

INSPECTION REPORT

11th October: For Format QA and to be sent to the school, para noes

THE PEELE SCHOOL

LONG SUTTON

LEA area: Lincolnshire

Unique reference number: 120645

Headteacher: Mr J Anthony

Reporting inspector: Mrs S Chamberlain
7661

Dates of inspection: 11-15 September 2000

Inspection number: 223773

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Modern (non-selective)
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	84 Little London Long Sutton Nr Spalding Lincolnshire
Postcode:	PE12 9LF
Telephone number:	01406 362120
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr E Saxton
Date of previous inspection:	9 March 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Susan Chamberlain 7661	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it?
			The school's results and achievements
			How well are pupils taught?
			How well is the school led and managed?
			What should the school do to improve further?
Brigid Quest-Ritson 9724	Lay inspector		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?
Martin Ash 4749	Team inspector	Modern languages	
Valerie Banks 4677	Team inspector	Geography	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
Jan Boulton 18888	Team inspector	Physical education	
David Evans 15948	Team inspector	Science	
Reginald Fletcher 15304	Team inspector	Music	
Anthony Hill 18261	Team inspector	Art	
		Special educational needs	
Keith Hopkins 10385	Team inspector	Information technology	

		Design and technology	
William Robson 3731	Team inspector	English Equal opportunities	
Felicity Shuffle-Botham 30427	Team inspector	History	
		Religious education	
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REPORT CONTENTS

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

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school was inspected by 12 inspectors and led by Mrs S Chamberlain. This is a summary of the inspection report, which is available from the school.

This is an under-subscribed, mixed, secondary modern school with 469 pupils on roll. The number on roll has risen by 75 since the last inspection. The school serves a wide rural area. Pupils claiming free school meals amount to 14 per cent of the population, which is average. Twenty four per cent of pupils are identified as having special educational needs, which is above average. Five per cent of pupils have statements, which is also above average. There are no pupils for whom speaking English as an additional language is a problem. Overall pupils' attainment on entry is well below national expectations.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an improving school that, during the inspection week, proved it could offer an acceptable standard of education across the whole curriculum. The difficult years the school has encountered are past. There has been a radical change in personnel; the composition now includes a relatively new headteacher and many new staff, including several middle managers. A combination of good teaching, with a focus on vocational education, and an improving trend of examination results at both key stages, as well as adverse socio-economic circumstances and a high unit cost per pupil, ensures that the school provides satisfactory value for money. It has removed itself from the category called serious weaknesses, which was identified at the last OFSTED inspection.

What the school does well

- The head teacher's vision for the school is very clear.
- Teaching is good overall.
- Vocational education is very good.
- Procedures for child protection and ensuring pupils' welfare are good.
- Teaching is supervised and improved effectively.
- Pupils' development is enriched by good community links.

What could be improved

- The attainment of all pupils in all subjects.
- The literacy levels of many pupils.
- Attendance levels.
- Links with primary schools, both curricular and pastoral.
- Spiritual and cultural development.
- Parental involvement in learning.
- The role of the heads of learning.
- The temporary status of special educational needs.
- The provision for information and communications technology and religious education at Key Stage 4.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the last Ofsted inspection in 1998 the school has made satisfactory improvement. Although, in 1998, there were some serious weaknesses combined with considerable periods without a headteacher

and many middle managers, the school, under new leadership, has risen from partial ashes to a position where it is more stable than for a long time. Most staffing vacancies have been filled and generally new staff have made an, at least, satisfactory start at the school. There has been a steady improvement in exam results despite a downturn in 2000. The many new teachers offer an improved and more up-to-date approach to teaching and learning and are supported by heads of learning. The new head teacher has revised the staffing structure with the help of the school improvement officer, a local education authority advisor, who is, temporarily, seconded to the school. Although the provision for special educational needs has been inadequate in the past, the recent good support from the local education authority has ensured that new plans and strategies are in place and a new sense of optimism prevails. Detailed individual educational action plans are now in use. Much use can now be made of assessment data as a result of a new computerised package that will give greater access to all staff and ensure that pupils' progress is more effectively monitored and evaluated.

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				<i>Key</i> well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
	all schools			Similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
GCSE examinations	E	E	E	E	

Pupils enter the school with standards well below the national average overall although standards in science are better. At the end of Key Stage 3 results in National Curriculum tests in 1999 were well below national averages in English and mathematics and very low in science, but these results were in line with pupils' prior attainment at Key Stage 2. Between 1997 and 1999 results in the school followed the national trend of improvement. In 2000 results were higher in all these subjects. Results were average when compared with schools of similar prior attainment. In GCSE in 1999 (and over the last three years) the proportion of pupils that gained five A*-C grades was well below the national average and also below the national average for five A*-G grades. When based on prior attainment pupils' progress at GCSE in 1999 was close to the average for similar schools. Improvement at GCSE was above the national trend for the last four years, but dipped in 2000. The prior attainment, on entry, of pupils in the last Year 11 was low and, although results were disappointing, they were not unexpected, despite inappropriate targets being set when staffing problems prevailed. In 2000, GCSE results were best in resistant materials, child development and information studies and weakest in food and French. High pass rates occurred in GNVQ business and GNVQ engineering.

Inspection evidence reveals standards below national expectations at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4. Overall pupils' progress, during the week of the inspection, was satisfactory but over either key stage it is unsatisfactory according to outcomes so far.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Attitudes are generally satisfactory but there is a minority of pupils in Years 9 and 10 who have little interest in their studies
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is satisfactory. Most pupils behave well but a few misbehave and disrupt lessons.

Personal development and relationships	Pupils have good relationships with staff and each other. They collaborate well. Some are over-dependent on their teachers. Many have limited horizons and expectations.
Attendance	Attendance is unsatisfactory overall. The level of unauthorised absence is too high.

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.

In 96 per cent of lessons teaching was satisfactory or better. This is far higher than recent key indicators would suggest. Especially noteworthy was the 75 per cent of lessons that were good or better. Where teaching was unsatisfactory or poor it reflected the behaviour of a small, but disruptive, group of pupils and the teachers' inability to cope with this group. Teaching is of a similar standard across the key stages. It was best in physical education and geography and weaker in religious education. Pupils responded well even though many were meeting new teachers for the first time. Most pupils had a good approach to learning and worked hard to ensure lessons were productive. Strategies for teaching literacy are developing but are, at present, unsatisfactory whereas those for numeracy are satisfactory but still in the early stages. Pupils with special educational needs now receive good support. Pupils with behavioural difficulties, however, can affect the work of others.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Provision is good and meets statutory requirements in all subjects except religious education and information and communications technology at Key Stage 4. Provision for vocational education is very good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	This is greatly improved and is now good. There are substantial systems in place to ensure pupils' needs are catered for properly.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	None
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school's provision for moral education is satisfactory; it is good for social education. Provision for spiritual and cultural education is unsatisfactory; there are too few opportunities for pupils to develop these in subjects like English and Art.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Procedures for child protection and ensuring pupils' welfare are good. The schools system for assessing pupils' progress is an emerging strength.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key	The headteacher provides very clear direction for the school, which he hopes will be the centre of the community. The senior management team are loyal and supportive.

staff	
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The changing governing body provides increasing support. They are aware of their responsibilities and, in the context of recent staffing difficulties, do their best to fulfil their statutory obligations.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school monitors teaching, progress and expenditure well. It is helped by the LEA and takes advice and criticism willingly.
The strategic use of resources	The school always seeks best value. The site manager is a particular asset in this respect. Resources are used well.

The period of staffing difficulties, including several long term sicknesses, the school has had to endure over recent years, is now over and, for the first time, the school is able to move forward with a full complement of heads of department. The accommodation is well maintained and resources are satisfactory.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children like the school. • Parents are happy to approach the school if they have concerns. • Parents also consider the school expects their children to work hard and do their best. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A proportion of parents who returned the questionnaire do not think they are well informed about their children's progress, nor do they feel the school works closely with them. • Standards of behaviour concern others. • Some parents do not consider the amount of homework right for their children. • Some parents had reservations about the way the school was run.

Inspectors believe that the school is in a state of transition and that, although some parental concerns had some justification last year, the new year has brought many changes that will largely address their worries. Inspectors agree with the positive views expressed by parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

Pupils enter the school with well below average attainment overall, although standards in science are better. Thirty per cent of potential pupils go to selective schools. At the end of Key Stage 3, results in the National Curriculum tests 1999 were well below national averages in English and mathematics. Results in science were very low for level 5 and above. Results were average when compared with schools with similar prior attainment. The National Curriculum point score, for all core subjects, was broadly in line with the national trend of improvement between 1997 and 1999. Overall standards of work seen during the inspection week were below national expectations.

In 1999, the proportion of pupils that gained five or more A*-C grades in GCSE at the end of Key Stage 4 was well below the national average and the proportion that gained five or more A*-G was below the national average. The picture in 1997 and 1998 was similar. In 1999 and over the three years from 1997-1999 results were well below the national average. The trend in the GCSE point score has been above the national trend of improvement since 1994 but in 2000 results dipped considerably, the prior attainment of these pupils being particularly low. When compared with schools with similar prior attainment, the point score in 1999 was close to the average, whereas, when compared with schools with a similar take-up for free school meals, it was well below average. At GCSE the best performance in 2000 was in resistant materials and child development; it was also good in GNVQ business. Results were worst in food and French.

Attainment in English at the end of both key stages is well below national averages. At the end of Key Stage 3, many pupils participate well in class discussion but rarely speak at length. Their writing is neat. Most can write in sentences and spell common words correctly, but few can write descriptive, imaginative stories. In Year 11 pupils lack confidence when speaking in class. They find writing in different styles very difficult. At both key stages, few pupils read widely. Only high attaining pupils can read aloud fluently with good intonation.

Standards of literacy often prevent pupils from making as much progress as they might in other subjects. For example pupils' understanding of technical vocabulary in science and design and

technology is weak. In history, Key Stage 4 pupils had not heard of “lynching” and did not understand the word “propaganda”. When given the opportunity to read aloud pupils often lack fluency and expression. There is little evidence of extended writing in geography, religious education or history and, in science, pupils are not always encouraged to write in sentences.

In mathematics, at the end of Key Stage 3 and in GCSE in 1999, pupils attained well below the national average. In 2000 results were higher than previously. From inspection of pupils’ work and lessons it is clear that, as a result of improved teaching and management, standards and achievements are rising at both key stages.

The mathematics department is rightly trying to improve standards by adopting strategies similar to the National Numeracy Policy in Key Stage 3 lessons. Likewise the school has sensibly conducted a numeracy audit across the curriculum and encourages subject areas to contribute to the development of numeracy. The school has identified the need to develop its policy for the teaching of literacy in all subjects. Links with primary schools are developing but teachers are not yet building on what pupils have been taught through the National Literacy Strategy.

Numeracy standards are low for many pupils entering the school. Pupils do not know the multiplication tables and number bonds thoroughly. The mathematics department is, rightly, trying to improve standards by adopting strategies similar to the National Numeracy Policy in Key Stage 3 lessons. Also the school has sensibly conducted a numeracy audit across the curriculum and encourages other subject areas to contribute to the development of numeracy. During the inspection good support was seen in several areas. In science pupils plotted linear and non-linear continuous and discrete data successfully; in design and technology pupils measured and weighed accurately; in music pupils used vulgar fractions accurately in transposition; in physical education pupils used their knowledge of the geometry of the triangle effectively and in geography pupils used data display techniques appropriately to plot rainfall data. The school needs to continue its efforts to improve standards of basic numeracy.

In science, pupils enter the school standards below national averages. Whilst over the past three years standards at the end of Key Stage 3 have been well below the national figures for similar schools, results in 2000 showed a significant improvement to those over the last few years. In a range of lessons observed at Key Stage 3, and in the sample of pupils’ work, pupils gained standards close to national expectations although, in Year 9, some standards were below average. At GCSE grades A*-C standards are consistently well below average compared with similar schools and, even though there

had been a gradual improvement over the past three years, in 2000 results plummeted. In lessons observed at Key Stage 4 and from scrutinising pupils' work standards are normally below national expectations. In some lessons in Year 11, pupils attained above average standards.

