

INSPECTION REPORT

KING RICHARD SECONDARY SCHOOL

Portsmouth, Hampshire

LEA area: Portsmouth

Unique reference number: 116462

Headteacher: Mr B McClarin

Reporting inspector: Keith Simmonds
3238

Dates of inspection: 14th – 18th January 2002

Inspection number: 222231

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: Allaway Avenue
Paulsgrove
Portsmouth

Postcode: PO6 4QP

Telephone number: 02392 370321

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Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr D Horne

Date of previous inspection: 6th – 10th March 2000

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
3238	K Simmonds	Registered inspector	Art and design	What sort of school is it? How high are standards – the school's results and pupils' achievements How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
19693	S Hall	Lay inspector		How high are standards – pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
27719	P Metcalf	Team inspector	Mathematics	
14429	A Stillman	Team inspector	Science	
16434	R Samways	Team inspector	English	
19278	B Allan	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
17618	M Hillary	Team inspector	Equal opportunities; geography; citizenship	
17732	D Martin	Team inspector	History	
4344	T Ferris	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	How well are pupils taught? How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
24026	C Holland	Team inspector	Music	
23030	C Runyard	Team inspector	Physical education	
16546	G Langtree	Team inspector	Religious education	
15297	K Stevenson	Team inspector	Special educational needs; English as an additional language	
13048	T Boyden	Team inspector	Business education	
8530	J Adams	Team inspector	Design and technology	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

King Richard School is a community comprehensive school with an intake of boys and girls aged 11 to 16 situated in the city of Portsmouth. Most of its pupils are drawn from the large estate surrounding the school, which has many severe social problems. Many pupils come from disadvantaged backgrounds. The school is about the same size as most other secondary schools, with 1007 pupils on roll (495 boys and 512 girls). The pupils are almost entirely from a white heritage background. The number of pupils with English as an additional language is much lower than in most schools. The proportion of pupils eligible for free schools meals, at almost a third of the roll, is above average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs, 49 per cent, is well above average. The main needs catered for are difficulties with reading and writing, emotional and behavioural difficulties and sensory impairment. The pupils' attainment on entry in Year 7 is well below average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

King Richard School works in challenging circumstances but provides its pupils with a satisfactory education. Standards in Key Stage 3 (Years 7 to 9) are well below average. They are below average in Key Stage 4 (Years 10 and 11). In both key stages, most pupils achieve what they should. Pupils' work, particularly in Year 10, indicates that the standards they achieve are improving, reflecting the effective match of curriculum provision to their learning needs and improved teaching. The leadership and management of the school are very good. Positive use of innovation, as with the 'College' approach in Years 10 and 11, together with the commitment to General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ), is helping to set high expectations and challenge the pupils' background circumstances. There is a strong focus on improvement, which has been rapid in the last two years. The action taken has significantly improved the curriculum provision and the teaching and learning, despite recruitment difficulties. Spending is closely linked to key educational priorities and the school provides satisfactory value for money. The school's capacity to improve further is very good. Although there are key areas, as in attendance and behaviour, for further improvement, it is no longer subject to serious weakness.

What the school does well

- The well above average standards pupils achieve in dance.
- The 'College' structure in Years 10 and 11, and the progress pupils make in the GNVQ courses, particularly Year 10 science.
- The high expectations of the pupils' achievement and the effective ways in which they are shown what they have achieved and how to improve.
- The very good quality and range of extra-curricular activities.
- The good provision for the pupils' social development and the good quality of support and guidance for them.
- The quality of provision for statemented pupils and the management and monitoring of special educational needs.
- The effectiveness of the links with partner institutions.
- The strong strategic leadership of the headteacher and leadership team together with effective subject leadership, dedication and teamwork.
- The high quality staff development.

What could be improved

- Standards in design and technology in all years and in religious education in Years 10 and 11.
- The pupils' speaking and listening, and numeracy skills in many subjects.
- The attendance and engagement in learning of a significant proportion of pupils.
- The behaviour of a significant minority of pupils in Years 7 to 9.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in March 2000 when it was considered to have serious weaknesses. Since then the improvement has been rapid and good. Standards are very much as at the last inspection, being well below average at Key Stages 3 and 4, though there has been some slight improvement in English and mathematics at Key Stage 3. The school's focus on teaching and learning, despite recruitment difficulties, has led to significant improvement, which is bearing fruit in rising achievement in both key stages. Teaching is now satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Similarly, the effective use of a high quality staff development programme has paid off in raising the expectation and challenge in the pupils' learning. It has also helped to address most of the concerns in relation to the pupils' attitudes and behaviour raised at the last inspection. Though behaviour remains unsatisfactory it is now about the impact of a significant minority of pupils in Years 7 to 9 and reflects weaknesses in social skills and immaturity present at entry in Year 7. Despite the school's best efforts, attendance is poor and for some pupils is an impediment to their achievement. Curriculum planning is now good in most subjects. This has a positive impact upon the teaching and learning and pupils' achievement. In the specific subject weaknesses noted at the last inspection, there has been satisfactory improvement in modern foreign languages, music and religious education. Design and technology, though improved, 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 well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
	all schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
GCSE examinations	E	E	E	C	

At the age of 14 the pupils' results in the 2001 National Curriculum tests were well below average in English, mathematics and science. When compared with similar schools (based on free school meals data) the results for English are average and those for mathematics and science are below average. At entry, pupils' attainment is well below average and many display significant weaknesses in literacy and social skills. Girls performed better than boys in English and boys performed better than girls in mathematics and science. The inspection, however, found that boys' and girls' achievement was how similar in all three subjects. Pupils' achievement in English, mathematics and science is satisfactory. The achievement of those pupils with special educational needs, with English as an additional language and of the gifted and talented is satisfactory.

The school's overall GCSE results in 2001 (based on the average points score per pupil), were well below average. Overall results have remained the same over a three year period. When compared with similar schools and the prior attainment of pupils at entry to the key stage, in Year 10, the results are average. The proportion of pupils obtaining five or more A*-C grades is well below average but when compared with similar schools is again average. The inspection showed that the achievement of pupils of all abilities and those with special educational needs and English as an additional language is satisfactory throughout Years 10 and 11. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys or girls but attendance can be a significant factor in the pupils' achievement. The subjects that performed best in GCSE in 2001 were history and dance. The inspection confirmed that pupils' achievement is good or better in dance, drama, art, geography, history and business studies. In design and technology and religious education it is unsatisfactory.

Data is effectively used to set targets at a whole school level and for individual pupils. 2001 targets were met and ambitious targets have been set for 2003 when the first group of pupils following GNVQ will complete their courses. Current assessment of completed GNVQ modules indicates that the school is well on target to achieve significant improvement.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Satisfactory. Pupils' attitudes have improved and many are interested in their work and respond well to good teaching, as in dance and art. In a minority of lessons they can be passive or reluctant learners and easily lose concentration.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Unsatisfactory. Though most pupils behave well in and around the school and in lessons, a significant group of pupils in Years 7 to 9, mainly boys, disrupt lessons and the learning of others.
Personal development and relationships	Unsatisfactory overall. Though there is improvement as pupils move into Years 10 and 11, many in Years 7, 8 and 9 lack confidence and are unable to take responsibility. When they are mature enough pupils exercise responsibility well, as with the mentoring of Year 7. Relationships are generally satisfactory.
Attendance	Poor. Well below the national average. Despite the school's hard work in monitoring and promoting attendance a significant proportion of pupils fail to attend regularly.

Most pupils have a responsible and positive attitude to their work and to adults in the school, an improvement over the position at the last inspection. At entry to the school, in Year 7, many pupils lack confidence and are unable to take responsibility. They are socially immature and find it difficult to appropriately express their views, for example often calling out in class. In Years 7,8 and 9 this disruptive behaviour by a significant group, mainly boys, though usually well dealt with, adversely affects the learning of others. As pupils move through the school they are well supported by the school's discipline and guidance systems, and their ability to understand the effect of their actions grows. They enjoy taking responsibility and showing initiative, as with the preparation for Rock Challenge, the organisation of GNVQ assignment work in Year 10 and the mentoring of Year 7 by older pupils. A very good range of extra-curricular activities is well attended and enjoyed by the pupils. In all years pupils are involved in raising sums of money for charity and community projects. For a significant proportion of pupils their poor attendance impedes their learning and achievement. Many parents do not see the importance of regular attendance to their children's education.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	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 teaching is satisfactory overall and there is a considerable proportion of good and some very good and outstanding teaching. The significant improvement in teaching, from that of the last inspection, has been effective in promoting gains in learning throughout the school. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language is satisfactory. The improved teaching, particularly the good teaching in Years 10 and 11, is not yet evident in raised standards because of the significant weaknesses in literacy and social skills, with which many pupils enter the school, and the impact of poor attendance on many pupils' achievement.

The teaching is good in English throughout the school. In mathematics it is satisfactory and in science it is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good, particularly in the GNVQ lessons, in Year 10. Teaching is consistently strong in dance and physical education in Years 7 to 9 and art, geography, history and ICT in Years 10 and 11. It is weaker, though still satisfactory, in Year 9, where there are more problems in dealing effectively with challenging behaviour. Where lessons are unsatisfactory there are often weaknesses in the management of pupils and their participation in whole-class activities, for example allowing pupils to call out their answers. This can lead to the lesson being dominated by a small group of pupils. In the resistant materials aspects of design and technology, some aspects of Year 11 religious education and GCSE physical education, limited subject knowledge can slow the pupils' learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. Improved in planning and breadth since the last inspection. A key strength is the range of courses offered. Where there are weaknesses they are to some extent a direct or indirect consequence of the strengths. For example, the expanded GNVQ provision has reduced the ability of other subjects to use ICT as much as they could; and there is insufficient time for music in Years 7 to 9 and for religious education in all years.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good overall. The identification of needs and planning to meet them is thorough and very effective in Years 7 to 9.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Unsatisfactory. The school does not always correctly identify pupils who require additional support with language development. Some identified are good English speakers.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Good overall. Provision for social development is very good and a strength of the school. Provision for cultural and moral development is good. Spiritual development is satisfactory though opportunities to promote this aspect are missed.

How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Good pastoral care and guidance arising from well co-ordinated communication within the school and with parents. Satisfactory and improving monitoring of pupils' academic progress.
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The links with parents are good. The information provided is clear and informative, as with the regular 'Crusader' newsletter. Opportunities for parents to discuss their children's progress are good. Inspectors share the school's concerns at the difficulty in actively involving a significant group of parents. The curriculum is reasonably balanced and well matched, as with the Year 7 'access' group and the innovative Year 10 and 11 'College' approach, to the pupils' needs. Reduced time for music and religious studies at both Key Stages 3 and 4 affects the pupils' learning. Design and technology, though improved, remains unsatisfactory. Pupils benefit from the motivating GNVQ courses and good experiences in dance, drama, English, history, geography and art. Literacy skills are satisfactorily developed in most subjects but those of numeracy receive insufficient attention. Personal and social education is satisfactory. Links with the community and other schools are very good and have a positive impact upon the pupils' development.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher and leadership team ably and strategically lead the school. The leadership of subjects is effective.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. Governors are well informed about the school's strengths and weaknesses. They play a full role but are not always strategically involved.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and standards is very effective. The use of data and target setting to raise standards is not yet fully developed.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Financial planning is closely linked to improvement priorities. The principles of best value are well applied. Effective use is made of ICT in evaluating performance and reducing workload.

Accommodation is adequate and improvements, as with the refurbishment of the boys' toilets, have taken place. In English, modern foreign languages and special educational needs the accommodation is good. There are limitations in some science rooms, design and technology, music and physical education. Resources are unsatisfactory overall. There are specific weaknesses in science, design and technology, physical education, drama and media studies. Despite significant recruitment difficulties, the match of staff to the school's needs is satisfactory and improved since the last inspection. The headteacher has a strong strategic vision and has skilfully used innovation to move the school forward rapidly in the last two years. His expertise, with that of the very effective leadership team and supportive governing body, provides very good capacity to improve the school further. The principles of best value are understood and well applied in the school's work.

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 achievement of their children. The willingness of staff to discuss concerns. Their children are expected to do well and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The behaviour of a minority in lessons. The active involvement of more parents with the school.

work hard.

- How closely the school works with parents and the quality of information that it provides.

Though the positive parental views were from a small sample, the inspection team agrees with the parents' view of the school. Pupils like the school. They express a strong confidence in staff and feel particularly valued by the headteacher. Overall, the inspection team agrees with those areas of concern raised by some parents. A significant group of pupils, mostly boys, in Years 7, 8 and 9 can disrupt the learning of others. Often this happens when there is a change of teacher or difference to the regular routine. The immaturity of these pupils, despite the school's best efforts, means that they are often unable to cope with new situations. The level of active parent involvement is of equal concern to the school. Whilst parental interest in supporting their children in key events, as with productions and Rock Challenge is high, there is not the same level of commitment in the day-to-day work of the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The pupils' attainment when they arrive at the school at the start of Year 7 is well below average in English, mathematics and science. Though there has been some improvement over the last three years, the group of pupils entering in September 2001 had very low reading scores, with over half the year group at least two years behind their chronological age. Many pupils have very low basic literacy and numeracy skills at entry in Year 7. Often their ability to listen effectively and join in class discussion or respond to questions without just shouting out answers is weak. Many Year 7 pupils also display poor social skills.

2. At the age of 14 (at the end of Year 9) the performance of pupils was well below average in the national tests in English, mathematics and science. Only a small number of pupils achieved the higher levels of the tests in all three subjects. This has broadly been the pattern over the last three years, though the results in English and mathematics show some improvement from 2000, when they were in the lowest five per cent nationally. In comparison with similar schools (based on free school meals data) the results for English are average and those for mathematics and science are below average. At the higher levels results are above average in English and science but well below average in mathematics. The trend in English and mathematics is one of slight improvement and in science is static. Overall improvement since the last inspection is steady. Girls' performance is better than boys' in English and boys' performance is better than girls in mathematics and science. The slight improvements seen in 2001 reflect the improved teaching and quality of subject planning since the last inspection. However, the poor rate of pupil attendance, together with the significant weaknesses in basic skills at entry, is still a significant factor in the overall standards of Years 7 to 9.

3. Since 1998 the GCSE results have remained static. The 2001 results were well below average in respect of the pupils' average points score. Poor attendance, despite the school's best efforts, is a significant factor in these results. When compared to similar schools nationally the pupils' points score is average. In respect of the proportion of pupils attaining five or more passes at A*-C (24 per cent) the results were well below average in comparison to all schools, and average nationally when compared to schools with similar intakes. For those pupils attaining five or more A*-G (83 per cent) the results are well below average but average when compared to similar schools nationally. When the results are compared to the pupils' prior attainment on entry to Key Stage 4, in Year 10, they are below average overall. For most pupils this represents at least satisfactory achievement over Years 10 and 11. Though attendance again is a significant factor, most pupils achieve what they should.

4. In 2001 few subjects achieved GCSE results in line with the national averages. Exceptions were dance and history, where results were well above average, reflecting strong teaching and subject leadership. Against the pupils' prior attainment, though subject results are mostly below the national averages, they achieved what they should, as in geography and drama. In design and technology and religious education, pupils underachieved and did not do as well as they should have.

5. Data is effectively used to analyse performance and set targets at a whole school and, increasingly, individual pupil level. The school met its GCSE targets for 2001. The agreed targets for 2003, at a 35 per cent rate of success at five or more subjects at A*-C grades or equivalent, are challenging but realistic goals for improvement. The move to a vocationally biased curriculum, in Years 10 and 11, has been innovative and is already having

a positive impact upon standards, pupil interest and attendance. In the GNVQ course modules so far assessed, standards have improved significantly, as in science, and the indicators are that the 2003 target is achievable.

6. In English, standards are below average in Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11, when account is taken of the pupils' prior attainment, the majority achieve satisfactory standards. At both Key Stages 3 and 4 the pupils' progress over time is satisfactory. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are a particular weakness at entry and throughout Key Stage 3 though by Year 10 many have grown in confidence and can talk or discuss effectively. Too often in Years 7, 8 and 9, speaking tasks lack challenge and discussion is not effectively promoted in English and other subjects. A large proportion of pupils have low reading ages at entry to the school. Though well supported, by the school, in their reading many do not read as often or widely as they should. Shared reading texts are good and pupils in Year 9 respond positively to Shakespeare's 'Macbeth'. Years 10 and 11 pupils cope well with more challenging texts, such as Priestley's 'An Inspector Calls' or John Agard's 'Half-Caste'. Many pupils have weak writing skills in Year 7 but are well taught and supported in planning and drafting their ideas, as in the development of effective openings to stories. Marking and good teacher commentary is well used to improve spelling, punctuation and grammar, as in a Year 9 lesson on 'Macbeth'. In GCSE coursework the more able pupils produce a good range of writing. Those with weaker skills are well supported, as in a Year 11 lesson where a writing frame was well used to structure the response. Overall standards are improving and the pupils' learning is well supported by effective teaching and very good subject leadership.

