

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **THE ROYAL GRAMMAR SCHOOL**

High Wycombe

LEA area: Buckinghamshire

Unique reference number: 110530

Headteacher: Tim Dingle

Reporting inspector: Clare Gillies  
(OFSTED No: 20597)

Dates of inspection: 20 - 23 November 2000

Inspection number: 223758

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Grammar
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18 years
Gender of pupils:	Boys
School address:	Amersham Road High Wycombe Buckinghamshire
Postcode:	HP13 6QT
Telephone number:	01494 524955
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Wilfred Rooke DL
Date of previous inspection:	March 1995

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The Royal Grammar School is a selective 11-18 boys' grammar school with 1341 pupils (bigger than most secondary schools). The large sixth form has 379 pupils. The school has 70 places for boarders, with 62 at present. Prior to September 1998 it was a 12-18 school. Just under 80 per cent of the pupils are white, the largest minority ethnic group being Pakistani pupils (close to 5 per cent), followed by Indian pupils. Just over one per cent of pupils is eligible for free school meals, well below the average. Twenty-one pupils are on the register of special education needs, of whom two have statements – well below average. The catchment area is wide as pupils come from over 50 primary and independent schools. Pupils' attainment on entry is well above average. The school has been a designated language college since 1996.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

The Royal Grammar is a most effective and excellent school with many impressive and outstanding features. These include standards that are well above the average for grammar schools, pupils' excellent attitude to school life and their very good behaviour; there is strong leadership and management, at least very good teaching in 55 per cent of lessons, a most positive ethos which nurtures excellent learning, very good pastoral care, including that for boarders, and harmonious relationships at all levels. The sixth form is cost-effective and the school provides very good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Pupils' attitudes to school life are excellent and their behaviour is very good. They develop into responsible individuals and their relationships with one another and with teachers are excellent. They learn very well.
- Standards are well above the grammar school average at GCSE and the national average at A level. The GCSE points score has gone up for the last four years and in 2000 extremely high results were attained in electronics, mathematics, physics and modern foreign languages. At A level half the grades attained in sixteen subjects were grades A or B, and one-third attained in eight subjects were grade A. In comparison with national attainment and achievement, standards seen during the inspection were extremely high.
- Teaching is very good in over 55 per cent of lessons, including 10 per cent that is excellent. Teachers have excellent knowledge of their subjects and a significant number deliver exciting and inspiring lessons.
- The range and number of activities outside lessons is excellent, particularly in music and sport. Other successful activities include the Combined Cadet Force (CCF), Young Enterprise and many societies and clubs. The choice of subjects in the sixth form is very good.
- Leadership and management, the contribution of the governing body and financial arrangements are very good. The headmaster is providing strong leadership and developing the school carefully. He is sensitively combining modern planning with the school's traditions.

#### **What could be improved**

- In Years 7 to 9 statutory elements of the National Curriculum for design and technology are not covered. Pupils spend less time studying it than in most schools. GCSE results are lower than in other subjects.
- Information technology is not used enough in a minority of subjects. Results, overall, in information systems are lower than in other subjects.
- Target-setting (especially in terms of predicted and expected grades) is not yet in place for individual pupils although much data is now available.
- A few lessons are teacher-dominated and/or uninspiring.
- For some year groups of pupils, parents' evenings are held too early in the day for parents to attend easily. Parents mind not being able to see all the teachers who teach their sons.

*The strengths far outweigh the weaknesses. The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan. The present School Development Plan already includes references to the issues raised in the box above.*

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION (March 1995)**

Time for design and technology and physical education has increased but not enough to deliver the full design and technology National Curriculum. Previous issues related to attendance registers, health and safety and registration periods have been dealt with fully; the school immediately addressed health and safety issues noted during the inspection. In a few lessons teachers still over-direct the pupils but the headmaster is generating useful debate about teaching styles. Pupils in all years, except for the sixth form, attend a daily act of collective worship. Time has increased for religious education but not for music. Statutory arrangements for pupils with special educational needs have improved significantly. Pupils have benefited considerably from

several major developments; for example, the new boarding facilities, the refurbished laboratories and removal of the modern foreign languages huts. Positive changes in the way the school is organised and managed, introduced by the new headmaster, are already evident. The GCSE points score has risen consistently for four years and rigorous analysis of results ensures that complacency does not set in. Overall, the school has made good improvement since the last inspection.

## 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
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE examinations	A*	A*	A*	A
A-levels/AS-levels	A*	A	A	

**Key**

Well above average      A

Above average            B

Average                    C

Below average            D

Well below average      E

*A\* means that results are exceptionally high and in the top five per cent nationally.*

Results at the end of Years 9, 11 and 13 are very high compared with all national statistics. They are well above the average for all grammar schools. In tests at the end of Year 9 the percentage of pupils reaching Level 7 is well above the grammar school average in science, above average in English and average in mathematics. The points score for mathematics is particularly high as very few pupils attain less than Level 6.

