

INSPECTION REPORT

CASTLE VIEW SCHOOL

Canvey Island

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 115335

Headteacher: Mr R J Sullivan

Reporting inspector: Mr John Beardsmore
16429

Dates of inspection: 4 – 8 December 2000

Inspection number: 223700

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Foundation

Age range of pupils: 11 to 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Meppel Avenue
Canvey Island
Essex

Postcode: SS8 9RZ

Telephone number: 01268 696811

Fax number: 01268 511585

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs M Parks

Date of previous inspection: 20 November 1995

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mr John Beardsmore 16429	Registered inspector		Leadership and management
Mr Douglas Binfield 13481	Lay inspector		Attitudes, behaviour, personal development
			How well does the school care for its pupils?
			Partnership with parents
Mrs Betty Barratt 2740	Team inspector	History	The school's results and achievements
			Teaching and learning
Mr James Bowden 7926	Team inspector	Physical education	
		Special educational needs	
Mr Terry Creissen 30646	Team inspector	Music	
Mrs Pamela Draycott 14876	Team inspector	Religious education	
Mr Peter Evans 3853	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
Mr Douglas MacIldowie 20709	Team inspector	English	
Mr Roger Parry 20247	Team inspector	Geography	
		Equal opportunities	
Mr John Richards 10288	Team inspector	Design and technology	
Dr Colin Robertson 5399	Team inspector	Science	Curricular and other opportunities
Mr Bob Shaw 2112	Team inspector	Mathematics	
Mr Michael Whalley 8786	Team inspector	Modern languages	
		English as an additional language	
Mr John Woodrow 5335	Team inspector	Art	

The inspection contractor was:

Anglia College Enterprises Ltd
Anglia Polytechnic University
Danbury Park Conference Centre
Main Road
Danbury Chelmsford
Essex CM3 4AT

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Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Castle View is an 11 to 16, mixed, foundation comprehensive school, one of three secondary schools on the island. Its roll is rising and there are no vacancies in the present Year 7. Its 806 pupils come mainly from Canvey Island, though a small, and increasing, number come from surrounding areas, including some from Basildon. The socio-economic circumstances of the area are broadly average. The overwhelming majority of the pupils are white, with only 15 belonging to ethnic minorities, ten of whom are black and eight of whom have English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is broadly average, though fewer than average have a written statement of special needs. Despite this, the attainment of pupils on entry has in the past been rather below the national average, apart from the present Year 7, where it is close to the average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school, where leadership is strong and purposeful, standards are rising and pupils achieve well at Key Stage 4. Its management systems are well structured, it provides sound and improving value for money and it is in a strong position to secure further improvement.

What the school does well

- The headteacher provides very strong and skilful leadership
- The pupils' achievement is good at Key Stage 4 and their academic standards are rising
- Over half the teaching is good or better
- The pupils' attitudes are good and relationships in the school are very good
- The school makes good provision for its pupils' personal development and has excellent systems for improving their attendance
- Careers education is of high quality and pupils benefit from the school's very productive partnership with the local community, schools and colleges.

What could be improved

- Standards of attainment, though rising, are not yet high enough
- A small minority of the teaching is unsatisfactory
- Behaviour by a small minority of boys sometimes affects the quality of learning
- The monitoring and evaluation of teaching should be more rigorous
- Physical education is not taught in accordance with the National Curriculum.

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 November 1995 and since then it has made satisfactory improvement. The issues needing attention at that time were properly addressed. Test results at the end of Key Stage 3 have risen in line with the national trend, but not GCSE results. However, the school's GCSE results in 2000, though significantly below the previous year's, were in line with the ability tests taken by the same pupils when they entered the school, and also with the year group's Key Stage 3 test results two years earlier. Attendance levels have risen since the last inspection. Arrangements for the pupils' health, safety and welfare have been improved. Leadership and management are more purposeful and are clearly focused on raising standards and improving the quality of teaching.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 year olds 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*	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
GCSE examinations	C	C	D	E	

** **NOTE:** This refers to schools with a similar proportion of pupils claiming free school meals, not schools with similar academic standards on entry. Castle View School's results were actually well above average when compared with schools whose pupils had reached similar levels in their Key Stage 3 tests.*

In the **Key Stage 3** tests in 2000, pupils' overall attainment matched the national averages for their age except in English, where it was below the national average. This represents satisfactory achievement by the pupils concerned, since they entered the school with standards that were just below average, especially in English. Standards at Key Stage 3 have risen in line with the trend of improvement nationally over the last three years.

The school's performance at **GCSE** has been variable over the past few years, with a significant fall in 2000, especially in the headline rate of five grades A* to C. As a result, improvement here has been slower than the national trend. However, the proportion of those gaining five grades A* to G and those gaining at least one grade A* to G were above the national average. In addition that particular year group came into the school with well-below average attainment, so that the results were not surprising, and showed satisfactory achievement by the pupils concerned. In the core subjects, GCSE results in 2000 were below the national averages for all schools, and in science they were very low – that is, in the lowest five per cent nationally.

The school's **targets** for GCSE were over-optimistic in 2000 but inspection evidence indicates that those set for 2001 are challenging but realistic. This reflects improving standards, especially at Key Stage 4, where standards are higher than the GCSE results in 2000 would suggest. Pupils' **current work** at both key stages is broadly in line with the national average. Subjects where standards are above average at both key stages are religious education, information and communication technology (ICT) and art. Standards are improving in science and modern languages, though they are still below average at Key Stage 4.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Most pupils are keen to learn and work hard, both in lessons and at home. They co-operate well, sometimes with enthusiasm, when required to take part in paired or group work in class.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory. Behaviour is often good in lessons, in the dining hall and around the school. However, misbehaviour by a small minority of boys does cause difficulty in some lessons and sometimes impedes learning.
Personal development and relationships	Most pupils are cheerful, confident and sensible, and respond well to the opportunities provided to exercise responsibility and initiative. Relationships in the school are very good.
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory, following a sustained improvement since the last inspection.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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.

Teaching is satisfactory throughout the school, with greater strengths at Key Stage 4. It was at least satisfactory in 94 per cent of lessons seen, with 35 per cent being good, 20 per cent very good and five per cent excellent. Four per cent of the teaching was unsatisfactory and two per cent was poor. Whilst the overall judgement of satisfactory teaching remains the same as at the time of the last inspection, a higher proportion is now good. The quality of pupils' learning is similar to that of the teaching.

Teaching is good in English and satisfactory in mathematics and science. In other subjects, teaching is strongest in art, where all the teaching was judged to be very good or excellent, and in design and technology, geography, history, religious education and business education, where a high proportion of the teaching was good or better. In the remaining subjects teaching varied more in quality. In mathematics, science and modern languages, while over 40 per cent of the teaching was good, some was found to be unsatisfactory. In modern languages there was also some teaching that was poor.

The teaching of literacy and numeracy skills is satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs are enabled to make good progress by good teaching and classroom support. The teaching of the highest attaining pupils is satisfactory but could sometimes be more challenging.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is broad and balanced in most respects and is enriched by an extensive programme of optional activities. Physical education does not meet National Curriculum requirements.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision is satisfactory and meets statutory requirements. Pupils make good progress in their lessons as a result of the good quality support they receive.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Provision is satisfactory and the few pupils involved are making good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school makes good provision for the personal development of its pupils within a strong moral framework and this is reflected in its well-developed community ethos.
How well the school cares for its pupils	A high level of support and guidance is provided and there are effective arrangements for pupils' health, safety and welfare. The mentoring scheme is proving very successful.
Partnership with parents	Parents show a keen interest in pupils' progress and in school activities. Good communications with parents promote effective relationships between parents and school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides very strong and skilful leadership, loyally supported by the senior management team; management systems are well structured but monitoring by some heads of faculties needs to be more rigorous and systematic.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are very supportive of, and interested in the school. Their work is well structured to enable them to meet their responsibilities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school carefully analyses a great deal of data on its pupils' attainment and uses this to review its performance and set targets for individual pupils, subject areas and the whole school.
The strategic use of resources	Financial planning and monitoring are very good and the school pays due attention to the principles of best value. Accommodation is satisfactory and learning resources are adequate except in music. There are sufficient specialist teachers to deliver the curriculum, though, in common with others in the area, the school has experienced difficulties in recruitment in a few areas.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pupils like the school• They are encouraged to work hard• Behaviour is generally good• Much of the teaching is good• The school is well led and managed• Relationships with parents are good• There is a wide range of activities outside lessons	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A minority do not feel sufficiently informed about their children's progress• Some parents are not satisfied with examination results in GCSE

The inspectors broadly support the parents' positive views although there is scope for further improvement in teaching and in the behaviour of a minority of boys. In regard to their negative views: parents do receive regular reports about pupils' academic progress but clearer details about standards achieved would be helpful. Examination results do need to be improved but the inspectors are confident that the school is tackling this in a determined and systematic manner.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1 Standards at Key Stage 3 have risen in line with the trend of improvement nationally over the last three years. Improvement at Key Stage 4 has been slower. Pupils' overall attainment at Key Stage 3 matches the national averages for their age, but it is lower than the averages in schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. In the core subjects, attainment in mathematics and science in 2000 matched the averages for all schools, whilst in English standards were below the national average and the performance of boys was much lower than that of girls. When compared with similar schools, the 2000 results were well below the average in science and mathematics, and below the average in English.

2 At Key Stage 4, GCSE results in 2000 dropped to below the national average, and to well below the averages for schools with a similar proportion of free school meals. Boys did less well than the girls. However, the results were well above average when compared with the results of schools where pupils had achieved similar scores in Key Stage 3 tests. Moreover, the proportions of those gaining five grades A* to G and those gaining at least one grade A* to G, were above the national average. In the core subjects, the results in English and mathematics were below the national average for all schools, and in science they were very low, that is, in the lowest five per cent nationally. When compared with schools with similar standards at Key Stage 3, the results were well above average in English and mathematics, but still well below average in science.

3 Standards in the other (non-core) subjects matched the national average in the end of Key Stage 3 National Curriculum assessments in 2000, except in information and communication technology where they were above. In religious education they exceeded the expectations of the locally Agreed Syllabus. At GCSE standards were below average in all subjects apart from art where they were in line with national average, and religious education, where they were well above average.

4 The school's targets for attainment at GCSE in 2000 were over optimistic but inspection evidence indicates that those set for 2001, whilst challenging, are realistic. This reflects improving standards, especially at Key Stage 4. The work of pupils in the present Year 9 broadly reflects the levels shown in results of the 2000 Key Stage 3 tests, but the standards achieved by pupils currently at Key Stage 4 are better than the 2000 GCSE results. Standards in religious education are well above average at Key Stage 4, and above expectations at Key Stage 3. Attainment in ICT and art is above average at both key stages. Attainment is improving in science and modern languages, though still below average at Key Stage 4.

5 As stated above, pupils attain very high standards in religious education, especially at Key Stage 4, where pupils ask searching questions, reflecting maturity and insight, and many offer detailed and clear reasons for their opinions based on their good knowledge of different religious beliefs and practices. Standards are also high in ICT, where pupils develop great confidence. By the end of Key Stage 4 the work of higher attaining pupils especially is often outstanding, with accurate, detailed analyses of systems, comprehensive designs and sophisticated solutions to problems. Similarly, pupils reach high standards in art. A special feature of their work is the capacity to observe closely and with understanding, to identify visual ideas and imagery, and then to interpret this personally in an expressive two or three-dimensional form.

6 Standards in science at Key Stage 4 remain below average but not to the extent of the 2000 GCSE results. Higher attaining pupils achieve good levels in investigation and, at best, their written work is very detailed and of high quality. The work of many other pupils, however, shows elementary mistakes. Similar differences are shown in attainment in modern languages where, while higher attaining pupils reach good standards orally, many others lack confidence and are reluctant to speak the language being taught. At Key Stage 4, higher attaining pupils write with a good level of accuracy, but most pupils are still insecure in the application of basic grammar rules. Nevertheless, the work seen in modern languages at Key Stage 4 was of a higher standard than the GCSE results in 2000.

7 Pupils show a pleasing willingness to volunteer answers in many subjects, including history. Overall, the reading and writing skills shown in subjects across the curriculum are of an average standard. In ICT the pupils demonstrate above average skills when they write in a formal manner and they have a good grasp of the technical vocabulary related to systems and their constituent parts. In mathematics their writing skills are adequate for the purpose, as they are in the humanities subjects, although some pupils are less than competent in sentence construction and spelling. Overall standards of literacy are satisfactory, and the school's provision for developing literacy skills is good.

8 Standards in numeracy are satisfactory throughout the school. Opportunities for pupils to process and interpret information presented numerically and graphically are appropriately provided across the curriculum with notably productive use in design and technology and ICT. Units of measurement are met routinely in many subjects and these are usually dealt with confidently although some Year 9 pupils in a physical education lesson were unsure of the length of a metre. Subjects such as science and geography make regular demands on pupils' numeracy and, as across the wider curriculum, levels of skills are adequate to support learning.

