

INSPECTION REPORT

BURNT MILL COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

Harlow

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 115219

Headteacher: Mr Anthony Ward

Reporting inspector: Mr Geoff Headley
1714

Dates of inspection: 11 – 15 December 2000

Inspection number: 223724

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11-16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr P Fox
Date of previous inspection:	May 1996

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Mr C Parsons 4126	Team inspector	Science; equal opportunities; English as an additional language	Curricular opportunities
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Burnt Mill is a comprehensive school for boys and girls aged 11 to 16. It is average in size with 970 pupils on roll. It opened almost forty years ago as part of the development of the then new town of Harlow. Most pupils transfer from one of five feeder primary schools, and a growing number come from outside the immediate area. About 5% arrive at, or leave, the school at times other than the usual admission or leaving dates. The vast majority of pupils are white, with other ethnic groups represented in small numbers. About 4% have English as an additional language, although none requires support with language acquisition. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is a little above average. The pupils' attainment on entry varies greatly but is below the national average overall. The proportion with special educational needs, including those with a statement, is broadly average. Special provision is made for a small number of pupils who have impaired hearing.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school is growing in popularity. There is a strong ethos of care and inclusion and there are many effective teachers. Most pupils enter the school with below average attainment and they are helped to make at least satisfactory and sometimes better progress. The standards achieved in the Key Stage 3 national tests have risen steadily. Results in the core GCSE subjects have also risen but overall improvement at this level has been slow. The Year 7 curriculum enables pupils to form secure relationships but it does not give a firm academic foundation. Attendance is unsatisfactory. The school is soundly led and managed and gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- There are many effective teachers; they have good knowledge of the pupils and help them to make at least satisfactory progress.
- There is a strong ethos of care and inclusion; relationships are strong; there is good provision for the pupils' personal and social development, and the very good pastoral system assures their welfare.
- Pupils participate enthusiastically in a very wide range of extra-curricular activities.
- There is good provision for pupils with hearing impairment; they are monitored closely and benefit from skilled teaching and effective support.
- There is good provision for the expressive arts, and standards are particularly high in drama.
- Teachers new to the profession and to the school are supported very well.

What could be improved

- Despite improvement in mathematics, Key Stage 3 pupils are not making sufficient progress in the subject because teaching is currently unsatisfactory. The art and history GCSE results are declining.
- The low levels of literacy and numeracy have not been tackled soon enough or with sufficient rigour.
- Girls are not doing well enough against others nationally and the reasons are not analysed sufficiently.
- Important weaknesses in the curriculum depress attainment in Year 7 and deny most pupils in the school their statutory entitlement to information and communication technology and religious education.
- Assessment information and target-setting are not used well enough to plan more challenging tasks and achieve higher standards. The marking of the pupils' work is not consistent or always effective in helping them to make progress.
- Action taken to improve attendance has not been successful.
- Governors are very supportive but do not fulfil their leadership responsibilities.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the school was inspected in May 1996 the Key Stage 3 national test results have improved. The GCSE results are better, although they have been slow to rise. Attendance has not improved and remains unsatisfactory. Progress in dealing with the key issues from the inspection has been uneven. There is now greater consistency in teaching and learning; pupils learn well in most subjects, and teaching is good overall. The pupils' spiritual development is promoted more effectively through

assemblies and within some subjects. The provision for those with special educational needs has continued to develop and is now satisfactory. Learning resources have been enhanced and despite deficiencies in some subjects, provision is adequate overall. There has been insufficient progress in developing literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). Provision for ICT and religious education do not fulfil statutory requirements; other shortcomings in religious education have not been tackled and several weaknesses remain. The school still does not provide a daily act of collective worship.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16-year-olds based on average points scores in GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE examinations	E	E	D	D

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

In 2000 the Key Stage 3 results were below the average for all schools and similar schools; however, they are much better than in 1999 and have re-established the improvement which has been taking place since the last inspection. Whilst the rate of improvement is similar to that found nationally on the basis of the average grade, it has been faster for the proportion of pupils achieving at least Level 5. The English results have fluctuated greatly but are now broadly in line with all schools. The improvement in mathematics and science has been more consistent but the results remain below average. In 2000 the school fell slightly short of its statutory GCSE examination target. The results were better than in 1999 but remain below the national average and the average for similar schools. Most pupils gain at least one examination pass. The core subjects' results are getting better but overall improvement is slow; high standards are achieved consistently in drama. There have been striking improvements in geography, whereas art and history results have fallen dramatically. Overall, the school is enabling most pupils to make satisfactory progress and some to make above-average progress.

Work seen during the inspection largely reflects the academic profile of the pupils and the examination results. In most lessons pupils learn satisfactorily, but weaknesses in literacy and numeracy impede learning and greater progress. Standards are low in ICT because of inadequate provision.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Most pupils have good attitudes; they are enthusiastic and interested learners, and participate eagerly in the many activities provided.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory overall: most pupils accept the school's code of conduct and behave sensibly. Misbehaviour is mostly linked to weak teaching.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are good; pupils of all ages mix freely and work well together; their personal development is promoted effectively.
Attendance	This is unsatisfactory with no sign of improvement. Significant absenteeism, particularly by older pupils, adversely affects progress. There is also lateness in the mornings and to lessons. Several parents condone absence.

Pupils take advantage of the many opportunities for initiative and they accept responsibility with

maturity. The good attitudes of the majority enable learning to take place in most classrooms. There is a noticeable improvement in behaviour as pupils get older. A significant minority do not respond to the school's efforts to improve attendance. Serious misbehaviour, including bullying, is rare but is dealt with quickly and effectively.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is good overall, being stronger at Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3. 95% is at least satisfactory; 13% is very good or excellent; 5% is unsatisfactory. There is good teaching in all subjects and some very good teaching in most. Almost half the weak lessons were in mathematics at Key Stage 3, largely owing to staffing difficulties exacerbated by absence during the inspection week. In the other core subjects, English teaching is good and science is satisfactory overall. Language and number are not taught adequately in subjects; the lack of a whole-school approach, particularly in number, is an obstacle to higher standards.

The pupils make satisfactory progress in most lessons but this is not sustained sufficiently over time and is undermined by low standards of literacy.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	This is unsatisfactory with weaknesses in Year 7 that impede the pupils' progress. Religious education and ICT do not meet statutory requirements. Good features include a very wide-ranging extra-curricular programme.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Specialist staff are skilled and well informed. They work effectively with pupils and monitor their progress. Subject teachers are not always aware of pupils' needs and individual targets. Provision for those with impaired hearing is good.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	A few pupils have English as an additional language but none requires extra help with language acquisition. Their progress is similar to that of other pupils in the school.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision is good overall: spiritual development is satisfactory; moral and cultural development are good; and many features of the school's work ensure that social development is very good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school knows its pupils well and looks after their welfare carefully. The pupils' behaviour, attendance and academic progress are monitored satisfactorily. Assessment is not used successfully to raise attainment.

The school takes appropriate steps to involve parents in its work but gets a limited response. Parents are kept informed if their children underachieve or do well, but the home-school agreement has not brought about an effective partnership. Reports on pupils' academic progress are not clear enough and governors' reports do not give parents sufficient information. Pastoral procedures, including those for child protection, are good. Links with primary schools are good. The combined studies course in Year 7 enables pupils to settle quickly and form secure relationships but does not enable them to achieve

high enough standards in the discrete subjects and in literacy. Assessment is regular and leads to target-setting but the information is not used well enough to adjust teaching and achieve higher standards. Religious education and ICT do not meet statutory requirements. Personal and social education is good but is not taught below Year 9. Vocational subjects meet the needs of the lower-attainers. Careers education is good, and expressive arts work is very good. The timetable works well overall but results in inappropriate teaching groups for foreign languages and some pupils having less effective time for art than others. Provision for gifted and talented pupils is developing but is not yet raising their attainment.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	This is satisfactory overall. The headteacher provides clear leadership and good management and is central to the very positive ethos. Some monitoring is thorough but it does not always lead to improvement strategies. There has been slowness in tackling some important weaknesses.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are well informed and monitor the school's work. They promote its strengths but do not readily accept its weaknesses. They have not challenged it to make better progress or ensured some of its statutory obligations.
The school's evaluation of its performance	There is an increasing use of data. A largely objective evaluation by the headteacher and senior staff leads to appropriate priorities for development.
The strategic use of resources	Financial control and planning are good and where possible, budget decisions support the school's priorities.

The school benefits from clear leadership from a dedicated and experienced headteacher. There is a focus on school improvement and a shared commitment to succeed. Subject departments are called to account but weaknesses are not always tackled rigorously. The governors' leadership has good features but is not firm enough; they need to acknowledge the school's shortcomings so that they are in a better position to help its development. Staffing, accommodation and resources are satisfactory overall; however, there are some weaknesses that need attention. Current staffing difficulties in mathematics and non-specialist teaching in Year 7 adversely affect pupils' progress. The few inadequacies in accommodation are being overcome. Inadequate resources affect a small number of subjects. The principles of best value are applied when buying resources and services.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The welcoming and inclusive ethos. The leadership of the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The way the school communicates with them about their child's progress. The amount of homework given.

Parents' views, expressed by a small minority through the questionnaire and the pre-inspection meeting, are largely very favourable. Parents are right to be concerned about how the school communicates with them as there are shortcomings in the reporting system and inconsistent use of the homework planners. Parents' concerns about the amount of homework are not confirmed; both the quality and quantity were found to be satisfactory.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. The results in the 2000 Key Stage 3 Standard Assessment Tasks (SATs) were below the national average and the average for similar schools (those with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to a free school meal); however, they are much better than in 1999 and have re-established the improvement which has been taking place since the last inspection. The rising trend is in line with that found nationally for the average points score and above the national trend for pupils achieving Level 5 and higher. Girls do slightly better than boys, as is the case in other schools in England, but with the exception of 1999 they are further behind the average for their gender.
2. There are differences between the core subjects. The English results have fluctuated greatly but the proportion of pupils achieving the expected level or higher is now broadly in line with all schools. The improvement in mathematics and science has been more consistent but the pupils' performance remains below the level achieved nationally. When compared with similar schools (those with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals), English and mathematics are in line and science is below. The overall rise in standards is reflected in the results of both boys and girls; however, whereas the most recent results show girls and boys to be equally below the gender averages in English, the girls fall below in mathematics and further below in science.
3. At GCSE, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more A*-C grades in 2000 rose against the 1999 figure, but at 35% the results remain below the national average and the average for similar schools. Although the proportion achieving these grades is now higher than at the time of the last inspection, the school has found difficulty in securing improvement in the intervening years. There was a significant rise in the year following the inspection but thereafter the results fell and the most recent ones have done no more than regain lost ground. A comparatively high proportion of pupils achieve at least 1 A*-G grade and by this measure the school is above the national average and well above similar schools. Despite the overall rise this year, the results, measured by the average points score, have not kept abreast of the national trend and the school is now further behind the national average than at the time it was last inspected. Girls usually do better than boys, but with the exception of 2000, their results are much further below the average for their gender. They did particularly badly in 1999.
4. The 2000 A*-C results fell slightly short of the school's statutory target of 37%, although the targets set for one or more A*-G grades and the average points score were exceeded. The main target for 2001 is set at 35% and is reasonable given the prior attainment of the current Year 11 pupils. A target in excess of 40% has been set for the following year. This demonstrates appropriately high expectations of the pupils currently in Year 10 and the school's determination to raise standards.
5. While the overall GCSE results have remained below average, good results have been achieved consistently in drama and to a lesser degree in child development, although in the latter with relatively small numbers taking the examination. For the last two years home economics results have been above average. There have been striking improvements in geography and in 1999 and 2000 the results were broadly average. There is no indication that one core subject is consistently stronger than the other two. The 2000 English and English literature results were below average but results are getting closer to the average each year. Significant improvements have occurred in

mathematics; the results were in line with national figures in 1999, although they fell back slightly in 2000. This year's science results remained below average but they were better than in 1999 and closer to those in previous years; the proportion gaining A*-C grades in single science exceeded the national average in 2000.