The average GCSE points score has gone up for the last four years. Practically all pupils attain six or more grades A\*-C and many attain considerably more. In 1999, 58 per cent of grades attained were A\* or A. This dropped slightly in 2000 but the average points score went up. In 2000, pupils attained extremely high standards in electronics, mathematics, physics, French, German, Italian and Spanish. Results in modern foreign languages are amongst the highest in the country. Statistics comparing the average points attained at the end of Year 9 with average points attained in GCSE show that pupils make well above average progress compared with schools with similar attainment at the end of Year 9.

At A level at least 33 per cent of grades attained were grade A in the following subjects: biology, chemistry, English language, French, Greek, music, physics and Spanish. Mathematics, French and the three science subjects are popular at A level. Each year about twenty pupils attain places at Oxford and Cambridge. Standards seen during the inspection were extremely high in all years, as pupils work at levels well above those expected for their age. In all subjects, many examples of pupils' exceptionally high standards of understanding, knowledge and skills were observed.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent. Pupils work extremely hard in lessons and are enthusiastic about getting as much out of school life as possible. The great majority are involved in several activities outside lessons. They appreciate all the school has to offer.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils are polite, courteous and considerate. Minor incidents of bullying are extremely rare, as are permanent exclusions. Temporary exclusions are used extensively where behaviour adversely affects pupils' welfare.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. Pupils are proud to be members of the school community and they manage their work and other activities well. They develop into responsible individuals and their relationships with one another and with teachers are very good, a major factor contributing to how well they learn.
Attendance	Very high with no unauthorised absence.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen, overall	Very good	Very good	Very good

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

Teaching observed during the inspection was at least good in 86 per cent of lessons. It was very good in 55 per cent, including 10 per cent where it was excellent. No overall unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection although there are elements, which could be improved. In Years 7 to 11 teaching is consistently good in English and very good in mathematics and science. Literacy and numeracy skills are developed extremely well. Teaching was particularly effective in many different subjects, in all years. It was particularly impressive in Year 9 (over 90 per cent good) and in Years 11 and 13 (over 65 per cent very good).

In lessons seen during the inspection pupils' behaviour, effort and concentration were at least good and in half the lessons they were exemplary, particularly in the sixth form. Here pupils debate and discuss ideas with a maturity one might associate with university level. Learning was good in 90 per cent of lessons seen during the inspection. It was excellent in over half the lessons observed in Year 13 and consistently good in Year 12.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good, overall, particularly the range of subjects in the sixth form. Statutory requirements for design and technology are not met. Information technology is not used enough in a minority of subjects. Pupils do not study music, drama, information technology and electronics all year round. They have to study French if they only do one language for GCSE. The range and number of extra-curricular activities is excellent.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Significantly improved since the last inspection, particularly since the appointment of a co-ordinator. Whether they have learning or behaviour problems, the few boys on the register are catered for well and make very good progress. Parents speak highly of the support provided by the school.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. The school successfully conveys that it expects the highest standards of moral and social behaviour and awareness, and these are achieved. Provision for pupils' spiritual awareness is good, in assemblies particularly and in religious education and other subjects.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Pupils are very well cared for and given much effective support and guidance. Their views are respected and valued. They appreciate the importance of the new anti-bullying leaflet. Pupils' attainment and progress are monitored carefully but they are rarely guided by targets related to predicted or expected grades.

The school works well with parents and keeps them fully informed about school life. Parents help the school both by attending many functions and sports' fixtures and by donating generously to raise funds.



## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headmaster and other key staff	Very good. The headmaster is providing strong and effective leadership and steering the school well. He is sensitively combining modern planning with consideration for the school's many strengths and traditions. The senior management team and middle managers all work hard to support the most positive ethos and to make sure that the school does not stand still but develops effectively.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. The governors are enthusiastically supportive and bring a wealth of useful expertise and practical common sense to their discussions. They are quite clear how they want the school to develop and put much energy and time into raising funds and planning for the future.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The present development plan is extremely well written and carefully balanced. When preparing it, the headmaster consulted every possible member of the school's community and evaluated every aspect of the school's performance most thoroughly.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Extensive resources are used wisely to maximise the quality of education provided now and planned for in the future. The school applies the principles of best value very well.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practically all are confident that their sons are expected to work hard and achieve their best.</li> <li>• Ninety-seven per cent (questionnaire) state that their sons like school and make good progress, that the teaching is good and the school is well led and managed.</li> <li>• Considerable praise for the number and range of activities that happen outside lessons.</li> <li>• High quality pastoral care, including that for boarders.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents' evenings: in some years these are too early in the day for parents to attend. Particularly concerned that cannot see all subject teachers.</li> <li>• Homework – sometimes too much, sometimes too little and occasionally cannot be done without access to a computer.</li> <li>• Lack of lockers.</li> <li>• A few have concerns about elitism, particularly in sport.</li> </ul>

