

INSPECTION REPORT

KING'S GROVE COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL

CREWE

LEA area: Cheshire

Unique reference number: 111442

Acting Headteacher: Mr H G Brownson

Reporting inspector: Mr M Buckley
30517

Dates of inspection: 9-13 October 2000

Inspection number: 223779

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

© Crown copyright 2000

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Buchan Grove Crewe Cheshire
Postcode:	CW2 7NQ
Telephone number:	01270 661223
Fax number:	01270 560789
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	County Councillor David Newton
Date of previous inspection:	30 March 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Michael Buckley 30517	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?
Gillian Marsland 13706	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?
Malcolm Burley 8361	Team inspector	Science	
John Hardy 11969	Team inspector	Design and technology	
		Information and communication technology	
Anthony Hill 18261	Team inspector	Art	
		Special educational needs	
Bryden Keenan 4891	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
John Knight 3827	Team inspector	Geography	
John Mallinson 12121	Team inspector	History	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
David Morris 4757	Team inspector	Music	
Roger Moyle 25748	Team inspector	Physical education	
Sheila Nolan 28097	Team inspector	Mathematics	
William Robson 3731	Team inspector	English	
		Equal opportunities	
Felicity Shuffle-Botham 30427	Team inspector	Religious education	

The inspection contractor was:

Chapel House Inspection Unit Ltd
The ICAA Education Centre
Brighton
Alresford
Hampshire
SO24 9RE

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Registrar
Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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?

1-15

The school's results and achievements
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

16-21

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

22-30

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

31-37

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS

38-40

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

41-49

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

50

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

51-130

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

King's Grove is a very small mixed comprehensive school, with only 404 pupils on roll and no sixth form. It takes pupils from almost every part of Crewe. The school has lost many pupils since the last inspection in 1998, owing to the prolonged uncertainty about its future. Now that proposals for amalgamation have been withdrawn, a permanent headteacher has been appointed. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals (about 25 per cent) is above the national average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is very low (about 3 per cent) and most are of Black Caribbean heritage. Seventy-six pupils (over 16 per cent) are on the register of special educational needs, a lower proportion than the national average, and 11 (over 2 per cent) have statements indicating the additional support they require, which is about the average nationally. The majority of these statements are related to moderate learning difficulties. The attainment of the majority of pupils when they enter the school is below the national average, with a minority of higher-attaining pupils.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The last inspection determined that the school had serious weaknesses in leadership and management. This is no longer the case. The leadership of the acting head teachers and key staff over the past three years has been outstanding and management is good. Pupils generally learn well and standards are well above those for similar schools, although just below those expected nationally. Teaching is consistently good in all subjects and year groups and the personal development of pupils is very good, as are relationships at all levels in the school. Although attendance is unsatisfactory, this is an effective school that gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Very good leadership and management by the acting headteachers and key staff.
- Consistently good teaching in all subjects and year groups.
- Very good provision for pupils' moral, social and personal development.
- Very good relationships at every level in the school's community.
- Very good range of extra-curricular activities.
- Financial planning is very well focused on the school's educational priorities.

What could be improved

- Standards of attainment, particularly in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science.
- Attendance and punctuality.
- The level of governors' involvement in the school's management.
- Provision for information and communication technology across the curriculum, religious education and collective worship.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good improvements since it was last inspected in March 1998. It has successfully tackled eighteen of the twenty key issues identified then. In particular, leadership and management are very strong, morale is very good, there is a good school development plan, arrangements for assessment are significantly better, there is a good programme of personal and social education and financial planning and management are now very good. The school has turned around a deficit of over £60,000 and it is now in a healthy financial position. Improvement in the performance of most departments has been good or very good. The quality of teaching is much better and standards of attainment are slowly rising. Only a few governors have become closely involved with the school's management. A comparatively small but significant minority of parents are still letting down the school and their children by allowing frequent absences or lateness. The locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education is not fully covered and the school still does not provide a daily act of collective worship.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key 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	C	C	A	

The table shows that overall standards in the GCSE examinations have improved steadily since 1997. In 1998 and 1999, they were in line with the national averages. In 1999, they were well above the average for schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. Performance in English, English literature and information and communication technology is significantly higher than in other subjects. The weaker subjects include modern foreign languages and geography. In 1999, the average overall point score in National Curriculum tests for fourteen year-olds was close to the national average and well above the average for similar schools. Improvement over the last three years is in line with the national trend although the actual scores are lower. Pupils do slightly better in English and mathematics than they do in science. The progress across Key Stage 4 is better than that made in most schools where pupils achieved comparable scores in the 1997 tests at the end of Key Stage 3. In the work seen, the attainment of pupils in Years 9 and 11 was in line with national standards in English and just below that level in mathematics and science. Pupils' achievement and progress are satisfactory overall and pupils with special educational needs make good progress. The school's targets are appropriate and pupils are generally well on the way to reaching them.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good.
Personal development and relationships	Very good.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory.

Parents feel that their children like school. Attitudes to lessons are good and there is a very high take-up of the extra-curricular activities. Pupils show a great deal of consideration and respect for one another and for adults, and relationships are very good amongst pupils and between pupils and adults. Pupils are very keen to take initiatives and to take personal responsibility for a variety of activities. Attendance is below the national average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	N/A

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

Teaching was satisfactory or better in 99 per cent of the lessons seen. It was good or better in 63 per cent of lessons and very good or excellent in almost 19 per cent of lessons. Teaching is good overall, across all subjects. There was a slightly higher proportion of good or very good teaching at Key Stage 3 and teaching was strongest in art, history, information and communication technology and physical education. In all year groups, the teaching of English and science is consistently good, and it is satisfactory and often good in mathematics. Particular strengths in teaching include the extent of teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subjects. They have very good relationships with their pupils and manage them very well. They provide a good range of activities which maintain the pace of lessons and encourage pupils' interest. Literacy is well supported across all subjects but skills in numeracy are not so well developed. The school makes good arrangements for teaching pupils with special educational needs. Pupils generally learn well. They concentrate well and show interest, and their productivity and pace of work are good when lessons are stimulating. However, pupils are sometimes too dependent on their teachers and uncertain what they have to do to improve.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. Meets legal requirements except that the locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education is not fully covered, owing to a lack of time.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactory.

Literacy is well supported across the curriculum. There is a good range of choices for pupils in Years 10 and 11. Arrangements for supporting pupils with special educational needs are good and there is a very wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer. There is good provision for personal and social education and careers education. There is very good provision for pupils' moral and social development. There is good support for personal development and the school nurse and school counsellor provide a valuable service. There is a very detailed baseline for assessment. The school provides good information to parents and parental involvement is satisfactory. There is not a daily act of collective worship.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Leadership has been very clear, determined, courageous and effective. The delegation of responsibilities has been very well managed through a very difficult period. Action to meet the school's targets has been very successful.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Unsatisfactory. Despite opportunities being presented, most governors are not sufficiently involved in management of the school at any level.
The school's evaluation of its performance	This is done well. Progress towards targets is regularly monitored by senior management and objectives have been effectively tackled.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Resources are well managed and put to appropriate use.

Morale is very good. There is a very strong commitment amongst all staff to raising standards. Financial management and administration are good and the principles of best value are strictly observed. Financial planning is very well founded in the school's educational priorities. The number, qualifications and experience of staff are good and appropriate to the needs of the school. Accommodation is good overall, with some very good provision, such as the library, the sports hall and the suites for information and communication technology. The range, quality and quantity of resources are generally good.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching is good. Their children are making good progress. They would feel comfortable approaching the school with questions or a problem. The school expects pupils to work hard and do their best. The school is helping pupils to become mature and responsible. The school is well managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is not enough homework. Parents are not kept well enough informed about how their children are getting on. The school does not work closely with parents. There are not enough extra-curricular activities.

Inspectors agree with the parents' positive views. Teachers' expectations are high, leadership is very good and teaching is good. Pupils' personal development is very good. However, progress is just satisfactory. Inspectors find that parents are provided with good information and that extra-curricular activities are very good, with a very good take-up. The frequency and appropriateness of homework are satisfactory. The staff of the school are easy to approach and links with parents are satisfactory.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Results from the standard tests taken by pupils at the end of their primary education indicate that the attainment of the majority who enter the school in Year 7 is below the national average. This finding is supported by the school's own assessments, conducted in the autumn of Year 7.

2. In the 1999 tests at the end of Key Stage 3, the percentage of pupils reaching the expected levels was close to the national average in English but below the average in mathematics and science. The provisional results for tests in 2000 show little change in mathematics and science but a significant fall in standards in English. Over the last four years, teachers' assessments in other subjects show low percentages achieving the expected levels in most subjects. However, in information and communication technology, results are generally at or above the national average. Girls regularly outperform boys in most subjects except science.

3. The average point scored per pupil is a better indicator of the school's performance overall. In 1999, the average point score for fourteen year-olds was close to the national average in English and science but below average in mathematics. Overall, for all three subjects, the average point score was close to the national average, indicating that a few pupils had achieved significantly higher points than the rest of their age group. Over time, there has been an improvement in the average point scores in English and a good improvement in mathematics although results fell off again in 1998 and 1999. Taking the three subjects together, the trend is in line with the national trend but actual scores are lower. When these results are compared with those of other schools with a similar percentage of pupils who are eligible for free school meals, the average point scores are above average in English and mathematics and well above average in science. The overall average is well above that for similar schools.

4. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, the proportion of pupils obtaining five or more A* to C grades was below the national average but the proportion obtaining five or more A* to G grades was close to the national picture. Over the past three years, the proportions of pupils with five or more A* to C grades have risen slowly but surely and the provisional results for 2000 show a further small improvement in this figure. The average point score for 1999 was close to the national average and the trend shows a steep and consistent improvement which is better than that seen nationally. When compared with similar schools, the percentage of pupils obtaining five or more A* to C grades was above average and the average point score was well above the comparable figure. The progress made by pupils across Key Stage 4 was better than that made by pupils of the same age in other schools who achieved similar Key Stage 3 results in 1997.

5. The percentage of pupils obtaining A* to C grades was above the national average in English literature and information and communication technology and just below the average in English, history, mathematics and statistics. It was significantly below the national average in the other subjects. The percentage of A* to G grades obtained was slightly above the national average in all subjects except science, mathematics and statistics. All candidates obtained at least a G grade in design and technology, English, English literature, geography, history, information and communication technology and physical education. The average point scores were above the national averages for English and information and communication technology and in line with the average in English literature, but below that

standard in the other subjects. There was a high proportion of grade A passes in information and communication technology but, in English, science and design and technology, the majority of passes were at grade D. Most pupils obtained lower grades in the other subjects and the worst results, comparatively, were in geography.

6. The school carries out detailed monitoring of its own assessments and results in external examinations and uses the local authority's tests to predict performance and to set targets. On this basis, the school is not yet reaching its full potential, despite improvements each year. The most recent statutory targets were carefully set and are appropriate for the pupils concerned. The prediction for 1999 was not quite reached but the provisional results for 2000 indicate that the school has successfully reached its target. Evidence from the inspection indicates that pupils in Years 9 and 11 are on the way to achieving the targets set for 2001.

7. Evidence from the inspection shows that standards in Year 9 are above those expected nationally in information and communication technology and physical education and that attainment in information and communication technology is well above the nationally expected level in Year 11. Pupils' attainment in Years 9 and 11 is at the expected levels in English, art, design and technology and geography. Standards in Year 9 are also at the expected levels in French and music and pupils in Year 11 are working at the expected levels in physical education. Although most of the work in lessons was at the appropriate level in mathematics, science, history and religious education, a careful scrutiny of written work over time showed that the total body of pupils' work in Years 9 and 11 is not at the expected standards in those subjects. The attainment of pupils in Years 10 and 11 in design and technology and French is below the national standard and it is below expectations overall. No music is taught at Key Stage 4. When pupils' previous levels of attainment are taken into account, their achievements are satisfactory in almost every subject and they are good in art, information and communication technology and physical education. Older pupils make unsatisfactory progress in French.

8. The school has worked hard to remedy the underperformance of boys and, over the past two years, has reduced the gap between the proportions of boys and girls obtaining five or more A* to C grades in the GCSE examinations from nineteen per cent to five per cent. This was especially noticeable in science, French, English and history, although the most recent results show that girls are again achieving much better grades in some subjects. Pupils of all ages who have special educational needs make good progress in most subjects except mathematics, where progress is satisfactory and in line with that of other pupils. Pupils who are withdrawn for corrective learning make very good progress against the targets set. Teachers are given good advice and guidance from the local authority's specialist services to enable those pupils with additional special needs to make good progress.

9. The school has made good progress towards the development of a literacy policy and teachers of other subjects are aware of ways in which they can support pupils' literacy skills. The department has led staff development sessions to raise the awareness of their colleagues and provide them with ideas. Most departments display key words related to their subject on classroom walls. Writing frames are used to help pupils structure their written work correctly. For example, in one geography lesson, the teacher provided very good guidance about how to plan fieldwork and write up findings. In French, dictionaries are available in all lessons and pupils frequently use them to build up their vocabulary. Most pupils are able to read well enough to understand texts and worksheets in other subjects. In some subjects, notably science and history, more opportunities are needed for pupils to read aloud. Writing is neat and accurate in all subjects. There are good opportunities for extended writing in history, geography and religious education.

10. Many pupils still have weak numeracy skills on entry to the school but, by the end of Year 9, higher-attaining pupils have good skills and use calculators sensibly and sparingly. However, other groups make slower progress and some pupils in Year 9 still have difficulty in reading numbers accurately and in choosing the appropriate operation when carrying out calculations. Pupils preparing for GCSE mathematics mostly use their calculators sensibly and can estimate accurately. There are still some, however, who lack the appropriate mental strategies to assist their number work.

11. There is good discrete provision for information and communication technology but its use across the curriculum is not well developed. In some areas, such as science, physical education and English, pupils improve their work by making satisfactory use of the equipment and software available. In history, design and technology, geography and science, pupils make use of word-processing, compact disc drives and the Internet to research and present their work. Other subjects, apart from religious education, make some use of this technology but it is underdeveloped. The good discrete provision throughout Key Stage 3 and work on text-processing in Year 10 are effective. However, pupils not taking the GCSE examination in information and communication technology in Year 11 have to rely on cross-curricular provision to develop their skills further and their proficiency is adversely affected. For example, only a few are able to use spreadsheets effectively in mathematics. Cross-curricular provision is not effectively co-ordinated.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

12. Pupils' good attitudes to the school have a positive effect on their attainment and progress. Most pupils are enthusiastic and show a real interest in their work. Good examples of this were seen in a Year 9 design and technology lesson, where pupils designed a compact disc storage rack, and in a Year 10 volleyball lesson. Pupils listen to one another, enjoy classroom discussions and take pride in their work. For example, a class in Year 8 held an intelligent discussion on *The Diary of Anne Frank*, offering sensitive comments and listening carefully to others' contributions. Discussions with pupils revealed that they particularly enjoy art, French, history, information and communication technology and music. The pupils also demonstrate a mature response to role-play and enjoy practical activities. Many pupils participate in extra-curricular activities provided by the school, such as football, netball and the 'Scrabble' club, and say that they would appreciate more lunchtime activities.

13. Behaviour in and around the school is good. The pupils are courteous and welcoming to visitors. Behaviour in the classrooms is good and pupils respond very well to the school's clear values and firm guidelines. This contributes to the generally productive environment for learning. The pupils have a sensible approach to using the school's equipment. For example, a Year 9 design and technology group used the cookers with care when baking bread. Concern for the safety of others was seen in a Year 8 physical education lesson, where the pupils assisted each other whilst moving large equipment. The school has suitable behaviour and anti-bullying policies and no bullying was seen during the inspection. Pupils are clear that they would consult their form tutor, head of year or school counsellor should problems arise. They respect the school's rules and understand the impact their actions have on others. During the last reporting year, there were two permanent exclusions from the school for aggressive and confrontational behaviour and a relatively high number of temporary ones.

14. The personal development of the pupils and relationships at all levels within the school are very good. Many pupils are involved in the 'Kings Grove Focus Group', which is a forum to discuss issues related to school life and to raise money for charity. The pupils have recently discussed after-school clubs and lunchtime arrangements. The 'What 4 Club' is a

Christian group which meets weekly to organise charity events, such as shoeboxes for Kosovo. Pupils can take responsibilities as captains of sports teams and Year 11 pupils act as prefects. A new initiative is the pairing of Year 11 pupils with the new intake in Year 7 to provide support and guidance. Relationships amongst the pupils and between the pupils and staff are very positive and based on mutual respect. Pupils work together well in pairs and groups. They appreciate and acknowledge the skills of others. For example, in a Year 7 art lesson, pupils gave positive evaluations of the self-portraits completed by their classmates. The respect shown for the views of others was demonstrated in a Year 7 tutorial discussing values, rights, respect and responsibility. In all these ways, the pupils learn to contribute to the school as a community and to take an active part in school life.

15. Attendance is unsatisfactory. For the last reporting year, attendance levels were below the national average. On the Monday of the inspection week, only seventy-one per cent of one Year 8 tutor group attended school. No tutor groups in Years 8, 9 or 10 achieved ninety per cent attendance over the four days of the inspection. Many pupils are regularly late for school in the morning which adversely affects their learning. Unauthorised absence is above the national average and authorised absence is high, owing to pupils taking holidays during term time. Registration is quick and efficient, allowing lessons to start on time. The school is maintaining its efforts to target poor attenders and the educational welfare officer provides good support during regular visits to the school. Twenty-eight pupils in the school have less than seventy per cent attendance rates. The school has implemented a policy of contacting pupils' homes immediately concerns arise. A new draft attendance policy, which clearly explains attendance regulations to parents, is also designed to address poor attendance and punctuality.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

16. Teaching is consistently good across the school. It was satisfactory or better in ninety-nine per cent of the lessons seen. It was good or better in sixty-three per cent of lessons and very good or excellent in almost nineteen per cent of lessons. There was a slightly higher proportion of good or very good teaching at Key Stage 3. Teaching is good across all subjects but it is strongest in art, history, information and communication technology and physical education. In all year groups, the teaching of English and science is good and it is satisfactory and often good in mathematics. This represents a significant improvement since the last inspection. Literacy is well taught across all subjects but numeracy less consistently so.

17. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of their subjects. This enables them to ask well judged questions that test pupils' understanding and encourage them to think for themselves. In most subjects, such as mathematics, information and communication technology, modern languages and physical education, teachers are technically correct. They manage classes very well. For example, in English, they facilitate good discussions and ensure that pupils move from one activity to another without losing time or concentration. Potential misbehaviour is dealt with skilfully and without confrontation. Teachers plan a variety of activities in most lessons. This maintains pupils' interest and ensures that they make the most of the time available and learn at a good pace. For example, in a very good religious education lesson, the use of role-play enabled Year 10 pupils to consider the problems of unwanted pregnancy in a mature and realistic way.