The attainment of pupils in art at the end of both key stages is below national expectations, although GCSE A*-C grades for the year 2000 indicate a significant improvement. In lessons seen at Year 7, attainment is in line with national expectations. This reflects the new curriculum thrust, aimed at the efficient teaching of basic art skills in pupils' first year of school. By the end of Year 9 pupils' attain below the national expectation in all material areas of design and technology. Standards are variable at the end of Key Stage 4 but are below average overall. In Year 10 GNVQ engineering, most pupils have well-developed skills in using tools, equipment and machinery. Information and communications technology lessons show that, by the end of Year 9, pupils attain below the national expectation. By the end of Key Stage 4 about half of the pupils attain the national expectation but the rest fall below. Whilst word-processing, desktop publishing and spreadsheet work figure mostly in pupils' work there is little evidence of computer aided design or manufacturing. Most pupils made at least satisfactory progress in lessons observed during inspection week.

Standards in geography at the end of Key Stage 3 are below those expected of 14 year olds, with few achieving higher levels. In recent years, GCSE results at grades A*-C have risen, except for the dip in 2000, and although below average for all schools they are above average for similar schools. The number of grades A*-G are broadly in line with all schools. Achievement at both key stages is satisfactory. Attainment of pupils in history at the end of Key Stage 3 and 4 is below the national expectations. Assessments, at the end of Year 9, indicate levels broadly in line with the national average but in work seen, attainment was lower. Pupils recognise the main characteristics of the periods studied and can extract information from sources in response to questions, their skills of analysis and interpretation are weak and there is little recognition of multiple causation.

French results at GCSE for grades A*-C have been well below national standards except in 1998; they have also been lower than most other subjects. Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are also below national expectations. Severe staffing difficulties have affected attitudes and attainment in the past, but the new teachers are changing attitudes to work and achievements are improving.

Amongst some serious deficiencies in pupils' basic musical knowledge, early lessons, under the direction of the new head of department, show pupils and teacher working well together to remedy

these and making rapid progress towards the rigorous targets set. In physical education pupils' work seen during the inspection was in line with national expectations at the end of both key stages. Achievements are good at all levels. Pupils understand how to prepare their body for exercise and are able to play games with energy and enthusiasm.

Pupils recognise the main features of the major religions studied, although recall is weak. They consider their own beliefs and the effects of belief on the lives of others. Since the last inspection, GCSE results have fluctuated, although still below national averages overall. There is insufficient time to deliver minimal requirements in order to meet national expectations in Key Stage 4.

The majority of pupils take at least one GNVQ subject. GNVQ business (intermediate) results were above average in 1999 and 2000. Standards in GNVQ engineering were in line with national averages in 1999 and 2000. Work seen during the inspection was in line with expectations in engineering and health and social care and above in business.

Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in lessons. The very good information available to staff, on the revised individual education plans, enables teachers to address individual special needs. The very good support given by learning support assistants ensures that those pupils with identified special needs are helped in their lessons. The satisfactory progress observed during the inspection week has been made in spite of a difficult year in which the serious weaknesses of the learning support department have been largely overcome. Very good systems for identifying and supporting pupils with special needs are now in place. Subject departments are beginning to work with them, especially in the core areas, and the progress of special educational needs pupils is confidently predicted to improve as the new department settles into its central role in the school.

The more able, gifted and talented pupils are in the process of being identified by the learning support department, but their special educational needs are not yet met effectively in all subjects.

Unusually, compared with national figures, boys have performed slightly better than girls at the end of Key Stage 4 over the last three years. However, in 1999, girls did better than boys in science, mathematics and the resistant materials course of design and technology. Results do not, therefore, follow national trends for boys and girls.

The school is very aware of its need to improve the very low results, which have occurred because of the poor staffing situation up until July 2000. The new appointments amongst the teaching staff are the most important factor in bringing about improvement. There are good monitoring and evaluative strategies to ensure that this new staff profile remains as effective as it was seen to be at the time of the inspection. A thrust to improve pupils' key skills is also a priority and is supported by additional initiatives, such as the Summer Literacy School. The school has made sensible predicted targets for 2001 having failed to be realistic for 2000 when the prior attainment of the past Year 11 was not properly considered.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

Pupils' attitudes to their studies are on the whole positive, especially when they are given the opportunity to become actively involved in their lessons, as was seen during a Year 7 Science lesson. An experiment, which required them to make cells out of jelly and grapes, caught and held their interest. In another lesson, Year 11 English pupils were keen to contribute to discussion and evaluate each other's writing. Some pupils lack determination; their initial enthusiasm for lessons or activities is not sustained. There is a minority of pupils, especially in Years 9 and 10, who take little interest in their studies. They show a reluctance to work quickly, can be abstracted or disruptive and barely listen to their teachers.

Standards of behaviour are satisfactory. Behaviour in lessons is generally good, and as pupils move around the school and grounds, even when social areas and corridors become crowded at break and lunch times. Pupils themselves helped to draw up the recently introduced behaviour policy through the School Council. The minority of pupils in Years 9 and 10, referred to earlier, can behave badly and disrupt lessons by talking constantly and moving around in classes, making it difficult for others to learn. The level of fixed term exclusions is well above average for a school of this size. The number has risen sharply since the last inspection, but is now beginning to fall. The main reasons for these fixed term exclusions are bad language towards members of staff and disruptive behaviour. The number of permanent exclusions is average for a school of this size.

The way in which pupils respond to the school's provision for their personal development is satisfactory. Relations within the school are generally good. Pupils have good relations with members of staff and usually with each other, though there are some instances of bullying and oppressive behaviour. Most pupils can work well together, especially in pairs, but a few are unable to collaborate

effectively. Some pupils do not find it easy to plan and organise their work. They lack a sense of inquiry and tend to rely on their teachers to provide them with information. Pupils do not always have the confidence to show initiative and develop responsibility for their own learning. Some have limited horizons and expectations. Opportunities for pupils to take responsibility are greatest in Year 11 where many act as prefects. The prefects are ready to accept the responsibility of their duties and are proud of the blue jerseys, which distinguish them. Most pupils respect their surroundings. Litter and graffiti are not a problem. Pupils have helped to improve the very pleasant gardens.

Pupils with special educational needs demonstrate an interest in their work and almost are keen to learn. They appreciate the attention of the learning support department and work hard to improve their skills. Those with more complex special needs, and those who experience emotional and behavioural problems, generally settle well to lessons and work towards the targets.

Attendance is unsatisfactory. Attendance in 1999/2000 shows little improvement from 1998/99; it is below the national average. Unauthorised absence is worse and well above the national average although an improvement over the rate for 1998/99. Attendance deteriorates as pupils move up the school and there are a few pupils with very low rates of attendance. Low attendance has an adverse affect on what pupils can achieve and standards of attainment. There has been only a slight improvement since the last inspection.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

During inspection week, the second week of a new school year, an exceptional effort was made by the whole teaching staff who pulled together to produce good teaching after many years when sickness and lack of specialist staff have prevailed. Teachers, many of whom were new to the school, and five of whom were new heads of department, were able to give of their best having only been in school for four days before the start of the inspection. The high quality of teaching seen gave the inspection team sufficient confidence to expect that such a standard will continue after the inspection too.

In 96 per cent of lessons teaching was satisfactory or better. This is far higher than expected given the recent school's performance indicators. Senior managers, who know only too well what a struggle it has been to establish a stable, present and specialist staff, are very pleased that the new staffing profile is capable of such success.

Especially noteworthy were the 75 per cent lessons that were good or better. Where teaching was unsatisfactory or poor it reflected the behaviour of a small, but disruptive, group of pupils and the teachers' inability to cope with this group. Teaching was of a similar standard across the key stages. It was best in physical education and geography and weaker in religious education.

Pupils responded well even though many were meeting new teachers for the first time. Most pupils had a good approach to learning and worked hard to ensure lessons were productive.

Teachers have a good knowledge of their subjects and consequently pupils acquire new skills and understanding well. In Year 11, for example, pupils finished a mathematics lesson using Japanese numbers to help them with number bases. This proved very effective and was enjoyed by all. However, practice of basic skills is limited. Numeric processes were promoted when pupils were mentally stimulated by short, sharp questioning at the end of lessons. Although pupils were also encouraged to improve their vocabulary by teachers drawing attention to keywords on classroom walls, many of which, were directly associated with the subject, teachers do not yet provide pupils with sufficient help to improve their literacy skills. However, in some lessons in geography teachers encourage pupils to develop their confidence and fluency when reading aloud.

In GNVQ lessons, teachers are extremely well organised. Lesson planning and assessment opportunities are all very good. The teachers circulated well to help individuals and give them further ideas.

Teachers manage pupils well. This was particularly evident in Year 11 football where the teacher coped effectively with a difficult group of boys. In some lessons, however, a small group of pupils disrupted learning. Less experienced teachers find this difficult to handle and their teaching suffers, affecting the whole class.

The setting of homework is inconsistent across the school. Inspectors and parents agree that this is an area, which requires specific focus. Pupils' work is not always collected in, even when offered to the teacher. Assessment procedures are particularly good in GNVQ lessons and poor in physical education. In music pupils' receive oral, formative evaluation throughout lessons and records of their work are kept on paper and cassette tape. There is inconsistent practice across other subjects.

Pupils drew on their intellectual and creative capacity when making models of cells in science. The teacher created a stimulating atmosphere in which the pupils were inspired and where they flourished. In physical educational learning was enhanced by good teacher intervention, which helped the individual by giving them further ideas, which were stimulating and motivating.

Teachers plan lessons well and many have contingency options. Music lessons provided a good example of how well learning objectives can be shared with pupils by using a time plan, which is displayed so that pupils know exactly what is required and by when. Such clarity was also noted in Science. Teachers' expectations are high and pupils respond accordingly. There is good use of praise and encouragement, especially in history lessons. A variety of teaching methods was used, during inspection week, amongst which was very good use of the school grounds in geography. Pupils' observational skills were developed and they were helped to differentiate between signs of weathering and erosion.

Learning and interest levels were high and generally matched the quality of teaching.

Pupils' self-knowledge is aided by personal and social education lessons and, in tutor groups, there are good discussions that are stimulating and thought provoking. Pupils contribute views on issues such as the rights and wrongs of the "oil crisis" and the Siamese twins problem. A good rapport between teachers and pupils helps most pupils become self-aware and objectively observe their own progress in this respect.

Teachers make good use of resources. There is, however, insufficient use of cross-curricular ICT.

Learning support assistants work effectively in support of pupils with special educational needs and their work is valued by staff and pupils alike. Class teachers are working well with the new individual educational plans and appreciate the information and guidance they give. Departments have yet to build subject specific targets into these plans and to develop fully effective links with the learning support department. The higher attainers are given extension work but this is not common practice in all subjects and requires further development.

Inspectors were aware of a unity amongst staff and pupils, which was remarkable given the 43 per cent turnover of staff experienced since July. This was a credit to each and every individual involved.

The school is at the start of a new era. Provided a firm line is taken with a few disaffected pupils the strength of teaching in the school should be maintained.

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

The curriculum provision in the school is good and meets statutory requirements in all subjects with the exception of religious education and information and communications technology (I CT) at Key Stage 4. The provision for vocational education is very good. Although the school works hard to provide a daily act of collective worship, it does not fully meet the requirements.

The school has made good progress in its curricular provision since the 1998 report, particularly in the past 12 months. It now has the specialist staff and improved facilities, for example in ICT, to meet the demands of the curriculum. Vocational courses have been established at Key Stage 4, reflecting the emphasis on work-related contexts for learning identified in the school development plan. Provision in history and French is much improved and the school has made systematic efforts to improve the provision for extra-curricular activities.

