

INSPECTION REPORT

MARK RUTHERFORD UPPER SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Bedford

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique reference number: 109674

Headteacher: Mr John Brandon

Reporting inspector: Mr Martin Beale
19385

Date of inspection: 16th to 20th October 2000

Inspection number: 223727

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 13 to 18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Wentworth Drive
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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr P Lord

Date of previous inspection: 22nd January 1996

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	11
The school's results and achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	13
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	14
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	15
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	16
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	17
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	19
THE SIXTH FORM	20
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	21
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	26

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Mark Rutherford Upper School is a larger than average mixed comprehensive for pupils from 13 to 18 years of age. There are 1140 pupils on roll with 292 in the Sixth Form. A high proportion of local children attend the selective schools in the town. The proportions of the pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those for whom English is an additional language are higher than in most secondary schools, although only two pupils are at an early stage of language acquisition. The number of pupils identified with special educational needs, including those with statements, is below average as is the proportion who are eligible for free school meals. Attainment on entry is close to the national average, although there are fewer high-attaining pupils.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The leadership and management of the headteacher and senior staff have been successful in raising standards, which are high in the Sixth Form, where the teaching is very good. Teaching is satisfactory overall in the rest of the school. Attainment is also above average at Key Stage 3 in English, mathematics and science and average at GCSE. Most pupils behave well and have positive attitudes to their work, although a significant minority do not. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards are above average in English throughout the school.
- Effective links with feeder middle schools and good teaching enable the pupils to achieve above average results in the Standard Assessment Tests (SATs) in core subjects at the end of Key Stage 3.
- Enthusiastic teaching is resulting in good progress and above average standards in the Sixth Form.
- The good provision for pupils with special educational needs supports their progress well.
- The high quality of drama teaching results in an enthusiasm for the subject and high standards.
- Standards in music are very good at Key Stage 4, and GCSE results are well above average.
- The library is used well by pupils as a central resource for learning.
- The school provides a good range of well-supported extra-curricular activities.

What could be improved

- Standards in science at GCSE and the progress made by pupils at Key Stage 4 should be higher.
- Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are unsatisfactory. Some aspects of the National Curriculum are not being fulfilled and there is an inconsistent approach to the use of ICT.
- Attendance is below average and some pupils are not punctual to school.
- A more consistent approach is needed to managing pupils' behaviour and discipline.
- Greater clarity is needed in line-management procedures, and more systematic monitoring by senior staff of the work of departments is required.
- Teaching and standards are unsatisfactory in religious education at Key Stage 4, as is the provision for the subject in the Sixth Form.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Standards at Key Stage 3, GCSE and A Level have risen since the last inspection in 1996. The school has not made sufficient progress in dealing with some of the other key issues raised. Teaching has improved - much less is unsatisfactory and slightly more is good or better. The provision for religious education has improved at Key Stage 4 but standards have not, and the school still does not comply with requirements for religious education in the Sixth Form. Assessment data is used more to track pupils and identify the progress made, although it is not being used sufficiently to inform planning in many subjects. ICT skills are not consistently developed across the curriculum. Attendance overall is worse than in 1995/96.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 and 18-year-olds based on average points scores in GCSE and A Level/AS Level examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
GCSE examinations	C	C	C	C
A Levels/AS Levels	C	A	B	

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

Overall SAT results and results in each of the core subjects in 1999 were above average. When compared with similar schools, overall results and those in English were well above average, and were above average in mathematics and science. The trend in the school's results from 1996 to 1999 was broadly in line with the national trend. There were further slight improvements in 2000 in English and mathematics, but a slight decline in science. GCSE results in 1999 were close to both the national average and the average of similar schools, and have improved since the last inspection at a rate that is broadly in line with national improvements. There was a further improvement in 2000. Science results were broadly average and have fallen considerably since 1998. This decline continued in 2000. Results in German and business studies were both below average in 1999 but, along with English language and French, improved considerably in 2000. The school just failed to achieve its GCSE targets in 2000 and those for 2001 present a considerable challenge. Girls have achieved better results than boys and, although the difference between them had been decreasing, it grew in 2000. A Level and GNVQ results in the Sixth Form were above average in 1999 and improved overall in 2000. Above average results have been achieved in recent years by pupils in French, Italian, technology, physics and chemistry while those in general studies, biology and geography have been below average.

The standard of work observed during the inspection reflects the results of the most recent examinations. The pupils make satisfactory progress overall at Key Stages 3 and 4 and good progress in the Sixth Form. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards their targets and pupils with English as an additional language are given effective support that also enables them to make good progress. Standards of both literacy and numeracy are satisfactory and the writing of many pupils is good. Standards in science are below expectations at Key Stage 4. ICT skills are not sufficiently developed at Key Stage 4 and standards are also below expectations at Key Stage 4 in religious education.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Most pupils are keen to learn and to do well, but some pupils show a casual attitude to their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Most pupils behave well in lessons and around the school, but the unsatisfactory behaviour of some pupils hinders their progress and that of others.
Personal development and relationships	The school council and the other positions of responsibility are undertaken in a mature manner. Relationships are mostly satisfactory.
Attendance	Attendance is below average. Several pupils are regularly late to school

	and to lessons.
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In many lessons the pupils show evidence of good teamwork and interest and enthusiasm in their work; however, poor attendance and unsatisfactory attitudes are affecting the progress of some pupils.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Very 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 satisfactory overall. It is very good in the Sixth Form. Teaching is satisfactory or better in 92% of lessons and very good or better in 17%. The teaching of English is good while science teaching is satisfactory at both Key Stages 3 and 4. Teaching is satisfactory in mathematics at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. There is much good teaching in drama, history and modern foreign languages; however, religious education teaching is unsatisfactory at Key Stage 4. Lessons are generally well planned and prepared and are conducted at a good pace, generating enthusiasm, enjoyment and a momentum to learn. Many teachers have high expectations and challenge their pupils through effective questioning. In these lessons pupils are attentive, work well together and consolidate and extend their learning. The teaching for, and support of pupils with special educational needs enables them to make good progress towards their targets. Good support is provided for the pupils at the early stages of English language acquisition, enabling them to have access to the curriculum. The teaching of literacy is good within English and, although very good work is being done in some subjects, this is inconsistent and there is no school literacy policy. Numeracy is well taught within the mathematics department but as with literacy there is no school policy for the development of number skills. Some of the unsatisfactory teaching was linked to weaknesses in class control, which led to some pupils not concentrating on their work. Some of the 100-minute double lessons proved to be too long for some pupils. Some lessons lacked pace and at times teachers left the pupils to get on by themselves with tasks, having little contact with them.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum at Key Stage 3 and well-considered progression routes into the Sixth Form, but weaknesses at Key Stage 4 result in insufficient breadth to pupils' experiences.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The integration of all pupils with special educational needs gives them access to the full curriculum, with those few not taking modern foreign languages at Key Stage 4 following valid courses.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The satisfactory provision and support enables these pupils to have full access to all aspects of the curriculum.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for personal development is satisfactory, but opportunities are missed to develop spiritual awareness and to celebrate and draw on the variety of cultures present in the school.
How well the school cares	The school provides effective care, but the oversight for behaviour and

for its pupils	other pastoral matters lacks sufficient cohesion to be fully effective.
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Statutory requirements are not being met for the teaching of ICT and religious education at Key Stage 4, and for the latter in the Sixth Form. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities. There are some inconsistencies in the application of the school's policy on behaviour, in the monitoring of attendance and the quality of support and guidance provided. The school has obtained funding to tackle some of these matters. Parents are suitably informed about their children's progress but are not always actively involved in the life of the school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and senior management give the school a clear direction, but the purpose and structure of line management arrangements need to be more sharply focused on school improvement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors scrutinise the work of the school effectively but are not sufficiently involved in establishing a strategic view of its development.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The analysis of data is used to monitor the pupils' progress but its use as a tool to raise standards needs to be developed.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory use is made of the resources available to the school. Governors follow the principles of best value, although they have not been formally adopted.

The observation of teaching by some very effective heads of department has resulted in improvements, but the accountability of departments and year teams to senior management lacks sufficient cohesion to ensure sustained and consistent improvement. Staffing levels and learning resources are satisfactory overall. The new building programme seeks to remedy shortcomings in the accommodation and to provide year group bases for pupils to use at break and lunchtimes.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are pleased with standards in English, mathematics and drama. • They feel well informed about their children's progress. • Parents feel that the teaching is often good. • They are pleased with the opportunities provided for their children to take on responsibilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents feel that standards in science should be higher. • They are concerned that some teachers do not manage to control behaviour in their classes. • They would like to see improvements in the accommodation for Sixth Form private study.

The inspection team supports the parents' positive views of the school. Inspection evidence also supports the concerns expressed by parents about standards in science, the behaviour in some lessons and the limited space for private study.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Overall SAT results in 1999 were above average, as they had been for the previous two years, and well above the average of similar schools. Results in each of the three core subjects were above the national average. When compared with similar schools, they were well above average in English and above average in mathematics and science. These results were above those at the time of the last inspection, but only slightly so in science. The trend in the school's results from 1996 to 1999 was broadly in line with the national trend. There were some variations by gender over this period. Boys did relatively better than girls in 1999, reversing the position of the previous two years. There were further slight improvements in 2000 in English and mathematics, but a slight decline in science.
2. Although GCSE results have improved since the last inspection at a rate that is broadly in line with improvements nationally, they are not as high overall when compared to results at Key Stage 3. Overall results in 1999 were close to both the national average and to similar schools; however, although the proportion of pupils achieving 5 or more A*-C grades was in line with the national average, it was below the average of similar schools. Science (double award), history and drama achieved the best results relative to national figures in 1999 but it was only in double science, drama and French that the proportion of pupils achieving the highest grades was close to the national average. Results in single science (taken by a third of the year group) were very low, with less than 5% achieving an A*-C grade. The provisional results for 2000 show a slight increase, to 46%, in the proportion of pupils achieving at least 5 grades A*-C but a slight decrease in the average points score. Overall results in science fell considerably from 1998 to 2000. Girls have achieved better grades than boys at GCSE for some time. Although the gender difference between results had been decreasing and was less than the national average in 1999, it increased again in 2000. The overall 2000 results fell slightly short of the school's targets for A*-C grades and average points score. The targets for 2001 present a considerable challenge if they are to be met.
3. A Level results have fluctuated since the last inspection, reaching a high point in 1998, corresponding to the best set of GCSE results in 1996. There was a slight decline in 1999, but the average points score was still above the national average. When comparing the proportion of pupils gaining A or B grades in 1999 with national figures, above average results were achieved in English literature, business studies, physics and design and technology and from small groups of pupils entered for chemistry, Italian and music. Below average results were in art, geography, general studies and history as well as in German where only a small number of pupils were entered. The 2000 results were an improvement on those in 1999. General studies and geography results remained low but there were improvements in art, French and German. Design and technology results were particularly impressive with 6 out of the 9 candidates achieving a grade A.
4. The results achieved by the pupils who follow vocational courses at Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form are good. Three-quarters of the pupils who were entered for vocational qualifications at the end of Key Stage 4 in 2000 achieved a pass grade, this being similar to the 1999 figure. A 100% pass rate was achieved by pupils in the Sixth Form taking Intermediate GNVQ in business, science and health and social care. GNVQ results at Advanced level in 1999 and 2000 were above the national average. All pupils who took Advanced qualifications in 2000 passed. All taking business achieved merits. Three of the five taking health and social care passed with merit grades and two achieved distinctions. Pupils also study for diplomas in sports science, and many distinctions and merits were achieved in the units taken by the pupils in 2000, although no national comparisons are available.
5. Despite the absence of a coherent literacy policy across the school, literacy standards of pupils

are satisfactory. Pupils can speak well and listen carefully when favourable classroom circumstances are created: group work is often fruitful. The pupils' levels of reading skill enable them to meet the demands of the curriculum, and most develop an appropriate range of research skills. The overall quality of writing is satisfactory, with some excellent work being done in some subjects. The majority is fluent and accurate, and most teachers encourage the need for care over presentation. There is no consistent school approach to spelling, punctuation and grammar.

