

INSPECTION REPORT

**ACKLAM GRANGE COMPREHENSIVE
SCHOOL**

Middlesbrough

LEA area: Middlesbrough

Unique reference number: 111751

Headteacher: Mr J A Bate

Reporting inspector: Mrs S Tweddell
(OFSTED No: 1709)

Dates of inspection: 6 – 10 November 2000

Inspection number: 223753

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 - 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Lodore Grange Acklam Middlesbrough
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Telephone number:	01642 277700
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Cllr Hazel Pearson OBE
Date of previous inspection:	30/10/1995

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Sandra Tweddell (Ofsted No: 1709)	Registered inspector	English as an additional language	What sort of school is it?
			How high are standards? a) The schools results and achievements
			How well are pupils or students taught?
			How well is the school led and managed? How well does the school care for its pupils? a) assessment
Graeme Norval (Ofsted No: 9624)	Lay inspector		How high are standards? b) Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
			How well does the school care for its pupils?
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Marie Blewitt (Ofsted No: 23550)	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
Alan Brewerton (Ofsted No: 10905)	Team inspector	Science	
Jeffrey Cooling (Ofsted No: 14704)	Team inspector	Geography	
Rick Fuller (Ofsted No: 30553)	Team inspector	Mathematics	
Vincent Gormally (Ofsted No: 10209)	Team inspector	Art	
David Gutmann (Ofsted No: 10060)	Team inspector	Business education	
Paul Hartwright (Ofsted No: 8501)	Team inspector	Information technology	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils or students?

Peter Hick (Ofsted No: 10739)	Team inspector	Physical education	
Terence Payne (Ofsted No: 12276)	Team inspector	Music	
Jacqueline Pentlow (Ofsted No: 30563)	Team inspector	Religious education	
		Equal opportunities	
Mary Sewell (Ofsted No: 27983)	Team inspector	English	
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Robert Tweed (Ofsted No: 1845)	Team inspector	History	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Acklam Grange is a large comprehensive school which is bigger than most secondary schools with 1347 pupils on roll. Pupils come from an extremely wide range of backgrounds, from areas of high unemployment to affluent areas on the edge of the town. The number of pupils who are eligible for free school meals, 21.4 per cent, is broadly in line with the national average. Most of the pupils are white but the school has the advantage of 62 pupils for whom English is an additional language. This is a higher number than in many schools. Most of these pupils are fluent in English. The number of pupils on the register of special educational needs is slightly above the national average, there are 301 pupils at different stages of the register. Thirteen pupils have a statement of special educational need. The attainment of pupils on entry is broadly average, but varies from year to year and a third of pupils have difficulties with literacy. The school has recently been designated as the City Learning Centre for the Middlesbrough *Excellence in Cities* partnership.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Acklam Grange is a highly effective school which has successfully raised standards over the past ten years. At the end of Key Stage 4, attainment is above average in comparison with schools that take in pupils from similar backgrounds and has improved more quickly than many schools. There are five key reasons for this. There is very good leadership from the headteacher who has set a clear direction. With the senior management team, thoughtful systems have been established to manage the school. There is a strong work ethic and an emphasis on learning which permeates the school. The provision for personal development is very good and pupils are valued and so develop confidence. The quality of teaching is good at both key stages and parents and pupils hold the staff in high esteem. Based on the quality of education provided and the standards obtained in relation to the money it receives, particularly in terms of the personal development of pupils, the school gives very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils make good progress at Key Stage 4 and achieve well particularly in English and geography where attainment is above average at the end of both key stages and in mathematics where attainment is above average at the end of Key Stage 4.
- Teaching is good throughout the school.
- The leadership of the school is very good and has led to a steady rise in attainment.
- There is a special ethos which comes from very good provision for moral and social development and deep care for the well-being of all pupils.
- The behaviour and attitudes of the great majority of pupils are good.
- A good emphasis on professional development ensures that all staff keep up to date with developments in education, especially developments in literacy at which the school is successful.

What could be improved

The school is currently working on these points.

- The attainment of higher attaining pupils in many subjects is not as high as it is in English and geography.
- Although good, there is still some inconsistency of teaching within and between departments.
- The new management structure has not had time to take effect.
- Staff have all been, or are being, trained in the use of computers, but are awaiting hardware to use them in their teaching.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good progress on the points for improvement from the previous inspection in 1995. Each department now has good information about the attainment and progress of individual pupils which many, but not all, departments are using well to raise standards. Planning has improved to take account of the needs of pupils of different attainment, although there is some inconsistency within and across departments. The provision for information and communication technology has improved. The programme for teaching personal, social and health education has been successfully reviewed and tutors have more responsibility for ensuring that the programme is taught. Moreover, mentors are being used successfully to support individual pupils. The provision for literacy is good and involves all departments. Assemblies are effective but the school still does not meet the requirement to have a daily act of collective worship. The

quality of teaching has improved significantly and is good with a high proportion of very good or excellent lessons. The school has very good capacity to improve even further.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	All schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
GCSE examinations	D	C	C	B
A-levels/AS-levels	N/a	N/a	N/a	

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

The table shows that in 1999, attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 was in line with the national average and above the average for schools that take in pupils with similar backgrounds. Over the past three years, attainment has been rising above that of most schools. There is little difference in the performance of boys and girls. At the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999, pupils did particularly well in English, attaining in line with the national average, and above the average for similar schools. Attainment in mathematics was in line with that of similar schools and of schools in the country as a whole. Attainment in science was well below the average for similar schools and for schools nationally, although attainment has been close to average for the past three years.

In 2000, attainment in GCSE fell due to a higher number of pupils with special educational needs. At the end of Key Stage 3, attainment in English, mathematics and science improved, in science significantly. The school did not meet its target for the number of five or more A* to C grades at GCSE, but exceeded its target for the average score achieved by each pupil. There is currently no data to make comparison with other schools.

The inspection found that attainment continues to rise and is similar to that of 2000. Attainment in English and geography is above average. At both key stages, pupils achieve well in relation to their prior attainment and the gap between the performance of boys and girls is less than that found nationally.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. The majority of pupils have positive attitudes and enjoy coming to school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Most pupils are very well behaved in class and behaviour is good around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good and between pupils are good.
Attendance	Satisfactory and the rate of unauthorised absence is lower than in most schools.

The positive attitudes and good behaviour of most pupils are key factors in their good progress. Pupils develop high esteem and an awareness of the need to care for others. Adults respect pupils and value their opinions which leads to a mutual respect between staff and pupils. Most pupils are proud of their school and are good ambassadors for it.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is good or better in 73 per cent of lessons and very good in 31 per cent. 98 per cent of lessons are satisfactory or better. Teaching of literacy, English, mathematics and science is good as is the teaching of other subjects except music which is satisfactory with good features. All teachers have good methods to ensure that pupils behave so that all are able to listen and to learn. Most have a good understanding of the subjects they teach so that pupils make progress in the knowledge, skills and understanding. The needs of most pupils are met, but in some subjects, higher attaining pupils are not always challenged and lower attaining pupils are sometimes given work that is unsuitable. At Key Stage 4, pupils have a good understanding of how well they are learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum is broad and balanced.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. Pupils do best when they receive support, but this is not always available as there are relatively few support assistants.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. Most pupils are fluent in English and the school makes good use of the limited support for the few who are not.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Provision for moral and social development is very good and for spiritual development is good. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory as there are many good opportunities for developing an awareness of Western cultures but fewer for understanding other cultures and traditions.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. The ethos of the school is caring and supportive and encourages pupils to become thoughtful citizens.

The school has good links with parents and very good links with its feeder primary schools. The curriculum is enhanced by a very good range of extra-curricular activities. The provision for moral, social and spiritual development is a key strength in the good ethos of the school and encourages pupils' respect for themselves and for others.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher has set a clear agenda for continuous school improvement and he is supported extremely well by his deputy. Senior staff are hard working, enthusiastic and clear about their new roles.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors are deeply committed to the school and work hard to support the staff and pupils.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Very good systems are in place to evaluate attainment and progress and the information is used well by most, but not all departments.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Governors and senior staff are successful in ensuring good value for money.

The headteacher is highly effective with a great concern for raising standards, and ensuring that his pupils develop as rounded individuals. The leadership of the senior management team and of heads of department is good overall. Governors are enthusiastic, have pride in the school and they fulfil their strategic role well. The school has recently developed systems for reviewing the quality of teaching, but it is too soon to judge how effective these systems are. Resources are used strategically and wisely. Staff, accommodation and learning resources are adequate.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The standards achieved by their children and the progress they make, especially those with special educational needs and those with high attainment • The attitudes and values promoted by the school and the sense of pride pupils feel. • The behaviour of the pupils. • Systems of communication. • The teaching is good and teachers have high expectations of pupils' work and a strong commitment to the pupils. • The leadership and management of the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A very small number of the 25% who responded feel they receive insufficient information about how well their child is doing. • A slightly smaller number feel their children do not receive the right amount of work to do at home.

The inspection team found that parents are justified in their views about what pleases them about the school. In relation to what a small number of parents would like to see improved, the inspection team found that sufficient information is given about how well pupils are doing but that sometimes, the information about subjects in the reports to parents is too bland. Homework is set and marked regularly by all departments, using an agreed timetable to which all parents have access.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 in 1999 was in line with the national average and above the average for schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. Over the past three years to 1999, the trend in attainment has been rising above that of most schools. There was little difference between the performance of boys and girls. At the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999, pupils did particularly well in English, attaining in line with the national average, and above the average for similar schools as many pupils attained the higher levels of the test. Attainment in mathematics was in line with that of similar schools and of schools in the country as a whole. Attainment in science was well below the average for similar schools and for schools nationally.
2. In 2000, attainment in GCSE fell slightly because there were more pupils with special educational needs than in the previous year but the average points score was the same as last year. In the tests at the end of Key Stage 3, attainment in English, mathematics and science improved significantly, particularly in science. In all three subjects, the number of pupils achieving the higher levels of the national tests increased. English, once again, did particularly well. The data to make comparisons with other schools is not yet available.
3. The inspection found that attainment is continuing to rise at both key stages and is similar to last year. Overall achievement at both key stages is good. Part of the reason for this is the increased use of information about pupils' prior attainment and their progress. This has been used at Key Stage 4 for the past three years and is beginning to be used with younger pupils. Tutors have the responsibility of talking to older pupils about how well they are doing in relation to what they are expected to achieve at GCSE. Some departments, for example, English, use the information well to set targets for pupils. Other departments are still learning how to use the information in the best way.
4. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in relation to their previous attainment and reach standards which are generally consistent with their abilities. Progress towards the targets set in their individual education plans is good when the targets are clearly specified,
5. Higher attaining pupils achieve well in English and geography at both key stages but in other subjects, they are sometimes not challenged and so do not make the progress of which they are capable. Pupils for whom English is an additional language achieve appropriately. Most of the pupils are fluent in English; the few who are not receive help from specialists which supports their progress.
6. Attainment in English continues to rise and is above average at the end of both key stages. Many pupils achieve high grades at both key stages. This is because of skilled teaching, particularly of writing where standards are high. Pupils apply their skills of literacy well in other subjects. Literacy has been a focus for development and all departments encourage pupils to develop and use the skills of literacy for their subjects. For example, pupils often use subject specific language confidently because staff encourage them by talking about the meaning of words when pupils come across them for the first time. Most pupils understand how to find information from books and computers. Most express themselves well in writing and present information well.
7. Attainment in mathematics is in line with the national average at both key stages. At the end of Key Stage 4, pupils achieve well. Many pupils have a good facility with number as this is taught effectively in the mathematics department. In other subjects, skills of numeracy are used well, for example in science when recording information and in business studies where pupils understand how to use databases and spreadsheets.
8. There has been a significant improvement in attainment in science at the end of Key Stage 3. Attainment is still below, but closer to, the national average than it was in 1999, In comparison with similar schools in 2000, attainment is above average. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is average overall: in combined science it is above average, but in single sciences is below average. By the time pupils leave school, many have a good understanding of physical processes, such as forces and electricity. Their knowledge of materials and their properties, for example, how materials can be classified, although satisfactory, is less strong. Although there is usually good challenge for higher

attainers in the top sets, a few underachieve.

9. Although resources are presently limited for information and communication technology, pupils achieve well at the end of both key stages and attainment is above average apart from in control technology as it is taught insufficiently. Higher attaining pupils make good progress as the work is demanding. Sometimes, lower attaining pupils receive little support and so do not make the progress they should. All staff have been, or are being, trained to use computers to increase learning opportunities for pupils. However, pupils' skills in many subjects are not currently being extended as staff give inconsistent opportunities for pupils to use computers. Plans have been made to tackle this through the funding for the City Learning Centre.
10. At the end of both key stages, attainment in religious education is in line with what is expected from the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. Pupils at Key Stage 3 begin to reflect on ultimate questions about life and they have a good understanding of Christianity. Older pupils at Key Stage 4 begin to think about moral issues, such as the sanctity of life. Less strong, although satisfactory, is the knowledge of all pupils about a range of world religions.
11. By the end of both key stages, attainment in history is average and has improved significantly over the past seven years. Younger pupils have a detailed knowledge of different periods of British history, such as life in medieval Britain and the English civil war. Higher attaining pupils develop good historical skills, such as using sources of evidence from books and the internet and making hypotheses about why things happened. Pupils of average attainment are less confident about interpreting evidence. At Key Stage 4, most pupils have the skills to analyse information and higher attaining pupils have a good breadth and depth of understanding which they use well to relate cause and effect.
12. Pupils achieve well in geography and their attainment is above average at the end of both key stages. Higher attaining pupils achieve particularly high standards. As in English, teaching is highly skilled and thoughtful. By the end of Key Stage 3 many pupils use maps and other artefacts well to gain information and they present their work clearly. Pupils studying the subject for GCSE develop confidence in analysing a wide range of information and they understand the impact of human life upon the environment.
13. Pupils make good progress in French and German at Key Stage 3 and attain in line with what is expected for fourteen year olds. At the end of Key Stage 4, attainment is below average. The department has analysed the reasons for this and is introducing new approaches to raise standards. Many pupils by the end of Key Stage 3 have reasonable confidence to talk about their lives in French or German. Higher attaining pupils at Key Stage 4 write fluently with careful attention to grammar and spelling. Lower attaining pupils are sometimes more apathetic and pupils have a limited vocabulary which affects their ability to converse and write.
14. Attainment in design and technology at the end of Key Stage 3 is average overall but pupils' skills in design in graphics and resistant materials are unsatisfactory. At the end of Key Stage 4, overall results are broadly average, but attainment in food and textiles technology is high and in graphics and resistant materials is low.
15. Attainment in art is in line with national expectations at Key Stage 3 but below average at the end of Key Stage 4. By the end of Key Stage 3, many pupils are skilled at observational drawings, often giving a sensitive personal response. They use different techniques effectively. At Key Stage 4, many pupils are skilled in three-dimensional work, drawing and painting, but their work in graphics is weaker as their techniques are not well developed and their ideas are naïve.
16. Drama has recently been introduced for pupils at Key Stage 3 and they make good progress and achieve highly. Pupils use a range of dramatic techniques well and they develop confidence in exploring characters. They develop perception in evaluating their own work and that of others.
17. Attainment in music by the end of Key Stage 3 is well below average. Higher attaining pupils understand notation but the skills of many pupils in singing, using instruments and listening and appraising are unsatisfactory. The number of pupils taking music at GCSE is too small to make valid comparison with national data.
18. Attainment in physical education is in line with national expectations at the end of key Stage 3 and

above average at the end of Key Stage 4. Boys and girls do equally well in games such as volleyball and dance. A very good range of extra-curricular activities increase the opportunities for pupils to enhance their skills.