Well over 500 parents returned the questionnaire and a considerable number wrote comments as well. Over 60 attended the parents' evening. The inspection confirmed all their positive views. The team appreciates their concerns about parents' evenings. The school is providing more lockers. There was no evidence that the amount of homework varies any more than normal. The school does everything possible to encourage all pupils to participate in sport.

## PART B: COMMENTARY

### WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

*References to subjects refer to particularly impressive (or less successful) features of lessons seen during the inspection. From discussion with pupils and examination of their books it is clear that such features are replicated in other subjects.*

**Pupils' attitudes to school life are excellent and their behaviour is very good. They develop into responsible individuals and their relationships with one another and with teachers are excellent. They learn very well.**

1. Pupils are polite, considerate and very well behaved. They are adamant that the concepts of fairness, equal opportunity and racial tolerance are embedded in the culture of the school and there is no evidence to the contrary. Mutual respect between pupils and teachers is clear in both lessons and extra-curricular activities. In discussion, a few pupils observed that their inspection behaviour was possibly better than normal and that a few teachers were more punctual to lessons than usual! Nevertheless, the vast majority of their comments about school life were overwhelmingly positive, for example, "It's a brilliant school – it's as good as you make it".
2. Year 7 pupils are well-supported by prefects and much is done to help them settle into the school with confidence. The deputy head who oversees pastoral care is considerate and thoughtful and the heads of year and form tutors are very conscientious. The quality of the personal, social and health education programme is very good although, as it is taught by over twenty teachers, the effectiveness of its delivery is variable. The provision for boarders is excellent, both in the quality of care and facilities. Assemblies are well-planned and interesting and occasionally led by religious or cultural groups, for example the Islamic Society during the inspection. All these positive features contribute enormously to the excellent ethos of the school which, in turn, is reflected in pupils' behaviour.
3. Pupils give generously to charity and every week contribute towards the Benevolent Fund. During the last academic year over £5000 was raised and given to twelve different charities, including Jeans for Genes, the NSPCC and the Indian Cyclone Appeal. The school successfully reflects its prospectus statement that "boys should not be inward-looking and insular but should be aware of what is going on in the local community and beyond". On one afternoon a week many pupils do social service, for example, working in local primary schools. Pupils participating in the Duke of Edinburgh Award also contribute much to the local community.
4. In half the lessons seen during the inspection pupils' behaviour, effort and concentration was exemplary - they could not have contributed more to the success of these lessons, particularly in the sixth form. Here pupils debate and discuss ideas with a maturity one might associate with university tutorials. Learning was good in 90 per cent of lessons seen during the inspection. It was excellent in over half the lessons observed in Year 13 and consistently good in Year 12.
5. Whilst there is a clear correlation between particularly effective teaching and impressive learning, in several lessons it is the pupils who contribute most to the overall quality of learning because they put so much effort and mental energy into absorbing, thinking about and analysing information, for example:
  - thinking logically in mathematics; for example, working on spatial awareness.
  - making highly perceptive comments on texts in English.
  - displaying excellent initiative in group work, especially in drama.
  - helping each other effectively in computer studies.
  - in the sixth form - checking meticulously corrections in chemistry lessons, keeping up their sense of humour during serious biology revision lessons and applying superb mathematical skills to gravitational problems in physics.
  - sharing discoveries and ideas, for example, as they examine OS maps or climate data in geography.
  - enthusiastically discovering and absorbing explanations in many science lessons.
  - seeking and using alternative expressions in modern foreign languages.
  - adapting their orthographic drawings in design and technology.
  - debating philosophical issues with enthusiasm, verve and determination.
  - identifying theoretical aspects of their work in art and justifying their choice of design and colour.
  - quickly grasping spiritual and moral concepts in religious education.
  - persevering with creative learning and practice at the keyboards in music.