The present curriculum is broad and balanced overall and there are good opportunities for pupils' personal development. At Key Stage 3, pupils are taught all the subjects of the National Curriculum, including religious education, as well as personal and social education. ICT is taught as a discrete subject. Nearly two thirds of pupils gain a qualification at the end of Year 9. Cross -curricular provision of I CT is only in the developmental stage and although planned, little is taking place. Drama is not identified in English work schemes. There is a lack of balance in creative subjects, art and physical education. In the latter, games dominate at the expense of dance in the former. Pupils are taught in mixed ability groups in Year 7 and then taught in sets from Year 8. This arrangement suits the needs of most pupils but does not seem to improve results.

Curricular breadth at Key Stage 4 is ensured by pupils studying a common core of GCSE subjects comprising mathematics, English, double science, design and technology and French. Some subjects offer a Certificate of Achievement course for lower attaining pupils. For a small school, it offers a good range of choices for those academically or vocationally inclined. Provision for vocational education is very good. About ninety per cent of pupils follow a vocational course in GNVQ business studies, or engineering or health and social care. They achieve above average results in business and

results in line with the national average in the others. There is a youth award scheme for pupils with poor literacy skills and work-related experience for a few poor attenders. ICT is a key element in GNVQ subjects. Those pupils who do not take a GNVQ do not receive their ICT entitlement since, at present, it is not being delivered through other subjects. A few parents expressed the view that the option arrangements limited pupils' choices. However inspection evidence indicates that only a few pupils did not get their first choice.

The total teaching time is appropriate and most departments have adequate time to teach their subjects. However the time to teach design and technology at Key Stage 3 and science at Key Stage 4 is below the national average and affects standards. Religious education at Key Stage 4 plays a minimal part in the personal and social education programme and there is insufficient time to cover the curriculum. As a result of timetabling arrangements, some classes in mathematics have two hour lessons in one day which, within a 10-day timetable, affect subject continuity by creating a long gap before their next lesson.

Curriculum planning is good in most subjects and the school has effective arrangements to ensure continuity with colleges offering post-16 provision so that pupils are well prepared to move on to the next stage of education. Subject links with primary schools are weak. The urgent need to improve all basic skills requires a specific focus on individual pupils' needs as soon as possible so it is essential that these links are strengthened.

The special educational needs department has made very good improvement since the last inspection. Systems for screening pupils and identifying individual special needs are now very good. The school now complies fully with Code of Practice. Learning Support Assistants are working effectively in classrooms, are confident in the support they give and are valued by teachers. The department has been restructured and, as a Learning Support department, has moved into the heart of the curriculum to lend strength to basic skills teaching in the core subjects. It retains the support it gives to the statemented pupils, who may have specific learning difficulties which require cross curricular support, difficulties such as dyslexia, poor co-ordination, emotional and behavioural difficulties and communication needs. The department is also identifying the more able, gifted and talented pupils to ensure that extension work is given in departments.

The curriculum provides pupils with equal opportunity to participate in all subjects and activities. In English and geography there is a preponderance of boys in bottom sets and occasionally the boisterous behaviour of some of these prevents others from participating fully in these lessons.

Extra-curricular provision is satisfactory. It is very good for extra-curricular music. Teachers are aware that transport difficulties may prevent some pupils from attending clubs after school and offer a range of activities at lunchtime as well. There are good opportunities to learn a range of instruments and take part in instrumental lessons, clubs and the rock and funk band. Many pupils enjoyed taking part in the production of The Rocky Monster Show. They also appreciated the Activities Week in the Summer term. There is a satisfactory range of sporting activities and pupils take part in inter-form and inter-school competitions. The Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme has re-started and helps pupils to become more self-reliant. There are some visits that include a ski trip to Bulgaria and a language trip to France. Not enough use is made of the local area by subjects such as history, religious education and art. Clubs, such as the French club and the physics club for higher attaining pupils are closely linked to classwork. Homework clubs take place daily. The summer literacy school for Year 6 primary pupils was a success as an introduction to the school as well as a very helpful initiative to improve pupils' skills. The computer rooms and the library are open to support pupils at lunchtime and after school. There is an open door policy in the art department.

The school is working hard to provide a wider range of experiences for pupils and has a planned extra curricular programme for the year. During the week of the inspection, activities were available but participation was low, possibly due to it only being the second week of term and the impact of the oil blockade.

The effective programme for personal education is well planned to cover sex and health education including drugs, elements of which are also taught in science and religious education. It includes good careers education and preparation for life in the community. Teachers are well supported by detailed lesson plans.

Provisions for careers education and work experience are very good, enhanced by the very good links the school has developed with post-16 institutions and small local businesses. The careers service is closely involved in helping Year 9 pupils to select their options and preparing older pupils for employment or further education. Pupils are well supported by a well organised and up to date careers library. There is a high quality programme of work experience, well supported by small local

businesses in what is a rural area. Pupils are well prepared and great importance is given to health and safety. Pupils with special educational needs are well catered for and sheltered placements are found if necessary, for example at Hovenden House, one of the Cheshire Homes.

The school enjoys good links with the local community, participating in such events as The Long Sutton Flower Festival. Some pupils took part in a National Westminster Bank survey about what young people want from banking. The school works closely with the Community Sports Association which shares sporting facilities. The all-weather pitch is the result of the collaboration between the school, local businesses and the community, and using lottery money.

The school's provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. Responsibility for this provision has been given to subject departments. There is considerable variation in how departments approach this, both in the quality of their planning, and its effect in the classroom. Assemblies seen during the inspection were well organised and made a useful contribution to pupils' personal development, though pupils themselves did not play an active part: their moral and social content was stronger than the spiritual or cultural. There is no planned programme: the choice of topic is left to the speaker. The use of tutorial form time has improved since the last inspection. Most tutorials provided a constructive start to the school day and a few included a pause for reflection. The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship.

Spiritual provision is unsatisfactory overall. It is still in need of further development within subject departments. Religious education does provide many opportunities for pupils' spiritual development at Key Stage 3, but since there is little religious education at Key Stage 4, these opportunities are lost. The opportunities available to develop pupils' spiritual awareness and self-knowledge, inherent in subjects such as English and art are largely missed.

Provision for pupils' moral development is satisfactory. Most lessons give due emphasis to teaching the principles of right and wrong. Pupils discuss the cost of war in history and euthanasia in the personal and social education programme. Assemblies observed had an appropriate moral content.

The provision for pupils' social development is good overall. Most lessons seen had a good social atmosphere. The good relations between members of staff and pupils are an important part of this provision. The social area and common room help to promote pupils' social skills by giving them places to meet socially at break and lunch times. The opportunities for pupils to work in pairs or

groups vary between subjects, but, when used effectively, for example in physical education or in practical work in science, they encourage pupils to develop social skills. The personal and social education programme also makes an effective contribution to pupils' social development through the range of topics studied.

Though it varies considerably between subjects, the provision for pupils' cultural development is unsatisfactory. This judgement applies both to encouraging pupils' awareness of their own traditions and providing opportunities for them to experience other cultures. There is good provision in history, (for example the studies of Islamic medicine), and in music, (through the diversity of musical styles studied), but disappointingly few opportunities in English, art and science, which have the potential to broaden pupils' horizons.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

The school looks after its pupils carefully. There are good procedures to ensure that members of staff know pupils and their problems well. Heads of Learning, assisted by their tutor teams, have an overview of how pupils are progressing. Most of the tutorial periods seen during the inspection helped to provide a calm start to the school day and developed good relations between tutors and pupils. The Head of Work-related Learning has particular responsibility for health and welfare. Good guidance on child protection is now given to members of staff in the handbook and as part of their in-service training. This is an improvement since the last inspection. The school's procedures to ensure pupil's safety, both in school and on visits outside are good. A few minor concerns were drawn to the school's attention during the course of the inspection. Procedures to monitor and promote attendance are painstaking and thorough. The school has done much to improve its systems of recording and monitoring attendance since the last inspection. These are now good. Social inclusion funding and a Local Education Authority (LEA) initiative have been used to improve strategies to raise rates of attendance, including telephoning parents on the first day of absence. The school is disappointed that this hard work has not translated into higher rates of attendance so far. New procedures to promote and monitor good behaviour have been drawn up during the course of the past year. These are effective and are helping to improve standards of behaviour in lessons and around the school.

The procedures to provide academic and personal support and guidance for pupils have also been revised during the past year. Monitoring of pupils' academic progress is much improved and is now good, especially at Key Stage 4. Here information collected on pupils' progress is used effectively,

through regular personal interviews, to make pupils aware of how they are doing and what they need to do to improve. The system of credits and individual targets covers all aspects of pupils' life at school, attainment, behaviour and attendance. This is particularly popular with younger pupils. The procedures, good in themselves, have not yet been in place long enough to measure their effect on the standards pupils attain.

Assessment was one of the major weaknesses at the previous inspection. The latest HMI report on the school saw some improvement in this area. The situation now is a promising one, with planned, regular termly or half-termly assessment the norm in all subjects. The data is held centrally and is part of a comprehensive management information system. The school routinely tests all pupils annually at Key Stage 3. This data along with intake Key Stage 2 data is used to predict grades at Key Stage 3 and at GCSE. This is then used to set individual targets in all subjects for all pupils. The system is new and its full use as a planning tool has yet to be realised. The school has done well to get as far in a comparatively short time. Assessment in individual subjects is generally satisfactory, with particular strengths seen in music, mathematics and modern foreign languages. Poor procedures are found in science, English and physical education. Assessment is used soundly as a tool in planning further learning in most subjects but this is weak in science. Overall assessment is becoming a strength of the school but there is a need to ensure consistency in its use in all subject areas.

The new structures and systems, that are at the foundation of the learning support department, are secure and being built on through subject departments. The department does not yet have a permanent head. Contingency arrangements are in place, which should ensure that it maintains its strength and builds on the good systems of practices laid out for it under the guidance of the acting head of learning support and the local authority school improvement officer.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

Very few parents returned the questionnaire - 64 out of 469. Most of those parents who returned the questionnaire agreed that their children like the school. Parents also think that the school expects their children to work hard and do their best. They feel comfortable approaching the school when they have problems or concerns. Inspection findings agree with these views. The responses of some parents were critical of the school. A number of those who returned the questionnaire did not think they were well informed about their children's progress. Inspectors agree that annual reports lack

detail and do not explain how much progress pupils make. Some parents do not think the school works closely with them. Inspectors consider the school tries hard to involve parents. Some parents expressed concern about the leadership and management of the school. Inspectors consider the leadership and management of the school are good. Other concerns included standards of behaviour, the amount of homework set and the range of extra-curricular activities. Inspection findings do not confirm these concerns.

The school actively tries to foster links with parents, but meets with little success. Parents have been consulted about important changes, for example the aims and values statement and the introduction of the home/school agreement. The school provides a reasonable range of information about itself through the prospectus, newsletters and letters about particular events and topics. Parents receive some information about progress each term. Although the termly reports give a useful snapshot of progress, annual reports are almost equally brief and give parents little real information about what their children know, understand and can do, nor do they suggest what pupils need to do to improve. Similar comments were made in the last inspection report. There is an active friends association, which raises useful funds, but not many parents help with this. Attendance at parents' evenings is low compared with other schools. Few parents are involved in the work of the school. Many contribute little to their children's learning and, in some cases, have an adverse effect by not ensuring their children come to school regularly.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

The head teacher has a very clear vision for the school. He pursues this with vigour and has brought about enormous changes during his year in school. Other senior managers offer loyalty and satisfactory support and work energetically to implement the many new initiatives introduced of late. The problems encountered over the last few years, including some serious weaknesses identified in the last inspection report, have been largely addressed; the senior management team has worked very hard to achieve this. The school improvement officer has been an invaluable asset to the school and has ensured that a sound structure for staffing is now in place. He has reviewed learning support for pupils with special educational needs and, by working closely with the senior management team, has stabilised this area.

Since the last inspection achievement in Key Stage 3 and in Key Stage 4 has improved. The exceptions are GCSE results in 2000 that were poor but, to some extent, reflected the prior attainment

of the pupils concerned. The school has very positive aims. These are encapsulated in “Accept Challenge Achieve Success”. Examination targets, normally accurate, in 2000 were unrealistic and not substantially estimated. However, targets for 2001 are more sensible though modest.