19. In business studies, attainment is in line with the national average and boys do particularly well as they use computers more proficiently. Pupils achieve well. Pupils demonstrate a good ability to plan, review and evaluate their work. Most pupils apply skills of literacy and numeracy well to present and analyse their findings. Sometimes, they do not use spellcheck facilities to correct their work.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

20. Overall, pupils have good attitudes to learning and work hard. The majority are keen to come to school and there is a high response to the very wide range of activities offered by the school. At a quiz evening organised by the parent teacher association during inspection, nearly one hundred and seventy pupils attended. Joint winners were a pupil team and an administration staff team. Competition was keen and younger pupils persevered. Evidence from parents indicates that pupils are proud of Acklam Grange and their parents hold it in high regard. This view is supported by inspection evidence.
21. In nearly fifty percent of the lessons observed, attitudes were very good and in a small number of lessons, excellent. In the majority of lessons, pupils respond well. They work well independently on computers and in pairs or groups, accepting responsibility for their own learning. Pupils show a good response to questions which challenge their thinking. They are happy to contribute to discussion and to read from their work or from texts. Overall, pupils' attitudes have a significant impact on their learning and progress reflecting the favourable comments in the previous report.
22. Pupils' behaviour is good and is usually very good in many lessons, The inspection took place during a period of heavy rain that prevented pupils using the yards or fields for much of the time. Given the conditions, the behaviour of pupils was exemplary. A very small amount of inappropriate behaviour was observed but these incidents diminished when the weather improved. There is no recorded evidence of unacceptable behaviour. Pupils and their parents are confident that incidents of bullying will be dealt with promptly and effectively.
23. The attitudes of pupils with special educational needs to learning are good. They show keen interest in their lessons and can sustain their concentration and effort. They respond constructively to the support they get from teachers and classroom assistants. Their behaviour in class and around the school is respectful to adults and towards each other, and they react appropriately to correction. They show maturity in their relationships, for instance in their response to the help they get from older pupils with their reading. They work well in groups, as in an English lesson based on detective work, designed to develop pupils' listening skills. There is no discrimination towards pupils with special educational needs, and they are fully integrated into the life of the school.
24. The number of fixed period exclusions has increased since the last inspection. There were no permanent exclusions in 1999/2000. The school is scrupulous in recording exclusions, which presents a biased adverse picture. A large percentage is short-term over-night or part-day exclusions. Staff and pupils regard these as an opportunity for both to reflect on the cause of the offence and potential outcome. There are very few repeat offenders. Evidence from meetings with the local authority inclusions officer and education social worker confirm the judgement that exclusion is being used effectively and fairly to the ultimate benefit of the pupils affected. In the previous academic year, there was one permanent exclusion. The pupil was supported and successfully re-integrated back into school.
25. Pupils' personal development, their relationships with each other and with staff are very good. The school has a special ethos which is partly due to the very good provision for personal development. There is high respect for the feelings and beliefs of others and no evidence of sexism or racism. Full use is made of the many opportunities for personal development. Prefects and senior prefects, who value their appointments, use their authority wisely and with compassion. They are supportive and many of the other older pupils support younger ones in shared reading. Year 11 pupils are taught how to help with the learning of reading.
26. There are many active clubs. These include a Pelargonium Club, run by pupils with help from a staff

member. The corridors are lined with plants, the propagation greenhouses filled with cuttings and the, mainly younger, pupils with justifiable pride. The club has achieved national standing, with a hybrid named after the school shown at the Chelsea Flower Show. Plans for the school to host the annual international show in 2001 are well advanced.

27. Other pupils have achieved county and national recognition in many sports in the past and currently. Extensive use is made of corridor walls to display pupils' work and activities. There is a large display of the Child of Achievement award presented to a group of pupils in 1997 by the Prime Minister. This is the only occasion when the award has been made to a group, following fund raising activities for a local children's hospice. That year and every year since, younger pupils have raised substantial sums of money for the same project. Last year, Years 7 and 8 pupils raised £8611 by a wide range of activities.
28. A Year 10 display from 1999 is based on work designed to show young people in the twenty-first century how their compatriots lived in the twentieth century. Pupils' letters, drawings and photographs depict fashion, customs and social practices of the present day.
29. Attendance is satisfactory. Following the last inspection attendance dropped slightly but has since recovered. In the last academic year, and this year to date, attendance marginally exceeds the national average for comparable schools. Reference to statistics produced by the education social worker shows that over the last five years Acklam Grange has had the highest attendance of non-denominational secondary schools in the local area.
30. There are no obvious inconsistencies between year groups, although there are a very small number of persistent offenders particularly in Key Stage 4, whose attendance is of concern to the school. Persistent absenteeism affects pupils' learning and their performance in important examinations. Some absence is condoned by parents and parents are made aware that the school will not tolerate this.
31. This is a very large school, built mainly on one level. Consequently many pupils have to cover a substantial distance between lessons. The school has a five-minute gap between lessons to allow for this movement and generally, this works well. However, there is some evidence that pupils moving to and from lessons at the extreme ends of the school are late for the start of the next period. This feature was commented upon in the last inspection report.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

32. The quality of teaching is good overall and there is little difference between the teaching of older and younger pupils. 98 per cent of teaching is satisfactory or better and of this, 73 per cent is good or better. A significant number of lessons have major strengths, just under a third of lessons are very good or excellent. The teaching in all departments is good, except in music where it is satisfactory overall although there are strengths in the teaching.
33. Pupils with special educational needs generally are taught well. Where they are available, teachers work constructively with classroom support assistants, but the level of such support is low. In some lessons teachers use individual education plans constructively, but this is inconsistent across departments. Teachers within the special needs department make very good use of their specialist knowledge, for instance by working already to the probable changes in the Code of Practice. Specialist teachers produce good individual education plans which take account of pupils' statements where necessary, and involve pupils in the process of review. There are too few examples of clear, specific short-term targets being set within subjects. All departments have literacy policies which give valuable support to the development of basic skills. Pupils for whom English is an additional language are taught as effectively as others and receive specialist support when they are at an early stage of learning English which helps them.
34. Higher attaining pupils are challenged effectively by their teaching and so achieve well in English and geography at Key Stages 3 and 4 and in mathematics at Key Stage 4. In other subjects, they are sometimes unchallenged by the teaching and so do not make the progress they should. Boys do as well as girls as the school has found ways of encouraging and motivating them by the teaching and by personal support.
35. The teaching in geography is highly effective and results in high numbers of pupils doing very well at

GCSE. The features of the teaching that ensure this happens are high expectations of all pupils, rigour in following departmental policies by all staff, and, a most important feature, extremely good methods of questioning which probe pupils' understanding and make them reflect on their learning. Another aspect is good interaction with pupils which results in much lively discussion. All of these features are present in the teaching of other departments, but not as consistently.

36. All teachers have a good understanding of the subjects they teach which they use to move pupils' learning forward. In a Year 9 science lesson, the teacher had very good subject knowledge which was used well to ask probing questions which extended the class' learning. In a Year 11 information and communication technology lesson, the teacher's good understanding of databases enabled the class to achieve highly.
37. All departments are aware of the need to develop and extend the literacy skills of the pupils and all have effective methods for this to happen. In a Year 10 lesson on resistant materials, the teacher was careful to explain new vocabulary. This enabled good learning and the pupils were confident to use the vocabulary which gave precision to their discussion. In another lesson, pupils studying settlements in geography consolidated their understanding of key words such as *physical* and *human*, by skilful teaching.
38. A method used across the school is sharing the purpose of the lesson with pupils and telling them what they should have learnt at the end of the lesson. This gives pupils a focus for the lesson which helps their learning. Year 10 pupils following the key skills course were very clear about what they were expected to know at the end of the lesson and this helped them to achieve highly. Sometimes however, the objectives are not clear to the pupils, an example of minor inconsistencies within and between departments. In some subjects, pupils are given targets which also gives them something to aim for.
39. Many teachers ensure that lessons are challenging which extends the learning of all pupils. Pupils studying business education were successfully challenged by an activity which involved a petty cash spreadsheet. This enabled them to understand the idea of spreadsheets. In another example, a Year 9 class made very good progress in understanding the difference between facts, opinion and theory because the lesson was so challenging. Pupils who are gifted or talented are given more difficult work in some lessons such as in a Year 9 mathematics class when higher attaining pupils were asked to find the volume of a cone. However, there is inconsistency within and between departments.
40. The school is large which has the potential to cause pupils to lose time. This is handled well by all staff because of the ethos of the school which encourages punctuality. In the main, lessons begin and end promptly. Most staff use time in lessons efficiently which maintains the motivation of pupils. Resources are ready, the lessons are well planned and a few staff use deadlines which prompts pupils to work hard. Year 10 pupils studying *An Inspector Calls* achieved highly because the lesson moved quickly and resources were very well prepared.
41. The management of behaviour is a key strength of the school and pupils are enabled to listen and to learn. Relationships are very good between staff and pupils so that pupils are confident to ask questions and contribute to lessons. One out of the very many examples of this was a German lesson with a Year 8 class, in which pupils made very good progress. This was because they were enabled to be attentive and to take in information and participate fully in the lesson.
42. Instructions and explanations are clear so that pupils know exactly what they have to do. Pupils in a Year 11 class studying electro-magnetic induction increased confidence in their understanding because the teacher gave very good explanations so that pupils learnt systematically. In another example, pupils in Year 10 studying the development of surgery were enabled to understand key facts and cope with difficult vocabulary by the careful explanations.
43. The good display and attractive environment within classrooms and in the school creates a good learning ethos which motivates pupils to want to learn. The learning environment in a Year 7 classroom included an expectation of high achievement and pupils made good progress. Many staff are enthusiastic about teaching which motivates the pupils. Pupils in a Year 7 art lesson were highly motivated by their teacher's enthusiasm when they were learning about the effect of colours. As a result, they understood the ideas of the impact of colours and how to mix them.
44. Homework is set to a prearranged timetable and all staff ensure that they keep to this and give

homework regularly.

45. The quality of teaching has improved greatly since the last inspection as there has been a successful focus on teaching and learning. Pupils learn effectively because the teaching is good. There are still inconsistencies within and between departments but overall, teaching is a key strength of the school.

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

46. Since the last inspection and after considerable consultation, the curriculum has been redesigned and provides broad and balanced opportunities for all pupils in line with the new national curriculum. Governors, head teacher, staff and the deputy head in charge of the curriculum formed an interactive team during the redesigning process. The governors' curriculum working party continues to be closely involved in curriculum decisions. Pupils with special educational needs have access to the full range of National Curriculum and other extra-curricular and social activities enjoyed by pupils generally. The curriculum has been enhanced by the appointment of two full time learning mentors and a co-ordinator for gifted and talented pupils.
47. The overall time allocated to the taught curriculum is in line with national recommendations although some time is lost due to movement of pupils and staff on the large site. The needs of students of different attainment is satisfactorily met in most subjects by means of different methods of grouping. The 10 day timetable is generally effective in ensuring that subjects receive sufficient time. Drama has been successfully introduced for all pupils at Key Stage 3. Pupils study either French or German in Years 7 to 9 and have the opportunity of studying both languages in Years 8 and 9. Citizenship is included in the personal, social and health education lessons and is also taught as part of the curriculum in a wide range of subjects. There is a good range of business studies classes for pupils of all abilities and provisional plans to further increase the range of vocational opportunities in September 2001. The curriculum has been thoughtfully planned so that it is relevant to the needs of pupils.
48. A good range of examination subjects is available at the end of Key Stage 4. This includes GCSE in the core and most foundation subjects, and a short GCSE is offered to those studying religious education. A variety of vocational subjects such as business studies, office applications, drama and theatre arts and ICT also have a GCSE accreditation. Certificates of Achievement are offered in core science, modern foreign languages and physical education for some students. A significant number of ICT students gain a key skills certificate. Curriculum support is provided in all subjects by other teaching staff, auxiliary staff and a special needs department. Additional curriculum support provides intensive literacy, small group work and some withdrawal from lessons. Sixty students are disapplied from the National Curriculum in line with new guidance and alternative subjects have been carefully considered so that their curriculum is still balanced. Pupils receive good support in preparation for their future employment through a programme of work experience and the personal and social education programme. This programme is highly effective in promoting pupils' personal development.
49. A very wide range of extra-curricular activities is available to pupils. These are provided at lunchtime and after school and occasionally during evenings and weekends. More than half of the staff willingly give their time to provide these clubs. Examples are the pelargonium club that exhibits at local and European shows and groups that are taken to Euro Disney where they learn about the information and communication technology applications used as well as improving their French. Work in English is supplemented by an active drama programme including pupil performances and productions by visiting theatre companies. The physical education department has been awarded 2 consecutive Sportsmark awards by Sport England. A bread project in food and textile technology was conducted on a commercial scale. Extensive charity work is also conducted through the pastoral system. In addition, classes are available in most subjects to enable students to raise their attainment levels in examination subjects. All these curricular activities are much appreciated by parents.
50. Careers education is organised effectively by a school co-ordinator and a team of five staff in conjunction with the careers Advisory Service. Decision making, a personal survey of interests and an action plan are developed during the Year 9 personal social and health education programme. In years 10 and 11 students have a specific careers lesson with a planned programme of work. Records are kept in students work files. Work experience, mock interviews and records of achievement are key components of the Year 10 and 11 careers programme. Some Year 10 students have career interviews and the Careers Advisory Service interview all Year 11 pupils and keep a database for each

individual.

51. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The spiritual provision in the school overall is good. Each pupil attends two assemblies per week and the content of these has a clear spiritual emphasis. During the week of the inspection the theme of 'Remembrance' was powerful. However there is no spiritual content in the form periods, on the other three days, and so in this respect the school is not complying with the statutory requirement of providing a collective act of worship every day. Very effective use was made of the work of pupils' poetry based on the First World War and a diary extract from a visit to the Battlefields; these showed empathy and true reflection. Displays around the school also permeate this spiritual emphasis with much poetry on display and the Millennium Trees containing poems, prayers and dreams for the future. These trees are treated with respect and pupils were seen reading the book that goes with these and discussing the contents. Religious education contributes to the spiritual development of the pupils in discussing a range of spiritual questions and in a number of other subjects such as art and science the spiritual dimension is included as appropriate.
52. There are very good procedures to promote pupils' moral and social development. The school's very special ethos makes a noticeable contribution. Many subject areas include moral and social responsibility in their lesson planning. For example, in science pupils are encouraged to take care of equipment, have respect for the property of others and to obey the safety rules. In physical education the importance of rules, team play and fair play is highlighted. The programme of personal, social and health education within the well-managed pastoral care programme provides good opportunities for thinking about health and sexual issues within a moral framework.
53. A major strength of pupils' social development comes from the system of heads of year staying with the same group of pupils as they progress from Year 7 to Year 11. This initiative received strong support from parents at the parents' meeting. The procedure supports the detailed knowledge of each pupil that is a major part of the pastoral care provided in this school. The head of pastoral care, with the heads and deputy heads of each year group, form an effective and supportive base for personal and social development. The recent appointment of a home-school liaison officer is already having a positive impact upon pupils' behaviour, absenteeism and awareness of taking responsibility for their own actions.
54. During the inspection, a presentation to Year 8 pupils by a professional group of three young people, *The Cragrats*, vividly demonstrated areas where there is temptation to accept drugs. Appropriate procedures to resist and walk away from such temptation, were presented with significant empathy for the age group of the pupils being addressed. The degradation and desperation consequent upon drug usage were well presented. Sex education is taught as part of personal, social and health education. The context is a moral one and emphasises loving relationships.
55. Many charity events are initiated and organised by the pupils, such as raising funds by packing bags for customers at a local supermarket. There is a strong structure of school councils. Each year group has its own council and they are represented in the whole school council. Wide-ranging topics are discussed and they form a good channel for two-way communication between senior management and pupils. A particular strength is the wide range of residential and day visits planned for pupils of all ages. In talking to pupils these visits received frequent mention, including an eloquent comment by the headboy. The headboy and headgirl both represented the school at the Middlesborough Remembrance Day Cenotaph parade that took place during inspection.
56. The provision of cultural development is satisfactory. There is good provision for the understanding of western culture but less coverage of other cultures found in the world. The pupils have the opportunity to go on a range of visits including those to the theatre. The history and modern language departments arrange a wide range of visits to European countries. Good examples of the wider aspects of cultural development within lessons are seen in the English department who use a good range of texts from other cultures and in art and textiles who draw on the patterns of other cultures in their design work. The pupils respond positively to these and they enhance the pupil's cultural understanding. Four world religions are considered in religious education but, except for Christianity, pupils' understanding of these is quite weak and at times confused. In other subjects, opportunities for cultural development are rarely identified in the schemes of work and many opportunities are missed.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

57. The supportive structure noted in the last inspection report has been continued and expanded.
58. The procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils welfare are very good. The pastoral care department is well organised and strongly led. Tutors and year heads work very hard together to ensure pupils well being. The head of pastoral care and the special education needs co-ordinator are jointly designated as child protection officers. They recognise the necessity for good communication in such a large school and there are excellent procedures to keep all teaching and non-teaching staff informed.
59. There are clear health and safety procedures with an adequate number of fully qualified first aiders. Many other staff have elementary first aid qualifications. There are appropriate procedures to record all injuries and to inform parents of matters of concern. However, there is no designated area where pupils more seriously injured or in need of privacy, can wait for collection by ambulance or parents. No member of the governing body is directly involved with health and safety matters but members of the premises committee receive appropriate reports throughout the year. Ongoing risk assessment is the responsibility of all members of staff. There are good safety procedures in the science and technology departments. Compliance with statutory requirements, such as the formal annual risk assessment' rests with the local authority. The testing of portable electrical appliances, fire and security equipment, and fire evacuation drills is controlled by the head of pastoral care.
60. The links with feeder primary schools are very good. Parents comment favourably about this and inspection evidence supports them. There are four schools that provide the majority of pupils entering Year 7. Considerable work is done to ensure continuity of schemes of work in different subjects. Teaching staff make two-way visits. Acklam Grange considers the facilities for transfer to be so important that each year they make funds available to the feeder primaries for supply teachers. This enables teachers from the primary schools to visit the secondary school, both with and without pupils to ensure a smooth and stress-free transfer, which effectively supports progress in learning
61. Notice boards are in appropriate locations giving advice on career choices and where to seek further advice. The programme of personal and social education includes lessons about writing curriculum vitae and letters of application.
62. There are very good procedures for monitoring and improving attendance. Formal registration takes place at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions and registers are also checked informally at the beginning of each lesson. The registers are computerised using an optical mark reader to transfer information daily to school records. Year heads are given a weekly printout and have easy access to the records at any time. A bulletin listing any pupils about whom there is a concern is distributed to all staff weekly. There is excellent co-operation between the school and the education social worker (ESW). The ESW has been working with the school for 10 years. He visits the school several times a week and has a very close liaison with year heads and knows pupils and their families extremely well. The recent appointment of a home-school liaison officer is already reducing absenteeism, truancy and poor behaviour.
63. Procedures to promote and monitor good behaviour are very effective. Pupils are expected to behave well and are supported in this by consistent reinforcement of high standards and the rights and responsibilities all share. The behaviour code focuses on the recognition and reward of achievement. There are appropriate procedures for dealing with any unacceptable behaviour. Parents and pupils are confident that when isolated incidents of bullying take place, they will be dealt with quickly and effectively. Inspection evidence supports this view.
64. Reports to parents about their child's progress are sometimes bland. In religious education, the reports issued to Years 7,8 and 9 are general and do not relate to the attainment targets of the Agreed Syllabus and Key Stage 4 pupils following the core course do not receive reports. In this the school is not fulfilling the statutory requirements.
65. Systems of assessment are good and are continuing to develop well. The school uses national tests to assess the likely progress that pupils will make, based on information about their previous attainment. The information is given to all departments to use to set targets and to talk to pupils about their progress in order to encourage them as to how well they might do. In addition, information is collected about, for example, pupils' attitudes and their behaviour ready for the interim report in the spring term. All departments contribute to this information so a full picture is built up of each pupil. Tutors are given the data so that they can discuss the profile with individual pupils.

Pupils who are in danger of underachieving are identified by these means and where possible, they are assigned mentors who work with them to encourage them to succeed. Pupils speak highly of this process. Not all departments are using the information as systematically as they could. The English department uses it most successfully to set targets for all pupils.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

66. Many parents hold the school in high regard. Ninety-nine per cent of the parents responding to the questionnaire state that the school expects their children to work hard and achieve their best. This excellent opinion is supported by evidence from the parents' meeting and in a separate questionnaire produced by the school at the last school open day. Parental support for the school is strong in many other areas, including children liking school, making good progress, and the help given to achieve maturity and responsibility. A very large majority of parents also believe that the school is well led and managed. Inspection evidence strongly supports the views of parents in all these areas.
67. Parents receive good quality information. In a school of this size it is impossible to operate an open-door policy. However, appointments are easily made by telephone to discuss matters of concern with the head or deputy head of each year group. The prospectus is a powerful, informative and attractive document. The governors' annual report to parents is seen as the school's window to the world and is a celebration of achievements. The school is aware that alterations are required to this document in order fully to comply with statutory requirements. There is a home-school agreement.
68. School reports to parents comply with statutory regulations. Many contain areas for improvement but few are sufficiently targeted upon the extent of improvement required. Some tend to be bland, merely reporting what pupils have done.
69. The school does all it can to encourage parents to support their children's learning. However, the impact of parents' involvement with their children's learning and on the work of the school is variable. There is an active parent teacher association, which includes four parent governors. Attendance at annual review meetings is carefully recorded by the school. At the last options evenings, where pupils choose their examination subjects, nearly eighty per cent of the eligible parents were present. However, the parental support for academic achievement is less obvious. Quite a number of home-school diaries are not signed by parents and there are a number who fail to respond to requests to explain absence.
70. In the main the supportive comments made in the last inspection report are still justified and in some cases have been extended.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

71. The quality of leadership has been maintained since the last inspection and is very good. The headteacher has set a very clear agenda for school improvement. He has high expectations of staff and pupils, yet also has a deep concern for their welfare. His approach is thoughtful, analytical and rigorous which has led to a continual rise in attainment. The deputy headteacher successfully complements this work and together, they make a strong team.
72. The senior management team supports the leadership effectively. It has recently been reviewed and since September, seven senior teachers have been allocated specific areas of responsibility. All are very clear about their roles and have approached them with enthusiasm and thoughtfulness, gathering information and setting a clear direction for their work to develop. It is too soon to determine how effective this will be, especially as most hold other senior roles in the school. The headteacher is aware of the need to keep the new arrangements under review. Heads of department give a good lead and effectively support staff in their teams.
73. Governors fulfil their role most effectively. They are energetic and enthusiastic, and most are deeply committed to, and proud of the school. They bring a wide range of expertise to their work and use their different experiences well to benefit their work. They have good systems for gaining information about all aspects of the work of the school.
74. The school development plan is most effective in ensuring that the priorities of the school are met. It

is a comprehensive and detailed document. All staff are involved in its review to see if the previous year's priorities have been met and all staff are involved in determining the priorities for the following year. Governors and staff use it well.

75. The approaches to literacy and numeracy by the whole school are managed well. All departments use the policies for developing the literacy skills of pupils and a few are beginning to use the policies for numeracy. A school approach to numeracy has followed that of literacy so the work is not as advanced as it is for literacy.
76. The provision for pupils with English as an additional language is satisfactory. The great majority of pupils are fluent in English as well as, for example, Punjabi and Urdu. The school acts promptly to help the very few pupils who are at early stages of English, drawing in specialist support when it is needed. The communications between this support and subject staff sometimes is not as effective as it should be, for example, one pupil who did not complete work was punished as the teacher did not realise the extent of his difficulties. This was quickly put right by the teacher as soon as she realised, and the pupil now receives good support in the lessons in this department.
77. The senior management team gives strong leadership to the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs. The very low rate of exclusion, for example, is evidence of the school's determination to keep pupils whose behaviour is difficult firmly within the school community. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very effectively managed through the special educational needs co-ordinator. She has a clear perspective of the standards achieved by pupils with special needs and keeps her colleagues across the school focused on raising achievement. Resources are satisfactory within the context of the school's budget. Statutory requirements for pupils with special needs are fully met. The prospectus gives a detailed account of how such pupils are accommodated, and the governors' annual report to parents explains how resources are used.
78. The school has made steady progress since the last inspection in improving its provision for pupils with special educational needs. It has taken account of national developments in its approach to inclusion, and has managed a balanced approach to special needs' provision which minimises the bureaucracy and paperwork, and focuses instead on the quality of provision within the classroom.
79. There are no major issues concerning equal opportunities in that all pupils have equal access to a broad and balanced curriculum; however there is an uneven balance of girls and boys in some sets. The school has two mathematics sets taught by single gender and they are being monitored to see how effective this is in raising attainment.
80. The school aims have been carefully decided and appropriately are centred around a focus on learning. The school aims to achieve this through a shared approach to making decisions and a valuing of all adults and pupils in the school. The very good leadership and good team work amongst all staff has created a very strong work ethic. This comes from professional pride and a mutual respect between adults and pupils. The learning environment is very good, extending throughout the school. Adults and pupils have created a most attractive environment, making the best use of space on corridors. Pupils are expected to attend regularly and punctually, and arrive ready to work. This has a major impact on learning. The aims have been most successfully met.

Use of strategic resources

81. Finances are very effectively managed and financial controls satisfy the auditors' requirements. The school is called upon to give financial support and advice to neighbouring schools. Specific grants are effectively and demonstratively targeted on the purpose for which they are intended. In addition the school actively seeks to improve provision for its pupils by well-judged and successful bidding for further grants, which have included School Challenge money and provision for the impending City Learning College to be sited at the school.
82. The school systematically plans all expenditure to implement priorities for improvement. Departmental improvement plans are tightly embedded in and inform the school improvement plan. Governors, headteacher, senior managers, heads of department and the school's senior administrator play appropriate roles with skill. They are well supported by an established and efficient financial administrative system. Staff are very experienced in knowing what information is needed and where to get advice before making financial decisions. There is an excellent understanding of specifications. Spending on goods and services is anticipated and decisions made to ensure rigorous adherence to principles of best value. Purchases of equipment are reviewed and on rare occasions

have been put to a new purpose if under-used. The facilities, environment and equipment observed to be used in the promotion of high standards of pupils' education at the school bear witness to the very good strategies in place for using and allocating resources.

Staffing

83. The school is adequately staffed to teach the curriculum. The number, qualifications and experience of the teaching staff provides a good match to the needs of the pupils. Of the total of 75.4 full time equivalent teachers there are 9 part time and while this increases the number of classes that share subject teachers this does not lead to difficulties because of the effective systems of communication and good departmental team work. The ratio of teachers to the number of pupils is slightly above the national average. While the amount of non-teaching time varies in relation to the additional management responsibilities undertaken by staff, on average teachers teach for 76.9 per cent of the week which is in line with the national average. Teachers who are non-specialists do a small amount of subject teaching but this does not reduce the quality as they are well supported and the school has good arrangements for professional development.
84. There are effective procedures to help newly appointed teachers and temporary supply cover staff who join the school. The induction programme for newly qualified teachers meets statutory requirements and good links exist with higher education establishments for initial teacher training. The school has well-established partnerships with primary schools and post 16 colleges. In this way and through the well planned programme of in-service training, teachers are kept informed and up to date with developments in education.
85. The teaching benefits from the very good support provided by the non-teaching staff. Administrative, clerical and technical staff work closely with teachers to enhance the day-to-day smooth running of the school. The provision of support staff in specialist subjects and practical areas such as science, design and technology, information and communications technology has improved since the last inspection although in music and art, the absence of technician support adds to the non-teaching workload of the teachers. Within the constraints of its delegated budget the school targets support staff to match the priorities identified in the school development plan and keeps under review the number, expertise and qualifications of all non-teaching staff. When the opportunity arises to appoint additional staff finances are used effectively and since the last inspection funding for specific purposes has led to appropriate appointments of staff to support pupils with special educational needs, for pupils with additional language needs and to improve liaison between school and home.

Accommodation

86. Most of the accommodation is at ground level and dates back to the 1950s. This means that the layout is extensive and that much of the building was not originally designed to teach the curriculum and meet needs of the present day. The school effectively overcomes these potential drawbacks. As a result of careful planning, good organisation and the sense of pride shown by pupils and staff efficient and effective use is made of the available accommodation and facilities.
87. Since the last inspection several improvements have been made. A new science block provides a suite of modern laboratories with appropriate preparation rooms and storage. This in turn allowed the school to make further changes and rationalise rooms for other subjects so that now most departments have good-sized rooms that are close together. The space available for music remains cramped and some of the specialist rooms for design and technology are unsatisfactory.
88. At the time of the inspection, excessively wet weather made the extensive outdoor areas difficult to use and indoor facilities for physical education come under pressure given the number of pupils on roll. The hard surface play areas, especially the recently added tennis courts are well used. The environmental project area, ponds and greenhouses enhance the grounds and provide opportunities for learning in several subjects. Plans are at an advanced stage for a major investment using funds through the DfEE "Excellence in Cities" programme. This will provide for the building of a well equipped new block that will contain extensive up to date computer facilities and conference rooms for when the school achieves the status of a City Learning Centre in 2001.
89. The many positive features identified in the last inspection remain. Caretaking and cleaning staff maintain the accommodation to a high standard of safety, security and cleanliness. As funds become available, a rolling programme of decoration and refurbishment is implemented and pupils and staff work hard to make the school environment attractive and welcoming. There is a wealth of

stimulating displays that celebrate the school's life and achievements and a rich variety of indoor plants that add to the positive atmosphere. There is a general absence of graffiti, litter and vandalism and the inspection found that the combined efforts of the school community leads to an effective and imaginative environment for teaching and learning.