6. Number skills are satisfactory, with the pupils' mental arithmetic skills developing because of the concentration on this aspect by the mathematics department, with mental calculation exercises at the beginning and end of lessons. Although there is some use of graphs in geography and pupils are expected to apply their number skills in business studies, there is not a consistent approach to the development of numeracy across the curriculum and no school policy.
7. The overall standard of work in science at Key Stage 4 reflects the recent decline in the science results at GCSE. Overall, attainment is below average. The time allocated to science at Key Stage 4 is below that recommended and the 100-minute double lessons are not always being used to best effect by some teachers. A significant number of the pupils lack sufficient motivation to succeed and, coupled with some unsatisfactory teaching, or teaching that fails to inspire, this leads to unsatisfactory progress and below average standards of work.
8. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) in the taught course in Year 9 are satisfactory, but pupils have insufficient opportunities to use and apply their ICT skills in other subjects. Only a third of pupils in Years 10 and 11 are taught ICT skills in a discrete course. It is expected that the remainder will receive their ICT entitlement in other subjects. Some good examples of the use of ICT to support learning and to develop ICT skills are seen in mathematics and science; however, the pupils are not receiving their entitlement to the full National Curriculum for ICT. Consequently, standards in ICT at Key Stage 4 are well below expectations.
9. The evidence from observations in lessons and from an analysis of the pupils' work shows that pupils in Year 9 are working at a standard that reflects the most recent SAT results in English, mathematics and science, with standards generally above expectations. The good links with feeder middle schools in these subjects is ensuring that teachers can build effectively on the pupils' experiences there. The picture in the remaining subjects is much more varied, and attainment in many subjects is in line with, and in some areas below, expected standards at the early stage of Year 9. The result of this is that when the pupils start their GCSE courses in Year 10 they do not have above average attainment in all subjects. The majority then make satisfactory progress through Key Stage 4 in most subjects and the standard of work seen during the inspection reflected the most recent GCSE results. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make similar progress to other pupils at both Key Stages 3 and 4. Teaching in the Sixth Form is very good, enabling the pupils to make fast progress from GCSE to A Level and to achieve above average standards in their work.
10. The standard of work in drama throughout the school is high and is a particular strength, as is the attainment of pupils in music at Key Stage 4. The provision for religious education at Key Stage 4 is unsatisfactory, largely because only half of the recommended time is devoted to the subject. The teaching here is also unsatisfactory with the result that pupils fail to achieve the standards expected by the locally agreed syllabus. There is also no suitable course available for pupils in the Sixth Form.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11. The pupils' attitudes to school and learning are mostly satisfactory, although for a significant minority this is not the case. This confirms the views of parents about behaviour in the school. An example of good attitudes was seen in a lower ability set in Year 11 watching *Shakespeare in Love*. The pupils showed positive attitudes to learning despite the difficulties many of them had with the language. Pupils in a further mathematics group in Year 12 asked questions to clarify their own learning for themselves. Extra-curricular activities such as choir and sport are well supported. Pupils often behave well around school, holding doors open for each other and moving

sensibly between buildings and lessons. In many instances, pupils are able to work collaboratively and have good relationships with their teachers. In a Year 10 English class for example, they showed excellent working relationships, which contributed to good pace and quality. Year 13 pupils measuring electrons in science enjoyed the activity and created a good working atmosphere. By contrast, poor behaviour in a small number of lessons hinders learning. For example, Year 9 pupils studying still life in art displayed very casual attitudes to work, and Year 11 pupils in a science lesson slowed the pace through their poor attitudes.

12. In many lessons pupils demonstrate respect for each other, such as in physical education lessons where they watch the performance of others attentively. In a Year 10 English class working on a poem, where pupils were fully involved in group discussion, they followed the argument closely even when not contributing. There is some exposure to other belief systems through religious education, and pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds are reasonably well integrated into the life of the school, as are those with special educational needs. The attitudes of pupils with special educational needs is generally good; they wish to learn on the whole, although they often lack self-esteem and confidence in themselves.
13. The ability to take turns, follow instructions and listen sensibly does not come naturally to some pupils. Many pupils behave sensibly out of class, but behaviour around the school varies considerably between groups and locations. Pupils and parents report some instances of bullying, mostly petty name-calling, and the school council feels it is quite serious.
14. Opportunities are offered for pupils to take responsibility and demonstrate initiative. They can work on the school council, where a mature and sensible quality of debate was demonstrated; they can also take on the responsibility of colour representative for various sports teams. Sixth Form pupils are chosen to patrol the corridors at lunchtime; they can also enter the bonus scheme, for example to volunteer for work in a middle school. In general this is an area that could fruitfully be developed, to offer pupils the experience of personal development through responsibility.
15. Attendance is not only unsatisfactory but worse than at the time of the previous inspection. Authorised and unauthorised absence are both above average. There is also evidence of some pupils not attending lessons having been marked present at registration. This occurs more in the afternoon than the morning. Pupils frequently arrive late to registration and sometimes to lessons during the school day, including those in the Sixth Form. This is an aspect which has not improved at all since the last inspection.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

16. Teaching is satisfactory overall and is better in the Sixth Form than elsewhere. In 92% of lessons teaching was satisfactory or better, and it was very good or excellent in 17%. Teaching in the Sixth Form is a particular strength and here there was no unsatisfactory teaching and over a quarter that was very good or better. The teaching of English is good and there is also much good or very good teaching in drama, history and modern foreign languages; however, religious education teaching is unsatisfactory at Key Stage 4.
17. Lessons are generally well planned and thoroughly prepared with clear aims and well-chosen resources. In these lessons the pupils are attentive, collaborate well and settle to work quickly, and this enables them to consolidate their learning and apply their skills to new contexts. Excellent planning with a good progression of tasks to meet the variety of needs in a Year 9 bottom French set enabled most pupils to extend their understanding of specific vocabulary. A well-planned German lesson in Year 11 conducted entirely in the target language consolidated the work that the pupils had previously covered, used the time available well and generated interest and enthusiasm for the new material. The pupils' attention was captured in a Year 12 geography lesson by the very good use of resources, which stimulated a very good response from the pupils. The excellent organisation and planning of materials in a Year 12 history lesson studying female suffrage and the very good rapport that the teacher had developed with the class, resulted in a good pace to learning. Probing questions involved all pupils in the discussion. The effective use of questioning is a feature of many of the most successful lessons, and results in good progress.

This was seen in a Year 12 English lesson, where the teacher built on the pupils' answers well so that they were able to make connections between disparate pieces of information from earlier reading.

18. Many teachers have very good knowledge of their subject, which they use to generate enthusiasm and enjoyment through brisk explanations and well-chosen activities. The energetic and inspiring presence of the teacher in a Year 10 drama lesson, coupled with excellent questioning and expectations of high standards produced a very good working atmosphere in which the pupils made very good progress in learning how to express emotion and character through movement. The very good knowledge and understanding of the material and effective planning generated a fast pace in a Year 12 mathematics lesson on co-ordinate geometry. The pace to a Year 10 expressive arts lesson creating a street dance was lively and energetic with the good personal skills of the teacher being used effectively to demonstrate ideas and possible steps and routines. The good relationships established with the class encouraged a considerable commitment and effort from most pupils. The teacher in a Year 11 Italian lesson provided a good model of the language, checked carefully that the pupils understood, and provided an interesting range of tasks. This encouraged the pupils to work collaboratively, to participate in question and answer sessions and gain confidence in their use of the language.
19. There is often a good focus on the requirements of the examination syllabus as in a Year 13 art class where submissions from previous candidates were used to enable the pupils to see the standard expected of them. The discussion of a poem as part of the GCSE coursework for a lower English set in Year 10 was handled with strong direction from the teacher to draw out the pupils' thoughts and impressions and to discover the impact of individual words and phrases. A good pace was maintained and clear deadlines set for pupils in a GNVQ class in Year 11 where a good discussion was held to show the pupils the difference between a pass, merit or distinction in their forthcoming assignments. The high expectations of the teacher resulted in positive attitudes to their work from the pupils, who were motivated and keen to do well.
20. Marking is largely helpful and supportive, particularly in English, and pupils feel that their teachers are very willing to help them achieve their best. The use of homework too is largely positive and this helps to reinforce learning. The care and support given to pupils with special educational needs is good, with a detailed handbook available for each department to consult.
21. Where teaching was unsatisfactory it was often because of poor discipline, with teachers not correcting pupils who were talking and not getting on with the work set. In some other classes the pupils needed regular reminders about what they had to do, and some pupils, including the higher-attaining, had great difficulty sustaining their concentration in double lessons if activities were not varied or sufficiently interesting. At times lessons lack pace with there being little effective interaction between teacher and pupils, who are left by themselves to get on with tasks set.
22. Many pupils with special educational needs have literacy weaknesses. They make good progress through the good teaching of the learning support staff. ICT is used well by support staff and by many departments, to help the pupils to present their work accurately and neatly. Pupils are well taught where learning support assistants give extra individual help in lessons, but there are insufficient numbers to cover the whole curriculum for all pupils with special educational needs. The direct support provided for the pupils with English as an additional language, particularly those at the earliest stages of language acquisition, is effective, although class teachers do not always adapt their teaching to tackle the specific needs of these pupils.

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

23. The school has carried out some development work to eliminate the weaknesses in the curriculum identified in the previous report. All of the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education are still not met, however, even when contributions from the personal, social and health education programme (PSHE) are taken into account. Provision for religious education remains

unsatisfactory throughout the school. All pupils have access to ICT, but the school can not guarantee that this is a coherent and progressive experience. Neither can it guarantee equality of access and opportunity for all pupils in this aspect. Greater use needs to be made of ICT to support learning across the curriculum, as well as meeting the full requirements of the subject itself. Most teachers place sufficient emphasis on developing an understanding of the key words of their subject and draw upon the pupils' mathematical skills where appropriate. Greater focus through developing a co-ordinated and consistent approach to all aspects of literacy and numeracy development is needed across the school. These weaknesses in the curriculum, taken together, mean that statutory requirements are not met and there is insufficient breadth and balance, particularly at Key Stage 4.