The governing body is supportive. There have been a number of changes in the membership over the last year and these have proved useful. The school’s needs, in the present educational climate, require further changes to ensure the necessary skills are available. The governing body is aware of its responsibilities and makes every effort to fulfil them. Recent problems with staffing have made this difficult but, at the time of the inspection, these were under control. At last there is a full middle management. Heads of department are aware of their roles. Many are new and are not yet established fully but during the inspection they offered good support and achieved a great deal of success by contributing to the bonding of a new staffing profile. Responsibilities, such as those for heads of learning, are being delegated by the headteacher but there is more to do in this respect.

The school has a continuous staff development policy that is close to the new guidelines for performance management and involves teacher interviews with their line managers, formal lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils work. Individual targets and training are subsequently identified. Over the previous year staff have had the opportunity to participate in many types of training, for example in information and communications technology initiatives. The majority of requests for training are successful and the school keeps good records and documentation. Staff development was a serious weakness in the last inspection and is now very effective.

The school development plan is a detailed and substantial document that clearly identifies targets, action, lead personnel, time scales, monitoring and evaluation and success criteria. Developments are costed approximately and appropriately. Departmental plans are variable and many need review in the light of a changing staffing profile.

The school has an equal opportunities policy with laudable aims but few guidelines as to how these might be achieved or monitored. Although all staff are aware of the policy, there is insufficient monitoring of the achievements of different groups of pupils. All are committed to equal opportunities. A history of undervaluing girls is being addressed with rigour.

The school makes effective use of information and communications technology. It is used well for administrative matter is and is being extended to other parts of the school so that teaching staff can access data when necessary.

The school is financially viable. All budgetary matters are managed prudently. Specific grants are used effectively and for the correct purpose. Financial control is secure. The change of computer package has required quick learning on behalf of administrative staff and this has been achieved successfully. The school is careful in its planning for educational developments. It has a three-year financial plan, which includes costing, even for a worst-case scenario, and a five-year refurbishment plan. The school seeks best value for any expenditure. The caretaker is very effective in ensuring this. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

The numbers and experience of staff are matched to the needs of the curriculum in all subject areas except religious education, where the use of non-specialist teachers, at Key Stage 4, is having an adverse effect on learning. In physical education and mathematics non-specialist staff are making a sound contribution.

The recent appointment of many new and appropriately qualified teachers has addressed the serious weakness identified in the last inspection. Thirteen new teaching staff were appointed at the beginning of the year representing a 43 per cent turnover. The number and quality of these new teachers has had a positive effect on the quality of teaching.

A very experienced acting head of learning support, brought in on a contract basis to review and set up the new systems, leads the department. The permanent post of head of learning is currently being advertised, for January 2001. Arrangements to maintain and develop the department further, until the new appointment has been made, are in place. For this reason the inspection team has retained Special Needs as a key issue. It is for the governing body and at the senior management team to monitor and evaluate the progress that the department is making, to ensure that the very good foundations laid for it build on successfully across the school.

There is a need for more support staff in food technology, information and communications technology and science. The caretaker has been appointed since the last inspection and makes a strong contribution to the smooth running of the school. Overall the match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum is sound.

There is a good induction programme for teachers new to the school. Mentors are appointed, teachers attend the county induction programme and the continuous development policy combined with the informative staff handbook supports all new staff. Because there were so many new teachers all staff received induction training at the beginning of the year.

Since the previous inspection the school has improved the level of staff expertise. It is a positive picture, which is having a beneficial effect on staff moral and the success of the school.

The accommodation is good. It enables the curriculum to be taught effectively in all subjects except design and technology, where the facilities overall are in need of refurbishment. The food technology and multi materials rooms are too small for larger groups, restricting the variety of learning activities. Teaching areas are spacious, bright, designated for specific subject use and are mostly grouped together. However, two rooms used for history are away from the subject base, limiting the use of a range of equipment and appropriate display.

The physical education accommodation has a gymnasium, fitness room, sports hall, well maintained fields and all weather hockey pitch. These very good facilities have a positive effect on standards of attainment. However, the old dilapidated changing rooms, the poor surface and netting of the tennis courts and the department office are unsatisfactory facilities. The main music teaching room is large and appropriate. However, the small group teaching room is used inappropriately as a keyboard area. A few lessons are taught in the Year 11 common room, which is not acoustically sound; there are no music practice rooms.

Good covered display boards line the walls in most parts of the school except in modern foreign languages and physical education areas where there is a need for more display.

At the time of the inspection several rooms were very warm because the blinds did not effectively screen the sun.

The school provides an attractive environment. The buildings are interspersed with gardens and courtyards. There is a stimulating pond and greenhouse. A group of pupils voluntarily look after these areas. There is some litter, which it is regularly removed and there is no evidence of graffiti. A five-year programme of refurbishment, decoration and maintenance has been undertaken by the site

manager and his assistant. The school looks very clean, attractive and well maintained. Efficient procedures are in place for fire, health and safety matters.

At present no pupils have to use a wheelchair but there is access to the majority of the accommodation except to the tower block.

The many structural improvements since the last inspection include, refurbishment of a fourth science laboratory, repositioning the music room, building individual booths for modern foreign language activities and the construction of a corridor to the sports hall.

The school allocates funds for resources that are equivalent to the highest spending schools. Since the last inspection by Ofsted the school has improved the way in which funds are allocated to subject departments. A formula is applied that takes into account the number of periods taught as well as extra funds for practical subjects. As a result science and design and technology now receive more appropriate levels of funding. In the last inspection by Ofsted it was noted that long-term planning for resources by heads of department was not well developed. Currently only half the departments include estimated costs for resources in their departmental development plans. The recent appointment of several new heads of department should remedy this position.

With the exception of physical education and history all departments are considered to have at least adequate resources for learning. Resources are particularly good in geography, music, mathematics English and religious education. In PE resources are unsatisfactory and insufficient to teach the subject effectively. History is short of textbooks. At present the school has one computer for every six pupils, close to the national average.

Learning is well supported by the library. A well-qualified librarian who has worked well with outside agencies supervises it and established a resource that supports the curriculum. There are four dedicated computers each with the facility to access the Internet. The library is open every day both before and after school. It is well used both by pupils and teachers. The current provision of about thirteen books for every pupil is supplemented by long-term loans from the county library service. This figure is below many other schools. The school will need to consider the increasing school population when allocating future funds to the library.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

1. Improve the attainment of pupils in all subjects of the curriculum by ensuring a particular emphasis on increasing their vocabulary and giving opportunities to read and write extensively and with understanding.
2. Ensure that pupils receive their full entitlement at Key Stage 4 in religious education and information and communications technology.
3. Make permanent the position of head of learning support in order to ensure the present good practice continues beyond December 2000.
4. Improve levels of attendance by reducing the number of unauthorised absences.
5. Enlist better parental involvement in pupils' learning by improving communication between parents and the school.
6. Ensure that there are more opportunities to develop pupils' spiritual and cultural education across the subjects of the curriculum.
7. Establish an action plan for heads of learning to ensure a united approach and a clear direction.
8. Improve both general and subject links with feeder primary schools.

Other minor issues:

1. Ensure all pupils receive a daily act of collective worship.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

124

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

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Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	26	43	27	2	1	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

Y7 – Y11

Number of pupils on the school's roll	469
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	75

Special educational needs

Y7 – Y11

Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	25
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	101

English as an additional language

No of pupils

Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0
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Pupil mobility in the last school year

No of pupils

Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	60
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	48

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.1
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	4.3
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	43	40	83

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	12	12	8
	Girls	23	17	9
	Total	35	29	17
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	42 (46)	35 (52)	20(41)
	National	63 (64)	62 (69)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	13 (16)	14 (18)	1 (14)
	National	28 (34)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	8	17	12
	Girls	19	18	15
	Total	27	35	27
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	33 (32.2)	43 (84)	32 (41)
	National	64 (62)	64 (64)	60 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	12 (15.5)	9 (54)	4 (8.8)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (31)

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	29	36	65

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	5	26	29
	Girls	11	32	32
	Total	16	58	61
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	25 (9)	89 (76)	94 (88)
	National	46.3 (44.6)	90.9 (89.8)	95.8 (95.2)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score	School	27 (21.6)

per pupil	National	38 (36.8)
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Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	40	55
	National		N/A

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	1
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	435
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	81	1
Other minority ethnic groups		

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)	23
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	231

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77.7
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	22.5
Key Stage 4	21.2

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	1,075,350
Total expenditure	1,052,856
Expenditure per pupil	2,714
Balance brought forward from previous year	35,800
Balance carried forward to next year	58,294

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	469
Number of questionnaires returned	63

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	32	52	6	8	2
My child is making good progress in school.	37	43	16	0	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	16	48	16	13	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	17	43	24	8	8
The teaching is good.	19	56	17	0	8
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	17	46	22	10	5
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	38	49	8	5	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	29	60	3	3	5
The school works closely with parents.	10	54	19	11	6
The school is well led and managed.	17	43	13	8	19
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	19	60	13	2	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	13	44	21	5	17

Other issues raised by parents

Parents are concerned about the provision for pupils with special educational needs. They also are unhappy about the Year 2000 GCSE results. Inspectors believe that their concerns have been justified and that some pupils have been adversely affected by a number of staffing issues occurring in the last few years. However, the position at the time of the inspection has greatly improved. There are many new and well-qualified teachers in place and these, combined with the efforts made over the last year, are proving fruitful.

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

ENGLISH

In 1999 pupils' attainment in National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 was well below the national average and well below the average for similar schools. Standards of attainment have improved in recent years and this continued in 2000 when almost half of the pupils in Year 9 attained level 5 which is higher than in 1999. At Key Stage 4, the proportion of students attaining GCSE grades A*-C in English in 1999 was very low compared with the national average, but in line with attainment in similar schools. Attainment in English literature was similar to the national average, although a much smaller percentage of pupils study the subject each year than nationally. Overall, pupils attained lower grades in English than they did in science or mathematics. Since the previous inspection, standards in English at Key Stage 4 have fallen markedly and this continued in 2000, when less than 14 per cent of pupils attained grades A*-C. At both key stages girls attain slightly higher standards than boys but the difference is less than in most schools.

Standards of work seen during the inspection show that current levels of attainment on entry and towards the end of both key stages are well below the national average. Higher attaining pupils in Year 9 participate well in class discussion. They can use standard English effectively and listen attentively to the teacher and each other. In lower bands most pupils respond to questions with very short answers and are easily distracted. Very few pupils read widely for pleasure. Pupils in the top band can identify themes such as love, abuse and death in *Goodbye Mr Tom* and provide examples to back up their views. Many lower attaining pupils struggle to read their own descriptions of "My Village" fluently and few use any intonation to make the reading more interesting for the listener. Pupils use basic punctuation well. Most pupils write neatly in sentences and spell common words accurately. Those in the middle band can use short paragraphs correctly in their descriptive writing. More advanced writing skills are not well developed. Pupils in the top band use direct speech confidently in their narrative writing but most Year 9 pupils make limited use of adjectives in their writing. Pupils in lower bands describe their village as "small" or "good" and show little imagination in their choice of vocabulary.

At Key Stage 4, Year 11 pupils rarely contribute at length to class discussion, with the exception of pupils in the top set who listened carefully to each other's descriptions of their work experience placements. They then analysed the good points and confidently suggested ideas for improvement.

Standards of reading remain low as pupils often read aloud accurately but without fluency or confidence. A few higher attaining pupils are able to comment on Wilfred Owen's use of literary devices in "Dulce et decorum est", showing their effect on the poem. Most pupils understand the plot of examination texts but have difficulty analysing relationships between characters. For example, lower attaining pupils describe events in Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd* but cannot explain clearly how Troy and Gabriel Oak are different. Year 11 pupils still have difficulty in writing imaginatively. One Year 11 class wrote a formal letter accurately in the correct format but had very few ideas about how to make it interesting or informative.

Literacy standards are generally low and this affects progress in most subjects across the school. Some attempts are being made to address this with the use of word walls but further strategies are necessary.