6. Few pupils gain the two highest grades in any subject, but this year an average proportion achieved A grades in drama, home economics and science. The pupils' performance in most other subjects has fluctuated, with no discernible pattern emerging. The exceptions are art and history which have both fallen from being above average to a position where the proportion gaining A*-C grades is now almost thirty percentage points below the national figures. The German results have also declined, and Spanish has replaced it as the second language. In the last two years the boys' results have been above the average for boys nationally in several subjects, including mathematics in 1999 and English in 2000. The good home economics results are achieved by girls. The high standards in drama are achieved by both boys and girls.
7. The majority of pupils enter the school with low levels of literacy. The curriculum organisation and the teaching arrangements in Year 7 are not suitable for dealing with this. As a consequence weaknesses remain and are an obstacle to many pupils' learning throughout their time in school. Some measures are in place but under the circumstances have been slow to start. A literacy summer school for entrant pupils has been established; material from the National Literacy Strategy has been disseminated and staff training on literacy organised. A school action plan has been drawn up; a draft literacy policy is currently under discussion; writing frames are used in some subjects, including those that are mainly practical, such as dance. There is evidence of good literacy-based activity in English and also some other subjects, such as dance, but the effectiveness of the strategies is unsatisfactory, as standards of literacy remain low. Pupils can speak clearly and listen carefully when favourable classroom circumstances and teaching methods allow. Oral work is good in English, art, design and technology, history and music, but poor in modern foreign languages. Reading is not well developed across the curriculum: reading for understanding is not good, for example, in science and history, but satisfactory in English and design technology. The pupils' reading skills do not generally hinder their access to the curriculum. Writing is very variable in quality and much of it is weak. In science it is largely accurate and relevant. A minority of pupils, usually higher-attainers, write well with fluency and accuracy. Several subject areas consistently encourage pupils to take care over presentation, spelling, punctuation and grammar, but this is not consistent throughout the school.
8. Provision for tackling pupils' weaknesses in using number is unsatisfactory. Although there have been improvements in mathematics, and number skills are used satisfactorily to support learning in a few other subjects, many pupils still lack sufficient understanding and confidence when applying some basic skills. Even some of the ablest pupils in Years 10 and 11 have significant weaknesses, particularly in mental arithmetic. By the school's own admission the numeracy strategy, started three years ago, needs revision to ensure a consistent and effective approach to raising standards.
9. Standards in lessons vary greatly, largely reflecting the academic profile of the pupils and the school's examination results. In about 45% of lessons, standards were below the age-related expectations, whereas they were above in 13%. Standards are slightly higher at Key Stage 4, mainly in Year 10; this can be attributed in part to some of the more able pupils responding to the imperatives of the examinations. At both key stages attainment is occasionally above average in several subjects, particularly when there is a strong emphasis on practical activity, for instance physical education, dance and drama. Occasionally when the higher-attaining pupils are taught together, in science for instance,

they produce work that is above average, although this does not happen consistently. Across all subjects, the standard of pupils' work is very rarely well above nationally expected levels. The improvement in mathematics is reflected in lessons where the ablest pupils at both key stages are often achieving higher than average standards.

10. Understandably most pupils with special educational needs are attaining below the age-related expectations, although the majority make satisfactory progress overall because of carefully planned support. Some individual pupils make good progress within specific programmes. For example, one in Year 8 improved his reading age by a year and a half over a period of eight months through supported study. Most pupils on this programme, however, make little or no headway in increasing their reading age, despite being taught well and making progress in other aspects of literacy, such as punctuation.
11. The school is enabling most pupils to make at least satisfactory progress. In most lessons they learn well enough to achieve what can be reasonably expected of them. Their enthusiasm and good response to much good teaching ensures that this happens. Various indicators show that most pupils also make satisfactory progress over time, and for some the gains are even better. Those taking the GCSE examinations in 2000 did well when their results are matched against their attainment in the national tests taken five years earlier in their primary schools. The rising standards in English against a background of low literacy levels, widespread when the pupils are admitted to the school, indicate the progress that is possible, and should be a spur to some other subject departments.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

12. Generally pupils have good attitudes to school, although there is also significant absenteeism and some lack of punctuality, both in the mornings and moving between lessons. Extra-curricular clubs and activities are very well attended and highly praised by both pupils and parents.
13. Many pupils are enthusiastic learners, particularly in the more practical subjects such as physical education and drama. For example, in a Year 10 English lesson with a theatre in education group, the pupils showed good levels of concentration and commitment. All the pupils worked purposefully in a Year 7 mathematics lesson looking at co-ordinates, and in a Year 9 sex education lesson the pupils behaved with commendable maturity. Some examples were seen of poor and disruptive behaviour in lessons, such as in modern foreign languages at Key Stage 3. Poor behaviour is sometimes, but not always, linked to poor teaching. Year 7 was frequently the source of poor behaviour; for example, in a mathematics lesson about a third of the pupils were inattentive and insufficiently responsible to remain focused, thus wasting time. Parents also recognise that, although pupils often behave well, especially during trips, visits and extra-curricular activities, there are some disruptive and challenging pupils whose behaviour interferes with learning.
14. The pupils often develop constructive relationships with each other and their teachers, and this is a strength of the school. For example, in a Year 9 physical education lesson involving a warm-up and stretching exercises to music, very good relationships were demonstrated which underpinned the pupils' learning. Year 7 pupils work together to produce an 'alternative' prospectus and video for those coming into the school from primary schools. The house system offers a full sporting and social programme, which greatly supports and encourages social development and harmonious relationships. There is sometimes minor pushing and shoving when the pupils are moving around the school, particularly on narrow staircases and in corridors, but many pupils are polite and

sensible, for example in holding doors open for others.

15. The school has a strongly inclusive ethos. This results in Year 7 pupils, others coming new to the school, traveller children, those with special educational needs, and the few pupils who have English as an additional language, being warmly welcomed and quickly becoming part of the school community. Some bullying does take place but it is mostly name-calling and rarely involves physical violence. Pupils are unanimous that bullying of any kind is quickly tackled. The specially trained 'listeners' make an excellent contribution to helping younger pupils and developing good relationships in the school.
16. Some opportunities are offered for pupils to reflect on daily life; for example in a Year 7 assembly when they were encouraged to consider the meaning of Christmas after hearing a poem, and in drama where pupils frequently evaluate their own and other people's work with sensitivity and respect; however, opportunities for reflection are missed in several subjects. Respect for others is a strong thread running through the school's activities, and pupils observe performances of their peers in dance, drama and music sensibly. The pupils do not extend this respect to their immediate environment: toilets sometimes suffer vandalism, much of the school's fabric is very well worn and shabby and there is a persistent problem of litter which is exacerbated because it lies in some places unattended for days.
17. The school offers a very large range of opportunities for initiative and personal responsibility, which pupils take up eagerly. There are pupil governors, representatives on house councils, "listeners " and in Year 11, prefects. Pupils participate with enthusiasm in performances and willingly contribute to assemblies. They behave with a notable level of sense and maturity when not directly supervised using computers and equipment, in design technology and music for example.
18. Attendance is unsatisfactory at 89.73% for the last school year, with 9.53% authorised absence and 0.74% unauthorised. This was reflected in the week of the inspection when only a tiny number of lessons observed had the full complement of pupils. The problem gets worse higher up the school, with Year 10 and Year 11 consistently showing attendance rates below 90%. This is having a significant negative effect on attainment in several subjects. The number of fixed-term exclusions was 106 last year, with one permanent exclusion. Although the figures for exclusion have risen since the last inspection, they reflect the school's determination to tackle serious misbehaviour, and the changing population, which includes a greater proportion of difficult and challenging pupils arriving from other schools in the area.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

19. At the last inspection two in every ten lessons were unsatisfactorily taught, and the school was required to improve the quality of teaching by ensuring greater consistency in and between subjects. The attention given to teaching since then, through monitoring and guidance, has paid dividends. Teaching is now good overall. 95% of lessons are at least satisfactory; 55% are good or better, including 13% that are very good; one personal and social education lesson was judged to be excellent. Teaching is stronger at Key Stage 4, where two-thirds of lessons are of a good standard and ensure that pupils learn well. There is also good teaching at Key Stage 3 where the bulk is satisfactory. The 5% of lessons that were unsatisfactory occurred in English, mathematics, science, geography and modern foreign languages and were spread across both key stages. In most cases the lessons were taught by teachers who otherwise taught satisfactorily or well. These particular lessons were unsuccessful for a variety of reasons. Sometimes this was

because of poor class management, a lack of clarity about content or a slow and tedious approach. In one case the teacher did not recognise what the pupils could already do. Almost half the weak lessons were in mathematics at Key Stage 3. They were largely a consequence of staffing difficulties exacerbated by absence during the inspection week. Pupils made little or no progress in these lessons, causing mathematics teaching to be unsatisfactory overall. In the other core subjects, English teaching is good and science is satisfactory overall.

20. Teachers know the pupils very well and pupils are willing learners. The strong and effective relationships form the basis of a purposeful working atmosphere in most classrooms. Teachers prepare well and use their subject knowledge to good effect. Many lessons are successful because pupils are motivated by interesting material and a range of activities which keep them focused on what is to be learned. Many teachers are thorough in checking pupils' understanding and patient when providing explanations and demonstrations to those having difficulty. As a result of these qualities, most pupils learn satisfactorily during lessons.
21. There is some good teaching in all subjects and very good teaching in varying proportions in most. A range of qualities combines to make these lessons particularly successful. For example, in an English lesson Year 10 pupils comparing film texts benefited from the teacher's skilful management of group work. A mathematics lesson was very successful because of the teacher's ability to question effectively, use examples well and express high expectations of average-attaining pupils in Year 11. A very good science lesson, taught to a lower-attaining group in Year 8, ensured the pupils' progress because they were given clear direction on what was expected of them and very focused individual support. The long-standing weaknesses in GCSE art are being tackled by some good-quality teaching; for instance a Year 10 lesson was very successful because the pupils were required to evaluate their own work and talk about the styles and methods used by established artists. In one of several very good design and technology lessons the pupils' learning was rapid because the teacher used time very effectively, pupils were expected to work at a brisk pace and their application of skills and knowledge was checked and double checked. An energetic approach and confident use of role-play in a Year 8 history lesson ensured that the pupils learned relevant facts and discussed important questions. A very well planned ICT lesson taught to Year 10 pupils led them through the process of designing a compact disk package; in this lesson the teacher made good provision for the range of ability in the class and used group work effectively to deal with common problems. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 9 were taught French very well by a teacher who struck a good balance between leading the pupils and expecting them to participate; as a result, they learned well and made rapid gains in language acquisition. In dance, taught as part of physical education in Year 8, and as a discrete GCSE subject in Year 10, the teacher's clear expectations about the quality and range of movements, and the requirement that pupils evaluate their own work, ensured good skill development. The excellent personal and social education lesson, taught to a Year 11 group, came about because of the teacher's thought-provoking introduction and the skilful way in which sensitive questions were handled. All the pupils were given opportunities to contribute to discussion.
22. In several lessons, which are satisfactory in that they have more strengths than weaknesses, teachers do not make sufficient provision for the range of ability in a class. More often this adversely affects the higher-attainers who sometimes coast because not enough is demanded of them. There is also insufficient consistency in promoting higher standards of literacy and numeracy.
23. Some of the class teaching for pupils with special educational needs is very good. They

are helped to remember what they have learned because words are written on the board, language is clearly and consistently used, words are carefully linked, concrete aids are used and activities given are short and at an appropriate level for the pupils' capacity to concentrate. The learning support staff work very effectively with pupils with special educational needs across both key stages and are allocated to pupils according to identified needs. Staff are very well informed; they work well as a team to ensure efficient planning and suitable resources, which provide a blend of help and challenge to encourage pupils to work independently. The learning support staff are very aware of the progress made by individual pupils towards the targets on their individual education plans; however, there is insufficient support in some Year 7 classes. Individual education plans are reviewed by the special needs co-ordinator twice a year with input from learning support and other teaching staff. They contain generic and specific targets, with strategies for meeting them. A weakness is that subject teachers are frequently unaware of the contents of the plans, and the targets and strategies do not inform their planning of lessons. None of the pupils with English as a second language has difficulty with access to learning and these pupils make similar progress to other pupils. The school is developing well its provision for the ablest pupils, but they do not always make sufficient progress in their learning at present when work is not matched sufficiently to their attainment level.