24. A major strength of the curriculum is the variety of courses and forms of accreditation used to meet the needs of the range of pupils in the school. A good range of vocational courses is offered at Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form. Progression routes are carefully considered to ensure that all courses offered can lead on to further higher level study. Good continuity from middle schools is also achieved in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science and this is a significant factor in maintaining good results in Key Stage 3 national tests.
25. The integration of all pupils with special educational needs allows them access to the full curriculum, with those few not taking modern foreign languages in Key Stage 4 following a life-skills or complementary studies course. There are constructive links with feeder middle schools, and with the local college of further education, which provides a *Ways to Work* course for the small number of pupils for whom the National Curriculum proves inappropriate. The identification of pupils with special educational needs is effective. Individual education plans (IEPs) are written for all students at stages 2 to 5 on the special needs register, with a new development of subject-specific targets, which need to be monitored carefully. The support provided for the pupils with English as an additional language is effective, and enables them to have access to the full range of learning opportunities provided.
26. There is good provision for extra-curricular activities, which does much to enhance the curriculum and extend the pupils' learning opportunities, as well as their social and cultural development. A considerable number of very well-attended sporting activities take place on a daily basis, with up to half of the pupils taking part in some year groups. Drama provision is particularly strong, with lunchtime drama clubs and a Saturday morning theatre and drama school. The school's jazz band has made numerous tours, including as far afield as Italy and Spain. Good use is also made of visits by local writers and theatre groups, as well visits to the theatre. A range of trips is offered to Europe to support study in languages, although there is often insufficient support from pupils to make them viable. There are also good links with the local community such as the police, who make a valuable contribution to the school's PSHE programme.
27. Provision for the pupils' personal development is satisfactory. The PSHE programme provides a satisfactory framework for the development of key aspects, including careers and other work related experiences. There is too much variation in the quality of teaching, however, to ensure that provision is good for all pupils. Some assemblies make a good contribution to developing the pupils' spiritual awareness, but there is little contribution from religious education lessons. There are missed opportunities in lessons in many subjects to develop this aspect, even where, as in mathematics, it is identified as an aim of the department. Provision for the pupils' spiritual awareness is consequently unsatisfactory. Drama often helps the pupils to confront and explore moral and social issues. A good example observed during the inspection concerned bullying. Unfortunately a PSHE lesson on the same subject was ineffective and did little to influence the pupils' attitudes. As noted above, extra-curricular activities make a good contribution to the pupils' cultural development. A number of activities extend this to explore the culture of other countries, for example in art, music and geography.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

28. The school gives satisfactory support and guidance to its pupils to help raise their achievement. In some departments, particularly the core subjects, there is good liaison with feeder middle schools,

ensuring that the transition is as smooth as possible. There is good support for pupils' personal development, although this is not a consistent picture in each year group. Form tutors monitor and support the pupils in their care, and those in Year 11 are offered mentoring if they are felt to be underachieving. There are some pockets of good practice in departments. For example, in geography personal support and guidance is a strong feature, through the monitoring of pupils' work, where they are encouraged to carry out self-assessment and target setting. Good work, consistent effort and positive contributions are recognised through cards sent home to parents and special assemblies. This is particularly effective in the Sixth Form where close supervision and contact with pupils ensures good support for their work and achievements.

29. The monitoring of pupils' academic performance is satisfactory. Most departments have satisfactory systems for the assessment of pupils' academic progress, although there are no systems in place to assess the pupils' progress and attainment in ICT at Key Stage 4. A considerable amount of assessment data is compiled at school level. This is passed to form tutors for the purpose of monitoring the pupils' academic progress. Targets for the pupils' improvement are set termly within some departments, but this is not a school-wide system. Although assessment data is thoroughly analysed, it is not being used to inform planning in all departments, a weakness reported by the last inspection. The use of data is generally more effective at Key Stage 4 and the Sixth Form, where systems are based on examination requirements and help pupils with their future work. Assessment in departments is currently not overseen effectively by senior management.
30. The school makes satisfactory arrangements to ensure the safety of all the pupils in its care. Child protection procedures are satisfactory. Designated staff work closely with the pastoral year teams who offer a refresher session each year to include all staff new to the school. Routine medical and welfare arrangements work well.
31. There are some weaknesses in the management of the pupils' behaviour. This is partly as a result of having moved more responsibility for disciplinary matters to departments. In many cases this works well, but the links with year teams are not always strong enough. Too much of the discipline procedure is reactive, dealing with events that have already occurred rather than actively seeking to avoid them. Although the PSE programme, assemblies and tutor time do contribute to the reinforcement of suitable behaviour, their delivery is too inconsistent to be wholly successful. Teaching staff are not visible and consistent enough in dealing with smoking and littering behind the tennis courts, and pushing and shoving in corridors. Parents and pupils both report some incidents of bullying - mostly name-calling and petty unpleasantness - which is not being picked up or dealt with effectively by staff. The system of placing pupils 'on report' for poor behaviour is not always effective, as some pupils have had large numbers of such reports without apparent improvement.
32. The monitoring of attendance and punctuality is also unsatisfactory. Although policies and guidelines are good on paper, staff do not always apply procedures consistently or mark registers in accordance with guidelines. In some cases - such as the Year 12 option afternoons - pupils themselves are unclear about requirements for registration. Persistent and frequent lateness to registration occurs in some groups and is inadequately challenged or reported by staff. There are still problems of internal truancy, worse in the afternoon than the morning and often, but not exclusively, among Year 11 pupils. In this respect the school has made no improvement since the previous inspection.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

33. The views of parents and carers towards the school are largely positive. They feel that the standards of work achieved are often good, but they are concerned about standards in science, which is to some extent reflected in inspection findings. They feel that the teaching is often good, although variable across subjects. They feel that the school is good at developing the individual, that pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their learning, and that teachers are very largely supportive. There was a concern expressed about the lack of accommodation for Sixth Form private study, which the inspection found to be justified.

34. A range of information is provided for parents. There is a professionally produced and readable prospectus. The governors' annual report to parents is also well presented but does not give the statutory information about the election of new parent governors. This is particularly relevant since the terms of four out of five parent governors expired in September.
35. Generally parents are happy with the information they receive about their children's progress, though reports vary in effectiveness and comprehensibility. Those for pupils in lower years concentrate more on effort gradings than giving a sharp picture of strengths and weaknesses in each subject, and they do not always contain clear targets for improvement. Pastoral staff use special praise cards which are sent home to inform parents about particular achievements; equally, parents may be invited into school to discuss problems of work or behaviour or telephoned at home. Induction evenings for parents new to the school, whether in Year 9 or at Sixth Form level, are seen as helpful by both sides and a useful way of making expectations clear. The process of selecting options for GCSE is thorough and well organised, with a correspondingly good turnout by parents. The school also involves parents fully in choices and decisions made about Sixth Form courses. The parents of pupils with special educational needs are fully involved and consulted about their children's progress.
36. Parents' involvement in their children's learning is satisfactory, but the school recognises that it does not do enough to encourage parents to take an active part in the life of the school. There are some links such as the home-school agreement and homework diaries, though parents rightly point out that teachers do not always sign these regularly or follow up comments made. Parents feel that staff are approachable, and that they are encouraged to leave routine messages for them on the voicemail system. Although parents support their individual children well, it has proved difficult to extend this. The parent-teacher association has been disbanded owing to lack of support and it has been difficult to attract parent governors. The school reports no demand for communications to be translated for those parents who speak English as an additional language. It would like to encourage more people from ethnic minority backgrounds to act as mentors for similar pupils within the school, but so far has had some difficulty in reaching them. This is an area that could fruitfully be developed, both to involve more parents more actively, and to reflect and celebrate the diversity of cultures within the school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

37. The headteacher has provided the school with a clear direction, and through his leadership has successfully expanded the school to its full capacity and raised standards in some regards. He and senior staff have quite rightly focused on improving the quality of teaching and learning as the means to raise standards. There are some very effective heads of department and heads of year, who share the commitment to improving standards in the school; however, there is a lack of cohesion in their work because of weaknesses for their line management by senior management. The headteacher and senior management need to strengthen and clarify the purpose of their line management to increase the accountability of middle managers and to ensure that policies are implemented consistently, taking steps where necessary to remedy any weaknesses.
38. The monitoring of work within some departments is having an impact on raising standards by identifying strengths, sharing good practice and taking steps to eliminate weaknesses. The observation of teaching by heads of department has been effective in bringing about improvements, but the accountability of departments and year teams to senior management lacks sufficient cohesion to ensure sustained and consistent improvement. Senior managers are not sufficiently involved in this process. The school has gathered much assessment data in the last few years. The analysis of this information is used to set target minimum grades and to monitor pupil progress, but its value as a tool to raise standards has not been effectively realised.
39. Improving teaching and learning as the prime focus for raising standards remains the major priority in the school improvement plan. The process of development planning has assisted the school in managing change but in general, departmental plans do not relate closely to school priorities. They are often more concerned with routine annual management tasks rather than long-term

improvements. Closer monitoring by senior management of departmental plans is required if they are to provide a valuable tool in the school's drive to improve.

40. The Governing Body is going through a time of considerable change. The term of office of seven of the governors ends this term, although some intend to stay on. In most cases the chairs of committees are remaining in post to provide continuity and to see the school through the period of transition, which includes the appointment of a new headteacher. Many governors have given the school good support while in office. The Governing Body scrutinises the work of the school effectively through its comparatively recently introduced committee structure; however, it is not sufficiently involved in establishing the long-term strategic view of the school's development. Some statutory requirements are also not being met for the teaching of ICT at Key Stage 4 and for religious education in the Sixth Form and the school does not provide a daily act of collective worship.
41. The management of the provision for pupils with special educational needs is good, with training provided for the support team, and for all teaching staff in relevant aspects. The system of link teachers with each department meeting frequently, and conveying information in both directions, is effective in promoting a whole-school focus on special educational needs. The Governing Body fulfils its requirement to monitor the provision effectively. Funding for the pupils with special educational needs is used wisely for learning support staff and the good base of resources.
42. Financial planning and the monitoring and control of the school's budget are satisfactory. The governors' committee fulfils some of its functions well. The monitoring of spending, the support for bids from external funding and the establishment of secure financial systems within the school are carried out well. In contrast, governors are not sufficiently involved in establishing the long-term implication of spending decisions against clear criteria by which success can be evaluated. The funding available to the school has been suitably allocated to meet its identified priorities. The principles of best value are understood and used by the school when purchasing goods and services, but have not been formally adopted. The school has been successful in recent bids for building improvements and social inclusion funding to establish projects to tackle the problems of disaffection and poor attendance, both of which are important areas for the school's focus.
43. The school has sufficient staff to meet the requirements of the curriculum. The teachers are appropriately qualified in their subjects except that there is no qualified teacher of religious education. There are too few learning support assistants to provide the necessary level of in-class support for pupils on the special needs register. Staff are supported by well-organised professional development, the responsibility of a senior member of staff. The teachers are required to evaluate the training they receive and feed back to their colleagues on courses attended. Induction of new teachers, including those who are newly qualified, is well planned and provides effective support. Work with initial training students is also well organised and clearly documented. School mentors for initial training receive appropriate training. There are sufficient administrative and support staff in the school, and they provide an efficient and enthusiastic service. Support staff are given training and meet regularly to discuss professional needs and procedures.
44. Although a considerable effort has been made to accommodate 1140 pupils in a school originally built for 970, the accommodation still provides insufficient space in some areas of the curriculum. Plans are in hand and funding allocated to remedy most of the weaknesses by building a new block, removing most of the temporary classrooms and providing communal areas for each year group. The latter should help to reduce some of the congestion in the buildings, and is seen by the school as a way of helping to improve behaviour at break and lunchtimes. Two science laboratories are being refurbished as part of a programme of improvement, but currently there are too few laboratories and 20% of science lessons are taught in non-specialist rooms, a position that is to be rectified within the new building plans. The rooms for some subjects are too small, limiting the activities that can be undertaken. There is insufficient study space for the large Sixth Form. The grounds provide good outside sports facilities.
45. Resources at the school are satisfactory overall. They are good in history, geography and physical education but are unsatisfactory in both music and religious education. The availability of

textbooks is satisfactory in most subjects with the exception of science. The library has been extended since the last inspection and now provides a good facility. It is a valuable and well-used learning resource, having good ICT facilities, including Internet access and is well stocked with a wide range of appropriate books and CD ROMs. Across the school as a whole, however, ICT resources are inadequate. The ratio of computers to pupils is significantly below the national average for secondary schools and some of the older machines have a limited capacity. The supply of equipment to enable all pupils to cover the control and measuring aspects of the ICT curriculum is inadequate. The development of the use of ICT across the curriculum and the possibility of running accredited courses in Key Stage 4 is hindered by the current level of resources.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