18. Teachers' high expectations in most subjects challenge and extend pupils of all abilities. For example, a lower ability French group was challenged to conduct a whole lesson in French, with the result that they reached higher standards than expected and they enjoyed the experience. In another lesson, a lower set concentrated throughout to produce an accurate and musical performance on the gamelan. Higher ability groups are also

challenged appropriately in most subjects. In English and mathematics, they are often entered early for the GCSE examinations, with generally successful results. Teachers treat the opinions of their pupils with respect. As a result, pupils express their views confidently and treat other people's opinions with courtesy.

19. The very good relationships that are formed mean that pupils have confidence in their teachers and adopt positive attitudes to their work. Teachers use humour and praise well so that lessons are generally enjoyed and pupils' self-esteem is kept high. These are important factors in the good learning that takes place. Pupils enjoy practical work and they use equipment sensibly and safely. They respond well to opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning. This is particularly noticeable in science, art and physical education. They also use time constructively to evaluate their performance and the methods chosen. Pupils work well in pairs and in groups, sometimes with outstanding results. Teachers try to provide equal opportunities for all pupils in their lessons. They are aware of the gap in attainment between boys and girls in some classes and, in French for example, one teacher insists that boys sit next to girls as part of the strategy to raise boys' attainment. In many English lessons, boys and girls are also encouraged to work collaboratively.

20. Pupils who are withdrawn for additional support are taught individually, using structured schemes for literacy and numeracy. They acquire phonic reading skills very quickly through a repetitive, reinforcing programme of study. The programme is supported by computer software that enables pupils to find out how well they are doing by identifying the strengths and weaknesses in their learning. Pupils concentrate for these short periods of intensive support, making very good efforts to overcome the barriers to their learning. Pupils with special educational needs who are supported in mainstream lessons benefit from the good support of qualified and experienced teaching assistants. They acquire reading and literacy skills effectively because teachers devise simplified worksheets and modified resources to ensure that they can work at the appropriate levels. The numeracy skills of these pupils are not so effectively challenged and their progress in that area is no more than satisfactory.

21. There are some comparative weaknesses in teaching. Occasionally, teachers talk to the class for too long. In these lessons, they tend to "spoon-feed" pupils with information rather than challenge them to develop their own understanding. As a result, pupils in some groups become too dependent on the teacher and are unwilling to take the initiative in their learning. Although teachers generally plan well, they do not always make the learning objectives clear to pupils who are then not sure why they are undertaking a particular activity. Some lessons lack visual stimuli or an appropriate variety of practical resources and approaches to help pupils understand. Teachers mark work regularly but they do not always provide helpful comments so that pupils know how well they are doing. However, marking is particularly good in art and history.

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

22. The curriculum meets statutory requirements at both key stages although too little time is provided to teach the Agreed Syllabus for religious education. There is sufficient time for all the subjects of the National Curriculum but only one modern foreign language is offered. At Key Stage 4, pupils must choose one technology subject but are otherwise allowed a guided choice from thirteen subjects. None of these subjects leads to a GNVQ-level vocational qualification but several, such as office technology, are designed to equip pupils for working life. Lower-attaining pupils are not able to follow the single-award science course. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 can only experience dance, drama and music through a GCSE course in expressive arts, offering a combination of these subjects, together with

elements of art and creative writing. In Year 10, all pupils take a keyboarding course which covers the recommended syllabus for information and communication technology in a single year.

23. The tutorial programme in all years ensures that pupils experience a good programme of personal and social education, which includes a proper awareness of health, sex and drugs issues and good careers guidance. There is a separate, well planned course in careers education for Years 10 and 11. Representatives from local business visit the school to give advice on career opportunities and the local businesses make a good contribution to pupils' development through work experience. Continuity in curricular planning is achieved through productive links with the four major primary schools whose pupils come to the school. Some teachers teach occasional lessons in these schools to familiarise themselves with teaching methods and the content of the syllabus. Links with sixth forms and colleges are equally strong.

24. The school offers a very good range of extra-curricular activities, which are highly successful in extending and enriching the taught curriculum. These include visits to theatres, arrangements for a professional artist to take up residence for a week in the school, visits to the Louvre and visits to art galleries in Mexico. The English department runs handwriting and 'Scrabble' clubs. Pupils studying history are particularly well served with day visits to Styal and Ironbridge and attendance at 'Hitler's Trial' in Manchester. Pupils have the opportunity to visit the First World War battlefields in France, Hadrian's Wall and the Menai Centre. Each Easter, there is a three-day residential tutorial programme at Warwick university for pupils in Year 11. The physical education department organises many popular after-school clubs, practice sessions and matches.

25. The curriculum provides pupils with equal opportunities for study and teachers discuss equal opportunities issues with pupils regularly, as part of the personal, social and health education programme. Setting arrangements in Years 7 and 8 are based on attainment in English and mathematics. This sometimes results in pupils being wrongly placed in French or in some practical subjects, with no opportunity to move into the upper band when they have the ability to do so. Curriculum provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. It is broadened through extra-curricular activities, such as the weekly handwriting club and the reading club. The banding of pupils on entry enables them to have full and appropriate access to the core curriculum of English, mathematics and science. The very informative pupils' profiles supplied by the learning support department alert teachers to individuals' special needs and indicate effective strategies for teachers to use. However, the profiles do not identify realistic short and middle-term targets which would inform planning and enable progress to be monitored effectively. A small number of pupils are withdrawn for individual tuition in literacy and numeracy. Their individual education plans are very good and contain very precise targets for learning and the withdrawal sessions are based on computer programmes and corrective learning schemes. These arrangements enable progress to be easily measured against clear targets and allow pupils to evaluate their own progress.

26. Overall, the school makes good provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its pupils. The provision for the spiritual development of pupils is satisfactory. In religious education, pupils have valuable opportunities to reflect on Man's place in the universe. They consider the nature of God and investigate their own responses to the concept through music, poetry and prayer. In their consideration of bereavement, they have the opportunity to explore ultimate questions and to share concerns and feelings. In history, pupils reflect on the horrors of war and the bi-annual visit to the Belgian war cemeteries provides profound opportunities for reflection and spiritual growth. Pupils investigate the growth of anti-Semitism and the resulting holocaust. The creation and presentation of the

school's millennium gift to a local church was a valuable experience not only for the pupils involved but also for the rest of the school whom they represented.

27. The provision for pupils' moral development is very good. The school has clear expectations of behaviour that are based on self-control and staff provide good role-models in this respect. Good opportunities for pupils to consider moral and ethical issues are provided in science, where pupils consider such topics as genetic engineering, and in geography, where pupils study units on the ethics of aid to less developed countries and environmental issues. In religious education and in the personal, social, health and careers programme, pupils investigate moral dilemmas such as abortion and the dangers of the misuse of drugs. The social and health education course has a comprehensive health programme which encourages pupils to make considered choices regarding their own values. In history, pupils study the growth of the British Empire and explore the effects of slavery. Pupils are encouraged to support various charities, in particular the annual 'Children in Need' appeal. The 'What 4' group provides opportunities for pupils to consider the needs of the wider community.

28. There are very good arrangements for supporting pupils' social development. Pupils are encouraged to become involved in many areas of school life outside the classroom. The school focus group provides good opportunities for discussion and decision-making and the attachment of Year 11 prefects to Year 7 tutor groups enables them to take responsibility for supporting younger pupils. The annual visit to North Wales by pupils in Year 8 and the three-day residential experience at Warwick University are excellent vehicles for social development as well as being good academic learning experiences.

29. Provision for the cultural development of pupils is good. The use of visiting writers, artists, sculptors and theatre groups enriches the school's provision and focuses pupils' attention on the arts. The work undertaken during 'Book Week' and in conjunction with the artists in residence on 'Art Days', has resulted in work of a high standard. Pupils are encouraged to participate in musical activities and to learn to play instruments, including the gamelan. The lack of opportunities for music at Key Stage 4 is a weakness however, as is the lack of dance in expressive arts and physical education. In geography, pupils study the cultures of Brazil, Japan and Kenya while, in religious education, they investigate the belief systems that underpin the cultures of Hindus, Muslims and Jews. Visits to Liverpool provide a valuable opportunity to explore the art and culture of minority ethnic groups and ethnic art from the past. However, opportunities for pupils to appreciate the multi-cultural nature of Britain today and to celebrate the contribution of other cultures are often missed.

30. Since the last inspection, the range of skills taught in art has been widened and a recent curriculum audit has looked critically at the time given to each subject and evaluated the effectiveness of what is taught. However, the time for religious education has not been improved and governors are still insufficiently involved in monitoring and developing the curriculum. There is no formal policy for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Nevertheless, provision for spiritual development has improved since the last inspection and provision for the social and moral development of the pupils is now very good. The school still does not meet statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship. Assemblies generally provide sound moral guidance but do not constitute acts of worship unless teachers choose to include prayers or time for reflection.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

31. The school's procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare are satisfactory and have improved since the previous inspection. Parents have expressed the view that the school is very supportive, caring and considerate to pupils and their families.

This view was confirmed by the inspection. The pupils know that they are valued by their teachers and respond accordingly. There is now an appropriate child protection policy and the head of the pastoral team is the designated person responsible for its implementation. All staff are aware of the required procedures and notices within the school clearly inform pupils whom to contact should problems arise. However, staff have had no recent training. Health and safety issues identified by the previous inspection have now been tackled. A suitable health and safety policy is implemented and whole-school risk assessment is carried out by the site manager and the designated governor. Pupils are well aware of safety issues and these are emphasised regularly in lessons.