9 Pupils' achievement (that is, the progress they have made relative to their starting point and ability) is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4, when measured against their attainment at the beginning of each key stage. Achievement in ICT, geography and art is good at both key stages, whilst in religious education it is good at Key Stage 3, and very good at Key Stage 4. In these subjects, achievement is strongly promoted by good teaching and, often, by pupils' positive attitudes towards their learning. It is noteworthy that the poor levels of interest and motivation of many pupils were important reasons for the very low standards in science in the 2000 GCSE examinations. The poor attitudes and behaviour of a minority of boys at Key Stage 4 in modern languages hinders not only their own achievement, but also that of others.

10 Pupils with special educational needs achieve well throughout the school. Their learning requirements are very well known and met in lessons, especially through the very good support from learning support assistants. Analysis of GCSE 2000 results by the headteacher shows that pupils identified as having special educational needs achieve well – approximately 50 per cent achieve at least a G grade pass in every subject and just over 25 per cent achieve C grade passes in one subject. The achievement of the few pupils with English as an additional language is similar to that of other pupils.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11 Pupils' attitudes to learning are good and make a positive contribution to standards of achievement. Nearly all pupils listen attentively and respond well during discussions. They co-operate well, sometimes with enthusiasm, when required to take part in paired or group working. Very good examples are seen in some information technology, art and design and technology lessons. Most pupils work hard and show a strong commitment to do their best in classes and in work undertaken at home. Nevertheless, in about five per cent of lessons, attitudes are unsatisfactory and occasionally poor. This arises when the work is not sufficiently challenging or because of an unco-operative response by some pupils. Ninety-eight per cent of parents replying to the questionnaire feel that their child works hard to achieve his or her best.

12 Behaviour is satisfactory overall. In most lessons pupils behave well and this contributes significantly to successful learning outcomes. In about 70 per cent of lessons, behaviour is good or better, and in over half of such lessons it is very good or excellent. Impressive behaviour standards are usually seen in other areas of the school, particularly in the dining hall. However, in ten per cent of the lessons observed, behaviour was unsatisfactory and occasionally poor. Some of the difficulties arise from shortcomings in teaching, for example, in some science and modern language lessons. A small minority of pupils shows a lack of respect for others, occasionally becoming noisy and disruptive, which can impede learning. The incidence of bullying is relatively low. The small number of pupils from ethnic minorities usually integrate well into the life and work of the school. A small minority of boys is responsible for the majority of misbehaviour. Last year there were three permanent and 27 fixed period exclusions. This is much higher than at the time of the previous inspection. All the exclusions related to serious misbehaviour by boys. Most parents feel that behaviour is good although a few express concerns. Nearly all parents feel that the school deals effectively with the behaviour problems that occur.

13 Good provision is made for pupils' personal development. Pupils respond well to the opportunities provided to show initiative and take responsibility for the quality of their work. Pupils who serve on the school council, or who act as prefects and team captains, make important contributions to the school. Relationships throughout the school are very good. Pupils respond well to the example set by adults in the school and this helps to create the friendly and purposeful atmosphere that prevails.

14 Attendance is satisfactory. In 1999/2000 the attendance level of 91.7 per cent was broadly in line with recent national averages. There has been a commendable and sustained improvement in attendance since the last inspection. Last year unauthorised absence was 0.4 per cent, which is well below the average in most schools. It shows a significant reduction from the previous year's figure. Pupils arrive punctually and lessons start on time throughout the school day. All these factors have a positive impact on learning.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

15 Teaching is satisfactory throughout the school with greater strengths at Key Stage 4. In 94 per cent of the lessons seen during the inspection it was satisfactory or better, in 35 per cent it was good, in 20 per cent it was very good and in five per cent it was excellent. Four per cent of the teaching was found to be unsatisfactory and two per cent was poor. Whilst the overall judgment, that the teaching is satisfactory, remains the same as at the time of the last inspection, there is now a higher proportion which is good.

16 Teaching is good in English, and satisfactory in mathematics and science throughout the school. In other subjects, teaching is strongest in art, where all the teaching was judged to be very good or excellent, and in design and technology, geography, history, religious education and business education where well over 70 per cent of the teaching was good or better. In the remaining subjects teaching varied more in quality. In mathematics, science and modern languages, while over 40 per cent of the teaching was good, some was found to be unsatisfactory. In modern languages there was also some teaching that was poor. The teaching of literacy and numeracy skills is satisfactory.

17 Learning is satisfactory overall at both Key Stages 3 and 4. At best, pupils' learning benefits from the skilful sharing of the teachers' good subject expertise. This is evident, for example, in English, where the teachers' good subject knowledge, especially at Key Stage 4, enables pupils to work with confidence and higher attaining pupils especially, to reach high standards. It is also evident in religious education, where the teachers' high expectations of the standards to be reached encourage pupils to apply good intellectual effort in their work. In this, as in most other subjects where teachers are able to draw on a depth of subject knowledge, questioning is used very effectively to extend pupils' thinking. For example, probing, open-ended questioning enabled pupils in a Year 10 religious education lesson to consider sensitively issues about death, and prompted them to share their own ideas thoughtfully. The teachers' very good subject expertise is used equally effectively in geography, to question and to stimulate thought and discussion of a high order, as was the case in a Year 10 lesson on world poverty.

18 Teachers' subject expertise is never less than sound across the curriculum, but in many cases, and in particular where teachers are teaching their second subject, it is not sufficiently strong to ensure appropriately high levels of challenge, especially for higher attaining pupils. This was reflected in some history lessons where, though adequate, the teachers' subject knowledge was not strong enough for them to challenge pupils to think and explore issues in depth. It was also shown in some lessons in mathematics, and also in certain aspects of design and technology, for example, graphic design, resulting in inconsistencies in the quality of teaching across both departments.

19 The variation in the strengths of teachers' subject expertise results in differences in the extent to which pupils acquire knowledge, understanding and skills, including those of literacy and numeracy. Knowledge, understanding and skills are very strongly promoted where the teachers' subject knowledge is good. In modern languages, for instance, the clear model of well-articulated spoken French presented by teachers leads in many lessons to good standards of pronunciation. In art, the demonstration and sharing of the teachers' excellent skills in drawing, for instance, produces work of exceptionally high quality by the pupils. Where the teachers' subject knowledge is less secure, the range and pace of learning is often more limited and there is a tendency for teachers to over-direct the learning. In ICT, the great majority of teaching by specialist teachers is highly effective in enabling pupils to make good progress. On the other hand, where more non-specialist teachers are involved, especially at Key Stage 3, insufficient guidance, intervention and challenge in the activities often reduce the pace of learning and the pupils' interest.

20 Most lessons in ICT, as in other subjects, are well planned to provide well-timed and sequenced activities, resulting in pupils working hard and maintaining good levels of concentration. Timely intervention and individual teaching checks and assists understanding. At best, this teaching also provides challenge for the pupils to work at an appropriate intellectual or creative level. In mathematics the most effective teaching reflects good planning that ensures appropriately ambitious use of lesson time and a skilful questioning technique that fosters pupils' thinking and deepens their understanding. These features were evident in an algebra lesson where Year 8 pupils fully accepted the demanding pace set by the teacher because they were gaining so much from the clarity of the teacher's explanations. Where teaching is weaker, these opportunities are sometimes missed. Another strong feature of the more successful lessons is the good use of discussion to enable pupils to explore issues in depth and work productively together. For example, pupils in a Year 9 science lesson worked very well together carrying out experiments on the effects on temperature when a thermometer is in contact with a rapidly evaporating liquid. Good learning took place and pupils developed confidence, especially in the application of abstract ideas.

21 Sometimes the lack of challenge, together with an over-dependency on the teacher, reduces pupils' confidence as learners. This was well illustrated in two parallel Year 10 history lessons. In one, pupils responded with enthusiasm and confidence to the challenge for them to think deeply about the impact of indoctrination in Nazi Germany, in the other, pupils' learning was significantly slower because they were not challenged to develop their ideas but sat passively as receivers of knowledge, at best replying shyly to the teacher's questions to check their understanding. In some other lessons, for example, in English, there are instances where the lack of encouragement for pupils to engage in group discussion and problem solving restricts the opportunity for them to develop independent ideas and judgements.

22 Learning in most lessons is well supported by good behaviour and by classroom relationships which create a good learning ethos. The great majority of lessons are well organised. Pupils are encouraged to have positive attitudes to their learning by being presented with a good range of interesting activities and, where necessary, by skilful behaviour management. There are, however, a few lessons where, despite the teachers' best efforts, learning is disrupted by poor behaviour by a minority of boys. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, are well supported because their learning needs are well known and the work is well matched to them. Pupils with special educational needs benefit in particular from the skilled support they receive from classroom assistants which, when it is most successful, is planned in close consultation with the subject teacher.

23 Teachers monitor pupils' progress by marking their work regularly but marking does vary in quality across subjects, especially at Key Stage 3, where it does not always provide specific guidance on how the work could be improved. As a consequence, pupils are uncertain about how well they are achieving.

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

24 Since the last inspection, the school has redesigned its curriculum in some important respects. In Key Stage 3, for example, specific literacy lessons have been introduced in Year 7; the amount of drama has been increased; and discrete lessons in information and communications technology have given way to modules of work taught within the core subjects. Technology has also developed significantly and now, through a foundation skills course, makes more effective links between the subjects involved. In Key Stage 4, double science for all has been introduced and the single science option, which barred potentially able pupils from pursuing science A levels, has been abandoned. Religious education now leads to a GCSE examination for all pupils. Such changes have been introduced, not for organisational reasons, but in pursuit of higher achievement. The result is, in most respects, a broad and balanced curriculum, offering an appropriate range of choices and meeting specifically identified needs, such as those of pupils entering the school with below average literacy skills.

25 Literacy and oracy are high priorities for the school: there is a summer school for pupils just about to enter the school, a literacy hour in Year 7 and an oracy week for Year 11. Most subject departments, including physical education, show their commitment to the school's literacy policy by displaying key words in teaching areas and by reinforcing their use in lessons. Whilst there are few opportunities in mathematics for pupils to extend their speaking skills, in geography and history they are encouraged to discuss their work in pairs and to read aloud from texts. Discussion is also encouraged in physical education, and in modern foreign languages speaking and listening are given good attention. In several subjects, notably in science and geography, pupils are encouraged to research information from the Internet and CD-ROMs and to develop their note-taking skills.

26 The curriculum is enriched in various ways. The two-week summer literacy programme mentioned above has met with success over the past three years, helping pupils not only to improve in literacy but also to become confident in their new school environment. There is a rich variety of clubs and optional activities, including a wide range of sporting opportunities. Many visits take place, often in connection with particular subjects, such as history and religious education. The local community enriches the curriculum through links with, for example, the local heritage centre and partner primary schools. As part of a drive to raise pupils' aspirations, visits to universities are arranged for Year 11 pupils and extension classes for higher attaining pupils are organised (with other schools) each year with the local sixth form college.

27 The Key Stage 4 curriculum is designed as a mixture of compulsory and optional subjects, with most time devoted to the former. Pupils elect to take three subjects from the list of options and are given careful advice to ensure a balanced choice. In a few cases, individual arrangements are made, within strict guidelines, to enable pupils to combine work experience with part-time attendance at school in Key Stage 4. It is possible for pupils to avoid some subjects entirely in Key Stage 4, although they are strongly urged to select at least one humanities subject. In response to this, the geography department offers a GCSE class to small groups of pupils in Years 9 and 10, who would otherwise be unable to pursue the subject to this level.

28 ICT is successfully offered on a cross-curricular basis, each of the core subjects taking responsibility for major elements and most subjects contributing to some extent.

29 The provision for physical education is based mainly on games. Because of this, it fails to

cover the full range of activities specified at both key stages and does not therefore comply with the National Curriculum.

30 Pupils identified as having special educational needs take a full part in the school curriculum and there is appropriate support offered for the two pupils disapplied from modern foreign languages as part of their statements of special educational needs. Overall provision for those with special educational needs is satisfactory and they make good progress, especially where they are helped by learning support assistants. The school meets statutory requirements, including the curricular requirements outlined in pupils' statements of special educational needs.

31 The provision of personal, social and health education is good. There is a well-planned programme of lessons for each year group. Several successful lessons were observed during the inspection week. For instance, under the guidance of a community police officer, Year 8 pupils showed a good understanding of aspects of criminal law relating to alcohol and drugs abuse. On four days a week, each class spends the last 20 minutes of the afternoon with the form tutor. Inspection evidence indicates that the quality of such sessions could be improved.

32 Very good arrangements are made for careers and vocational education. A specialist from the Essex Careers Service and Business Partnership Ltd visits the school regularly and provides invaluable advice to classes and individual pupils. Very thorough arrangements enable Year 9 pupils to make informed choices about subject options for GCSE examinations. In Year 10, pupils receive careful instruction on interview techniques and job applications before embarking on suitable work experience opportunities with local employers. Visiting speakers and careful individual guidance enable pupils to make appropriate choices in relation to future employment and further or higher education opportunities. Over 30 organisations had exhibits at the Canvey Island Careers Convention that was held at the school in February 2000.