7. In mathematics standards are below average in both Key Stages. At both key stages 3 and 4 the pupils' progress over time is satisfactory. In Year 7 the pupils' work builds well on their prior experience. Number and basic numeracy skills are well emphasised to compensate for weaknesses at entry. Thinking skills are being developed as part of the Cognitive Acceleration in Mathematics Education (CAME) project. By Year 9 pattern recognition, linear sequence and angle properties are usually well known. Drawing and construction work is more restricted. Data handling is secure and most can produce charts and appropriate graphs and plot a line of best fit. In Key Stage 4 pupils build effectively on their prior knowledge, understanding and skills. However, drawing and construction remains weak and often pupils' graphs may contain incorrectly plotted points. Able pupils work well and confidently use simultaneous and quadratic equations and the sine and cosine rules. At Key Stage 3, the pupils' overall achievement is affected by unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour, which can disrupt many mathematics lessons.

8. In science, standards are below average in Key Stage 3 and average in Key Stage 4. Over time pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 3 and good progress, particularly in the GNVQ course, in Key Stage 4. At Key Stage 3 the rising attainment of the pupils at entry is having a positive impact upon standards and achievement. However, weaknesses in literacy and numeracy skills can slow the pupils' progress at Key Stage 3. Overall there is a rising trend, reflecting the impact of improved teaching and learning, particularly at Key Stage 4. The effective use of assessment, to guide pupils and support the planning of their learning, was clearly seen in a Year 10 GNVQ lesson on bacterial growth. Weaknesses in accommodation, resources and the use of ICT can restrict the improvement being made.

9. Pupils' basic skills in literacy and numeracy are often weak at entry to the school. In literacy there is a satisfactory whole school approach, making use of the national Key Stage 3 strategy. The creative use of experienced primary staff and the 'access group' in Year 7 is also having a positive impact upon the standards pupils achieve. Subjects make effective use of writing frames, spelling techniques and 'key words'. However, talk and discussion is given insufficient status and, for many pupils, speaking and listening skills remain low. Numeracy is effectively addressed within mathematics but as yet there is no whole school approach.

10. In other subjects at Key Stage 3, the pupils' achievement, including the gains they make over time, is outstanding in dance and good in art and physical education. It is satisfactory in geography, history, ICT, modern foreign languages, music and religious education. It is unsatisfactory in design and technology. Weaknesses in the teachers' subject knowledge, particularly in resistant materials, resources for systems and control and computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacturing (CAD/CAM) have held back the pupils' learning and achievement.

11. At Key Stage 4 the pupils' achievement is very good in dance and good in drama, art, geography, history and business studies. It is satisfactory in ICT, modern foreign languages, music, physical education and media studies. In design and technology and religious education it is unsatisfactory. In design and technology, weaknesses in the teacher's subject knowledge and resources, as at Key Stage 3, have held back the pupils' learning and achievement. In religious education the lack of time for the subject, together with the limited use of assessment, teacher confidence and resources, has had a similar effect. The overall higher achievement in Key Stage 4 reflects the improved pupil attitude, maturity and overall behaviour in lessons, to that of Key Stage 3. The effective use of GNVQ courses and the close match and relevance of the curriculum model to the pupils' needs also support this achievement.

12. The pupils with special educational needs (SEN) make satisfactory progress overall in respect to the national expectations. In ICT and dance they make better progress than expected, largely due to the good teaching in these subjects and to increased opportunities for learning. For example, in dance pupils with SEN are given opportunities to take responsibility for leading groups, and this promotes greater involvement and better learning. In design and technology the progress of the pupils with SEN is unsatisfactory.

13. The pupils with statements of SEN make good progress towards the targets specified in their statements and individual education plans. Many pupils who experience literacy difficulties follow specialist SEN programmes to develop their reading skills and they make good progress in Years 7, 8 and 9, developing improved fluency and accuracy. The pupils who have the greatest difficulties make more limited gains, but usually show good progress in relation to their previous attainment. Pupils make good progress in Year 10 with basic skills, including ICT skills and personal development, and sound progress in Year 11 where the SEN support programme is still being developed. The progress of the pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) is satisfactory overall, but with considerable variation. Many improve their literacy skills and their behaviour significantly, but a large number have poor attendance records and this means they do not learn as well as they could. The pupils with hearing impairments and those with specific learning difficulties (dyslexia) make satisfactory progress. The pupils for whom English is an additional language make satisfactory progress throughout the school, and generally achieve the targets set for them.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

14. The substantial majority of pupils display satisfactory attitudes to school. Attitudes can vary considerably due to the differing approaches of subjects and individual teachers. For example, in dance lessons all pupils have excellent attitudes to their work and show great enthusiasm for learning. They listen carefully to the teachers, follow instructions and work hard to develop their routines. In English and art, attitudes are good, as teachers have established clear classroom routines, conduct lessons at a brisk pace and set challenging work. In a minority of lessons, pupils are reluctant learners. They are passive and work at a slow pace and do not listen to others. The pupils enjoy taking part in extra-curricular activities. Clubs, such as table tennis, are very popular and pupils are very keen and successfully participate in productions such as the Rock Challenge.

15. Whilst much has improved since the last inspection and most pupils' behaviour is satisfactory and sometimes very good, the behaviour of a significant minority of pupils remains unsatisfactory. Behaviour, overall, as at the last inspection is unsatisfactory. Behaviour improves as pupils progress into Year 10. When teachers have high expectations of behaviour, the pupils listen in silence and do not call out. Behaviour around the school is generally satisfactory and pupils act sensibly in the corridors, canteen and the playground. The inspection team shares the parents' concerns about the challenging behaviour of a significant minority of Year 7, 8 and 9 boys. These pupils fool around, shout out inappropriate remarks and in some lessons wander around the classroom. They take little notice of verbal warnings. They disrupt their own and others' learning and slow the pace of lessons. The number of fixed term exclusions has risen during the year 2001/2, due to changes in policy; but there have been no permanent exclusions. Pupils' behaviour is adversely affected when they do not know the teacher or there are weaknesses in classroom management. In this minority of lessons, pupils chat or shout out instead of putting up their hands to answer a question. For some of the lessons affected, the high number of staff changes, despite the school's best efforts to resolve recruitment problems, in the last few years has also contributed to disruption and the pupils' unsatisfactory behaviour.

16. Overall, the pupils' personal development and relationships are unsatisfactory. Many pupils lack confidence and are unable to express their feelings. A significant minority do not consider others' feelings or listen to others' opinions. The pupils' ability, particularly in Years 7, 8 and 9, to talk and discuss, effectively, is limited and this aspect of personal and literacy skill development is given insufficient attention in lessons. The small number of Year 11 pupils who have taken part in the 'Enlightening' lunches organised by the Discovery project have gained important social skills through meeting adults from local businesses. Pupils on inclusion programmes are learning to listen to each other and work as a team. Some pupils enjoy taking responsibility and undertake duties such as helping staff with administration and acting as mentors to Year 7. The pupils are keen to raise money for charity and organise social events. Relationships are generally satisfactory. The majority of pupils co-operate with each other and often support each other in lessons.

17. The attendance of the pupils is poor and despite the school's hard work to monitor and promote attendance, it has declined since the last inspection when it was unsatisfactory. The attendance rate of 87 per cent for 2000/1 was well below the national average and the unauthorised absence rate of 1.8 was above the national average. All year groups had attendance rates of approximately 88 per cent, except for a dip to 84 per cent in Year 9. The attendance rates during the first term of 2001/2 have declined to 84 per cent. fifty pupils have very poor attendance and a further 250 pupils are absent for one or two days a week. Most parents do not see a direct relationship between what their children achieve and their attendance. The sporadic and long-term absence of almost a third of the pupils has a detrimental effect upon their learning and achievement, and the standards the school can achieve.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

18. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Of the lessons seen during the inspection, just over nine out of every ten were judged to be satisfactory or better, five out of every ten to be good, and almost two out of every ten to be very good or outstanding. This is a clear improvement compared to the last inspection when nearly two in every ten lessons were judged to be unsatisfactory. There have been clear improvements in using a wider range of activities, in planning, in assessment, and in providing greater challenge. Additionally, the teaching in both religious education and in design and technology has improved. Both subjects were criticised in the last report. The school has placed a very strong emphasis on supporting and improving the teaching. Recruitment and retention of teachers has been a significant problem for the school in the last few years. In resolving this problem and ensuring full staffing a significant number of unqualified teachers have been employed, though all are engaged in either the national Graduate or Registered Teacher

Training Programmes (GTTP or RTTP). Given its difficulties in recruiting and retaining teachers, this emphasis is having considerable success and the inspection team saw no detrimental effects upon the pupils' learning or achievement.

19. In Years 7 to 9, the teaching was judged to be satisfactory or better in nine out of every ten lessons, good or better in almost five out of every ten lessons and very good or better in well over one out of every ten lessons. Within this key stage, the teaching is strongest in Year 7. It is weaker, though still satisfactory, in Year 9 where there are more problems in dealing effectively with challenging behaviour. In the three years, the teaching is satisfactory in all subjects. It is good in English and physical education and very good in dance. A general weakness in a minority of lessons is in the management of the pupils' participation in whole-class activities, for example allowing pupils to call out their answers. This leads to at least part of the lesson being dominated by a small group of pupils.

20. In Years 10 and 11, the teaching was judged to be satisfactory in well over nine out of ten of all the lessons observed, good or better in six out of every ten lessons, and very good or outstanding in almost two out of every ten lessons. Key strengths in these two years include the quality of the teachers' planning, their choice of stimulating activities and their use of the time available. Overall, the teaching here is good in English, science, art, geography, history, ICT and in business studies. It is satisfactory in all other subjects with the exception of the GCSE physical education course where weaknesses in the teachers' theoretical knowledge are holding back the pupils' progress in this aspect of their work.

21. The quality of the pupils' learning is satisfactory at both key stages. In a significant number of lessons the teachers have to work very hard to counteract the unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour of a minority of pupils in the class. By and large, they are successful in doing so, through firm and consistent application of the school's disciplinary procedures. A second factor that affects the overall quality of learning is the unsatisfactory attendance of many of the pupils. Again, the teachers have to work very hard to ensure that those who missed the previous lessons or lessons are able to participate. Additionally, in Years 7 to 9 many pupils are relatively passive learners who rely on their teachers for constant reassurance. By Year 10, however, many have begun to respond well to the greater independence demanded by coursework and by the nature of the GNVQ courses.

22. In the best teaching (that is in approximately one lesson in five), the key features are:

- very good knowledge of, and enthusiasm for, the subject;
- very good relationships with most of the pupils and good management of potentially boisterous behaviour;
- very good links with the pupils' previous learning;
- good questioning which extends and 'fixes' the pupils' learning;
- good demonstrations and explanations.

For example, in a very good ICT lesson in Year 7 the pupils made very good progress in mastering the skill of entering data into active cells on spreadsheets. The teacher captured the pupils' attention and interest from the very start by animated 'PowerPoint' presentation. Good emphasis on key vocabulary, for example 'active cells' and 'formula bar', helped to fix their learning. More difficult tasks for the more able and good support for the others ensured that, by the end of the lesson, all had made good progress. In a Year 9 dance lesson, the teacher's charismatic approach, excellent planning and very good questioning quickly got all the pupils engaged, including a small number of boys who were initially reluctant. The teacher's high expectations of the pupils extended to their use of language, leading to many being able to articulate their learning with very good attention to technical terms, for example, 'For a lift, you need body tension, really stretching and tightening your muscles'. By the end of the lesson, almost all had produced a polished performance and been creative. This was an outstanding lesson. In a Year 11 English lesson, focusing on a 17th century poem, the

teacher engaged the pupils' interest by linking the poem to contemporary 'agony aunt' letters. Good explanation and questioning enabled the pupils to make very good written responses to the poem. This was a class that has suffered from recent staffing changes and from a high level of absence.

23. A general strength in most of the teaching is the teachers' accurate assessment of the pupils' progress and informed feedback to them on where they are at, and how to improve. The setting and effective use of homework has improved since the last inspection and is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11.

24. Where the teaching is less than satisfactory (in approximately one lesson in 13), the key weakness is difficulty in managing the pupils' behaviour, particularly in holding their attention, dealing with pupils calling out and with other unsatisfactory behaviour. Other factors include:

- poor match of the activities to where the pupils are at, for example occasionally work which too easy, but more often too difficult;
- too slow a pace to the lesson;
- unsatisfactory explanations, leaving the pupils unsure about what they have to do.

The teaching of numeracy skills is satisfactory in mathematics but unsatisfactory across the other subjects. Training for the teachers of all subjects will, however, take place shortly. The teaching of literacy skills within English is good in Year 7. It is satisfactory in English in the other years and across subjects, where, for example, there is good attention to key technical vocabulary. In a number of lessons in history, geography and religious education, the teachers provide good help for the pupils in structuring their writing.

25. The teaching of the pupils with SEN is satisfactory overall. It is good in ICT, dance, and in the skills programmes taught by the specialist SEN staff. In the most effective teaching the teachers know the pupils' needs well, expect that the pupils will do well in their lessons and provide high levels of individual support. The pupils' individual education plans (IEPs) provide the teachers with good levels of information. They have clear and specific targets, relevant to the pupil's current ability, and give good guidance on what to do to support the pupil in the classroom. In the best lessons the teachers use this information well in their planning to meet the needs of all the pupils in the class.

26. The specialist programmes for the pupils with SEN are taught well. The teachers and the learning support assistants (LSAs) leading the lessons are knowledgeable about the pupils and use the IEPs effectively to set appropriate challenges. The teachers and the LSAs use a wide range of specialist teaching schemes. Occasionally, the schemes are used without sufficient variety, but overall they provide a good basis for lessons. In a particularly successful lesson the LSA used a range of activities, including a quiz, to help a pupil to understand the meanings of both spoken phrases and expressions as part of an anger management programme. The interest generated by the different activities, and the skilful management by the LSA, led to a considerable improvement in the mood and behaviour of the pupil in a very short time.

27. The LSAs provide very good support in the classroom for the pupils with SEN. They know the pupils' needs well, understand the requirements of the lessons and provide sensitive and unobtrusive help to ensure that the pupils are able to be successful in the lesson. In the most effective lessons they work as partners with the teacher to ensure pupils behave appropriately, and to help pupils with poor literacy skills to respond to the task. For example, in one lesson the teacher used a sequencing activity to help pupils understand the meaning of a poem. The LSA worked with a pupil with literacy difficulties, helping him with the more difficult vocabulary, and this meant he could complete the task at the same time as the rest of the class. She then helped the pupil to write detailed answers to a list of questions about the poem. Meanwhile the teacher had focused on supporting two other pupils who

were less experienced readers, with low levels of motivation. This support was also effective.

28. The teaching of the pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL) is satisfactory overall. The only specific EAL teaching in the school is provided by a visiting teacher from the local authority's EMAS (Ethnic Minority Achievement Service). This was not observed within the inspection, but was reported as good by the pupils who had received the support.

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

29. There are more strengths than weaknesses in the school's curriculum at both key stages. A key strength in all years is the range of courses offered. In Years 7 to 9, in addition to the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education, the pupils study personal and social education, drama, dance and media studies. In Year 7, all pupils sample each of French, Spanish and Italian before choosing one language in Year 8. ICT is taught as a subject in its own right in Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11, all pupils study English language and literature, mathematics, science, religious education, physical education, ICT and personal and social education. Additionally, they can choose from the other National Curriculum subjects plus media studies, drama, dance, child development and nautical studies. In Year 10 GNVQ courses are now available in science, business, art and design, performing arts and ICT. Within the available choices there is very good equality of opportunity for all pupils.

30. A second strength of the curriculum is the good range and quality of experiences provided in English, science, history, geography, art and dance and within the specialist help provided for pupils with special educational needs. For example, the pupils experience a good range of fiction and poetry in the GCSE English course and well-organised fieldwork in the local area in geography. Planning in all subjects is now good, a much improved picture compared to the time of the last inspection.

31. The school has put a lot of thought into the transition from primary school into Year 7. The school has appointed three teachers with extensive primary experience and is using them both to teach in Year 7 (currently English and mathematics) and to advise other colleagues in these two subjects. In addition there is an 'access' group in which some 30 pupils with particularly low scores (Level 2 or below) at the end of their primary education receive targeted literacy support. Key aspects of the National Key Stage 3 strategy are in place, including the provision for pupils who did not meet the expectation for 11 year olds, i.e. Level 3 rather than Level 4. As a result of all of the above, the school is providing a better continuity of learning than is found in most schools.