Resources for Learning

90. There are clear procedures for allocating funds to each department to cover the cost of textbooks, materials and equipment and heads of department are able to bid for additional resources to meet agreed priorities in their development plans. All areas of the curriculum are adequately resourced and in several departments there has been significant improvement since the last inspection. Science, information and communications technology, drama and business studies now have a wider range of equipment. Larger items of audio-visual equipment such as television, video and projectors are available in departments and are used effectively in lessons. The school library and resources centre is relatively small in size for the number of pupils but it now has a more varied and up to date stock of both fiction and non-fiction books as well as a growing range of computer soft ware. The provision of a library and resources centre manager makes the facilities more accessible to pupils than at the time of the last inspection. Pupils and staff combine their efforts to make the library an attractive working environment.
91. The school makes good use of the immediate school grounds, the local community and a wide variety of educational visits out of school and visitors into the school to further enrich pupils' learning. With the additional funding provided by the *Excellence in Cities* programme in 2001 the school will improve the resources for learning and plans to use the large number of new computer facilities to raise standards further.
92. The inspection found that pupils generally show respect for the resources they use in school. They take care of books and equipment and there is little waste or misuse.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

93. In order to continue the improvement in attainment and the quality of provision, the headteacher, senior staff, governors and teachers should;
- (1) raise the attainment of all subjects to match that of English and geography by ensuring that the work given to higher attaining pupils is challenging ensuring that the needs of lower attaining pupils are met using the successful methods of the two departments, (paragraphs 1, 5, 8, 13, 14, 112, 120, 121, 123, 142, 143, 146, 170, 185, 209, 210)
 - (2) implement the plans to review the quality of teaching so that all may learn from the best practice of others, (paragraphs 32, 33, 34, 38, 39, 45, 104, 112, 115, 116, 126, 130, 148, 149, 152, 171, 188, 189, 196, 212)
 - (3) implement the plans to keep the new management structure under review to ensure that it continues to give good leadership, (paragraphs 72)
 - (4) Ensure that as equipment becomes available, all departments use their skills in information and communication technology in their teaching. (paragraphs 3, 91, 106, 125, 130, 166, 175, 180, 180, 193, 223.)

94. Other areas that governors should consider in their action plan are;

The provision of a daily act of collective worship, (paragraph 51)

As planned, ensure that provision of religious education in Year 11 takes place next year (paragraph 213)

Raise the awareness of pupils about Britain as a multicultural society. (paragraph 56)

Ensure that all departments make consistent use of data about progress and attainment. (paragraphs 65, 98, 106, 149, 177)

Review reports to parents so that they give information about how pupils need to improve their work (paragraphs 64, 68)

Ensure that communication between staff who are concerned with pupils for whom English is an additional language is clear, (paragraph 76)

As funds become available, review the support given to pupils with special educational needs, (paragraphs 127, 178)

As funds permit, improve the provision for design and technology (paragraph 151)

Review the accommodation for drama (paragraphs 155, 156)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

194

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

52

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5	26	42	24	2	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

	Y7– Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1347	N/A
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	266	N/A

Special educational needs

	Y7– Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	13	N/A
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	301	N/A

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	62

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	28
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	21

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.7
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.5
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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	126	139	265

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	63	70	40
	Girls	105	84	54
	Total	166	154	94
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	63 (61)	58 (57)	35 (52)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	30 (35)	29 (36)	10 (27)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	77	82	53
	Girls	104	105	70
	Total	181	187	123
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	69 (62)	71 (66)	47 (61)
	National	64 (61)	64 (64)	60 (61)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	31 (31)	36 (39)	14 (30)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (30)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	105	141	246

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	42	99	105
	Girls	71	129	133
	Total	113	228	238
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	46 (45)	93 (95)	97 (98)
	National	46.6 (46.1)	90.9 (87.3)	95.8 (98.4)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	38 (34.8)
	National	38 (37)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate	
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and	School	17	100

the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	National		N/A
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Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	5
Black – other	1
Indian	29
Pakistani	44
Bangladeshi	2
Chinese	3
White	1225
Any other minority ethnic group	6

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	6	0
Black – African heritage	4	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	2	0
Bangladeshi	3	0
Chinese	0	0
White	198	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	75.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.7

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	13
Total aggregate hours worked per week	438

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76.9
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 2	N/A
Key Stage 3	23.2
Key Stage 4	21.1

Financial information

Financial year	99/00
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	£
Total income	2,826,448
Total expenditure	2,833,510
Expenditure per pupil	2155
Balance brought forward from previous year	-47,126
Balance carried forward to next year	-54,188

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1315
Number of questionnaires returned	326

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	44	51	4	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	49	46	2	1	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	40	51	5	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	31	57	10	2	1
The teaching is good.	45	47	3	1	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	36	46	11	2	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	58	35	3	2	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	66	33	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	38	49	8	1	4
The school is well led and managed.	59	35	2	1	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	50	44	2	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	46	433	4	1	6

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

ENGLISH

95. Attainment on entry has been gradually rising and is largely in line with the national average in 2000. This improvement is also reflected in the standards being attained at the end of Key Stage 3. The results in the National Curriculum Tests in 1999 were broadly in line with national averages and above average in comparison with similar schools. The 2000 results are a considerable improvement and well above the national average. Inspection evidence indicates that overall standards of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 are above average and above those of last year's pupils. This suggests that the strategies put in place by the department to raise attainment in literacy are successful and the trend of rising standards is continuing. Pupils achieve very well at the end of both key stages.
96. At the end of Key Stage 4 pupils' results in GCSE English language and literature in 1999 is broadly in line with national averages with many pupils achieving grades at a higher level. However the trend is moving steadily upwards and inspection evidence suggests that this trend is being maintained and attainment in Year 11 is currently average. English and English literature results compare favourably with other subjects taken at GCSE in the school. There is no significant difference between boys and girls attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 but at the end of Key Stage 4 girls do slightly better than boys. At Key Stage 4 virtually all pupils achieve very well, with most achieving grades in the A* - G range at GCSE. Pupils with special educational needs are making good progress. Pupils for whom English is an additional language are making similarly good progress as their peer group at both key stages.
97. By the end of Key Stage 3 standards in speaking and listening are satisfactory and frequently good as in a Year 7 lesson where pupils successfully interviewed each other about their junior school experiences. At Key Stage 4 pupils listen well and respond confidently; as in a Year 11 lesson on the poem *I Wanna Be Your Vacuum Cleaner*. The contributions in this lesson were enthusiastic and helped pupils to a clearer understanding of the significant features of the poems. In oral work, pupils expressed their understanding and took an active part in the lessons.
98. Standards in reading at the end of Key Stage 3 are broadly in line with national standards. The department has successfully focused on raising attainment in reading, especially for boys. The strategies of paired reading with Year 7 lower attaining pupils being supported by Year 10 mentors has resulted in significant improvements in reading skills. Most pupils are able to read fluently; refer to textual evidence to support a viewpoint and to distinguish fact from opinion. A good example was in a Year 9 lesson where pupils compared two newspaper articles. Further work needs to be done in monitoring the pupils' progress in reading, to ensure that progress in reading is maintained.
99. By Key Stage 4 pupils are reading with a good degree of sensitivity and understanding. The best example of this was a Year 10 lesson on the play *An Inspector Calls* where pupils were able to empathise with the plight of the suffragettes and gained a better understanding of social conditions at the turn of the century. Most pupils use the library regularly and extend their reading into non-fiction texts and are confidently using CD ROMs. Reading is frequently focused on the retrieval of information to support work in other subject areas; the best examples of this are in geography and science.
100. Writing skills improve significantly across both key stages, due to the use of a wide range of imaginative writing strategies. In a class of low attaining Year 8 pupils, their newly learned vocabulary was enthusiastically shared on a flip chart before it was developed into a individual 'newspaper report'. This task was made possible by the use of written guidance which was enlarged to guide and support the pupils' writing.

101. Higher attaining pupils in Key Stage 3 write imaginatively, as in the following example of Year 9 poetry:

Autumn's like.....

*Autumns like death,
Sorrow and grief.
Soft green leaves
Crinkle and fall, like
Burnt paper drifting to the ground.*

102. At Key Stage 4 higher attaining pupils write with confidence and creativity, these skills are evident not only in English but also in the full range of subjects. A good example of this is the sensitive and reflective poetry written during a school visit to the World War 1 battle fields in France.
103. However some lower attaining pupils still have difficulty with the basic skills of spelling, punctuation and grammar. All pupils use information technology effectively, both as a resource and as a tool for improving presentation. High standards of commitment and presentation are a feature of the work in English at both key stages. At Key Stage 4, pupils are producing folders containing work of consistently high quality. There is much evidence of redrafting and a sense of pride in the final pieces, many of which are proudly displayed around the school.
104. Teaching overall is good with many examples of very good and excellent teaching and no unsatisfactory teaching; pupils make good progress as a result. Most teachers display good subject knowledge and have high expectations of pupils. Planning is detailed and provides continuity especially in classes who have more than one teacher. Where teachers explain what they expect pupils to learn at the beginning of lessons and share with the pupils the criteria upon which they will be assessed, their learning is very good. An excellent example of this was a Year 11 lesson on examination criteria where pupils became examiners and scrutinised some candidates' work. As a result of this exercise, their attitudes were positive and they displayed a mature understanding of what is required of them in examinations. The tasks are appropriate and frequently challenging as in a Year 10 lesson on Simon Armitage's poem *About This Person* where pupils successfully made comparisons with the poem, *I am Bothered*. In the more successful lessons, the carefully structured tasks ensure that pupils take an active part. An example of this is the good use of questioning in a Year 9 lesson on John Steinbeck's *The Pearl* which enabled the pupils to make very good gains in understanding. Pupils sustain concentration and have a business like approach to their work. In one less successful lesson more able pupils were not stretched sufficiently and in another lesson where the focus was on individuals working on their own, some lower attaining pupils did less well. Overall however, pupils very obviously enjoy the subject and appreciate the work of their teachers.
105. The department's leadership is excellent. All aspects of planning, monitoring and assessment are in place. The clear vision of the head of department for raising standards is shared by the whole team which indicates a firm basis for success. The department makes excellent use of information about how well pupils are doing in order to inform their future planning. Overall this is a thriving and energetic department with an assured commitment to making pupils equal partners in learning.
106. Much work has been done to tackle the points for development in the last report; however, there is still room for even further development. Some minor inconsistencies in assessment practice across the department need to be tackled. This will ensure that the rigorous and consistent approach to raising attainment is maintained. Higher attaining pupils need a specific focus to enable them to reach their full potential and information technology needs to become an integral part of the teaching of English.
107. The standard of literacy across the curriculum is good. Most departments are using a variety of methods to assist both reading and writing. Specialist subject vocabulary is displayed in all subject areas and there are many examples of guidance for writing in use across the curriculum. The best examples of extended pieces of writing are in science, geography and history.

MATHEMATICS

108. In 1999 overall attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 was close to the national average. Over the years from 1996 to 1999, boys' and girls' performance have been close to national averages and to each other. The proportion achieving level 5 was close to the national average but for levels 6 and 7 below the national figures. Compared with similar schools, a smaller proportion achieved these higher levels. The provisional results for 2000 show a very significant improvement in the proportion achieving level 6 and above; increasing from approximately 30 percent to 40 percent of the year group. Provisional data from a regional survey show that the Acklam Grange pupils overall made better progress during the key stage than those at the other Middlesbrough Schools.
109. The inspection found that at Key Stage 3 the standard of pupils' work is similar to that of last year and pupils achieve well. Higher attaining pupils can apply Pythagoras' theorem, solve simultaneous equations graphically and can calculate an estimated mean from grouped frequency data. Pupils of average attainment are acquiring an understanding of algebra, which they can apply to the solution of linear equations and to plotting graphs and curves; they can find the area of compound shapes and can interpret scatter diagrams. All pupils have an appropriate range of numeracy skills and express themselves using suitable mathematical language, for example, in describing a series of numbers. Pupils, of all levels of attainment, have used their mathematical knowledge to solve relatively substantial problems, but the range of tasks is somewhat abstract and lacks the potential to draw on pupils' own experiences. For example, there is insufficient use of statistical data collected by pupils themselves, which might be used to debate social or moral issues.
110. The proportion of pupils achieving grade C and above in the 1999 GCSE mathematics examinations was above the national average. Girls' results were better than boys' at this standard, which was the reverse of the 1998 results. Overall standards in GCSE mathematics in 1999 were significantly above those nationally and pupils attained relatively better in mathematics than in their other subjects. Nearly 14 percent achieving grades A and A* compares very favourably with some 8 percent nationally. Although there was a drop in higher grades in 2000 there is generally a significant sustained improvement both since the previous inspection and relative to pupils' attainment at the end of Key stage 3. The standard of pupils' work currently, at the beginning of Year 11, is above average and pupils achieve well.
111. Pupils of all ages have a very positive attitude to mathematics lessons and their teachers. They show considerable interest in what they are doing. They are generally seen working independently but given the opportunity enjoy working cooperatively as exemplified by pupils' descriptions of a paper folding experience when they worked in teams of ten. A buzz of enthusiasm was observed when pupils were challenged to find the most solutions to a spatial problem.
112. In the majority of Key Stage 4 lessons the teaching is very good with just one lesson observed for which the teaching was unsatisfactory. The introductory mental tasks to lessons are most successful in reinforcing learning when they are directly related to the main theme of the lesson, for example number work involving squares and square roots as an introduction to Pythagoras' theorem; or when they are related to a recent homework task. The very good teaching involves clear instructions and precise use of mathematical language. Good questioning observed in the study of standard index form extends learning and is typified by the teacher's explanation that *it is better that I help you think it out, than that I tell you*. For the class with unsuccessful teaching, pupils' data handling skills were being developed in an illogical order; this severely hindered learning and understanding for these lower attaining pupils including those with special educational needs. However, good planning of the development and structure of topics drawing on a range of mathematical skills typically challenges pupils. Systematic and rigorous teaching extends higher attaining pupils' understanding of related mathematical functions and their graphs. Pupils of below average attainment are enjoying the challenge of understanding trigonometry; the teachers promote learning by emphasising key points and developing the topic at an appropriate pace. The role of homework in underpinning skills and understanding is well judged for most classes but is insufficient in quantity for some of the highest attainers who have the potential to achieve the top GCSE grades.
113. The overall standard of teaching and learning at Key Stage 3 is good; in all lessons teaching is at least satisfactory. A range of teaching aids is well used to extend pupils' participation and learning. 3-D models and polydrons are well used to extend understanding of space and shape. 'Follow on' number cards and number rods are used to reinforce number bonds and mathematical vocabulary for lesson introductions. The use of pupils' individual white boards effectively ensures their enthusiastic participation in question and answer sessions. A strength of teaching is investigative work; eleven

year olds investigated the number of different nets from which 3-D figures can be constructed; others, including those with special educational needs, find the relationship between angles and sides of rectilinear figures. These pupils are confidently developing knowledge and extending skills acquired at primary school. Teachers are conversant with the National Numeracy Strategy and its implementation at Key Stage 2. Typical of good teaching is the development of pupils' confidence in expressing mathematical ideas and language. Lower attainers including those with special educational needs, use the words 'decrease', 'less than' and one remembered the word 'subtraction' because *submarines go down!* With similar confidence, higher attaining pupils describe strategies for determining the maximum volume of an open box constructed from a sheet of card.