24. Marking as an aid to teaching has some good features in English and modern foreign languages. In both, teachers write detailed and helpful comments that give pupils pointers for improvement. Aspects of marking are good in some other subjects; however, there is not a consistently effective approach across the school. In mathematics, the work is marked infrequently and even in the subjects where marking is done regularly, its impact on the pupils' progress is unsatisfactory. There is a coherent marking policy but teachers do not use marking as an integral part of assessment and pupils are rarely given indicators of where they are in relation to national expectations, or set targets to help them achieve higher standards. Homework is also variable, although it is satisfactory overall. The tasks are varied and mostly extend classwork, but it is rarely presented in different ways to ensure that pupils of different abilities are appropriately challenged. When a homework task is to finish what has been started in class the ablest pupils have little to complete because they have worked at a quicker pace than others.

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

25. The school is successful in enabling its pupils to settle quickly into Year 7 and to develop supportive working relationships with their peers and teachers. This is the result of various activities with feeder primary schools and the curriculum arrangements in Year 7, where one teacher teaches pupils 'combined studies' for a large proportion of each week. While providing well for the pupils' personal development, this arrangement is not enabling sufficient progress to be made in the subjects involved and needs to be reviewed. An increasing emphasis is placed upon developing the pupils' literacy. Some effective action is taking place across subjects, but this needs to become more systematic and consistent, and the arrangements in Year 7 are not sufficiently focused to meet the wide variety of needs present in the year group. A start has also been made in introducing a strategy for numeracy, but this is presently too narrow in scope, not yet properly organised and not implemented sufficiently widely. Revisions have been made to religious education since the previous inspection, but statutory requirements are still not met at both Key Stages 3 and 4. A large proportion of pupils follow an ICT-based course at Key Stage 4, but for those that do not and for all pupils at Key Stage 3, statutory requirements are again not met. While there are opportunities at both key stages for the

pupils to use computers, they are not guaranteed the experiences that will fulfil their entitlement to develop ICT skills and knowledge to an appropriate level across a range of applications.

26. The strong ethos of inclusion within the school means that there is equality of access to the curriculum and the opportunity for all pupils to learn. Nevertheless the very wide spread of prior attainment and varying levels of basic skills in Year 7 do make it very difficult for teachers to meet fully the needs of all the pupils present in any one class. There is a need to review the grouping of pupils to ensure that all are consistently challenged at appropriate levels.
27. Pupils with special educational needs usually work with their class group, but are occasionally withdrawn for specific tuition in basic skills or for individual programmes. Specific programmes are used for identified pupils to increase their literacy. One computer-based programme being offered is not as effective as it might be, because many of the pupils do not turn up for their sessions and so their learning lacks rigour and consistency. Pupils with poorly developed phonic skills are offered a variety of other programmes, but evaluation of their effectiveness is now needed. Key Stage 4 pupils not reaching the standards required of GCSE courses are offered alternative accreditation in most subjects, ensuring that their achievements are still recognised.
28. Gifted and talented pupils have been identified and a programme established to extend their experiences and provide challenging and stimulating activities. Much of this is collaborative activity with other local secondary schools. The school is also participating, with promising early results, in a local project to consider the impact of single gender classes for mathematics. Timetable arrangements work well overall, although there are inappropriate teaching groups for modern foreign languages and some pupils have single art lessons, giving them less effective teaching time than those who have a double lesson.
29. The programme for personal, social and health education (PSHE) makes a good contribution to the personal development of the pupils in Years 9-11, but is omitted in Years 7 and 8. There is also an effective programme for careers education, including work experience in Year 10. A vocational course in ICT has been introduced and there is a link scheme with the local college for a small number of older pupils. The school has recognised that national initiatives make this the ideal time to review provision in this area. There is an opportunity to provide an even more coherent experience that builds progressively as pupils move through the school, encompassing the new requirements on citizenship. More use can also be made of the flexibility now allowed to schools in providing more relevant arrangements for some pupils at Key Stage 4 through a more vocationally enhanced curriculum.
30. The range and quality of extra-curricular activities is very good, and they make a significant contribution to the pupils' personal development. Very strong links have been established with the local community to support and develop work in music, for example. Visitors include theatre groups and an 'artist in residence', with workshops routinely arranged to provide access to such external expertise. Productions and concerts, including some to raise money for charity, are regular events. Over a quarter of pupils regularly participate in extra-curricular sport. Pupils are encouraged to establish links with outside professionals to develop further their interest and talent. There is an annual day trip to France for Year 7 pupils and residential visits to France and Spain in Years 8 to 10. Access to the school's facilities, such as ICT resources, at break, lunchtime and after school is very good. Revision sessions are provided at key points and more routine help provided regularly, such as the daily rota of science teachers available to provide

help to those having difficulties.

31. All pupils are encouraged to participate fully in the life of the school and there is particularly good support and encouragement for lower-attaining pupils to take on responsibilities. The focus on expressive arts makes a very good contribution, especially to their cultural and spiritual development. Many assemblies are used well to develop a sense of community and responsibility for others. Religious education and PSHE provide a focus for the consideration of social and moral issues. There are good examples of teachers seizing the moment to capture the pupils' interests and to develop a sense of awe or wonder at the beauty and complexity of the natural world. The pupils are encouraged to explore the work and ideas of cultures other than their own, for example through Russian dance or Egyptian art. Consequently, the school is good at supporting the pupils' personal development.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

32. The school's pastoral system is strong and effective, ensuring that concerns over behaviour, attendance or academic work are quickly picked up. Successes and improvements, particularly in such areas as conduct in lessons and participation in extra-curricular activities, are recognised and rewarded. Procedures for improving academic performance are only just beginning to be applied. The recent target-setting day was a positive move and welcomed by both parents and pupils, but some targets are too general to be helpful and it is unclear exactly how and when they will be evaluated. The use of homework planners to guide and monitor performance is not yet consistent.
33. The school is a warm and caring environment where all staff know the pupils well. Child protection procedures are tightly run and organised, with an assistant headteacher as the designated person. The pastoral team works closely together and any concerns are referred through heads of year. The induction of new teachers in this aspect is exceptionally thorough. Everyday procedures for health and safety are satisfactory. Safe working practices are used in, for example, science, physical education and design and technology, although there are no boundary lines painted around large technology equipment to ensure safety. Sick and injured children are dealt with by one of five staff who are qualified in first-aid; the medical room and accident record book are well maintained. Toilets and eating arrangements, however, are barely adequate: there is a persistent problem of vandalism and the dining areas are shabby, though well supervised. Outside the building, there are concerns about litter, and not enough care is taken to separate cars and child pedestrians, particularly in the mornings.
34. The school does much to promote good attendance but is not wholly successful, partly due to the unwillingness of some parents to ensure that their children actually come to school. Latecomers are checked in at reception and teachers ensure that certain absentees get 'first day' telephone contact, although temporary teachers need inducting better into the system. There is much reinforcement of good behaviour and attendance, ranging from individual certificates for those with 100% attendance to rewards for the 'form of the week'. The school works closely with the educational welfare officer and traveller support service. A senior staff member is now monitoring levels of attendance, but it is clear that levels are unacceptably low in some Year 10 and Year 11 groups. Attendance overall has not improved since the time of the last inspection, and the improvement made when the school was part of a special attendance project has not been maintained.
35. The school has a flexible range of rewards and sanctions to encourage good behaviour,

and it is having some success in reintegrating some difficult and challenging pupils. There is noticeable improvement in the behaviour of the pupils as they move up the school, from being sometimes chaotic and unfocused in Year 7 to enthusiastic, courteous and friendly in later years. A particular success has been in eliminating almost all bullying and threatening behaviour, with only a few isolated incidents recorded. These are dealt with quickly.

36. Pupils report that the school is welcoming and friendly, and staff go out of their way to be helpful and supportive to the children in their care. Inspection evidence confirms this view. A number of clubs support classwork and homework outside lessons. Personal and social education lessons are used to guide and support pupils as they mature, and there are helpful meetings to discuss GCSE options. Vocational education programmes such as the ASDAN scheme are used successfully with a small number of pupils. Careers guidance for older pupils is very well organised and managed. All pupils are well integrated and supported. Parents recognise and praise highly the school's caring and inclusive ethos. In this respect the school has maintained the high standards found at the time of the last inspection.
37. Procedures for assessing the pupils' attainment and monitoring their progress are satisfactory overall. Strengths lie in a coherent, whole-school marking system linked to levels of attainment and regular termly assessment; however, marking is not done consistently well to fulfil the potential of the policy. Celebration of achievement at Key Stage 4 and the arrangements for tutor profiling through target-setting also serve to monitor pupils' academic progress. A recently revised assessment policy is in place, but implementation is relatively new and the monitoring and evaluation of its effectiveness is at an early stage. Examples of good assessment occur in modern languages, where targets are effectively used to raise achievement and in English, where good use is made of exemplar portfolios to standardise assessment across the department. Assessment procedures are unsatisfactory in religious education and music, and Year 7 pupils are not assessed in geography against key stage descriptors. Procedures for assessing performance in ICT are not yet fully in place.
38. There is detailed assessment of some pupils with special educational needs by outside agencies such as the educational psychology service. This information is used to provide targets for the pupils' individual education plans (IEPs) but frequently these targets are not then used by teachers to plan or modify lessons. Additional targets are set on the school's target-setting day, but these are not yet linked to the targets on IEPs. The school implements the provision outlined on the statements and very effective use is made of support staff in doing this. The statements are reviewed regularly with parents and other professionals and pupils are expected to attend these meetings.
39. The use of assessment to inform curriculum planning is unsatisfactory. The school uses standardised tests as well as Key Stage 2 and 3 assessments to identify the potential of individual pupils in Years 10 and 11 to achieve GCSE passes. This information, however, is used insufficiently by most subject departments to analyse and improve attainment. The target-setting process is weakened because subject staff have insufficient knowledge of the pupils' targets. Core subjects make more consistent use than others of tracking pupils' progress across Key Stage 3. Good practice is evident in mathematics, design and technology and modern languages, but the targets set for more able pupils are limited overall.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

40. The views of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire and came to the

pre-inspection meeting are largely very favourable about the school, although they were a minority of all parents. They feel that their children are making good progress, sometimes better than expected. The school is seen as very flexible and approachable, and the staff as involved and committed. Parents particularly praise the way in which the school encourages the pupils' personal development. Many parents praise the school's welcoming atmosphere and the way all pupils are included in the life of the school. They recognise the opportunities given to lower-attaining pupils who are encouraged to participate and feel proud of their efforts. This is strongly supported by inspection findings. In addition, they feel that both leadership and management of the school are strong, and acknowledge the beneficial influence of the headteacher. Of those who responded, a significant minority feel they are not well informed about their children's progress and cite the inconsistent use of homework and homework planners, which inspectors confirm.

41. There is a well-presented prospectus with an additional information pack, though it lacks certain statutory items such as information about children with special educational needs and national comparisons for SAT and GCSE results. The governors' annual report to parents similarly lacks information on statutory items such as the treatment of children with special educational needs, the school's targets for GCSE examinations and the action taken to tackle the key issues from the last inspection; however, the latter two were included in a recent newsletter. The newsletters are professionally produced to a high standard. Several parents mentioned that they did not receive them and therefore did not know about the homework club, for example. Some information is provided on notice boards around the school and there are special booklets for open evenings and presentations.
42. Pastoral staff are vigorous in contacting parents about attendance, behaviour and academic work. This is done when there are concerns, but contact is also of a positive nature, in the form of commendations, certificates and reports, when pupils are doing well. In the case of exclusions there is much contact with parents. The wide variation in information and formats used in annual reports makes them confusing. Modern foreign languages are the notable exception, offering a model of good practice in reporting and giving helpful advice to parents.
43. The involvement of parents in their children's education is disappointing. Despite a thoughtful home-school agreement, a number of parents appear to make little effort to ensure that their children come to school or complete homework. Increased efforts are being made to involve the parents of all pupils with special educational needs. Where parents support their children in their learning and there is close liaison between home and school, much better progress is made. Particularly strenuous efforts have been made to involve the parents of pupils with a statement of special educational needs, but there is too little involvement by parents overall. Consultation evenings attract only about two-thirds of parents, although those who attend work closely with staff. The annual parents' meeting with the governors is also very poorly supported. Several parents are never seen in school. This presents a challenge to the school to find ways to strengthen the partnership and encourage parents to play a more active part in their children's education. The recent target-setting day was more successful. The school made efforts to accommodate parents at different times, and as a result over 88% attended.
44. Social and sporting activities are better supported through the house system of separate but linked parent-teacher associations. The system helps to ensure good relationships and a supportive framework for pupils and parents to join. Some parents are themselves ex-pupils and enthusiastically organise activities such as theatre trips and quiz nights, as well as actively supporting performances of music, drama and dance.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