32. A fourth strength is the range and quality of extra-curricular opportunities that the school provides for its pupils. In the current term there are teams and clubs for football, rugby and hockey. Table tennis is particularly popular, with very well attended clubs every day. Some 50 pupils participate in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. In music there are keyboard, recorder and GCSE theory clubs and workshops for samba band, gamelan and African drumming. In dance there are jazz, tap and technique clubs; many pupils participate in the annual Rock Challenge. In art, there are regular artists 'in residence'; gallery visits locally and to London and a planned study visit to Barcelona. In addition, learning support assistants provide support for homework every morning before school and after early closing on Wednesday afternoons. Overall provision of extra-curricular opportunities is very good.

33. The school has made good use of its participation in the local 'Excellence in Cities' scheme to think and act radically in aiming to provide alternative provision in Years 10 and 11 better tailored to its pupils than more traditional models. This has led to a fundamental swing

from a GCSE-based curriculum to one that mixes the academic with the work-related approach of GNVQ. In doing so, it has been more radical than many schools. Almost all the pupils in Year 10 now study GNVQ science and approximately 70 per cent follow an additional GNVQ in business, art and design, the performing arts or ICT. Although it is still early days, most pupils appear to be responding very well to the greater personal responsibility required to organise their own work, to meet regular deadlines and to seeing the links between what they are learning and the practical application in the world of work. Motivation is good. A key aim of the school, to prepare the pupils better for the next stage of their education (for most at Further Education College), is well on the way to being met.

34. There are nevertheless some weaknesses in the school's curriculum, some of which are a direct or indirect consequence of the strengths and some of the school's recruitment difficulties. In Years 7 to 9, for example, the range of subjects studied means that the time allocation for music and religious education is severely squeezed, resulting in a lack of breadth of study. In neither subject is there sufficient time for statutory requirements to be met. The same situation pertains in religious education in Years 10 and 11. In design and technology, requirements are not met for computer-aided design and, in Years 7 to 9, for experience in systems and control. This is largely due to difficulties in recruiting staff with the necessary breadth of experience. The expansion of the GNVQ provision in Years 10 and 11 and recruitment difficulties have had the adverse consequence of reducing significantly the number of pupils studying either a foreign language or design and technology in Years 10 and 11. The school is appropriately investigating the possibility of introducing GNVQ engineering and should ensure that all pupils clearly capable of benefiting from further language study are able to do so. A further, though probably temporary, consequence of the expanded GNVQ provision has been to reduce severely the availability of computer rooms for other subjects. As a result, subjects that previously made good use of ICT are currently unable to do so. At the present time the provision for ICT across the curriculum is therefore a weakness.

35. The strategy for developing the pupils' literacy skills across the whole curriculum is satisfactory. Most subjects are actively emphasising specialist technical vocabulary and concepts. Some, for example religious education, history and geography, give good support to pupils in structuring their writing. However, the status of structured talk and discussion, particularly in Years 7, 8 and 9, is not a sufficiently planned aspect of the pupils' work. The school's provision for numeracy across the curriculum is at present less than satisfactory. Subjects have yet to develop coherent practice to match the aspirations expressed in their planning documents. A whole-school policy has yet to be developed.

36. Good provision is made for the pupils with special educational needs (SEN). There is an extensive range of specialist provision for pupils with SEN in Years 7, 8 and 9, particularly in developing their literacy skills. On occasions, pupils are required to miss some of their lessons to attend specialist teaching programmes and this causes some disruption. However this is managed well, and the gains from the programmes almost always outweigh the disadvantages. The study option in Year 10 provides a good opportunity for pupils to develop their basic skills and personal development. The plan to extend this provision to Year 11 will provide further opportunities. There is good equality of access for all, and pupils with SEN are fully included in the life of the school.

37. The curricular requirements of statements of SEN are fully met. The pupils with statements receive good support. Individual education plans (IEPs) are effective in ensuring that individual needs are met. They provide good guidance for teachers on pupils and what should be done to meet their needs. Statements and IEPs are up to date and reviewed regularly.

38. The school's approach to inclusion is clear and well understood. It makes effective and flexible provision for the individual, based on a secure knowledge of both pastoral and learning needs. Positive examples are seen in the GNVQ courses and the 'access' group in Year 7. Weaknesses exist, as in the identification and co-ordination of pupils with EAL and

the impact poor attendance has on the access to learning for a significant group. Gifted and talented pupils are appropriately identified and their overall provision is satisfactory. Talented pupils' needs are well met in dance, art, drama, history and the developing Year 10 GNVQ curriculum but provision can be less consistent in other subjects. The very small number of gifted pupils are known and supported in their specific subject learning but the school has yet to develop a coherent extension programme for these pupils. Similarly, though pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds make up a very small part of the pupil population, their needs are well understood and met. Overall these aspects of the school's work have benefited from the strategic leadership of the senior management team, and the positive working links between it, the special educational needs team and subject and pastoral leaders.

39. Provision for careers education and guidance is good. There is a well-structured programme from Year 9 through to Year 11. Particular strengths of the programme include the focus on telephone skills, taster days at local colleges, work experience and small group and individual interviews.

40. The school's provision for personal and social education is satisfactory with a number of good features. There is a strong commitment to developing pupils' social skills and promoting their self-esteem in line with the school's aims and values. Personal and social education makes an important contribution to pupil's self-esteem and develops key skills of working together and communication. The subject actively involves members of the local community and events, such as the Rock Challenge in supporting the pupils' learning. The developing scheme of work is well thought out and makes appropriate reference to the key areas of social and health development and citizenship. The majority of pupils value personal and social education, particularly in issues related to health, sex education and drugs.

41. The school's partnership with the community is good and these links have a positive impact on the pupils' attainment and personal development. The school has established good links with local employers and these enable pupils to prepare for the world of work. They benefit from work experience and work-related learning. Through the Discovery programme, some Year 11 pupils gain useful social skills by participating in 'Enlightening lunches' with members of the business community. Pupils on the inclusion programme take part in an innovative Inter-generation project and work closely with local senior citizens to organise social events. This has generated a better understanding by young and old of each other's needs. Visitors, such as dance groups and the Water Board, enrich the curriculum and there are appropriate visits to local places of interest.

42. The school has developed very good links with its partner institutions. Transfer arrangements for Year 6 pupils are good and parents value the school's induction programme. A transition mentor is establishing important links with feeder primary schools to reinforce the school's expectations of behaviour and attendance. Pupils on work-related programmes benefit from attending college courses, for example in construction and beauty therapy. There are also very good links with post-16 institutions, for example Fareham and Highbury Colleges of Education. These links have been particularly useful in the introduction of the GNVQ courses. The school provides good guidance for pupils transferring to further education and there has been a significant improvement in the number of pupils taking up this opportunity over the last three years.

43. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall with very good provision for the pupils' social development.

44. Since the last inspection the school has reviewed its provision for spiritual, moral and cultural development and ensured, through effective planning, that all subjects contribute to the pupils' experience in these areas. There is an impressive commitment through the visual displays around the school to enhance the pupils' self-esteem. Projects such as the Discovery project also actively contribute to pupils' personal development.

45. The provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. In religious education pupils are encouraged to reflect on important questions of meaning such as life after death and the existence of God. In art there are good opportunities for pupils to reflect on their learning and in English, poetry, plays and novels are effectively used to help pupils consider their own beliefs, values and ideals. In a number of subject areas, opportunities to help pupils reflect on their feelings are missed. The school has no overall policy for collective worship and observed assemblies, while well planned and delivered with interest, give little opportunity for personal reflection and response. The school's personal and social education programme has a strong commitment to developing pupils' self-esteem and improving listening skills, which are underdeveloped in a significant minority of pupils.

46. The school's provision for moral development is good. Issues connected with human rights are effectively explored in religious education and personal and social education. Important environmental issues are explored in design and technology and geography. In physical education there is a good emphasis on the importance of fair play and accepting decisions. In English, pupils consider important moral issues such as prejudice and discrimination, relationships and the value of human life.

47. The provision for pupils' social development is very good and a strength of the school (maintaining the very good provision identified in the previous inspection report). In many subjects pupils have opportunities for paired and group work. In religious education and personal and social education, pupils consider a wide range of social issues such as family life, medical ethics and drug use and misuse. In geography, pupils explore issues of justice and fairness. The school provides many opportunities through its very good extra-curricular activities for pupils to exercise responsibility and develop their social skills. While provision remains impressive, a significant minority of pupils, mainly boys in Key Stage 3, demonstrate poor social skills particularly in their inability to listen to each other and treat one another's views with respect and consideration.

48. Provision for pupils' cultural development is good and has improved since the previous inspection. In design and technology, studying food from differing cultures enhances pupils' cultural understanding. In mathematics, pupils are encouraged to consider number systems from other cultures and in art there are many opportunities to consider art from a range of cultures. In geography, pupils usefully consider the advantages and disadvantages of life in more and less developed countries. Pupils' cultural understanding is also enhanced through the use of school trips and visits, although links with local and wider faith communities have not yet been fully developed.

49. Overall, the school has made good progress in developing its curriculum and in gearing it more closely to the learning needs and aspirations of its pupils.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

50. As at the last inspection the school provides good educational and personal support for its pupils. Links between academic and pastoral support, as with the now effective homework monitoring and provision, an issue of the last inspection, have been strengthened.

51. The school works hard and is mostly successful in fulfilling its aim 'I won't give up on you'. Pupils are valued and supported as individuals. They have confidence in the adults in the school and feel that they can easily turn to teaching and non-teaching staff for help and guidance. The full-time counsellor provides valuable support to pupils suffering from personal difficulties. Tutors have good relationships with their tutor groups and often provide effective individual support. However, on occasions, during tutor time, this can be too focused, leaving the rest of the group to chat amongst themselves. The school provides very good and well-attended opportunities for 'out of school hours' learning by opening for private study before school and on Saturday mornings. Helpful supervised study sessions are run on Wednesday afternoons to support pupils with homework and revision. The pupils

appreciate the breakfast club.

52. The school has devised a range of innovative programmes to support pupils with particular difficulties, mainly relating to behaviour and attendance issues. The effective use of key staff in classroom and in small groups helps pupils cope with their problems. Older pupils who are at risk of disaffection are given good opportunities for work-related learning which includes attendance at college, extended work experience and one-to-one support in English, mathematics and science.

53. The school has adopted the new national SEN Code of Practice and has clear criteria for the identification of the pupils with SEN in line with the local education authority guidelines. It has good systems for assessment and uses an extensive range of tests to identify pupils with SEN and to assess their needs. These assessments are used effectively to focus support for the pupil, especially in the specialist teaching programmes available. The school has developed very good processes for using assessment information to monitor the progress of pupils. These include analysis of improvements in literacy skills and National Curriculum attainment, the movement of pupils across stages of the SEN Code of Practice and the review of progress IEP targets. IEP reviews are undertaken at appropriate times and are based on effectively evaluated school assessment data. However, parents and pupils are insufficiently involved in the process of reviewing progress and setting new targets.

54. The school fully meets the statutory requirements outlined in the statements of SEN. Statements are up to date and actions identified in the statements are implemented appropriately. Additional staffing is used as specified and is effective. Pupils have access to a full curriculum, except during short periods of withdrawal for individual or small group programmes. All key staff have access to relevant information about the pupils through an established IEP process and know the pupils' needs well. Annual reviews are held at the appropriate time and use a good range of information. Pupils and parents are encouraged to be involved in this process, although they do not attend review meetings as frequently as the school would wish.

55. The school's procedures for the identification and assessment of pupils for whom English is an additional language are unsatisfactory. There is no formal school identification process and the school does not always identify accurately pupils who require additional support with language development. Some assessments are undertaken by the local authority's EMAS service, and these provide helpful guidance for teachers, but they are not used sufficiently by teachers to plan their lessons.

56. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are good. Work is regularly marked and effective feedback is provided to pupils in terms of National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades as well as an effort grade, curriculum targets and information on how to achieve those targets. Pupils confirm that they have a good idea of their attainment and what they must do to improve. Good use of these procedures was noted in English, mathematics, modern foreign languages, geography, history, design and technology, art and dance, although practice is not so evident in religious education or GCSE physical education where assessment is not focused on the pupils' actual attainment and progress.

57. Assessment information is used well to guide curricular planning as in science where pupils' examination and coursework performances were reviewed before deciding to enter pupils for GNVQ examinations. In modern foreign languages, pupils' disappointing 'speaking' assessments resulted in further time being given in the curriculum to individual speaking activities.

58. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress are satisfactory. All staff have responsibility for analysing assessment information against progress charts so that under-performing pupils can easily be identified. Procedures for the effective monitoring of pupils' progress and attainment were noted in English, science, history, geography,

modern foreign languages and ICT, although the use of such information in other curriculum areas is not always consistent. Procedures are supplemented by a very good central database, which includes detailed assessment data on all pupils and is updated at half termly intervals, although, to date, this information is not sufficiently disseminated or analysed.

59. Overall, the school's procedures to ensure the pupils' welfare, health and safety are satisfactory. The school has appropriate procedures for child protection. It follows local guidelines and issues all staff with a useful handbook on procedures. A senior teacher is the designated member of staff with responsibility for child protection and carries out her duties effectively.

60. The school pays good attention to health and safety. The site manager conscientiously monitors and co-ordinates health and safety issues, including risk assessment. The school has drawn up a sound policy and has appropriate systems in place for fire drills, testing electrical equipment and reporting hazards. The school has effectively addressed the health and safety issues identified in the last report. During the inspection, some minor concerns were brought to the attention of the design and technology department.

61. The school's provision for first aid is satisfactory. Three members of staff are qualified in first aid and others have received basic training. Pupils who are ill or injured receive appropriate care in a well-equipped medical room. Satisfactory records are kept of accidents, but the school does not keep records when medication is given.

62. The procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are good. The on-line computerised registration is managed efficiently and allows staff to have up-to-date information on attendance at each lesson of the day. Pupils identified as having poor attendance are given good support by learning mentors, who work closely with the families and other agencies. The school regularly reminds parents and pupils of the importance of attending school and has introduced a monetary reward scheme for attendance and punctuality. At the time of the inspection, the school had no full-time educational welfare officer and the attendance rate had declined considerably. The school has yet to convince many parents that it is not acceptable to keep their children off school for reasons other than illness. Many parents do not sufficiently relate their children's attendance to their academic achievement.

63. The school's procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are satisfactory. The behaviour management policy is very detailed and gives staff strategies to manage poor behaviour through a staged referral system. However, it does not place sufficient emphasis on rewarding good behaviour. The 'warning' system is widely used to deal with low-level disruption, but is not completely effective as some pupils continue to misbehave until their final warning. The procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour are good. The anti-bullying policy gives clear guidance on sanctions for the bully and support for the victim. Bullying is discussed in personal and social education lessons and pupils say that incidents are dealt with effectively. Pupils are able to openly discuss their concerns with older pupils trained as mediators.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

64. The small number of parents who returned the questionnaires and attended the pre-inspection meeting with inspectors generally have positive views of the school. They feel that their children are expected to work hard and that they are making good progress. They value the way in which staff are willing to discuss their concerns. The inspection team shares the parents' views that behaviour of a significant minority of pupils is unsatisfactory.

65. The school's links with parents are good, as at the time of the last inspection. Parents and carers are encouraged to become involved in the life of the school. Staff are very approachable and often contact home to celebrate success as well as to discuss

concerns. Initiatives such as the Parents' Forum and parent focus groups have proved to be valuable opportunities to discuss suggestions and explain school policy. However, the school is not yet effective in changing the passive attitudes of the vast majority of parents, to that of valuing and upholding the school's aims to raise standards. For example, though the school regularly reminds parents about the importance of ensuring that their children attend school, attendance is still unsatisfactory. A significant minority of parents do not value the importance of their children attending school. The school is very welcoming and works hard to reach out to its parents and carers; however, the inspection team shares the school's concerns at its difficulties in working closely with a significant group of parents.

66. Overall, the quality of information, which the school provides to parents, is satisfactory. New parents receive clear and detailed information in the prospectus and are invited to meetings with staff. The governors' annual report is informative; it contains all the required information but does not fully evaluate the success of SEN provision against the school policy. Regular newsletters, in the form of Parents' Briefings and the termly 'Crusader' magazine, are of a high quality. They keep parents well informed about future events and changes in policy and celebrate the school's successes. The options booklet gives clear and detailed information about the choices pupils have at the end of Year 9, and the school invited parents to an information session on the GNVQ course. There are no regular curriculum information evenings for parents to learn about the work of different subject departments, nor do the parents of pupils in Key Stage 3 receive details each year of what their children will be studying.

67. The school offers parents good opportunities to discuss their children's progress at the termly consultation evenings. Parents, pupils and tutors review the detailed information provided by subject teachers and agree targets. However, this valuable information on progress is only seen by parents who attend the meetings, as only a brief summary is sent home. The school has satisfactorily addressed the issues about the pupils' annual reports raised at the last inspection. The reports now contain attendance records and Key Stage 3 teacher assessments. The reports are generally satisfactory and show National Curriculum levels or predicted GCSE/GNVQ grades. Some subject departments, such as dance, provide good information about what the pupils can do and how they can improve their work, whilst information from other areas, such as religious education, is too brief.