**Standards are well above the grammar school average at GCSE and the national average at A level. The GCSE points score has gone up for the last four years and in 2000 extremely high results were attained in electronics, mathematics, physics and modern foreign languages. At A level half the grades attained in 16 subjects were grades A or B, and one-third attained in eight subjects were grade A. In comparison with national attainment and achievement, standards seen during the inspection were extremely high.**

6. As The Royal Grammar school has a selective intake it is to be expected that results at the end of Years 9, 11 and 13 are very high compared with all national statistics. What makes standards impressive is that they are well above the average for all grammar schools. In tests at the end of Year 9 the percentage of pupils reaching Level 7 is well above the grammar school average in science, above average in English and average in mathematics. However, the points score for mathematics is particularly high and well above the grammar school average (reflecting that very few pupils attain less than Level 6).
7. At GCSE, the average points score has gone up for the last four years although during that time individual subjects have peaked at different times. Practically all pupils attain six or more grades A\*-C and many attain considerably more. The highest number of A\* grades was achieved in 1999, when 58 per cent of grades attained were A\* or A. This dropped slightly in 2000 but the average points score went up. In 2000, over 50 per cent of pupils achieved grades A\* and A in electronics, mathematics and physics and over 80 per cent in French, German, Italian and Spanish. The latter confirms the importance of the school having language college status; indeed, results in modern foreign languages are amongst the highest in the country.
8. A relatively lower percentage of pupils attained A\* and A grades in classical civilisation, design and realisation, English language and literature, Latin, physical education and information systems. Over the last five years in the core subjects, the average point scores for the sciences and English language have been slightly higher than for mathematics. Statistics comparing the average points attained at the end of Year 9 with average points attained in GCSE show that between 1997 and 1999 pupils made well above average progress compared with schools with similar Year 9 attainment.
9. At A level, at least 33 per cent of grades attained were grade A in the following subjects: biology, chemistry, English language, French, Greek, music, physics and Spanish. In thirteen of the twenty-four subjects taken at A-level all pupils attained A-E grades and in sixteen subjects over 50 per cent of pupils attained grades A and B. Mathematics, French and the three science subjects are popular at A level. In 2000, in AS Level electronics, one pupil attained full marks in all three modules. Each year about twenty pupils secure places at Oxford and Cambridge.
10. Standards seen during the inspection were extremely high as pupils work at levels well above those expected for their age. In English, pupils absorb texts and give clear responses which are well articulated and well-informed. They develop ideas about themes and characters convincingly. In mathematics, they have excellent problem-solving skills, powers of logical reasoning and spatial awareness. In science, they demonstrate both breadth and depth of knowledge and understanding and interpret quantitative data with expertise. In all other subjects many examples of pupils' exceptionally high standards of understanding, knowledge and skills were observed.

**Teaching is very good in over 55 per cent of lessons, including 10 per cent which is excellent. Teachers have excellent knowledge of their subjects and a significant number deliver exciting and inspiring lessons.**

11. Teaching observed during the inspection was at least good in 86 per cent of lessons. It was very good in 55 per cent, including 10 per cent when it was excellent. No overall unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection although elements that could be developed are outlined in paragraph 37. Teaching was particularly effective in biology, chemistry, electronics, design and technology, history, information technology, mathematics, German, Spanish, music, philosophy, physical education, physics and religious education. Examples of excellent teaching were observed in English, biology, chemistry, French, German, music and physical education. Teaching was particularly impressive in Year 9 (over 90 per cent good) and in Years 11 and 13 (over 65 per cent very good) - the three years when pupils take national tests, GCSEs and A levels.
12. Over one quarter of the teachers have higher degrees. A few are examiners for GCSE and AS/A level examinations and many benefit from active participation in various subject committees at a national level.

GCSE coursework in history was used as an exemplar of good practice by an examination board. Teachers attend relevant and worthwhile courses, which they share effectively within departments. They all have excellent knowledge and expertise in their subjects. This is a significant factor in the very good quality of teaching. It means that lessons proceed in an atmosphere of academic challenge. Teachers :

- ask penetrating questions and do not accept superficial answers (chemistry and design and technology)
- emphasise particularly important words and names both in discussion and writing (classics)
- elaborate and add detail to facts by inserting interesting and unusual bits of information, (music and history)
- demonstrate superb skills (rugby) or when showing how to use equipment (design and technology)
- enhance understanding of algebra by particularly clear explanations (mathematics)
- check that pupils completely understand relevant terminology (communication studies)
- use topical materials and references to generate interest and amusement (art and economics)
- relate their own experiences of the world of work to topics being studied (business and politics)
- develop planning, which extends work done before and generates a fast pace (Latin)
- outline possibilities rather than providing quick answers (computer studies)
- provide critical references to related texts and link texts to modern social issues (English)
- offer excellent initial stimulus, for example, studying Buddhism, and raise awareness of different moral and ethical codes (religious education)
- deliver complete lessons using a modern foreign language fluently, at just the right pace to challenge pupils and always make them extend their answers (German)
- discuss subtle nuances of meaning in other languages (Spanish)
- successfully urge pupils to apply knowledge from other subjects