33 There are very good links with the local community. Such contacts, which have been improved further since the last inspection, make a significant contribution to pupils' learning. The school works closely with the local Business Education Partnership and with many commercial and industrial companies. Pupils participate in local musical events, sports competitions and in other activities including those promoted by Castle Point Borough Council. They are also involved in supporting local and other charities. The school works closely with local voluntary organisations and community groups use the school premises. Visiting speakers include local clergy who take part in assemblies.

34 Links with partner educational institutions are very good. There is close liaison with the local primary schools on induction and curriculum issues. For example, Year 6 pupils are able to improve their literacy and numeracy skills by visiting Castle View to use computer facilities and undertake work based on their individual ability levels. Year 6 children from a local primary school visit the ICT department twice weekly. This is an excellent example of effective liaison between a secondary and primary school that provides direct and tangible benefits to the younger children. There is very good co-operation with nearby secondary schools, colleges of further education and with Essex and Kent Universities. This facilitates the smooth transfer of Year 11 pupils by enabling them to clarify educational and vocational opportunities.

35 The provision for pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Assemblies make a significant contribution to the school ethos, celebrating pupils' achievements, encouraging them to think about moral issues and strengthening the school's community spirit. Some assemblies are explicitly religious in nature, including those led by representatives of local churches. Religious education also provides many opportunities to reflect on the ultimate questions of life. The school could, however, do more to promote the pupils' spiritual development, both by looking for opportunities in other areas of the curriculum and also by making better use of the "thought for the day" in form tutor time at the end of the school day, which is sometimes perfunctory. Moral development is very strongly promoted in a variety of ways. The school makes very clear how it expects pupils to behave towards others and provides many opportunities for pupils to consider moral issues, for example, in assemblies and in lessons such as religious education and history. Pupils are also encouraged to show initiative, for example, by becoming prefects or serving on the school council, and to take responsibility for the quality of their work. Older pupils are encouraged to help the younger: there is a very well planned and structured paired-reading programme where Year 11 pupils support Year 7 pupils. The former receive formal training and guidance to help them with their work in this programme. This has a positive impact on the social development of all involved. In terms of cultural development, the school demonstrates real commitment to making its pupils aware of cultures other than their own, for example, in classroom displays in religious education, geography and music. Both art, for example, through the involvement of visiting artists, and English, through the medium of literature and drama, make a strong contribution to the pupils' understanding of their own culture, as well as that of other people.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

36 The school has good systems for monitoring and assessing pupils' attainment and progress and has taken effective action to improve its systems since the last inspection. For example, a common system of letter grades recognises the quality of pupils' work, which are used where it is inappropriate to award National Curriculum levels in Key Stage 3. Increasingly, however, teachers use National Curriculum levels in assessments of discrete sections of work, which provide a useful indication of how pupils are doing in relation to external assessments. The exception is physical education, where the new National Curriculum levels introduced in September 2000 do not feature in assessment procedures. At Key Stage 4, GCSE grades are used, as well as the school's grades. The school has also introduced a simple, but effective, system for informing pupils and parents about the pupils' progress, and an equally effective merit point system, to reward good achievement. The consistency of assessment is monitored both within, and across faculties.

37 Assessment procedures for pupils with special educational needs meet the statutory requirements embodied in the Code of Practice for special needs. When statements of special educational needs are reviewed annually, the review draws upon a wide range of professional opinion and consultation with parents or carers. This provides for and informs the updating of pupils' records on a regular basis. The school has only recently begun to receive a small number of pupils for whom English is not their first language and two of the eight pupils have attended the school's summer literacy school prior to entry. Progress of all these pupils has been good and there is regular liaison with the support services. The school should, however, make use of its existing systems for supporting pupils with special educational needs, to make sure that all relevant subject staff are as well informed about these pupils and about appropriate teaching strategies.

38 Overall, the school makes good use of assessment information. For example, it uses assessments of pupils' potential attainment at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 to set targets for National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades. This information is displayed for pupils in classrooms. Pupils have opportunities to discuss with teachers the steps they will take to reach these targets. Senior staff use assessment information well to measure achievement and added value at the end of key stages. Pupils' achievement is celebrated in assemblies, and this creates positive attitudes in pupils towards individual success and the success of others. Form teachers play an important role in monitoring and guiding pupils in their quest for improvement.

39 Very good provision is made for pupils' health, safety and welfare. This represents an improvement since the last inspection. Health issues identified in the previous report were quickly addressed. Governors and staff carefully monitor such matters and the system of regular inspection and risk assessment is effectively implemented. Good arrangements are in place for dealing with child protection issues. Accidents and illness are dealt with competently by staff who have received first aid training.

40 High quality pastoral and educational support is provided to all pupils. The work of the heads of year is recognised and praised by pupils and their parents. A mentoring scheme has been successfully introduced in Key Stage 4. This provides for each pupil to meet and discuss any personal concerns and future plans with a particular teacher or other adult mentor. The school is establishing a "peer counselling" scheme, sponsored by a major bank and the local Rotary club. Over 30 pupils from Years 8 to 11 have recently completed training as counsellors and the full scheme is to be launched early next term. Work in supporting pupils is underpinned by the good systems for monitoring and recording pupils' personal development. Support and guidance to pupils with special educational needs are satisfactory.

41 Arrangements for promoting pupils' attendance and punctuality are excellent and have made a significant contribution to the improvement in attendance levels over recent years. Good systems are in place for promoting high standards of behaviour. Pupils are clear about the school's expectations and the rewards system works well, especially for pupils in Years 9 to 11. Sanctions for misbehaviour are dealt with quickly and fairly. The high priority that the governors and headteacher place on attendance and good behaviour is illustrated by the additional measures currently being implemented under the school improvement plan.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

42 The vast majority of parents have very positive views about the school. They are particularly pleased that their children are expected to work hard and achieve their best. The friendly atmosphere of the school is appreciated and parents feel comfortable in approaching the school about any concerns. Most parents indicate that their child likes school, that pupils make good progress and that their behaviour is usually good. They also think that teaching is generally good and that the school is well managed. The wide range of activities provided outside lessons is appreciated. A minority of parents feels that standards should be higher in GCSE and Key Stage 3 tests. Others would like more information about their child's progress.

43 Inspection evidence broadly supports parents' views although there is scope for further improvement of teaching and in the behaviour of a small minority of boys. Regular information is given about academic progress but clearer details about standards achieved would be helpful. Examination and test results do need to be improved, especially in the number of pupils achieving passes at A* to C grades in GCSE. Inspectors are confident that the school is tackling this in a determined and systematic manner.

44 The school has good links with parents. Newsletters and the 'Turret' publication give helpful information about school events and activities. The prospectus and the governors' annual reports provide comprehensive details about the school and its achievements. Parents are well informed about induction arrangements and advised about the main areas to be studied in each term of the forthcoming year. Parents receive helpful statements about progress in each subject. They are issued termly for Years 7 to 9 and half-termly for Years 10 and 11. The annual written reports provide a full account about work undertaken and areas for improvement. There is, however, a need for such reports to include clear advice about how the level of attainment in subjects compares to national standards.

45 Parents and carers are involved in the annual and transitional reviews of pupils identified as having special educational needs. This keeps them involved and informed as to their child's progress towards the targets set out as part of the review process. Parents and carers are provided with copies of their child's individual education plan thus keeping them informed of their child's targets in lessons. The latest annual governors' report to parents includes information on the school's policy for special educational needs but does not include information as to the successes or changes to the school policy over the preceding year.

46 Parents make a good contribution to the life and work of the school. This has a positive impact on pupils' learning and well-being. An outstanding feature is the very high attendance levels at meetings, concerts and the prize-giving evenings. They are supportive of the work undertaken at home and co-operate well in helping to ensure that this is undertaken as planned. Parents show interest in curriculum developments. Several parents attend workshops to support learning, for example, on paired reading schemes, mathematics today, and surfing the Internet. The parent teacher association organises fund raising activities and is very helpful in supporting special events. The association takes into account specific requests submitted by the school council when considering parent teacher association donations to the school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

47 The quality of leadership and management is good, and higher than at the time of the last inspection. Management systems are sound and well structured and the school is now well placed to secure further improvement.

48 The headteacher provides very strong, purposeful and skilful leadership, which is clearly focused on raising standards and improving the quality of the education that the pupils receive. He is well supported by the senior management team, with whom he works closely, and by the governing body, whose respect he enjoys. He is firm when the occasion demands but takes care to listen to the views of staff, parents and pupils. Since the headteacher's appointment just over three years ago, one of his key priorities has been to raise the school's expectations of what the pupils can achieve, and, at the same time, the aspirations of the pupils and their parents as regards higher education and possible career choices. Another related aim has been to increase pupils' self-respect by openly highlighting and valuing their achievements of all kinds, for example, in assemblies and displays round the school. Teaching and support staff have responded positively to this leadership and show a sense of purpose in

working together. Parents demonstrate considerable satisfaction with the headteacher's approach, as indicated by their responses to the questionnaire and in their views expressed at the parents' meeting.

49 Management systems were criticised in the last inspection report, including the structure of the senior management team and a lack of clarity in lines of management responsibility. These have now been restructured and are now much more logical, clear and effective. The senior management team has been strengthened by the appointment of a senior manager, who acts as bursar and heads the school's large team of support staff, thus enabling other members of the senior management team to concentrate on educational priorities. This system has the further advantage of ensuring that financial and educational issues are never considered in isolation. The link between senior and middle management is now much more effective and line management responsibilities are now much clearer. Senior managers (directors of studies) now oversee the work of heads of faculties, to whom specialist teachers and heads of small departments report. Heads of faculties have received training in their line management responsibilities. Leadership at middle management level is good in most subjects, and very good in the design and technology faculty (which includes art, where it is excellent) and in ICT. It is unsatisfactory in the physical education department.

50 The school has good systems for planning and monitoring its work, though there is variation in the rigour with which faculties monitor their work. The school improvement plan is well structured, thorough and realistic, and focuses upon appropriate priorities, especially on measures to improve standards and the quality of teaching. The school now makes increasingly good use of a wealth of data on the pupils, including the results of ability tests on entry and Key Stage 3 test scores, to predict minimum GCSE grades and then to set targets based on the pupils' potential. GCSE results in 2000 fell well short of the targets set by the school, partly at least as a result of particular factors affecting that year group. Those for 2001, though challenging, are firmly based on an accurate assessment of the pupils' current performance and appear realistic. Care is taken to evaluate the school's performance in the light of such data, for example, by reviewing the work of individuals and groups of pupils, as well as subject areas and faculties, so as to ascertain whether the pupils are doing well enough.

51 Teaching is monitored through a well-established programme of lesson observation, which is part of the line management system. This is potentially, and sometimes in practice, an effective way of improving the quality of teaching. Certainly the concept of lesson observation and feedback is now widely accepted. However, its usefulness varies from faculty to faculty because the evaluation of teaching is not always sharp enough, and the subsequent targets for improvement are sometimes too bland or vague. Teaching has not been properly monitored and developed in the physical education department, part of the science faculty.

52 The management of the school's provision for pupils with special educational needs is currently under review and has recently been strengthened. The register is effectively organised and updated on a regular basis. The school pays due regard to the Code of Practice for special needs but the school policy for special needs does not fully meet the requirements of DfEE circular 6/94. The school is aware of this and is awaiting the introduction of new Code of Practice in order to produce a new policy document.

53 The funding for special educational needs is used appropriately and the school provides extra funding to enable further support to be given for pupils identified as having special educational needs. Learning support assistants are effectively deployed to ensure that all pupils with statements of special

educational needs receive the support they need as outlined in their statements. Formal structured monitoring and evaluation of the work of support staff is not yet well developed, so that strengths or inconsistencies in practice are not yet being identified and shared. The line management of learning support assistants in this respect is not yet fully developed.

54 The governing body is very supportive of the school and its members identify closely with the headteacher's priorities. Their work is well structured, through their committees, to enable them to fulfil their responsibilities. Their knowledge of the school's work is enhanced by the attachment of individual members to different faculties, which they are expected to visit at regular intervals. Members are consulted about the school improvement plan, which they regularly review at their meetings.

55 There are two areas in which the school does not fulfil statutory requirements: physical education is not taught in accordance with the National Curriculum Programme of Study for that subject; and the school does not fully comply with the requirement to provide a daily act of worship for all pupils.