68. The impact of the parents' involvement in the work of the school is satisfactory. Parent governors support the school, but there is no parent teacher association. The small number of parents who have joined the Parents' Forum and focus group help to shape the school's future. Parents and carers enjoy supporting productions, such as the Rock Challenge and attendance at concerts is good.

69. The parents' contribution to their children's learning is generally satisfactory. The results of a recent survey by Keele University indicate that most parents are interested in their children's education. They offer help and advice, and ask about their children's work, but only 60 per cent of parents attend the termly consultations.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

70. The school is very well led. The headteacher's strong strategic vision, innovation and commitment to the school and its community, have been a significant factor in the rapid improvement which has been achieved. The very effective leadership team ably support the headteacher in giving a clear and corporate lead to the school's work. All managers share a strong commitment to high standards and improvement. The developing potential noted at the last inspection has been well fulfilled.

71. The leadership team have been very effective in establishing a common understanding and purpose amongst all staff on the key priorities of the school, as in improvement in standards, the quality of teaching and learning, raising pupils self-esteem and

expectation and improving attendance and behaviour. In these areas there is a consistent application and commitment, as with behaviour management, to the well set out systems of the school. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and the management of subjects and years displays a much higher consistency and effectiveness than in most schools.

72. The governors support the school and play a satisfactory role in setting its educational direction. They are very well informed by the headteacher and leadership team and have appropriate procedures and committees in place to ensure that they can fulfil their role. Expertise is well used, though governors recognise the need for a wider representation from local commerce and industry. The chair of governors and chair of the improvement committee show a strong grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses and the priorities for improvement. They are appropriately questioning and challenging of the school's improvement, as with standards, the quality of teaching and learning and key changes, as with the non-uniform aspect of the 'College' approach. However, the full governing body is not always as exacting as the staff team in demanding high expectations of the school and its community. Since the last inspection the governing body has been effective in ensuring that it meets its statutory obligations and now does so in almost all aspects. The exception is in the full meeting of the statutory curriculum requirements in design and technology.

73. The school knows its strengths and weaknesses and takes appropriate and well-prioritised action to secure improvement. Problems, such as with the difficulties in recruitment and retention of teachers, the persistent issue of attendance and the limited engagement of many parents, are not allowed to become excuses. In fact it is often in these areas, as with staffing and the effective use of programmes such as the 'Excellence in Cities' project, where the leadership team makes best use of innovation and creativity to ensure that the school does its best for all its pupils. The school's aims and values are clear and understood by staff and pupils. In its work the school effectively demonstrates that it lives and meets them, as with the aims of 'I won't give up on you' and raising pupils' self-esteem and expectation.

74. The concepts and processes of school self-evaluation are well understood and effectively applied to the school's improvement. Planning for the future is set out in a very thorough and rigorous School Improvement Plan (SIP). In setting appropriate priorities and targets, this plan recognises the need to be pragmatic in terms of the school and pupils' needs. This is very well reflected in the correct but innovative move to a vocationally biased Year 10 curriculum, the Years 10 and 11 'College' approach and the primary approach work in Year 7. Procedures to monitor and evaluate this plan are very good. Precise success criteria allow improvement to be easily measured and shared with governors, staff and parents, as with the improved schemes of work and planning, a key issue at the last inspection, and the improving standards in GNVQ science. The priorities of this whole-school plan are well reflected in subject improvement plans, which in the majority of subjects are of a good quality. Costs are well identified and accounted for when setting the budget.

75. The management of subjects is good overall. It is not less than satisfactory in any area and is very good in English, science, history and dance. A strong sense of common direction, very good teamwork and thorough curriculum planning, a significant improvement from the last inspection, is characteristic of the effective management. Monitoring and evaluation procedures are particularly effective, as is the consistent view of teaching and learning, in securing improvement and raising standards. In science the very effective introduction and monitoring of the GNVQ course has already significantly raised the Year 10 pupils' attainment. Subject leaders feel well supported and challenged by the leadership team. Communication is seen as open and very good.

76. The school meets statutory requirements regarding the SEN Code of Practice. All documentation related to SEN is maintained well. Statements of SEN and IEPs are up to date, reviewed on time, and are fully and effectively implemented. The monitoring of the progress and teaching of pupils with special educational needs is very good. The SEN co-

ordinator's recent monitoring of the use of IEPs in lessons, ensuring that the IEPs are being used appropriately by teachers, is an excellent example. The SEN policy meets statutory requirements, but the governing body's annual report to parents does not provide a full evaluation of the success of the policy.

77. The management of provision for pupils for whom EAL is unsatisfactory. The EAL co-ordinator works hard but in relative isolation. The school has not yet developed a sufficiently rigorous whole-school approach to monitoring the progress of pupils with EAL, and consequently not enough is being done to improve provision for this group of pupils. The current EAL action plan is too limited in its ambition and not linked adequately to the school's main improvement plan.

78. The school's financial planning is now good. Spending is closely linked to key educational priorities, for example the recruitment and retention of teachers, supporting the large number of unqualified and inexperienced teachers and the introduction of a more work-related curriculum in Years 10 and 11. Appropriate steps have been taken to eliminate the budget deficit that occurred at the end of the last financial year, largely due to a 'clawback' of some £50,000 by the Local Education Authority (LEA) as result of over-estimated pupils numbers. A workable plan has been agreed with the LEA to bring the budget back into balance within two years; the school is ahead of the interim targets of this agreement. Financial control is now tight. The principles of 'best value' are well understood by senior managers and governors. Appropriate comparisons are made with other schools and with the national picture. Good investigations of costs and potential benefits were made before the expansion of the work-related curriculum in Years 10 and 11. There are good procedures for competition in the award of contracts.

79. The school makes very good use of specific grants and additional funding. It uses its funding for SEN appropriately and gets good value from the work of the SEN co-ordinators and learning support assistants. Funding from 'Excellence in Cities' for the work-related provision, for learning mentors and for the temporary internal exclusion from lessons of pupils causing problems has been prudently used. It has, however, made less headway in developing its provision for gifted and talented pupils.

80. While the number of pupils in the school is close to its capacity, the school's 1940s buildings and site are adequate for most of its requirements. The majority of subjects are conveniently grouped together and the fabric of the accommodation is generally well cared for.

81. Since the last inspection, the boys' toilets have been refurbished and the girls' toilets are scheduled for similar improvements before the end of this financial year. Similarly, following that inspection the school has built three extra ICT rooms to meet the demands of the curriculum as applied then. However, with the subsequent introduction of GNVQ in business studies, science, art and design, performing arts and ICT itself, these new ICT rooms are being very well used and are now proving barely adequate. Next year, when these new subjects run in both Year 10 and 11 and the new course in leisure and tourism starts, they will be inadequate. Other non-GNVQ courses already have problems getting appropriate access to ICT rooms.

82. Subject accommodation is good in modern foreign languages, English and SEN but presents problems in several subjects. For example, there is no specific classroom teaching space for GCSE physical education. In design and technology, teaching areas for resistant materials and graphics are limited. Music lacks the necessary small rooms for individual tuition and practice. Science has insufficient services in several rooms to allow practical work and the accommodation is generally drab with some worn out fittings.

83. The school has worked hard to provide a range of community facilities within its accommodation. The learning resources centre and canteen are available outside of school

hours. The learning resources centre, including the library, is adequately stocked with an appropriate range of book and magazine resources. ICT facilities, including 'broadband' Internet access, are good. The facility is well used by pupils, both in school and during out of school hours, Saturday mornings. The librarian provides helpful support to pupils and is establishing an effective system to monitor and evaluate the centre's use. Outside hard play areas and playing fields are adequate and well maintained. The school has made a strong effort to improve the outside play area environment with benching and appropriate planting. Parents' rooms are available and parents and community organisations make use of and are encouraged to use the school.

84. Though staff recruitment and retention remain difficult for the school, it has done everything possible to reduce the disruption to pupils' learning. It has taken a range of very effective steps to ensure that staff vacancies are filled, and the school is currently fully staffed. There are a large number of unqualified teachers working in the school but they are following carefully planned national training programmes and are developing their skills well. Although there are minor weaknesses in subject knowledge in some areas, for example in some aspects of design and technology, the quality of the teaching is satisfactory overall. The high number of staff changes in the last few years has led to disruption in the management of some classes and to worse pupil behaviour in some of the lessons affected. The school is aware of this, and has taken effective steps to support these classes through careful consideration of changes in staff timetables and good support for new teachers from mentor colleagues. The school's induction and training arrangements for teaching and non-teaching staff are of very good quality, thorough and ensure that teachers have good opportunities to develop their skills. However, further consideration needs to be given to specific subject specialist support in individual teacher subjects, such as music. The performance management requirements for the appraisal of staff are implemented effectively, and are very well supported by senior staff and teacher mentors. The range and quality of the school's staff development work overall are very good.

85. Overall, learning resources are unsatisfactory. Only in English, where there have been recent improvements, are they good. An increase in texts has reduced the department's reliance on photocopied material and they have good access to television and video equipment. Although there has been a significant increase in the numbers of computers since the last inspection, this has not kept pace with the increased demands for ICT facilities arising from the curriculum developments in GNVQ courses. Whilst these courses have good access, this is at the expense of other areas of the curriculum. This has led to some subjects, such as modern foreign languages, having less access this year than last, and others remaining below that needed to fully meet their requirements. There is a lack of sufficient ICT facilities for computer-aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM) and production simulation in design and technology. There are not the ICT resources for pupils to experience the full range of techniques for observation and measurement in science. Availability of ICT facilities in the learning resource centre is satisfactory; it is open out of school hours, including Saturday morning, and operates an open access policy. Book resources for religious education are inadequate in Years 7 to 9 and poor in Years 10 and 11. There are too few textbooks for examination courses, both GCSE and advanced supplementary level (AS), in dance as well as a general lack of resources for media and drama.

86. In the relatively short time since the last inspection the school has shown good improvement. Though it is working in challenging circumstances and has considerable teacher recruitment difficulties, the key issues of the last inspection have been well addressed and the school's action plan has been effectively implemented.

87. The quality of teaching has shown significant improvement and is now satisfactory in Years 7, 8 and 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Pupils' behaviour remains unsatisfactory, particularly in a significant proportion of Year 7, 8 and 9 lessons; however, against the position at the last inspection there has been satisfactory improvement. For example,

bullying is well dealt with and the inspection team saw no incidents of harassment; behaviour in and around the school is much improved. Attendance remains a significant issue, despite the school's best efforts in monitoring and systems to promote attendance; overall there has been no improvement. Curriculum planning is now good in most subjects and has a positive impact upon the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' achievement; the improvement has been good. Similarly, the school's very effective use of the GTTP and RTTP programmes for teacher training has been successful in securing committed staff who display a developing quality. In addressing the specific subject weaknesses of the last report, the school has shown satisfactory improvement in modern foreign languages, music and religious education. In design and technology, though there has been improvement, provision remains unsatisfactory overall.

88. The clear direction set by the leadership, together with the rigorous monitoring and evaluation of progress, has been effective in securing improvement. New technologies, as with the effective electronic logging of subject monitoring, are efficiently used to improve practice and reduce workload. The school is now well placed to continue improving and, though there are key areas as in attendance and behaviour for further improvement, it is no longer subject to serious weakness.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

89. In order to improve further the standard of education provided, senior managers and governors should:

- (1) Improve attendance and ensure that a higher proportion of pupils consistently engage in learning.

(See paragraphs: 2, 3, 13, 17, 21, 62, 65, 73)

- (2) Ensure that the persistent behaviour of a significant minority in Years 7, 8 and 9 does not disrupt the learning of other pupils.

(See paragraphs: 7, 11, 14, 15, 16, 19, 24, 115, 118, 129, 134, 136, 142, 162, 168, 184)

- (3) Develop pupils' speaking and listening skills in all subjects and raise the status of talk and discussion in the pupils' learning.

(See paragraphs: 1, 6, 8, 9, 101)

- (4) Raise standards and pupils' achievement in design and technology by:

- the implementation of a strategic plan for subject improvement;
- further development of the teachers' experience and subject facilities;
- ensuring that the statutory requirements for the curriculum are met.

(See paragraphs: 4, 10, 11, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143)

- (5) Raise standards and pupils' achievement in religious education in Years 10 and 11 by:

- developing the teachers' subject confidence and knowledge;
- developing the use of assessment, so that it more effectively measures progress and informs pupils of what to do next to improve;
- improving the subject time allocation and resources.

(See paragraphs: 4, 11, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190)

90. Other weaknesses which are less serious but which should be considered for inclusion in the school's action plan are:

- Implementation a whole school approach to numeracy.

(See paragraphs: 9, 24, 35, 121)

- Implementation of appropriate line management, monitoring and evaluation of EAL provision.

(See paragraphs: 55, 77)

- Development of resources and teachers' knowledge in the subject specialist aspects of ICT.

(See paragraphs: 34, 85, 155, 157, 158)

- Improvement of resources in science, music, physical education and media studies.

(See paragraphs: 8, 85, 110, 132, 169, 177)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

171

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

43

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	3	26	60	69	12	1	0
Percentage	2	15	35	40	7	1	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

Y7 – Y11

Number of pupils on the school's roll

1007

Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals

376

Special educational needs

Y6 – Y11

Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs

13

Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register

474

English as an additional language

No of pupils

Number of pupils with English as an additional language

4

Pupil mobility in the last school year

No of pupils

Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission

45

Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving

34

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	10.8
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	2.1
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	93	104	197

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	10	31	37
	Girls	29	36	34
	Total	39	67	71
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	20 (47)	34 (30)	36 (26)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	2 (19)	13 (7)	9 (4)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	26	42	44
	Girls	61	58	43
	Total	87	100	87
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	44 (47)	51 (42)	44 (49)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	15 (15)	19 (16)	10 (16)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	90	102	192

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	12	71	82
	Girls	28	90	98
	Total	40	161	180
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	21 (24)	84 (84)	94 (95)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	27
	National	38.4

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

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	
Indian	
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	
White	1004
Any other minority ethnic group	3

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	67	
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	48.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20.5

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	33
Total aggregate hours worked per week	1158.5

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	63.9%
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 2	25
Key Stage 3	23
Key Stage 4	24

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000
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	£
Total income	3231346
Total expenditure	3150339
Expenditure per pupil	3154
Balance brought forward from previous year	-89042
Balance carried forward to next year	-8035

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	22
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	34
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0

Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	3
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	726
Number of questionnaires returned	26

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	42	46	12	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	58	31	12	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	23	42	27	4	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	23	58	19	0	0
The teaching is good.	38	46	8	0	8
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	50	31	15	4	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	69	27	4	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	65	35	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	35	38	19	4	4
The school is well led and managed.	50	31	4	0	15
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	38	42	12	0	8
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	27	58	0	0	15

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

- Very good leadership and teamwork.
- Well-planned schemes of work.
- Regular assessment and target setting.
- Good quality teaching.

Areas for improvement

- Developing speaking and listening skills.
- Improving the quality of pupils' individual reading.
- Providing more consistent access to and uses of ICT.

91. Attainment on entry of the current Year 7 was well below the average achieved nationally for pupils gaining Level 4 or above. Attainment in the Year 9 2001 national tests was well below the national average for pupils gaining Level 5 when compared to all schools, but in line with the national average in comparison with similar schools. The standards of Year 9 test results over the past three years have fluctuated, having significantly declined in 2000 and risen in 2001. Attainment in the work seen in lessons and in the scrutiny of pupils' work across Years 7, 8 and 9 is still below the national average. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs and the small number, with English as an additional language, make good progress and achieve satisfactory standards in relation to their prior attainment.

92. Attainment in the 2001 GCSE examinations was well below the national average for pupils gaining A*-C grades in both English and English literature. The performance of boys was significantly poorer than that of girls, especially in literature. In the Year 10 and 11 lessons observed and in the scrutiny of coursework, standards overall are still below the national average, significantly lower in Year 11 than in Year 10. However, when taking account of their prior attainment, the majority of pupils, including those with English as an additional language, achieve satisfactory standards. The more able and those with special educational needs make particularly good progress.

93. Pupils' skills in speaking and listening are not as good as they should be. Most pupils are more than willing to respond to teachers' questions in whole-class discussion and they often show considerable confidence and insight. When they work in pairs or small groups, however, the quality of their talk is limited. Tasks often lack challenge or focus, and the planning and organisation for speaking and listening do not always allow pupils to participate effectively or to make different kinds of contributions to discussions.

94. In Years 7, 8 and 9, pupils' whole-class shared reading includes a good range of texts. In Year 7, for example, their autobiographical writing is linked to reading Dahl's novel 'Boy'. Year 8 reading of Swindell's 'Stone Cold' produces a good range of responses from pupils as they consider social issues of homelessness and isolation. Pupils respond positively to the Year 9 scheme of work on Shakespeare's 'Macbeth', learning to refer to the text when explaining their views.