13. Teachers expect pupils to explain concepts at a high level, for example, demanding the precise use of mathematical terminology or the correct use of anatomical words in fitness testing. They interject in group discussions to steer pupils' ideas forwards, for example, in English, and demand that pupils use the target language for discussion when working in groups in Spanish. They establish sophisticated levels of understanding of concepts in art so that pupils can work well on individual studies for GCSE. They seek evidence for all statements pupils make in history and demand exceptionally high analysis of coursework in electronics and the sciences. In many GCSE and sixth form lessons teachers make references to examination techniques, the important points to stress, how to interpret the wording of questions, how to gain marks solving problems and refer to well-chosen exemplar materials.
14. Perhaps the most significant element of successful lessons is when pupils find them interesting and fun. Pupils enjoy work when they can keep up as it becomes progressively more difficult (mathematics) or they learn systematically how to improve (hockey) They find it helpful and stimulating to be provided with several different diagrams or acronyms to reinforce key concepts (history) and appreciate being treated as young scientists as they learn to use equipment (chemistry) and particularly enjoy eating dry cream crackers when learning about saliva, or pretending to play "Who wants to be a millionaire"! (biology) They enjoy tackling interesting homework about a brochure for a holiday around the solar system (physics). They appreciate being left to work things out for themselves, when the teacher provides superb resources for an experiment and then steps back (physics).

**The range and number of activities outside lessons is excellent, particularly in music and sport. Other successful groups include the CCF, Young Enterprise and many societies and clubs. The choice of subjects in the sixth form is very good.**

15. It is almost impossible to do justice to the school's extra-curricular activities in just a few paragraphs. So many things happen during the lunch hour and after school that the inspection team could only sample a few. The music department's practices for a concert were all directed most professionally and led to improvement, as did a rehearsal for the school play. A local MP candidate spoke to the Jeremy Paxman Society - the quality of discussion was excellent as pupils have considerable understanding of political and economic issues in the UK and rest of the European Union. Twenty boys played chess in the lunch hour, and in competitions after school the atmosphere was most positive and some good quality of play was seen.
16. The Christian Union meeting provided a chance for valuable discussion and for pupils in different years to socialise. Members of the astronomy club examined photographs of the moon they had taken the previous week and learned much about how features on the moon are named. Perhaps the highlight of the extra-curricular activities observed was the preparation for a national mock bar trial competition, a

superb example of citizenship in action. Four pupils had already visited the Old Bailey to extend their interest in the law.

17. Hockey, rugby, basketball and table tennis practices happen every day and different sports at other times of the year. On Saturdays, hundreds of boys are involved in matches. The rugby team reached the quarter-finals in the Daily Mail Cup and has toured Australia; the hockey teams reached the National Finals; the junior cricket team has visited South Africa, and teams perform extremely well in Eton fives, swimming, fencing, rowing and orienteering. All boys benefit from this excellence in such a wide range of sports and their social and co-operative skills are developed extremely well.
18. The music department regularly performs in the local and wider community and in music festivals and competitions. The number of concerts, musicals and performances by groups such as the Jazz Band, brass group and close harmony singers is considerable. With two CDs and tapes available, the high quality of music performances is recorded for many to enjoy. The work of the large number of peripatetic teachers is particularly valuable. The electronics department contributes enormously to the lighting and sound for the school hall and many pupils have benefited from working in this area.
19. The CCF is one of the most successful groups in the country. Young Enterprise teams always do well - one reached third place in the 1999 UK finals. World Challenge participants gain enormously from working on community projects, in India, for example. Numerous visits to the theatre are organised by the English department, in addition to four outings a year for pupils who participate in the Vulture clubs. The chemistry department visits the Materials Science Department at Oxford University, the history department takes Year 9 to World War One battlefields and organises a field trip to a medieval castle in Burgundy. In geography, Year 7 pupils study woodland ecosystems at a local Field Studies Centre and GCSE pupils spend four days in Dorset. The Karting group achieves outstanding success.
20. The modern foreign languages department organises numerous study trips, and sometimes work experience, in France, Germany and Spain and has many valuable contacts in Europe. Pupils' competence and motivation to speak other languages and their awareness of other cultures benefit greatly from all these links and experiences. The modern foreign language department also contributes to the very good range of subjects offered in the sixth form by offering Bahasa Malay, Japanese, Mandarin and Italian in addition to the three languages offered for GCSE.
21. Other subjects which enrich the sixth form curriculum include philosophy, politics, ancient history, economics, business studies, communication studies and sports studies. Since September 2000 the school has curtailed the number of foreign trips and outings, in all years. The senior management team is concerned that boys will find the new AS levels now taught in Year 12 more demanding than A levels. Aware that boys derive such great benefits from overseas and UK visits and experiences, the balance between time in school and time spent away will continue to be evaluated carefully in the future.