In most lessons pupils have positive attitudes to learning. Year 7 pupils are especially eager to learn and enjoy taking responsibility for their own learning by finding books, authors and publishers as part of a lesson introducing them to the library. Most pupils follow instructions willingly and concentrate well but only occasionally show real enthusiasm for learning. A few are de-motivated and occasionally rude. These, mainly low attaining pupils, find it difficult to collaborate and frequently argue with each other.

Overall, teaching is satisfactory. In more than half the lessons it is good or very good, but occasionally poor class control results in unsatisfactory teaching. Pupils are now beginning to make good progress in many lessons at both key stages. Teachers always make the purpose of the lesson clear at the beginning of the lesson, provide clear instructions and re-iterate what pupils have learnt at the end. They pace lessons well to ensure sufficient time for this. They mark work carefully and give useful suggestions as to how it could be improved, although they rarely insist on pupils completing corrections. In the best lessons, teachers ask good, incisive questions based on a secure knowledge of their subject. For example, in a Year 10 class the teacher's questioning and high expectations of pupils allowed them to understand how they could improve their own descriptive writing. As a result, they adapted the setting of their stories to match their character's mood. Learning support assistants work effectively with pupils on the special needs register to ensure that they make good progress. Teachers often provide appropriate resources to allow lower attaining pupils to participate fully in lessons but the work is sometimes insufficiently challenging for higher attainers. Occasionally teachers prepare insufficient

resources to challenge pupils for the whole lesson. As a result these lessons lack pace and the teacher struggles to control the class. However, in most lessons teachers manage classes well.

There have been several improvements since the last inspection. Pupils' attainment at Key Stage 3 has improved and there are now four specialist teachers who are working well as a team, ably led by a newly appointed head of department. All pupils now study the National Curriculum as pupils are no longer withdrawn from English to follow a corrective reading scheme. Further improvement is still required, especially in standards of achievement at Key Stage 4. The head of department has already identified key areas for development. These include ensuring schemes of work are appropriately challenging for all pupils and that pupils are made more aware of ways in which they can attain higher National curriculum levels and GCSE grades.

MATHEMATICS

At Key Stage 3 in 1999 in the national tests pupils attained well below the national average for the standard level and for the next higher level. These results were also well below those for schools with a similar proportion of pupils receiving free school meals. The provisional results for 2000 are however a great improvement and are just below national averages. The results for 1999 are similar to those in the other core subjects.

At GCSE in 1999 pupils attained well below the national average for grades A* to C. This was similar to the results for the previous year. There was not a significant difference between the results for boys and girls. The provisional results for 2000 were also very poor though this was to an extent expected given the very low entry profile for that year group. The school has an entry profile which is well below the national average but the results in mathematics at both Key Stage 3 and at GCSE are well below what might be expected and indicate only satisfactory progress for the pupils concerned given their prior attainment.

From lesson observations and from the inspection of pupils' work, it is clear that, although attainment is still below the national average, there has been a marked improvement overall in standards. This has resulted from the work of the recent head of department; and the much improved teaching within the department.

Numeracy standards are very poor for many pupils entering the school. Pupils do not know multiplication tables and number bonds thoroughly. The mathematics department is rightly trying to improve standards by adopting strategies similar to the National Numeracy Policy in Key Stage 3 lessons. Likewise the school has sensibly conducted a numeracy audit across the curriculum and encourages subject areas to contribute to the development of numeracy. During the inspection good support was seen in several areas. In science pupils plotted linear and non-linear continuous and discrete data successfully; in design and technology pupils measured and weighed accurately; in music pupils used vulgar fractions accurately in transposition; in physical education pupils used their knowledge of the geometry of the triangle effectively and in geography pupils used data display techniques appropriately to plot rainfall data. The school needs to continue its efforts to improve standards of numeracy.

Pupils use calculators sensibly and accurately in general. Information and communication technology was seen to be used effectively in one lesson. In this lesson Year 7 pupils learned how to analyse equivalent fractions successfully using a SMILE program. The department is aware that there is a need to develop this area and to incorporate it fully into the curriculum at both key stages. Attainment in the Space and Shape and Data Handling attainment targets is generally satisfactory at both key stages. Investigative mathematics is in its early stages of development. Some particularly stimulating examples were seen using algebraic models to solve the Manhattan Policeman Problem. Pupils with special educational needs attain appropriately.

The good quality of learning in lessons generally follows the good quality of teaching. Thus in most lessons pupils make good progress. Often this is the development of new skills, as seen in Year 9, where a lower attaining class effectively investigated long multiplication using Napier's Bones. In a mixed ability group, pupils learned effectively about equivalent fractions through a mixture of practical measurement and very good teaching. In a middle attaining Year 11 class, pupils learned to expand brackets with confidence whilst solving simple algebraic equations. In many lessons pupils consolidate previously acquired skills and knowledge from all attainment targets.

Pupils' attitudes to learning are at least satisfactory and often good. They enjoy using data from the world around them. Thus pupils enjoyed measuring the areas of their hands and feet in one Year 8 lesson. Pupils' concentration is usually good throughout the 60 minute lessons. They enjoy explaining their understanding to other pupils and often use the appropriate mathematical terminology. They

generally take a pride in their work and have good relations with their teachers. The small group sizes help make the classroom a friendly place to learn in.

Teaching is good overall. This is a major improvement on the previous inspection and review by HMI. The core teaching team has raised expectations in terms of work and its presentation and this is now bearing fruit in the classroom. In the most stimulating lessons good pace is a key characteristic. Lessons are well structured, with many following the national numeracy strategy with short, sharp sessions on mental work to start or end and sound mixtures of teacher-led whole group sessions and practical sessions when pupils consolidate their skills. Lessons are well paced to maintain interest and good questioning is used in many lessons to develop understanding. Teaching is mainly traditional in style and is successful. Some good lessons, however, would become very good with the introduction of more strategies, such as the use of ICT. Teachers have good relationships with their classes and they use praise and the rewards system effectively. Assessment plays a major part in the teaching and good record keeping alongside the target setting is normal practice. Teachers generally know their subject well and appreciate the potential pitfalls in learning. Homework is used well as a back-up for classroom learning. There is at present limited use of information and communications technology in mathematics lessons and this area requires development. Teachers clearly enjoy teaching their subject and pupils generally learn well when teaching is good.

The department is well led by a newly appointed, very hard working, dedicated head of department who has been in post for one week. In that time he has consolidated the work of his successful predecessor and implemented positive initiatives to raise standards. Assessment procedures are exemplary and as a result the expectations of pupils have been raised and pupil individual targets are the norm. He has sensibly introduced a greater emphasis on basic numeracy. There has also been a sensible move to introduce more investigative work. The development of the use of ICT is one of the department's priorities. Since the HMI review the department has made good progress by introducing a very good scheme of work, a comprehensive assessment structure and much improved teaching and learning. These initiatives will undoubtedly result in higher standards in due course.

SCIENCE

Pupils generally enter the school having attained standards that are below national averages. This year there has been a slight improvement and, in most Year 7 lessons observed, many pupils attain standards close to national expectations. In a range of other lessons at Key Stage 3, and from reading

a sample of pupils' written work, standards are closer to national expectations, although in Year 9 some standards are below average. Over the past three years standards attained in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 have been well below the national figures for all and for similar schools. Over the past three years one in ten of pupils failed to turn up for the Key Stage 3 tests. There is disaffection in some Year 9 classes. The investigational skills of formulating hypotheses, carrying out fair tests and drawing conclusions are underdeveloped. These factors were mentioned in the last OFSTED inspection and they continue to result in underachievement at Key Stage 3 although test results in 2000 did show a significant improvement. The teachers report that these improvements are due to the introduction of new textbooks. In lessons pupils with special educational needs make suitable progress.

At GCSE, standards for grades A*-C are consistently well below average compared with similar schools and, even though there had been a gradual improvement over the previous three years, in 2000 results plummeted. There has been some improvement since the last OFSTED inspection in that boys and girls attain the same average grade at GCSE. Whilst in 2000 all girls gained a pass, a greater proportion of boys attained the highest grades. The department is aware of the need to redress this imbalance. In lessons observed at Key Stage 4 and from examining pupils written work and coursework, standards are normally below national expectations. Pupils' investigative skills are underdeveloped and thus they underachieve in their coursework. In common with the last report poor attendance and disruptive behaviour continues to affect the progress of many pupils in Year 11. In some Year 10 and Year 11 lessons pupils attain above average grades and this should give the school cause for optimism. New personnel and better strategies for monitoring teaching support this optimistic view.

Teaching is recent but definite strength of the science department. Teachers work hard and prepare interesting lessons that motivate most pupils to enjoy their science. In a Year 10 class studying digestion pupils are fascinated by a video showing the absorption of fat. Teachers have a good command of the subject and provide pupils with clear and accurate explanations. A Year 11 class understands the formation of metamorphic rocks as the result of such skilful explanation and want to learn more. At the start of lessons teachers make explicit learning outcomes and instructions and, as a result, pupils know exactly what they are going to learn and what they must do. This motivates pupils to get involved in the work and, in most lessons, make suitable progress in their learning. A Year 11 class, making electromagnets, carry out their work very efficiently and attain an above average level of learning because they know what is expected of them. Teachers are particularly skilful in

organising interesting and safe practical work. A Year 8 class are captivated by a well-planned enquiry into the competition between weeds and grass on the school playing field. A hard-working and highly efficient laboratory technician ably supports this work. Teachers usually enjoy good relationships with pupils and this ensures that lessons proceed at a suitable pace. In a few lessons where these relationships are less secure, and teachers do not possess the skills to overcome disaffection or disruptive behaviour, learning is affected and pupils make poor progress. Some of the teaching is of the highest quality. In a Year 7 lesson where pupils make model cells, the teacher prepares exciting activities that stimulate pupils to want to know more. Relationships are so good that pupils confidently take responsibility for their own learning and have the curiosity to bombard their teacher with questions they want answered.

Most pupils enjoy science lessons and make satisfactory progress in their learning. They like practical work and are developing experimental skills at a suitable rate. They are particularly good at taking responsibility for handling and assembling equipment. They work well together, help each other and carry out experiments sensibly and safely. Most pupils make satisfactory progress in learning scientific facts but do not have enough opportunities to carry out investigations. They miss the chance for using what they know to explain their thinking and develop a better understanding.

The recently appointed head of science has a clear vision for the future. He is a good teacher and provides a good role model for others. He is hardworking and has already made an impact on the day-to-day running of the department. There is a commitment to succeed and optimism that there is capacity to improve teaching, learning and standards. The head of science realises that a high priority needs to be given to the monitoring of quality of teaching and learning in lessons so as to ensure that the aims and aspirations of the department are realised in practice and standards are raised. The inconsistency of the way teachers mark pupils' classwork and homework remains a problem since the last OFSTED inspection and will be included in the programme of monitoring. The head of science is keen to establish better links with local primary schools so as to understand better the scientific knowledge and understanding pupils bring with them. There is also a need for the department to ensure that their own schemes of work build upon these early experiences to help pupils make progress in a logical sequence. The lack of routine investigative work and the use of information and communications technology are major weaknesses and strategies are in place to improve the teaching and assessment of these important aspects. There is limited attention to basic literacy and numeracy skills and these could be developed further.

ART

The proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C in GCSE examinations in 2000 has risen significantly since 1999, when results were at a very low ebb. Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are below national expectations.

In lessons and work seen during the inspection, the attainment of pupils at the end of both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 is below national expectations. However, a significant number of lessons at Key Stage 3 indicate attainment in line with national averages. This is the direct result of the current focus on basic art skills teaching at Key Stage 3, particularly in Year 7. Where teachers are secure in their knowledge and understanding of art, the pupils demonstrate a clear understanding of tonal graduation in exercises that build on previous work. Their basic skills are reinforced through set homework. On occasions, when the teacher is not secure in the subject, pupils do not grasp the techniques of tonal drawing effectively. By the end of Key Stage 3, higher attaining pupils use well developed freehand drawing skills to copy architectural features from photographs of building from different historical periods. Their knowledge and understanding of the architecture they study is generally poor. They can name very few of the features they draw. Teachers do not yet effectively reinforce the specialist language of art and architecture. There is generally insufficient observational work done in art lessons and pupils' observational skills are not well developed. By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils' work shows that they have not had a sufficiently broad and balanced experience of art and have not had a fully effective grounding in basic art skills. However, the work of higher attaining pupils does show some sustained research into their projects. Pupils' notes on artists and art and design styles, are largely copied from reference books. The annotation of the work, by teachers, is very sparse. Attention needs to be given to the blending of art and design studies with the knowledge and understanding of those artists and designers who are being studied. This will ensure that the department makes an effective contribution to the whole school initiative to promote literacy. The resources for print-making and ceramics are not used efficiently, thus denying pupils the opportunity to extend their studies and build up their skills, knowledge and understanding of art and design.