95. In their reading for GCSE, pupils go on to encounter a wider range of more challenging texts. A Year 10 group, for example, grappled successfully with Shakespeare's language as they analysed one of Iago's soliloquies in their reading of 'Othello'. In another Year 10 class, close reading of Priestley's stage directions enabled pupils to develop their

understanding of the principal characters in 'An Inspector Calls'. The poetry contained in the examination anthology ensures that pupils' reading covers texts from different cultures and traditions. In two Year 11 lessons, pupils were learning to articulate personal responses to John Agard's 'Half-Caste', confronting issues of racial stereotyping and prejudice.

96. A large proportion of pupils enter the school with low reading ages. Whilst they are well supported by English and by SEN teaching, at an individual level pupils do not read as regularly or as widely as they should. The English department has begun to address this by requiring Year 7 pupils to read independently during some of their tutorial time. There has also been improved provision of suitable texts in the school's learning resources centre.

97. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are taught to plan and draft their ideas in writing. This process was well illustrated in some Year 7 lessons where the focus was on writing effective openings to a variety of stories. Pupils, many of whom have poorly developed literacy skills, benefited from this approach and managed to produce some lively and thoughtful writing. In another Year 7 lesson, the focus was on weaving dialogue into narrative and the teacher made skilful use of a good quality story written by two girls in the class. Teachers make regular assessments of pupils' written work and indicate through their marking and comments how to improve on spelling, punctuation and sentence structure. They also draw pupils' attention to the National Curriculum level descriptions, as in a Year 9 lesson on 'Macbeth' where the teacher spent time emphasising the difference between a Level 4 and a Level 6 written response.

98. In GCSE written coursework the more able and committed pupils produce a good, varied range of writing. Year 11 pupils, for example, having read Marvell's poem 'To his coy mistress', wrote empathetic responses in the form of letters to the lover. Others, from their reading of Steinbeck's 'Of Mice and Men', show considerable insight in writing about the theme of isolation in the novel. Those pupils with weaker literacy skills are given plenty of support through a wide range of printed resource sheets, sometimes in the form of writing frames, to help them structure their writing. This was well exemplified in a Year 11 lesson where pupils used a frame effectively to formulate their written responses to Agard's poem 'Half-Caste'.

99. The quality of teaching in English is never less than satisfactory and most often it is good or very good. It is characterised by strong subject knowledge, thorough planning and high expectations of pupils. Lessons always start with explicit sharing of aims and objectives and end with some reflection on the learning. Relationships in the classroom between teachers and pupils are consistently positive and good humoured. Teachers use the school's agreed procedures for behaviour management very well when necessary with a minority of pupils, so that learning is not interrupted for the majority.

100. Leadership and management of the department are very good and this has enabled satisfactory improvements to be made since the last inspection. There is a clear sense of direction and teamwork, curriculum planning is secure and the quality of teaching and learning is regularly monitored and evaluated. Staff are well aware of the need to improve standards, particularly in speaking and listening and independent reading. Provision for whole-class reading is good following the recent acquisition of a range of new texts. Other resources, such as televisions and overhead projectors, are adequate. Access to computers, however, is limited and the department has yet to exploit the full potential of using ICT in English. Accommodation, in a suite of rooms, is good, giving teachers secure bases and enabling them to enhance the learning environment with a range of good quality displays of work and posters. Library facilities, in the learning resources centre are adequate. Books, both fiction and non-fiction, are of an appropriate range though more consideration is needed of the low reading ages and comprehension skills of many pupils. ICT facilities are good and the library is well used, both within and outside of school hours to support the pupils' learning.

101. A large proportion of pupils enter the school with poorly developed skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening and this inevitably hinders learning and access to the curriculum. The school is taking positive steps to co-ordinate whole-school approaches to literacy and this was the focus of a recent professional development day. There is a good level of departmental awareness of the need to teach specialist and technical vocabulary. This is exemplified particularly well in dance when pupils evaluate each other's work. In other subjects, however, teachers are not always making the most of opportunities to teach key vocabulary beyond simply displaying it round the room. Some subjects are making good use of writing frames to help pupils structure and express their ideas, with some good examples in history, religious education, geography and English. Many pupils struggle to express themselves orally, often giving very limited answers to the teachers' questions and not thinking through their responses. They are given insufficient opportunities to use talk for thinking and learning in any planned or structured ways.

Drama

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

Strengths

- Curriculum planning
- AS level option for more able pupils
- Collaborative group work and pupil independence

Areas for improvement

- Quality of accommodation and resources

102. Drama is a popular subject in the school, taught separately from English. In the most recent GCSE examinations, pupils achieved results which were well below the national average for grades A*-C. There are, however, a significant number of pupils who gained A*-C grades by taking the examination in Year 10 and they go on to study for AS level in Year 11. Those pupils who took the AS level examination last summer did well to achieve C and D grades. Estimated performance for the current Year 11 pupils shows a potential increase in A*-C grades for 2002.

103. In the small sample of lessons seen the quality of teaching ranged from satisfactory to very good. Some teachers are experienced and have a secure knowledge of their subject. Others are less secure, but they benefit from both the well-written schemes of work and support from other colleagues. Most pupils respond well when working in a variety of mixed groupings and are able to devise and present their work through imaginative uses of voice and movement. Students go on to develop increased independence in their GCSE course, often taking a great deal of responsibility for their own work. There is a good sense of continuity and progression in their learning and skills development, in which crucial elements are regular reflection and evaluation of their own and each other's work.

104. Although there is a studio and an adjoining drama room, the overall quality of the accommodation for drama is unsatisfactory, particularly when taking account of the minimal resources and equipment. This limits the learning opportunities for GCSE pupils, especially when they take the technical option to deal with staging and lighting.

105. Drama makes a significant contribution to the life of the whole school, both in developing pupils' personal, social and cultural learning and also in providing a good range of opportunities for involvement in extra-curricular theatre activities and performances.

Media studies

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

Strengths

- Curriculum planning
- Teachers' subject knowledge

Areas for improvement

- Accommodation

106. Media studies is taught as part of the expressive arts curriculum to all pupils in Years 7 to 9. It then becomes an optional GCSE subject for Years 10 and 11. It is a relatively new subject for the school at this level and the first group sat the examination last summer, 2001. The results were well below average for pupils gaining A*-C grades. Current Year 11 standards are at least 10 per cent better for the higher grade potential.

107. In the very small sample of lessons seen, the quality of teaching was consistently good, characterised by effective planning, strong subject knowledge and high expectations of pupils. Marking of the GCSE coursework is thorough and provides pupils with valuable feedback for improvement.

108. Younger pupils relish the opportunity to reflect critically on the aspects of television, advertising and newspapers. In a Year 8 lesson, for example, they were able to use their own knowledge of television 'soap operas' to discuss features of stock characters and then to create their own. Pupils enjoy the practical nature of the course and there is some impressive project work in Year 11, where they make very good use of computers and digital cameras. Pupils in a Year 11 lesson were using the Internet productively to download material for work on creating fliers and publicity for films. The work of one of the most able girls in this class was particularly outstanding.

109. It is clear that media studies offers pupils considerable challenges and opportunities for independent study. They enjoy its immediate relevance to their own lives and at GCSE level they thrive on being able to develop and publish their own ideas.

110. The course runs on limited resources and there is no specialist accommodation other than access to the school's computers. This has a negative impact on what pupils are able to achieve.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Teachers' subject knowledge and awareness of examination requirements
- The teachers management of some pupils' challenging behaviour

Areas for improvement

- Catering for the full ability range in teaching, especially the most able
- Development of pupils' literacy and ICT skills
- Development of numeracy across the curriculum

111. In the 2001 national tests in mathematics at the end of Year 9, standards were well below national averages and below those in similar schools. The number of pupils reaching

Level 5 and Level 6 was well below national averages and well below similar schools. Teacher assessments were rather generous at the top end of the mark range and especially so for girls who did not do as well as expected. The performance of boys is better than girls in terms of the average point score. The mathematics results have remained well below the national average, although improving at a rate faster than national improvements in 2000 and 2001. Pupils' standards on entry to the school were well below national averages and their achievement is in line with expectations at the end of Year 9.

112. On the evidence of the pupils' work and the lessons observed, standards at the end of Year 9 are still below national expectations for a significant group but show overall improvement from those of previous years. Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language make satisfactory progress. Work is developmental and covers all of the attainment targets with an appropriate emphasis on numeracy skills and a developing emphasis on thinking skills through the use of the 'Cognitive Acceleration in Mathematics Education' (CAME) project. Pupils can recognise patterns in linear sequences and identify angle properties, although their drawing and construction work is underdeveloped. They produce tally charts, bar charts and simple pie charts and can find the line of best fit on a scattergraph. Higher attaining pupils can identify patterns in quadratic sequences, use trial and improvement to solve cubic equations and calculate missing lengths in right angled triangles using Pythagoras' theorem.

113. In the 2001 GCSE examinations, the number of A* - C grades in mathematics was very low in comparison with national averages and well below similar schools. Over the last three years, the number of A* - C grades has fallen while the percentage of pupils gaining no certification has remained steady. The performance of boys is marginally better than girls at the top end of the mark range. Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language make satisfactory progress. Relative to their performance in other subjects, pupils performed less well in mathematics. On the basis of their national test results in Year 9, achievement in mathematics is in line with expectations, although below expectations in terms of the higher grades, so that able pupils are not doing so well.

114. On the evidence of the pupils' work and the lessons observed, standards at the end of Year 11 are still below national expectations for a significant group. Overall, and particularly in Year 10, they show improvement from those of previous years. Work is developmental and builds well on the work in the lower school, although examination techniques are poor so that questions are not fully understood and responses are weak or missing. Work covers all of the attainment targets and pupils have a good knowledge of transformations including translations and enlargements, although drawing, construction and graphical work remains underdeveloped so that incorrectly plotted points and non-smooth curves are commonplace. Higher attaining pupils can work confidently with simultaneous and quadratic equations as well as use the sine rule and cosine rule to calculate the lengths and angles of any triangle.

115. Teaching and learning across the school are satisfactory. The majority of teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and a good awareness of examination requirements, especially in Years 10 and 11. Most lessons start promptly with a useful numeracy activity, which quickly focuses pupils' attention and engages them in the work of the lesson. Teachers manage pupils well and have a variety of strategies to cope with the unsatisfactory and challenging behaviour of a significant minority of pupils. The school's sanctions policy is used well although the use of praise is not so evident. Relationships between pupils and teachers are mostly productive and harmonious. However, in too many lessons, too little attention is given to the spread of ability and insufficient consideration is given to work which challenges the most able. Unsatisfactory teaching displayed work which was not correctly pitched at the ability level of the pupils and poor management of some pupils' behaviour. Limited experience and lack of subject knowledge so that, for example, in a Year 7 lesson the teacher failed to anticipate pupils' difficulties with recurring decimals on work involving time.

116. Teachers have a good awareness of the individual strengths and weaknesses of

pupils and good information is centrally kept, although the quantity and quality of marking in exercise books are more variable. At the end of each topic, work is graded against National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades and formal feedback is provided with target setting and strategies for meeting targets. Coursework is marked against each strand and feedback on coursework is very good, although some tasks are generously assessed against the National Curriculum criteria.

117. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are unsatisfactory in the lower school so that, in a significant minority of lessons, pupils demonstrate challenging behaviour and poor attitudes to one another. Many lessons are typified by silly behaviour and excitable pupils who shout out answers, thus restricting opportunities for others to think and be involved. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Pupils demonstrate a more mature attitude to their work and demonstrate positive relations with the teacher and each other. They are keen to do well and concentrate on their work but sometimes not for the whole lesson.

118. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. Pupils are well supported by the teacher and the learning support assistants who do a good job of supporting pupils' mathematical development as well as encouraging their good behaviour. For example, in a Year 10 lesson on percentages, a small group of boys worked very well with the help of the learning support assistant in converting percentages to fractions and writing these in their lowest terms. The provision for gifted and talented pupils is underdeveloped so that able pupils are not sufficiently identified or challenged.

119. The curriculum broadly meets statutory requirements, although there is insufficient provision for ICT. The department is committed to ICT and schemes of work usefully identify opportunities to use ICT. However, access to computer facilities is becoming increasingly difficult and pupils confirm that they have little opportunity to use ICT other than calculators. The provision for literacy within the department is unsatisfactory although, in a small number of lessons, literacy skills are well rehearsed and supported so that in a Year 9 lesson the teacher reminded pupils that "diameter equals circumference divided by pi" and not "diameter equals circumference over pi". However, in the majority of lessons, literacy skills are not sufficiently stressed and poor presentation skills are not addressed so that too much work is untidy and often incomplete. Writing skills are often marred by poor use of technical vocabulary and reading skills are low so that pupils have difficulty accessing work in books, worksheets and external examination papers.

120. The provision for numeracy within mathematics is satisfactory, although provision across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. Number work is weak in science, languages and ICT, with little evidence of its development in subject areas even where it is referred to in departmental schemes of work. Poor numeracy skills were particularly evident in languages where pupils had difficulty converting between the 12 and 24 hour system. Algebraic skills are used well in music to identify patterns and in dance for timing, although their use in ICT, for example in creating formulae for spreadsheets, is underdeveloped. In physical education, measuring skills are used well in athletics and for fitness testing while, in science, pupils measure accurately but lack an understanding of units. In geography, pupils use line graphs and bar graphs, although their interpretation skills are not developed, so that most of the analysis is undertaken by the teacher. Pupils' data handling skills are weak in science but an interesting use of graphs was seen in English where pupils plotted a 'mood' graph for Lady Macbeth. At present, there is no whole school numeracy policy to provide a coherent framework to develop pupils' numeracy skills.

121. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The recently appointed head of department has a good awareness of the strengths of the department as a result of her regular monitoring of lessons, pupils' books and referrals. The department development plan is well focused on priorities and much work has already been undertaken in providing departmental documentation and writing schemes of work. The head of department provides

good support for non-specialist and unqualified teachers in the department. The department is well resourced, in terms of equipment and textbooks, although provision in the library is limited. The department has its own area in the school and most rooms provide a welcoming atmosphere with displays, which validate pupils' work and effort. Much has been done in a short period of time and there is a shared commitment for improvement and a capacity to succeed.

122. Progress since the last inspection has been good but results have remained at a similar level to those in the last report. The department has worked hard to develop pupils' numeracy skills, although numeracy across the curriculum remains an issue for further development. Some of the work in Year 7 still lacks challenge but new schemes of work are now beginning to have an impact on the content of lessons, especially in terms of the level of work suited to different classes, the progression intended within topics and possible teaching approaches. The majority of teaching remains satisfactory and the department has responded well to the difficulty of recruiting qualified mathematics teachers who receive good support from the department. There is still a significant minority of pupils who display negative attitudes in mathematics lessons but discipline procedures are followed well although the use of praise is not so evident. The department is well placed to continue to improve and to raise standards.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Pupils' achievement in Key Stage 4 and the rising standards of the Year 10 GNVQ course.
- The good quality of teaching and learning in Key Stage 4.
- The effectiveness of assessment in supporting pupils progress and the planning of their learning.
- The very good subject leadership.

Areas for improvement

- The standards of science in Key Stage 3.
- The adequacy of accommodation and learning resources.
- The planned use of ICT in the subject's curriculum.

123. The provision for science is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4 where a most effective science GNVQ course has just started. Pupil attainment has been well below the national average but is rising fast at both key stages.

124. Pupils' standards in science on entry to Year 7 in 2001 were well below the national average. However, they have risen rapidly in recent years and are now much higher than in 1997 when the current Year 11 entered. At the end of Key Stage 3 in 2001, the Year 9 pupils' results reflected their low entry level and were well below average. Results have been similar over a three-year trend. However, the rising Year 7 standards are evident in the improved work of the current Year 9, who are working to higher levels than their predecessors. For instance, one group were revising the effects of forces on a moving object and were able to describe the idea of several forces acting together to give a resultant force and how that acted on a body. The standards of their completed end of module tests, coupled with observation of their work in class and scrutiny of their books, suggest they will end the year with improved levels compared with results in 2001. Their standards overall are below average instead of well below average. This continuing improvement is also present in the performance of Year 8 and Year 7 pupils, with each year being on course to further raise the end of key stage standard as they come to it. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys or girls. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English

as an additional language make satisfactory progress. Overall standards in Years 7, 8 and 9 are below average but the pupils' achievement is satisfactory.

125. Standards in the 2001 double science GCSE were well below the national average, as will be those for 2002, that is for the current Year 11. By the end of Year 11 standards are currently well below average. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys or girls. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and those with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress. In Year 10, however, pupils have responded very well to the fresh challenge of the new GNVQ course and are on line to complete their Key Stage 4 with at least average results. Overall standards at Key Stage 4 are average and the pupils' achievement is good.