**Leadership and management, the contribution of the governing body and financial arrangements are very good. The headmaster is providing strong leadership and developing the school carefully. He is sensitively combining modern planning with the school's traditions.**

22. After five terms in post the headmaster has achieved a great deal. He has immersed himself into the culture of school life and found out what all members of the community want to see improved. The School Development Plan is a most interesting document which emerged after many questionnaires were completed and much research had taken place. Punctuating this document are phrases that encapsulate the headmaster's approach to management - that everything "must be seen through pupils' eyes, or from their point of view". This, blended with his enormous respect for all teachers and staff, generates a purposeful and constructive style for improvement.
23. Changes in the structure and personnel of the senior management team are evolving with considerable thought. For example, new positions have been created to extend the effective push for more information technology and use of assessment data generated by one deputy head. More teachers are being given opportunities to lead on initiatives, which addresses one issue raised in the previous report. A special educational needs co-ordinator has been appointed recently and significant improvements have happened. The headmaster has written a helpful document on teaching and learning, to stimulate discussion amongst teachers. He is aware that some lessons are delivered with considerable competence and professionalism, but they are possibly uninspiring in their presentation. His own inspirational and fun style of teaching is certainly a valuable role model for other teachers to consider.

24. The senior management team has introduced many initiatives which reflect its respect and confidence in pupils. For example, the team devotes every lunch hour to meeting pupils who have produced extremely good work or made particularly good effort. They sign an imposing book and discuss their achievements with the headmaster and head of year. The senior management team is keen to respond to pupils' ideas, put forward in the recently established school council. All suggestions, however unusual, are considered very carefully. Pupils now attend parents' evenings.
25. The governors and senior management team are determined to keep staffing levels high so that teachers have time to prepare lessons and mark work thoroughly. Parents praise the quality of marking and the speed with which it is done. The inspection team saw much evidence to support their observations but occasionally noted no more than ticks or crosses, without any guidance for improvement. Heads of departments and heads of years teach fewer lessons than other teachers, which means they have time to carry out their duties most efficiently. The head of chemistry is head of science at present but will pass this role to another after two years. This is a good way of keeping the three subjects well-united.
26. Governors devote much time to supporting the school. They are quite clear how the school should develop and how future funds will be spent. Governors bring much valuable expertise and experience to their deliberations and several of them attend a wide range of events and activities at school. The foundation governors operate separately, overseeing the foundation funds carefully and donating generously to the school, for example, contributing to the excellent new boarding house. Indeed, without the extra income generated by the foundation, the school could not survive with its present staffing arrangements. All financial administration is very good and the bursar provides helpful information for the governors and senior management team.

## **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

**In Years 7 to 9 elements of the National Curriculum for design and technology are not covered (a statutory requirement). Pupils spend less time on this subject than in most schools. Results at GCSE are lower than in other subjects.**

27. The National Curriculum for design and technology states clearly that the range of materials studied should be wide. Schools are "encouraged to look for opportunities to teach both food and textiles" (page 17) and that pupils should be taught "about the working characteristics and applications of a range of modern materials (optical fibres and synthetic microfibres, for example), including smart materials (shape memory alloy and modified starches, for example)" (pages 136 and 137). Too few materials are studied at the school because pupils only study the subject for two lessons a week - three a week would be closer to the average found in maintained schools.
28. The school did not respond immediately to the key issue raised in the last report (because of severe financial constraints), so until September 1998 pupils only studied the subject for one term a year – one factor contributing to slightly lower results compared with other subjects. It will not be until 2003 that pupils who have studied the subject every term though Years 7 to 9 may take the subject for GCSE. As the course was only offered as an AS level in September 2000, too few pupils opted for it to be run. It is the only National Curriculum subject not offered for A level.
29. Although the standards attained in items made by pupils are above average by the end of Year 9, pupils lack experience in writing up detailed description and evaluation of projects - another reason why GCSE results are slightly lower than in other subjects. The number of rooms for this subject also limits the time pupils can spend on it. During the inspection several health and safety concerns were noticed; these were addressed immediately by the senior management team.
30. The National Curriculum for design and technology stresses the point that this subject draws on knowledge and understanding from other subjects, ranging from art to religious education or business studies to science. The importance of this subject needs to be fully acknowledged by the governing body, senior management and all teachers. It is surprising how little liaison exists between design and technology and electronics and physics teachers. Great potential in collaboration and sharing of expertise lies dormant.