The response of pupils to art lessons is generally good. It is better at Key Stage 3 where pupils enjoy the challenge of art lessons and respond positively to the good and very good teaching. They are well behaved in the most effective lessons and are respectful of teachers and courteous to visitors. A few lessons are disrupted by noisy chatter where the teacher does not have effective strategies for dealing

with low level disruption. In lessons where teachers make clear what their expectations of behaviour and work are, the pupils are well behaved and make good progress.

The quality of teaching is good overall at Key Stage 3. It is satisfactory at Key Stage 4. Lessons are generally well prepared, with resources to hand and a clear plan for the lesson. This sometimes includes a demonstration of the teacher's own skills, but does not make sufficient allowance for the discussion of work at the end of lessons. Hence the critical, evaluative skills of pupils are not challenged. Teachers have had very little time to get to know the pupils, but their enthusiasm for the subject and their secure knowledge and understanding of art and design, enables most teaching to be informative and challenging.

The newly appointed acting head of art is working hard to ensure that the department remains on course for improved results, whilst the head is on maternity leave. She is planning to develop three dimensional studies, which is her own subject strength, and to bring printmaking back onto the curriculum. She has also moved pupils away from copied work towards more challenging and effective observational studies. At present the department does not make effective use of information communication technology, but the acting head has experience in that area and, given adequate resources would make good use of it. The department has not yet implemented the monitoring and assessment targets set in the school development plan.

The department has not made significant progress since the last inspection. The department went into decline soon after the inspection and results dropped to a very low point. Following the appointment of a new head, the department has begun to pull round and improve its results. With the present staff delivering good and very good teaching, along with the basic skills taught well at Key Stage 3, the department is set for a significant improvement in its examination results in future years but an injection of funds to improve resourcing is necessary.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Over the past three years the proportion of pupils achieving an A*-C grade at GCSE in all the subject strands and disciplines of design and technology has been well below the national averages. In resistant materials and in GNVQ engineering pupils' achieve above the national average grades when compared with all secondary schools. In these subjects, and in child development, the proportion of pupils achieving an A*-C grade is not significantly different to the results for all maintained secondary

schools. Over the past three years in food technology the proportion of pupils achieving an A*-C grade is significantly below the national average. However, the proportion of pupils achieving an A*-G grade in all design and technology subjects is not significantly different to the national average for these grades. Girls achieve well below the national averages for girls in all design and technology subjects whilst boys achieve broadly in line with the national average for boys. During the inspection week the work seen in all material areas reflects the rising trend in attainment shown by the recent examination results.

At the end of Key Stage 4 standards are below the national average expectation. A significant minority of pupils, mostly boys, attain standards in line with the expectation in resistant materials and in GNVQ engineering. Similarly a significant minority of pupils, mostly girls, attain standards that are in line with the expectation in child development and, to a lesser extent in food technology. With the exception of the work produced by a minority of higher attainers, pupils' have only a rudimentary understanding of the principles and processes of designing. The standard of technical writing and graphical communication skills are weak. In general the presentation of design ideas lacks clarity and quality. The recently introduced Year 10 design and technology induction course is effectively addressing these weaknesses. Food technology tasks relate well to product designs and to industrial practice, but pupils, except the higher attainers find the concepts difficult to grasp. Higher attainers also show a satisfactory understanding of the nutritive, sensory, chemical and physical properties of food whilst the understanding of the lower attainers is at a very basic level. In Year 10 GNVQ engineering most pupils show good skills in using tools, equipment and machinery and are very conscious of the need for safe working practices. Whilst some pupils use information technology to complete coursework, it is confined to the few rather than the majority. Skills in using computer aided manufacturing techniques are very much underdeveloped, being limited by an insufficient range of suitable equipment. Whilst there is some evidence of good standards of work being produced using computer aided design software, it remains underdeveloped across the design area as a whole at both key stages. Pupils' with special educational needs make satisfactory progress and attain in line with expectation for ability.

The standards attained by the great majority of pupils at the end of Year 9 are below the national average expectation in all the strands and disciplines of design and technology. A significant minority of pupils attain broadly in line with the expectation in Years 7 and 8. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of the design process and principles is generally unsatisfactory, particularly in Year 9. While the standard of technical presentation and graphicacy for a significant minority of higher

attainers is satisfactory, the standard overall is unsatisfactory and particularly so in the work of the lower attainers. A small proportion of the work produced by too many pupils is not helped where outcomes of the use of felt-tip colour pens are garish and rendering techniques are ineffective. Pupils' understanding of the design process and principles is weak. Skills in investigating and analysing products, in presenting ideas using appropriate technical writing skills are generally underdeveloped. Higher attainers show satisfactory levels of fluency in the use of technical terms but lower attainers are very hesitant and unsure of the correct terminology. New approaches to the teaching of design and technology coupled with new design projects that more closely match pupil interest and capabilities have been introduced this term. During the inspection week it was clear that these changes are enabling pupils to appreciate more fully the processes and principles of good design work.

Overall teaching is good at both key stages. During the inspection good or better teaching was observed in six out of ten lessons. Teachers' are using a growing range of exemplar design material eg the mechanical toy project, to guide and support pupils design work effectively at Key Stage 3. The worksheets used provide clear guidelines for design work with extension sheets to effectively challenge, and extend, the higher attainers. However, some worksheets are insufficiently modified to meet the needs of the lower attainers. In the main, teaching ensures that most pupils are appropriately motivated and clearly aware of what they need to do in their projects. In many lessons good humour prevails and an atmosphere conducive to positive learning is established. The great majority of pupils respond well to the teaching styles adopted and show satisfactory and often good interest levels. Lapses in pupils' concentration are dealt with effectively and pupils are kept on task for the great majority of the time in most lessons. The teaching styles and approaches adopted ensure that satisfactory and often good progress is maintained in lessons. Teachers provide good verbal feedback to pupils on their progress. This system effectively enables pupils to understand how well they are progressing and what they need to do to improve. Homework is regularly set and effectively extends the curriculum time in most material areas. In some instances unusually large group sizes for a practical subject reduce the amount of individual support and attention teachers are able to provide for pupils. The technician provides an invaluable contribution to pupils learning in resistant materials and GNVQ engineering, but there is insufficient support time overall, especially in the food technology area. Teachers' work is made difficult by the inadequacy of the provision of some specialist rooms.

The newly appointed head of department for design and technology has already set in place plans and processes to address most of the issues identified in this and the last report. The department as a whole approached the findings of the previous inspection in a positive manner and standards overall

have improved, most notably so in the resistant materials, GNVQ engineering and child development. These subjects are amongst the better performing subjects at external examinations in the school.

GEOGRAPHY

Standards for 14 year olds, seen in lessons and the pupils' work, are below those expected for 14 year olds but, overall, they make satisfactory progress and a few achieve higher levels.

In recent years, GCSE results at grades A*-C have risen slowly and, although below average for all schools. Grades at A*-G are broadly in line with all schools. Boys and girls do better in geography than in other GCSE subjects. Boys generally outperform girls. This year, the results dipped, a consequence of a less able year group who were difficult to motivate and whose attitudes were influenced by the school's difficult staffing situation. They still did better compared with most other subjects. Inspection evidence confirms that now the staffing is stable and all pupils are taught by specialist teachers, standards, although still below average, are improving. Geography is a popular subject chosen by almost half the year group and the number of girls choosing it has risen.

Over time, at both key stages, pupils make satisfactory progress in relation to their prior achievement. Some classes make slower progress than others, the result of being taught by a succession of temporary teachers. The over use of work sheets and lack of marking restricted their experiences and development. During inspection week pupils make good progress in lessons at both key stages because teachers have adopted a common approach and use active teaching styles with the emphasis on making pupils think for themselves. Many pupils are over dependent and have difficulties organising their work so that practical activities, such as using the school grounds in Year 8 to find and discuss examples of weathering, help them to work more independently. Their level of interest is shown by the improved presentation of their work.

Throughout Key Stage 3, teachers are giving increased attention to improving pupils' vocabulary, reading and numeracy so that pupils' skills, although below average, are improving. Lists of key words are used to good effect.

By the end of Year 9, most pupils can use a range of simple techniques and follow instructions to obtain and handle information from secondary sources. Most are good at locating features on maps.

Many show some understanding of physical processes in their work about rivers. There is insufficient fieldwork and use of information and communications technology.

In Years 10 and 11, pupils use key vocabulary confidently, although lower attaining pupils find it difficult to remember what they have learnt previously. In work about Peterborough, they build on their knowledge of location to show how land use can change over time. By the end of the key stage, few demonstrate other than a limited capacity for geographical analysis or initiating questions. In coursework about Boston, for example, the highest attaining pupils are able to make sound use of their numerical skills to present and interpret data and justify their conclusions. However average and lower attaining pupils give limited explanations. They show some understanding of environmental issues in work about the Sutton Bridge Power Station.

Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, benefiting from small group teaching in Years 8 and 9 and the department's efforts to prepare work to suit different needs. Most achieve a grade at GCSE and four pupils, who took the Certificate of Achievement, all passed, two with merit. Learning support assistants provide good support in classrooms.

The quality of teaching is good throughout. Teachers plan lessons very well so that pupils are clear about what they have to do and provide them with a variety of appropriate and stimulating ideas. Their expertise enables them to give clear explanations and develop pupils' curiosity through their response. In a very good Year 9 lesson, for example, lower attaining pupils were very involved in planning a visit to Brazil for a group of environmentalists. Well-designed tasks, with up to date resources kept them interested. The Internet was a great motivator and working in groups helped pupils learn to organise themselves. The teacher made good humoured interventions to overcome difficulties and praise their contributions. As a result, they improved their information handling and numerical skills, searching for information about flights, costs, time zones and distance in a relevant way.

Teachers' management of behaviour leads to generally calm and orderly classrooms where pupils can concentrate on their work, although sometimes the teacher does not insist on pupils' listening carefully enough. Time is wasted sometimes when lessons finish too early or pupils are not kept fully on task. Homework is set regularly. At present, the marking at Key Stage 3 does not give enough information to pupils about how to improve.

The leadership and management of the department are good. The newly appointed head of humanities and a very experienced teacher work well together and, after the staffing difficulties of last year, have effectively re-focused the educational direction of the department. The former has completely revised the Key Stage 3 work programmes. Progress since the last inspection has been good. The development plan identifies the use of assessment at Key Stage 3 to help the department track and monitor pupils' progress and the use of ICT and fieldwork, to improve analytical skills. The head of department is clear about future priorities and the department is well able to make further improvement under her leadership.

HISTORY

The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 is below the national expectation. Teacher assessments indicate a higher standard but, as there is no regular assessment of the key elements on which teacher assessments are based, they do not reflect inspection findings. Pupils recognise the main characteristics of the period studied. Using written and pictorial sources they can select and extract information in response to questions, and pupils of higher ability can use the information to make independent deductions. Retention of information is weak, and the understanding of change and the causes of change, by pupils of middle and lower ability is poor. Source material is used at its face value and pupils have little experience of source analysis. Pupils are developing an understanding of the causes of the First World War and of life in wartime Britain. They consider the Treaty of Versailles, from the allied and the German view and, with teacher direction, they can make links between it and the conditions that enabled Hitler's rise to power. In Year 8 pupils study the change in Britain's working conditions, from a largely farming base to the growth of factory based industry.