46. To build on the progress made since the last inspection and to tackle the remaining weaknesses, the school should:
- raise standards in science by undertaking a thorough review of provision, the time allocation and the deployment of teachers to classes, and in particular by: (paragraphs 2, 7, 65, 67 and 70)
 - strengthening the link between the department and senior management and monitoring more rigorously standards and the quality of teaching
 - improving the provision of textbooks for pupils to study at home
 - providing a consistent challenge in lessons at Key Stage 4;
 - raise standards in ICT by: (paragraphs 8, 23, 94, 97, 98, 100 and 101)
 - ensuring compliance with National Curriculum requirements for the teaching of ICT and for the use of ICT to support learning in other subjects
 - increasing accessibility for all pupils to computers and other ICT equipment
 - introducing rigorous assessment procedures for ICT capability at Key Stage 4;
 - improve attendance and punctuality by: (paragraphs 15 and 32)
 - ensuring that all staff apply school procedures consistently
 - ensuring that all staff challenge and report persistent and frequent lateness to registration
 - introducing procedures to identify quickly and deal with any pupils who have been present at registration but who are absent from subsequent lessons;
 - improve the behaviour of a small but significant minority of pupils by: (paragraphs 11, 21 and 31)
 - ensuring that the monitoring of behaviour and pastoral arrangements are co-ordinated
 - increasing the supervision of pupils at break and lunchtimes particularly in the less visible areas of the school
 - taking a more vigorous stance on the elimination of bullying
 - improving the discipline in a small number of lessons;
 - clarify the line management structure by: (paragraphs 37 and 38)
 - making middle managers more clearly accountable to senior management
 - improving the monitoring role of senior managers to include a systematic review of all areas of the school and regular observations of teaching;
 - raise standards in religious education by: (paragraphs 10, 23 and 124-128)
 - increasing the time allocation to that recommended by the locally agreed syllabus
 - ensuring that all aspects of the locally agreed syllabus are taught to pupils in Years 9, 10 and 11 and that a programme of religious education is available for all pupils in the Sixth Form
 - providing continuity in teaching groups between Years 10 and 11
 - improving the provision of textbooks and artefacts.

OTHER ISSUES THAT SHOULD BE CONSIDERED BY THE SCHOOL

47. The following minor issues should be considered by the school for inclusion in the action plan:

- Governors should consider taking a more active role in bringing cohesion to planning for the long-term development of the school. (paragraph 40)
- There is an inconsistent use of assessment data to inform curriculum planning. (paragraph 29)
- School policies for literacy and numeracy should be developed. (paragraphs 5, 6 and 23)

THE SIXTH FORM

48. The qualities of the Sixth Form, noted in the last inspection report, have been maintained. Improvements have occurred and provision is good. Typically, about 60% the pupils in Year 11 choose to continue their studies in the school. There are 300 currently on roll, with more in Year 12 than Year 13 and more boys than girls. The curriculum makes provision for the different abilities and aptitudes of pupils. The good range of subjects enables them to extend their study of subjects taken at Key Stage 4 and also take some which are new to them. Subjects are mostly offered at A Level and through the new AS Level in Year 12; several Intermediate and Advanced Level GNVQ courses are also provided. For pupils to be admitted into the Sixth Form they have to meet the entry requirements. These are set at a relatively low level and applied flexibly to encourage pupils to study further. Pupils are helped with their choice of subjects; they receive provisional acceptance and are adequately prepared towards the end of Year 11. As a consequence, there is little movement between courses after the selections have been made and teaching groups established; however, there is some movement out of school especially to the local college of further education and when some pupils leave as job opportunities arise. The school is part of a loose consortium arrangement, which currently enables pupils to study theology, economics and media studies in neighbouring schools and pupils from those schools to join drama and psychology groups at Mark Rutherford. The member of staff responsible for the Sixth Form is very experienced, and an effective manager. Sixth Form tutors are kept well informed and those new to the role are given guidance and support.
49. Sixth Form teaching is good overall with about a quarter of lessons judged to be very good or excellent. Both the A Level and GNVQ examination results have risen. They were above average in 1999 and they improved again in 2000. Observation of lessons and scrutiny of work indicate that the current Sixth Form pupils are attaining at a similar level. The system for monitoring their academic progress, spotting under-achievement and ensuring value-added has shortcomings. Pupils are given target minimum grades to achieve in public examinations, but the targets are not always high enough to be a useful measure of progress and for judging whether pupils are reaching their potential. The pupils' attitude to learning is predominantly very good and the majority benefit from their studies and respond positively to the social opportunities offered to them. Research skills and independent learning are constrained because of restricted access to information technology. Likewise, private study is problematic because of inadequate designated space and facilities.
50. Planned provision for the pupils' personal development is made through the personal and social education programme, although inconsistency in the quality of its delivery lessens its value. Personal development is promoted in other ways, for example through pupils' membership of committees and through a bonus scheme whereby they give assistance to people inside and outside school; an enrichment programme is timetabled each week, although this is optional in Year 13. Opportunities for physical education and recreational sport are limited. A Level general studies includes elements of religious education but because not all pupils take the course the school does not meet statutory requirements. Resources are allocated appropriately and staff deployed efficiently, making the Sixth Form provision cost effective.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	214
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	41

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3	14	41	34	8	0	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	Y9 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	848	292
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	92	

Special educational needs	Y9 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	11	-
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	163	-

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	71

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	25
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	59

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.00
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.3
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	1999	153	127	280

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	102	109	94
	Girls	112	94	89
	Total	214	203	183
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	76 (77)	73 (73)	66 (66)
	National	63 (64)	62 (58)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	31 (44)	46 (43)	29 (31)
	National	28 (34)	38 (34)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	107	99	105
	Girls	113	91	105
	Total	220	190	210
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	79 (79)	68 (70)	75 (70)
	National	64 (60)	64 (62)	60 (61)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	34 (42)	39 (40)	43 (44)
	National	31 (29)	37 (35)	28 (30)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of 15-year-olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	1999	152	120	272

GCSE results		5 or more grades A*-C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	59	134	146
	Girls	58	112	115
	Total	117	246	261
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	43 (43.8)	90 (90)	96 (96)
	National	46.6 (44.6)	90.9 (89.8)	95.8 (95.2)

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

GCSE results		GCSE points score
Average points score per pupil	School	39 (38)
	National	38.0 (36.8)

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

Attainment at the end of the Sixth Form

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A Level or AS Level examinations	1999	44	43	87

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A Levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A Levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	13.6	20.1	16.9 (19.3)	2.0	2.4	2.2 (1.0)
National	17.7	18.1	17.9 (17.6)	2.7	2.8	2.8 (2.8)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	30
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	7
Indian	53
Pakistani	4
Bangladeshi	3
Chinese	10
White	1020
Any other minority ethnic group	56

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	4	
Black – African heritage	-	
Black – other	-	
Indian	1	
Pakistani	-	
Bangladeshi	-	
Chinese	2	
White	52	2
Other minority ethnic groups	2	

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y9 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	75.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y9 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	14
Total aggregate hours worked per week	353.5

Deployment of teachers: Y9 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	79.6
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Average teaching group size: Y9 – Y13

Key Stage 3	24.8
Key Stage 4	19.1

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	2946616
Total expenditure	2996478
Expenditure per pupil	2505
Balance brought forward from previous year	149754
Balance carried forward to next year	99892

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	950
Number of questionnaires returned	453

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	35	58	5	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	34	59	4	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	24	64	9	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	56	14	2	3
The teaching is good.	26	63	5	1	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	25	55	12	3	6
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	47	44	5	0	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	54	40	5	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	25	55	14	1	5
The school is well led and managed.	34	54	4	2	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	33	53	7	1	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	25	49	11	2	13

Other issues raised by parents

Parents who attended the meeting were concerned that standards in science were lower than in other subjects and that there is insufficient space for private study in the Sixth Form.

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

ENGLISH

51. Results in the 1999 Key Stage 3 Standard Assessment Tests (SATs) were above the national average and well above results in similar schools. Girls outperformed boys by a margin smaller than that found nationally. Results in English were similar to those in mathematics and science. The trend over the last three years has been broadly in line with the national trend. Results for 2000 showed a slight improvement. The proportion of grades A*-C in GCSE English in 1999 was above the national average, while A*-C grades in English literature were below. Girls outperformed boys in both subjects by a margin smaller than the national figure. In 2000 results improved, markedly in English literature. All pupils entered for both subjects in 1999 did significantly better than in the average of all their GCSE subjects. The trend in both subjects over the last three years has been inconsistent. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A-E at A Level in 1999 was below the national average, while the proportion of A-B grades was above. Girls outperformed boys by a margin much larger than nationally. Results for 2000 show an improvement at A-E but a decline in the proportion of the highest grades.
52. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is above expectations. Pupils speak confidently, accurately and clearly and can read aloud distinctly in a manner that conveys meaning. Levels of comprehension are good. The overall standard of writing is satisfactory. Most is at least competent, while the best is fluent, confident, thoughtful and often done with enjoyment. Lower-attaining pupils frequently write in a style close to speech which lacks technical accuracy and coherence. There is no significant difference between boys' and girls' writing.
53. Pupils of all abilities generally make good progress because of effective teaching by all teachers and the pupils' own positive attitudes towards learning. This was evident in a Year 9 lesson on poetry, where the pupils made good progress in exploring the implications of figurative language because the teacher had high expectations of them, conducted the lesson at a good pace and used questions skilfully. Pupils with special educational needs progress satisfactorily because teachers match work and presentation appropriately to meet varying needs.
54. The pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is also above expectations. Pupils speak clearly, and expressively or informatively as the occasion requires. They usually listen well. Most can read aloud well and show good understanding. All take care over presentation of written work and most tackle an increasing range of subjects with success. Some narrative writing is excellent, and much is clear, thoughtful and well planned. Responses to literature are sometimes sensitive and perceptive. There are no significant gender differences in pupils' writing.
55. Teachers at Key Stage 4 are knowledgeable and encouraging. They respond very constructively to the pupils' work in lessons and mark their writing well: marking combines criticism with target-setting very effectively. Pupils are mostly keen to learn, attentive and well-motivated. All of these factors contribute to the good rate of progress made. This was seen in a Year 10 lesson on a poem, where progress was very good in terms of understanding and insights gained, and the confidence to express and share them. As at Key Stage 3, pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress because teachers respond appropriately to individuals' specific needs.
56. Sixth Form pupils' attainment in lessons is in line with examination expectations. They speak and listen well, with increasing confidence, and from the beginning of Year 12 are developing an analytical approach. Understanding and knowledge of texts are mainly satisfactory, and writing in both years is confident and competent. Its quality improves in depth of perception and maturity in Year 13. A few minor weaknesses in spelling, expression and structure persist into Year 13. The best work handles ideas, evidence and arguments very effectively.
57. Sixth Form pupils make good progress because they are highly committed to the tasks and so

work hard. In lessons they are attentive and usually respond well, as exemplified in a Year 12 lesson on a prose text. The teacher's skill at blending stimulus with support, deft use of open-ended questions, together with good use of time and a range of activities, enabled the majority to begin moving on from GCSE approaches towards A Level, and to reflect on and consolidate their findings. The marking of Sixth Form work is of very high quality: close, detailed and encouraging of further developments.