56 The provision of learning resources, including ICT, is satisfactory and the library is well stocked and run. The lack of resources in music, however, significantly restricts the range of learning opportunities available and needs to be remedied. The school's accommodation is adequate for the requirements of the curriculum, though provision in physical education is restricted by the lack of a gymnasium. Staffing is also adequate. There are sufficient qualified, specialist teachers to teach all subjects, though, in common with many other schools in the area, the school has in the recent past experienced some difficulty in recruiting teachers in some areas of the curriculum, such as music, mathematics and modern languages, which has, at times, affected the quality of teaching in these areas. The support staff are sufficient in number and make a significant contribution to the work of the school.

57 Financial planning and monitoring are very effective and enable the school to make good use of the finance that it receives. Planning is closely related to the priorities of the school improvement plan and good use is made of external funding for specific purposes, such as special educational needs. The school makes every effort to minimise its expenditure by seeking value for money. More generally, it follows the principles of best value, for example, by working closely with the local community and with local schools and colleges. Its systems for monitoring expenditure are very effective, as confirmed in a recent report by external auditors.

58 In the light of the achievements of the pupils during their time in the school, the quality of the education provided, and the use that it makes of the resources at its disposal, the school provides sound, and improving, value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

The headteacher and the governing body should:

1. Continue to raise standards of attainment by:
 - implementing the various strategies set out in the school improvement plan (paragraphs 1-4, 50)*;
 - ensuring that standards in science are at least in line with those in the other core subjects (paragraphs 2, 76);
 - improving the behaviour of a small minority of the boys (paragraph 12).
2. Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - Providing appropriate support and guidance where teaching is unsatisfactory (paragraph 16);
 - Building teachers' confidence and knowledge where they are teaching other than their first subject (paragraphs 18 and 19);
 - Providing challenge, especially for higher attaining pupils, by the use of probing questions, group discussion, individual teaching and guidance (paragraph 21)*;
 - Avoiding the over-direction of learning by teachers (paragraph 21);
 - Ensuring consistency in marking, especially at Key Stage 3 (paragraph 23)*.
3. Ensure that the monitoring of teaching is equally rigorous in all faculties, so that teachers are given clear guidance on ways to improve their teaching (paragraph 51)*.
4. Ensure that physical education is taught in accordance with the National Curriculum (paragraphs 29, 155).

In addition, the headteacher and the governing body are invited to consider the following minor issues that have been identified in this report:

5. To work towards full compliance with the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils, particularly by improving the use of the daily tutor time (paragraph 35).
6. Improve the range of resources in music (paragraphs 56, 147)*.

** These items already feature in the school's improvement plan.*

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	120
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	45

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5	20	35	34	4	2	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	806	N/a
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	73	N/a

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	7	N/a
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	126	N/a

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	8

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	36
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	18

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.9
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.4
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	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2000	79	99	178

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	27	51	47
	Girls	73	67	59
	Total	100	118	106
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	56(58)	66(63)	59(61)
	National	63(63)	65(62)	59(55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	27(12)	31(39)	19(18)
	National	28(28)	42(38)	30(23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	36	56	59
	Girls	84	83	79
	Total	120	139	138
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	67(67)	77(62)	78(76)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	24(25)	33(43)	39(48)
	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	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	2000	104	85	189

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	16	97	99
	Girls	29	83	83
	Total	45	180	182
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	24 (41)	95 (96)	96 (97)
	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	34.2 (37.0)
	National	38.4 (38.0)

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

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	8
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	3
Chinese	1
White	789
Any other minority ethnic group	2

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	27	3
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	42.0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	14.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	408

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	73.3
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	25.8
Key Stage 4	22.5

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	2,111,625
Total expenditure	2,102,646
Expenditure per pupil	2669
Balance brought forward from previous year	134,974
Balance carried forward to next year	143,953

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	806
Number of questionnaires returned	158

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	38	48	9	5	-
My child is making good progress in school.	44	47	8	-	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	30	51	8	6	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	26	58	9	6	1
The teaching is good.	33	54	8	1	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	36	50	11	3	-
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	53	39	4	3	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	65	33	1	1	-
The school works closely with parents.	31	50	13	3	3
The school is well led and managed.	31	52	8	2	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	32	53	9	3	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	33	47	5	2	13

OTHER ISSUES RAISED BY PARENTS

The number of pupils achieving GCSE passes at grades A* to C is disappointingly low.

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

ENGLISH

59 The attainment in English of pupils entering the school is below average. In recent years, in the end of Key Stage 3 tests, they have achieved standards that were below national expectations and well below those of pupils in schools that are deemed to be similar on the basis of free school meals. In 2000, however, there was a significant improvement in the proportion of pupils gaining the higher levels. During Key Stage 3, pupils made satisfactory progress, although the boys consistently achieved lower standards than the girls. At the end of Key Stage 4, there has been a steady improvement in performance in GCSE English (particularly by the girls) to a point in 2000 where, although the overall standard was below the national average, pupils had made good progress from their prior attainment at Key Stage 3. In GCSE literature, results have been below the national average, but the school should be credited for its policy of entering all pupils for both subjects. Over time, boys have made a considerable improvement in their achievements in literature. Drama and media studies have both traditionally attracted a Key Stage 4 option group of around 20 pupils each. Results at GCSE have been good in drama, and there had been a steady improvement in media studies until 2000.

60 In the work seen during the inspection, overall standards at Key Stage 3 were broadly in line with national expectations, with girls generally performing better than boys. In a Year 7 lesson the pupils giving oral reviews of books they had recently read were confident and generally articulate, although most of their reviews were shorter than might be expected. Other pupils in the class listened well and asked helpful questions. In their written responses to literature, the most able pupils show above average insights into the characters and situations as well as following the progress of the story, for example, in the letters Year 8 pupils wrote as Macbeth after his meeting with the witches. The majority of pupils show adequate factual understanding of the books they read, but their responses are often limited to retelling the story. In a satisfactory range of writing for different purposes, the most able pupils produce lively and mature pieces that are a pleasure to read. For many pupils in Years 7 to 9, however, mechanical errors and narrow vocabulary limit the impact of their written work. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language were seen to make good progress and achieve success in several lessons. Overall, progress during Key Stage 3 is satisfactory.

61 At Key Stage 4, most pupils listen carefully and work well in co-operative learning situations such as group brainstorming and performances in their literature studies and practical drama. A Year 10 group producing an original play on the theme of 'The Wall' worked together very well and showed above average ability to create characters and develop situations through discussion and experiment. Year 10 pupils' appreciation of literature is shown by the attention that they give to readings in class, for example, a class studying *Of Mice and Men*, who demonstrated perceptive understanding of how character is conveyed through words and actions. They were able to deduce meanings from unfamiliar language and to recognise irony. The less able pupils continue to respond at the factual and narrative levels, but they make sound progress in their understanding of character and motivation. The more able pupils use an increasingly broad vocabulary with originality and confidence, for example, in the poetry that they wrote after close examination of real oranges and lemons in a Year 10 lesson. In general, the girls continue to be more accurate in their expression and to write at greater length than the boys at this stage. Many pupils enhance their work with word-processing or desk-top publishing, adding illustrations to produce a professional finish to products such as the cinema projects in media studies. Overall, standards seen at Key Stage 4 were in line with the national average, with an

encouraging number of pupils showing potential for high attainment - boys as well as girls. Progress at this key stage is good for most pupils.

62 The teaching of English is good overall. Whilst it was never seen to be less than satisfactory at either key stage, the very good or excellent lessons seen were nearly all at Key Stage 4, in both English and drama. In the best lessons, pupils were provided with a very well-planned sequence of learning activities that enabled them to build on previous achievements. The purpose of the lesson was clearly stated and reminders given, so that the pupils understood why they were doing the activity and took it seriously. In a Year 10 drama lesson, for example, the teacher had very clearly briefed the class, so they were able to develop good teamwork and independent learning in a secure framework where everyone had a clear task and contribution to make. The result was a moving and sensitive presentation of the conflicts between individuals and families in a community divided by religious differences. At both key stages, teachers are enthusiastic about English, and this is conveyed to the pupils. The quality of their reading aloud is very high, and this provides a very good model for the pupils and holds their interest. A very good learning environment has been created, with excellent displays in all classrooms that stimulate the pupils and encourage their interest and involvement in the subject. Boys are very positively encouraged to enjoy and take risks in their reading and writing, sometimes with the result of overshadowing the girls. In a few lessons, a lack of clear direction or too much time spent on a single activity led to pupils going off task. Opportunities for pupils to develop their own thinking were not taken in some lessons, where the teacher did most of the talking and accepted short and undeveloped first answers to their questions. In the best lessons, pupils were encouraged to talk in a constructive way, for example, in pair or group discussions and solving problems, thus developing independent ideas and judgements.

63 Pupils' responses to their English teaching are good at Key Stage 3 and very good at Key Stage 4. Generally, they listen well to the teacher and to each other, respecting what they have to say. They are willing to volunteer answers and keen to succeed, for example, by meeting their individual learning targets. They work co-operatively in reading partnerships and other group exercises. Some pupils at Key Stage 3, however, have a short attention span and they are quickly off task if not clearly directed and provided with a variety of activities. At Key Stage 4, pupils are mature in their behaviour and attitudes towards English, and were clearly a pleasure to teach in the lessons seen. Attendance and punctuality were both good during the week of the inspection.

64 The English department is well led and managed. All teachers have a very clear focus on literacy skills and share a clear determination to raise the achievement of boys through approaches known to appeal to them - occasionally leading to girls receiving too little attention. The scheme of work provides a good balance between language development and the appreciation of literature. In practice, however, some classes have a more balanced diet than others. Although the teachers are well aware of individual pupils' needs and effective ways of providing for them, the scheme of work for Key Stage 3 does not give sufficient challenge to the needs of groups of higher ability. Marking of pupils' work is regular, positive and thorough, and the progress of individual pupils is well tracked and monitored. The department works hard to create and maintain an attractive learning environment in a well-furnished suite of rooms. Resources are adequate and well managed. The drama room is a suitable space with plenty of stimulating display, but learning would be enhanced by the provision of more powerful and flexible lighting.

65 The last inspection indicated two main areas for improvement. The first was the need to raise boys' achievement, and the English department has introduced effective strategies for this, including the choice of appropriate reading materials and teaching methods. Standards of boys' attainment have risen at both key stages since the last inspection. The second key issue was the need to provide differentiated approaches for pupils of all abilities. Some progress has been made in this area: setting has been introduced from the beginning of Year 8, and teachers are certainly aware of the needs of

individual pupils and provide for them. Nevertheless, there is still a need to develop the schemes of work at Key Stage 3 to reflect the setting and to provide an appropriate course of study for each level of ability. Overall, progress since the last inspection has been good.

MATHEMATICS

66 Standards are currently in line with the national average at both key stages and almost all pupils are progressing satisfactorily. The overall attainment of the Year 7 entrants to the school has improved over recent years and is now broadly average. The test results at the end of Key Stage 3 have also improved and those of 1999 and 2000 were in line with the national average. Recent GCSE results, however, were below average. In 1999 the proportion of grades A* to C gained by both boys and girls approached the national average but these fell further below in 2000, mainly because of a marked fall in the boys' performance. Nevertheless, these 2000 results represent a creditable advance from the standards achieved by that year group in the Key Stage 3 tests two years earlier. The school enters an above-average proportion of the Year 11 cohort to the GCSE mathematics yet, to its credit, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to G is above the national average. The results of both boys and girls in 1999 compared favourably with their aggregated results in all other subjects as well as in the other core subjects of English and science. Standards in the present Year 11 are higher.

67 The pupils' current attainment at Key Stage 3 is broadly average. By the end of Key Stage 3 all pupils have met Pythagoras' theorem, while the abler pupils can calculate the circumference and area of circles. Whilst the ablest pupils are progressing at a pace to match their capabilities in Years 8 and 9 they are not achieving as well as they might in Year 7. This is because teachers are not taking proper account of their prior attainment from Key Stage 2 and consequently there is unnecessary repetition of some topics.

68 Although Year 11 pupils were not in school during the inspection week their written work in mathematics was carefully scrutinised. Across both year groups at Key Stage 4 the pupils are attaining at a broadly average level and are on track to achieve significantly better results at GCSE than those of recent years. By the end of Key Stage 4, all pupils can enlarge shapes by a given scale factor while the higher achieving pupils can solve problems using the sine and cosine formulae in trigonometry. Pupils' investigative skills are well developed and enable them to achieve high standards in GCSE coursework; this represents a strength of the work in mathematics. The drawing and use of algebraic graphs in Key Stage 4 are also particularly well developed. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, as shown by their GCSE results. However, they do not receive sufficient support in mathematics because their individual needs are not properly identified. Another factor affecting progress is the availability of textbooks. There are sufficient for class use but these are not loaned to pupils. Consequently, even towards the end of the course, when pupils are making final preparations for the GCSE examination, they lack this important encouragement and support for independent study.