114. Teaching is under-pinned by teachers marking most of pupils' work. It is departmental policy that confidence is maintained by success; pupils are successful at most of the work attempted. Consequently marking typically highlights that work is correct, using praising comments and stickers; on the relatively few occasions when appropriate, diagnostic marking is used. The generally high standard of presentation of pupils' work reflects the care taken by teachers in their exemplars. Assessment grades are made and carefully recorded in accordance with school policy together with a comprehensive record of each pupil's attainment as they progress through the school.
115. In lessons with good teaching, most teachers take particular care to ensure that pupils who have been absent are fully involved from the outset of the lesson; but this is not always the case. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from individual support by classroom assistants as well as support teachers, who work well as a team with the class teachers. Pupils for whom English is an additional language have full access to the mathematics curriculum. Particularly talented pupils are well catered for with suitably planned extension work and a small number of pupils are studying for a GCSE statistics examination in addition to mathematics.
116. Mathematics teaching satisfies all the requirements of the National Curriculum. Monitoring is generally effective but there is inadequate monitoring to ensure appropriate learning in classes taught by two different people. Liaison with primary schools involving most of the teachers of mathematics is a strength of the department and ensures continuity of pupils' learning upon transfer to their new school. A very good range of display of pupils' work and posters explaining techniques, covers the walls of corridors and rooms in the mathematics areas providing an environment which stimulates learning. The competent team of teachers of mathematics is well led and motivated. They have the potential to continue developing good practice and to build on the good standards currently achieved.
117. Since the last inspection in 1995, the high standards in special educational needs provision, motivation of pupils and the attention of teachers to marking have been maintained and improved. An additional two classrooms integral to the mathematics suite have significantly and adequately enhanced the learning environment. The mathematics teachers are now considerably more experienced individually and in working as a team; this is resulting in higher standards. The department is aware of the need to provide challenging work and there is little evidence of uninspiring routine teaching. A high proportion of teaching is good or very good, resulting in a significant improvement in the proportion of higher levels at Key Stage 3. Although the proportion of A and A* grades in GCSE examinations has remained static, with the exception of those in 1999, overall performance has improved significantly from around 40 percent A* to C grade to over 50 percent at this level in recent years.
118. Pupils apply their skills of numeracy well in other subjects. Acquiring a facility with number and developing confidence to use a good range of mathematical vocabulary underpins the school's teaching of mathematics. Key words are displayed in teaching rooms. From the beginning of Year 7 pupils have a comprehensive mathematical vocabulary list to support learning. Mental activities at the beginning of lessons are designed to strengthen numeracy skills. A numeracy summer school was held recently for the first time at Acklam Grange School for 30 pupils. Two policy documents outlining mathematical skills are held by all departments and used by many. One outlines data handling techniques expected of pupils at each level, the other explains a standardised approach to the use of mathematics including numeracy.
119. These documents are specifically referred to in science teaching to support recording of observations. English teaching includes interpretation of newspaper articles, of social interest, involving statistical data. One example seen is entitled '70 percent of cereal boxes are less than two thirds full!'. In geography the guidance is used in working with map scales, the presentation of climate and weather statistics and collecting data such as a Year 10 shoppers' survey. In business studies lessons,

spreadsheets and graphs are used but weaknesses in labelling frequency axes are observed. In information communications technology lessons, pupils are stimulated by using computer programmes to work with mathematical formulae. Computers are regularly used to consolidate number bonds for lower attaining pupils in all Key Stage 3 mathematics groups.

SCIENCE

120. In 1999, test results for fourteen-year-old pupils were well below the national average. By comparison with similar schools, results were well below the national average for level 5 or above and for level 6 or above. There was little difference between the attainment of boys and girls. The results in science were below those for mathematics and for English. Since the last inspection, the trend has been below the national trend. Assessment by teachers indicated that, in 1999, teachers overestimated the performances of pupils. The results for 14 year old pupils in 2000 represent a significant improvement on those for 1999. These results are still below but closer to the national average when compared with all schools. They are above average when compared with similar schools. This represents satisfactory achievement based upon the attainment of pupils on entry to the school in 1997, which was broadly average.
121. Inspection evidence shows that attainment continues to rise. This is because of rigorous action by senior management, governors and the department working together to analyse examination results and use the findings to improve attainment. By the age of 14, most pupils have learned new skills, increased their knowledge of scientific facts and their understanding of scientific concepts and have made progress in investigative science. Attainment, overall is average but there is evidence of some underachievement by higher attaining pupils. High attaining pupils understand the relationship between current, voltage and electrical resistance, can represent scientific results in graphical form, interpret graphical information and understand the particulate nature of matter. Lower attaining pupils are less secure in their understanding but can, for example, indicate that the addition of salts to water increases its boiling point.
122. In 1999 the results of examinations for the double award GCSE were well above average. The number of grades achieved at the highest levels, A* and A, was in line with the national average even though they were above average for girls. The performance of boys overall, however, was better than that of girls. 63 per cent of pupils were entered for the double award examination. This was well below the national average. The trend since the previous inspection is in line with the national trend. The GCSE double award results in 2000 are broadly similar to 1999, although in these examinations the number of pupils obtaining the highest grades fell. The results for girls were better than those for boys. In 1999 a further 36 per cent of pupils were entered for the GCSE single award science examination. In 2000 this number fell to 32 per cent of pupils. The results of the 1999 examinations were well below average and no pupils gained grades A* - C whilst virtually all achieved grades A* - G. Results improved slightly in 2000. Even though in both 1999 and 2000, the results for double award science were better than those for English and mathematics when single award science is taken into account, science results at GCSE are well below those for English and mathematics. Similarly, by comparison with the results which pupils obtained at the age of 14, even though the double award results represent very good achievement, they represent only satisfactory achievement when single award GCSE results are also taken into account.
123. Evidence obtained during the inspection shows that, even though a significant minority of the highest attaining pupils underachieve, standards overall, at the beginning of Year 11 are in line with the national average. High attaining pupils, at the start of Year 11, can write balanced chemical equations, recall that the rate of a chemical reaction increases as temperature increases, due to an increase in the frequency of collisions between particles, and appreciate that electrical resistance varies as temperature changes. Pupils whose attainment is in the middle of the range, are less secure in their understanding of chemical concepts and can only write word equations to represent chemical reactions. The lowest attaining pupils are very insecure in their understanding of scientific processes. For example, they have a limited knowledge of the methods used to separate mixtures of substances or that evaporation of perspiration causes cooling and helps maintain a constant body temperature.
124. Overall, pupils throughout the school, including those with special educational needs, achieve

appropriately.

125. From work seen during the inspection, it is clear that all attainment targets are well covered and that investigative science is well integrated into the teaching programme at Key Stage 4. However, there is less evidence of planning or of evaluation in investigative science, particularly in Years 7, 8 and 9. Where planning and evaluation are evident, as in an investigation into osmosis in plants, by Year 11 pupils, they are well developed.. Experimental results are well represented in tabular and graphical forms and pupils are encouraged to explain experimental results in scientific terms and to make hypotheses. The standard of literacy is good overall. Higher attaining pupils write clearly and fluently. They use scientific terms with confidence and spelling is good. Lower attaining pupils are less confident and tend to be more restricted in the range and extent of their written work often limiting their writing to short sentences in which spelling and the use of scientific terms are less secure. While numerical competency is less well developed in lower attaining pupils, numeracy is, at least, satisfactory. The use of information and computer technology to support learning remains unsatisfactory even though there is evidence of the use of data-logging in some lessons.
126. Throughout the school the quality of teaching is good because of the recent focus on raising attainment by the department and by senior management. In Years 7, 8 and 9, teaching was at least satisfactory. In most lessons, teaching was good or very good. In Years 10 and 11 teaching observed was again satisfactory in all lessons, in most it was good and, in two lessons, the quality of teaching was excellent. In most lessons, teachers make use of their very good subject knowledge in providing very effective explanations and in asking questions which challenge or assess pupils' knowledge and understanding. They give clear objectives which enables pupils to focus on what is expected of them, classroom management and organisation are very effective and the pace of lessons matches the needs and tasks of pupils. Lessons are, on the whole very well planned. There are a very few lessons, however, in which planning needs to be more focused so that the pace of the lesson is maintained. Work is usually set which matches the attainment of pupils and which demonstrates the relevance of science teaching to the real world. However, in a few lessons, higher attaining pupils were not sufficiently challenged by their work. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils and homework is given, when appropriate, which either consolidates or extends classwork. The management of pupils is good. Teachers, however, do not always plan the use of time effectively and a few lessons over-run. In a very few lessons, work is over-directed by the teacher and, in others, there is a lack of challenge. In these, pupils are not provided with sufficient opportunity to develop the skills of independent learning and there is evidence of underachievement. The learning environment in all science classrooms is enhanced by excellent displays of pupils' work and guides to how work may be improved. Whilst books are always marked and comments are often made, marking does not always indicate the level at which pupils have performed nor does it always indicate how pupils can improve.
127. The identification of appropriate and challenging learning objectives coupled with good support for pupils' learning, enables pupils, throughout the school, to make good progress in improving their knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts and information. In the majority of lessons, pupils work hard and at a good pace. When given the opportunity to do so, pupils work well independently and in groups, think out problems for themselves and concentrate hard. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall. However, due to the limited provision of classroom assistants who are trained to support teachers, the progress of some pupils with special educational needs, particularly those with behavioural problems, is impaired.
128. Apart from a very few pupils whose behaviour is unsatisfactory, the behaviour of pupils and their attitude to science are both good. Pupils listen well to their teachers, respond positively to the various activities and show interest and enjoyment. Most pupils answer, and ask, questions well and have the confidence to discuss scientific ideas and experimental results with their teachers and with other pupils.
129. The science curriculum is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements. The allocation of curriculum time is adequate.
130. The science department is well led by an able and dedicated head of department, who is supported by an able team of teachers. He provides clear educational direction, is hard-working and committed. Whilst curriculum planning is good and includes planning for the inclusion and use of computers as a support and investigative tool, in practice the use of information and computer technology is unsatisfactory. Development planning is in line with school development planning and is both effective

and manageable. Procedures for assessment are well established for all year groups and are used effectively to monitor progress, identify and support underachievement, and improve attainment. While formal monitoring of teaching by a designated member of the school's senior management team as part of the performance management process is in place, the monitoring of the quality of teaching by the head of department is less well developed. Teaching staff are well qualified and they are effectively deployed. The number and quality of laboratories is now good. Technical support for the department is good. Resources, in terms of books and scientific equipment are generally good. However, the provision of up-to-date computers, and appropriate software, is poor.

131. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Attainment in the tests for pupils at the age of 14 and at 16 have both improved since the last inspection. For example, overall GCSE results in science have improved from 32.6 percent A to C grades in 1995 to 41.7 per cent in 2000. The improvement in double award science was from 55 per cent at the time of the last report to 61.4 per cent in 2000. Teaching, described in the previous report as *sound with some good features* is now good. Learning described as being *sound* is now good. Data handling skills, described in the last report as being unsatisfactory, are now satisfactory and investigative skills have improved. The provision of laboratories has improved significantly. The department and senior management team have worked successfully to improve the provision and thus raise attainment following particularly poor results in 1999.

ART

132. At Key Stage 3 attainment is average, Pupils draw well from direct observation, in particular from their observation of the immediate environment. These drawings show a sensitive personal response to the area directly observed by pupils. Very good drawing in pencil is evident in small scale studies of pattern and texture. These in some cases are successfully scaled up to produce good quality designs. Pupils are also able to develop design ideas successfully from the study of, for example, aboriginal art and pattern structures produced in other cultures. In drawing and painting, pupils show imagination in producing compositions in colour from their adaptation of aboriginal *Dreamings* to the interpretation of the school environment, journeys around the school being substituted for aboriginal journeys. This work is imaginative and vivid and shows potential for development in other media. Good work is evident in ceramics and in printmaking together with successful compositions in mixed media. The use of computers in art and design is minimal due to limitations in resources. This area urgently needs development in order fully to meet National Curriculum requirements. Basic literacy skills are enhanced by the practice of compiling lists of key words and their meanings.
133. Pupils achieve appropriately in skills of drawing and design; they also gain an awareness of the work of major artists whose works are studied as a source of ideas. This practice has a positive impact on learning by combining effectively the theoretical and practical areas of the National Curriculum. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in relation to the targets set for them due to the nature of the subject and to good match of material to the attainment of the pupils. There is variation in attainment across activities and also across different levels of prior attainment and experience. Some work in graphics is below average, but the best work in drawing and design is above average and in some instances well above average.
134. At Key Stage 4, attainment is below the national average. In GCSE examinations in 1999, results were below average with 45.7% grades A* to C. In the previous two years, results had been near the national average at 54% in each year. As at Key Stage 3, the work in drawing and painting related to the environment is strong and expressive. Work in mixed media and in three-dimensional design is also relatively strong. At this stage also, art historical material is linked, with pupils own creative work effectively being used often as a source of ideas. Design in graphics, however, is weak with some rather naïve ideas and limited technique.
135. Achievement by the end of Key Stage 3 is sound but, the level of prior attainment in many cases limits the level of attainment. Progress at Key Stage 3 is helped by thoughtful use of a syllabus for older pupils, adapted for younger ones. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.
136. Pupils are attentive in class and sustain their concentration throughout lessons. Groups, however, are often large for a practical subject and on occasions restlessness develops particularly amongst groups of boys. On the whole, behaviour in class is good, and rarely unsatisfactory.
137. Teaching is good overall. Staff have a good understanding of the subjects they teach which enables

them to lead pupils into understanding and using different techniques. Staff manage behaviour well so that pupils can listen and learn. Homework is used well to extend and reinforce the learning of pupils. Many teachers are enthusiastic which motivates the pupils. In a Year 7 class, pupils studying the effect of mixing colours were highly motivated by the enthusiastic and lively teaching and they quickly gained an understanding of the effect of colour. Higher attaining pupils are often given work to extend and challenge their ideas, such as a Year 8 class who used the idea of scale to create larger and smaller pictures. In a very good lesson with Year 7 pupils, the teacher valued the responses pupils made which encouraged them to contribute. One pupil stated that black was a warm colour. The teacher used this comment well to explore why black may be seen as a warm colour in a scientific context.

138. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 is broad and varied, covering work in two and three dimensions. Practical work is accompanied by theoretical work and art history, including the study of the work of other cultures, is explored widely. Spiritual features in, for example, aboriginal art and its relation to religious belief are considered. Pupils also develop an understanding of the different approaches to design in other cultures as, for example, in the study of Guatemalan kites and African fabrics. Assessment is thorough and criteria are linked to National Curriculum programmes of study and of the assessment objectives of the GCSE syllabus.
139. At Key Stage 4 the curriculum is based upon the 'Unendorsed' GCSE syllabus, This provides for the study of several areas, drawing and painting, graphics, three dimensional work, printmaking and work in mixed media, printmaking and collage, together with the continuing study of art history. There is extra curricular provision for extended study at lunchtimes and after school.
140. Staff are appropriately qualified and experienced in relation to their specific roles. A clear sense of purpose is shared by all in the department and the level of professional commitment is high. An important shortcoming is the lack of a non- teaching technician. This limits the extent to which activities requiring lengthy preparation can be effectively pursued. The difficulty is most acute in ceramics and three-dimensional design.
141. The department is well managed with very comprehensive documentation. Very good relations prevail between members of the department and curriculum leadership is good. Accommodation is roomy and furnished to a good level. Display space is good but storage is limited and there is a lack of provision for the storage of clothing and equipment. The department mounts good displays of pupils' work at salient points in the school which enrich the environment and also mounts an annual exhibition of work for the benefit of parents and visitors. Sound improvement has been made since the previous inspection, particularly in the subject guidance for Key Stage 3.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

142. At Key Stage 4, overall department performance in 1999 in comparison with all maintained schools was below average at 44.7 per cent GCSE A*-C grades. In comparison with other departments in the school however, results in 1999 were slightly above the school average. This overall department picture has been approximately maintained in 2000. Contributory subject performance varies. Results for food technology in 2000 are high and have continued to improve. Results for textiles technology in 2000 continue to be very high at 64.1 per cent. Results in graphic products fell in 2000 and are now low. Resistant materials results continue to be very low. When compared with pupil performance in other subjects within the school, pupil average point scores are low in graphics and resistant materials, but high in textiles. Teacher assessment for Key Stage 3 is generous when compared with other subjects.
143. The inspection found that by the end of Key Stage 3, standards overall are average but attainment in the range of areas taught is variable. Pupils generally achieve appropriately overall, but there are variations in achievement in the different aspects of the course. In some areas, such as graphics and resistant materials, skills in designing are below average. This is because not all areas of design are taught evenly. Where there is an over emphasis upon drawing tools, components and processes, pupils do not sufficiently develop areas of their designing such as research, specifications and the required diversity of design ideas. In graphics, pupils have mastered a range of drawing and simple rendering techniques. Pupils do not always transfer skills of presentation learnt in graphics, to other areas of the design and technology curriculum, such as work in resistant materials. They do not always develop their designs to an appropriate level, and teachers' expectations of development in design is variable across the department.