32. The pupils are well supervised by ancillary staff and teachers at breaks and lunchtime. There are satisfactory arrangements for dealing with illness and accidents and, although there is only one person qualified in first aid at present, arrangements have been made to train another member of staff. The school has a good medical room which is used by the school nurse during her weekly visits. The nurse provides good support to the school and additional medical advice and information for the pupils. This provision is complemented by weekly sessions run by a counsellor from the local college which provide good support for pupils who have personal problems. There are satisfactory procedures for monitoring and improving attendance. Attendance is monitored daily by form tutors who keep the heads of year informed. The educational welfare officer provides good support for the heads of year and visits the school regularly. The school has recently adopted a 'first day response' scheme and the office staff provide good support by contacting the homes of absent pupils. Attendance stickers are added to the day books of pupils with one hundred per cent attendance, and pens and vouchers are also awarded.

33. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are good and have improved since the previous inspection. The school's code of conduct is clearly displayed throughout the building. It is understood by the pupils and consistently implemented by the staff. The school has an appropriate scheme of sanctions and bronze, silver and gold merit awards are given for positive behaviour as well as for good effort and achievement. Procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour are satisfactory. Incidents of challenging behaviour, including bullying, are recorded on the pupils' individual files and monitored by the heads of year. There are good procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development. Form tutors and heads of year maintain a strong pastoral system based on the positive relationships between the pupils and staff. Year 7 tutors stay with that year group for several years but the other form tutors follow their year groups up the school each academic year. These arrangements provide continuity for pupils and ensure that the relevant expertise is developed to support new pupils adjusting to life at secondary school. The school makes good provision for the personal, social and health education of the pupils. Effective support is provided by the school nurse and the counsellor. Good links are maintained with outside agencies, such as the educational psychological service.

34. Pupils who have statements of special educational needs benefit from a well-structured approach to their academic and personal welfare. The learning support department offers good support to other departments and provides profiles of individual pupils that are drawn from their statements and from the regular reviews. The statements are reviewed annually, in accordance with the requirements of the Code of Practice. Reports on progress in academic work and on personal development feed into the reviews, which are attended by parents, relevant teachers and specialist staff, and by pupils where appropriate. The pastoral staff manage individual behaviour programmes effectively, using a well-monitored system of reports.

35. The school has satisfactory arrangements for assessing pupils' attainment and progress. Information about pupils' attainment is analysed when they arrive in school, in

order to provide a good basis for future assessments. Teaching departments build on these analyses by adding results of tests, reports and examinations. Teachers' assessments, guided by the present assessment policy, are mostly accurate. Many subjects, such as history and English, have well compiled portfolios of marked and levelled work as examples to ensure consistency in standards. Pupils are involved successfully in the assessment of their attainment in several subjects, such as physical education and science. However, pupils' understanding of how well they are doing in the short-term is sometimes limited by insufficient use of National Curriculum levels and examination grade criteria.

36. Assessment is used satisfactorily to assist in the raising of attainment. Assessment data are used initially to place pupils in sets based on attainment on entry to the school. The senior management team produces a detailed analysis of test and examination data for individual pupils and for year groups that is used to set and review targets for pupils preparing for GCSE examinations. These procedures have not yet been fully introduced into Years 7, 8 and 9. The database is not stored electronically and so teachers cannot gain immediate access to it. However, a key priority in the school's staff development plan is to provide further training in the appropriate use of data to raise attainment. The senior management team has used information from assessment to identify possible curricular developments but there have been few changes because of the uncertainty about the school's future. Procedures for monitoring pupils' progress are satisfactory. Heads of Years 10 and 11 conduct checks twice a year and this good practice is being extended to other year groups. Mentoring, targeting of underachieving pupils, extra-curricular classes and subject-specific focus groups all contribute to provide good support for pupils preparing for examinations. In some teaching departments, including science and history, assessment is used well to monitor the progress of individual pupils. Teachers' marking is insufficiently detailed in many subjects and does not contribute enough to pupils' progress.

37. Since the last inspection, the school has done a great deal of work to improve its assessment practices and procedures for monitoring and support. A whole-school policy has been formulated and its effect on departmental assessment practices is now monitored. Good practice from year groups and subject areas is positively influencing procedures across the whole school.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

38. The overall quality of the school's partnership with parents is satisfactory. Views expressed at the parents' meeting and in the responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire indicate that the majority of parents feel happy approaching the school with concerns and feel well informed. The school provides parents with good quality information. The termly newsletter, the 'Kings Grove Bulletin', is attractive and informative. This and the regular letters home keep parents informed about forthcoming events and pupils' achievements. Award evenings and concerts at the school are well attended by parents. The level of parental involvement with the school is satisfactory. There is a 'Parents and Friends Association' which has recently raised £1,800 for the school. Parental support for the school was also demonstrated by the formation of a 'Parents Action Group', which campaigned for the school to remain open over the three years when the local authority was considering closure. Some parents provide additional support during educational visits. This is welcomed by the school and supports the pupils' personal development.

39. The governors' annual report to parents and the prospectus are well produced and informative. Both of these documents have improved since the previous inspection and they now meet statutory requirements. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are provided with a useful guide for helping their child to learn at home. Parents' evenings are held annually for each year group, allowing parents to consult teachers about their children's

achievements. An additional meeting is held for the parents of Year 11 pupils. The annual progress report and Records of Achievement are of good quality. They inform parents about pupils' attainment and progress in all subjects of the curriculum and indicate targets for improvement, as well as providing the school's test results. Reports include details of the merits pupils have been awarded and information about attendance and homework. The section for the pupils to complete, regarding their achievement and experiences during the school year, is generally used well.

40. Parents make a satisfactory contribution to their children's learning at school and at home. A number of parents expressed concerns about the amount of homework set and the quality of the information they received about their children's progress. Inspectors find that the school has a comprehensive homework policy which most parents support. Some parents provide additional support for learning by assisting on educational visits. The pupils' day books provide a useful opportunity for home-school liaison to support learning. Some parents have responded well to this initiative and use the book regularly. A small but significant proportion of parents do not co-operate with the school by ensuring that their children attend regularly and on time.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

41. Shortly before the last inspection, the long-serving headteacher retired. At the same time, the local education authority announced that it was considering closure of the school or a possible amalgamation with a neighbouring school. Consequently, the governors were not allowed to appoint a new headteacher. The senior deputy headteacher was made acting head and the senior management team took on additional responsibilities to compensate for the loss of one post. An early discovery was that the school's budget was overspent by more than £60,000. At that point, the inspection took place and the school was declared to have serious weaknesses in leadership and management and to be providing unsatisfactory value for money. The threat of closure remained hanging over the school until July 2000, when a government-appointed arbitrator declared that the local authority's proposals were inefficient and that the school should remain open. By that time, the acting headteacher had decided to take early retirement and the other deputy was appointed in his place. Also, the number on roll had fallen dramatically owing to the uncertainty over the school's future.

42. The last inspection report identified twenty key issues for the school to address in its action plan. However, the temporary management team also had other, even more pressing, priorities. These included maintaining or raising standards of attainment, balancing the budget, campaigning for the school to remain open and keeping morale high. The acting headteachers and senior managers have tackled this very difficult situation with courage and determination. Their clear and effective leadership has ensured that all four of their most pressing priorities have been successfully addressed. Standards have improved, morale is high and the budget is healthy and well under control. Most important, the school is to remain open. Furthermore, eighteen of the twenty key issues have been effectively dealt with. In particular, leadership and management are now very strong, there is a good school development plan, arrangements for assessment are significantly better, there is a good programme of personal and social education, financial planning and management are now very good and there are effective policies for child protection, equality of opportunity and health and safety. Improvement in the performance of most teaching departments has been good or very good. The school has emerged with credit and with strong parental support. It no longer has any serious weaknesses and it is providing satisfactory value for money. Now that a permanent headteacher has been appointed, the school is well placed to continue its improvement.

43. Delegation of responsibilities has been very well done, with consideration for the senior staff concerned. The allocation of assignments is sensible and effective and, where necessary, staff development has taken place. The senior management team has willingly taken on the additional work and their commitment has permeated the whole school. Most departments are well managed. All staff are dedicated to the school and to raising standards. Appropriate educational priorities and targets have been established and the school's aims and values are fully reflected in its work and in the close-knit community of pupils, teachers and non-teaching staff. Most departments are well managed and science, art, history and modern languages are very well led. Teaching is monitored by senior managers and heads of most departments and records are kept of lesson observations. These are generally not sufficiently analytical and evaluative to form the basis for staff development. However, practice is now well established and the basis has been laid for further development. Arrangements for appraisal and performance management are in draft and are on line to be implemented in the New Year.

44. The three-year school development plan is a well constructed document which sets out clear and relevant targets, with costs, success criteria and time deadlines, and which identifies named persons to carry out and monitor the work. However, all but the most urgent of the targets have been put to one side in order to bring the school through the last three years. This has required careful selection of priorities and monitoring of progress towards them. In the same way, financial planning has been overshadowed by the need to keep expenditure as low as possible in order to turn around the deficit budget. Nevertheless, educational priorities have been well supported and the simple but rigorous procedures established by the acting headteacher and the registrar have proved to be extremely effective. Financial planning and management are very good and the principles of 'best value' are closely observed. Specific grants are used carefully but appropriately. The school is carrying forward a healthy and growing credit balance into the next financial year. Administrative systems make good use of information and communication technology but it is not fully introduced into planning across the curriculum.