69 Pupils' number knowledge and skills, while adequate overall, encompass a wide range of proficiency. Most of the higher attaining pupils can use arithmetic confidently but many lower attaining pupils are insecure when, for example, converting between fractions, decimals and percentages. Teachers sensibly restrict the use of calculators and, while this usefully fosters the regular practice of mental arithmetic, weaknesses remain with these basic skills. Teachers are aware of this and have started to draw upon techniques from the National Numeracy Strategy; there is both need and scope for further development in this area. Numeracy is used satisfactorily across the curriculum to support learning in a range of subjects. This is exemplified by the productive use of graphs in science to assist the analysis of experimental results.

70 Pupils' attitudes to learning were at least satisfactory in three-quarters of the lessons seen and in half they were good or very good. The positive commitment of most pupils owes much to the high quality of relationships in lessons, which encourages them to give of their best. This was exemplified in a lesson on polygons where Year 10 pupils, despite their difficulties in the subject, responded enthusiastically to the teacher's animated presentation of the topic and to his sense of humour. The attitudes to learning of Year 10 pupils were never less than satisfactory and were mostly good or very good. In a third of lessons at Key Stage 3, however, the misbehaviour of a minority of boys damaged the learning atmosphere; occasionally this was so serious and prolonged as to disrupt the learning of the whole class despite determined action from very competent teachers.

71 The quality of teaching varies widely. In most lessons observed the teaching was at least satisfactory and in nearly half it was good, very good or excellent, most consistently so at Key Stage 4. The teaching was unsatisfactory in one lesson in eight; it occurred when teachers were unable to check boys' misbehaviour, when the set tasks failed to provide sufficient scope for progress and when explanations were not sufficiently clear. The most effective teaching reflects good planning that ensures appropriately ambitious use of lesson time and a skilful questioning technique that fosters pupils' thinking and deepens their understanding. These features were evident in an algebra lesson where Year 8 pupils fully accepted the demanding pace set by the teacher because they were gaining so much from the clarity of the teacher's explanations. Teachers draw productively on practical aids to add variety to lessons and deepen the pupils' learning experience. Homework is regularly set and, with firm insistence from teachers, it is treated seriously by almost all pupils. Marking is undertaken regularly, although for some teachers it is not as helpful to pupils as it could be.

72 Appropriate steps have been taken since the previous inspection to raise attainment and these are now beginning to bear fruit. For example, more structured arrangements for the revision of GCSE topics are now in place. Greater care is given by teachers to planning and this leads to more interesting lessons and effective learning. With strong and clear-sighted leadership of the subject, a generally satisfactory response has been made to the points arising from the previous inspection report but, as indicated above, weaknesses remain in some of the teaching and in the behaviour of a minority of boys.

SCIENCE

73 At the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level 5 was slightly above the national average. The proportion reaching the higher levels 6 and above was slightly below average. These results, which were similar to those of the previous year, are consistent with evidence gathered during the inspection. Standards shown by pupils' work and in lessons are broadly in line with national norms. As they progress through the key stage, pupils achieve satisfactorily in relation to their attainment on entry to the school.

74 When they arrive, Year 7 pupils encounter a well-structured curriculum, based on a published scheme, which builds upon their experience of science in the primary school. Throughout the key stage, pupils cover the National Curriculum requirements in a systematic way, with appropriate emphasis on practical work. Some good examples of practical investigation were seen. Pupils in a lower ability Year 8 group compared ways of protecting iron from rust. They were carefully guided but were also given opportunities for independence. Each step was discussed and pupils were able to predict what they thought would happen and to give reasons, writing in their own words. Investigations often involve careful measuring and recording. For example, a middle-ability Year 8 group investigated the friction offered by various surfaces around the school by pulling a shoe along each surface and measuring the force required. They predicted outcomes, recorded results, drew bar charts and were able to evaluate their results.

75 By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils have gained appropriate skills in practical investigations and have experienced the use of computers in collecting and recording data. They are accustomed to using graphs and to tabulating results, although some do not consistently include correct units. Their attainment in biological topics is better than in some of the more abstract aspects of physical sciences, particularly where calculations are involved in Year 9.

76 The proportion of pupils gaining A* to C grades at GCSE in 2000 was well below the national average and much lower than in the previous year. The attainment of this year group had been relatively low on entry to the school but this fact alone is insufficient to explain the poor GCSE results. Comparison of the test results obtained by these pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 with their eventual performance at GCSE shows that, although some pupils did better than expected, others did worse, and by a wider margin. Progress through the key stage was therefore unsatisfactory. Underachievement measured in this way was most marked in the lower ability sets. The school reports that there was, in these groups, a significant number of disaffected pupils and that negative attitudes towards science were commonly expressed.

77 No lessons could be observed for the current Year 11 but, on the evidence of written work and test scores, attainment is in line with national averages. In Year 10, all lessons seen were devoted to revision for an end-of-module public examination. It was evident from the pupils' answers to practice papers that, while many pupils had revised and were eager to do well, others had not prepared thoroughly and were making very elementary mistakes. No practical work was seen in Key Stage 4 but pupils' course work and accounts of class practical work indicated sound progress. Some work was of high standard. Some of the best written work in Year 11 was immaculately presented and very detailed.

78 Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Their individual targets are known to teachers and planning for lessons makes reference to these.

79 Pupils' attitudes to lessons usually reflect the quality of the teaching. Where this is imaginative and lively, pupils respond with enthusiasm and enjoyment, as in the lesson on friction already mentioned. In this, pupils at one stage were allowed to roam around the school building and grounds, testing various surfaces. None took advantage of the situation: all worked hard at the task, even when beyond immediate supervision. The Year 10 revision lessons illustrate a range of responses by pupils. In one, higher ability pupils worked with concentration, calling on the teacher for help at times but also showing an ability to work independently. In another lesson, although the teacher had prepared well, pupils did not respond as hoped. The atmosphere suffered as a result of mildly

disruptive and confrontational behaviour by a small group. The class did not engage with the teacher in the collaborative way that had been planned and some pupils were clearly uninterested in the proceedings. Pupils in a third revision lesson were willing enough to work but progress was impeded by poor planning and a requirement to waste time on writing out the questions.

80 Teaching was satisfactory or better in ten of the 12 lessons observed and was good or very good in five of these. For the reasons explained, no teaching of new topics or of practical work was seen in Key Stage 4, so these judgements are based on a limited range of evidence. The best teaching is characterised by good lesson planning; skilful use of questions; good class management; and the ability to communicate enthusiasm for science. It also provides opportunities for pupils to speculate and discuss. For example, pupils in a Year 9 lesson carried out a number of simple experiments, such as observing the decrease in temperature that occurs when a thermometer is in contact with a rapidly evaporating liquid. In each case, they had to work out how the visible effect could be explained in terms of invisible moving particles. The teacher moved from one group to the next, probing for understanding and encouraging pupils to employ theoretical ideas they had already encountered. Good learning took place as pupils gained confidence in applying these abstract ideas.

81 Unsatisfactory aspects of teaching included inadequate lesson preparation; insufficient checking for understanding; slow pace and lack of variety; and missed opportunities to enrich lessons with examples drawn from science in everyday life. Some marking of exercise books was careless, with scientific errors uncorrected.

82 The science department has responsibility for teaching particular aspects of information and communication technology. This ensures that ICT is regularly used as a tool within the teaching of science, for example, as a means of collecting and displaying experimental data, and as a source of information about science topics.

83 ICT is also well used in the efficient administration of the department, for example, to store data on pupils' attainment and to generate individualised letters to Year 11 pupils indicating how they could improve their performance. The department functions smoothly on a day-to-day basis and there are sound policies, schemes of work and planning documents. However, there is insufficient monitoring of policies and of classroom practice.

84 There have been improvements since the last inspection in, for example, standards attained at the end of Key Stage 3, the consistency of investigational work and the quality of teaching.

ART

85 The art department is highly successful in providing all pupils with an effective art education and in attaining high standards.

86 Pupils enter the school with standards of attainment in art which are well below average. The broad, rich art curriculum and the excellent scheme of work, together with consistently very good individualised teaching and high expectations, result in high achievement and good progress throughout the school. This was particularly clearly seen in Year 7, where, at the time of the inspection, thanks to the recent incorporation of art into a design technology rotational timetable, groups of pupils were observed having their first art lesson in their secondary school. They responded with rapt attention to the teacher, undertook practical work with silent concentration and made very impressive progress from a remarkably low base.

87 The development of the intellectual aspects of the subject is very impressive, with knowledge and understanding of art and the capacity to manipulate creatively ideas and imagery, particularly notable. Pupils study and learn from the work of artists and designers and use this knowledge to enrich and strengthen their own practical creative work. Critical skills are good and used with confidence, and a common specialist vocabulary of art terms is developed which is used routinely in conversation and writing.

88 Pupils are eager to learn, concentrate well and work hard. They are thoughtful and resourceful in their work. They are able to undertake individual independent study and use reference sources well to support their work. High quality, related homework and the use of sketch-books play a major role. In discussion with teachers, pupils acquire very relevant targets for improvement and value their achievements. Achievement is good, and sometimes better, throughout Key Stage 3. By the end of this stage, attainment has risen from well below average on entry to above the national average. This is higher than was reported at the last inspection. The consistent and thorough way in which the teaching takes account of the needs of every individual ensures that all pupils, including both those with high levels of capability and others with learning difficulties and very low prior attainment, achieve well and attain standards beyond expectations.

89 Art is a very popular and successful subject in Key Stage 4. Achievement and progress are at least good through Years 10 and 11 and all students achieve well. Learning and study abilities are used well in a very focused way. The standards of attainment seen are above national average and are characterised by creative vigour and power and strong individuality. Many pupils go on to study art and design in further and higher education with success. A special feature of the work is the capacity to observe closely and with understanding, to identify visual ideas and imagery from this, to find something personal and new to say and then set it out in an expressive two or three-dimensional form. Some pupils, often girls, place a particular emphasis on the recording and presentation of the preliminary work, but no gulf between the attainment of boys and girls, of the magnitude of that shown in the most recent GCSE grades, was discernible in the work of the current Year 10 or Year 11 cohorts. Despite this, in recent years GCSE examination performance has improved beyond the good picture provided in the last inspection report.

90 The success of the department reflects the consistency of approach and shared ideals of the cohesive teaching team, together with the strong and effective subject leadership. The quality of all the teaching seen was at least very good and in two lessons was excellent, an improvement on the good standards noted at the time of the last inspection. The teachers are themselves working creative artists who play a significant part in the local arts community. This personal involvement further increases the respect felt for the art team and fosters further the excellent relationships.

91 The achievements of the art team have not been easily won. Accommodation for art is no more than adequate. Learning resources are well chosen and used, but are no better than adequate for the basic work programme. The facilities do not yet exist for developing work in areas such as printmaking and ceramics to a high level, and the excellent curricular intentions for the use of ICT are thwarted by the lack of sufficient and up-to-date facilities.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

92 Standards in design and technology are satisfactory overall. Attainment is in line with the national average at the end of Key Stage 3. GCSE results have fluctuated in recent years, from around the national average to below, with considerable variation between different aspects of the subject. However, inspection evidence indicates that present standards are also in line with the national average at the end of Key Stage 4.

93 Year 7 pupils enter the school with limited experience of the subject, and rapidly develop their designing and making skills. Satisfactory progress overall is made by pupils of a wide range of abilities, due to effective teaching and the pupils' own enthusiasm for the subject. For example, very good progress was made during a resistant materials lesson, where pupils used marking out and cutting tools accurately and safely. They correctly identified the appropriate saws for plastics, metal and wood. Their neat posters for safety rules showed a good understanding of potential workshop hazards, and knowledge of subject-related vocabulary, such as mandatory and prohibited. Year 8 pupils demonstrated a wide range of attainment levels when designing and making a box to contain a small souvenir. The best work showed good design skills and the ability to measure, score and cut card accurately, to form an attractive box. On the other hand, some pupils experienced difficulties with right angles and measuring in millimetres.

94 When researching mechanisms prior to designing a mechanical toy of their own, Year 9 pupils studied ways in which energy can be transferred. They were able to identify the actions of various mechanical systems, such as levers, ratchets, and gears, within commercial machinery, showing an understanding of simple movements and forces. Throughout Key Stage 3, pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress. They understand the importance of research, and draw on various sources of information to develop their ideas for realistic products. They relate their work to similar commercial examples and assess their work as it progresses. Good contributions are made in class brainstorming sessions, especially in textiles and food technology lessons. Pupils work with a variety of materials, and are beginning to understand how the properties of materials can be used to advantage. Original ideas are communicated through drawings and plans, and individual and group evaluation is used to advantage. Freehand drawing and presentation are weaker elements, although written material is generally accurate and neat.

95 Attainment in Year 10 lessons and the work of Year 11 pupils shows that the majority of pupils are reaching the course objectives in each of the areas offered, namely industrial production, graphics products, food technology, textiles and child development. Work in progress in all these areas demonstrates that an overall A* to C pass rate close to, or just above the national average is possible. The department's discerning forecasts support this view. In 1999 overall GCSE passes were just above the national average, but in 2000 they were considerably below, although careful analysis reveals that the achievement and progress of this particular group of pupils from Year 7 onwards was good.