The attainment of pupils who study history for GCSE is below national expectations. Pupils are taking the GCSE examination for the first time in 2001. No history was taught at Key Stage 4 at the time of the last inspection. In the coursework seen pupils have a clear understanding of the changing role and the emancipation of women. Pupils of higher ability can interpret information and demonstrate independent thought. Pupils of middle and lower ability are dependent on the teacher and written sources, demonstrating little analysis of information. They use source material to provide information and present it in a logical order. Responses generally lack supporting evidence and do not generally demonstrate an awareness of change over time or of causal links, without teacher direction. There is little evidence of extended writing other than that assisted by structured questions, and a heavy dependence on text.

The achievement of girls is generally higher than for boys due to a greater willingness to apply themselves to written work and to concentrate on the task set. Lack of motivation among some pupils, particularly boys at Key Stage 4, negatively affects their progress. Weaker literacy skills, also adversely affects the progress of boys.

The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory, especially where resources are appropriately selected. Where the level of literacy required is too high, or where tasks are mundane yet time consuming, achievement is reduced.

Teaching is at least satisfactory and where pupils are actively involved in their learning, it is good. Good classroom management results in a positive working environment, and the teachers' interest and enthusiasm is communicated to their pupils. Tasks are generally selected appropriately and support the needs of the less able. Teachers plan lessons well and in lessons seen they have high expectations of both work and behaviour. As a result the attitudes and behaviour of the pupils is generally good. The standard of response accepted however, is at times too low and pupils are not encouraged to develop their ideas. Teachers make an effort to introduce a variety of teaching strategies. They are restricted by the very limited resources within the department however, which reduces opportunities for independent learning and leads to an over use of worksheets. As a consequence pupils become over-dependent on their teacher. Where lessons are too teacher dominated pupils become passive and concentration levels fall. The limited pupil involvement in the assessment of their work results in few pupils taking responsibility for their learning. The use of information and communication technology is limited to word processing and some individual research, but the department is investigating future opportunities.

The management and personnel of the department have changed this year. There are clear plans to continue the good progress made over the last two years and an enthusiastic response to the challenges remaining. The department's action plan outlines the focus for development. Schemes of work are being reviewed for Key Stage 3, and being developed for Key Stage 4. The new humanities faculty is intending to develop common assessment and reporting policies, and to introduce strategies to improve numeracy and literacy across the faculty. The reports to parents at present contain no information regarding attainment in the key elements of history. Since the last Ofsted inspection the department has developed an attractive base and there have been some additional resources, but given the low level of resourcing then, these are still insufficient. The lack of visual material, in particular, is

a handicap for pupils with poor literacy skills. The school appointed a qualified historian and as a result pupils now have the opportunity to study history at Key Stage 4. There is limited time however for support of non-specialist teachers at present and for the development of teaching strategies and visits. There is still insufficient use of first hand investigation of history, however the visit to Ypres by pupils in Year 9 was a valuable innovation by the humanities department.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

There are no GCSE courses in information technology at present, which means that comparison with national results is not possible.

The overall standards attained in all the strands and disciplines of information and communications technology by the end of the Key Stage 3 are below the national average. There are strengths in pupils' attainment in word processing, desktop publishing and to a lesser extent in the use of spreadsheets. Pupils' attainment in modelling, measuring and control technology is below the national expectation. The great majority of pupils' attain standards in line with the expectation for age and capability in all the timetabled information technology lessons observed during the inspection. This is certainly an improved situation resulting from new equipment and new teaching personnel. Pupils' readily assimilated good skills in logging on to the new network system, in loading programs and manipulating text or data in the projects observed. Keyboarding skills are generally good overall for the higher attainers, although lower attainers are unsure of the keyboard and are hesitant when entering text or data into their work files. All pupils use the mouse well to negotiate icons, menus and functions when working in a word-processing program or a spreadsheet application. Almost all pupils show a positive attitude to learning and make satisfactory and often good progress in the lessons observed. Pupils' speak with enthusiasm about their work with higher attainers using the technical vocabulary of the subject well. There are no significant differences in the work of boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress and achieve well.

The scrutiny of work shows attainment to be broadly similar to national average expectations in the GNVQ key-skills course. Across the curriculum pupils attain below the national average expectation in all the strands and disciplines of information and communications technology. The lack of opportunities for pupils to develop their information technology skills through a planned, systematic or sustained provision at Key Stage 4 affects standards. A minority of subjects have yet to identify how the National Curriculum requirements for information and communications technology are to be

delivered. Many pupils word-process or use desktop publishing for their coursework but are very much dependent on staff interest and expertise. The use of electronic storage devices such as CD ROM, or the Internet to research projects together with the use of spreadsheets for modelling or graph-work remains underdeveloped throughout Key Stage 4.

In all the timetabled information technology lessons observed the teaching was predominantly good or satisfactory. Teachers are enthusiastic about their subject and effectively stimulate pupils' interest. Word-processing and desktop publishing applications are effectively explained through clear, straightforward, effective demonstrations of the applications. Teachers provide challenging and interesting tasks that are well matched to interest and ability. The problems posed build effectively on pupils' prior knowledge, skills and understanding. Where possible teachers provide high levels of individual support and guidance. A very small proportion of the pupils have difficulty concentrating on work. However, teachers are very adept at deploying a wide range of strategies to keep disruption to a minimum, enabling the great majority of pupils to remain focused on task throughout lessons. Good teaching generates a good response from pupils and they make at least satisfactory progress in lessons. Teachers are good at testing pupils understanding of the required task. Worksheets, produced within the department, successfully identify learning objectives. However, some tasks and some written instructions within the worksheets are insufficiently modified to suit the needs of the lower attainers. Behaviour in lessons reflects the quality of teaching and is generally positive and often good. The lack of technical support limits the actual teaching time in lessons, particularly when faults with computer hard and software occur.

The standards reported in the last inspection have been maintained. Whilst there has been improvement in standards at Key Stage 4, the issues in relation to the effective use of information and communications technology across the curriculum remains unresolved. The school has invested substantially in a whole school network, with a good range of software and hardware, which links to the Internet. The very good leadership and management shown by the head of department is set to enable the planned cross-curricular provision for information and communications technology to be delivered using the new equipment. However, the provision at present does not meet the requirement of the National Curriculum at Key Stage 4 where the small minority of pupils, who do not study a GNVQ subject, do not receive their full entitlement in the subject.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

All pupils study French in Years 7-11. No other foreign languages are offered. In recent years French GCSE results, for A*-C grades, have been well below national standards except in 1998, when only 12 pupils were entered and have been lower than in similar schools. They have also been lower than most other subjects in the school. Some pupils in Year 9 have reached level 5 in French, but general levels are below national standards. At both Key Stages 3 and 4 pupils are stronger in listening, speaking, and reading, and weaker in writing. When speaking, a Year 8 class could tell the time in French using a 24 hour clock. When listening, a Year 7 class heard details about different people on tape and could identify their nationality. A Year 9 class were able to read descriptions of various people and then translate them. In a Year 10 class, pupils described people on the overhead projector, and the teacher gave them detailed advice on accurate writing before they wrote descriptions of people. Overall, there is a satisfactory amount of written exercises and sustained writing: however, pupils make unnecessary errors in grammar and spelling. Pupils do not check their written work carefully enough. Girls usually gain better results than boys. Pupils have regular reading sessions: these contribute to their general literacy and develop their French skills and knowledge, including the use of dictionaries. Pupils spend most of their time using the foreign language in listening, speaking, reading and writing: these are at lower levels than they would be in English. Pupils only use numbers occasionally. Pupils have had limited access to computers, but use them when they have the opportunity.

The department has successfully addressed almost all the issues raised in the last inspection report. The curriculum and assessment are better, and the quality of teaching and learning has improved.

The overall quality of teaching seen in inspection week was good and considerably improved on recent years. At Key Stages 3 and 4 the quality of teaching is at least satisfactory, often good, and occasionally very good. The quality of teaching is improving standards and ensures satisfactory or good progress. The teachers plan a sequence of activities, are proficient in French, project their voices clearly, and have good accents. They use the foreign language for parts of the lesson, but sometimes use too much English. They use overhead projectors very well, and use other resources effectively to increase learning. Standards of discipline are generally good, but a few pupils find it difficult to concentrate sufficiently. Time is used well, and teachers are good at encouraging oral work in pairs: however, sometimes they do not use pair work sufficiently. Staff display pupils' work, maps, posters, and other authentic material, which increase the students' knowledge of the language and countries concerned. However, more maps and display are needed in some classrooms. Pupils' work is assessed regularly, and results inform subsequent teaching. Useful homework is set regularly. The

teaching of those with special needs is satisfactory, and meets the needs of these pupils as well. Teachers manage classes well. For example, in a Year 9 class, pupils created sentences about favourite hobbies, and then performed dialogues for the whole class. They then matched information about hobbies on the overhead projector to various people, using dictionaries effectively. Finally, they listened to a list on tape, and identified 17 different hobbies. In a Year 11 French class, pupils expressed their opinions about different school subjects. They then worked in pairs, using dictionaries to check meanings. Next they wrote why they liked or disliked various subjects. They listened to a tape, and identified the preferences of the people they heard. Finally they wrote a paragraph about their views on their own school subjects. In both these lessons the pupils were actively involved throughout, worked very well on the different tasks, and made good progress.

Almost all pupils behave well. They show interest in their work, sustain their concentration, and develop good study skills. Their response is at least satisfactory and often good at both key stages. Many pupils enjoy lessons. They work well in pairs, and sometimes have opportunities to use their initiative in creating role plays and working independently. Their positive attitudes are enabling them to improve their performance. However, a few pupils find it difficult to concentrate and achieve their potential. Most pupils, including the most and least able and those with special educational needs, make good progress in lessons at both key stages.

The organisation of the curriculum meets statutory requirements. The head of modern languages monitors the progress of pupils in French. The department is very well led and organised, and has prioritised development plans, and works well as a team. The department lacks sufficient textbooks, magazines, computer software, blinds and display boards. Visits to France encourage social interaction and personal responsibility, and improve language competence. The textbooks and other materials used, together with the visits abroad, help develop awareness of the diversity and richness of other cultures. The quality of most teaching, the attitudes of most pupils, visits abroad, and the leadership of the head of modern languages have a positive effect on standards.

MUSIC

Standards in music at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 are below expectations. A very new head of department for music is working effectively to remedy this as quickly as possible.

In Year 7, baseline assessments are now made, at first by recording whole-class activities on cassette tape, as a 'bench-marking' exercise for future reference. Such assessments of current standards are being planned for individuals in all years to ensure reliable gauges of attainment, progress and added-value can be made at some future date. These will form part of a new scheme of monitoring and review in which the procedures for assessment, recording and reporting attainment and progress in music are in process of being completely revised.

In both Key Stages 3 and 4, standards vary widely. Some pupils are evidently talented but, for the majority, standards are generally low, commonly less than expected at Key Stage 2 and, in many cases, even Key Stage 1!

Teacher Assessments in Year 9 in 2000 were found to be unreliable and inconsistent. Observations confirm that, whilst attainment generally improves across the key stage, notably in relation to classroom performance, it remains, for most pupils, significantly below national expectations. For example, there is no evidence of the use of music technology in Key Stage 3. Pupils in Year 9 confuse the most basic concepts, for example, movement upwards or downwards, whilst many are insecure in their knowledge of simple musical notations. Such shortcomings require the more rigorously focused and well-differentiated work seen during this inspection, targeting those under-performing pupils and their specific needs. Singing, although not yet well-developed, does occur. Pupils sing willingly and are already beginning to maintain an independent part, although occasionally tending to shout to sustain their part against others, with sometimes raucous tone.

At Key Stage 4, small numbers of committed pupils take GCSE courses in music (currently twelve in each of Years 10 and 11). Standards of attainment seen in class and workbooks are unsatisfactory. Of 11 students entered in 1999, 100 per cent gained grades A*-C, an exceptionally good result. In the year 2000, whilst 100 per cent gained grades A*-G only 60 per cent gained grades A*-C, below national standards for all maintained schools but above those for similar schools. The achievement of girls and boys compared to one another in these small groups is inconsistent.