45. The headteacher is very experienced; he is a good manager and gives calm and clear leadership. His way of working is central to the school's strong ethos of care and inclusion. This, and a combination of several other good features, provides a favourable backdrop to pupils' learning. Parents recognise the school's strengths and as a consequence it has grown in popularity.
46. The school has improved but some important areas have not been tackled quickly or rigorously enough. Measures to raise examination results have been slow to take effect, although those in place now are more sharply focused on the important matters that affect pupils' attainment. Heads of department are called to account by the headteacher and senior staff through analysis of results. This is done well, within a clear framework that requires each subject leader to evaluate the department's effectiveness and agree targets for the following year; however, the process does not always result in precise strategies to achieve these targets. Follow-up meetings, although used well to support departmental and whole-school initiatives, do not contribute sufficiently to raising standards and overcoming specific departmental weaknesses. As a consequence of not applying monitoring procedures much earlier, the school has failed to prevent falling standards in art and history, it has not measured the impact of the Year 7 combined studies course on pupils' attainment, and it has not analysed sufficiently the performance of girls.
47. Monitoring procedures are now developing well and have some good features. Better teaching and learning have been priorities and have been achieved by monitoring classrooms, and through staff training and guidance. Lesson observations are carried out thoroughly by senior managers and are often supplemented by good-quality written feedback to teachers; heads of department also observe lessons but not regularly or as systematically. Senior staff have received training to improve their monitoring role and have now undertaken full reviews of a few departments. These are well documented and make a sharply focused and helpful appraisal of the work of departments. Other, less formal reviews, done in the form of random visits, look at departmental practice and also celebrate success. There is an expectation that middle managers will develop their monitoring role by scrutinising pupils' work and ensuring that school policies are implemented by their departments; currently practice is uneven.
48. There is a shared commitment to school improvement as the roles of senior managers are enhanced and middle managers become better equipped to carry out their responsibilities. There is increasing use of data to measure the school's effectiveness. A senior teacher has been appointed very recently to develop this and to help middle managers become confident in using the information when monitoring the work of their departments. Currently, a range of available data is used to assess pupils' attainment but it is not used widely to raise it. Information is rarely used by departments to plan strategies to reach their own targets and those set for groups and individual pupils.
49. The school's developments are planned satisfactorily after its own evaluation of its work; review is regular and carried out well. There is a focus on raising standards, and the priorities which emerge are appropriate; however, some important ones, particularly those identified through subject reviews, do not feature prominently in either the school plan or those produced by departments. The link between whole-school priorities and the ones set by departments is sometimes tenuous. In some cases the plans list tasks rather than long-term developments, and the line-management arrangements have not

been sufficiently rigorous to prevent this from happening.

50. Governors are well organised; they have a good range of experience and expertise and carry out their business properly. They have adopted an efficient way of monitoring, mainly through their curriculum committee, which, for instance, receives the examination results and the outcomes of departmental reviews. They have sound knowledge of the issues facing the school and they are supportive and proud of its increasing popularity. They know the school's strengths, and rightfully promote its success in adding value with regard to pupils' learning; however, their leadership role is not firm enough because they do not readily accept the school's weaknesses and have not challenged it to make better progress since the last inspection. Some legal obligations to do with the curriculum and published information have not been met. They must accept the school's shortcomings and take a more active role in setting its priorities.
51. Financial control is good. Where possible, expenditure is linked to planned developments. Budget decisions are discussed appropriately, and money earmarked for specific purposes is used properly. The principles of best value are applied when deciding which resources and services to purchase, when comparing the school's performance with others and to a lesser extent when consulting with parents. The income and expenditure per pupil are high compared with national figures; however, when all available resources are matched to the quality of education provided, the school gives satisfactory value for money.
52. Staffing, accommodation and resources are satisfactory. There are sufficient adequately or well-qualified teachers to deliver the National Curriculum in most subjects, although there are exceptions to this. In mathematics nearly half the teachers are supply staff and this is having a negative impact on learning and progress. More support and training are needed to enable some modern languages teachers to be more effective when teaching outside their specialist language. Not all aspects of the combined studies course in Year 7 are taught consistently because the teachers lack the in-depth knowledge across the range of subjects included. Non-teaching staff ably support the work of the school.
53. The school makes very good provision for supporting newly qualified teachers (NQT's). There are four such teachers in the school this year who receive very good support from their mentors, experienced teachers in their department and the co-ordinator. There is an effective induction programme. The school also trains new teachers in conjunction with a local university. The support that each student teacher receives from the school is of very high quality and is greatly valued by the students.
54. The school is making great efforts to improve its accommodation through a rolling programme of refurbishment and building. The accommodation for physical education is particularly good, but rooms for textiles are set apart from the rest of design and technology and history rooms are in different parts of the school. Most classrooms are well maintained, with bright stimulating displays of pupils' work, such as in modern languages. Most classrooms are of a good size, with appropriate lighting and blinds as in ICT, but there are cramped conditions in design technology and the small size and shape of one music classroom is having a negative impact on learning. Some refurbishment remains to be done, including the refurbishment of two science laboratories and the art rooms, which are still unsatisfactory. The communal areas of the school are not so well maintained. There is poor lighting in the art corridor and stairs are dusty. In spite of refurbishment, pupils' lavatories remain poor, and litter is a problem in the grounds.
55. Resources in the school are satisfactory. There are good resources in expressive arts and modern foreign languages, and even though the ratio of computers to pupils is below

the national average, there has been a significant improvement in these resources in the last nine months. There are deficiencies in resources in some subjects. In science and mathematics there are insufficient textbooks available for students to use at home. In design technology the lack of working and up-to-date sewing machines affects the delivery of textiles. The library is well used, particularly at break and lunchtime, but it is not available at all times of the school day. There has been an improvement in the ratio of books to pupils since the last inspection and a full-time librarian has been appointed. There is now an adequate range of books in the library to support most subjects except design and technology, and non-fiction books are still limited. Computers provide CD based access to information in a wide range of subjects as well as wordprocessing facilities.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

56. The very positive ethos in the school places it in a favourable position to remedy the weaknesses. Staff and governors should now work together to ensure higher standards. They should:

- (1) take remedial action to overcome the consequences of the recent staffing difficulties in mathematics which have caused weaknesses in teaching and pupils' learning, and have halted the improvements in the subject;
- (2) employ a range of support and supervision strategies to reverse the decline in the examination results in art and history;
- (3) build on the measures already introduced to raise the levels of literacy and numeracy by ensuring a rigorous whole school approach, which is supported by guidance on how all subject departments, and individual teachers, can contribute;
- (4) analyse and monitor the performance of girls, and put in place teaching and learning strategies that will prevent further slippage and ensure that their attainment is raised;
- (5) eliminate the shortcomings in the curriculum by:
 - dealing with the consequences of the Year 7 combined studies course and accepting the need for higher standards in the discrete subjects and the need to tackle weaknesses in literacy as soon as pupils enter the school
 - ensuring that subject arrangements and the schemes of work provide pupils with their statutory entitlement to religious education and ICT;
- (6) develop the good procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress by:
 - using the information to plan lessons which challenge pupils and help them achieve the targets which are set for them
 - improving the quality of marking so that it links closely with the assessment procedures and is consistent and effective in helping pupils to make progress;
- (7) improve attendance by:
 - reviewing the effectiveness of current procedures and extending those which are judged to be successful
 - working more closely with parents to demonstrate the importance of good attendance and its impact on attainment and progress

- signalling the significance of good attendance by requiring all departments to devise strategies which support the whole school approach;
- (8) ensure that governors are more effective in carrying out their leadership responsibilities by:
- their acceptance of the school's weaknesses, and by implication the priorities for its development
 - challenging the school as critical friends to make more rapid progress
 - applying all statutory requirements.

In addition to the above key issues the governors may wish to consider these other matters when drawing up their action plan:

- the omission of personal and social education in Years 7 and 8
- pupils' academic targets are not always sufficiently precise
- written reports are not sufficiently helpful to parents
- the school has difficulty in forging partnerships to improve learning with the parents of some pupils
- there is a shortage of support staff working with the Year 7 pupils who have special educational needs
- subject teachers are not sufficiently familiar with the pupils' special needs or the targets set for them.

UNIT FOR PUPILS WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENT

57. The unit for pupils with hearing impairment is well resourced and effective. The teacher and two learning support assistants are skilled and work closely with the school's special needs co-ordinator and other support staff. The unit has been refurbished with double glazing, carpeting and treated walls and now provides an environment that is acoustically beneficial to the pupils. The unit provides a base for the pupils to have their progress monitored closely, to have individual behaviour management systems developed, and to be given specific tuition and for staff to check their hearing aids.
58. The pupils are very well integrated into all aspects of school life, including the range of extra-curricular activities. They are members of tutor groups and are taught mainly alongside their peers in class groups in which they receive support. They do not take French, but instead they receive specific tuition in the unit. This is generally examination preparation for Year 11 pupils, or a programme of language development, or work prior to lessons to establish key words.
59. The unit-based staff understand the needs of their pupils well, plan accordingly and provide a range of appropriate materials, which enable them to work effectively. Independence is encouraged and support is withdrawn wherever it is felt that a pupil is able to work unaided. The staff work hard to raise the awareness of the whole school to the specific needs of the pupils. They provide training for newly qualified teachers, written information about the pupils, and they work with tutor groups and in assemblies on deaf awareness. Signing has recently begun to be used on a wider basis in the unit. The school now has a signing choir and signing club, which provides opportunities for teachers and pupils to take BSL stage 1 examinations.
60. There is good liaison with outside agencies, including those for educational psychology, audiology and speech therapy. The assessments carried out by the personnel from these services are used for setting targets to pupils. There are also close links with the primary feeder school. The pupils make satisfactory progress with their work and good progress with communication and personal development. Overall the provision offered by the unit is good because of the high level of inclusion and the skilled support that it offers.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	181
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	36

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	11	43	38	4	1	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

Number of pupils on the school's roll	970
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	192

Special educational needs

Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	27
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	243

English as an additional language

Number of pupils with English as an additional language	39
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Pupil mobility in the last school year

Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	45
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	49

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	9.6
National comparative data	5.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.8
National comparative data	0.4

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	86	93	179

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	43	50	52
	Girls	66	56	44
	Total	109	106	96
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	61 (23)	61 (44)	53 (38)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	17 (3)	27 (17)	19 (9)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	34	58	33
	Girls	60	64	40
	Total	94	122	73
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	53 (37)	69 (47)	42 (45)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	17 (13)	38 (18)	24 (15)
	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

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	77	82	159

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	23	64	74
	Girls	33	75	81
	Total	56	139	155
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	35 (29)	87 (88)	97 (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	School	32

per pupil	National	38.4
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Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	0
Indian	4
Pakistani	7
Bangladeshi	5
Chinese	3
White	927
Any other minority ethnic group	22

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	1	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	124	1
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)	53.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	20
Total aggregate hours worked per week	487

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76%
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	23.7
Key Stage 4	21.12

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
£	
Total income	2,491,108
Total expenditure	2,547,966
Expenditure per pupil	2,837.38
Balance brought forward from previous year	87,866
Balance carried forward to next year	31,008

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	970
Number of questionnaires returned	49

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	19	2	2
My child is making good progress in school.	44	44	12	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	21	38	23	13	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	19	50	15	12	4
The teaching is good.	25	62	6	0	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	40	33	19	4	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	54	33	6	6	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	56	40	2	2	0
The school works closely with parents.	42	42	12	0	4
The school is well led and managed.	38	44	10	2	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	33	52	4	2	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	42	40	6	0	12