96 Pupils enjoy the GCSE courses, and generally show good understanding of what is required. In all areas of the subject, research and links with commercial products are sound and help pupils to develop their own ideas. Pupils document their work well, using annotated sketches and self-evaluation to develop their ideas. ICT is used to good effect by many pupils for design work and written evaluations. Presentation is variable, and for some, poor standards of graphic design reduce the quality of otherwise good work. Study skills are variable, and very good only for the higher attainers.

97 Design sheets for industrial products show good productivity over the two-year course, with accurate isometric and orthographic drawing. Ideas for design improvements are carefully considered and communicated well, through freehand sketches and annotated diagrams. Graphics show adequate research into similar commercial products, but the resulting original work often shows that pupils are insufficiently using their own ideas. Textile examination work demonstrates colourful design ideas, and the use of a good range of printing and dyeing methods, with accurate stitching and well made garments. Unfortunately, grades are too often reduced because of incomplete work. Food technology pupils explore original ideas for healthy eating recipes, and demonstrate good presentation skills, using ICT, collage and corporate layout effectively, to enhance their design sheets. When designing kitchen interiors, Year 10 pupils show just average knowledge of perspective drawing, as many are unable to identify vanishing points and eye-levels in their work. However, rendering is neatly done, with a satisfactory understanding of colour combinations, and selection of appropriate surface materials for kitchen units and work tops, but only the best work shows appreciation of scale, and awareness of kitchen work patterns related to ergonomics.

98 Pupils in all years display good attitudes, and are willing learners. They show interest in their work, both practical and written, and work co-operatively in groups. They are willing to listen to others' ideas, and acknowledge differences of opinion. The vast majority of pupils are well behaved, and form constructive working relationships with their teachers and peers. Pupils work carefully and safely with hand and power tools. The positive and purposeful atmosphere in practical work promotes good learning and progress.

99 The quality of teaching is never less than satisfactory and is predominantly good. Some of the teaching is very good. A consistent strength in all areas is thorough preparation of schemes of work, lesson plans, workshops, kitchens, studios and resources. Teachers have made the design and technology environment an exciting place in which to work and learn. Projects are well planned to make effective use of the design process, and the majority of projects are open ended, allowing for extension work for the more able. In some cases greater use of separate tasks is needed to cater for all pupils in the wide ability range. Introductions and demonstration set clear objectives, although across all areas the use of questioning needs further development to reinforce learning and gauge understanding. GCSE examination assessment criteria could be used more effectively, through attention to detail, to target higher grades, and greater use of exemplar material, to identify differences in standards. In the best lessons, literacy, numeracy and ICT are well integrated with practical work, for example, through technical vocabulary, measurement, and research. These core skills are effectively synthesised in Key Stage 3 foundation lessons, where design and technology concepts common to all areas of the subject are studied. Further work is needed to ensure consistency of approach in relation to the teaching of aspects of the design and technology curriculum that overlap faculty areas, for example, the teaching of design principles, and direct observational drawing. Greater advantage needs to be taken from the very good teamwork across the faculty subjects, for example, the contribution that art can make to the teaching of aesthetics. Features of teaching which is very good are varied strategies in lessons that give a balance of activities; the integration of theory and practical; and the realistic exploration of technology past and present, as in the study of a wide range of mechanical tools and implements in a Year 9 lesson.

100 The assessment of standards and pupils' progress is a strength, and an important feature of the work of the department. Marking is successfully linked to target setting, and National Curriculum levels. Self-assessment helps pupils to understand how they can improve their work. Homework is constructively marked, well related to project work, and regularly set, providing good progression and continuity. The quality of teaching promotes good learning, and this is evident in the creative effort that pupils make in problem solving, in investigating technological concepts, and in exploring ideas through the disassembly of retail products.

101 The curriculum is relevant, broad, balanced, and varied, providing a full range of activities associated with design and technology. In Key Stage 3, subject rotational arrangements have been improved and now provide very good learning opportunities. The foundation skills lessons help pupils to understand and develop links with other subject areas, and literacy and numeracy. The information technology, systems and control elements are adequately covered for all pupils in Key Stage 3 through these lesson arrangements, but in Key Stage 4, pupils taking the art option do not have sufficient opportunity to develop these skills. National Curriculum requirements are not currently being fully met in this respect. There are good extra-curricular activities, including after school clubs, and many opportunities for pupils to visit industrial sites, such as Ford at Dagenham, to see manufacturing technology in action.

102 Good progress has been made in addressing the concerns expressed in the last inspection report, and design skills are showing improvement, especially in Key Stage 3. However, further work is needed to co-ordinate the presentation of design principles that are common to all areas of the subject. Written work has improved overall. Tasks are no longer low level. The department has worked hard to establish meaningful, inspirational projects that lead to the making of realistic products. Lack of challenge, planning inconsistencies and weaknesses in policy implementation have been addressed, and are no longer constraints to raising attainment. Some overlaps in provision still exist, especially in the areas of graphics and art, for example, in the teaching of colour theory, perspective, and layout, where greater consistency is needed to ensure accuracy of presentation across the department.

103 The department is ably led, and managed efficiently and effectively. There is clear direction for the subject, with strong emphasis on continued improvement and strategies for raising pupils' attainment. Staff illness, and the lack of technician support have not weakened enthusiasm, and there is shared commitment, and considerable capacity to implement further improvements.

GEOGRAPHY

104 Teaching and learning show improvement since the last inspection report.

105 By the end of Key Stage 3 a majority of pupils reach standards in line with the national average in geography. However, fewer pupils attain at higher levels, and a greater proportion attains at lower levels than nationally. By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils' work is broadly in line with the average. For example, 98.5 per cent of pupils entered for the year 2000 GCSE gained passes at grades A* to G which is above the national average. The proportion gaining passes at grades A* to C was 37 per cent, which is below the national average. The attainment of boys and girls has fluctuated from year to year. Work seen in the present Year 11 indicates that standards are now more in line with the national average. Pupils achieve well in both key stages. This is supported by the school's analysis of attainment. For example, half the pupils taking GCSE in 2000 did better than predicted by their attainment at the end of Key Stage 3. This shows good progress over time, and the capacity for continued improvement. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in both key stages.

106 Pupils in Key Stage 3 understand geographical processes on a regional and world scale. For example, pupils in Year 7 know that air temperatures are influenced by the latitudinal position of a land area and its location in relation to the oceans. They can identify the Gulf of Mexico on a world map and know this ocean current moderates the British climate. Pupils obtain evidence from a range of sources such as maps, photographs and statistics. From this information they perceive patterns and explanations for physical and human processes. From map evidence they can rank villages in an area of East Yorkshire according to the number of services provided in each one. Pupils use their accumulated skills to undertake individual investigations assessed for GCSE, such as coastal erosion at Walton-on-the-Naze. They also consider the morality of issues they study, for example, the level of compensation given to victims of a petro-chemical disaster in India compared with a western nation. Higher attaining pupils use techniques for measuring the rate of erosion with much skill. They present their work with obvious pride, often using ICT. Lower attaining pupils' work shows weaknesses in literacy and insufficient attention to detail, for example, in labelling graphs and diagrams.

107 The quality of teaching was good in three-quarters of the lessons observed and satisfactory in the other lessons. The teaching has a number of strengths. Teachers have secure subject knowledge that is well used to stimulate pupils' interest in geography. A teacher's personal links with an area shown on an Ordnance Survey map added to pupils' understanding of the relationship between village size and service provision. Pupils benefit from teachers' attention to improving their literacy skills. For example, pupils build up subject words in a dictionary notebook to reinforce their learning. Teachers manage pupils effectively so that they are focused on learning. They provide suitable resources for pupils with special educational needs so that they make good progress with work in class and at home. Provision for higher attaining pupils is less obvious and teachers miss opportunities to provide these pupils with sharp questions to make them think deeply. These pupils often miss the stimulus of further work when they finish tasks, especially in Key Stage 3. Occasionally, teachers do not use lesson time effectively. They talk to the class for too long when pupils need to learn through activity. Teachers make good use of assessment at the end of topics, but the quality of on-going marking is variable. Pupils do not always receive enough written comment from teachers on how to improve their work.

108 Leadership and management are effective. Fieldwork provision in Key Stage 4 is good. At Key Stage 3 fieldwork requires development to extend pupils' experiences. Faculty monitoring reports of teaching and the quality of marking need greater rigour to support raising achievement further. ICT is appropriately integrated in the well-planned scheme of work, but whole class access to computers is difficult. The department makes provision for higher attaining pupils to take geography GCSE at the end of Year 10. This arrangement is on a trial basis, and lessons occur outside the timetable.

HISTORY

109 Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with the national average for pupils of a similar age. This is shown in the National Curriculum teachers' assessments over the last two years and in the standards of work seen during the inspection of pupils in Year 9. At the end of Key Stage 4, standards are improving. GCSE results have been below the national average over the last three

years but the standards being reached by pupils in the current Year 11 match the average and are broadly in line with the department's target of 60 per cent set for attainment at grades A* to C in 2001. Pupils' achievement at both Key Stages 3 and 4 is satisfactory when measured against their attainment at the beginning of each of the key stages.

110 Pupils' achievement at Key Stages 3 and 4 results in sound, and in the case of higher attaining pupils, good, historical knowledge, understanding and skills, which they use increasingly effectively in their work. From Key Stage 3 onwards, pupils have good understanding of the nature and reliability of historical sources, and increasing confidence in interpreting them accurately to find information and to draw substantiated conclusions. They have good observation skills and are often perceptive in their exploration of issues from Year 7 onwards. This was particularly well reflected in a Year 7 lesson where pupils confidently and perceptively identified a wide range of information from the sources being studied about the life of the Romans. The great majority use their knowledge and understanding well in investigation to describe and explain changes and events. Skills in chronology and empathy are also well developed by the end of Key Stage 4. Few, however, are able to apply their knowledge, understanding and skills with confidence in oral argument, mature and well-informed discussion, or the proposal of hypotheses. Explanations provided in lessons are often rather narrow and not set in a wide historical context. Links are made, but not confidently, with parallel events at other times, or in identifying trends and patterns. The written work of higher attaining pupils does reflect some of these strengths. That of higher attaining pupils, for instance, is well structured, accurate and detailed, containing at best good argument and comparison, and indicating clear lines of enquiry. Standards of literacy are sound and good use is made of numeracy skills in interpreting and presenting data. The written work of many average and lower attaining pupils is, however, less strong, often being less detailed, clearly focused and relevant to the question being answered.

111 Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. They are helped to learn by the good learning ethos in lessons and by the clarity of the teaching. At best they are also very well assisted by good support from classroom assistants and by materials being adapted to meet their specific learning requirements.

112 Pupils' achievement is supported well by their positive attitudes towards history. They work hard and concentrate well in lessons, and respond very well to good teaching. But at Key Stage 4 especially, they are often compliant rather than confident, independent and avid learners. This is especially the case when teaching demands too little of them in taking initiative in their learning.

113 Teaching is good overall. In the lessons seen during the inspection it was good or better in two-thirds and very good, and in one case excellent, in a further third. None of the teaching was less than satisfactory. In the best lessons, pupils make good progress as a result of appropriately high expectations and challenge in the teaching. Very good use is made of questioning to challenge pupils to think deeply and to make links in exploring issues. For example, in a Year 10 lesson, pupils worked at an intellectually demanding level when they were challenged to explore in depth the influences of education and indoctrination on young people in Nazi Germany. There are, however, too many instances when learning is over dependent on the teacher and levels of challenge are too low. For instance, learning was slower than to be expected in a Year 8 lesson on the murder of Thomas Becket because pupils spent too long listening to the teacher and there was insufficient opportunity for them to investigate events for themselves. Similarly, in a Year 10 lesson, pupils worked passively as receivers of information because of insufficient challenge for them to think laterally, to make links and to consider issues in depth.

114 Learning is very well supported by very clear teaching and explanation, and the constant checking of understanding. In the best lessons, pupils' interest and enthusiasm for the subject are stimulated by the skilled sharing of the teachers' good subject expertise, often through lively and exciting narrative. In some of the other lessons, however, while the subject knowledge of the teachers is adequate, it is not strong enough to enable them to challenge and extend pupils' learning with confidence.

115 Teaching is very effective from the outset in promoting historical skills, including those of investigation, interpretation, the critical use of historical sources, empathy and chronological understanding. Where teaching is strongest, pupils learn to work accurately as historians. Their research skills are well supported by these approaches and also by tasks being clearly explained, encouragement to use a wide range of resources including the Internet, and the judicious use of homework. Pupils' progress is closely monitored. Their work is marked thoroughly and pupils are given clear guidance on how to improve standards.

