useful in their own way." This reflects the school's approach to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and personal development.
- 220 The department has a good strategy for developing pupils' literacy skills. Key words are identified and recorded in pupil glossaries. In a Year 11 lesson, there was good development of language and understanding of symbolism when identifying the Greek roots of words such as 'Pentecost' and interpreting this as 're-awakening'. However, the department has only just started to consider how it may contribute to pupils' numeracy development.
- 221 The quality of teaching and learning was never less than good in any lesson seen and they are very good overall. By the end of Year 9, teaching is very good or

excellent in two-thirds of lessons; learning is very good in two-thirds. By the end of Year 11, teaching is very good or excellent in half the lessons; learning is very good in half. Consequently, pupils' attitudes and behaviour are also very good. Teachers are quick to involve pupils right from the start of lessons. In the best lessons, the pace is often fast and challenging, but pupils rise enthusiastically to this as there is a great deal of mutual respect between pupils and their teachers.

222 The statutory and locally agreed syllabus requirements for the teaching of the subject are fully met. By the end of Year 11, religious education can be studied either as a full or short course GCSE option. Some pupils taking the short course also choose to undertake additional work in their own time to gain full course accreditation. In this they are well supported by their teachers. A small group of lower attaining pupils, identified as having difficulty with the GCSE course, are able to gain accreditation through the Certificate of Achievement award. Such provision exemplifies the department's approach to ensuring the best opportunities for all pupils to study the subject. Religious education has a high profile in the school because of its positive and innovative approach. Pupils enjoy the challenges set by the subject and particularly the discussion and debate on religious, moral and social issues. The department's provision for the pupils' personal development is one of its major strengths.

223 The leadership and management of the department is very good. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. The success of religious education reflects the hard work and commitment of the head of department. Planning, monitoring and assessment procedures are good, leading to reports to parents which are also of good quality. However, in its policy documentation the department under-estimates the contribution it makes to whole school aims and policies. This could be improved by identifying more specific subject links. Religious education has only just acquired a computer and this is being used satisfactorily by pupils for word processing. However, information and communication technology resources require development in order that the department may make its proper contribution, as outlined in the locally agreed syllabus. The range of library books requires improvement to foster independent learning and research. The space for the display of pupils' religious education work outside of the main specialist room should be extended.