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

ENGLISH

61. The results in the 2000 Key Stage 3 SATs (Standard Assessment Tasks) improved substantially from 1999. The percentage of pupils at Level 5 and higher was close to the national average, while that for Level 6 and higher was below. The overall results were average in comparison with all schools and similar schools. Girls do better than boys, as is the case nationally. English results were better than both mathematics and science. The trend over the last three years has been inconsistent against the national trend. At GCSE, the percentage of grades A*-C in English and English literature was the highest since 1996; although both remain below the national average, they are now much closer to it. Girls outperformed boys in both subjects but were further away from the national average for their gender. All pupils entered for English literature in 1999 did significantly better than in the average of all their other GCSE subjects; in 2000 they did better in English language compared with their other subjects. Trends in both subjects have been rising at a faster rate than the national trend.
62. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is below national expectations. Pupils can speak clearly and relevantly, and their oral responses are frequently better than their written ones. They usually listen carefully. Reading aloud is done well and conveys meaning even when it lacks expression. Written work varies widely in quality, with the great majority of it being below expectations. Weaknesses include poor organisation, unreliable spelling and punctuation, and a restricted range of vocabulary - even when ideas are satisfactory. A small proportion is lively, handles a range of topics confidently and is well planned and sustained. Girls' writing is sometimes better than that of boys. Pupils of varying attainments make satisfactory progress in lessons because they have positive attitudes towards learning and are taught skilfully. This was well exemplified in a Year 7 lesson on persuasive writing, where pupils were interested in learning about language and readily offered appropriate suggestions. The teacher had prepared both pupils and the lesson thoroughly, and used very sound subject knowledge well to provide suitable challenges, to build pupils' confidence and to create a good momentum for learning. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress because teachers adapt tasks and teaching strategies to match their needs. Year 7 pupils of average and below average prior attainment who are taught English by non-specialist teachers in the combined studies course do not make satisfactory progress in acquiring specific language skills.
63. The pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is also below national expectations. Oral skills are well developed, and further enhanced for those who study drama. Most pupils listen attentively, but fewer read aloud well. Reading for meaning is generally satisfactory. The best writing shows intelligence, contains thoughtful responses to literature and makes effective use of quotation and evidence. Most written work, as at Key Stage 3, lacks variation of style to match task, as well as appropriate structure and paragraphing. Many pupils who use wordprocessing do not improve their presentation, though higher-attaining pupils practise redrafting effectively. Some narrative and descriptive writing is very imaginative, and girls' writing is usually more successful than boys'. The pupils at Key Stage 4 are mostly keen to learn and they concentrate well in lessons. This significantly helps them to progress well. Group work is constructive, for pupils respect one another and their views. Group work in a Year 10 lesson on comparing film texts enabled all members to contribute, and discussions were well focused. The teacher managed groups and their subsequent reporting back very well, in a tightly-structured

session which sustained motivation and deepened pupils' understanding of the genre. Working relationships between pupils and with teachers are always good. Teachers' responses in the classroom and high quality of marking also encourage learning. As at Key Stage 3, teachers' awareness of the specific needs of some pupils with special educational needs, and sometimes individual in-class support, enables those pupils to progress satisfactorily.

64. Teaching quality is mostly satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and mainly good at Key Stage 4, where it is sometimes very good. Teachers usually have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and work, plan lessons well and try to ensure that tasks and materials are equally accessible to pupils of all attainments. They always create an atmosphere in lessons conducive to learning. Marking of pupils' work is consistent, thorough, and often very detailed: comments on pupils' work, especially at Key Stage 4, are extensive and frequently create a dialogue with the pupil. Teachers in all years are committed to developing pupils' language skills.
65. Standards in English have risen since the previous inspection. This is due in part to sound curriculum planning and to the monitoring and support of teaching by the head of department. The teachers have tackled successfully all the issues for action in the previous report. To improve, the department needs to support any school move to introduce more specialist teaching into Year 7. It also needs to devise a more accurate system of tracking pupils' curriculum entitlement and attainment across Years 7 to 9. Curriculum planning should include greater emphasis on the need to match work to pupils' differing abilities. Pupil target-setting and arrangements for pupils to self-assess need to be more systematic and frequent. The system of marking work at Key Stage 3 is not sufficiently related to National Curriculum levels, and liaison between the learning support assistants and classroom teachers is not always effective.
66. Drama is taught as a discrete subject throughout the school within the expressive arts faculty. It is a very popular subject, with three GCSE option groups in each of Years 10 and 11. The proportion of pupils gaining GCSE grades A*-C in 1999 and 2000 was well above national averages. The results were the best in the school, as is the case in most years. On the basis of a very small number of lessons seen, attainment is average at Key Stage 3 and standards rise as pupils tackle GCSE work. The pupils have a satisfactory grasp of basic drama skills and at Key Stage 4 can use them most effectively. Work in a Year 11 lesson carried conviction and expressed emotion economically. Key Stage 4 pupils are adept at improvising dialogue, and have the skill and imagination to refine early attempts. Pupils in all years generally work with concentration, a lack of self-consciousness and respond resourcefully to challenging tasks. When teaching provides a clear focus for work, as seen in Years 10 and 11, pupils make good progress in lessons, consolidating earlier knowledge and deepening learned skills. When concentration is lacking, or undermined by pupils' poor attitudes, as was the case in a Year 8 lesson, the work resulting is superficial. Pupils are capable of reflecting on their own and others' work with sensitivity and objectivity. A very good Year 10 lesson on Theatre in Education (TIE) presentations displayed the teacher's excellent knowledge of skills and techniques and very good management. These attributes underpinned the work of the group on the basis of shared commitment and self-discipline. Work done in both drama and expressive arts benefits from having the TIE company, based in the school. Both disciplines make use of its expertise.

MATHEMATICS

67. Standards have improved significantly over recent years. At the end of Key Stage 3 they are now in line with the national average, although at Key Stage 4 attainment remains below average. While recent test and examination results testify to previous satisfactory progression, the pupils' current progress is unsatisfactory overall mainly as a result of severe staffing difficulties at the time of the inspection.
68. The attainment of the entrants to Year 7 in 2000, as judged by their National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 2, is below average. The results from the corresponding tests at the end of Year 9 have improved over recent years and markedly so in 2000, when the proportion attaining Level 5 or higher matched the national average, with the girls slightly ahead of the boys. The proportion of pupils achieving Level 6 or higher was well below average and as a consequence the overall results were below the average for all schools and similar schools. Mathematics results are below those achieved in English but similar to science. Girls are usually further behind the average for their gender. There has been striking improvement in the GCSE results over the last five years although the proportion of pupils in 2000 gaining grades A*-C is still below average. These GCSE results nevertheless represent satisfactory progress from the pupils' attainment on entry to the school and at the end of Key Stage 3. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-G is above average. The mathematics results of 1999 compare favourably not only with those of English and science but also with the average across all other subjects.
69. The pupils' current attainment is broadly average at Key Stage 3 and below average at Key Stage 4. While the ablest pupils in most years are progressing at a pace to match their capabilities, their current progress in Year 7 is unsatisfactory. This is because, with a wide attainment span in each class, few teachers are setting a sufficient range of tasks to ensure that the ablest pupils are consistently challenged. By the end of Key Stage 3 all pupils are gaining familiarity with fractions, decimals and percentages while the abler ones can express numbers in standard form using indices. By the end of Key Stage 4 all pupils can enlarge shapes by a given scale factor, and the higher-achieving pupils use trigonometry to solve problems in two and three dimensions. Pupils' investigative skills are well developed and lead to creditable coursework for GCSE. The pupils with special educational needs are mostly progressing satisfactorily, especially when additional support is provided in lessons. Their individual learning needs are identified and documented but class teachers take little account of these. There are insufficient textbooks for mathematics so in some lessons the pupils have to share. Books can be loaned only to a few classes so, even towards the end of the course when pupils are making final preparations for the GCSE examination, most lack this important encouragement and support for additional independent study.
70. Most pupils have a reasonable basic knowledge of number but, particularly in Years 10 and 11, many lack confidence when applying their skills, especially those of mental arithmetic. More generally across the years, many pupils have poor retention of what they have learnt and this retards their progress over time. Teachers are aware of this and have started to draw upon the techniques of the National Numeracy Initiative to strengthen the pupils' proficiency and confidence in these basic areas of mathematics. Some very effective examples of this were observed, but implementation overall is patchy. Numeracy is used satisfactorily to support learning in some subjects; this is exemplified by the productive use of graphs in geography to assist the comparison of data, but overall provision is unsatisfactory.
71. The positive attitudes of pupils owe much to the pleasant manner and caring concern of

teachers that encourages pupils to give of their best and to seek help when necessary. This was exemplified in a lesson where Year 10 pupils, despite their difficulties with mathematics, were displaying very high levels of commitment as they explored how to obtain the maximum area within a given perimeter; their very positive attitudes reflected a warm regard for the teacher and his skill in pitching the teaching to their needs. In around a third of lessons at Key Stage 3 there was a degree of inattention and slackening of effort by a small minority - usually boys - that damaged the learning atmosphere of the lesson. Almost all the classes at Key Stage 4 displayed positive attitudes with the sole exception of a group of Year 10 boys who, despite their incomplete GCSE coursework, an imminent deadline for completion and the teacher's best efforts of persuasion, foolishly declined to use lesson time productively.

72. The quality of teaching varies widely. Teaching was at least satisfactory in three-quarters of all the lessons observed and good or very good in a quarter but it was unsatisfactory or poor in a third of lessons at Key Stage 3; this is a seriously high proportion. All the teaching at Key Stage 4 was at least satisfactory. The ineffective teaching stemmed largely from the school's unavoidable reliance on temporary teachers who were responsible for about half the teaching programme during the inspection week. The most effective teaching reflects good planning that ensures appropriately ambitious use of lesson time and skilful questioning techniques that foster pupils' thinking and deepen their understanding. These features were evident in a Year 7 lesson on co-ordinates where the teacher skilfully pitched tasks at three levels of challenge corresponding to the National Curriculum levels that the pupils had reached. In sharp contrast, a temporary teacher spent a whole lesson dwelling on the basic idea of co-ordinates when almost all the Year 7 pupils were already familiar with the concept from their primary school and many were able confidently to use higher order skills in four quadrants. Such lack of challenge for the ablest pupils was a major reason for unsatisfactory progress in a third of lessons at Key Stage 3. In almost all the lessons at Key Stage 4 the pupils were progressing at least satisfactorily.
73. The teaching of the lowest-attaining classes at Key Stage 4 is consistently effective and represents a strength of the work in mathematics. It provides these pupils with a clear sense of making progress and bolsters their motivation to succeed while the teacher's marking and record-keeping is of the highest order. More generally, the marking of pupils' work is unacceptably variable; in some classes, even beyond those taught by temporary teachers, pupils' work contains scant evidence of having been seen or marked. Homework is regularly set and, in the main, it is treated seriously by pupils. Their written work is mostly satisfactory and sometimes good, although there is also some untidy and careless work that often correlates with infrequent marking.
74. The head of department, although relatively newly appointed, exercises strong and clear-sighted leadership. He is fostering, for example, the greater use of National Curriculum levels of attainment to provide the pupils with a clearer sense of progress and of targets. His responsibilities extend beyond the mathematics department and this constrains his impact on the work in mathematics. There is a need to review responsibilities to ensure, for example, the speedy completion of the scheme of work for mathematics and that the monitoring of teachers' marking is undertaken more rigorously. Since the time of the previous inspection there has been substantial improvement in the key area of attainment but, largely because of the current unsettled staffing situation, deficiencies remain in the quality of teaching; however, the arrival of new teachers to take up permanent appointments in January 2001 promises to go much of the way to restoring the previous effectiveness of the work in mathematics.