58. Teaching quality throughout the years is good overall and sometimes very good. Teachers at all levels contribute significantly to the development of pupils' language skills. Pupils' attitudes to learning and behaviour are mostly very good. Effective monitoring and support of teaching by the head of department has contributed to the raising of standards since the last inspection. The department has maintained the strengths mentioned in the previous report and has tackled all of the issues for action contained in it. Schemes of work are being revised to improve coherence and progression, and efforts being made to incorporate more work using ICT.
59. To improve, the department should support any school moves to devise a literacy policy; seek to reduce the unacceptably large number of 'split' classes in Year 9; and strive to obtain more regular access to ICT for all pupils. It should also incorporate tighter learning objectives, progress criteria and learning objectives in revised schemes of work, and encourage more consistent practice among staff regarding objective-sharing in lessons. The amount of media work in Year 9 needs to be increased and teachers' awareness raised of the contribution English makes to pupils' spiritual development.

MATHEMATICS

60. The Key Stage 3 SAT results in 1999 were above the national average. The proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 and higher was above the national average, as was the proportion reaching Level 6 and higher. Boys and girls achieved equally well, and the results were above those for similar schools. The 2000 results were better for those reaching Level 6 or above, and the same for Level 5 and above. The trend for improvement has been in line with the national trend for the last four years. GCSE results show a similar pattern of an improving trend: the 1999 percentage of A*-C grades was close to the national average. The results fell in 2000 with the A*-C grades being below the national average. Boys and girls achieved equally well, with the boys being slightly better than girls overall, reversing the trend at the time of the last inspection. A Level results have steadily improved. In 1999 40% of pupils achieved grades A-C, while 76% obtained a pass, but in 2000 all pupils passed and nearly half obtained grades A or B. A small number of pupils took Further Mathematics A Level in both 1999 and 2000 with good results
61. Attainment seen in lessons and in the analysis of work in books is in line with national expectations at Key Stage 3, although it varies with the quality of teaching, the composition of the group and the time of day. Lower sets are too large for teachers to give the individual attention needed without learning support assistants, although those pupils with special educational needs achieve equally as well as others. Pupils were preparing for the end of half-term test, revising topics usually covered previously. Well-prepared worksheets enabled many pupils to draw correctly reflections of shapes in mirror lines, to know the meaning of congruent, lines of reflection and order of rotational reflection. Number skills are good on the whole, with accurate estimation, rounding off, and use of factors and multiples to produce the highest common factors and lowest common multiples in a set of higher-attaining pupils. The regular practice of mental mathematics 'starters' to lessons helps the pupils to develop interest as well as confidence and competence with number. Many Year 9 pupils had used the 'LOGO' program on computers, and there was a good display of their work in one room.
62. At Key Stage 4, attainment seen varies from good to very poor, being just below national expectations overall. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well where teachers focus on their individual education plan targets and give them sufficient individual attention. The banding and then setting system does not produce an easily recognisable continuum of prior attainment, and the expectations of a few teachers are too low, with inappropriate challenge and pace to the lesson. Where lessons were well planned, and clear learning objectives shared with pupils, there

was a sense of purpose, pupils were interested, tried hard and achieved well. A Year 10 group heading for GCSE Intermediate level and dealing with transformations knew the correct terms, meanings and usage by the end of the lesson. Excellent questioning skills by some teachers guide pupils through difficult concepts, as in the Year 11 lesson on finding arc lengths, and area of sectors of circles, or consolidated previous learning by recap, as in the Year 10 lesson on factor trees. Teachers with very good relationships with pupils are friendly but firm, definitely in control, and pupils appreciate them and work well. In some classes learning is hindered by too much chatter, and a minority of teachers lack appropriate skills of managing pupils' behaviour, or setting an appropriate pace or structure to the work. A Year 11 class tackling coursework, finding the maximum volume for different sized boxes, seemed unaware of how to tackle the problem, lacking the skills of investigating, using or applying mathematics to a problem. This important aspect of mathematics is not emphasised enough, or used in teaching and learning all topics to develop the required skills, although the samples seen of final coursework from previous Year 11 pupils were very good.

63. Sixth Form attainment is good, in line with and sometimes above national expectations. The Year 13 class tackling coursework for the A Level examination showed high levels of knowledge and understanding of vectors and trigonometrical calculation. Sixth Form teachers show excellent levels of knowledge and understanding of their subject, and were always able to answer and solve pupils' difficulties. Self-assessment works well here. Pupils check their work from the teachers' discussions and textbook answers, discovering for themselves where and how mistakes are being made, to develop and take responsibility for their own learning. The excellent preparation of the new A/S Level course has helped teachers and pupils tackle it confidently, with a system of worksheets as well as new textbooks. A fast pace and a variety of activities in each lesson are a good feature of A Level lessons, and Sixth Form pupils are keen and enthusiastic about their work. GNVQ numeracy, timetabled in Year 12, is taught competently, using and applying mathematics to real life problems.
64. The quality of teaching is good overall, a quarter being very good, nearly three-quarters good, and three lessons unsatisfactory. Such inconsistencies imply the need for a greater level of monitoring of teaching and learning, with action taken including training where needed. Using the strengths of many and sharing good practice would help to raise standards. Assessment procedures are good, but there is limited use made of assessment data to improve learning, and to match work better to pupils' prior attainment and aptitudes. More guidelines on teaching and learning methods, including using investigations, would benefit teachers' use of the detailed schemes of work. Although number skills are well taught within the department, there is no school numeracy policy and no audit of use or liaison with other subject areas, to improve numeracy further.
65. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory, though further improvement is needed in the monitoring process, with evaluation, decisions made and action taken. The use of ICT needs development, and resources still need improvement. Number work has improved, but the pace of lessons is still variable, part of the inconsistencies in teaching and learning which is an issue to resolve. Standards have risen since the last inspection, especially at Key Stage 3 and A Level, and the proportion of very good teaching has improved, while overall teaching remains good.

SCIENCE

66. Results in the 1999 Key Stage 3 SATs were above the national average and those achieved in similar schools. Results have remained high since the previous inspection. There has been some variation in the results of boys and girls in each year, but these are not significant when averaged over a four-year period. The 1999 results were equivalent to those in mathematics, but slightly below those in English. The proportion of pupils awarded A*-C grades at GCSE rose steadily after the previous inspection to a peak in 1998 that was above the national average. This dropped in 1999 to be more in line with the national average. Those pupils taking the double award course performed slightly better in science than they did in the average of all their other subjects. Those taking the single award course performed much worse. There was little variation in the performance of boys and girls in either course. Performance dropped sharply again in 2000.

While results in mathematics also dropped, those in English rose sharply. Results in all three science A Levels improved significantly in 1999. Results in physics and chemistry were above the national average, although the number of chemistry candidates was small. Results in biology remained below the national average. In 2000 the average points score dropped in all three subjects, with biology being very low. All pupils following the Intermediate GNVQ achieved unit credits in 1999 with 60% achieving an overall pass, with a further 10% at both merit and distinction. In 2000 all pupils achieved an overall pass, with 20% at merit.

67. The standard of work observed in Year 9 is in line with recent SAT results. Most pupils are working at the expected level and a good proportion above it. Most pupils in a middle set were able, for example, to describe the basic structure of atoms and were starting to use terminology, such as atomic symbol and atomic number, with confidence. Higher-attaining pupils in the group were also confident in using word equations to describe chemical changes and were familiar with symbol equations. Most pupils have positive attitudes and apply themselves to their learning. Competent teaching and appropriate planning, including good curriculum links with middle schools, help to ensure that the pupils make secure progress in Year 9.
68. At Key Stage 4 a significant minority of pupils, in a quarter of the lessons observed, do not apply themselves sufficiently and have a poor attitude to learning. Consequently the teacher has to spend too much time ensuring that good order prevails and insisting that the work set is actually carried out. This happens mostly in middle sets. Pupils in these lessons then make unsatisfactory progress as a result, usually despite satisfactory teaching. Occasionally teaching is unsatisfactory because the teacher has not worked with sufficient vigour to ensure that the pupils get on with their work. In some lower-attaining sets the pupils apply themselves to a satisfactory extent in the lessons, but with little enthusiasm. Many put little effort into linking their work with previous lessons and are satisfied to complete the tasks set without developing their understanding further. Progress over the key stage is then unsatisfactory for these pupils. In other lower sets, such as a Year 10 class testing foods for starch, the pupils do work enthusiastically and link ideas, such as their knowledge of food types developed in food technology. Teachers need to be more consistent about the level of challenge provided for these groups. Sometimes they also need to be confident that any discipline problems developing from this greater rigour will be swiftly dealt with through the school's procedures. Higher-attaining pupils tend to be more motivated, are making satisfactory progress more consistently and are reaching some high levels of understanding. A Year 11 group investigating the resistance of different wires, for example, understood the nature of electricity and were using this well to explain why they expected the resistance to change with length and thickness; however, even these hard-working and well-motivated pupils had some difficulty sustaining their concentration for a full 100 minutes.
69. Standards observed in the Sixth Form also reflect broadly those achieved in recent examinations. A Level biology students are performing better in lessons than indicated by the results in 2000, but Year 12 A Level chemistry students currently have fundamental misunderstandings that will impede further progress if not tackled immediately. The Intermediate GNVQ science group is small, but all are on target to achieve at least a pass. This course provides a valuable route into post-16 science for those not quite achieving the necessary GCSE grades for A Level study. Pupils generally apply themselves well, both in lessons and in carrying out independent study. Teaching at this level is usually good. The teachers' own knowledge and understanding are secure and this develops confidence in the pupils. A good range of activities is used, such as a very effective demonstration in a Year 13 physics lesson and group presentations in a Year 13 chemistry lesson.
70. Literacy and numeracy are secure for most pupils. Most teachers place a good emphasis on developing an understanding of the meaning of key words in the topics studied. They also use mathematics where appropriate. This work would, however, be strengthened as part of a whole-school policy on literacy and numeracy development. Skills of scientific enquiry are also secure and match levels of knowledge and understanding for most pupils. Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language make similar progress to other pupils in their group. Their progress is good when additional support staff are present. Access to computers was

difficult during the inspection because of unfinished refurbishment of a laboratory. Planning indicates that all pupils do have access to ICT as an information source as well as for measuring and analysing physical data. Further enhancement of the resources available is required if this is to be as broad an experience as expected for all pupils.