**Information technology is not used enough in a minority of subjects. Overall results in information systems are lower than in other subjects.**

31. Many teachers at the school are extremely confident computer users and they prepare materials most effectively. In the great majority of subjects pupils are encouraged to word-process their work, to use the internet for research, to apply the skills they learn in discrete information technology lessons effectively and to use their home computers. The school's own web site is particularly interesting and informative and put together with considerable skill. Despite receiving no external funding, the number of computers has increased over the last few years but demand outstrips supply. This partly explains the lack of information technology in a minority of subjects. Considering that some pupils do not have access to a computer at home, the school must keep up the momentum to acquire relevant software for subjects which have made little progress, and to upgrade and expand its facilities.
32. When access to computers is possible they are used most effectively in English, mathematics and science. In a GCSE biology lesson very well-focused research specifications were established before pupils accessed the Internet. In an A level physics lesson, pupils used a computer well when studying gravitational forces in depth. The science department is expanding its use of computers with the recent purchase of data loggers and is keen to acquire more CDROMs. The design and technology department supports the use of information technology for 2D and 3D work but, overall, does not use computers enough in Years 7 to 9. In music, pupils use electronic keyboards regularly and learn to use a notation software package successfully. The modern foreign languages department uses video conferencing for project work in its partner schools and their own creation, "Hot Potato" (on-screen grammar and vocabulary exercises), is so effective that over 300 pupils use it at home and it has recently been purchased for professional distribution.
33. Apart from occasional Powerpoint presentations and the use of spreadsheets, computers are hardly used at all in business studies, economics or politics. This is surprising because these subjects often lead the way in the growth of information technology in schools. Recent changes in staffing are expected to improve the situation. In geography, although the use of information technology is included in the schemes of work, the department possesses very few CD-ROMs and teachers do not use computers regularly. The history department is making steady progress using computers in lessons. The art and physical education departments have not yet incorporated information technology in any significant way and the classics department acknowledges its "zero use in the classroom for teaching or research". Apart from careers work, information technology is not used in personal, social and health education.
34. Several courses are offered in Years 10 and 11, and in the sixth form for pupils who wish to build on their discrete information technology lessons in Years 7 to 9. Evidence suggests that pupils select the GCSE information systems or the AS level/A level information and technology courses believing them to be relatively soft options. They do not write-up well what they have done to reach a solution, in addition to providing a printout of the solution. They need further guidance on how to tackle this part of the course, which has to be done well to achieve high grades. The best results achieved are in A level computing. Pupils who choose this know it is going to be a challenging option, involving programming and developing sophisticated string loops.

**Target-setting (especially in terms of predicted and expected grades) is not yet in place for individual pupils, although much data is now available.**

35. Teachers challenge many pupils verbally, to improve particular aspects of their work, or aim for specific grades. Isolated examples of teachers encouraging pupils to set themselves targets were noted in a few subjects, for example, mathematics. The majority of teachers are also most competent at telling pupils what is expected to achieve particular grades. Nevertheless, teachers rarely assess standards against National Curriculum levels thoroughly, so that the challenges they set pupils are based more on instinct than statistical analysis related to national and other data. The school is fully aware of this and has recently created a post of Director of Studies. This person will shape the direction of assessment and present data to teachers in a manageable and constructive way.
36. Data that predicts GCSE grades is already available, but its use and interpretation could be extended. For example, the information about pupils' attainment between 1997 and 1999, and 1998 to 2000, comparing their performance in Year 9 national tests with their GCSE grades, shows that the value added was above the median for all maintained schools in English but below it for mathematics and science. Clearly there is scope for improvement by examining individuals' performances in mathematics and science. The modern foreign language department already uses value-added analysis for A level data and such good practice could be shared effectively.

**A few lessons are teacher dominated and/or uninspiring.**

37. Teachers do not always consider whether their teaching style makes lessons as enjoyable as possible for pupils. With superb subject knowledge and enthusiasm for their subjects, and extremely receptive and attentive audiences, they occasionally hold forth for too long. Particular features, noted within lessons during the inspection, that could be improved and reflected upon include:
- Too few opportunities for pupils to discuss or investigate topics in groups or to show what they understand on the whiteboard (mathematics)
  - Holding forth for too long on a set text (English)
  - In modern foreign languages, if the lesson is too teacher-led then pupils do not speak as much as they could and evidence suggests that they do not regularly talk to each other in groups or pairs. They do not develop an appreciation of language for communication if the mechanical aspects of language are over-emphasised (French)
  - Failing to bring all pupils into discussions or allowing a few to dominate (Latin, economics and history)
  - Not explaining the relevance of the past to the present (history)
  - Handing out poor quality worksheets and setting homework which needs a map that cannot be taken home (geography)
  - Occasionally answering questions just posed, rather than giving pupils time to reflect (history)
  - Ignoring the excitement of scientific topics (physics and biology)
  - Not creating stimulating displays. Displays rarely reflect the extremely high standards attained. The art department in particular wants to establish an exhibition space and the lack of design and technology around the school has already been mentioned.