45. The governors were criticised in the last report for not meeting their statutory responsibilities. Some progress has been made since then, but not enough, and the governors are still not sufficiently involved in the management of the school. They have provided a great deal of moral support and most governors attend meetings and special events arranged by the school, such as open days, functions and trips. The finance and general purposes committee and the main governing body are kept well informed by the acting headteacher and the registrar so that the governors understand the school's main strengths and weaknesses. The special educational needs committee makes a valuable contribution to the work of that department and the curriculum committee has begun to consider the school's academic targets. However, minutes reveal little extended debate about educational matters and governors are not involved at an early stage in the school's developmental and financial planning. They are not linked to teaching departments and they seldom receive presentations from departments about their work.

46. Since the last inspection, the school has introduced a comprehensive equal opportunities policy. This is reflected in equal opportunity statements in all departmental handbooks. As a result, all staff are aware of the need to vary their teaching methods to support boys and girls. They monitor examination results by gender but do not yet monitor the progress of pupils from ethnic minorities. The allocation of teachers to subjects provides good role-models for boys and girls. For example, both male and female teachers teach the resistant materials course and information and communication technology. No member of staff has responsibility for monitoring the equal opportunities policy, with the result that its effect has not yet been evaluated.

47. Overall, there is a good match between the qualifications and experience of teachers and support staff and the needs of the curriculum. Most heads of department have relevant first qualifications and many of them are graduates. There are some weaknesses, however. For example, there are no specialist staff for religious education and no head of department for music. Induction procedures for new staff have improved since the previous inspection and the arrangements in the science department are particularly effective. New teachers, including newly-qualified teachers, are now well supported by their colleagues and by senior managers. The school has the potential to be an effective base for teacher training and it will be taking five initial teacher training students in the current academic year. The number of support staff in the special educational needs department is well above average for the size and type of school, while the number of administrative, clerical and premises staff is above average.

48. The standard of accommodation is good and meets the needs of most subjects. Most subjects are taught in closely grouped rooms, but in science and design and technology, rooms are more scattered and this limits the sharing of information and monitoring of departmental work. The best features of accommodation include the information and communication technology suites, the library, the sports hall, the modern language classrooms and a spacious, centrally situated special educational needs area. The rooms for geography need re-decorating and rooms allocated to drama lack appropriate lighting. The good quality of display in corridors and classrooms promotes learning and celebrates pupils' achievements. The playing fields are well maintained but the surface on the hard courts is unsatisfactory, hampering the full development of pupils' skills. The premises are cleaned well and their condition is well monitored by the very efficient site-manager. Litter, graffiti and vandalism are rarely problems. Facilities for the disabled are not satisfactory. Since the last inspection, the design and technology and art departments have been improved and the accommodation for modern languages is now very good. Further work is due to begin in late October.

49. Most departments are adequately resourced. The quality and number of textbooks are satisfactory in all departments except religious education and they are very good in modern foreign languages and history. The school is well equipped for all types of activity in physical education. There are some minor shortages in mathematics and the music department has a limited range of instruments and no computers. The ratio of computers to pupils in the school is well above the national average. Three well equipped computer rooms are linked to the Internet, most of the school is internally networked and there are additional computers in most departments. The library provides a welcoming study area, the enthusiastic librarian encourages extensive use throughout the day and borrowing rates are good. The book stock is satisfactory in most areas except mathematics and design and technology. The three existing computers are well used and additional machines are to be provided. Many departments enrich the curriculum by using resources outside school, such as museums, field centres, local colleges and universities. Since the last inspection, expenditure on resources has greatly improved. Provision for information and communication technology is now very good and the library makes a valuable contribution to the life of the school.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

50. In order to continue the school's improving trend, the senior managers and the governors should:

- (1) Work to raise standards of attainment, particularly in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science by adopting measures such as;

- developing and implementing a policy for numeracy across the whole school;
(see paragraphs 10, 16, 65, 74)
 - extending the emerging very good practice in target-setting and assessment in Years 10 and 11 to the rest of the school;
(see paragraph 36)
 - disseminating the very good practice in teaching amongst all teaching departments;
(see paragraph 21)
 - ensuring that the now good resources for information and communication technology are well used to support teaching and learning across all subjects of the curriculum.
(see paragraphs 11, 64, 96, 98, 99, 113, 117, 128)
- (2) Adopt a uniformly rigorous approach to pupils' lateness and continue to use a full range of strategies to persuade parents to meet their legal responsibilities by ensuring that their children attend school regularly.
(See paragraphs 15, 40)

- (3) Involve governors more closely in the school's management by taking action such as:
- involving them at an early stage in the planning cycles for the school development plan and the budget;
 - linking them to teaching departments where they can become more informed and monitor and support the work;
 - receiving regular presentations from teachers about the work of the teaching departments and other matters of importance.
- (See paragraphs 30, 45)
- (4) Ensure that provision for religious education and collective worship meets statutory requirements.
(See paragraphs 22, 30, 124)

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	52

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	18	46	34	1	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 - Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	404	N/A
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	112	N/A

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	11	N/A
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	76	N/A

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	17
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	20

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	9.8
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.5
National comparative data	1.2

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	1999	42 (56)	51 (47)	93 (103)

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	19 (28)	21 (24)	19 (24)
	Girls	38 (33)	30 (28)	25 (21)
	Total	57 (61)	51 (52)	44 (45)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	61 (59)	55 (50)	47 (46)
	National	63 (65)	62 (59)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	14 (31)	32 (24)	18 (17)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	19 (22)	19 (33)	22 (28)
	Girls	33 (28)	31 (32)	29 (24)
	Total	52 (50)	50 (65)	51 (52)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	56 (49)	54 (63)	56 (50)
	National	64 (62)	64 (63)	60 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	34 (26)	25 (28)	25 (17)
	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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	1999	50 (48)	41 (52)	91 (100)

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	17 (15)	44 (43)	48 (46)
	Girls	16 (20)	38 (48)	40 (52)
	Total	33 (35)	82 (91)	88 (98)
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	36 (35)	90 (91)	97 (98)
	National	46.6 (46)	90.9 (87)	95.8 (93)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score	School	38.0 (36.0)

per pupil	National	38.0 (37.0)
-----------	----------	-------------

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	12
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	445
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	5	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	1	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	31	2
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	27.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	14.7: 1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	8.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	180

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77.4
---	------

Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	18.9
Key Stage 4	19.3

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
----------------	-----------

	£
Total income	1,349,731
Total expenditure	1,331,500
Expenditure per pupil	2,895
Balance brought forward from previous year	14,164
Balance carried forward to next year	32,395

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	406
Number of questionnaires returned	147

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	48	42	5	3	2
My child is making good progress in school.	50	42	1	2	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	41	48	6	2	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	35	44	13	4	4
The teaching is good.	47	47	2	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	31	50	11	3	5
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	57	39	2	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	63	31	2	0	4
The school works closely with parents.	36	44	13	1	6
The school is well led and managed.	42	44	5	0	9
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	46	44	5	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	33	43	11	1	12

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

ENGLISH

51. In 1999, attainment in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 was close to the national average and above the average for schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. Standards have improved since the last inspection although the most recent results in 2000 show a drop in the proportion of pupils attaining the expected level. The proportion of pupils attaining grades A* to C in the 1999 examination for GCSE English was below the national average but well above the average for similar schools. In English literature, results were above the national average. A comparison between pupils' attainment on entry to the school and the standards they achieve by Year 11 indicates that they make satisfactory progress. Pupils achieve better results in English than in science or mathematics. The provisional results for 2000 are not quite as good as in the previous year but are still much better than those at the time of the last inspection. Teachers have worked hard to close the wide gap between the attainment of boys and girls, reported in the last inspection, by varying their teaching methods and ensuring that reading books appeal to both boys and girls. In the 1999 GCSE examination, this gap was narrower than in most schools although it widened again in 2000.

52. On the basis of the evidence gathered during the inspection, standards at the ends of both key stages are in line with those expected nationally. Pupils listen attentively to teachers and to one another during discussions. When a topic interests them, they contribute enthusiastically to the discussion although not always in standard English at Key Stage 3. For example, some Year 9 pupils related extended anecdotes about their experiences in junior school, in response to reading about David Copperfield's schooldays. In some lessons at Key Stage 4, pupils just read from their notes when asked to lead a discussion on their set text. Pupils generally speak clearly and articulately but their ability to produce sustained responses depends too much on the teacher's challenging questioning. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in all year groups.

53. Regular library lessons at Key Stage 3 and plentiful opportunities to read in many English lessons encourage pupils to read widely. All except the lowest-attaining pupils read aloud clearly and confidently. Pupils in the top sets read fluently and add expression, at times adding an appropriate accent to show their understanding of characters and the social setting. Pupils in the highest-attaining set in Year 11 have already achieved high GCSE grades in Year 10. They continue to study literature and are able to compare the techniques used by H G Wells and Penelope Lively in *The Red Room* and *The Darkness Out There*. Lower-attaining pupils study less demanding but appropriate texts. They have a good knowledge of the plot and characters in novels such as *Kes* and *Of Mice and Men* but struggle to make a personal response to the books or to analyse the relationships between characters.