116 The history department is well led and managed. Teachers are very well supported in their work and there is a strong and shared commitment to raising standards in support of the school's policy. Resources are used very effectively to support learning. Specialist history rooms provide a very good learning environment, enhanced in particular through the very good use made of display. The use of non-specialist rooms, however, results in accommodation which is less supportive of learning in history and complicates the use of resources. The head of department is very hard working, thorough and conscientious. The work of the department is monitored regularly and systematically, but procedures are not sufficiently rigorous in ensuring clearly-focused guidance for improvement. In particular, outcomes fail to identify clearly the strengths and weaknesses in standards and teaching. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory, but attention still needs to be given to ensuring greater challenge in the teaching in many lessons.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

117 Standards of achievement, in both key stages, are good in this subject.

118 Pupils enter the school with a wide range of ICT skills. During Year 7, they build on these skills and develop good general ICT capability, irrespective of their previous experiences. Through a broadening range of opportunities during Key Stage 3, pupils make good progress in understanding and using the main facilities of a range of common software packages. There are no discrete ICT skills lessons in these years, so all of this is done, very effectively, through lessons of other subjects - mainly English, mathematics, science and design and technology.

119 By the end of Year 9, all pupils can create and amend text effectively; set up and carry out simple searches of data files; enter and manipulate data in tables; and create simple series or sets of instructions to control objects or events. Higher attainers can carry out complex searches of databases; create sophisticated presentations of information for different purposes and audiences; plan and edit programs of instructions for controlling events; and discuss effectively the impact of ICT on society and the individual. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is, and has been in recent years, consistently high, and above the national average for the subject. A notable feature of achievement in these years is the great confidence pupils have in their use of ICT. They are inquisitive and are prepared to explore facilities in a software package with little prompting or supervision.

120 In Key Stage 4, pupils build effectively on the attainment of Key Stage 3, and those who follow the GCSE course are able to produce coursework of good quality. The work of the higher attaining pupils is often outstanding, containing accurate and detailed analyses of systems and designs that are comprehensive and sophisticated solutions to a problem. The work of average and lower attainers is usually systematically developed, using a range of appropriate software in implementing a solution. A significant commitment to the subject is shown by most pupils on this course through the amount of work they produce. They write well in a formal manner and show a good grasp of technical vocabulary along with a sound knowledge of ICT systems and their constituent parts. From the work seen during the inspection, the overall achievement of pupils following this course is above national average standards. In both key stages, pupils with special educational needs make very good progress.

121 In recent years, results for GCSE IT or Information Systems (IS) have been near or above national averages. In 1999, all candidates obtained A* to C grades for the full GCSE IT, with 38 per cent obtaining A*/A grades. In 2000, however, the percentage obtaining A* to C was well below the national average. The percentage of pupils achieving A* to G grades has always, in recent years, been above national averages. At GCSE, however, boys regularly out-perform girls. Overall, GCSE IT has regularly been one of the highest performing subjects in the school.

122 The quality of teaching is good overall in the subject, whether in the context of ICT specific lessons in Key Stage 4 or within subject lessons throughout the school. All teaching observed was at least satisfactory or better. Half was good or better, within which there were examples of very good and excellent teaching. The majority of teaching in Key Stage 3 was satisfactory whilst the majority in Key Stage 4 was good.

123 Where teaching is good, there are well-planned activities that lead to a clear learning pathway for pupils to follow, often supported with good-quality, step-by-step guidance materials. Clear objectives and high expectations are articulated and set at the start of the lesson. The teacher maintains a good pace by giving effective time signals. Clear explanations and verbal guidance are given on how best to approach a task. For example, in a mathematics lesson, hints were given on a suitable scale to use in programming the movement of an object on the screen, along with sensible reminders of some common pitfalls and errors encountered when carrying out the task. Such teaching has the effect of ensuring pupils spend their time effectively on the key learning points, thus making effective progress, rather than becoming bogged down in technical irrelevances. Much of the good teaching involves carefully targeted and sensitive individual support when pupils work at the computer. As a result of high expectations that they will work autonomously and independently, pupils are mutually supportive and readily share their skills and knowledge. Also, in the good teaching, effective use is made of other adults, such as support teachers, special educational needs support staff, and technicians.

124 In a minority of teaching, pupils who fail to concentrate are insufficiently challenged; opportunities are not taken to draw out key learning points or summarise lessons in a plenary; or the activity is itself too broad or unchallenging. Overall, however, the quality of teaching enables good and effective learning to take place in the subject.

125 Pupils have a very positive attitude to the subject. They are motivated by it, clearly enjoy it, and as a result make good progress. They collaborate well and co-operate when required to do so, such as when having to share computers.

126 All necessary strands of ICT are covered in the Key Stage 3 curriculum. All ICT in these years is taught through activities arising from other subjects. The way ICT is delivered in this cross-curricular fashion is a real strength. All activities are suitably geared to National Curriculum levels and most are relevant and rigorous but a small number have limited focus or effectiveness and require improvement in terms of their purpose. Statutory requirements in the subject are broadly met but the quality of the ICT curriculum in Key Stage 4 for those not following GCSE IT is more constrained and insufficiently mapped, both in terms of what the pupils cover and what they achieve.

127 ICT as a subject is very well led and managed, both strategically and on a day-to-day basis. There is a focused, if somewhat limited, ICT development plan that concentrates appropriately on standards. It could be improved by being more strategic and visionary in its content. The ICT department has effective systems for bringing together data for end of Key Stage 3 teacher assessments from different subjects. There is very good assessment practice in place where pupils are required to carry out guided self-assessment on their performance in each of the ICT activities encountered. There are very good links with primary schools that regularly send children to use the school's ICT facilities.

128 There are two well-run, inter-linked networks. A good proportion of curriculum computers can access the Internet and the school is developing an effective intranet to support learning. There is a good range of appropriate software available to support the curriculum. Technician support is of high quality. Significantly, there are a large number of ICT competent and confident teachers on the staff, particularly in the core subjects. This provides the school with an excellent resource and enables the good quality cross-curricular approach to ICT to be adopted.

129 In some ICT rooms, the sharing of computers by pupils for GCSE courses is constraining progress and achievement. Adequacy of resources in these situations is only just satisfactory. Current arrangements for network management are highly person-dependent and unlikely to be sustainable as ICT provision increases. Because of limited access, most foundation subjects have insufficient opportunities to use ICT to enhance their own subject. The school therefore needs to consider how it will enable such subjects to meet their statutory requirements for implementing Curriculum 2000.

130 Standards of achievement have risen since the last inspection and, overall, ICT is a strength of the school.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

131 GCSE results in modern languages over the past four years have been below national averages, especially in terms of the proportion gaining grades A* to C. In German, which is no longer taught, they were well below in 1997, 1998 and 1999. However, the proportion gaining grades A* to G has been above national averages. In 1999, for example, all but one of over 150 pupils entered gained a grade. Also in 1999 those pupils who took the full GCSE French course did better in comparison

with their performance in other subjects than is the case nationally. Teachers' assessment of pupil performance at the end of Key Stage 3 has placed pupils performing overall in line with national averages at level 4 and above. Based on lesson observations and evidence from pupils' work, however, standards lie somewhat below national averages.

132 Standards at Key Stage 3 are higher in reading and writing than in listening and speaking. For example, some higher attainers are, already in Year 7, able to write an introductory paragraph in a letter introducing themselves. In Year 8 higher attainers can match statements about television viewing to a list of programmes in a French magazine. In many classes average and low attainers, including those with special educational needs, cope well with a clearly defined core of language, as when ordering something to drink and asking its price in a cafe. By the end of the key stage some higher attainers are beginning to use more complex structures in their writing, such as object pronouns and a wider range of examples of the perfect tense. Pupils hear a well-articulated, clear model of French and, as a result, some develop very good accents. A more systematic correction of pronunciation would raise standards further. In some classes however, especially in Years 8 and 9, speaking standards, including pronunciation, are unsatisfactory, because many pupils do not listen carefully and are unwilling to speak. Only a few pupils are confident enough to sustain a basic dialogue on familiar material. Overall therefore, whilst progress is satisfactory, it is variable and dependent upon the particular class and the language skill concerned.

133 It was only possible to see two Key Stage 4 lessons during the inspection week. Judgements are based on these and on evidence from pupils' work, including course-work. Pupils in Key Stage 4 extend the range of their writing appropriately. This represents an improvement since the last inspection. Although some Year 10 pupils aiming for higher GCSE grades are still quite insecure in their application of basic grammar rules, others can write at length about their school uniform, for example, using a variety of tenses including the imperfect and the conditional. Similarly, higher attainers in Year 11 can write with a good level of accuracy about their past holiday and future plans. Progress in writing is, therefore, often good. The progress of some pupils is, however, disrupted by poor behaviour and this affects standards, especially in speaking.

134 In most lessons the attitude of pupils to their learning is good. Pupils want to learn and respond well to the opportunities offered. Average and higher attainers in Years 8 and 9 settled quickly to work sensibly at a series of language tasks on computer. Many pupils accept French as the normal means of communication in the classroom, volunteer to answer the teacher's questions and try hard to imitate French pronunciation and intonation. In some classes, where behaviour is poor, there is an undercurrent of rejection of foreign language learning, most noticeable amongst boys of average or low attainment, and especially when asked to listen to or to speak French. Most pupils can, when prompted, use simple glossaries or dictionaries to look up meanings and can make simple everyday requests in French. Few, however, have the confidence to take risks linguistically and usually make the shortest oral response possible. Written work is usually carefully done and many pupils are keen to do well and pleased when they achieve success.

135 In four-fifths of the French lessons observed the teaching was at least satisfactory and just over a half was good. The level of subject expertise is high, helped by the presence of two native speakers. Teachers work hard for their pupils and are always supportive of them and of their efforts in French. Where teaching is strong, there is evidence of detailed planning, with tasks well matched to the pupils' ability, for example, the production of a listening grid to help low attainers cope with

understanding a cassette recording. There is good control, with positive relationships between teacher and pupils. Good organisation, allied to brisk pace, promotes effective learning, as in two lessons observed in the ICT room. In the unsatisfactory or poor lessons observed, lesson objectives were ill defined, pace was slow, leading to difficulties of control, and resources were not imaginatively exploited.

136 In general, teachers should consider in their planning and delivery of lessons how they can challenge higher attainers more consistently, for example, by creating opportunities for them to make longer utterances and to work more from memory.

137 The curriculum meets statutory requirements. Since the previous inspection, curriculum time has been increased and is now at the recommended level. Some pupils with special educational needs are, however, withdrawn from 20 per cent of their French time and this affects their progress. The modern language teachers have a high level of ICT expertise and could contribute significantly to the pupils' entitlement in this area, if they had better access to ICT facilities.

138 There have been two changes of faculty head in the last two years and the new head of faculty has been in post only since January. Good progress has been made on devising an assessment system to track pupils' progress through the key stages, and plans are in hand to develop links abroad, including through e-mail. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching took place for a day in the summer term. This now needs to take on a sharper focus, specifically related to the key issue of raising standards. Progress has, therefore, been made in some areas since the last inspection but standards have not yet risen sufficiently. After the recent staffing disruption, the now fully-staffed modern language department should concentrate its efforts on teaching strategies to improve pupils' listening and speaking skills.

MUSIC

139 The school has experienced difficulties in appointing a permanent member of staff for music and this has resulted in some deterioration in standards. However, the school has worked hard to resolve this problem and the current post holder has supported pupils well through this unsettled period.

140 In work seen, pupils were working below national expectations although the most able were doing better than this. The statutory requirement to assess pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 was not fulfilled. In 2000, 40 per cent of pupils achieved A* to C grades at GCSE. This was higher than the school's average but below national averages.

141 Pupils make good progress in their lessons but experience over time has been inconsistent at Key Stage 3. There are significant gaps in knowledge and understanding of musical terminology, instruments and styles. Year 9 pupils are taught in full-class groups in music; this has a negative impact on the quality of provision in practical sessions and restricts the achievement of high standards at the end of the key stage.

142 At Key Stage 4, students were observed making good progress. However, in Year 11, students have not experienced a full course of music teaching and there are significant gaps in their knowledge and understanding. A key issue for the school will be how it responds to the specific needs for these students so that they have a fair chance to perform to their potential in the GCSE examinations this summer.

143 The majority of pupils in Key Stage 3 appear to enjoy their music lessons and have been able to develop their knowledge and understanding as well as their social skills. Attitudes to learning at Key Stage 3 vary and it was noted that some pupils did not take full advantage of the curriculum opportunities that they were offered. There is a good take-up of pupils in the choir, and instrumental provision is responsive to pupil demand.

144 The quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 is mainly satisfactory and occasionally good. The teacher has good subject knowledge and he was able to draw from a range of world music in the lessons observed. The work planned for this term meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. Pupils are given opportunities to make musical decisions and develop their creativity. As a result, they respond well: for example, they appeared to enjoy working on an Indonesian Gamelan-style piece using tubular bells as a stimulus. They quickly picked up the idea of layering and were able to see that a simple melody can be used creatively to create a complex mixture of musical sounds. The teacher was able to set the work in context by playing a recording of a piece of Indonesian Gamelan music at the end.