**For some year groups of pupils, parents' evenings are held too early for parents to attend easily. Parents mind not being able to see all the teachers who teach their sons.**

38. As the majority of parents work, many of them commuting considerable distances, it is difficult for them to attend parents' evenings held during the late afternoon and some cannot take time off work. The inspection team appreciates that teachers donate many hours to provide the excellent range of after school activities but also acknowledges that most parents want to attend parents' evenings. They also want to make contact with all their sons' teachers rather than a maximum of six.



## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to maintain improvement, governors and senior management should:

### **Raise standards and the status of design and technology by:**

- Increasing the amount of time for the subject in Years 7 to 9
- Studying and using a wider range of materials
- Refurbishing the present rooms and providing another one as soon as possible
- Creating display space around the school to show successful items made by pupils
- When reviewing the School Development Plan, reflect on the importance of this subject within the school curriculum, for example: "Through design and technology, all pupils can become discriminating and informed users of products, and become innovators" (*National Curriculum pages 134/135*)
- Encouraging greater liaison between the department and others, such as electronics and physics (*Paragraphs 27 to 30*)

### **Continue to expand the use of information technology in all subjects and raise standards by:**

- Focusing on subjects such as business studies and economics, which hardly use it at all
- Exploiting the talents of those teachers who use it with confidence and success
- Checking that statements about its use in schemes of work are put into practice
- Making pupils aware of the rigour required in course work (*Paragraphs 31 to 34*)

### **Develop target-setting, using the data already available by:**

- Sharing good practice between and within departments
- Using the expertise of the recently appointed Director of Studies to direct and guide teachers
- Discussing the value of targets with teachers, pupils and parents
- Deciding how best to set targets related to value-added data, predicted and expected grades (*Paragraphs 35 and 36*)

### **Improve the minor elements of teaching, which are not satisfactory in some lessons, by:**

- Sharing good practice within and between departments
- Encouraging group work, particularly in modern foreign languages
- Insisting on a high quality of presentation of any materials handed out to pupils
- Raising the quality of displays
- Practising techniques of how to address questions to all pupils in a class
- Persevering with the worthwhile debate about teaching styles, already started by the headmaster (*Paragraph 37*)

### **Respond to parents' concerns about parents' evenings by:**

- Arranging for all parents' evenings to be held in the early evening rather than late afternoon and organising them so that parents can meet as many of their son's teachers as they want (*Paragraph 38*)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	99
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	45

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
10	45	35	14	0	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	Y7-11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	962	379
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	16	

Special educational needs	Y7-11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with Statements of Special Educational Needs	2	
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	18	3

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	5
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	11

### Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	3.3
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.0
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
	2000	191		191

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	189	189	189
	Girls			
	Total	189	189	189
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	99 (98)	98 (99)	99 (99)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	95 (81)	98 (98)	98 (95)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	191	191	191
	Girls			
	Total	191	191	191
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (99)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	98 (95)	98 (96)	100 (99)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	190		190

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	189	189	189
	Girls			
	Total	189	189	189
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	100 (98)	100 (99)	100 (99)
	National	(46.6)	(90.9)	(95.8)

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

One pupil aged 15 in January 2000 was not in Year 11

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	68.6 (68.5)
	National	(38.0)

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

### Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A level or AS level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	212		212

The figure includes 18 pupils in Year 12

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	22.6 (23.7)		22.6 (23.7)	6 (3.6)		6 (3.6)
National	(17.7)	(18.1)	(17.9)	(2.7)	(2.8)	(2.8)

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

### Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	11
Black – African heritage	8
Black – other	7
Indian	45
Pakistani	66
Bangladeshi	2
Chinese	15
White	1119
Any other minority ethnic group	68

### Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	1	0
Black – other	1	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	26	0
Other minority ethnic groups	3	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 to 13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	83.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

#### Education support staff: Y7 to 13

Total number of education support staff	9.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	360

#### Deployment of teachers: Y7 to 13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74%
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#### Average teaching group size: Y7 to 13

Key Stage 3	28
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### Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	4391272
Total expenditure	4429001
Expenditure per pupil	3306
Balance brought forward from previous year	0
Balance carried forward to next year	-37729

Key Stage 4	21
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## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1341
Number of questionnaires returned	593

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	53	44	2	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	54	42	3	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	40	54	3	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	33	55	9	0	3
The teaching is good.	50	46	1	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	46	46	5	1	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	55	37	6	0	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	82	16	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	36	50	10	1	3
The school is well led and managed.	64	33	1	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	57	37	1	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	66	31	3	0	0