71. Teaching overall is satisfactory, with a high proportion that is good, particularly in the Sixth Form, but with the occasional unsatisfactory lesson at Key Stage 4. At Key Stage 4 the quality of teaching is better than the quality of learning, with teachers having to work hard in some lessons to overcome negative attitudes and a lack of application from pupils. In addition to providing a more consistent challenge, science at this key stage needs to have more relevance and stimulate a greater interest in a broader range of pupils than it does at present. A thorough review of the current provision is required. This needs to cover the amount of time available, how this is arranged, the allocation of teachers to groups, the provision of textbooks for pupils to study at home, the syllabus being followed and the use of more modern and stimulating resources. Management has had insufficient impact on raising standards. There needs to be more monitoring of the standards and quality of learning and greater use of assessment data to raise attainment. The effectiveness of the link between the senior management team and the department is in need of significant strengthening.

ART

72. The GCSE results have risen since the last inspection, but with the exception of 1998 they have remained below the national average. In 1999 the proportion of pupils gaining an A*-C grade was about six percentage points below the national figure; however, the girls' results were above average and all achieved at least a grade G. The pupils' performance in art was worse than the average of all their other subjects. The A*-C results fell slightly in 2000 but everyone gained at least a grade G. The A Level results have also improved since the last inspection. They were broadly average in 1999 and above average in 2000. In each year since the last inspection all pupils entered have gained a grade.
73. The pupils transfer from their middle schools having had very different experiences in art. This is reflected in the attainment of Year 9 pupils which is mostly below, and for some well below, the nationally expected standard. Provision is well planned to ensure that the National Curriculum requirements are met and to take pupils through some important processes. For instance, they learn how to experiment and how to use a range of media to communicate their ideas. Teaching is satisfactory overall but attainment is not raised sufficiently by the end of the key stage. Although pupils, including those with special educational needs, make steady progress, their technical skills remain weak as does their knowledge and understanding of the visual elements such as line, tone and pattern. Most pupils behave satisfactorily; they comply with the classroom tasks but are rarely enthusiastic. Teachers encourage creativity through the manipulation of images and rightly promote the work of established artists, although this is not always done in a way which raises pupils' interest or excites their imagination. Lesson objectives are clearly stated and instructions precise, but there is too little emphasis on enhancing the pupils' ability to draw from observation or on helping them to appraise critically their own and others' work. A purposeful and lively approach are features of the best lessons whereas a lack of pace and focus contribute to the occasional unsuccessful one.
74. Because of below average attainment at Key Stage 3 most pupils who continue with the subject at Key Stage 4 have a lot of ground to make up. This constrains their GCSE performance and is a significant reason why the majority do not achieve higher than a C grade; however, a very casual attitude shown by some pupils, mainly boys, also limits their success. Teaching is stronger at this key stage, with pupils benefiting from some very good lessons. For example, in a Year 10 class the teacher's high expectations and effective questioning helped the pupils to realise the range of possible outcomes and then make decisions about their own drawings and paintings. In another Year 10 ceramics class, pupils received very good support after the teacher's brisk and precise demonstration of some basic skills. Pupils are made aware of the examination criteria. Well-presented displays remind pupils of the processes and the standard required for examination

success. By the end of the course they have refined their way of working. Most research adequately, explore a range of ideas and support their projects with documentation. Occasionally teaching is unsuccessful in overcoming pupils' lethargy and their reluctance to learn. Although classroom management is sound and information is imparted adequately, insufficient progress is made because pupils are not challenged to move beyond low-level tasks.

75. Standards are rising at A Level because the pupils become serious artists and the teachers place appropriate demands upon them. Although their technical skills are not strong, their expressive skills flourish as they show increased boldness and have the confidence to take risks. They are taught well, as was the case in a Year 12 ceramics lesson and one in which Year 13 pupils were learning how to present their personal studies.
76. Overall, satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection, although improvement has been uneven and some changes have taken too long to implement. Some shortcomings in teaching and learning noted in the last report still exist. Assessment still needs strengthening so that all pupils are clearer about their attainment and importantly what they need to do to improve. Monitoring of and within the department is not sufficiently rigorous to raise standards. There are some good aspects of management and others, such as development planning, need refinement.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

77. Results of the 2000 GCSE examinations are close to the national average for A* to C grades. There has been a rising trend overall from 1996 to 2000. Recent results for girls are significantly higher than those for boys. In all years results are lower than those for pupils in other subjects. A Level results show a rising trend from 1996 to 2000 with this year's results being above average.
78. Many pupils have limited design and technology capability when they join the school. They make satisfactory progress in Year 9 and by the end of Key Stage 3 attainment of the majority of pupils meets national expectations, but few pupils reach higher levels. Pupils are able to establish user preferences and build this information into design proposals. There is some good work in product design but it is at too low a level where fundamental principles are not developed. In food studies, pupils can categorise foods according to major nutrient groups and are beginning to understand how to test food products. They are well motivated and use tools and utensils with due regard to safety and hygiene. Pupils are able to model electrical and pneumatic circuits and have an understanding of computer controlled machinery, which are improvements since the last inspection.
79. Despite having lower than average time allocations, by the end of Key Stage 4 pupils' attainment is in line with expectations. In food studies pupils have a good understanding of nutrient groups, which they have built on from Key Stage 3, and higher-attaining pupils know that diet must be modified, for example, for people with a gluten allergy. There is some good modelling in graphic products and examples of good quality practical work in resistant materials. In resistant materials pupils have a satisfactory understanding of industrial processes, for example the use of jigs for repeat operations, but their knowledge of aspects of product design is undeveloped and attainment here is below expectations. Staff are aware of pupils with special educational needs and produce suitable targets, which are effective in enabling these pupils to make satisfactory progress. Good use is made of ICT to enhance the pupils' work and for research purposes.
80. In the Sixth Form pupils make satisfactory progress overall. Work from the current Year 13 is satisfactory but attainment is not quite as high as that of last year's pupils. In Year 12 pupils are developing a detailed knowledge of how to analyse an existing object, with the appropriate detail, to form the basis of a new product.
81. Teaching is at least satisfactory in all lessons and in half it is good or very good. Teaching is effective in enabling the pupils to learn when good relationships lead to good levels of discussion. Teachers use their good subject knowledge well when using questioning techniques effectively to further the pupils' understanding. Most pupils respond well to this and their learning is enhanced

by their good levels of motivation, which leads to good use of time. Where pupils are able to handle materials from which they will choose, they become familiar with their properties. Homework forms an integral part of lesson planning. Less successful elements of some lessons include giving too much information without interacting with pupils, and pupils not being clear about how to apply a quality control principle outlined.

82. The general curriculum is enhanced by the recent addition of child development, where teaching is good and pupils have good attitudes to the subject. The general vocational course in health and social care in Year 11 also contributes to the broader curriculum, but despite satisfactory teaching, progress and attainment here are limited by the poor behaviour exhibited by some pupils. The built environment vocational course broadens the Sixth Form curriculum. Assessment systems are good in Key Stage 4 and the Sixth Form where they are based on course requirements and give pupils a clear indication of how they might improve their work. The new system in Key Stage 3 relates directly to National Curriculum levels and provides a good basis for reviewing units of work in order to enable attainment at higher levels. Assessment in Key Stage 3 is not yet used to inform future planning.
83. There is a good system for monitoring teaching, and development planning contains appropriate priorities. Current links with senior management are too informal to be fully effective. There is a good sense of shared purpose in the department. There are detailed schemes of work and teachers work closely to these when planning lessons. The curriculum is satisfactory, but there is a need for topics in Year 9 and resistant materials work in Year 10 to be modified to achieve a better balance of elements of product design and choice of materials. Schemes of work allow for some elements of pupils' social development but opportunities for their moral, spiritual and cultural development are not yet incorporated. Satisfactory use is made of pupils' numeracy skills, notably in the areas of weighing and measuring. Accommodation is adequate for the needs of the curriculum, although there are ongoing problems, already identified by the school. Storage units in the food technology rooms are old and in need of renewal, and despite the best efforts of the staff, work surfaces are unhygienic. There is inadequate dust and fume extraction in the resistant materials workshops. A number of the machines in these rooms do not have emergency switches.

GEOGRAPHY

84. In 1999, half of the pupils taking geography GCSE achieved grades A* to C, which was in line with the school's target but marginally below the national average. There was a fall in results in 2000. GCSE results are lower than at the last inspection, when they matched the national average. At A Level, just over half achieved grades A or B in 1998, well above the national figure, but in 1999 this fell to 9%, well below the national average and only rose to 12.5% in 2000. Ten pupils were entered for the Certificate of Achievement in 2000 and achieved 8 distinctions and 2 merits. Girls generally achieve better results than boys, although the reverse was the case in the 1999 GCSE examinations.
85. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Year 9 and, by the end of Key Stage 3 attainment is in line with national expectations. Teaching is satisfactory and the pupils' attitudes and behaviour are mainly good. The teachers involve the pupils in enquiry into important questions and issues using a good range of well-selected resources. This enables the pupils to develop their analytical skills effectively and build up a satisfactory level of knowledge and understanding. Higher-attaining pupils respond well and produce good work, for example in lessons using computers to annotate a photograph of the Barton Hills. The pupils make a good effort with the presentation of maps, diagrams and written work across the range of attainment. Oral work varies from constructive discussion in pairs or groups, to more restricted use of short phrases or single word answers in full-class sessions. Most pupils listen well to their teacher and to each other. They gain effective practice of drawing graphs and other numerical diagrams.
86. By the end of Key Stage 4 attainment is below the national average. Higher-attaining pupils write well, especially when expressive writing is required, for example describing what it is like to

experience an earthquake. They produce effective maps and diagrams, often using computers in their coursework, and can analyse these well. Good use is made of subject vocabulary, indicating understanding of key concepts. In a Year 11 lesson, for example, terms such as 'feedback' and 'process' were used correctly in discussing industrial location. The large numbers of pupils with average or below average attainment find difficulty in grasping key ideas. Their writing is less clearly expressed and lacks depth and detail. The teachers use their very good subject expertise to prepare work at the right level to enable all pupils to make satisfactory progress, including those with special educational needs. They show their good management skills and high expectations in ensuring that pupils pay attention and concentrate on their work. Attitudes and behaviour are mainly good, reflecting the good quality of the teaching.

87. Results at A Level have varied considerably in recent years, reaching a peak in 1998, but declining in the last two years. The current Year 12 and 13 pupils are making good progress and achieve well in lessons and homework. This is a response to good teaching, which is, at its best, stimulating and challenging. The pupils continue to develop their investigative and analytical skills well. In a Year 13 lesson, for example, pupils made good use of a wide range of resources including computers to investigate coastal management issues. The best of their written and graphical work is very good. The teachers' good practice in monitoring and assessing pupils' work continues into the Sixth Form. Marking is thorough and used to help pupils improve.
88. Strong leadership and effective teamwork have helped the department to make good improvements in response to the last inspection. Work is now broadly planned at an appropriate level to extend the pupils, and attention should now be given to more detailed differentiation of work within classes. Opportunities to use ICT have been developed and the resources effectively reorganised. Pupils are encouraged to use the library facilities. A good programme of fieldwork has been built into each key stage. To improve further, the department should audit ICT provision and build it into the schemes of work across the age range. The subject's contribution to social, moral, spiritual and cultural development should be reviewed and included in the schemes of work. More use should be made of pupils' work in displays. The thorough and realistic action planning already in place should be followed through to try to raise attainment, especially at Key Stage 3.