126. It is evident that standards in science are rising well. In Years 7, 8 and 9 this is due to the pupils entering the school with considerably improved science attainment and the benefits of a new scheme of work. The introduction of the GNVQ course last September is also having a positive impact on Year 10. However, the large numbers of pupils absent from lessons and failing to produce the GCSE modular coursework is affecting standards in Year 11.

127. Weaknesses in the pupils' literacy and numeracy skills present difficulties in science, especially in Years 7 to 9 where the pupils' ability to read, take notes, spell, tabulate data and draw graphs hinders their progress. Several steps have been taken to help matters, for example, all Year 7 to 9 modules now have 'key words' for the pupils to learn at the beginning of the topic, but more work still needs to be done. Currently there is insufficient structured support for note taking, and more effective use of ICT would not only help the pupils' writing but also the drawing of diagrams and graph plotting.

128. The quality of learning is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, but ranges from outstanding to occasionally poor. Where it is best the pupils are fully engaged in the task, try out new ideas and take risks answering the teachers' questions even when they are not fully sure. Their behaviour in these lessons is very good and they work at a good pace, co-operate well and manage to build up notes that will make sense to them later. In contrast, where the learning is poor, bad behaviour is always present and the majority of pupils are off task and content to talk amongst themselves rather than do any work. Homework is poorly completed and pupils have low expectations for both their behaviour and achievement. At Key Stage 4 the quality of learning is always at least satisfactory, mostly good and occasionally very good. It is often, but not always, better in the GNVQ lessons than the GCSE and there is little difference between that of both high and low attaining sets.

129. The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory, but ranges from outstanding to poor. In the minority of lessons where teaching is unsatisfactory or poor, failure to control some very difficult behaviour leads to much time being wasted and a tendency to reduce the challenge of the curriculum and revert to the 'safe' option of paper and pencil work only. This leads to boredom and further poor behaviour. A minority of pupils, mainly in Year 9, can disrupt the learning of others. In the best lessons, behaviour is not an issue, pupils are prepared to engage with the work which the teachers make interesting and challenging. The teaching in Years 10 and 11 is always satisfactory or better and often good or very good. In the GNVQ course, teachers give the pupils responsibility for their work and they respond well. Lessons have industrial involvement and relevance.

130. Following the last inspection the subject has effectively addressed all the issues. It has simplified its GCSE entry procedures, created a Key Stage 3 management post and brought in a new Year 7, 8 and 9 scheme of work. The curriculum meets the National Curriculum requirements though a lack of remote sensing and data handling resources limits the ICT provision. It is well planned, though at Key Stage 3 there is scope to further enhance the match of the material to the pupils' capabilities between and within sets. For example, in one Year 7 top set, pupils were being asked to identify renewable energy sources. This is

Key Stage 2 work and they could do it very easily. This mismatch can also be seen in some GCSE work. Pupils in one Year 11 set were studying the effect of an acid's concentration on the rate of reaction with sodium thiosulphate. The figures for the concentrations of acid used reflected dilution principles and were relatively difficult to plot.

131. The subject is very well led and managed and there is an effective development plan. Subject expertise is good and training is used well. Staff work well together and are supportive and committed to high standards. Monitoring of teaching is very good. Effective strategies for assessment, target setting, and recording and analysing data are all in place. There has been a high turnover in staff over the last year, but the new staff, some still in training, are well matched to the task and receive good support. The science accommodation is somewhat drab and lacks sufficient services (gas, water and electrical outlets) to provide adequately for the necessary practical work.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- The standards pupils achieve in ceramics.
- Skilled teaching throughout Years 7 to 11.
- The effective use of assessment and the quality of support and guidance given to pupils.

Areas for improvement

- The use of a wider range of media in the subject's curriculum.
- The use of ICT.

132. Pupils' achievement in the subject is good and supported by effective teaching. Pupils' paintings, drawings, three-dimensional products and ceramics reflect a well-applied range of media and design ideas. Ceramic work is a strong feature of many pupils' GCSE work in Years 10 and 11. Severe weaknesses in skills, techniques and understanding, on entry in Year 7, are becoming overcome by the end of Year 9. However, the immaturity of many pupils' speaking and listening and social skills at entry to the school, together with poor attendance, in all years, limits the overall subject standards and the achievement of a significant group of pupils.

133. By the end of Year 9, the pupils achieve standards that are below the national expectation. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in lessons and over the key stage from their well below average prior attainment at entry to the school in Year 7. The pupils develop good knowledge and understanding of the subject, as with their use and ability to describe the purpose of maquettes in their ceramic work. In a Year 9 graphic lesson, pupils accurately applied a simple ratio in developing a range of designs based on Celtic symbolism. Most used pencil techniques with some precision. In a small number of Year 7 and Year 9 lessons the gains pupils make are slowed by the impact of a minority. These pupils display poor social and listening skills. They call out, without following the usual lesson routines, when answering questions or wanting attention. Often they can concentrate on their work for only very short periods and subsequently do not progress at the rate of most in the class.

134. By the end of Year 11 the standards that the pupils achieve in class are broadly average. The pupils' work and particularly the Year 10 GNVQ course indicates that, overall, standards are rising. In GCSE examinations standards are well below average, though these results have been adversely affected by a policy of early entry, in Year 10, now discontinued, and the impact that irregular attendance, particularly that of boys, has had on some pupils' coursework. In the 2001 GCSE examinations 26 per cent of pupils gained A*-C grades and in the 2000 examinations 33 per cent of pupils gained A*-C grades compared to 64 per cent

nationally. The GCSE results show a decline in 2001, but this is accounted for by attendance within that particular cohort. Until 2001 GCSE results have shown steady improvement. Ceramic's results are higher than those for graphics and girls significantly out-perform boys in the achievement of A*-C grades. These differences are not evident in the current Year 10 and particularly the GNVQ course. Skills such as colour palette, tonal work and techniques, such as scraffito, are effectively taught and practised. The quality of Year 10 projects and Year 11 coursework is of a high standard for the pupils' prior attainment, with some very good work in ceramics. Very good links are made to the work of other artists, as in a Year 11 lesson using a theme of the macabre and work in the style of Bosch and Pasada. Well-managed and resourced lessons, as for example in Year 10 GNVQ, enable pupils to make good progress with their ideas and critical analysis of designs. The pupils make effective use of ICT for research; for example one pupil had used the Internet to research Salvador Dali as part of a critical analysis. However, the lack of specialist imaging resources and software can restrict both the ideas and achievement of pupils. Most pupils achieve what they should in Years 10 and 11.

135. Clear strengths of teaching are seen throughout the subject. Although during the inspection a number of lessons were covered by a supply teacher, all teaching was satisfactory or better and the pupils' work indicates that overall the teaching is good in both key stages. Learning is satisfactory in Years 7, 8 and 9, reflecting the impact of the weaknesses in pupils' speaking, listening and social skills. Learning at these years is further disrupted by the regular changes caused by the expressive arts carousel. At Key Stage 4 pupils' learning is good and reflects the teaching. Many lessons benefit from a very clear three-part structure. Teaching is based on a depth of subject expertise and challenge to pupils to succeed, as for example in a Year 7 lesson on using Islamic symbols to produce symmetric designs on a clay tablet. Pupils usually respond well to the positive learning climate within the subject. As their self-esteem and confidence grow, through Key Stage 4, they develop sufficient social and speaking and listening skills to share their views and ideas with maturity in Years 10 and 11. Most pupils are self-reliant in their work by Year 10, organising coursework and meeting GNVQ deadlines effectively. Good questioning and thoughtful strategies of intervention with pupils support all ability groups in doing their best. For example, pupils in a Year 8 graphics lesson made satisfactory gains in their learning through the teacher's use of short demonstration and question/response sessions followed by individual or small group support. Routines are well established and pupils use equipment safely. Discussion of ideas is robust but respectful of the other person's opinion, particularly in Year 10. Planned opportunities for reflection on designs and the work of other artists, including peers and that of the teacher, are frequent; however, the pupils' more limited speaking skills can reduce the gains made from these activities in Years 7 to 9. Relationships are satisfactory overall and the teachers work hard at supporting pupils. However, a small but significant minority, particularly in Years 7 to 9, though well managed, display an unsatisfactory attitude to learning and can present challenging behaviour, which can disrupt the learning of others. Assessment is much improved from the last inspection; pupils know what they can do and how to improve their work. The quality of guidance and clear feedback to pupils, particularly in Year 10, is contributing significantly to the rising standards.

136. The subject offers an effective curriculum in both Key Stages 3 and 4. Planning is rigorous and teaching is well organised. All pupils can follow a full GNVQ or GCSE in Key Stage 4 and most benefit from the quality range of learning opportunities offered. Weaknesses of the Key Stage 3 curriculum, in progression, as a result of the expressive arts carousel arrangement, can slow the gains pupils make in Years 7, 8 and 9. Similarly, whilst the curriculum meets the requirements of the National Curriculum, the overall range of media offered is relatively narrow, and the lack of a fully-planned ICT programme is a weakness. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported. Sketchbooks are effectively used. Since the last inspection good progress has been made in their use to support the pupils' designing and critical analysis work. Effective use is made of gallery visits and a study visit to Barcelona is planned. The work of other artists and cultural traditions is strong, an

improvement from the last inspection, with effective work seen in relation to Hinduism, Islam and Celtic traditions.

137. Pupils' achievement benefits from the subject's clear view of itself and priorities for improvement. The leadership is good. It is rigorous in seeking improvement and demanding high standards. Strengths and weaknesses are well known, as with ICT, and the focused development has ensured satisfactory improvement and the maintenance of the strengths of the last inspection.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- The standard of food technology, relative to work in the other material areas.
- The commitment and teamwork of a relatively new and inexperienced staff.
- The teachers' knowledge of pupils and the support they provide for individual students.
- The positive attitudes of many pupils who enjoy the subject and want to succeed.

Areas for improvement

- Strategic planning, to ensure that the subject meets statutory requirements and the pupils achieve appropriate standards.
- Teachers to focus more sharply on key learning in lessons and assess the impact of their teaching on the pupils' progress.
- More opportunities for students to learn through practical activities.
- Access to computers, particularly for design, manufacture and control.
- A specialist teacher for resistant materials, systems and control.

138. By the end of Year 9, the pupils achieve standards that are well below average. Pupils of all capabilities, including those with special educational needs, do not make the progress they should over the key stage. There has been some improvement since the last inspection, yet the pupils can clearly do better. Standards are highest when the pupils work with food and textiles. In food technology lessons, the pupils successfully carry out surveys, select and modify recipes to suit requirements and evaluate and test the products they have made. However, few use the results of their testing to improve their products. In textiles as in food, the pupils' making skills are better than their designing skills. A Year 9 class showed very good attention to detail in developing and making stencils to decorate the juggling balls they were to make, yet their specification for the design was of a much lower standard. The pupils' presentation and drawing skills are of a low standard as is their ability to design and make in wood, metal and plastic, due to limited opportunities and teacher expertise. The pupils have a sound knowledge of levers and structures, yet they generally have no experience of electronics, pneumatics and computer control, or of using them to make things work.

139. By the end of Year 11, the pupils achieve standards that are well below average and they make insufficient progress over the key stage. The number gaining GCSE grades A*-C in 2001 was 15 per cent compared with the national average of 51 per cent. This is better than the previous year when only 10 per cent gained A*-C grades, but not as good as at the time of the last inspection, when 22 per cent did so. Last year, the girls did better than the boys by a margin which was slightly greater than the national difference. In most instances the pupils do better in their other subjects than in design and technology. Standards are best in food technology and the GCSE results in 2001 were generally in line with those in English and mathematics. However, the number of pupils who failed to achieve a grade, or were not entered for the examination was higher in food technology. Significant changes to the teaching staff and the loss of staff with expertise in resistant material and systems and control have caused considerable disruption to courses. The GCSE course for pupils

currently in Year 10 has been modified to accommodate current staff expertise, yet does not provide opportunities for pupils to focus on designing and making in resistant materials. Also, less than one in three of the pupils currently study design and technology in Year 10, which is extremely low when compared with other schools.

140. Statutory requirements for design and technology are not met at either key stage as the pupils have little experience of systems and control, or opportunities to use computers for design and manufacture and to support their work in the subject.

141. The quality of teaching and its impact on the pupil's learning are generally sound and sometimes good and there have been some improvements since the last inspection. The school has found difficulty in recruiting experienced teachers, yet the three trainees who make up half of the current staff make a good contribution to provision for the subject. The teachers' planning has improved since the last inspection, yet schemes of work are not yet complete for all aspects of the subject and planning is unsatisfactory overall. Teachers show energy and commitment in their teaching and most pupils clearly enjoy their work and behave well as a result. Teaching is particularly effective where lessons focus on practical activities, which the teachers use to develop new learning. For example, pupils in Year 7 took part in a competition to build frameworks to carry a specified weight, which they tested and analysed to learn about structures. The progress of the lower attainers is often enhanced by good individual support from learning support assistants in the classroom. However, lessons often focus too heavily on providing pupils with experiences rather than on the key learning needed to raise standards, and expectations can be set too low. Teaching is least successful where pupils are set uninteresting work which can lead to poor concentration and behaviour. In one instance a Year 9 group developed a questionnaire and analysed the results. This was not a new activity to them and there was little variety to maintain their interest over a long period of time.

142. The management of the subject has improved since the last inspection and is sound overall. The new subject co-ordinator leads with energy and commitment and has developed good teamwork across the department. Her day-to-day management has successfully addressed many pressing issues. However, the school has not developed a vision for the subject or a strategic plan to address shortcomings, particularly in teacher expertise and in accommodation for resistant materials, graphics and systems and control, or resources for graphics and ICT, which are unsatisfactory.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Pupils make good progress in Years 10 and 11.
- Teaching is good in Years 10 and 11.
- The management of the department is good.

Areas for improvement

- More specific provision needs to be made to extend the most able pupils in lessons.

143. There has been good progress in geography since the last inspection. By the end of Year 9 and Year 11, standards in geography are below the national average. From a low position on entry, pupils' achievement in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. Results at GCSE, in 2001, were close to the national average and are above average for the school, representing good achievement by most pupils in Years 10 and 11. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory in all years but the most able are not sufficiently extended in their work, where opportunities to make full use of ICT are missed.

144. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 make steady gains in their subject knowledge and understanding and geographical skills. In their skills of enquiry, which are particularly weak on entry to the school, they make good progress, as with the Year 7 local urban enquiry and Year 9 study of the microclimate around the school. By Year 9 most pupils can plot bar and line graphs for a climate accurately. More able pupils are able to analyse and write reasoned conclusions to an enquiry as with Year 8 pupils' work about a Brazilian shanty town. In Years 7 to 9 a significant number of pupils are hampered in their work by weak literacy skills. For example, some Year 9 pupils found it difficult to write a reasoned description of rainfall pattern across the United Kingdom and many Years 7 and 8 pupils' work is adversely affected by weaknesses in punctuation, spelling and grammar.

145. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are making good progress in describing and explaining coastal features and changes in populations. Pupils in Year 10 are able to discuss the different methods of coastal protection and weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of different approaches to coastal management. More able Year 10 pupils can describe natural features, but their answers sometimes lack the amount of detail needed for the highest grades. However, some of the more able Year 10 pupils can write extended answers in prose on the effects of natural hazards at a sound GCSE standard. Less able pupils often have only limited notes and simple answers to questions. They find it difficult to remember information from one lesson to the next. A significant proportion of pupils, in all year groups, have lower levels of literacy than average. Many pupils struggle with subject terminology, spelling and punctuation. This, together with the low levels of attendance of some pupils, affects their progress in the subject.

146. The teaching of geography is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. There was no unsatisfactory teaching observed. Teachers provide positive images when introducing people in other countries. In one good Year 10 lesson, there was an effective focus on examination technique and tips for pupils to improve their work. Aims and objectives are clearly outlined at the start of the lessons. Teaching material has been adapted to meet the need of the less able and those with learning difficulties. Teachers use various methods of recording information without the need for pupils to use extended writing. The work often contains alternative activities, which supports pupils of different capabilities. Sometimes this method restricts the development of the most able pupils who cannot work at their own pace.

147. Teachers consistently persist with the school's discipline policy in lessons and use praise and encouragement wherever possible, despite some negative behaviour. This ensures that behaviour does not deteriorate further. The teachers have to work hard at controlling the behaviour of a significant minority of pupils in some lessons. Pupil response varies widely from poor to very good. In some lessons pupils listen to each other, work well in groups and present to the class. In others a small number of pupils take up too much of the teachers' time and slow the pace of learning. Teachers work hard at developing good rapport in difficult circumstances. The subject is effectively managed. The strong team ethic and willingness to reflect on what works and what has to be improved provide a good capacity for further development.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- The well above average results at GCSE in 2001.
- The improvements in standards by the end of Year 9.
- The new system of assessment in Years 7 to 9.
- The new schemes of work in Years 7 to 9 and at GCSE.
- The shared commitment to improvement of the teachers.
- Leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- The literacy skills of pupils across Years 7 to 9.
- More effective use of ICT.