144. Pupils work safely and become competent in using a range of tools and techniques to make a variety of products, such as a double-cam automaton toy, and textile bags. They can measure accurately and use appropriate vocabulary when describing their work and processes used. The overall quality of their finished products is acceptable, but the type and standards of finish seen varies across the department and is sometimes low, particularly in resistant materials.
145. In food technology, pupils can modify a product when considering nutritional value or fibre content, and evaluate and develop healthy eating products. In textiles, they have developed good understanding and a progression of skills in a wide range of decorative and construction techniques. Pupils have investigated the influences of other cultures upon textile design before designing and making luxury gift products. They can evaluate their products when finished. Pupils generally achieve well in this aspect of the course.
146. By the end of Key Stage 4, the overall standard of pupils' work seen is average. There are no significant differences between the performance of boys and girls, and pupils with special educational needs achieve well in the department. Again, there are variations across the department, and analysis of pupils' work indicates that in food and textiles, pupils' project folders are well organised and develop all areas of the design process, in some cases to a very high standard. In these areas, good use is also made of computers to enhance project folders, when for instance pupils use spread sheets to handle and present the results of investigation and research. They are good at analysing products. In textiles pupils make use of CAD CAM embroidery facilities to improve the professional quality of finished products. In graphic products, most work is produced to a good standard of presentation, although work on pop-up mechanisms in cards displayed is simplistic and appropriate for younger pupils, and few projects are improved by the use of computers. By the end of the Key Stage pupils' work in graphic products has improved and the standard of graphic presentation, and finish of packaging products is satisfactory, and some is good, although some pupils do not sufficiently develop their research or design ideas. Pupils in all areas of design and technology make good use of prototypes to develop their ideas. In resistant materials, pupils do not develop and apply information and communication technology, or graphic techniques such as formal drawing methods and standard dimensioning to their design drawings. Most do not understand what is meant by 'sketching' to develop a busy page of different ideas, and subsequently the diversity of design ideas and range of materials used is poor. In food and textiles, pupils make best use of research including questionnaires and analysis of the results, often using computers to present their results in understandable graphical form. They are well versed in the arts of analysing products, and take their knowledge of nutrition, hygiene and healthy eating into account when they develop a wide range of products. Textiles products are developed to a high degree of finish and effectiveness.
147. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good, and sometimes very good. They are quick to settle to their work and are generally focussed and maintain concentration. They show interest in their practical work, and are keen to try out ideas they have been shown. Pupils are willing to take on challenges and respond well to the opportunity to organise themselves independently and to work within the routines of well organised workshops. Relationships between boys and girls are good, as are pupils' relationships with teachers. This contributes to the work ethos of the school.
148. The overall quality of teaching is good but varies between each of the aspects of the course. The best teaching is well planned and structured, providing opportunities for a variety of teaching styles. Teachers use a range of effective teaching methods such as demonstrations of process and skills tools and equipment, but less often information and communication technology. Teachers have a good understanding of their subjects which contributes to pupils' learning, and in general use correct technical vocabulary which they usually explain. In many instances they have identified and displayed key words, and in places provide key word lists and guidance for writing where they would be most effective. Teachers have good knowledge of all pupils' learning needs, particularly those of low attainers, and take their individual education plans regularly into account, enabling all to make appropriate progress.
149. A particularly effective feature is the frequent use of samples of purchased products or other pupils' work, which encourages product analysis, and helps pupils to focus on elements of their own designs. Where teaching is good this also leads to open class discussion and debate about design issues. There are differences in expectations of the quality of work expected in design folders across the department. Schemes of work are generally well planned but not shown to be mapped against

the requirements of the National Curriculum. The effectiveness of homework is variable, but when well planned, is relevant to the work in hand, for instance when pupils are given clear guidance about very focussed research and the subsequent analysis, and how it might influence the development of their own products. When poor, pupils are asked only to record what they have done. The department has good guidance for marking supported by end of unit evaluations and monitoring which contains written targets for pupils. There are different examples of forms, monitoring and target setting methods within the department and practice is not consistent. The department does not currently carry out base line assessment of pupils on entry, or share National Curriculum level descriptors sufficiently with pupils, particularly in Key Stage 3 where this would aid reliable teacher assessments at the end of the Key Stage. Pupils' cultural awareness is enhanced in food and textiles lessons, and the many industrial and college links in these areas are improving the quality of pupils work, their social awareness and raise some moral issues.

150. Pupils' learning is good across both key stages. In Key Stage 3, pupils make simple changes to recipes, investigate the effects of these changes, and learn about food hygiene. They learn to solder and how to use a vacuum former to enhance product quality, although opportunities to work in plastics are limited. Some pupils can find out why their simple electronic circuits do not work. In graphics they learn to model their ideas in card in 2D and 3D. In textiles, pupils are taught how to use a sewing machine early in their course and this contributes to the development of high standards. In resistant materials, they learn how to work accurately with a range of appropriate tools, but their learning is limited when they are not asked to develop their own electronic printed circuit board. Pupils' learning is enhanced when they contrast their own work with that of others and commercial products. In Key Stage 4, pupils approach their project work with interest, and those in textiles learn how to use information and communication technology and CAD CAM to enhance the finish of design and practical work. Pupils learn well when they practice and test ideas and samples which they often incorporate into their project folders. Improvements can clearly be seen in the design work of those who have had the opportunity to experience a link with a local college. In resistant materials, pupils work hard to improve the quality of their practical outcomes, but make less progress with most areas of their design folders. In graphics, they utilise a range of techniques such as modelling to develop their work. Pupils in food learn how to modify and develop products utilising nutritional and dietary information and utilise computer facilities and information from outside school when formulating their own products. Learning is good when pupils are made to feel confident about trying out or sharing ideas, or are provided with contextual investigative resources such as food products and packaging. There are no noticeable differences in the learning of those pupils with EAL. Pupils with special educational needs find the provision of key word lists and frameworks for the development of individual areas of projects particularly useful. In some areas, particularly food, pupils learn about batch production and industrial processes. Pupils make the best progress with their project folders when they follow a closely structured and monitored process through their project work.
151. The curriculum continues to be developed, but the Key Stage 3 curriculum, particularly in resistant materials and graphics, is in need of review in the light of Curriculum 2000. Opportunities for using computers, control technology, CAD CAM and to some extent electronics are largely missing from resistant materials and graphics area. The school does not meet statutory requirements for systems and control at Key Stage 3. The provision of information and communication technology facilities in general within the department is in need of further development, although what is currently available in food and textiles areas is being used efficiently. Resources are generally well matched to the curriculum. The remodelling of the accommodation in two food rooms has been successful, but two other food areas continue to be less satisfactory with some health and safety issues, and textiles work is also taught in one food room area. In contrast, the planned remodelling of resistant materials and graphics rooms has not taken place. Rooms and particularly tables or benches used for practical work in resistant materials are not ideal when used by graphic products students and for design work. There are no specific clean graphics areas or electronics workshops. Health and safety issues are well monitored in lessons, but the department does not carry out or fully record health and safety risk assessment procedures. The department make good use of the excellent provision of technician support, for instance when lesson pace is improved by the efficient preparation of resources in the food area. The department is managed by two managers, in two widely separate parts of the school building. Whilst they liaise regularly, there is ample opportunity for closer co-operation in the development of procedures, to learn from the best practice of each other and expectations of pupils. The department should cultivate a co-ordinated approach to their use of terminology and process in order to provide a consistent experience for pupils.
152. Since the last inspection the quality of teaching has improved, and teachers now take account of the

needs of individual pupils. There are still examples of prescriptive teaching in resistant materials where there is too little emphasis on the process of the development of ideas and products to meet specific needs. There are still some shortcomings in the Key Stage 3 curriculum. Significant improvements have been made in the monitoring and marking of pupils' work, and in setting targets for pupils. Practice still varies too much across the department.

DRAMA

153. Drama has recently been introduced for all pupils in Key Stage 3 but already, attainment is above average. Pupils confidently use a range of drama techniques effectively and understand the language of the subject very well. Pupils are able to explore ideas using drama. A good example of this was a Year 8 lesson where pupils explored life on board Captain Cook's ship. The pupils acted the part of eighteenth century seamen so effectively that they made a very convincing crew. Drama is used to explore themes such as 'conflict', as in a Year 10 lesson where the pupils learned to explore meanings and feelings by acting out a scene portraying 'conflict'. Pupils achieve highly in drama. In the Year 10 lesson their drama skills were so well developed that the lesson flowed from one activity to another with little intervention from the teacher. The pupils were able to use mime, facial expressions, body language and movement to portray the tension of the situation.
154. The quality of teaching in drama is very good overall. Teachers have high expectations which produce positive responses from the pupils and refreshingly lively pieces of work. Pupils were observed confidently managing and evaluating their own improvisations and making subtle changes to them. The feedback that teachers give to pupils is excellent, enabling pupils to gain confidence and develop further skills of performance. The work of the drama department is further enriched by visiting theatre companies, an example is 'Cragrats' and by frequently visiting the local theatre to perform upon a 'real' stage.
155. Although the drama department has adequate facilities in lighting and sound systems the accommodation is, at present, unsatisfactory. Two school halls are used which frequently means furniture has to be moved before a space is available. This wastes time and sets the wrong tone to begin a lesson. The acoustics are poor and the teaching space is continually being interrupted, the use of the stage is also restricted.
156. Drama is a rapidly developing subject in the school and will need the appropriate facilities to enhance the work of this enthusiastic department.

GEOGRAPHY

157. When pupils join the school in Year 7 their attainment is broadly in line with national expectation. At the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 the attainment of both boys and girls was above national standard. Teacher assessment for 2000 confirms that the high standards have been maintained. The proportion of pupils achieving at higher levels is significantly greater than national averages and the performance of boys in 2000 was well above that of boys nationally.
158. The proportion of the pupils who continue with the subject and take a GCSE examination was close to the national average in 1999 and above the national trend in 2000. Attainment has been consistently above the national average since 1996. Attainment in 1999 of both boys and girls was well above national average. Girls achieved better than boys at higher grades of A*-C. The percentage of pupils achieving the highest grades of A*/A was very high compared to national averages and within the school the achievement of pupils was very good when compared with other subjects.
159. In the GCSE results for 2000 from an entry of 124 pupils with an equal number of boys and girls the good performance of previous years continued. All the pupils gained a pass grade between A*-G and while the percentage achieving higher grades A*-C was lower than in 1999, within this the proportion of boys and girls achieving the highest grades of A*-A increased. There are no national comparative figures yet available for 2000 but the results for geography appear to be above the national average and well above other subjects within the school.
160. Achievement at both key stages is very good overall. As pupils progress through the school they gain a good grasp of geographical vocabulary and benefit from the consistency with which key skills of listening, speaking reading and writing are emphasised. In lessons observed in Key Stage 3 pupils

of different levels of attainment all make good and often very good progress. For example in a Year 7 set of higher attainers, pupils were introduced to the concept of settlement hierarchies and could explain how the number and range of services vary with size and location. In another lower attaining Year 7 group, pupils made very good progress as they could make reasoned decisions about where to site a village as a result of the well planned activities and the effective use of additional support.

161. As pupils work through their GCSE topics in Years 10 and 11 they develop growing confidence and competence in using a wider range of information. In Year 10 in an introductory lesson on ecosystems, pupils could identify from photographs and diagrams the way in which physical factors and human activity interact and lead to environmental changes. They can apply the knowledge and concepts to a variety of examples ranging from their own locality to issues such as the destruction of tropical rain forests and the impact on global climate.
162. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is consistently good. They are well motivated and well organised. Relationships between pupils are very good and the high expectations of their teachers are met with a positive response. Getting on with the work quickly follows prompt arrival into lessons. The many examples of pupils' achievements in exercise books and in the wealth of attractive displays in classrooms and adjacent corridors demonstrates the care and sense of pride that is typical of geography lessons. When pupils are asked to work with each other in small groups they are mature and sensible and increasingly most pupils take a growing amount of responsibility for setting targets for improvement.
163. Teaching is good with many strengths. Teachers have good subject knowledge and work as an effective team to support each other. The management of pupils is very good and praise and encouragement alongside good lesson planning leads to many stimulating lessons. On the rare occasions when a pupil does not reach the standards of work and behaviour expected this is dealt with by the teacher sensitively and effectively. In order to meet the needs of the wide range of pupils lessons are based on detailed schemes of work and the teaching provides a variety of materials and resources and a range of different activities so that there is appropriate pace and challenge. Many lessons benefit from the skill with which oral work leads to well focused and directed questions that require pupils to listen, concentrate and use their prior learning to offer thoughtful responses. In a small number of lessons where all these features are not combined, teaching and learning is still satisfactory but not all pupils are as fully challenged and so their learning is not extended. Good systems are used to assess pupils' work; classwork and homework are enhanced by opportunities for practical work and field studies in both key stages.
164. The leadership and management of the department is very good. The head of department provides clear direction and he receives good support from other teachers within the team. There is a shared commitment to high standards and the work of the department is an excellent reflection of the school's aims and values. Resources for learning are effectively used and the department is making increased use of new technology. The minor issues raised in the previous inspection have been tackled so that the department's development plan is now more detailed and more clearly aligned to whole school policies and priorities. With the exception of a very small number of lessons the subject is now taught in four well equipped classrooms close to each other. The many strengths identified in the last inspection have been sustained and the department has raised standards further. In order to maintain this very strong position into the future, the head of department is aware of the need to monitor the quality of teaching and learning following the reduction of teaching time in Key Stage 3. He is also aware of the need to anticipate the potential impact on the department of initiatives arising from the *Excellence in Cities* programme and the school becoming a City Learning Centre. He has plans to review the provision in the light of this development.

HISTORY

165. Pupils' attainment is average at both key stages and they achieve well. At Key Stage 3, two thirds of pupils now achieve level 5 and above, and at Key Stage 4 the percentage of pupils gaining A* to C grade over the last three years is average. Although only 40 per cent of pupils gained these higher grades in 2000, the trend in examinations has been rising over the last six years, and pupils have consistently made good progress across both key stages. The faster progress of boys, particularly at Key Stage 3, owes much to the fact that they contribute more orally in lessons than girls.
166. These results are reflected in the standards of work seen. By the end of Key Stage 3, most pupils have a detailed knowledge of aspects of First World War such as trench warfare and the role of propaganda. They use a wide range of historical sources such as contemporary poetry, pictures and

newspaper articles to interpret events. They have a broad understanding of mediaeval England and the development of the monarchy. They understand the events leading up to the English Civil War and the execution of Charles 1. Pupils produce extended writing of good quality, encouraged by the way in which teachers implement the department's literacy policy. At present, however, they have too few opportunities in history to develop their information technology and numeracy skills. Lower attaining pupils, whilst they develop a strong factual knowledge of the periods studied, have difficulty in understanding how, for example, the fairness of the Treaty of Versailles can be open to different interpretations.

167. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils generally achieve well. In tracing the development of surgery from ancient to modern times, carefully-structured teaching enables them to grasp some particularly difficult vocabulary. As part of their study of twentieth century American history, pupils carry out a very detailed analysis of the events surrounding the assassination of President Kennedy. This gives them a good insight into the reliability of different kinds of historical evidence. Lower attaining pupils show less depth of understanding; Their coursework on the Prohibition era in America, for instance, lacks a detailed understanding of the relationship between prohibition and organised crime. As with Key Stage 3, teachers are careful to ensure that pupils learn and understand key vocabulary.
168. At both key stages, pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is a second language have the support which enables them to make good progress.
169. Well planned teaching encourages pupils to respond very well in history lessons. All pupils, including those who have the most learning difficulties, are interested in the subject, and show sustained effort in their lessons. This interest is reflected in the significantly increased take-up of the subject at GCSE over the last two years. They listen attentively and show respect for each other's views, although boys participate more actively than girls. They take a pride in their written work which is generally neat and accurate. Pupils are very polite and well-behaved, and react appropriately when corrected. Their maturity and common-sense should encourage the department to allow pupils more opportunities for independent learning, which would be of particular benefit to the higher attaining pupils.
170. Teaching is good at both key stages. Lessons are carefully planned and appropriately matched to pupils' abilities. A lesson on Norman castles, for instance, with lower attaining pupils in Year 7, showed very well how key words are used to help pupils to understand features of the castles. The pace of teaching is generally very good, as in a Year 9 lesson on the Treaty of Versailles where the pace of teaching overcame an unsettled start due to the lateness of the pupils. Good classroom management, as exemplified in all the history lessons, is particularly effective in keeping pupils working hard, and is central to the progress that pupils make. For the highest attaining pupils, teaching could be further improved by extending their opportunities for independent learning, and by encouraging their historical research skills. Pupils' learning would be enhanced by more and better opportunities to use information technology.
171. The history department is well managed through regular meetings which focus on improving pupils' attainments. A range of extra-curricular activities such as the visit to the battlefields of Flanders helps to broaden pupils' experiences. The department also makes good use of textbooks which are well cared-for. The most important priority for the department is now to develop its monitoring of teaching.
172. Since the last inspection, attainment has improved. Improvements in the quality of teaching and learning have contributed significantly to higher attainment. The department is well placed to raise standards further by offering a higher level of challenge to higher attaining pupils.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

173. Results for GCSE information technology in 1999 were average and in the year 2000 were well above average. There was little difference between the results for boys and those for girls. In both years the results compared favourably with results for the rest of the school. The GCSE results have improved over the last three years and since the previous inspection. All pupils taking the Certificate of Achievement in information and communication technology (ICT) course last year gained certificates, some of which were at a higher level. At the end of Year 9 assessment by teachers for 2000 were above the national average.

174. Literacy skills improve rapidly during Year 7. A key feature of the department is the emphasis given to drafting of work which improves writing. Numeracy skills are developed to some extent when older pupils validate database entries. However, the general lack of emphasis on spreadsheets reduces some useful opportunities to develop mathematical skills. Attainment at the end of Year 9 is above average. Work in pupils' folders is also consistently well presented and above average.
175. Attainment during Year 11 is similarly above average. Some project work gains the highest GCSE grades. However Year 10 and 11 students who are not studying for GCSE or key skills ICT do not progress as well because the cross-curricular provision is insufficient in many departments. However, good quality presentations are produced in English, business studies, science and mathematics. The food and textiles technology department has produced a very well presented display of bread making on a commercial scale. Some students choose to use home computers as well as those in school. Pupils with special educational needs have little extra help either from the teacher or any classroom assistant except those in the lowest ability group. However more able pupils are given considerable encouragement and extra, more demanding, tasks. No difficulties were observed with any students who have English as an additional language.
176. All teaching in Years 7 to 9 is sound or better with most being good or very good. Teaching is good or very good for Year 10 and 11 students. All teachers demonstrate at least adequate and often good knowledge of the subject and the software for effective teaching. Two technicians have been appointed since the last inspection and contribute effectively to the department. In nearly all lessons time is well used. Where a Year 10 lesson had a brief introduction, a middle learning phase, and ended with a quick test, teaching was very good. The schemes of work guide the planning of lessons and provide progression and continuity.
177. Teaching methods effectively use the equipment that is available. Much of the work challenges the pupils so that they gain satisfaction from success. Expectations are high in most cases. Management of pupils is good although when the room is too small for the numbers of pupils in Key Stage 3, class control becomes difficult. Day-to-day assessment could be arranged more frequently to motivate pupils. The occasional use of colour when printing could be used as an extra reward. Although work is marked and used to inform pupils of their progress, records are not sufficiently frequent. Literacy is improved by drafting and the emphasis of key words. Homework is set when an appropriate task is relevant to the topic. Year 9 pupils develop considerable expertise when learning to design their own website. They use text, pictures, graphics, icons, colours and hyperlinks to make web sites for particular audiences.
178. Almost all learning in Years 7 to 9 is good or very good indicating further improvement since the last inspection. The few exceptions are due to some remaining poor accommodation and outdated resources. For example, Year 8 classes gained little new knowledge when asked to produce a newspaper style presentation because twenty-seven pupils needed to share twelve computers that were not compatible with others in the school. During Key Stage 4, learning was at least good and often very good in all lessons. Year 7 pupils acquire knowledge rapidly so that their attainment is soon above average even though they may have little previous skill. By the end of Year 9 pupils have learnt to produce effective presentations demanding considerable creative effort. The pupils enjoy the work so that they generally waste little time and are keen to learn new techniques. Most have no difficulty with concentration and enjoy the freedom to create their own designs. Although project work is graded for attainment and effort, pupils have little knowledge of their progress as National Curriculum levels are used too infrequently. Lower attaining pupils gain some knowledge from their peers but generally they get insufficient help. Higher attaining pupils are encouraged to recognise their achievements and eventually gain higher grades. Most rooms have very good displays of pupils' work.
179. In nearly all lessons attitudes and behaviour are good. Pupils' personal development is fostered well by the good relationships. The great majority of pupils have a good attitude to the subject and as stated at the time of the last inspection *a purposeful atmosphere pervades almost all lessons*. In the smaller ICT rooms students have to share computers but are able to help each other and exchange information. There are few opportunities provided for students to plan joint projects as if they were a business team. Many pupils show initiative when developing their work and all take pride in printing their results. Relationships between pupils and teachers are good due to the development of mutual respect.
180. Subject guidance is clear and provides a broad range of learning activities suitable for all pupils. Key Stage 4 pupils following examination courses have satisfactory opportunities to continue their study

of ICT and to gain qualifications. There are many opportunities for pupils to continue studying ICT during lunch break and after school. Some pupils used these sessions to complete coursework. Keywords and technical terms are emphasised in most lessons. Year 10 and year 11 pupils learn to use spreadsheets in the Key Skills course and in GCSE, thus improving numeracy. Although measurement, using sensors is taught to Year 10 and 11, it is not yet well established in the curriculum for younger pupils as equipment was not available. However equipment has recently been bought. Pupils in Year 7 appropriately send word processed letters to their previous schools thus maintaining continuity. The use of automatic control is not being taught in any year so the requirements of the National Curriculum are not being met for this attainment target. An increasing number of students visit Euro Disney each year where they learn how ICT is used in the management of the site.

181. Parents received an assessment of a wide range of progress indicators including National Curriculum levels in the ICT reports. Some pupils are involved in Internet debate conversations where moral and social issues are discussed. The social implications of holding personal information in data banks are discussed. A number of pupils are in contact with schools abroad. The interchange of ideas from pupils with different backgrounds develops their cultural appreciation.
182. The acting head of department has clear priorities for the development of the department. He recognises that an assessment procedure needs to be established and has developed a plan for action. Each year group has an examination but testing could be arranged more frequently. In conjunction with the governors and the senior management team, money is spent wisely and thoughtfully on equipment. The department analyses examination results and is strongly committed to gaining further improvements. Subject guidance is good but the use of ICT in other departments is inconsistent. Health and safety is given full consideration by technicians and teachers.
183. The accommodation is sufficient for the teaching of the timetabled ICT lessons but does not allow for easy access by whole classes from other departments. Ambitious and comprehensive plans have been made to provide a City Learning Centre that is to be built on the site. This is a conference and ICT facility to be shared by other schools and the community. Currently, there are fewer computers in comparison with national figures. Some older machines are usefully used in the science department. More modern PCs have now taken the place of older equipment in most rooms but the quantity and quality of the remaining computers and printers needs improving. Only one member of staff is well qualified to teach ICT so there is a need for more specialists in the department. All staff have been, or are being, trained in the use of computers. The acting head of department and the technicians provide support for all new staff. Despite this, there has been good improvement in the areas identified for improvement in the previous inspection.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

184. At the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999, attainment was average and in 2000 it rose slightly. The inspection found that attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is broadly average. Higher attaining pupils are able to cope with demanding tasks. They understand complex phrases and sentences and speak extensively, using a wide vocabulary. Their pronunciation is good. In written tasks they give full answers. Lower attaining pupils communicate well, albeit at a lower level. Pupils for whom English is an additional language and with special educational needs achieve well as they are challenged by their work. Achievement in both languages at Key Stage 3 is good. There are opportunities in Year 8 for pupils in the higher ability bands to study two languages.
185. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is below average, but rose slightly in French in 2000. All courses lead to accreditation. All pupils taking the Certificate of Achievement achieve a pass, with a high rate of merits and distinctions. Strategies are in place to improve standards at Key Stage 4. The written examination was proving too difficult for many and a decision has been made to attempt coursework in its place. Monitoring procedures are in place and high expectations set.
186. Pupils are well-behaved, well motivated and attentive. The relationship between teacher and pupil, and between pupils is good. Pupils are not afraid to ask for help and teachers take time to explain any difficulties. Learning was made fun in a Year 8 French class, The lesson was carefully planned to test oral skills, sentence structure and memory. A card game had been prepared to help pupils use *J'ai besoin de* They were visibly delighted at their success, made achievable through careful planning, and enthusiasm and encouragement of the teacher. There were high expectations throughout. Pupils at the end wanted to discuss their work and the opportunity to work over lunch found a class full of

lively youngsters engrossed in their learning. In a higher ability German class, pupils made requests in German and were encouraged to do so. Pupils responded to praise. Ideas and opinions about school subjects were expressed. Response during a Year 9 French lesson involving awareness of the environment and ecological problems was very good. The teacher explained in French concepts such as drought, flooding and made the pupils think and make deductions. In the plenary it was rewarding to see how much they had remembered.

187. At Key Stage 4, motivation and progress is satisfactory but varies. In the higher ability groups, pupils are aware of high teacher expectations and respond accordingly. There is evidence of extended writing, with careful attention to detail and grammatical accuracy on a wide variety of topics. Pupils work well in pairs and groups in oral work to develop competency. In some lower attaining classes, there is a degree of apathy. However in one such French class, pupils showed a keen sense of competition and volunteered to write up their answers on the board. Everyone was attentive and wanted to join in. At the end of the lesson new vocabulary was recalled, which was an achievement for these pupils.
188. At Key Stage 3, teaching is never less than satisfactory, with 60 per cent of teaching good or better. At Key Stage 4, all lessons were satisfactory, with 44 per cent good. The good lessons held high expectations, were well structured and were taught with brisk pace and enthusiasm and provided an exciting variety of tasks. Sometimes, there is an over reliance on text books with little real challenge. On occasions, lessons were marred by poor or challenging behaviour ,by a minority of pupils. Lessons overall at both key stages were well planned, with objectives shared with pupils at the beginning of the lesson. The curriculum is taught by a team of well qualified linguists, including two native French speakers. The foreign language assistants are often used effectively to develop pupils' skills of listening and speaking.
189. Many, but not all, teachers use the foreign language confidently throughout the lesson. When it is used it enhances the learning environment and effectively extends pupils' skills of listening. Lessons are well planned and use attractive resources, such as overhead transparencies. Time is generally used well and teachers have a good understanding of the subject which they use well to encourage pupils to become proficient linguists. Homework which extends learning is set regularly. Marking is thorough and consistent, with comments indicating how pupils might improve their work alongside encouraging remarks. As a result, many pupils take great pride in their books.
190. The department is well managed. The head of department supports her staff well. Documentation is detailed and subject guidance thorough. Staff benefit from observing colleagues and sharing ideas. Information from assessment is used well for setting targets and for planning. A set of assessments has been planned to suit pupils with special educational needs so that they can achieve at a level appropriate to their ability. Foreign trips and penfriend links are well established and have a positive impact is on pupils' understanding of foreign languages.
191. The previous inspection commented on there being few opportunities to practise the foreign language needed to develop confidence and competencies. This has been successfully tackled and pupils are encouraged to work in pairs and groups. Surveys are popular and provide the opportunity to ask questions and to understand the language used. Not all staff encourage pupils to

use the foreign language in the classroom, for example *Ich verstehe nicht* or *Je n'ai pas de stylo*. The department recognises that it needs to develop its use of computers when they become available.

MUSIC

192. Pupils have a wide span of attainment when they enter the school due to the quality of prior experience including specialist and/or instrumental teaching in their previous schools and home support. Many pupils start with limited musical experience and teachers' assessments confirm this. By Year 9, towards the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is well below average. The time given to music is below the recommended time to teach the National Curriculum programmes. The quality of singing is unsatisfactory; pupils sing insufficiently and irregularly so that the requirements of the National Curriculum programme are not met. Most pupils play keyboards in instrumental work but performing and music reading skills are insufficiently developed, as for example when pupils try to play very simple tunes. Pupils who play instruments can name given notes or recognise common signs; others do so from theory work rather than naturally from using music; very few show any

understanding of notation. Composing skills are very limited as seen when pupils tried to develop pieces. Pupils listen respectfully to each other and recordings but do not listen enough to appreciate an appropriate range of music. They appraise sensibly but show very limited vocabulary and well below average general musical knowledge, for example of composers, forms, styles, artists and instruments.