HISTORY

89. The 1999 GCSE results in history were above the national average, although the number entered was only half the number entered in previous years. This performance was not sustained in 2000, which saw a return to the earlier, below average results. At A Level, results have reached or exceeded the national average in the last four years, peaking in 1998. In 1999 the results were in line with the national average. There were only four candidates this year, the smallest entry in recent years, but they all achieved at least a C grade.
90. At Key Stage 3, attainment is a little above national expectations. In their essays on the effects of 18th century enclosures, pupils can weigh the advantages and disadvantages for the farming community and the wider economy. The same level of understanding and rational argument was seen in Year 9 lessons on 19th century changes to the system of poor relief. Pupils were able to use source material to write letters to *The Times*, from the point of view of a supporter or critic of the government's policy of indoor relief in workhouses. Teachers are enabling pupils to gain a good understanding of 19th century social changes, by looking at developments through the experience of a particular family, identified from a study of census data. This personalisation of social change has made it more interesting for pupils and they have responded imaginatively in their writing. The use of writing frames to help pupils plan their reports is helping lower-attaining pupils to develop their writing and they are making good progress. Teachers mark work carefully, paying attention to spelling and grammar, praising pupils' efforts and offering constructive criticism. As a result most pupils are making good progress on the course. At present, the teachers direct any investigation work. Pupils need to be able to use their initiative and widen their research to include reference books and ICT, so that they can develop the ability to select and organise relevant information for themselves.

91. The number of pupils taking history at Key Stage 4 has increased and attainment is in line with national expectations. In general, pupils are achieving the standards expected of them. The standard of note-taking is good in all classes. Pupils are making good progress in understanding the diplomacy of the period between the two world wars. They have produced well-argued essays, evaluating the terms of the Versailles treaties and the weakness of the League of Nations. They show good understanding of political movements, such as fascism and communism. In a lesson on the Weimar Republic, Year 10 pupils were able to explain how its constitution produced weak governments, vulnerable to extremist groups like the Nazis. Teachers are making good use of video material and historical sources in lessons and pitching the work at the right level for their classes, so that all can make good progress. In one class, pupils needed more direct teaching in the skills of source analysis, to be able to assess the usefulness of a source to historians of the period. In another, there needed to be a better balance between teacher direction and pupil selection of salient points to record in their notes.
92. Attainment in the Sixth Form is in line with national expectations. The teacher's probing questions helped Year 12 pupils gain an awareness of different historical interpretations of the movement for women's suffrage and to categorise the different social, economic and political arguments for women's suffrage. Year 13 pupils are developing the study skills needed in higher education, making notes from their teacher's mini lecture on Mussolini's idea of the corporate state and asking questions to consolidate their understanding. Teachers encourage them to read widely, and give excellent feedback on their essays. Regular tutorials are helping the pupils to make good progress in their research.
93. The quality of teaching is good overall and never less than satisfactory. Teachers establish good working relationships with their pupils and set them high standards of work. Their lessons are well planned with clear objectives, delivered at a good pace and productive in terms of pupils' work and understanding. Pupils are well behaved in lessons, show interest in their studies and apply themselves well to tasks. There is not enough opportunity for them to work together in pairs or small groups and there is no clear policy for promoting the personal development of pupils through their learning in the subject. Pupils' progress is monitored satisfactorily but formal assessments should be broader to test the full range of history skills.
94. The head of department monitors and supports teaching effectively but there needs to be more accountability to line management over setting targets for the department and reviewing progress periodically. Since the last inspection, major changes in staffing have seriously affected continuity. Good leadership and teamwork have served to minimise the effects of this upheaval on pupils' learning. The situation is now stable. The introduction of the Certificate of Achievement course for pupils struggling with GCSE in Year 11 has reduced the amount of underachievement noted in the last report. Overall, the department has made satisfactory progress in the last four years and is now in a position to do better by extending the range of learning styles and ensuring progression in history skills through more rigorous assessment procedures.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

95. No GCSE courses for ICT have been taken by pupils in recent years. A/S Level examination results in computing in the Sixth Form have been variable; they fell below the national average in 1999 but the 2000 results show good improvement. Attainment in ICT lessons in the first half term of Year 9 indicates a very wide range of ability. Attainment was good in less than a quarter of lessons observed and below national expectations in 40%. At Key Stage 4 there is also a wide range of attainment and overall it is below expectations. In the Sixth Form there is a good deal of appropriate autonomous use of computers; many pupils are able to word process and present their work to a satisfactory level.
96. In all years the emphasis is upon using ICT to "exchange and share information" and to "find things out". All have opportunities to word process and use software for presentation and there is a great deal of research using the Internet. Whilst many pupils have mastered the necessary skills to be selective and precise in their use of information from web-sites a significant number do not yet have the skills to make best use of this resource. In Key Stage 3 many pupils are able to produce

work for specific audiences as demonstrated in the follow-up to a geography visit, using appropriate text, pictures and layout to convey messages about the countryside. There are some opportunities for “developing ideas and making things happen”, in Key Stage 3. All pupils use *logo* for modelling and control in mathematics, have some opportunity to use data logging equipment in science and some are able to control software in design and technology. The timetabled ICT lessons together with the cross-curricular provision in Year 9 address concerns which were expressed in the last inspection report. All pupils at Key Stage 3 now have the opportunity to cover the ICT requirements of the National Curriculum. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by ICT teachers and make satisfactory progress.

97. Most pupils are well motivated and have a positive attitude when using computers, with the exception of a small minority in some Year 11 classes. Pupils usually work successfully in pairs during ICT lessons.
98. At Key Stage 4, about one-third of pupils have timetabled lessons in computer rooms and ICT is covered as a key skill in GNVQ courses. There is evidence that information-handling skills particularly using spreadsheets, need to be developed further. Planning for, and effective monitoring of, ICT across subjects at Key Stage 4 is not sufficiently developed to ensure that all pupils receive their entitlement to the ICT curriculum. There are insufficient opportunities in other subjects to build upon the skills where they have been developed in ICT lessons or to teach them to pupils in Key Stage 4 who do not have such lessons.
99. This situation is compounded by the ratio of computers to pupils, which is below the national average. All of the networked computers have access to the Internet, which is well used. The library is well equipped with computers and has an appropriate selection of CD ROMs. It also houses a small initial learning system, which is used by pupils with special educational needs.
100. Since the appointment of a new ICT co-ordinator, schemes of work and assessment procedures have been revised, resulting in improvements in teaching. Teaching in ICT lessons is at least satisfactory and often good. ICT lessons are well planned and objectives made clear to pupils. A Year 11 lesson on Internet use was thoughtfully combined with learning about health and safety in relation to computer use. Classroom management is usually good. Teachers provide appropriate support for pupils working at computers but opportunities for whole-class teaching were missed, resulting in much repetition of instruction and advice. Assessment procedures are in the process of being implemented in Year 9, which will improve monitoring and should help to inform future planning. There is no assessment of ICT capability in Key Stage 4 beyond ICT as a key skill in GNVQ courses.
101. A number of matters are still outstanding from the last inspection report. There is still a wide variation in attainment, with many pupils still achieving below expectations. Assessment for all at Key Stage 4 remains to be addressed. Steps have not yet been taken to develop the cross-curricular use of ICT at Key Stage 4. Provision of computers and other equipment is still insufficient to meet departmental demands. Combining the posts of network manager and technician for the past year has further compromised the dependability and efficient use of ICT resources.
102. Improvements in the management, co-ordination and monitoring of ICT need to be maintained to consolidate recent gains in teaching and learning. The school should ensure that the ICT curriculum at Key Stage 4 meets with requirements, that all subjects meet their obligations with regard to the use of ICT and that there is improved access to ICT equipment for all pupils.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

103. Standards at GCSE in modern foreign languages vary, but show an overall trend of improvement. Results in French in 2000 were in line with the national average reflecting the national upward trend in this subject since 1998. In German, the results in 2000 were well below the national average but this is an improvement on the results of the previous two years. Data for 1999 show that

pupils entered for French did better in this subject than in the average of almost all their other subjects, whereas in German they did worse than in most of their other subjects. In Italian, 57% of pupils gained A*-C grades in 2000, which is below the national average for Italian, but good comparatively, in view of the wide ability range of pupils entered for GCSE Italian at the school. In line with national trends, the GCSE modern language results of the boys in the school have overall been lower than those of girls since 1998. In German, the higher numbers and poor performance of boys entered for German in 1999 and 2000 significantly lowered the overall percentage of A*-C grades in this subject and in 1999, boys entered for German did worse in this subject than in almost all their other subjects. The quality of recently recruited staff is helping to raise standards generally in the modern foreign languages department, and especially in German.

104. At A Level, standards vary. Overall pass rates have fluctuated in all languages since 1998, but in 2000 pupils did very well in French and Italian with more than half gaining A or B grades in each subject. A Level German, however, remains weak with generally low pass rates and low pupil numbers.
105. Attainment at Key Stage 3 is broadly in line with national expectations. Most pupils achieve good standards in listening and speaking and are well motivated. This is because most teachers plan a variety of learning tasks and use the foreign language consistently. In a successful Year 9 beginners' Italian lesson the teacher used her native language throughout the lesson and pupils confidently copied her speech patterns and accent in their conversations. Pupils with special educational needs and pupils of average and low ability make good progress in listening, reading and writing as a result of the teachers' good planning to match all of the pupils' needs. For example, in a Year 9 French lesson, the teacher kept all pupils interested and productive with rapid activity changes, and quiet individual tasks. In all languages, the ablest pupils make less progress for their ability in all of the language skills. Pupils are motivated in their learning, working co-operatively together in conversations, and present their written work very well.
106. Attainment at Key Stage 4 varies between classes from above national expectations to below, and is average overall. Many pupils at Key Stage 4 attain above average levels in all the language skills, and are well motivated because teachers use a sequence of well-planned activities and use time and teaching materials efficiently. For example all pupils, and particularly boys, made excellent progress in a successful Year 11 German lesson, in which the teacher controlled pupils' interest, learning and behaviour, by delivering each stage of the lesson rapidly with colourful transparencies and clear worksheets. Some pupils, and especially boys, make poor progress and show poor attitudes when they are not sufficiently challenged in their learning. This was seen in a Year 11 French middle group, when the teacher did not give pupils good learning opportunities and some boys became bored, inactive and noisy. At Key Stage 4 written work is generally of a good standard because teachers monitor pupils' work regularly, and many pupils can successfully use ICT for preparation of coursework; however, insufficient opportunities for extended writing are given to the ablest pupils. Pupils' attitudes to learning are satisfactory overall at Key Stage 4, and good departmental planning gives all pupils opportunities for evaluating their progress.
107. Attainment is above average in the Sixth Form in all three languages. There is good progress in listening, speaking, grammar and essay writing. Consistent use of the target language by teachers gives pupils an ease of comprehension and response. For example in a Year 13 Italian lesson the pupils showed understanding of a video about Mothers' Day and commented confidently on the content in Italian, and in a Year 12 French lesson most pupils contributed confidently in French to a class discussion with good accents. Sixth Form pupils have very good attitudes to learning, sharing their skills in pair work and being keen to achieve well. Assessment of essay work in the Sixth Form is regular but requires standardisation between the languages.
108. The quality of teaching is a strength of the department, with 70% of teaching seen being good or better, and 60% of teaching very good or excellent. Pupils' attitudes to language learning are good.
109. Since the last inspection, GCSE and A Level results in French and Italian have improved but German results at GCSE and A Level have remained poor. Standards have improved in the middle

and lower sets at Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the Sixth Form. The quality of teaching has become a strength of the whole department. Assessment and monitoring at Key Stage 3 is now linked to the National Curriculum Attainment Targets (but not yet to the higher levels). The department should implement strategies for identifying and raising the achievement of the very able linguists. Attainment targets for pupils should be raised to include the highest levels at Key Stage 3 and A* grades at Key Stage 4. Informal assessment should be standardised throughout the department to incorporate all existing good practice in marking, comments and target setting. The department should continue robustly with its existing policy to raise the achievement of boys at Key Stage 4, especially in German. A standardised format for all schemes of work is needed and existing departmental policies, guidance and information should be revised and collated in a departmental handbook.