148. Pupils' performance at GCSE has significantly improved over the past three years. In 2001 for the 22 higher ability pupils, four boys and 18 girls, who took history, the results were well above the national average. Of these pupils 16 achieved A*-C grades whilst three gained A grades. Changes to the option system and the courses offered now mean that pupils from across the entire ability range take history. Observation of lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work confirm that the standards of pupils in the current Years 10 and 11 are just below national expectations. This represents good achievement for all pupils, including those with special educational needs, except for some pupils whose progress has been hampered by their poor attendance at history lessons. These standards are the result of the good teaching observed in Years 10 and 11.

149. What all pupils can do well is to investigate historical sites, as demonstrated by their coursework on Portchester Castle. They can describe and explain historical events such as categorising medieval peoples' explanations of the Black Death into natural and supernatural. Higher attainers can go on to make the links with the ideas of people in earlier periods of history. At all levels pupils are developing their ability to draw information from sources to support their conclusions, such as what the written and physical evidence tells us about Roman public health measures. The weaknesses of the lower attaining pupils are in recalling what they know and in recognising what examination questions are asking them to do. History is a popular option with the current Year 11.

150. The standards achieved by the pupils in Year 9 are below national expectations but represent a significant improvement over the past three years. Bearing in mind the low level of history knowledge and understanding at the start of Year 7, this represents satisfactory achievement for all pupils, including those pupils with special educational needs and with English as an additional language. By the end of Year 9 all pupils have a working knowledge of time in the past and can recall some information. Pupils of higher capability can produce good extended writing in response to such questions as, "What were the causes of the First World War?" However, for many pupils the major weakness is their inability to explain clearly, either orally or in writing, their historical understanding. Middle and lower attainers in addition find it difficult to extract information from sources because of their poor literacy skills. The teachers recognise this and are working hard at helping to develop the pupils' literacy skills.

151. The quality of both teaching and learning is good at GCSE and results in the good achievements of pupils. In Years 7 to 9 the quality of teaching was satisfactory in the vast majority of lessons and, in over half the lessons observed, was good. The attitude of pupils to their learning is very good at GCSE and is satisfactory for the majority of pupils at Key Stage 3. Teachers work very hard, ably supported by LSAs, to overcome the misbehaviour of a small minority of pupils and to encourage all pupils to have greater confidence in their

own ability, both of which are factors which slow the pace of learning. In all lessons there are at least satisfactory relationships between teachers and pupils. Many pupils are willing to answer teachers' questions and to offer their own ideas which teachers value. In a Year 10 lesson, one pupil commented on a pattern in the attitudes of people writing about sod houses on the American Plains and the teacher praised and then used the pupil's idea with the rest of the class. A strong feature of the most effective teaching is the very good planning of lessons. In a Year 7 lesson the pupils were able to write good persuasive arguments, as to why their chosen man had the best claim to the throne in 1066. This was because in previous lessons the teacher had carefully helped them to build up an understanding of what makes a good leader and of the detailed claims of each of the three men: William of Normandy, Harold Godwinson and Harald Haardraada. Then, within the lesson, the teacher broke the work down into small steps and explicitly modelled examples of persuasive writing. Other features of the teaching are the ways in which teachers challenge pupils to think and to work hard. The extra sessions for GCSE pupils, after school and on Saturdays, are evidence of the commitment of both teachers and pupils to doing well. Where teaching and learning is not effective teacher exposition is too long and pupils are not actively involved. Additionally, in some teaching groups, marking gives pupils insufficient guidance on how to improve, unlike the good practice in other groups. The recent staffing changes have resulted in some teachers taking over new classes this term. In some of the lessons observed, whilst the tasks set were appropriate for the average and below average attaining pupils, they were not appropriate for higher attaining pupils.

152. Leadership is very good. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection. Results at GCSE have improved. The new schemes of work in Years 7 to 9 give very effective guidance to all those teaching history and, together with the newly developed system of common assessments, are contributing to the rising standards. There is now much better provision of appropriate learning activities for pupils of differing capability including those with special educational needs. Monitoring and evaluation are effective through lesson observation and work scrutiny and this is helping to promote good quality history teaching. Resources are satisfactory with a suitably wide selection of textbooks available for Years 7 to 9 but are inadequate for the large numbers taking GCSE in the current Year 11. This is having a negative impact on the standards those pupils achieve. Insufficient use is still being made of ICT in history.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

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

Strengths

- GNVQ provision and teaching in Year 10.
- Long-term planning and the departmental scheme of work.
- Training and support for unqualified and registered teachers.

Areas for improvement

- Attainment, especially of boys in Years 7 to 9.
- Pupils' knowledge of their own learning and how, in specific terms, they can improve.
- Resources for teaching ICT, both in specialist areas such as design and technology and science as well as improved access to enable other subjects to fulfil their requirements.

153. Specialist provision for ICT is good; across the curriculum it is unsatisfactory. There have been improvements since the last inspection but a number of weaknesses identified at that time have yet to be remedied.

154. At the end of Year 9, whilst standards in ICT have risen significantly since 1999, they remain below the national expectation. The levels attained at the end of Year 9 by girls in

teachers' assessments in 2001 were higher generally than those of boys. In those lessons in Years 7 to 9 where misconduct contributed to unsatisfactory learning, this was more evident amongst boys than girls. The levels of pupils' research skills and their knowledge of the processes of exchanging and sharing information are in line with those expected. Their use of systems to control events and their use of ICT tools to measure and sense data are poor. Pupils enter the school with low levels of competence in ICT. They make steady progress overall; by the age of 14, their achievement is satisfactory. Typically, Year 7 pupils can combine text with graphics using desktop publishing, word processing or presentation tools. They can enter data in a spreadsheet and manipulate it using simple formulae and graph functions. By Year 8, they can identify key words to use in Internet research, select a suitable search tool and use discretion to locate relevant further information on web sites. Having found suitable material, they can copy both text and graphics to edit and incorporate into their own documents. For example, pupils use their reading of local newspapers to prepare their own journalistic prose, find further information from the Internet and incorporate it in their own news sheet. By the end of Year 9 pupils can prepare and follow a design brief, discuss sensing and control features, structure information, refine it carefully and present it in a polished form.

155. By the end of Year 11, pupils attain below average standards in ICT, with no pupils attaining the highest grades in GCSE and a smaller proportion than that found nationally attaining grades of C or above. Standards of key skills are below average; pupils' use of computer control systems and data sensing is limited by lack of resources in science and design and technology. Whilst differences in attainment between boys and girls remain, they are less marked in GCSE results. In current work, the quality of refinement and final product are better generally in girls' work. However, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. In Years 10 and 11, all pupils follow a nationally accredited key skills course that allows them to build well on their earlier achievements in ICT. Current Year 10 pupils, following the new GNVQ course, are achieving well. They benefit from presentations by visiting speakers; a commercial programmer provided useful examples to illustrate the application of relational databases that helped pupils develop basic concepts. Pupils put their ICT skills to good use in some subjects, notably GNVQ business studies and aspects of religious education and music. In other subjects, opportunities are limited by lack of special resources or easy access, for example, in English, art, history and musical composition. Some subjects build well on key skills, reinforcing comprehension and interpretation, for example when reviewing Internet sources in business studies, but in some cases, sources are often cited or copied uncritically. Until access became restricted during this year, modern foreign languages made profitable use of ICT facilities.

156. Pupils with special educational needs and those who find learning difficult make good progress in ICT and achieve well; results in key skills coursework are good and results in unit tests are improving significantly. Gifted and talented pupils are not routinely identified but some of the most capable pupils have extra challenge provided by their teachers. However, on occasions pupils have to rely on their own resources when the teacher has to spend time helping pupils who have missed work due to poor attendance or exclusion.

157. In Years 7 to 9, teaching is satisfactory. It is good in Years 10 and 11, accounting for the good progress being made by most pupils in GNVQ. Irregular attendance by a significant minority of pupils, in all years, can limit their better progress. Strengths in teaching are characterised by very good subject knowledge and interesting expositions using resources well. Also, when teachers have very clearly defined objectives for pupils' learning and they convey these to pupils, they can focus their attention on the central purposes of the lesson and make good progress. For example, in a Year 7 lesson, the teacher captured pupils' interest well, with a lively presentation to introduce spreadsheets. Pupils were clearly stimulated and enjoyed the opportunity to use the projection equipment themselves before more intensive individual work secured their grasp of basic skills. In lessons taught by unqualified teachers in the early stages of their training, more experienced teachers provide good support to sustain satisfactory standards, for example, in managing behaviour. Weaker

teaching is not sufficiently responsive to the pupils' capacity for sustained concentration. For example, in a Year 11 lesson, pupils' interest waned when the teacher spent too much time engaged in dull definition of terms. Generally teachers do take sufficient opportunities to tell pupils how their work relates to levels of attainment and how, in specific detail, they can effectively attain higher levels. In some subjects, specific ICT skills are taught well, such as in GNVQ business studies where pupils are taught to evaluate information based on Internet sources rather than simply cutting and pasting text into their own work. National Curriculum requirements are met, though not all pupils enjoy equal standards of provision, for example, pupils in their use of computers to control external events.

158. Management of the subject is satisfactory; some aspects are good whilst others are weak. The scheme of work provides a good planning framework. Monitoring, evaluation and subsequent action effectively promote improvements in the quality of teaching, especially for those teachers on the registered training programme. This represents a significant improvement since the time of the last inspection. Teachers routinely check the progress of pupils, especially in Years 10 and 11, in order to raise achievement. Furthermore, ICT resources have improved recently but not sufficiently to allow adequate access by other subjects since the increasing demands arising from the introduction of GNVQ courses. Hence, there has been insufficient attention to the teaching of ICT in other subjects, some of which consequently are unable to offer the breadth of curriculum expected.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Most pupils are making reasonable progress.
- The choice of languages offered by the school.
- The leadership of the head of department.
- Support for inexperienced teachers.

Areas for improvement

- The pupils' confidence in speaking.
- Greater consistency in expectations of how the pupils should contribute in lessons.
- Increasing the use of the language being taught when giving instructions.

159. In Year 7 all the pupils learn French, Italian and Spanish, each for one term. They then continue with one of the three languages. As a result of staffing difficulties and of the school's response to the new freedom to disapply pupils from parts of the National Curriculum in Years 10 and 11, only a minority of pupils are currently studying a language after Year 9.

160. The pupils' attainment by the end of Year 9 is well below average. Last year only a very small minority achieved the expected level for 14 year olds. The difficulties experienced by the school in recruiting and retaining modern foreign language teachers have been a major factor in holding back improvement in performance. Staffing is now becoming more stable. Evidence from the inspection shows some improvement by pupils currently in Year 9, though attainment remains well below average. The most able are beginning to cope with talking and writing about things in the past and future and have a sound understanding of longer passages in reading and listening. Most of the other pupils, including many with special educational needs, require a lot of support from their teachers in all four skills. In particular, they lack confidence in speaking, tending to speak in short phrases. They have some understanding of short sentences containing largely familiar language. The majority are nonetheless making sound progress, given their well below average attainment on entry to the school and the extent of the literacy problems still experienced by many. A minority are not making sufficient progress. These pupils tend to be concentrated in classes that have

been most disrupted by changes in teacher. Where there is underachievement, more boys than girls are affected.

161. By the end of Year 11, the overall picture in the school is of well below average attainment. In the 2001 GCSE examinations, the results attained by the pupils who studied a language were well below average. These pupils achieved results broadly in line with their results in their other subjects. There was no difference in the results attained by boys and girls. However, only one-fifth of the pupils in the year sat GCSE in a language. The percentage of pupils in the year achieving a grade C or above was therefore very low. The performance of the pupils currently in Year 11, again including those with special educational needs, shows a similar well below average picture. A small number are on course to achieve the higher grades; most are in line for the lower grades. Nevertheless, given the pupils' results in the Year 9 national tests, most are making sound progress. The most able produce coursework that is accurate and contains a satisfactory range of expressions, including past tenses. They have a good understanding of longer passages containing some unfamiliar language. Many, however, struggle to achieve accuracy or fluency in their speaking and writing.

162. Teaching is satisfactory. Positive features in many lessons include a very energetic approach and admirable perseverance in the face of behaviour that is at times poor. The teachers have good relationships with most of their pupils, they encourage well and praise appropriately. They are able to adjust the lesson if things are not working as expected. They have a good awareness of the National Curriculum and GCSE expectations. All of the above have a positive impact on the achievement and behaviour of most pupils. In the best lessons, the teacher builds effectively on the pupils' recent learning and is effective in using the language itself for classroom instructions. Two weaknesses in a number of lessons include a tendency to allow pupils to call out answers and some unnecessary use of English for instructions. In a number of lessons, a small minority of pupils arrive unwilling to contribute positively or to refrain from insistent attention-seeking. This puts considerable strain on the teachers who have to work very hard to ensure that the learning of the others is not spoiled.

163. The leadership of the head of department is good and provides clear direction. There is very good support for less experienced teachers. Monitoring of their work is a strength. Her enthusiasm and energy have been key factors in holding things together in very difficult circumstances. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Although attainment has not risen, it has not got worse, which it could easily have done given the difficulties in recruitment and the turnover of staff. There is now hardly any less than satisfactory teaching, an improvement compared to the last inspection. Planning is now good, assessment of the pupils' work is both accurate and rigorous, and two annual trips to France have been established.

MUSIC

Strengths

- The successful re-establishment of the subject in both the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. Enthusiastic teaching and supportive management are the main contributory factors to this development.
- Classroom management of pupils is mostly good.
- Lessons are clearly planned and timed with a variety of activities.
- Take-up in option groups, instrumental lessons and extra-curricular groups is increasing.

Areas for improvement

- Further curriculum development concentrating on the planned progression of subject skills across a broad breadth of study and with appropriate time in the curriculum.
- More resources are needed for music technology to support the development of composing skills at both key stages.

164. The school has responded well to a key issue of the last inspection and music has been re-instated at Key Stage 3 since September 2000. In September 2001, a year ahead of schedule, GCSE music was re-introduced in Year 10.

165. Music is part of a creative arts department offering art, music, dance, drama and media studies at both key stages. All pupils at Key Stage 3 follow a National Curriculum music course although such a wide variety of subjects significantly restricts the music curriculum time. GCSE music is offered as an option to Key Stage 4 pupils. Instrumental lessons are available for a variety of instruments including keyboard, guitar, drums, brass, woodwind and recorder, and various world music workshops regularly visit the school. There are several extra-curricular music clubs and the department holds annual concerts and contributes to school productions. Standards seen in Year 9 are below national levels for the stage of the course. Pupils play simple parts on keyboards using some finger techniques. They are able to differentiate note values. They compose short melodies and rhythms within simple structures and have knowledge of some modern styles. Skills and understanding in both performing and composing need further development alongside increased knowledge and more precise use of musical terminology.

166. At Key Stage 4, no pupils have studied examination music since 1997 when results were well below national standards. No Year 10 lessons were seen in the inspection.

167. Achievement is satisfactory overall at Key Stage 3 and pupils make sound progress over time and in most lessons. Standards on entry are well below expected levels and pupils have very limited musical experience. Across the key stage they improve to below expected levels although there is some limitation in the breadth of the curriculum offered at present. Pupils of all levels of ability make equal progress.

168. Teaching is satisfactory overall with some good features in classroom management. Lessons follow the well thought out learning policy of the creative arts department and are planned with a variety of practical activities. This helps to maintain pupil interest; some work sheets are available to support pupil learning. Teaching is lively, encouraging and patient and also makes good use of humour to encourage and cajole pupils into maintaining their efforts to learn. Pupils are expected to achieve. The aims of the lessons are clear, prior knowledge is checked through good use of questioning and evaluation sessions help pupils to consolidate their learning. Development of musical skills needs more short-term, precisely structured tasks with further musical examples to support pupils who have very little experience of practical music. Further development of work sheets for pupils of all levels of ability is required, too. Pupils' performances are valued by peers and the teacher, thus encouraging more to volunteer and build their confidence. The teacher supports the pupils well in paired and group work, relationships are good and most pupils enjoy their music lessons. This all leads to attitudes and behaviour that are broadly satisfactory at Key Stage 3

but, although pupils are aware of the expected standards, a significant minority indulge in challenging behaviour in some classes. Despite the best efforts of teachers, and sound use of school discipline strategies, this does affect progress and standards in some instances. At Key Stage 4 enthusiasm for the subject has resulted in the school offering music as an option a year ahead of planning.