SCIENCE

75. In 2000 the results in the tests at the end of Key Stage 3 moved much closer to the national figures, although they remain below the average for all schools and similar schools. Except for a dip in 1999 there has been steady improvement since the last inspection. The most recent results are similar to mathematics but below those achieved in English. Boys usually do better than girls, as is the case in most other schools, but the difference in their performance is greater than found nationally. The proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades at GCSE in 2000 was also a significant improvement on the 1999 results. They were more in line with those achieved in previous years and at the time of the previous inspection; they were boosted by the achievements of those entered for single science, particularly the girls. This was a reversal from 1999 when the boys performed relatively well in the single award whereas the girls' performance was poor in both the single and combined awards. In 1999 the pupils performed less well in science than in the average of their other GCSE subjects but this year there was no significant difference.
76. Attainment in lessons is in line with that demonstrated in the external tests and examinations. There is, however, a large difference for many pupils between their verbal answers to questions posed by the teacher and the quality of their written responses. Verbally, pupils often demonstrate insights and understanding far above test results. Pupils in a middle to lower set in Year 9, for example, demonstrated a sound understanding of the forces involved in the movement of a rocket, including the consequences of balanced and unbalanced forces, in discussion with the teacher. The pupils' written work, though, often shows a lack of comprehension of the initial written question and their answers then lack accuracy and the level of specificity required. Pupils in the same Year 9 lesson had some difficulty translating their ideas onto a question sheet, and many pupils were unable to complete the task without support. In addition some pupils have a good understanding of some topics, but very limited memory of others. This is for a variety of reasons, but includes poor attendance patterns, a variable response to homework and the amount of effort the pupils themselves put into developing their own connections between lessons.
77. Teachers have mostly developed good techniques to support the pupils' learning, but these are not yet consistently applied across the department. They focus well on key words and their meaning. They give good demonstrations so that the pupils see ideas in action or so that they can get on quickly with their own practical work. Visual effects are well used, having the object being discussed at hand or using a well-focused video clip. In a particularly effective Year 8 lesson on electricity and magnetism, for example, the teacher assessed the pupils' existing ideas through careful questioning, insisting upon accurate and specific answers. A series of short activities was then used to develop the pupils' ideas in small manageable steps, with support skilfully targeted where most needed. Consequently the pupils made very good progress and demonstrated a clear understanding of the key points of the lesson, which had been established at the start.
78. Overall the pupils make satisfactory progress, including the development of their enquiry and investigative skills, across both key stages. The progress made in individual lessons is often good because of effective teaching and the positive attitudes and behaviour of pupils. This good progress in lessons is not always sustained over longer periods of time, however. Those pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to others in their class and are often supported well by learning support assistants. Sometimes pupils do not make the possible or expected progress. Very occasionally this is because of unsatisfactory teaching which lacks rigour and pace, or some pupils putting little effort into their work. Sometimes, as in a Year 10 lesson on electricity, it is because of the poor quality of the equipment available, and on other occasions, such as a Year 7

lesson on acids and alkalis, because of inadequacies in the accommodation. The very wide range of previous experience and weaknesses in basic skills present in Year 7 classes make it very difficult for the teacher to meet fully the needs of individual pupils and this lessens the quality of their learning. Some marking of the pupils' work is good, but some focuses too much on the improvement needed and some lacks the detail on which to base improvement. Overall the impact of marking on progress is unsatisfactory.

79. Standards of attainment have been broadly maintained since the previous inspection, with recent improvement. The impact of staffing changes, with 75% of teachers with two years or less current service in the school, and 50% who are new to the profession, has been minimised. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. The work and direction of the department have been maintained during a term between substantive heads of department. Overall management has had a satisfactory impact on standards of attainment and the quality of learning. The task ahead is to ensure that routines and techniques are implemented consistently across the department so that the pupils' understanding develops more coherently over time and that this then feeds into higher test and examination results. This will also require more effective use of the assessment data available.

ART AND DESIGN

80. Over the last few years the proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades at GCSE has declined from an above average position to one which is now well below the national average. In the most recent examinations, boys did very badly. Over the same period, the proportion of A*-G grades has been at, or above the national average. In the last two years the pupils entered for art have done significantly worse than in the average of their other subjects.
81. Attainment by the end of Key Stage 3, demonstrated by the current pupils, is broadly in line with national expectations. Pupils record responses in sketchbooks, including observations of the natural and made environment in a nearby park. For example, Year 8 pupils show an increasing awareness and exploration of artists' techniques through the use of different drawing materials to study Van Gogh and Seurat. In Year 9, pupils develop their ideas on landscape in mixed media and clay relief and produce studies of an average standard; however, the majority of pupils' work is predominantly skills-based, on a small scale, and lacks direct relation to the materials used by the contemporary landscape artists linked to the project. Pupils mix and control paint with increasing accuracy by the end of the key stage. Most know about primary and secondary colours and the majority can describe the techniques of the artists they are studying. Many lower-attaining pupils in Years 7 and 8 have weak drawing skills, and all pupils' planning and presentation of ideas in sketchbooks is limited because they are not systematically taught throughout the key stage. Higher-attaining pupils show an understanding of artists' techniques, though these are underdeveloped because research through homework tasks is limited and often does not support class study or extend their overall knowledge. A significant minority of pupils in Year 8, mostly boys, have poor listening skills which affects their behaviour and progress in some lessons. Achievement for all levels of attainment, including pupils with special educational needs, is satisfactory.
82. The standards achieved by the pupils who choose to take art at Key Stage 4 are below age-related expectations and the level set by the examination boards. There is evidence of this in lessons and in their completed and on-going projects. Weaknesses in planning, presentation and research in their coursework outweigh strengths in investigating and making. Pupils experiment and organise materials to develop ideas, for example in designing stamps; however, as many draw from secondary sources such as magazine

pictures, this reduces the quality of their visual recording. Sketchbooks are appropriately used to develop ideas but individual research is limited to lessons, and homework is inconsistently used to supplement ideas or reinforce techniques. As a consequence, projects lack structure and progression. The pupils' knowledge and understanding of artists' techniques is at an elementary stage. Many can name artists and designers and higher-attaining pupils have produced well-written evaluations on artists' lives and studies in similar media; however, artists' techniques are insufficiently integrated into pupils' own work so that they can show by careful study of a painting or sculpture, an improvement in their own drawing, painting and three-dimensional techniques. The recent introduction of targets has had a positive effect on the pupils' attitudes in some lessons and this results in an improvement in the pace and quality of their work. In a Year 10 lesson the pupils gained confidence in talking about their designs to the rest of the group while receiving effective feedback from peers and the teacher to help them improve. Day-to-day assessment, however, in many lessons does not consistently engage pupils in an evaluation of their own and others' work. Two option groups in Years 10 and 11 are timetabled for single art periods and this is limiting their progress. Achievement overall is unsatisfactory because of the slow pace of learning and erratic attendance which is having an unfavourable impact on skill development.

83. There is a new team of teachers, and the quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. There are indicators that the decline in standards can be reversed. No unsatisfactory lessons were observed, and there was some good teaching at both key stages; pupils' learning is also satisfactory at both key stages. The teachers' strengths lie in their very good relationships with the pupils and their wide range of art expertise. In the best lessons, teachers develop the pupils' ideas through effective questioning. Challenging tasks progressively build up enjoyable and worthwhile experiences so that the pupils are motivated to tackle problems and improve their skills. Where teaching is unsatisfactory the work is less demanding and the pace of learning is slower. Sometimes the concepts are not regularly checked and the teachers' expectations for higher-attaining pupils are limited. There is a need to increase the opportunities for pupils to work both collaboratively and independently, particularly in Year 9. There is also a need to improve their overall motivation and to prepare those intending to take the GCSE course with research and study skills.
84. The leadership and management of the department have been disrupted since the last inspection and are partly the cause of the deteriorating examination results. The teachers now in post share a commitment to improve the quality of learning for pupils, for example through systematic planning at Key Stage 3. Improved schemes of work, now based on National Curriculum requirements, are beginning to have a positive effect on standards. The use of ICT remains unsatisfactory. Assessment is satisfactory, although data is not used sufficiently to plan lessons and set targets for pupils. Procedures for monitoring and evaluating the work of the department are still being developed.
85. There needs to be urgent attention given to raising attainment at Key Stage 4. Strategies to achieve this should include the consistent use of targets to increase the pupils' productivity, and planning which ensures improvement of their research and presentation skills. They need to learn how to evaluate art by talking about their own and others' work, and their understanding and awareness needs developing through opportunities to see original art.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

86. The proportion of pupils achieving A*-C grades at GCSE is below national averages, but the proportion gaining A*-G grades has consistently matched the national average over a

number of years. In 2000, the results in resistant materials and graphics rose and are now a little below national figures, whereas in food technology, the results fell to well below the national average. Major staff changes were a significant reason for this. The performance of boys and girls in 1999 and 2000 was worse than in the average of all their other subjects, although girls do slightly better.

87. Pupils enter the school with standards that are well below national expectations. They have little experience of design and have poor drawing and measuring skills. They make good progress at Key Stage 3, although they do not reach the national standards by the end of Year 9. Their attainment is adversely affected by poor literacy skills, which show in the low level of written evaluations. For example, few pupils evaluate their finished product against their original design, and test it thoroughly. Pupils generate ideas using research appropriately. For instance, a pupil explained the differences found in types of clock faces, and noted that having 1 to 12 is important on a child's clock in order to help them learn numbers. Pupils apply knowledge gained when designing, for example they were able to explain the types of movement when making automated toys. The standard of finishing is satisfactory, and their presentation improves throughout Key Stage 3 and reaches a satisfactory standard. This is helped by teachers who have high expectations about the quality of pupils' work.
88. At the end of Key Stage 4, standards seen during the inspection matched those achieved by the school's pupils in recent GCSE examinations. The exception was food technology, where attainment has risen because there is now stable staffing; here the pupils' work is much better than indicated by recent examination results and standards are now broadly in line with national averages. Pupils complete the design and making process, and use research appropriately. For example, a pupil investigated fast foods in different outlets before selecting one category on which to concentrate. In a range of areas the standard of presentation is high, as was seen in a class working on a promotional pack for compact discs. As in Key Stage 3, the poor literacy skills of many pupils affect their final grades. Design and technology makes a positive contribution to pupils' number and ICT skills, and through the use of key words, they gain a sound knowledge of technical terms.
89. Pupils enjoy the subject, and this shows in their attention and involvement in the lessons, in their reluctance to stop working, and in the work that they do outside lesson times. They have good listening skills, shown when they follow detailed instructions when making scale models. Pupils work together well when designing such items as sweet packages; they organised themselves without fuss and assigned responsibilities. Pupils act responsibly, and this is frequently seen when they work without direct supervision in the central area, or the ICT room. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress with the support of the learning assistants, the class teacher, and other pupils.
90. The quality of teaching is good at both key stages, with no unsatisfactory teaching observed. Planning is good, and the pace of lessons is brisk so that much is covered. For example, in a very good lesson the task set was for all pupils to produce a completed pop-up card. The high expectations resulted in a high level of motivation amongst pupils, and the cards were completed in time for them to be evaluated by the class. There are good resources which are used effectively, sometimes to demonstrate important principles. Questioning is good and makes the pupils think and consider reasons for their decisions. In the very good lessons, standards improve because teaching points are clearly made. In one lesson the importance of the evaluation process was made with dramatic input, and a very good prompt sheet was provided to further assist pupils.
91. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching by the new head of department are well planned

and there is a good team ethos. The textiles component at Key Stage 3 is not fully integrated into the department, thus restricting the number of aspects of the National Curriculum delivered. In some areas the design and making process is not followed. Accommodation and resources are unsatisfactory. The accommodation is generally cramped, and the absence of a well-equipped graphics room hinders improvements in standards. For example, the pupils have difficulty making good quality products when they have to work on benches in the resistant materials rooms. Procedures for assessment in Key Stage 4 are good, and results are analysed and used well; however, at Key Stage 3, although procedures are good, assessments are not cross-moderated. Furthermore, marking does not relate pupils' work to the National Curriculum. Unless this is corrected it will be difficult to raise standards. There have been recent changes to the schemes of work, but mapping is now necessary to ensure that the programmes of study are covered. In Year 10, pupils study a combined resistant materials and graphics course. This does not allow for reinforcement of the skills learned. The department has some good practices for extending the able pupils, such as entry to the Young Engineer of the Year Award. With further work this could be translated into a strategy for gifted and talented pupils.

92. The weaknesses noted in the last inspection report have been tackled but this cannot be judged as improvement because standards have declined at both key stages since the time of the last report; however, the recent improvement in teaching indicates the potential for standards to rise.

Child Development

93. Pupils consistently achieve well in this subject, and in 2000, the proportion of pupils gaining A*-C and A*-G grades in the GCSE examination matched the national average. The pupils are very well motivated, listen intently and take great care with tasks set. For example, in one lesson they clearly explained why folic acid is important in the diet of pregnant women, and how the lack of it may lead to spinal defects in babies. The quality of teaching is consistently good. Very good resources are used, and the organisation of visits to nurseries ensures that pupils gain relevant experiences from the subject.