MUSIC

110. At Key Stage 3 standards are mostly satisfactory. Pupils' achievement in lessons at Key Stage 3 is mostly satisfactory but where the challenging behaviour of some pupils slows the pace of lessons it is unsatisfactory. Keyboard performance skills are satisfactory for most pupils, who can play notes accurately, but singing standards vary from satisfactory to unsatisfactory. No evidence of composing was available during this inspection. Standards in listening and appraising and musical literacy are in line with national averages and pupils understand different musical styles. Pupils have no opportunity to develop skills in music technology at this key stage.
111. Standards at Key Stage 4 are very good and well above national expectations. Performing skills are good and pupils are able to compose in a variety of styles showing understanding and imagination. Phrasing and structure are used appropriately and pupils combine musical elements with control. Listening and understanding skills are at least satisfactory. Pupils' achievement over time including gains in lessons is good. Pupils are well motivated and work with enthusiasm and concentration.
112. In the Sixth Form pupils follow courses in music and music technology. Standards vary for individual pupils but performing skills are particularly good. In free-style composition, pupils' work is good but baroque composition techniques are less well developed for some. Aural skills, history and analysis are satisfactory for most. Techniques in the A/S Level music technology course are at an early stage of development. The pupils made good progress developing improvisation skills in an introductory study of Jazz and when developing their compositions.
113. Standards in instrumental lessons are good and, in the extra-curricular activities, they are very good. Pupils play complicated parts with confidence in the orchestra and jazz band and sustain syncopated cross rhythms in the African drumming group. In the choir sight singing skills are well developed and the tone is pleasing.
114. Teaching is satisfactory overall at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory or good at Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form. Lessons are well planned with a variety of tasks that allow all pupils to achieve equally, and in the good lessons short-term targets for the tasks help to maintain a good pace of learning. Questioning is used well to recall prior knowledge and teachers build confidence in the instrumental lessons and in extra-curricular activities. In some Year 9 lessons background chatter is not always checked and limited practical learning in the tasks fails to engage some pupils.
115. The curriculum has recently been re-designed with detailed and thorough schemes of work linking the attainment targets. Some development is needed to include more practical learning and to build more closely on pupils' abilities. New assessment schemes have also been developed and this marks an improvement from the previous inspection. The previous inspection also commented on the limited resources for ICT in the curriculum and these have been only slightly improved. Currently Year 9 pupils have no opportunity to use technology in their work and the music technology A/S Level course is inadequately resourced. The accommodation also restricts learning opportunities for some Year 9 classes who are unable to work in groups of different sizes.

Standards have been maintained in both lessons and in extra-curricular activities since the last inspection.

116. Expressive Arts is a popular option at Key Stage 4, although mostly girls choose it. Results at GCSE have improved and were above average in 1999. Pupils' achievement in lessons is at least satisfactory and often good. They can create and develop ideas in a variety of art forms through performing and they are gaining confidence in their abilities. Most can analyse characters satisfactorily and they use appropriate vocabulary in their evaluations. Satisfactory, good and very good teaching was seen. In the best lessons a variety of progressively difficult tasks with timed targets led to very good progress, and challenging behaviour was well managed. Lively, enthusiastic teaching with good support for group work encouraged the pupils to maintain concentration and to develop their work. Criticisms in the last report about the evaluation of pupils' work have been satisfactorily addressed but not all pupils are fully aware of how their work relates to national standards. There has been an improvement in the accommodation since the last inspection but space is still cramped in movement group work.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

117. Attainment overall in physical education is generally in line with that found nationally, average at Key Stage 3, marginally below average at Key Stage 4 and good in a Sixth Form enrichment activities dance lesson. In this lesson able dancers were choreographing quite a complex sequence to present to the dance club.
118. When teachers have high expectations of pupils' performance, reinforce quality movement as in a Year 9 sports acrobatics lesson, this has a positive impact on standards. Ball-handling skills were appropriate for many pupils in a Year 9 netball lesson. Their understanding and use of space, still at a developmental stage, was improved during the lesson by enthusiastic teaching, the use of appropriate practices that were well explained and effective use of questioning. Currently the department is not fully aware of the extent of the curriculum taught in middle schools or the level of pupils' attainment on transfer and cannot therefore ensure continuity or that the National Curriculum requirements are covered by the end of Year 9.
119. Pupils are given insufficient responsibility and are not seen to take roles as coaches or officials or to observe and evaluate work in lessons. Both of these aspects were commended in the last report. In a Year 10 fitness lesson, pupils who were given responsibility for preparing aerobic activity and then leading their peers did so with confidence and maturity. Pupils in a Year 11 rugby lesson were challenged by the use of appropriate practices, and were being taught to become thinking performers. They were able to make decisions and respond well in the game. The challenging behaviour of a number of boys adversely affected the learning of the whole group in a Year 10 football lesson despite the positive strategies used by the teacher. The lack of different tasks appropriate to both genders resulted in two girls, who had opted to take football, being unable to take much part in the game situation. Pupils are generally attentive and when they achieve success, their response is exceedingly positive. Just occasionally a few pupils have to be reminded to concentrate but more often pupils enjoy good relationships with each other and the teacher.
120. Standards in a wide range of extra-curricular activities observed during the inspection were good or very good. Large numbers of pupils attended at lunchtime and after school. Sixth Form pupils made a tremendous contribution to many extra-curricular activities as co-leaders alongside staff. Many pupils achieve sporting honours well beyond school level and their successes are displayed around the physical education department. Celebration of achievement in physical education needs to be shared more regularly with parents.
121. The teachers' enthusiasm for the subject and their pupils at all key stages has a positive impact on teaching and learning within and beyond the curriculum. Pupils with special educational needs achieve appropriate standards. Insufficient attention is given to providing for all levels of ability when planning lessons. In most lessons teachers make effective use of feedback, particularly at

the end of lessons. Discussion does take place about pupils' progress in Year 9 as pupils are taught by a number of teachers. More formal assessment of pupils' progress now needs to be an integral part of the schemes of work and updated to match the new National Curriculum level requirements.

122. The current timetable does not allow for the head of department to monitor teaching and learning and therefore good practice is not being identified or shared. The department has a line-manager but insufficient help is given with curriculum matters.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

123. Religious education is offered as a GCSE option in Year 10, but there has not been a viable group since 1995. A small group of six pupils sat the examination in 1999 and two gained A*-C grades.
124. Attainment at Key Stage 3 is in line with what is expected nationally. Pupils enter the school with reasonable background knowledge of the major religions represented in Britain. During Year 9 they extend this knowledge to include Buddhism. At the time of the inspection, pupils had just completed a church visit as part of a combined geography and religious education field trip. They were able to record their findings in a well-designed booklet that helped them to identify the main features of a Christian church and its form of worship. Pupils are gaining an understanding of religious explanations of the origin of good and evil. In a lesson on the Genesis account of the Fall, the teacher was able to make it relevant to pupils' experience of temptation and, by searching questions, helped them to explore what makes us choose to do what we know to be wrong. The opportunity for class discussion allows all pupils to make satisfactory progress in their learning, but needs to be more disciplined and include small groups if the exchange of ideas is to be effective.
125. Attainment at Key Stage 4 is below national expectations. The fortnightly lesson amounts to only half the recommended time and only half the locally agreed syllabus is taught. This also does not allow the teachers to get to know pupils well enough to establish good working relationships. Continuity has also been adversely affected by changing the groups in which pupils come for lessons, from their English classes in Year 10 to language classes in Year 11. The fact that the course does not lead to an external qualification seriously affects the subject's status. Pupils' attitudes towards the subject are fairly negative, so that teachers try to make the lessons relevant by adopting an approach similar to that used in PSE and sometimes repeating work done there, as in a Year 10 lesson on drinking and smoking. Little reference is made to the more overtly religious elements of the course. Whilst pupils possess the skills to discuss the moral issues raised in lessons, they are often not prepared to make the mental effort. Teachers find it difficult to engage them in orderly discussion, and pupils talking out of turn spoil lessons. The vociferous few grab the teacher's attention. There is little time for any written work, but many pupils even resist making brief notes on worksheets to record the main points of a lesson. Teachers have to settle for achieving less than their planned objectives, occupying pupils rather than making any real progress. The result is a high level of absenteeism from some lessons in Year 11.
126. Attainment by the few pupils who are studying the GCSE course in religious education is below national expectations. Their answers to examination questions lack sufficient depth and they are not applying knowledge of relevant religious teachings when discussing moral issues. Pupils were able to discuss the difficulties people have in believing in God, and in particular the problems posed by the existence of suffering and evil. Their notes on the course are rather insubstantial and attitudes to work are just satisfactory. Teachers are systematic in their coverage of the course, dividing the work efficiently between them. The generous teacher/pupil ratio should produce more informed understanding than pupils are showing.
127. Religion and ethics feature in one of the general studies modules in the Sixth Form, but these lessons are only available to half the pupils. In the lesson observed, pupils understood the basic

tenets of the Christian faith and were able to articulate their own views about religious belief. They showed respect for each other's views, voicing their doubts but keeping an open mind on matters of faith.

128. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and in the Sixth Form but is unsatisfactory at Key Stage 4. The present situation is not helped by the lack of a proper infrastructure for the subject. The department is fairly isolated, based in one of the huts and lacking proper monitoring and support during the long absence of its line manager. Resources for teaching the subject are also unsatisfactory, as there is only one set of textbooks for each year group and no religious artefacts. Teachers rely heavily on duplicated sheets.
129. Religious education was not being taught in Key Stage 4 at the time of the last inspection. This has been rectified in part. Similarly, religious education has been introduced in the Sixth Form, but is still not available for all pupils. Despite these improvements in provision, the status of the subject remains unchanged and it is not functioning properly at Key Stage 4. Consequently, there has been little real progress since the last inspection. The urgent need is for all pupils at Key Stage 4 to study a course that fulfils the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus, for resources to teach it and strategies for making the subject relevant and interesting to pupils.