169. Good senior and middle management planning and support alongside enthusiastic and committed teaching have re-established the subject in the curriculum and the extra-curriculum. There are still areas for development to be addressed:

- Curriculum time is limited and this restricts the breadth of study at Key Stage 3.
- The 'carousel' timetable of the creative arts department limits development of practical skills as pupils need to practise regularly.
- Subject support is needed for the new teacher to devise a full curriculum plan with progressive development of the musical skills, knowledge and understanding.
- Music technology is well used at Key Stage 4 but more resources are needed to support the development of pupils' limited performing and composing skills at Key Stage 3 and raise standards.
- Music is taught in one large room that is well arranged. However, small group activities, required by the National Curriculum, are restricted by the lack of small areas in which pupils can hear their own work clearly. There are no practice rooms in the department and peripatetic teachers often have to change rooms mid-session. Some development of accommodation is needed.

With further attention to these areas the department is well poised to move forward.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision of physical education is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- The new approach to discipline, which is beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' learning.
- Improving standards of the pupils' kit.
- Extra-curricular activities are increasing in popularity and lead to a greater interest in physical activity.

Areas for improvement

- Standards at GCSE by increasing the teachers' expertise, pace of lessons and challenge to the pupils.
- The pupils' listening and speaking skills.
- Create more opportunities for pupils to independently plan and evaluate their work.

170. Standards by the end of Years 9 and 11 are average. In the GCSE course, results for 2001 were well below the national average and have been consistently below for the last three years. Standards in the current Year 11 are well below average in the GCSE course. The pupils do not achieve well relative to their ability in other subjects. There has been considerable turbulence in the change of teachers and records of pupils' work have not been kept. The current teachers are enthusiastic but lack experience in delivering the theoretical syllabus. The slow pace and low level of challenge in the lessons limit progress and the pupils do not have the depth of knowledge that is required. Their practical performance is average. They have a satisfactory grasp of skills and strategies in activities such as rugby league and basketball. Their ability to analyse skills is not sufficiently refined.

172. Standards reached in Year 9 are average overall and the pupils' achievements are good in relation to their attainment on joining the school. A minority of pupils have good ball

skills. These pupils are confident in their control of the ball in games such as netball, basketball and table tennis. They understand the principles of attack and defence and their spatial awareness is good. A significant minority of pupils have games skills that are below average. They are slow to anticipate the flight of a ball and poor spatial awareness leads to crowding of the ball. This makes it difficult to consolidate skills in a competitive situation. An overall weakness is the pupils' listening skills. Much time is wasted in the repetition of instructions. Their ability to evaluate their own work and confidence in using technical vocabulary when speaking are not well developed. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well and are often more skilful than others.

173. Standards reached by pupils in core Year 11 lessons are average overall and the pupils achieve satisfactorily. Their performance becomes more skilful and they are more consistent in their use of tactics and strategies. A higher level of achievement is restricted because the majority of pupils lack the self-discipline to practise to refine their skills. Listening skills and the ability to answer questions using technical vocabulary are again aspects that are not well developed. On several occasions, unchallenging tasks and pupils' poor attitudes led to achievement that was less than could be expected from often-capable pupils. A minority of girls have above average basketball skills. They are quick to anticipate the ball and move about the court with agility and speed. They jump for the rebound and are quick to change to the offensive role. Pupils with special educational needs achieve satisfactorily overall.

174. Teaching and quality of learning are satisfactory overall and the new head of department is raising standards. The poor skills and attitudes of some pupils, the product of previous teaching, are now improving. The best teaching is in Years 7 and 8. The teachers are consistent in their high expectation of learning difficult tasks in practical lessons. The pupils enjoy the challenge and most try to improve through practice. The teachers use a variety of methods that are successful in developing practical skills but are not all equally successful in developing pupils' skills in planning and evaluating. In some lessons the pace of learning slows because the pupils are too dependent on the teacher. They need constant reassurance and do not listen carefully to whole class instructions. Question and answer sessions are used to assess gains in knowledge. Pupils generally call out their answers and the teachers are only able to assess the knowledge of the more confident. All lessons begin promptly and are well timed to ensure that skills progress logically to the final activity. Some double lessons are disjointed because the teachers have to swap half way through to teach mathematics. Time is lost and some of the more challenging pupils take considerable time to resettle. This is an unsatisfactory situation.

175. The teaching of GCSE theory lessons is unsatisfactory. The current teachers lack experience and specialised training. Notes are not given in sufficient depth and pupils are not tested often enough to ensure consolidation of knowledge. There is an inconsistent approach to the keeping of records and regular setting of homework. Pupils are unsure of what they need to do to improve. The teaching of practical lessons is good. Expectations are high and the pupils achieve well. A good example of this was seen in a rugby league lesson. The teacher's excellent subject knowledge and logical progression of task ensured that the pupils learnt new skills quickly and were able to transfer them accurately into a game. At present theory lessons are taught in a variety of classrooms. This makes it difficult to establish a subject stimulating environment and for pupils to display their work.

176. The pupils' attitudes to this subject vary. For the most part they are well motivated and keen to improve. This is particularly evident in the extra-curricular programme and good competitive games programme. Table tennis is growing in popularity and the pupils achieve success at school and district events. The girls are less inclined to take part in these activities and there are generally fewer opportunities for them. Trips to national sporting events are popular. Attendance rates and actual participation in lessons are poorer in Years 10 and 11 than younger years, but are steadily improving due to the more consistent application of the departmental code of conduct.

177. New leadership is giving a motivational boost to the department and improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Greater focus on formalising policies, monitoring of teaching and regular minuted reviews of progress will help to ensure that there is a consistent approach to raising standards. A joint departmental office would also help in the day-to-day running of the department and give easier access to resources and records. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection in core lessons but unsatisfactory progress in the teaching of GCSE. The amount of time dedicated to the syllabus is appropriate but should be balanced in favour of theory.

Dance

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

Strengths

- High standards and achievement in core and examination classes.
- GCSE results that are consistently above the national and school average.
- Pupils' motivation and independence in learning.
- Variety and quality of extra-curricular provision.

Areas for improvement

- Greater focus on the pupils' accurate use of technical vocabulary when writing and speaking.
- Increase the range of reference books to support examination classes.

178. GCSE results in 2001 were well above the national average and have shown a similar trend for the last three years. The pupils attain better results than in their other subjects. This represents very good achievement. Some pupils take the examination a year early and in 2001 had the opportunity to study AS-level. All pupils passed the examination and achieved well for Year 11 pupils. Those currently in Year 11 have above average practical skills and average knowledge in theoretical aspects. They are sophisticated in performance showing complex and technically difficult movements in a variety of styles. They show initiative and originality in composing dances and use advanced choreographic principles. Natural leaders emerge and many are able to critically analyse and improve the dances they perform. Current GCSE theoretical work is less advanced. Notes are limited but accurate. Theoretical work at AS-level shows that the pupils have a good understanding of how a variety of composers and choreographers have influenced dance through the years. They also show a satisfactory understanding of notation. Those pupils who are studying the new GNVQ course are making good progress and understand course requirements well.

179. Standards reached in Year 9 are well above average overall. This represents outstanding achievement in relation to their attainment on joining the school. Both boys and girls perform technically difficult dances with precision and good timing. They are able to interpret a range of dance styles. For example, a class in Year 9 depicted the dance culture of the 1970s. Their technical ability was such that they knew exactly where their weight was and were able to change it to move smoothly into the next move. Their co-ordination of all body parts, particularly head and hands, was exceptional giving an overall polished performance. Even those pupils who have a more limited movement vocabulary achieve exceptionally well. The pupils are all able to evaluate their performances and use some technical vocabulary to coach each other. They enjoy practising and are persistent in their efforts until they are happy with the performance. Pupils with special educational needs, particularly those with behavioural difficulties, achieve exceptionally well. They perform and thrive in the encouraging environment of the dance department.

180. Current teaching and quality of learning are very good overall and outstanding in Years 8 and 9. Each lesson is well balanced to include: thorough grounding of technique during the

warm up; rehearsal of moves learnt in past lessons; new skills; and then opportunities for pupils to evaluate and coach each other's performance. The teachers' very good subject knowledge ensures that the pace and tasks are challenging. Pupils who experience difficulties are given constructive support resulting in improved performance. The teachers have taught the pupils how to be effective when observing and improving dances. They enjoy this level of independence and work exceptionally hard in a trustworthy manner. They refer to instructions and stimuli that are well illustrated around the studios. The pupils' skills in this aspect could be improved further with access to words that are more precise and technical in detail. Relationships between the teachers and the pupils are outstanding. The mutual respect that exists creates an effective and supportive learning environment. The pupils believe they can achieve.

181. Leadership of the department is very good. Assessment records are used to modify teaching styles and to introduce new courses to meet the needs of differing pupils. Very good GCSE results have been sustained since the last inspection. There continue to be high levels of interest and motivation in lessons and extra-curricular activities. The school enjoys success in national competitions such as the Rock Challenge. Close links are established with parents in all aspects and as a result they tend to be supportive of the teachers' efforts. Effective monitoring of teaching has led to a consistent approach to discipline and help is given when needed for newer teachers.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is **satisfactory** at Key Stage 3 but remains **unsatisfactory** at Key Stage 4.

Strengths

- The progress and provision for pupils with special educational needs in Years 7 to 9.
- The effective subject leadership.

Areas for improvement

- The standards and pupils' achievement in Years 10 and 11.
- Teacher's subject knowledge and confidence in Years 10 and 11.
- The time allocation for Key Stage 4 and resources.
- The use of assessment to more effectively measure progress and inform pupils what to do next to improve in Years 10 and 11.

182. The last inspection report highlighted many weaknesses in religious education. There has been good improvement in many areas but some key issues still remain.

183. By the end of Year 9 pupils' standards are below the expectations of the agreed syllabus but their achievement is satisfactory. The pupils can highlight important beliefs and practices in Christianity and the other principal religions and can share their own ideas. They show a sound understanding of environmental issues and are aware of their own responsibilities for looking after the environment. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well through good, focused teaching and learning materials, which meet their learning needs. More able pupils do not always make the progress they are capable of because they do not develop their own ideas with sufficient depth. Pupils are often eager to share their ideas but a small minority of pupils, nearly always boys, simply shout out their responses and do not listen to others.

184. The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory overall, with a number of good features. This represents good improvement since the last inspection where teaching was unsatisfactory. The most impressive aspects of teaching in the subject are the purposeful, positive relationships between teachers and pupils, the very good support to individual pupils and the good use of questions. In a challenging Year 8 lesson the pupils' understanding of

the evidence for the existence of Jesus was effectively developed by the teacher through a series of skilful questions. All observed lessons were well planned and contained interesting learning activities. Occasionally opportunities were missed to model good responses from individual pupils to the benefit of others in the class. A small minority of pupils, always boys, spoil learning for others by behaving immaturely and calling out their answers, showing a lack of respect both for their teacher and their peers. This is usually well managed by teachers who show a real determination and perseverance to improve the pupils' learning.

185. By the end of Year 11 pupils' standards are well below average and achievement is unsatisfactory. This is largely due to insufficient time to teach the GCSE religious education short course, poor resourcing for the subject, pupils' attitudes to the subject (which are often negative) and some lack of subject knowledge and confidence among the teachers. Nearly all pupils can provide a simple personal viewpoint on issues covered in the course and have a basic factual knowledge of issues such as marriage and divorce, prejudice, racism and medical ethics. More able pupils can demonstrate an understanding of reasons for and against religious belief and practice. However, there are significant gaps in the pupils' learning. Many pupils have little knowledge and understanding of important religious beliefs and teachings and how they are linked to the issues covered in the course. They are also not able to develop their own ideas with sufficient depth and show awareness of the views of others. Recent results in the GCSE short course have remained well below the school's averages for GCSE.

186. The quality of the teaching in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory overall. Lessons are carefully planned and delivered with enthusiasm but, at times, there is a lack of subject knowledge, with not enough emphasis on important religious beliefs and teachings which underpin the course. At times the teaching is quite creative; for example, in a Year 10 lesson the effective use of questions and surveys helped pupils consider reasons for and against belief in God.

187. The subject has undergone considerable change in the last few years. This has had a negative impact on Year 11 students in particular, many of whom show little interest in, or enthusiasm for, the subject. With a new subject team well led by a dedicated, enthusiastic co-ordinator with good support from the senior management team, standards and attitudes to learning in Years 10 and 11 should improve significantly. The curriculum provision is improving and statutory requirements are met in Years 7 to 11 but the GCSE short course provision is unsatisfactory and opportunities to make full use of ICT are missed.

188. Improvement in the subject since the last inspection is satisfactory. The new co-ordinator provides good leadership and has clear, focused priorities to improve standards. Subject standards, achievement, teaching and learning have all improved in Years 7 to 9. Curriculum planning is much improved, as is pupil management. Weaknesses still exist in standards in Years 10 and 11. Time allocation is short of that recommended for a GCSE short course, and books are inadequate.

189. Religious education makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual development through exploring issues such as life after death, evil, suffering and social awareness, and through studying issues such as relationships, family life and medical ethics. There is good monitoring of the subject and an impressive commitment in the team to help pupils learn. While marking of the pupils' work is conscientious, assessment does not focus sufficiently on how well pupils are doing and what they need to do in order to improve. The display of pupils' work is impressive. Links both with feeder primary schools and with local faith communities are underdeveloped.

190. In the short space of time since the previous inspection the subject has made real progress and can celebrate a number of successes. These include caring, motivated leadership, clear improvement in standards and learning, much better planning and far more positive purposeful relationships with pupils. Good contributions are also being made to their

spiritual and social development. To continue this improvement the subject needs to: raise standards and achievement in Years 10 and 11; make more effective use of assessment; and develop links both with its feeder primary schools and with local faith communities.

BUSINESS EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in business education is **good**.

Strengths

- Effective teaching and high expectations of pupil achievement.
- Good and well-integrated use of ICT.
- Positive pupil attitudes to the subject.
- Good leadership.

Areas for improvement

- Pace of some lessons and the missed opportunity for pupil discussion.
- More frequent and effective use of assessment to measure progress.

191. GNVQ business is an option in Years 10 and 11. It is taught to Intermediate level. The first group of students will complete the programme this year. Nearly all of the Year 11 pupils are in line to complete the programme successfully, with a small number likely to attain merit grades or above. All pupils will complete the Part 1 qualification, which is the most common practice nationally at 16, but some will go on to complete the full qualification, something which is relatively much less common. Nearly all of the older pupils can give detailed descriptions of different types of business, have a sound grasp of the factors that make up effective customer service and recognise the importance of a health and safety policy in different working environments. The most able pupils make good use of business theory to distinguish the relative advantages and disadvantages of different forms of business organisation in local examples they have studied. They can similarly apply a good standard of analysis to customer service policy. Nearly all the pupils use ICT effectively to word process, gain information from the Internet and present information well. A good example was seen in one lesson where pupils prepared 'Power Point' presentations on customer service, many of them making striking use of text and graphics to illustrate their contributions. Pupils in Year 10 already show a sound grasp of the differences between national and local public services. They, too, are making effective use of the Internet for their own research although a number experience some difficulties in selecting key aspects of information and putting them into their own words. Most of the pupils have, however, made good progress with writing essays to specific targets. The achievement of the pupils, in both Years 10 and 11, is sound in relation to their prior attainment and good for a significant minority of them.

192. The teaching was at least satisfactory in all lessons seen and good in two thirds. The teacher has high expectations of the pupils and conveys these clearly and enthusiastically. He has good subject knowledge but is also committed to helping all the pupils take an independent and self-directed approach to their study in addition to building up their own subject knowledge and understanding. He uses a range of approaches varying from work with the whole class and with small groups, to supporting pupils working individually on their assignments. He has ensured that the teaching of ICT skills has been effectively integrated into the programme planning. He has also made very effective use of the 'Trident' work experience undertaken by the pupils in Year 10 and company visits, such as to the Bodyshop Factory, to illustrate and enrich coursework tasks. The opportunity to run the school shop is another relevant and challenging aspect of the programme. Teaching would occasionally benefit from proceeding at a slightly slower pace to give pupils the chance to discuss important issues and concerns as they arise in a whole class environment. The pupils would also benefit from more regular written assessment of their work at the beginning of the course to give guidance on how to improve standards.

193. Virtually all the pupils have a positive and strong commitment to GNVQ business. They are enthusiastic about the programme because they see its relevance to their future careers and they enjoy the ways in which they learn on the course. They quickly apply themselves to the tasks set, they display sustained concentration on their individual tasks and they show a readiness to provide one another with support and advice in group work. Most of them only seek teacher advice after making a strong effort to solve a problem for themselves.

194. The GNVQ business programme has good leadership. There is an overall commitment to improving pupil attainment and preparing them for the next stage of their careers after school. Course planning is very good. The programme is well resourced and makes good use of ICT. There are clear plans to develop learning materials further and to encourage more and more pupils to attain the full award. The programme needs to place emphasis on pupil assessment as a means of regularly monitoring its effectiveness. It would also benefit further from provision of specific staff development on approaches to assessment and placements in business.

195. In summary GNVQ business prepares its pupils well for the next stage of their careers through helping them gain sound knowledge and understanding of the business world, combined with the development of their skills for independent learning.