145 Short-term planning is good but long-term planning is ineffective. The school's scheme of work is not being used. It is incomplete and does not fully meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. Consequently, there is an issue about continuity, consistency and progression at Key Stage 3 that is not being addressed.

146 In Key Stage 4, the quality of teaching observed was very good and had a very good impact on learning. Pupils in the Year 10 group made very good progress in their musical development. Year 10 students clearly enjoyed the activity related to the Pachobel canon and learnt a range of useful skills in improvisation and chord sequences.

147 Since the last inspection, there has been a significant improvement in the accommodation for the department. However, the school has not yet addressed the issue of assessment at Key Stage 3 and adequacy of resources to teach the National Curriculum. Provision for information technology in the subject is not fully developed. As a matter of urgency, the school should make provision for a good quality sound system. Listening skills are being severely hampered by the current music centre, which is inadequate for the needs of the National Curriculum and GCSE. The school should also consider provision for acoustic instruments for use in practical music making sessions. The current stock of instruments is insufficient to sustain activity in extended composition work.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

148 Standards at Key Stage 3 are similar to those at the time of the last inspection. In games lessons, the percentage of 14 year olds working at or beyond national age-related expectations is broadly in line with national averages and they are on line to achieve appropriate levels at the end of the key stage. At Key Stage 4, all pupils follow the GCSE games physical education course. In relation to syllabus requirements, they attain satisfactorily.

149 At the end of Key Stage 3 the achievement of girls in netball is satisfactory. They have a secure knowledge of the basic rules of the game and can demonstrate how to do both a feint dodge

and a sprint dodge. The application of these in small-sided games is less secure as are the footwork skills of some of the girls. In rugby union the achievement of boys is also satisfactory. They are able to demonstrate the techniques of the maul, for example, and have a secure understanding of the rules associated with this.

150 A GCSE option course was introduced at Key Stage 4 in 1996. In 1998 the proportion of pupils achieving A* to C grade passes, at 38 per cent, was below the national average for all maintained schools and in the following year fell to 32 per cent. The smaller number of girls taking the course does not make for feasible gender comparisons. In 2000 the whole year group followed the GCSE games course and approximately two-thirds were entered for the examination. Pupils underachieved significantly, with only six per cent achieving A* to C grade passes. Insufficient GCSE practical lessons were observed to make a secure judgement on the progress of the present Year 11 group. However, an analysis of their practical grades and a scrutiny of a sample of their theory work indicate that standards in terms of A* to C grade passes should show an improvement in 2001. In their theory work, for example, pupils have developed a sound grasp of the syllabus requirements for anatomy and physiology and the principles of fitness.

151 Though no pupils identified as having special educational needs were observed with additional help, they are well integrated and supported and make progress in line with their capabilities.

152 Overall, the quality of teaching is sound, as at the time of the last inspection. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed and in some lessons the quality of teaching was good. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject are good. These are shown in the overall structure of lessons and the variety of planned activities included, which help ensure pupils remain on task. Clear introductions together with the breakdown and demonstration of skills help ensure pupils understand what they have to do to make progress. This, along with the positive attitudes and behaviour of most pupils, particularly the girls, helps to promote a positive learning atmosphere in which all can make progress. However, in a Year 9 rugby union lesson, a significant number of Year 9 boys were unco-operative and behaved poorly – this resulted in the teacher abandoning the planned lesson and had a negative impact on the learning of the whole group.

153 In particularly good quality lessons, pupils are offered challenge and are involved in planning, performing and, to some extent, in peer evaluation. This was, for example, the case in a Year 7 netball lesson where the girls were using prompt cards to set up practice drills. This deepened their knowledge and understanding of the skills and techniques required to improve the standard of their play. During all lessons teachers circulate well, offering praise, encouragement and constructive criticism. This ensures pupils understand further what they have to do to make progress as well as making them aware of their capabilities.

154 There are, though, areas for development in teaching, which if addressed would make the overall quality better. In many of the boys' lessons there is a lack of urgency at the start and in a Year 10 basketball lesson, for example, only 40 out of the 60 minutes available were used as taught time. There are insufficient opportunities in some lessons, as at the last inspection, for pupils to be involved in planning aspects of their own work or in peer evaluation. This kind of involvement, for

example, would have helped pupils deepen their understanding of the principles of passing and movement in a Year 7 boys' football lesson. Similarly, pupils are given insufficient opportunities to take responsibility for aspects of their own warm-up and there is insufficient emphasis by teachers on the naming of muscle groups being stretched. This would help younger pupils to prepare for the GCSE course. Non-participants are not always as fully involved as they should be – in some lessons they stand idle, away from the groups, instead of being part of the group introductions and demonstrations. This means they are not fully prepared for when they take part in the next lesson. At the end of some lessons, there is a tendency for the teacher to tell the pupils what they have achieved as opposed to involving pupils by asking for their perceptions. Although GCSE theory work is consistently marked the quality of some of the marking is somewhat variable. Comments made about missing work, for example, are not followed up.

155 The curriculum is based mainly on games, so that it lacks breadth and balance and at both key stages does not fully meet the statutory requirements of the physical education National Curriculum. Schemes of work are not all available at Key Stage 3 and those that are do not yet fully match the demands of the new curriculum. There is strong extra-curricular provision. A wide range of both inter-school and inter-house competitive activities extends opportunities. As a result of the enthusiasm of teachers, individual pupils have been successful at district and county level in athletics and cross-country running; two boys have represented the county at athletics and one is a national champion in his age group. Teams have won district tournaments at football and hockey.

156 Assessment procedures are in place but those used at Key Stage 3 have in the past lacked accuracy and the present procedures are not related to the new levels introduced as part of the new physical education National Curriculum. The quality of reporting to parents at the end of Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory. There is no indication of what pupils achieve in relation to the National Curriculum. Though the overall quality of accommodation allows for the physical education National Curriculum to be met, the continuing lack of a gymnasium prevents the safe teaching of gymnastics. Shower arrangements for boys do not provide the privacy expected. This has a negative impact on standards of hygiene. Though there is monitoring of teaching on a science and physical education faculty basis, there is no formalised monitoring and evaluation of teaching within the department. Thus good practice is not being recognised or shared, and the quality of teaching has therefore not improved since the last inspection. Leadership and management of the department are unsatisfactory and insufficiently proactive – a lack of clarity as regards accountability within the faculty structure is not helpful in this respect. There has been insufficient improvement since the last inspection and though it is possible to meet statutory curricular provision this issue has simply not been addressed.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

157 The standards achieved on entry to the school are mainly in line with the expectations of the Essex Agreed Syllabus for religious education and towards the end of Key Stage 3 are above those expectations. Results for the GCSE short course are well above average and show over the past four years significant improvement. The standard of written work of the current Year 11 indicates that high standards are being maintained. Boys' attainment is lower than that of girls across all years but, particularly in Key Stage 4, the gap is narrower than that reflected nationally. Attention has been given to using a range of teaching activities to support different ways of learning and this has contributed to the high standards attained by both girls and boys, particularly in Key Stage 4.

158 Over Key Stage 3, pupils make good progress and achieve well. Their knowledge and understanding are good and are used increasingly effectively to provide accurate descriptions and explanations. They develop their ability to compare and contrast different beliefs and practices and make links between religious faith and lifestyle. In Key Stage 4, pupils make very good progress, following a GCSE short course for religious education. In discussion, they ask searching questions and many offer detailed and clear reasons for their opinions based on their knowledge of different religious beliefs and practices. Some written work shows maturity and insight and provides opportunity for pupils to consider the implications of religious belief on moral and social issues. For example, pupils in Year 10 have used the Internet and recent newspaper and television coverage to produce a wall display focusing on genetic engineering and the value of human life, considering how Christians might respond to the issues raised. In Year 11, pupils have written letters expressing different religious opinions about such moral issues. Across both key stages pupils develop evaluative and research skills as well as developing their ability to empathise with other people's opinions. They do this, for example, through small and whole-group discussion, role-play and taking part in reflective activities which encourage them to consider religious beliefs from different viewpoints. They become increasingly confident in using religious terminology and can usually explain its meaning correctly.

159 Higher attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress. Teaching and materials are usually well matched to their learning requirements. They are included well in discussion. The department has produced some information and worksheets designed specifically for helping lower attaining pupils. Work to challenge the higher attaining pupils is planned into the curriculum, usually as extension tasks, encouraging them to research deeper into the topic or issue under consideration.

160 Pupils respond very well to the challenge of the work set, engaging closely with their work. For example, Year 7 pupils worked well comparing and contrasting different biblical accounts of the birth of Jesus and linking these to contemporary celebrations of Christmas. There is very little unfinished work in books. Written work, particularly from higher attaining pupils, is detailed, presentation is good and other work, such as that for display, completed with enthusiasm. The fortnightly homework set during Key Stage 3 is usually completed well. Homework over Key Stage 4 is well used to extend classwork. Very good relationships and good behaviour contribute strongly to the positive learning ethos in many lessons. All this shows that pupils' attitudes to religious education are usually very positive. However, there is a small minority, particularly of boys, who are less committed to their work in lessons. These can sometimes be disruptive and misbehave in class usually through unnecessary talking.

161 Teaching is of a good quality. In most lessons teaching was either good or very good. None was unsatisfactory. Two of the teaching team are religious education specialist teachers and three are

not. Lack of subject expertise is compensated for by drawing on the helpful scheme of work and by following the teaching activities suggested therein.

162 Pupils' positive response and progress are promoted by the teachers' positive relationships with their pupils and by their generally good management of the class. Teachers have appropriately high expectations, which result in pupils generally applying good intellectual effort in their work. In Year 9, pupils cover work associated with the symbolism of trees in religion. They focus, for example, on the role of the cross in Christianity (the tree of sacrifice and forgiveness) and the Enlightenment of the Buddha which took place under a Bodhi tree (the tree of wisdom). The quality of their written and display work is good, showing understanding of some complex issues.

163 Teachers' questioning is used effectively to check knowledge, extend understanding and encourage participation in lessons. For example, probing, open-ended questioning enables Year 10 to consider issues about death sensitively, and contributes to a learning environment which helps pupils share their own ideas thoughtfully. In Year 8, different types of class quizzes are used to check understanding, extend learning and encourage enjoyment of the subject content. A range of suitable resources is used and effective use is made of display materials, both purchased and that produced by the pupils.

164 The department's scheme of work is detailed and provides a firm foundation for teachers' lesson planning. Skills to be developed as well as content to be covered are considered when planning the work. Subject content is dealt with sensitively and mainly appropriate tasks set. On occasion there is a little unnecessary copying out of text, but overall, tasks are relevant and well sequenced and, particularly in Key Stage 4, they are also challenging. The pace of learning is usually good although on occasion it can be slowed by unnecessary talking on the part of a minority.

165 The development of literacy is well supported through written and oral work and by the correct use of religious terminology. Numeracy skills are used occasionally in interpreting data about religious affiliation from text books, for example. Planning for the use of information and communication technology is good. For example, there are planned opportunities for using the Internet and CD ROM to gather information and word processing to present it. There is an intranet facility, which includes religious education information and activity. However, in practice this planning is sometimes not implemented due to difficulties in booking computer rooms, for example.

166 The vast majority of pupils are very keen to do well, although attitudes from a small minority are less positive. In Key Stage 4, pupils understand how well they are achieving because examination criteria are explained and used appropriately. Pupils are less clear in Key Stage 3, where assessment is less rigorous. The foundation for good assessment practice is in place. Some assessment tasks have been drawn up and the use of pupil self-assessment, in co-operation with their teacher, is developing well. A clearer focus on the standards expected is needed to improve this in order to inform pupils more clearly about the progress they are making.

167 The department makes a strong contribution to the school's provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its pupils. It does this through the curriculum content which focuses on the beliefs and practices of a range of religions including their beliefs about God, prayer and what it means to be a human being. It also makes a contribution through the way in which lessons are taught. Pupils are encouraged to think for themselves and present their ideas in ways which take account of other people's beliefs and feelings. They learn from religious teachings and practices by taking part in reflective activities and encountering religious artefacts and symbols in sensitive ways.

168 The department is well managed and led. The two specialist teachers work purposefully together, supported by other teachers who teach smaller amounts of religious education. A great deal of effort has been successfully focused on improving standards in Key Stage 4 examination work. The work of the department is monitored regularly by the head of faculty, using school systems. The monitoring supports the work of the department, but through it, specific, religious education related issues are not always sufficiently identified. The faculty development plan is well implemented within the department. The time available for religious education across both key stages is that recommended by the Agreed Syllabus. On rare occasions, due to timetabling difficulties, a class or group may have two lessons in one week and none in the next week, following the two-weekly timetable. This leads to some discontinuity in learning for those groups. Resources are satisfactory and are well matched to the needs of the curriculum. Accommodation is satisfactory and good use is made of display. Good progress has been made in the department's work since the previous inspection.