GEOGRAPHY

94. There has been good improvement in geography over several years and the results are better than in most other subjects. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A*-C in the GCSE examination in 2000 was broadly in line with the national average. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls in achieving these grades. Pupils not entered for the GCSE examination successfully work towards a certificate of achievement.
95. In Year 7, geography is taught through a combined studies course. This constrains pupils' learning because the content of lessons and the way they are taught lack a sharp geographical focus. The basic skills of geography are not effectively developed and high-attaining pupils especially, are not sufficiently challenged. Progress is consequently unsatisfactory. In Years 8 and 9, geography is successfully taught as a discrete subject, with effective teaching ensuring that good progress is made. Teachers ensure that pupils learn basic geographical skills. For example, simple well-drawn diagrams and sketch maps are appropriately labelled and maps show scale, direction and symbols. Consequently attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is at the standard expected nationally. Year 9 pupils, including those with special educational needs, understand the difference between weather and climate. They research rainfall and temperature from different places around the world, with high-attaining pupils starting to search for the reasons

behind the data; for example, why Quito has a consistently high temperature throughout the year but Verkhoyansk has a wide range of extreme temperatures.

96. In the work seen during the inspection standards at the age of 16 reflect the recent GCSE examination results and are at the level expected nationally. Pupils show an understanding of the basic zones of a town; they study pictures of local towns in order to locate them in different zones, for example the central business district. Pupils have a secure knowledge of the iron and steel industry of the UK. High-attaining pupils understand that the siting of modern industry is less reliant upon being close to the raw materials. They can link other aspects of human and economic geography to support the reasons for change of location. Coursework for GCSE is of good quality; the best is often enhanced through good use of computers. When this happens, photographs are scanned, writing is appropriately shaded and features are correctly inserted on maps. Fieldwork conclusions are firmly based on the evidence gathered or through research, for example local traffic surveys. The less successful studies and coursework tend to be descriptive rather than analytical.
97. Pupils illustrate their work effectively with charts and graphs to represent simple data. Numeracy successfully supports their work. For example, simple statistics are shown through a range of graphs and charts, and in fieldwork pupils use data they collect to draw cross-sections of a river bed. ICT is used successfully to support the subject, for instance in the study of tectonic plates in Year 8. There is no difference in boys' and girls' achievement in lessons. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated and make progress in line with their peers.
98. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory; it is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. The lower standard of teaching at Key Stage 3 is because of the non-specialist teaching in Year 7. Elsewhere, specialist teachers show a good knowledge of geography and apply this well so that the pupils' knowledge and understanding are challenged and their horizons are extended. Where teaching is good, the pupils' understanding is enhanced because they are encouraged to ask and answer questions in geographical detail. Teachers usually have good expectations of pupils' behaviour and the quality of their work; teachers' lower expectations of both are features of unsatisfactory lessons. Practical tasks are not used sufficiently to involve pupils more and improve their understanding of the subject, for example when they are studying weather and climate. The range of tasks is also occasionally too narrow to meet the needs of the different abilities in a class.
99. The teacher in charge of geography provides good leadership and management of the department and has a clear view of what constitutes good provision. The teachers work well as a team and are committed to raising standards. There has been good progress since the last inspection, with most of the issues from the report being successfully tackled. There has been improvement in attainment, notably in the GCSE examinations, which are taken by an increasing number of pupils. Geographical work is now successfully supported by ICT, which has enabled pupils to present their work better, especially in examination coursework. Teaching is monitored, but more regular and systematic procedures are needed in order to share good practice and focus thoroughly on improved pupil outcomes. Some use is made of assessment data to track pupils' progress but this needs further refinement to ensure information is used effectively to raise standards.

HISTORY

100. GCSE results in history have deteriorated year by year since 1996, reaching their nadir in 1999 when they were poor compared with the national average and pupils did worse in history than in the average of all their other subjects. The results made a slight recovery in 2000 but remain well below average; the pupils' performance this year was not significantly different to the average of their other subjects.
101. At Key Stage 3, attainment is below the standard expected nationally. Weaknesses in literacy are affecting pupils' ability to write historical essays explaining the causes and effects of events. Despite thorough preparation for the assessment task on the causes of the Industrial Revolution, many Year 9 pupils were unable to develop points adequately, establish links between them and reach conclusions about the most important causes. Pupils enjoyed the opportunity for project work on 19th century working conditions. They showed reasonable ability to select relevant information and organise it to meet the specification set by teachers in a well-designed assignment. Teachers make effective use of historical sources in lessons, using them to develop literacy, through close scrutiny of the text, and to teach the skills of source analysis. Pupils show good comprehension of the chosen sources but are less successful in evaluating their authorship and purpose to determine their usefulness and reliability. Higher-attaining pupils are rising to the challenge of academic work in the subject and are making good progress. Lower-attaining pupils are being helped to progress by careful structuring of tasks and the extra help they receive from learning support assistants in many lessons. Learning is best when there is a variety of activities to help pupils engage with the topic, as in an entertaining Year 8 lesson on the treatment of the poor in Tudor times. In this lesson the teacher used role play to illustrate changing attitudes towards poor relief and the comparison with modern practice. History is taught through the combined course in Year 7. Much of the curriculum is left until the summer term, but teachers are exploiting opportunities in a unit of work on the development of Harlow, to develop some basic skills in the subject in the first term; however, lack of continuity and some non-specialist teaching mean that standards are variable, but not high enough, in the foundation year.
102. At Key Stage 4, attainment is below national expectations. In general, Year 11 pupils' attainment is a reflection of the below-average standards at the end of Key Stage 3. Motivation is a problem for some pupils who did not revise properly for the recent mock examinations. Their coursework assignments show higher potential, benefiting from taking the tasks stage-by-stage, drafting their answers and reworking them in the light of their teacher's helpful comments. Some pupils' notes are below standard, as there is not the same precise guidance on how to make notes and they are not checked regularly. Pupils need more practice on GCSE-style questions to develop their technique for answering essay and sources questions. At present many are producing simplistic answers, not drawing on their own knowledge when required to do so, and not making specific reference to sources in their answers. Year 10 pupils are making good progress and show, both in their coursework and in discussion, a good understanding of the problems of the Weimar Republic and the reasons for Hitler's rise to power.
103. Measures to tackle the low standards overall and the decline in examination results must be a priority for the school. Presently the quality of teaching is satisfactory and some is good; however it has not brought about the upward movement in standards that it promises. Lessons are well planned with clear objectives and teachers put them across in an interesting manner. In the Year 7 combined studies course there is not the same sharp focus on history skills in the lessons taught by non-specialists. In some lessons, although teachers are skilled enough to ensure adequate learning takes place, the pace and variety of the activities need improving. Teachers manage their pupils well and establish the right atmosphere in class. Pupils are well behaved and apply themselves diligently to the tasks they are set. They show reasonable interest in the

subject but not many choose it as one of their GCSE options. Plans to introduce fieldwork in the subject, with a Year 9 visit to the battlefields of the Great War next spring, are proving popular. The use of ICT in the subject is still at an early stage of development. There is satisfactory monitoring of the department's work and good teamwork by the teachers.

104. Since the last inspection, development in the subject has marked time until the recent dismantling of the faculty structure. New initiatives to improve literacy and assess pupils' performance in the subject more rigorously are having an effect on standards. Strategies are in place to tackle the low academic results, but development planning needs to be sharper, with measurable targets and success criteria, which will allow the regular review of progress by the school. Assessment data needs to be put to better use to set pupils individual targets and monitor their progress closely. The impact of the combined studies course on standards in history needs objective evaluation.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

105. Relatively few pupils enter the information studies GCSE examination, making a comparison with national results difficult to validate. In 2000 all candidates achieved A*-C grades, a big improvement on the previous year when only one of a cohort of ten did so. Attainment at Key Stage 3 is below national expectations and is depressed from the time they join the school in Year 7. The ICT element of the combined studies course is poorly developed and denies the pupils access to specialist teaching and regular opportunities to use computers. Beyond Year 7, pupils do have more opportunities to use computers. These occur in many Key Stage 3 subjects and give them some experience of all the necessary aspects of ICT. Use of the Internet for research is increasing with significantly more access to facilities. In a Year 8 geography lesson, for example, information about the number, location and strength of earthquakes was sought and used to good effect. Progress is impeded because there is no systematic, programme to teach ICT skills progressively or to build on pupils' interest and capability. Assessment procedures are now in place at Key Stage 3 but the use of it to inform planning is in its early stages of development.

106. At Key Stage 4, the attainment of pupils taking examination courses is mostly average or above. In Year 11, those taking GCSE information studies have made good progress. In Year 10, about half the year group now takes the GNVQ intermediate level course in ICT; these pupils have made significant gains in skills since the start of the course. Pupils in one lesson were demonstrating animated PowerPoint presentations for specific audiences as part of their coursework. Teaching on these courses is good and often very good, with clear objectives and demanding tasks for pupils, which are always closely linked to assessment criteria. The remainder of pupils in Years 10 and 11 are reliant upon a cross-curricular approach. Their experiences are varied and their attainment is often below age-related expectations because many subject teachers do not develop the specific skills of ICT and miss most opportunities to exploit its potential to enhance learning. Widespread staff development is needed to give teachers the skills and confidence to help improve the ICT capability of pupils at both key stages. The cross-curricular provision at both key stages is not working as intended; pupils' experiences of ICT and the contribution that each subject can, and does make, should be mapped to ensure pupils learn the appropriate skills. Provision should then be monitored closely and an assessment strategy put in place. There is very little provided for the Key Stage 4 pupils who do not follow the GNVQ course; this needs attention to ensure their entitlement.

107. In all lessons where computers are used pupils are highly motivated and respond well

with good levels of concentration and perseverance. The work of the pupils who have been taught the appropriate skills is successful and they often work imaginatively. The computer rooms are very well used by large numbers of pupils who work effectively without close supervision.

108. During the last year there has been significant increase in ICT provision. The network has been improved and continues to be extended. Resources are available to ensure full coverage of ICT curriculum. There is access to the Internet in many parts of the building. As a consequence, teachers are becoming more willing to use ICT; and in the subjects where they do attainment is rising. The school's intention to make better provision is seen in the department's development plan which identifies the outstanding issues to be tackled. Training for all teaching staff is imminent through New Opportunities Funding.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

109. The French GCSE examination results fluctuate. In 2000 they were below the national average, with 42% of pupils achieving A*-C grades, against a national figure of 50%; this represents a significant improvement on the previous two years but they have not reached the level they were at in 1997. There is little difference in the performance of boys and girls, but because girls do much better nationally it places them in a position which is much further below average than boys. In 1999 when the results were poor the pupils did worse than in the average of all their other GCSE subjects; in 2000 there was no significant difference. Until this year some pupils took German as a second language, although the number getting as far as GCSE declined to a very low level. Spanish has now replaced German as the second language.

110. Attainment at Key Stage 3 is broadly in line with national expectations. In French, standards are average overall. Pupils generally make good progress in writing and reading in French, but most make insufficient progress in speaking and listening. Many have poor French accents and are unable to speak confidently in extended sentences. This is often because teachers give them insufficient opportunities to hear and use French in lessons; however, pupils make very good progress when teachers use the foreign language consistently and train pupils well to listen and speak. A successful example of this was in a Year 9 higher-attaining set, when pupils showed good learning habits by responding readily with good accents to the teacher's rapid questions about school subjects. They achieved well in a listening exercise, and spoke confidently to each other when working in pairs. In the wide-ability groups in Year 8, some pupils make poor progress and some have unsatisfactory attitudes because teachers do not always give them appropriate tasks. This was seen in a higher-attaining group of Year 8 pupils where they were given a basic worksheet which severely restricted their reading and writing. Pupils in lower-attaining groups in Years 8 and 9 generally make good progress as a result of the teachers' good planning which makes provision for their needs. For example, in a Year 9 lesson the pupils were motivated by the teacher's encouraging manner, imaginative use of resources, and choice of tasks in which most could succeed. Pupils have satisfactory attitudes to French overall, but some examples of poor behaviour were seen in Years 7 and 8. Pupils have very good attitudes to learning Spanish; they make rapid progress in speaking, listening, reading and writing and standards are above average at Key Stage 3. This is largely because teachers enthusiastically promote the Hispanic culture and encourage good speaking habits. For instance, in a Year 8 lesson, the teacher used her native language consistently, enabling pupils to practise new language and structure with good accents; boys reacted particularly well to this opportunity.