The achievements in GCSE complement those of some 37 pupils (7.85 per cent of the school population) who take instrumental lessons, amongst whom some take graded examinations. Their results are not analysed or published.

Attitudes to music vary widely. At Key Stage 4, during the week of the inspection, pupils are seen to be keen to succeed and generally settle well to work with increasing independence and with little behavioural disturbance. This has an inevitable impact upon standards of attainment, progress and satisfaction in the results achieved, especially for a number of pupils with special educational needs who are beginning to make good progress. In contrast, at Key Stage 3, in many classes, there are a small but significant number of pupils who seek or attract attention by discourteous and occasionally poor behaviour. Such situations are sensitively and positively managed. However, confrontations occur occasionally. These distract the whole class, impeding teaching and learning, with an evident and damaging impact upon standards. Class teachers are often working harder than their pupils!

The quality of teaching is good or better in almost all lessons seen during the week of the inspection. In two thirds of lessons seen, teaching is very good or better. No unsatisfactory teaching is evident. The good teaching is characterised by energy, commitment and dynamism, making clear to pupils the learning objectives and checking that they are met by constantly monitoring work in progress. This inspires comparable responses from pupils although they are sometimes hard won, e.g. in a Year 9 class some disaffected pupils were seen, but good behaviour-management on the teacher's part ensured that progress *was* made. Teaching shows a care for pupils, which is particularly evident in the context of more individualised work at Key Stage 4.

There is opportunity for more rigorous self-evaluative assessment to be included in the new scheme, which will allow teachers, and pupils, to understand how well they doing. This is particularly important because until now there has been no reference point established by baseline-assessment of pupils on entry to the school. Analysis of pupils' work and discussion with them shows that there is a proper emphasis on performing and composing whilst listening skills need substantial development. At all stages, and especially at Key Stage 3, pupils currently appear uncertain of their own achievements, lacking confidence in their present attainments and therefore tentative in their efforts to enhance them. Assessment schemes, which should include self-assessment, are being revised to enable better data analysis, to inform planning and provide more reliable measures of progress in learning.

The well qualified, if inexperienced, head of music staff is supported by three visiting instrumental teachers. However, no support was seen in any music class for those pupils with special educational needs or statements and this places extra pressures upon both pupils and class teachers. Lesson planning follows the new National Curriculum and represents a significant improvement since the last

inspection. However, there remains much to be done, especially in relation to the developing application of differentiation which is currently mostly by outcome.

Learning in music is now for most pupils at least satisfactory and often good. The commitment of pupils, which good quality teaching inspires, is evident in the way pupils' focus upon work.

Accommodation in the main music room is adequate for whole-class teaching. However, the lack of group practice rooms imposes severe constraints, especially when more than one class or group is timetabled in the department. Then, part of the adjacent Year 11 common room is used, but its size and acoustics are unsuited to class music teaching and sound impinges on those using the keyboard room which also has to double as an instrumental teaching room. Pupils benefit from the generally good resources available, particularly the recently acquired keyboard synthesisers and sequencers, which have substantially enhanced the provision for information and communication technology although it is not yet available to Key Stage 3. The number of computer-workstations for music technology is very limited and severely ageing. Modern computer music workstations are urgently needed as are compact discs (the department has less than 10!). Extra-curricular activities, such as the rock and funk bands, were not able to be seen during the inspection (they begin in the week following) but they represent a good range for a school of this size.

Time allocated to music (6 per cent) is good and affords opportunity within the two-week, 50-period cycle of lessons to meet the many challenges of present circumstances. The schemes of work and lesson plans have already been modified and improved to meet these challenges whilst department development plan is being reviewed to support the several needs identified and is in the process of being costed.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Attainment is in line with national expectations at the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. (There were no end of Key Stage 3 teacher assessments in the year 2000 and GCSE is not part of the Key Stage 4 curriculum.)

Pupils' work seen during the inspection week shows that attainment in current Key Stage 3 groups is in line with expectations, with the majority of pupils making good progress. Boys in Year 9 play football with speed and stamina and have good basic skills. Girls in Year 9 are able to warm up and stretch

independently. When playing netball, the girls in Year 8, have inconsistent footwork. Their catching and throwing is good, but a few passes fail to reach the targeted player because of their inability to find space. Boys and girls, in Year 7, show sound co-ordination in tennis. Pupils are not yet able evaluate their performance and that of others, but a small number plan and lead warm up exercises.

The majority of pupils in Year 11 attain standards in line with those expected nationally. Boys show skill and strength in football but do not always play with tactical awareness. Girls are able to coach and lead small groups in a safe and confident manner. A few girls have good footwork, accurate passing skills and an understanding of the rules and tactics of netball. These pupils are attaining standards above those expected nationally.

The attainment of some individual pupils and teams is very good. They compete in football, netball, cross-country and athletics at district and county level.

The quality of teaching is good overall at Key Stages 3 and 4, and very good in one third of lessons. Pupils' learning is good at both key stages. Teachers have good subject expertise. They share the lesson objectives with the pupils at the start of the lesson and finish with a short summation. This reviews and reinforces learning and helps all pupils to make good progress. The range of ability in some classes demands greater flexibility than whole group tasks; teachers do not always sub-divide the pupils into groups according to their attainment. However, they circulate well and intervene in order to extend the more talented and give further help to those who need it.

In lessons where teaching is very good teachers promote literacy and numeracy skills well. They involve pupils with word definitions and geometrical shapes and measurements. Another feature of the very good teaching is the involvement of pupils in independent learning activities. This encourages pupils to develop planning and evaluative skills, although it does not occur throughout the department.

Pupils are interested in and enthusiastic about their lessons. The majority behave well, work co-operatively, in small groups and pairs, and have good relationships with their teachers. Pupils are prepared to listen and try hard in the varied activities set by their teachers, with the exception of a small number of boys in Years 9 and 11 who do not regularly participate in lessons and can be disruptive. The positive attitude of most pupils promotes their learning.

The curriculum meets statutory requirements. However, the Key Stage 3 curriculum lacks balance. Games activities dominate the programme and dance is not taught in Year 9. There is no provision in the curriculum for accredited courses, but the introduction of a GCSE course is part of the department's development plan. Teaching is monitored as part of the continuous staff development programme. The very good indoor and outdoor facilities are well maintained and enhance the learning of pupils. The changing rooms and department office are dilapidated and the surface and netting of the courts is in need of immediate attention. Resources are insufficient to teach the subject effectively. There are no computers in the department and there are not enough footballs, rackets, cones and other essential items of equipment. The department does not have a secure storage area.

Since the last inspection a new head of department has been appointed, the gymnasium refurbished, the provision of extra curricular activities increased and pupils' learning has improved. However, the head of the department has only recently been appointed and has not yet organised effective pupil groupings or a balanced curriculum plan for each key stage. Until these issues are resolved and pupils are regularly assessed and given clear targets for their learning the leadership of the department is still unsatisfactory.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 is below that expected of the draft locally agreed syllabus. Pupils recognise the main features of the major religions studied but, as re-call is weak, there is some confusion. They acquire a sound body of information about the beliefs and customs of Jewish and Islamic believers, and present this information in a variety of forms. There is little evidence that they are gaining a deeper understanding of religious principles as the key stage progresses or that knowledge and understanding is being re-enforced systematically as they move through the syllabus. They have the opportunity to consider their own beliefs and the effects of belief on the lives of others when reflecting on moral issues, such as euthanasia. Their responses suggest interest and thought, though there is little evidence that pupils apply religious values to their consideration of these issues. Pre-conceived ideas prevent a significant minority from considering other viewpoints and life styles. Attainment is further limited by the poor behaviour of a minority who demand an undue amount of the teacher's time and attention. Pupils who are prepared to explore the rich variety of belief systems build up some understanding of human response to questions regarding the existence of a deity. They consider evidence for and against the existence of God and higher attainers reflect on alternative points of view. The level of written response suggests limited reflection by the majority and generally

remains superficial throughout the key stage. Pupils debate ultimate questions, such as the possibility of life after death, and many produce sensitive and thoughtful poetry on this topic.

Attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 over the last three years has been below national expectations. Pupils have followed the short course in religious studies at GCSE, and the majority of pupils have been entered for the examination. Results have been below national averages for grades A* -C, but there has been an upward trend. The severe time reduction this year at Key Stage 4 has now curtailed the study of religious education and there is insufficient time to deliver the minimal requirements in order to meet national expectations.

Tasks set and materials used enable pupils with special educational needs to achieve levels in line with expectations, where the behaviour of a minority allows.

Teaching at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. Lessons are clearly thought out and efforts are made to involve all pupils. There is a clear focus and, where pupils are expected to evaluate and consider different viewpoints, good progress is made. Teachers set homework that is designed to be accessible to all and to stimulate interest. Work is regularly marked and teachers make good use of praise to encourage and build confidence. Efforts are made to vary teaching strategies and teachers are good role models in their respect for their pupils and their work. Where class control is weak pupils fail to recognise or develop an understanding of key concepts. Discussion of religious ideas, for example the religious response to suffering, cannot take place except in a reflective atmosphere and that is not possible where pupils are noisy and intrude on the reflections of others. A significant minority of pupils in Year 9 prevent their peers from benefiting fully from the course. Examples are seen of mature thought and reflection, for example in writing about the value of friendship, but little evidence of growth of religious knowledge and understanding. No teaching was available to be seen at Key Stage 4.

The management of the department is good. There is no specialist within the department and there has been little opportunity for training in the methods of the delivery of key concepts. This has a detrimental effect upon the teaching of abstract religious concepts. The department has worked hard to develop the knowledge required however, and the schemes of work are well planned and recognise the demands of the Lincolnshire Agreed Syllabus. Evidence from pupils' work suggests that coverage is more superficial than the schemes suggest and there is a lack of development in responses. Assessment, although satisfactory overall, is still not yet linked to attainment in religious knowledge and

understanding. As a result assessment cannot be used to monitor pupil progress or to review teaching strategies.

Many of the weaknesses highlighted in the last report have yet to be adequately addressed. Some progress has been made and there are now regular reviews. The department is working within the humanities faculty to develop common assessment and marking policies. The department makes a good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at Key Stage 3, but the school is failing to provide pupils with their legal entitlement to a religious education at Key Stage 4, that would enable them to appreciate life in a multicultural country.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Vocational courses give broad provision for the needs of the pupils and are a strength of the Key Stage 4 curriculum. These include an award course that is offered to selected pupils and GNVQ business, health and social care and engineering. Forty pupils took up at least one of these courses in 1999.

Attainment in engineering, in GNVQ assessments, over the last two years has exceeded the national average for secondary schools. Current indications are that the attainment of pupils in business in 2000 is high. Health and social care examinations will not be taken until 2001.

In lessons pupils' attainment in engineering and health and social care is in line with expectations; in business is above national standards. Pupils demonstrate confidence in research skills, communication and information and communications technology. They possess good enquiry skills. Pupils make good progress. They are aware of GNVQ procedures and track their work effectively.

All teaching is at least good and half is very good. The teaching is not over prescriptive and content and delivery give good opportunities for independent learning. Teachers' knowledge and understanding are good. They help pupils to document their work and to plan their assignments carefully. The department planning and organisation is very good and forms a firm teaching base. Lessons proceed at a suitable pace and teachers are able to deal with pupils' responses effectively. There is a very good rapport between teachers and pupils. A wide range of materials and teaching styles are used. There are examples of good use of resources outside the classroom. All pupils take part in trips locally and to a leisure park. The work experience programme is used effectively in conjunction with the curriculum units. For example in health and social care pupils were able to draw on their experiences

in a care home. The newly acquired computer aided design package enhances the engineering course work. The information and communications technology base provides a good, and well used, learning environment for the business groups.

During the inspection the attitudes of pupils were good with the exception of one health and social care lesson seen. The majority of pupils clearly enjoy learning independently and find that subject material motivates their learning.

Overall, the variety of provision, quality of teaching and high level of pupil achievement make the vocational courses some of the most appropriate and successful in the school. These have developed well since the last inspection.