54. Most pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 can write in a variety of styles. Some produce good, imaginative writing but they seldom use descriptive vocabulary very precisely. Handwriting is usually neat and punctuation and spelling are accurate, apart from those of the lowest-attaining pupils. This neat presentation continues through Key Stage 4. By Year 11, higher-attaining pupils write long, well argued, analytical essays. For example, they made telling comparisons between Zeffirelli's and Luhrmann's film versions of *Romeo and Juliet*. All pupils make good progress with imaginative writing and are able to vary the length of sentences for effect. Some original writing by higher-attaining pupils is very effective. One pupil recently won the title of Crewe's top teenage poet.

55. Pupils' behaviour in English lessons is very good and they have positive attitudes towards the subject. They have very good relationships with teachers, based on mutual respect. Relationships among pupils are also very good and they collaborate willingly during paired and small group work. Pupils usually follow instructions implicitly. However, they are very reliant on teachers' instructions and rarely have the opportunity to take responsibility for their own learning.

56. In the lessons seen, teaching was never less than satisfactory and it was good overall. Teachers manage classes well, especially during discussions and when moving from one activity to another during a lesson. They plan a variety of activities in most lessons, maintaining pupils' interest. This ensures that they make the most of the time available and learn at a good pace. Teachers and learning support assistants work together closely and provide appropriate work for pupils on the school's register of special educational needs. Assistants work confidently with individuals and small groups of pupils and, as a result, pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Teachers have a sound knowledge of the texts being studied. In the best lessons, this allows them to ask questions to challenge pupils' understanding. For example, pupils played the roles of characters in Willy Russell's *Our Day Out* and had to explain their actions to the teacher. Occasionally, teachers talk to the class for too long. In these lessons, they tend to "spoon-feed" pupils with information rather than challenge them to develop their own understanding of the text. Teachers usually explain the content of lessons to pupils at the beginning and sum up what they have done at the end. However, the purpose of the activities is rarely explained. Consequently, pupils generally know what they are supposed to do but not always what they are supposed to learn.

57. Since the last inspection, the good quality of teaching has been maintained and standards of achievement have improved in all age groups. Schemes of work have been re-written in Years 7 and 8 and now incorporate references to the National Literacy Strategy. This has not yet been completed for Years 9, 10 and 11. Assessment procedures are satisfactory but they do not provide enough guidance to pupils about how they can improve, especially at Key Stage 3. The department is managed efficiently and the head of department has identified appropriate areas for further development.

Literacy across the curriculum

58. The school has made good progress towards the development of a literacy policy and teachers of other subjects are aware of ways in which they can support pupils' literacy skills. The department has led staff development sessions to raise the awareness of their colleagues and provide them with ideas. Most departments display key words related to their subject on classroom walls. Writing frames are used to help pupils structure their written work correctly. For example, in one geography lesson, the teacher provided very good guidance about how to plan fieldwork and write up findings. In French, dictionaries are available in all lessons and pupils frequently use them to build up their vocabulary. Most pupils are able to read well enough to understand texts and worksheets in other subjects. In some subjects, notably science and history, more opportunities are needed for pupils to read aloud. Writing is neat and accurate in all subjects. There are good opportunities for extended writing in history, geography and religious education.

MATHEMATICS

59. On entry to the school, pupils' standards of attainment are below average although there is a small proportion of pupils who are working at or above the average levels. Standards achieved in the national tests at the end of Year 9 have been consistently below the national average in recent years and the provisional results for 2000 show a similar pattern. Teachers' assessments closely match the test results. However, the test results are above those obtained by schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. In 1999, results in mathematics were lower than those in English and science. Over several years, girls have out-performed boys.

60. The proportion of pupils obtaining grades A* to C in the 1999 GCSE examinations was close to the national average although the provisional results for 2000 show a decline in performance. Nevertheless, results are above the average for schools in a similar free school meals category and pupils' achievements and progress are generally satisfactory. Results in 1999 were below those in English but better than those achieved in science. There is still some difference between the attainment of boys and girls but the lower boys' results are accounted for largely by their lower attainment on entry to the school.

61. Inspection evidence indicates that overall standards are below the nationally expected level by the end of Year 9. Attainment in lessons varies according to sets. The highest-attaining pupils achieve well and show good skills, particularly in manipulative algebra, but they are less secure when explaining their results. Weak numeracy skills hamper the progress of lower-attaining pupils who find difficulty with place value, approximations and mental methods for calculations. Pupils with special educational needs attain well in simple data-handling tasks but still struggle to subtract numbers mentally and to express numbers in words.

62. By the end of Year 11, standards of written work and of work seen in lessons remain below the expected level although they vary according to the group. The highest-attaining sets, such as the group preparing to take an early GCSE examination, show satisfactory recall of previous work. Year 10 pupils are able to determine when to use the sine and cosine rules in problems but their ability to use and apply mathematics is less well developed. For example, they apply insufficient rigour in explaining how generalisations relate to practical problems. Their lack of skills in information and communication technology hampers their attainment in certain tasks, such as finding a shortest route. Lower-attaining pupils achieve some success in work on reflections and other transformations. They are able to spot patterns and make verbal generalisations. However, their work still suffers from weak numerical and algebraic skills.

63. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. There is good teaching in all year groups and there was only one unsatisfactory lesson out of the thirteen seen. In the best lessons, teachers are knowledgeable, technically correct and have high expectations with regard to work, attitudes and standards of presentation. Potentially higher-attaining pupils are given suitably challenging work. Pupils are confident in their teachers' guidance and the good relationships among teachers and pupils encourage positive attitudes to work. Pupils benefit from the planned approach to the content of their mathematics lessons and the progress of many pupils, including those with special educational needs, is well supported through individual attention. However, teaching is sometimes unimaginative and does not take sufficient account of the ways in which pupils learn mathematics. Many lessons lack visual stimuli or an appropriate variety of practical resources and approaches to help pupils understand. The use of information and communication technology is mainly restricted to numerical reinforcement for lower-attaining groups in Years 7 and 8. The pace of lessons

sometimes slows when there is too great a concentration on particular individuals. Teachers mark work regularly but they do not always provide helpful comments so that pupils know how well they are doing.

64. The sound leadership of the department has maintained standards over several years. The department's work is now well monitored and a thorough analysis of examination results identifies areas of underachievement. However, schemes of work require further development to provide greater guidance for those teaching mathematics. The department has made a satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Although results in the tests at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE mathematics have remained much as they were, the department reflects very positively the school's expectations in difficult circumstances. Some issues from the previous inspection have not been fully resolved. These include the use of information and communication technology, as well as planning for a range of teaching methods to extend pupils' understanding.

Numeracy across the curriculum

65. There is increasing provision within mathematics to develop pupils' numeracy skills, particularly in Years 7 and 8, and pupils benefit from a numeracy summer school. However, there is no co-ordinated programme across the whole curriculum to support and improve pupils' skills. The need for this has been recognised and it is one of the targets in the school's development plan, following a detailed audit of departmental practices.

66. In science, pupils' numerical skills are adequate for their calculations and their use of formulae. They develop their skills further in their GCSE courses, using graphs to assist in the presentation of their experimental results. In design and technology, they use their skills of measurement well in their individual projects for examination courses. In Year 9, they cope well with the accuracy required and with the division skills involved in practical work. In information and communication technology, pupils work comfortably with quantitative data, setting up spread-sheets involving pay negotiations, the cost of dealing with crime and hospital budgets.

67. Pupils' spatial awareness is reinforced well in art where they work with geometrical shapes and perspective throughout their course. In geography, pupils are encouraged to use measuring skills in map scales. Pupils in Year 8 use number operations well in calculating latitudes. In Year 9, they rank data appropriately to determine human development indices for different countries. Data-handling skills support coursework effectively. For example, in sports studies, successful tabulation of fitness test results assists their interpretation.

SCIENCE

68. In the 1999 national tests at the end of Key Stage 3, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level was below the national average but the proportion reaching higher levels was close to the national average. These results are lower than those obtained in the previous two years. Results in science are similar to those in English but better than those in mathematics. The 1999 results are well above the average for schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. Boys perform slightly better than girls. The provisional results for 2000 are similar to those obtained in 1999.

69. In the 1999 GCSE examination in double award science, the proportion of pupils awarded grades A* to C was below the national average, as it had been the previous year. Results are similar to those in mathematics but lower than those in English. The proportion of candidates awarded grades A* to G was in line with the national average. The

performance of boys was similar to that of girls. The provisional results for 2000 indicate an improvement.

70. Many pupils enter the school with low levels of attainment and their progress in Years 7 and 8 is often hindered by low levels of literacy. Nevertheless, observations of lessons and work seen during the inspection show that standards in Year 9 approach the nationally expected levels. One group in Year 9 used their computer skills to research the Internet to discover the effects of different drugs. Most pupils have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of topics in the main areas of study and higher-attaining pupils often exceed the nationally expected levels. One group in Year 7 achieved a good understanding of the way in which animals and plants adapt to different types of environment and pupils were able to carry out experiments to support their understanding. However, a lower attaining Year 9 group did not have adequate skills in numeracy to construct pie charts illustrating the use of different fossil fuels.

71. The highest attainers in Year 11 have a comprehensive understanding of the science curriculum and one group demonstrated a good understanding of the principles of genetics. For the majority of pupils, standards are approaching those expected for their age but remain below them. Most pupils have a sound understanding of the basic properties of materials. A group in Year 11 investigated the refraction of light through a semicircular glass block and developed a good understanding of the importance of total internal reflection and its applications. Pupils' investigative skills are good and they understand the importance of fair testing and the need for evaluation. The low proportion of time allocated to the teaching of double science makes it difficult for pupils to study the syllabus in sufficient depth to reach their potential examination grades. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress despite the fact that they have little additional support. Most pupils achieve as well as and often better than might be expected. They make good progress in literacy skills, especially in the development of technical vocabulary.