111. Standards at Key Stage 4 are average overall. In both French and Spanish, good

guidance by teachers enables most pupils to make good progress in reading and writing. Many pupils produce good written assignments, using a range of structure and expressions, and many successfully use ICT for research and for giving high quality presentations. In speaking and listening skills, pupils generally make satisfactory progress in both languages, but the ablest pupils, especially those in Year 11, make slow progress because they are limited by tasks set for them. This was seen in a French and a Spanish lesson, both involving higher-attainers in Year 11. Although the teachers efficiently organised a carousel of group activities as examination practice, they did not enable the pupils to make maximum progress because the level and amount of language required of them was limited. In contrast, an example of very good progress was in a Year 10 French lesson in which the teacher used the language well at a good pace, and supported every new stage of revision of structure with excellent use of the board. Attitudes to language learning are good overall at Key Stage 4, except in some French groups where boys are sometimes disruptive when they are not in groups appropriate for their ability. Pupils with special educational needs also have good attitudes and make satisfactory progress overall.

112. Teaching in modern foreign languages is satisfactory; over a third of lessons seen were good or very good. Teachers support pupils extremely well with systematic marking, encouraging comments, target-setting, and detailed reports to parents linked to national standards.

113. New management of the department is giving very clear and effective direction for raising standards. Staff have a strong, shared commitment to improve. This is evident in clear, updated schemes of work, departmental policies, and in jointly produced resources. Since the last inspection, teaching and pupils' reading and writing have improved. GCSE results in French are now closer to the national average, and Spanish is a strong second language. Improvement is still required in pupils' listening skills and especially in their speaking skills in French at both key stages, and in Spanish at Key Stage 4. There should now be strategies for raising the standard of speaking. Listening opportunities for pupils should be increased, especially through teachers' use of authentic language. There should be higher expectations in both languages for the ablest pupils. Pupils would benefit if they were grouped by ability in French in Year 8, and pupils should be moved between French groups according to their progress, especially at Key Stage 4.

MUSIC

114. In the GCSE music examination in 2000, 54% of students achieved grades A*- C and all got at least a grade G. In the last four years the percentage achieving grades A*-C has fluctuated between 54% and 69%. Each year's cohort is unique, reflecting the differing strengths and weaknesses of pupils, and because numbers are small compared with other subjects in the school, comparisons with national averages are misleading. This year because more pupils entered and a fair comparison can be made, the results were below average.

115. Standards by the end of Year 9 are average for the majority of pupils and their learning is satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs make as good progress as others and are fully included in all activities. Pupils throughout the key stage learn to play the keyboard in lessons. In Year 7 they play a Christmas carol quite successfully, although a true keyboard hand position has yet to be established. By Year 8, pupils play keyboards more confidently. They compose a blues composition and improvise instrumental fills between the lines of the melody. This they do with considerable adventure. They listen to each other when playing together, although this is always more successful when the teacher provides a strong beat from keyboard backing. In Year 9, pupils use the

keyboards to compose atmospheric music to accompany a dramatic scene. Using the whole tone scale, many pupils achieved an unearthly effect for the appearance of Marley's ghost to accompany a dramatic version of a scene from Dickens' *Christmas Carol*. This particular project shows how pupils are beginning to be more responsive to the kind of sounds that they make, and reinforces the preceding unit on writing music for a cartoon film. Many of the projects designed for Key Stage 3 link subject matter suitably. Although pupils are developing satisfactory skills throughout the key stage, the essential musical skills of performing, composing and listening need to be enhanced and assessed through each successive project. Pupils' attitudes to music are good. They are interested and enthusiastic, concentrating well and working productively, especially in Years 7 and 8. This is due to teaching, which is good in most lessons and never less than satisfactory. A particularly good feature of the teaching is the devising and use of many imaginative and interactive visual aids that captivate the pupils as well as help them to better understand the subject. Teachers have very good knowledge of the subject, and as practising musicians they serve as good role models. Although they give feedback to individuals in class, there is no regular class reflection and evaluation to enable the pupils develop a greater understanding of their learning. An effective assessment strategy is needed at both key stages to check progress and raise attainment.

116. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are broadly average for performing and composing. Pupils perform music regularly in the lessons and in the many extra-curricular activities offered. They compose songs and pieces which they perform at various concerts and they are taught to use a range of compositional methods. This was shown in a Year 10 lesson on setting words to music. During the last few years guitar lessons have been provided weekly for Year 9 pupils who choose to learn. The school should consider extending this to Years 10 and 11 and supporting instrumental and vocal lessons for all pupils taking the GCSE examination. The introduction of this in Year 9 has raised the level of interest in the subject, particularly among the boys, and it has also improved much of the playing of popular music. Listening skills are below average in Year 11. This weakness is not being overcome because pupils do not practise the skills regularly and they are not being helped to relate them to performing and composing activities. This should be carefully planned through revised schemes of work which increase the range of styles of music studied.

117. Music is an integral part of a very dynamic expressive arts faculty, and very good leadership is providing very clear vision. Concerts, including those for charity, incorporate all the expressive arts subjects and are a strong feature of the life of the school. Pupils have opportunities to work with professional musicians and during the inspection week such an opportunity was given. Since the last inspection the standards of attainment have been maintained. Teaching has improved, and the resources and accommodation upgraded to reflect the growing interest in the subject. Music continues to make a distinctive contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

118. In the 2000 GCSE examination, the proportion of pupils achieving A*- C grades was below the national average but they were much better than in previous years. All pupils gained at least a grade G. More boys than girls take the subject at this level and they achieve significantly better grades. Between 1996 and 1999 pupils followed a GCSE dance course but the number declined and in 2000 there were no entries. The five girls who took the examination in 1999 all achieved at least a G grade. The small number makes a comparison with the national results invalid.

119. Attainment at Key Stage 3 is in line with national expectations, although teachers have judged pupils to be at a higher level. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, show competence in swimming and a range of games such as netball, basketball and hockey. In games, pupils apply the rules fairly; in swimming they are very mindful of water safety. They understand some of the simple physiological changes that occur when they warm-up and the necessity of this to minimise injury and maximise performance. In dance, pupils warm-up to a musical beat; they know the importance of a good starting position and use angular and sharp movements to introduce their dance. The pupils enjoy dance, showing quality in their work through facial expressions conveying emotions like fear effectively; high-attaining pupils add gesture to their movements. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, are good participants in lessons; they receive good support from teachers and their peers and consequently make good progress. The teachers apply their own expertise successfully so that in a basketball lesson in Year 8, for example, very good knowledge of the game linked with good diagnosis, and fault correction challenged the pupils, extending their skills and understanding. The higher-attaining pupils showed correct techniques of both the attacking and defensive dribble. Pupils know rule violations, for example double dribbling and travelling with the ball.
120. The good progress made at Key Stage 3 continues in Years 10 and 11, as well-founded skills are used under pressure and applied successfully to a range of game situations. In basketball, for example, skills like the lay up shot, which was taught to pupils in Year 9, are developed successfully and applied within the game in Years 10 and 11. Good questioning reinforces the pupils' knowledge and understanding. An example of this was seen in a Year 11 football lesson where the teacher probed and challenged the pupils' use of individual skills within a game. As a consequence of this and similar approaches by teachers, the pupils' attainment is in line with national averages at the age of 16. In football, individual skills of dribbling, passing and moving off the ball are well developed. For instance, skills such as the step over, the double step over and use of width are employed effectively to outwit an opponent; however, depth in both attack and defence is not well developed. In dance, Year 10 pupils working on individual, partner and group dances do this very successfully, producing work of high quality. Pupils studying the GCSE theory show a basic knowledge of the principles of sports injuries and their treatment, using the correct technical words. They develop their understanding and expertise in both the theoretical and practical aspects of the subject, but theory and practice are not always successfully combined and teaching methods do not sufficiently involve pupils in their learning.
121. Overall, the quality of teaching is good; the teaching of dance is very good. Teachers have high expectations of both the effort and behaviour of pupils. Very good relationships, very good subject knowledge and good evaluation of pupils' work ensure that all pupils, including those with learning difficulties, make good progress. Teachers make use of information from individual educational plans in order to adapt their teaching strategies to meet the pupils' needs. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed, but there are instances where teaching has some shortcomings. In a very small number of lessons, for example, insufficient challenge and pace constrain progress.
122. The head of department shows good leadership and management of the subject and gives clear educational direction, placing increasing emphasis on raising attainment. As yet, the assessment process does not make sufficient use of data to assist the tracking of pupils' progress. Good improvement has been made since the last inspection. The majority of issues have been successfully tackled, although further development is now needed in order to meet the requirements of Curriculum 2000. The standard of teaching has improved and as a consequence learning is better. Attention should now be given to

GCSE provision so that the results improve. The teaching of dance and the pupils' performance are strengths of the department.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

123. Religious education is only taught as a separate subject in its own right in Years 8 and 9. In Year 7 it forms part of an integrated, combined studies programme and at Key Stage 4 it is subsumed within an arrangement which links religious and personal and social education (RPSE). In Years 7,10 and 11, the school is not meeting the recommendation of the Essex Agreed Syllabus and therefore statutory requirements, that 45 hours should be allocated to the subject in each school year. As religious education is not studied for examination purposes at Key Stage 4, there is no measure of pupils' performance against national standards.
124. At Key Stage 3 attainment is below the standard found nationally. Over the three years, pupils acquire a basic knowledge of Christianity and three other major religions, but not in any real depth. In Year 9 too much time is taken up with a study of personal heroes, which is intended as a way in to learning about religious leaders. Pupils enjoy the project and put a lot of effort into researching their chosen pop stars and sports personalities, and they do analyse what it is they admire in them; however it is out of all proportion to the main study of the charisma and authority of the founders of the faiths. Actual work done on Jesus, Mohammed and Guru Nanak is at the basic level of cameos of their lives, containing little substance to explain the profound effect that they have had on so many people. Consequently progress in understanding the teachings and appeal of religious leaders is unsatisfactory. The project gives pupils scope to work to their ability levels, but the exercises on the founders are simple and repetitious, not challenging higher-attaining pupils. Year 9 pupils make better progress in moral education, helped by the RPSE programme, which includes the study of human rights and the evils of the Holocaust. Year 8 lessons on the mysteries of life do much to arouse pupils' awareness and curiosity as to ultimate questions about our origins, purpose and fate, but religious teachings are not pursued sufficiently. In one class, only the higher-attaining pupils reached the stage of attempting some comparison of creation stories in different religions. In Year 7, much of the teaching is left until the summer term when pupils do a project on Islam. Lessons seen were 'one-off' sessions on the meaning of Christmas that pointed up the moral responsibility to work for peace and justice, but added little to what pupils already knew.
125. At Key Stage 4 standards are well below national expectations, as the subject has a very low profile in the religious, personal and social education programme. With only one lesson a week, there is great pressure on the experienced teachers to deliver health education, careers modules and social education. In a Year 10 review of the term's work, the only religious input had been reference to the churches' teachings on contraception, in the context of a study of the spread of AIDS. Religious aspects on moral issues are a consideration with teachers in their discussions but they do not appear as RE modules in the schemes of work. The Agreed Syllabus requires five modules over Key Stage 4, one in each term, but they are not evident in the planning of RPSE.
126. The quality of teaching was satisfactory in lessons observed in Key Stage 3. Teachers are making the lessons relevant for pupils by starting at the level of their interests and experience of life. They are attempting some matching of tasks to meet the needs of pupils of different attainment in mixed ability classes but their expectations of pupils' progress in religious understanding are not high enough. Some of the work is unchallenging, involving re-using the same material in different forms. There is some good marking with due attention to correcting English and setting pupils specific targets,

but teacher absence has meant that a lot of work has gone unmarked this term. Teachers enjoy good working relationships with their pupils, who enjoy the lessons, behave well and co-operate fully in their learning. ICT is being used at a fairly basic level for producing display material and information gathering.

127. Management of the subject is divided between three team leaders, which, despite good communications between them, renders it inefficient. There is no proper oversight of religious education teaching, or pupils' work in the subject across the school, to ensure delivery of the Agreed Syllabus and monitor standards. Current assessment arrangements are too general to monitor progress, but a pilot system based on the end of key stage descriptors in the Agreed Syllabus has been trialled and will provide a more accurate instrument for raising standards. Development planning in the subject is unsatisfactory, consisting simply of a list of tasks, without any attention to the details of strategies, success criteria, time frames, responsibilities and costing of initiatives. Except for the specialist teacher in charge of the subject, there has been no in-service training for others, who are non-specialists. Most of the issues raised in this report were present at the time of the previous inspection and are still unresolved. Recently, the humanities faculty structure has been dismantled and there has been a review of the Key Stage 3 curriculum. The long-standing curriculum and management issues need urgent attention if the required improvements are to be made.