193. At Key Stage 4, very small numbers have taken GCSE music in recent years. Results have been well below the national average. Standards in the current Year 10 and 11 groups are average and are reflecting a slight upward trend as far as numbers are concerned. Pupils show average instrumental skills; violin, piano, guitar and cornet are the most played instruments. Some pupils are talented and perform at high levels. Pupils sing and play in ensemble insufficiently and do not experience a range of repertoire, for example, from opera, musicals, folk, rock or music from around the world. In composing, higher attaining pupils show a secure understanding of musical language and compose fluently. Pupils have insufficient computers to develop and notate their work; this disadvantages them. However, school facilities are currently being improved and some pupils use home computers. Pupils listen attentively and use appropriate technical vocabulary in discussion; they show slightly above average general music knowledge.
194. Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory at Key Stage 3 but satisfactory at Key Stage 4. Those who are instrumentalists and read music, building on their previous learning, experience and their personal interests, achieve best but are insufficiently challenged. In the lower school, work does not yet adequately develop instrumental, vocal and music reading skills to enable pupils to achieve their potential in performing, composing and listening. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress and are well integrated. Achievement in examination work, where pupils are motivated, is satisfactory.
195. Most pupils show positive attitudes and good behaviour supports achievement, especially in Year 7 but a few pupils have negative attitudes by Year 9. Most pupils are friendly, open, responsive, and respectful towards staff and each other. They use equipment sensibly, work well collaboratively and remain on task. They show initiative and enjoy taking responsibility for their learning, for example when performing or composing in groups. Many pupils enjoy music making, especially using instruments and singing. In GCSE work, pupils are keen and most take advantage of opportunities in tuition but they do not support extra-curricular activities sufficiently.
196. The quality of teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 4 but unsatisfactory at Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 3, about a third of the lessons seen were unsatisfactory, mainly because they lacked rigour and the content was unsuitable. Teachers show secure subject knowledge and musicianship in performing, accompanying, conducting and arranging. They are confident and energetic in the better lessons; instructions are clear so that pupils know what they have to do. However, expectations are too low; questioning does not challenge pupils sufficiently and some tasks are too easy so that pupils do not focus on them. Pupils are usually managed well and relationships are satisfactory; at Key Stage 4 relationships are good. Lessons use an appropriate range of resources but not enough use is made of equipment to explain and make the lessons more interesting. Activities are varied but the main weakness is that lesson planning does not relate to pupils' needs to develop skills through music making; the approach is too academic. The poorer lessons proceed too slowly and pupils lose interest. Assessment is encouraging and supportive and helps pupils improve their work but not enough technical support is given, for example in showing pupils to sing. Teachers give good support to pupils with special educational needs but the lack of work for pupils of different attainment means that some find the lessons difficult. Homework is set irregularly and is not used effectively to extend learning.
197. The head of department and other teachers give much time to organising music but much remains to be done, especially to raise standards in classroom work in Years 7 to 9 and increase numbers, especially of boys, in examination work, instrumental tuition and activities. Schemes are currently under review. There are no curricular links with primary schools so teachers do not know what pupils have learned in their primary schools. Assessment is mainly informal and pupil self-assessment is insufficiently developed. Resources are satisfactory but there is no overhead projector or printed music for singing and playing. Pianos need refurbishing. Technical support is absent, imposing pressures on the staff. Accommodation is unsatisfactory; there is only one practice room for group work and inadequate storage facilities, especially for instruments. The quality of the music areas could be improved by displays of pupils' work. The arrangement of rooms with desks inhibits music making. Since the last inspection there has been unsatisfactory improvement.

198. Seven visiting teachers provide instrumental lessons involving 11 boys and 36 girls. This is about a third of the national average. Teaching is good and some very good teaching was observed in string tuition. Pupils' attitudes are good and progress is good in lessons but overall is satisfactory; pupils do not all have practice books, do not all practice sufficiently and classroom work does not reinforce learning. Standards are broadly average. The monitoring of instrumental tuition needs to be strengthened. There is a small orchestra and choir involving about 30 girls but few boys. These groups have satisfactory standards and perform in school concerts. The school produces musicals annually and performed a creditable *Godspell* this year. There is a popular annual talent show. The activities reflect the dedication and hard work of staff, the support of parents and the enthusiasm of the keen musicians whose performances and successes bring credit to the school.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

199. At the end of Key Stage 3, the level of attainment of the majority of 14 year olds is average and many pupils achieve beyond this level. Most pupils are very interested in the subject, enjoy it and are keen to participate and to improve. In a Year 7 lesson, boys could take their own pulse rate and understood the reasons for change after exercise. They listened attentively to teachers' explanations, contributed effectively to discussion, recorded results on a work sheet and performed mental calculations accurately. Girls in Years 8 and 9 showed improvement, through practice, in passing and catching in netball lessons. Boys in Year 9 showed a developing understanding and improving skill in rugby scrummaging and passing. Girls in a Year 8 dance lesson could note important aspects of a video recording, reproduce them in their own performance and, then, add additional refinements.
200. The level of attainment in Years 10 and 11 is above average. Pupils develop a range of skills and girls and boys do equally well. In a mixed volleyball lesson, the boys displayed energy and enthusiasm but the best examples of controlled performance came from girls. In some activities, pupils are encouraged to join local clubs, giving them opportunities to reach high standards and to contribute to the coaching of fellow pupils.
201. GCSE physical education is offered as an option in Years 10 and 11. It is not always possible to attract higher attaining pupils and so attainment is well below average. All pupils in Year 10 study the GCSE additional physical education short course. Pupils not taking the GCSE option are encouraged to obtain a Certificate of Achievement and it is intended to introduce a course leading to the Junior Sports Leaders Award.
202. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and integrated into lessons and make satisfactory progress. Teachers are very sympathetic towards pupils who have fears of particular physical activities and offer encouragement which builds up confidence.
203. The quality of teaching is good overall and often very good and excellent. Most lessons proceed at a good pace, keeping all pupils actively involved. Pupils frequently work in groups, the work for each group being carefully planned to take account of different levels of attainment, which enables pupils to practise and progress at a level suitable to their needs. Teachers circulate amongst their classes making appropriate and effective use of praise and encouragement. The relationships between pupils and teachers are very good. Class management is calm, clear and very effective.
204. All lessons are thoroughly prepared with teachers showing a very good knowledge of the subject and of the wide variety of activities which are offered. Formal class teaching is the preferred style but team teaching was used very effectively when inclement weather caused doubling up in indoor lessons. Safety procedures are emphasised whenever necessary. This is particularly evident in trampolining lessons where pupils conscientiously follow the required procedures. Pupils understand the necessity of warming up properly. It was quite usual for individuals to warm up on their own initiative and for a pupil to conduct the class warm up. Teachers always make lesson objectives clear and pupils constantly evaluate their own performances and progress.
205. In all practical lessons pupils' attitudes and behaviour are consistently very good or excellent. Many older girls show an impressive level of maturity. A good example was when Year 11 girls showed consideration and understanding when their teacher had lost her voice and continued to produce work of a very high standard. The only instance of unsatisfactory behaviour was during a GCSE theory lesson which was well prepared and well managed. A small minority of boys were deliberately uncooperative.

206. Extra curricular activities are a strength in this school. During a typical three day period, 19 different sporting activities took place. Several non-specialist staff make valuable contributions to these activities. Netball, basketball and orienteering are well supported. An indoor inter-house cricket competition revealed a wealth of talent. Junior Rugby players worked assiduously at strength training in the fitness room. There was particularly good coaching in volleyball where consistently accurate feeding enabled boys and girls to achieve highly. Within the department and around the school there are several displays which feature participation and success in a variety of sports with athletics and association football prominent. Girls' football is prominent at all age levels.
207. The extensive playing fields are clean and well maintained. They were completely litter free. The five hard tennis courts are in very good condition and there are other hard surface areas which can be used for netball and basketball. However, the fields are badly drained and frequently unusable. This presents some difficulties in teaching the games element of the National Curriculum. The school does, however, comply with the full requirements of the physical education curriculum. The two gymnasias and adjoining fitness room are clean and well maintained but changing accommodation is not adequate for the number of pupils on roll. There is an adequate stock of equipment and resources, well matched to the programme being offered. The department is efficiently managed with clearly defined objectives. There is a spirit of co-operation amongst the staff.
208. In recognition of its quality programme of physical education and sport the school has gained the prestigious Sportsmark Award. It is the department's intention to improve, even further, the programme it offers.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

209. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with the expectations of the Middlesborough Education Authority Agreed Syllabus for religious education that the school uses. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils have a good understanding of the beliefs and practices in Christianity, are able to express their own views and are beginning to make decisions about the larger issues of belief and understanding. Their knowledge and understanding of other world religions is weaker with pupils showing a certain amount of confusion.
210. By the end of Key Stage 4 attainment is below the national average for pupils following the short GCSE course in religious education. In 1999, 33% obtained grades A* to C compared to a national average of 47% and in 2000 21% gained grades A* to C. However, the standards of work seen in lessons is in line with the Agreed Syllabus expectations, and the current Year 10 are on track to achieve results in line with the national average as they are receiving the expected allocation of time for the subject. The number of pupils following the full course for religious education is too small for reliable statistical analysis but pupils do as well or better than in their other examination subjects. By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils have a sound understanding of a range of issues and understand how principles of belief affect people's actions. This is considered when looking at a range of moral dilemmas including euthanasia, abortion, relationships and the care of the environment. Pupils also have a good understanding of how God communicates and understand the revelation of God, as it is relevant to people today. As in Key Stage 3, applying Christian beliefs is much stronger than their grasp of other world religions. There is no significant difference between the attainment of different groups of pupils. Pupils arrive from junior schools without a unified base of knowledge, especially in world religions. Achievement in Key Stage 3 is good. Achievement at Key Stage 4 is satisfactory and attainment is improving with the breadth and depth of the work seen in Year 10.
211. There is a positive attitude to religious education and pupils take pride in their work. In lessons attitudes are usually very good or excellent, behaviour is also very good. Pupils work very well in pairs and in groups, listening to each other's opinions and respecting the views contributed even if they disagree. These relationships provide an environment in which issues can be discussed in a sensitive way and learning can take place, Pupils are self-motivated and always respond well when responsibility is given to them to organise their own work. Relationships between staff and pupils are also very good again enhancing the learning environment. There is no significant difference in the progress of different groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language.
212. The teaching of religious education is good, with almost two-thirds of lessons seen being good or better; there is no significant difference between the teaching at Key Stage 3 and 4, and no unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Strengths within teaching are the use of resources that enable the

pupils to relate their learning to a practical situation, for example, when pupils considered Islamic food laws and used artefacts when considering worship in Christianity. Technical terminology is used in appropriate ways along with strategies that assist the pupils to remember it. This is either key words displayed on the wall or in the case of the full GCSE course, pupils record vocabulary and meaning in a small notebook. The use of group discussion aids the pupils to develop a balanced view on issues and when individual responsibility is given to the pupils to organise their own work, they respond well and the quantity of work produced is very good. The approach of the teachers to the subject is suitable for the different groups being taught and the lessons are well structured to develop pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. Weaker areas within teaching occur when the teacher dominates parts of the lesson and where work within a class does not make an allowance for the faster and slower workers. The marking of work is generally thorough but there are relatively few occasions where a constructive comment is given that gives guidance as to how the work can be further improved. The lack of homework in the short GCSE course means that the pupils are spending less time on the subject and thus learning is inhibited.

213. Management of the department is good, documentation is thorough and the department works well together sharing lesson plans for the benefit of all pupils. Problems are caused by two teachers teaching one class so pupils' progress is affected by the use of non-specialist teachers, who lack the depth of knowledge and understanding to enthuse pupils. Accommodation for the subject is generally satisfactory but teachers teaching away from the main areas have difficulty in accessing the full range of resources and cannot make use of the same display material. At times the noise of moving furniture in the rooms above severely disrupts the lessons and interferes with both the learning and concentration. On one occasion listening to a pupil read out loud was impossible. The curriculum in religious education generally covers that required by the Agreed Syllabus. The Millennium tree project undertaken jointly with the art department has resulted in an impressive display of poems, prayers and dreams for the futures which the children treat with respect and often pause to read. The curriculum is also enhanced by the Year 9 moral issues mornings, making use of a range of outside speakers. However the curriculum currently taught to Year 11 at Key Stage 4 does not allow sufficient time to complete the course although this happens in Year 10.
214. Improvement since the last inspection has been good and all the positive aspects of the last inspection have been maintained. Pupils' motivation is now usually very good or better and the issue of closely directed work inhibiting the higher attaining pupils to develop their ideas fully has been tackled successfully. The new unit of work on 'Ultimate Questions' provides a very good basis for pupils to develop not only their factual base but also their understanding of how issues relate to life today. The short GCSE course in religious education has been introduced for all pupils. The staff is now trained in the use of computers so that they are in a position to move forward in using ICT.

BUSINESS AND VOCATIONAL STUDIES

215. Business studies, business and information technology and office applications are popular options for a high proportion of Year 10 and 11 pupils. Attainment in GCSE business studies was average in 1999 and 2000 and was above the school average. Boys' results are better than girls as boys use computers particularly well at an early stage of their examination coursework. For a minority of girls and boys, results are better than expected in relation to their prior attainment. Results in combined business and technology courses are below average, as are results in the vocational office applications GCSE course. Although standards of work in office applications lessons are below average, pupils achieve appropriately as most enter with relatively low attainment.
216. Pupils on all courses, including those with special educational needs, show good achievement, particularly where they make good progress in developing their skills in ICT. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, also show sound achievement in key skills of number and communications.
217. Year 10 pupils become very capable at researching local industry and higher attaining pupils show good ability to plan, monitor and evaluate their assignments. Standards over time are effectively monitored by teachers so pupils are set realistic termly targets. Pupils who find examination coursework difficult are identified early and given extra revision lessons for an alternative examination paper, which helps improve their overall results
218. In a good Year 10 key skills lesson, pupils used computers well to design and produce adverts for a school disco, business cards and brochures. In a good Year 10 business studies and information

technology (combined) lesson, pupils designed and produced attractive three-column brochures for a fast food takeaway business and created their own spreadsheets to show the income and expenses of a leisure centre. Pupils in Year 11 drew up petty cash spreadsheets, applying formulae well and improving their number skills. In a Year 11 office applications lesson, groups of pupils developed communications key skills by discussing and presenting their ideas for generating sponsorship income in sport. Pupils' desktop published posters are attractive but sometimes spoilt by uncorrected spellings. Most pupils, particularly average and higher attainers, can clearly explain basic business terms and concepts, and write about them in more depth in business studies coursework projects.

219. Pupils' attitudes to work and behaviour in class are very good. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, respond well to the practical activities planned by teachers, and generally concentrate well on their tasks, which they consider interesting and relevant. Pupils work well independently on computers or in groups, where they discuss topics and report back their findings with confidence.
220. Teaching in GCSE business studies in Years 10 and 11 is always good, and, in a half of lessons seen during the inspection very good. This leads to learning where the majority of pupils make good progress in gaining business knowledge and developing key skills in communication, number and IT. Teachers are very experienced and have very good knowledge of their subjects and industry practice. They have high expectations of pupils and the ability to pace lessons quickly, moving through a variety of short tasks which keep pupils of different attainment interested. This includes pupils with learning and behaviour difficulties. Tasks generally meet the needs of all levels of attainment within a class and teachers stop lessons from time to time to give higher attaining pupils additional tasks. Teachers' well-planned lessons and enthusiastic teaching help pupils to develop pride in their work and a desire to meet deadlines set. Teachers support individual pupils closely, and assess them carefully using criteria laid down by the examining board, grading work accurately and giving constructive feedback. This means pupils know how they can improve. Teachers use homework effectively for coursework research, revision for tests and sometimes for additional theory. Pupils' work is usually marked promptly with constructive written comments which suggest how the work might be improved.
221. In the best lessons, teachers introduce new topics briefly with clear aims. Following this are practical group activities for pupils to develop teamwork skills and improve their ability to research within and outside school rather than depend on the teacher to decide how they learn. Pupils evaluate what they have learnt at the end of lessons. Teachers use guidance for writing well to develop pupils' literacy by helping them structure their GCSE examination course work. Teachers use of business and industrial links is very good. Visitors from local industry evaluate pupils' plans for new businesses.
222. Business courses have good base rooms and are run by committed, experienced teachers. The number of computers available has increased recently, although some machines need upgrading, and the pace of pupils' learning is slower where they have to share computers in larger classes. School time is appropriately allocated to team meetings and the internal monitoring of teachers' GCSE and key skills assessments. Development plans for the future are realistic and give maximum flexibility for pupils to choose subjects they feel are relevant to their needs. The school is actively considering further vocational courses for 2001.
223. Since the last inspection, a new departmental structure has created an environment that attracts growing numbers of pupils of all abilities. There is a greater range of courses to meet pupils' varying needs. The good links with business and industry have increased, as have joint projects within school involving several subjects. The quality of teaching has improved with the appointment of a new specialist teacher from industry. Teaching methods enable pupils to actively participate in lessons, and make effective use of the newer computer equipment recently made available. This has had a considerable positive effect on examination results, particularly for boys. The department is well placed to improve further.