72. The quality of teaching at both key stages is always satisfactory and it is good overall. Teachers have a secure knowledge of their subject. Lessons are well prepared with clear objectives but occasionally these are not made clear to the pupils who are unable to see why they are carrying out the tasks set. Relationships with pupils are good and humour is often used to good effect. Praise, which raises pupils' self esteem, is a feature of many lessons. Progress is good when pupils are presented with a variety of activities to maintain their interest. For example, in one Year 11 class, the teacher provided a brisk introductory discussion and question and answer session followed by some written questions on inheritance. Following this, small groups discussed the moral and social issues related to the inheritance of genetic disorders. The lesson was rounded off with a short video-recording. As well as consolidating their knowledge of genetics, pupils improved their understanding of some of the related social problems.

73. Pupils enjoy practical work, which is always carried out competently and safely. After appropriate preparation by the teacher, pupils in a Year 9 group were given responsibility for planning and carrying out their own experiment to separate a mixture of iron filings, sand and salt. As a result, their understanding of compounds, elements and mixtures improved. They also used some of their time constructively to evaluate their methods and discover why the experiment caused some problems. Pupils responded well to this opportunity to take responsibility for their own learning. However, some lessons do not encourage such active participation and independent working. Occasionally, lessons lack variety and teachers spend too long on one point. The concentration span of many pupils is short and, when teachers spend too long talking, their interest wanes and little information is absorbed. Teachers are aware of the problems faced by lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs and make satisfactory provision for them.

74. The department is committed to improving standards of literacy and teachers make good use of word walls and lists of key words. Numeracy is not so well developed although standards are generally just adequate to meet the demands of the curriculum. Teachers mark work regularly and they follow the sound departmental marking policy. However, comments do not always tell pupils what they have got wrong and what they need to do to improve. Assessment is well used to set targets, inform changes in the curriculum and advise on changes in teaching groups. Behaviour is always satisfactory and usually good but some pupils are difficult to motivate and are only prepared to answer questions when pressed. Teachers work hard to provide the challenge and interest needed to keep them on task.

75. The head of department shows very positive leadership which helps to maintain a shared commitment to raising standards. Teachers spend a considerable amount of time outside lessons assisting pupils with their studies. The laboratories provide a welcoming and stimulating environment with excellent displays of work. Teaching is ably supported by a hardworking laboratory technician. Documentation is clear and informative. Since the last inspection, the quality of homework has improved, pupils' scientific vocabulary is much better and they are given more responsibility for their own learning. However, standards are still below the national average. Some pupils in the lower sets lack motivation and in some lessons teachers are too directive. The department makes good use of the computer suite and staff have received training.

ART

76. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C in the GCSE examinations in 2000 was well below last year's national averages and low when compared with overall school results. This follows a declining trend in GCSE results over the past few years. The large numbers of lower-attaining and less interested pupils who opt for art in Year 9 offer a partial explanation for such poor results. The work of current examination candidates in Years 10 and 11 suggests much better results in 2001. This is due to the very good teaching in Years 10 and 11 and the commitment shown by the majority of pupils. The department has made a very good improvement since the last inspection in teaching and attainment. The behaviour of pupils is now good and there is a clear improvement in their skills in investigation.

77. In lessons, the attainment and progress of pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 are good. The good and sometimes very good teaching enables pupils to improve their drawing and painting skills. They produce colourful studies of fruit and flowers, often using the inspiration of painters, such as Georgia O'Keefe, Van Gogh and Monet, to complete their work. The development of some basic art skills is not well supported in Year 7. This includes such skills as the use of one and two point perspectives and the skills required to observe artefacts and natural objects, including the human face and figure. Such weaknesses tend to follow the pupils' work through to the GCSE examination. The annotation of pupils' work is also a weakness. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 8 are able to convey athletic movement in their studies, using foreshortening techniques in a surprisingly mature way. The majority of pupils produce relatively immature images of human form although, by Year 9, higher-attaining pupils observe form and colour well and are able to reproduce them effectively in their paintings. They paint freely and select bold colours to simplify and give a strong visual impact to their work.

78. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are more attentive and learn more from the very good knowledge and understanding that teachers bring to their lessons. Their attitudes are often very good. They study a wider range of well-known artists and put a lot of creative and intellectual effort into researching and following their styles. Pupils in Year 10 are able to

transform images by combining them. Higher attainers use a more sophisticated approach, based on the work of M C Escher, to transform them. A drawing of a dove emerging from the patterns on a tiger's face is a good example. Although observational skills are not sufficiently well developed, pupils in Year 11 do produce some good pencil sketches in which the full tonal range of soft pencils is used. They note the tone and shading in natural stone walls and reproduce them effectively although they find it difficult to convey form without a defining hard edge to it. Higher-attaining pupils use the startling imagery of Giger to develop sustained project work based on the pierced human form. Others complete sensitive personal studies of child development that yield competent biological paintings as well as creative studies inspired by the work of Picasso.

79. Pupils have a generally positive attitude to their work although this tends to fall away in Year 9. They are well behaved in lessons, showing respect for each other and for adults. They work well in paired and group work, sometimes with outstanding results. For instance, a group recently produced a high quality ceramic tile panel for a local church. They then processed to the church with the panel as a gesture of pilgrimage. Another group, working on the Cheshire Millennium Project, produced a panel based on Duccio's 'Road to Emmaus' as part of a triptych altar screen that was exhibited in Chester Cathedral, before moving to a further exhibition in the city. Such work does much to provide for the very good personal and social development of pupils.

80. The quality of teaching is good overall and it is often very good, particularly at Key Stage 3. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject and use it effectively to demonstrate their skills when explaining techniques, processes or works of art to the pupils. Although critical studies are not developed consistently, there are occasions when the lesson ends with a useful, evaluative discussion of pupils' work. Good relationships and confident teaching ensure that lessons are enjoyable and productive. The department has developed a good system for the marking and assessment of pupils' work, holding all information on a separate class file that monitors the progress of pupils effectively. The head of department shows very good leadership and management skills. He has carefully analysed examination results over the past few years and is developing strategies that will keep the department focused on the need to raise standards. To do this it will be necessary to upgrade the resources for digital art and find ways of using resources and accommodation more flexibly. This will ensure that pupils pursue their studies to their full potential.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

81. In 1999, teachers assessed the attainment of 14 year-olds as being below the national average. The previous year, attainment was in line with the national average and the provisional results for 2000 are once more back to this standard. The results in the 1999 GCSE examinations in food technology and work with resistant materials were well below the national averages. There was a marginal improvement in the provisional figures for 2000 but still only one in five pupils gained a C grade or above and results are likely to remain well below the national figures. Those taking resistant materials achieved a level closer to the national norm although still below it. At least one pupil in each subject area gained A* in the final examination but overall presentations lack the level of precision and quality that is normally expected at this stage.

82. In lessons, attainment in Year 9 is broadly in line with expectations although pupils are less successful in designing than they are in making products. Throughout Years 7, 8 and 9, pupils make sound progress, developing levels of basic knowledge, skills and understanding in work with food, textiles, graphics, systems and control and resistant materials. Pupils use design briefs to develop their ideas and create specifications for the products they intend to produce. They undertake appropriate research using a range of sources, including the

Internet. They present proposals that are clear and demonstrate a basic understanding of the design process although the quality of presentations is not always good. Year 8 pupils, preparing to make a photograph frame, were able to produce a range of ideas having regard for the end user and suggest how the material could respond during the various stages of making. Pupils in Year 8 also demonstrated good observational skills as they scrutinised fibres, using a magnifying glass to identify ply and twist.

83. Skills development is regarded as important for all pupils as they move into the GCSE courses at the end of Year 9. One year 9 group was able, with a good degree of accuracy, to produce dovetail joints, recognising the need for careful measuring and marking out, along with sound use of appropriate hand tools. Some of the theory work produced by pupils is overly supported by worksheets, which provide insufficient challenge and require little independent thought. Pupils continue to make satisfactory progress through Years 10 and 11 when they are obliged to choose between food technology and resistant materials. Overall, attainment is in line with the standards expected although, in food technology, they are lower. Coursework folders and practical projects in Year 11 demonstrate a range of designing and making skills that reflect the requirements of the examination. However, the quality and accuracy of presentations are generally below those expected for pupils of their age. A number of pupils do produce high quality products.

84. Teaching in design and technology is always satisfactory and it is good at Key Stage 3. All staff have a secure knowledge and understanding of the subject and have planned a suitable range of projects to teach a good range of designing and making skills in both food and resistant materials. In all years, pupils respond well to their teachers and show a good level of interest in the tasks set. They work well together and relationships between pupils and their teachers are good. They listen and respond to instruction with a good degree of understanding. However, teachers provide too few opportunities for pupils to talk about their work, explaining the problems they have encountered and the processes gone through to solve them. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 take some responsibility for their own learning but still rely too much on the support they know will be provided.

85. At Key Stage 4, teachers plan well in both disciplines, with some reference to learning objectives, but the objectives often lack detail. All teachers provide clear instructions to pupils. In the most effective lessons, teachers maintain a good pace by making clear to pupils what is expected of them. This is often reinforced by appropriate interjection and individual contact. In the best examples of individual tuition, teachers use questioning to gauge the level of learning that had been achieved by the pupils. This also ensures that the pupils are aware of their own progress in the lesson. The least effective teaching was observed when pupils were not given time-frames in which to work and did not have a clear understanding of what was required by the end of the lesson. Where there was a lack of challenge, some pupils made ineffective use of time. Teachers support pupils well, including those with special educational needs, ensuring that pupils progress at an appropriate rate. The marking policy is followed by all teachers although there is some inconsistency in the quality of written comments advising pupils on how to improve their work.

86. The overall management responsibility for design and technology is unclear and the area operates as two discrete departments with a distinct division between food technology and craft, design and technology. Despite the fact that communication is good between the two areas, practice is not properly standardised. Planning in the two areas is effective, as are arrangements for assessment and the support for pupils of all abilities. The quality of technician support in both areas is good although the length of time provided is limited, especially in food technology. Since the last inspection, teaching and the monitoring of progress have improved. However, the quality of presentation and the skills in communication demonstrated by pupils are still often unsatisfactory.

GEOGRAPHY

87. Provisional results for the GCSE examination in 2000 show that the proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C was a significant improvement on results for 1999. However, both sets of results were well below the 1999 national average, the last year for which national figures are available. They were also well below the standards at the time of the last inspection. Relative indicators show that, in 1999, pupils performed less well in geography than in their other GCSE subjects. In recent years, girls' results have been better than those of the boys by a wider margin than the national gender difference. In 2000, teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 are in line with the latest available national average - a marked improvement over the last three years. In contrast to the GCSE results, boys are performing better than girls in these assessments.

88. By Year 9, the observed attainment of the majority of pupils is in line with what is expected nationally, with substantial minorities of pupils above and below this level. This represents an improvement since the previous inspection. Most pupils can extract relevant information from a range of sources to write clear notes although a small number with weak literacy skills find difficulty in writing at length. Pupils can describe the factors that indicate levels of economic development in different countries, while higher-attaining pupils can also explain which of these factors are the most reliable indicators. The majority of pupils in Year 11 are working at levels close to those expected. This is an improvement since the previous inspection and suggests a marked improvement in next year's GCSE results. These advances are due largely to the development of a greater variety of teaching strategies and a more stable staffing situation over the last two years. Most pupils produce good quality coursework containing passages of descriptive and analytical writing and use computers to improve the appearance of their work. They set up hypotheses and test them by subjecting their fieldwork measurements to simple statistical analysis. A small minority of pupils finds the logical recording and analysis of gathered data difficult. The generally good quality of coursework in the last two years is a direct result of an emphasis on teaching fieldwork skills. For example, in a Year 11 lesson pupils were analysing measurements taken on a recent field trip to the upper reaches of a local river. Most pupils have a good grasp of technical vocabulary.

89. The overall standard of teaching is good with no significant differences in quality between the two key stages. The proportion of good teaching is higher than at the previous inspection. No teaching was judged to be unsatisfactory. In the best lessons, teachers' good knowledge of the subject is reinforced by brisk pace, variety and challenging content. These qualities were evident in a Year 9 lesson on development, when lower-attaining pupils became fully involved in a simulation exercise on international trade. Pupils respond and behave well in all lessons, particularly when presented with variety and stimulating practical exercises. Lessons frequently start with a review of recent learning, during which pupils readily recall and then consolidate what they have learned before, followed by a clear statement of the aims of the current lesson. In comparatively less successful lessons, tasks are not well matched to the needs of individual pupils and teaching sticks too closely to textbooks and worksheets instead of using the wide range of alternative learning resources that is available.

90. Very good classroom management and control create an atmosphere conducive to good learning. Learning is also assisted by frequent opportunities for collaborative work. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Teachers know them well and recognise their needs, but there is often no additional support available for them. Potential misbehaviour is dealt with skilfully and without confrontation. Opportunities for pupils to learn independently have increased in frequency over the last two years. Evidence of this was

apparent in the excellent displays of enquiries by Year 8, based on the siting of successive Olympic tournaments over the last 40 years.

91. Most of the points for improvement raised in the previous inspection report have been addressed successfully. The quality of teaching has improved and now offers more variety. Assessment of pupils' work and the tracking of their progress have improved but examination results are still too low. In an attempt to improve them, teachers are rightly placing more emphasis than formerly on practising examination techniques. Pupils' progress is slowed by the lack of a fieldwork programme at Key Stage 3 and insufficient planned opportunities for pupils to practise their computer skills. Management of the subject is in the hands of one relatively inexperienced teacher whose professional isolation, in terms of teaching geography, places him at a disadvantage and stands in the way of continuing improvement in standards.

HISTORY

92. Teachers' assessments of attainment in Year 9 and the most recent GCSE results are below the national averages but in line with attainment in schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. Pupils enter the school with below average levels of attainment. Thereafter they make satisfactory progress. GCSE results in the last two years have been slightly below the national average but better than those for most other subjects in the school. Boys performed as well as girls in 1999 but did very much worse in 2000.

93. By the end of Year 9, pupils' attainment is below the standards expected nationally. Most pupils can gather information and use it intelligently to provide a clear narrative of events. They can explain reasons for technological developments at a local mill and investigate family relationships in the streets of nineteenth century Crewe. They can understand why children were used in Victorian factories and imagine what their daily lives must have been like. They understand the difference between primary and secondary sources. They can also detect possible bias in the way events are reported, for instance in the Bayeux tapestry, or in the way evidence is collected, for instance by the parliamentary commissioners investigating child labour. Pupils have developed skills of taking notes and conveying information in diagrammatic form. They have fair recall of chronology and the sequence of events. They present their work in legible, accurate prose.

94. By the end of Key Stage 4, standards are still below national expectations although pupils have become more analytical. They immerse themselves in topics, such as the Vietnam war, and write perceptively about its effects on the political situation in America. They gain insights into the devices of Nazi propaganda, showing how it was used to influence different sections of German society. They can argue trenchantly about conscientious objectors in the First World War and the reasons used to justify or condemn their actions. They use original sources intelligently, demonstrating a good knowledge of the historical context.

95. Teaching is good at both key stages, with some lessons that are very good and none unsatisfactory. Teachers prepare conscientiously, manage their classes skilfully, and explain things excitingly. They organise an unusually large number of visits and residential experiences, all of which serve to motivate pupils and help them understand a topic far more deeply than could be achieved in a classroom. However, there are occasions when pupils could be given more opportunity to think for themselves and debate with each other. In that sense, expectations are only satisfactory but teachers do expect pupils to research thoroughly and express their findings at considerable length. In return, teachers mark books rigorously, giving pupils clear guidance about where they stand and how to improve. As a result of good teaching, pupils show interest in their work, and learn methodically. They always know what they should be doing and how to set about it. They learn rapidly from the

stimulus provided by day visits to Styal and elsewhere and from several excellent residential courses. However, learning is limited in some lessons when pupils ask few questions and they are not motivated to follow their own lines of enquiry.

96. Improvement has been steady and standards have been maintained since the last inspection. All the weaknesses mentioned then have been remedied except one. Marking in Years 10 and 11 is now related to GCSE grades and there is an appropriate three-year development plan but the department still makes too little use of information and communication technology. This hinders the development of independent learning and deprives pupils of the satisfaction of presenting their work in a more polished format. The slight drop in the number of high grades in GCSE is largely because many of the higher-attaining pupils, who would otherwise have taken history, enter instead for the new subject of sociology. This subject is taught by a historian and achieves the best results in the school. The subject is very well led. The head of department monitors teaching and pupils' books, thus ensuring good practice in the classroom. Excellent record-keeping allows underachievers to be identified and supported. The shrewd purchase of books, excellent display in classrooms, regular revision classes after school and the many extra-curricular activities all serve to raise morale and increase pupils' motivation.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

97. In 1999, teachers assessed the attainment of 14-year olds to be above the national average. Girls perform better than boys and attain a higher National Curriculum level overall. The GCSE results have remained well above the national average each year since the last inspection. In 1999, a greater proportion of boys than girls achieved grades A* to C. However, provisional figures for 2000 indicate that girls out-performed the boys, who appeared to achieve less well than the assessments at the end of Year 9 indicated.

98. Standards of attainment in lessons are above those expected nationally in Years 7, 8 and 9. Year 7 pupils, despite entering the school with low-level attainments, are quickly working at a level that is in line with national expectations. They work with a good level of confidence and, after only five weeks, they can manipulate text and import images into documents with the minimum of assistance. Year 9 pupils are confident in the full range of software applications although control is still to be fully developed through liaison with science and design and technology. Year 8 pupils prepare spreadsheets to look at a situation involving pay negotiations and Year 9 consider the costing implications of increasing numbers of offenders when looking at crime and punishment. The way in which the work is carried out allows adequate time for pupils to discuss the use of technology and its overall impact, encouraging them to become discerning users. All pupils in the three years are directly taught information and communication technology and have further experience of it in other subjects although this cross-curricular provision is underdeveloped and requires a greater level of co-ordination.

99. Standards of attainment in GCSE groups are well above average. In Year 10, all pupils are able to take at least the basic text-processing qualification which makes up the first unit of work in their discrete information and communication technology lesson. Almost all achieve a pass and the majority obtain distinctions. A proportion of pupils take the course further as part of their programme for the two years, with equal success. This provides them with a commercially recognised qualification. Throughout Year 10, the subject is directly taught, developing further pupils' knowledge, understanding and use of computers. Pupils taking GCSE are competent users with a good knowledge of the generic software used in a commercial environment. One Year 11 group was working on the possible budget for a health trust, having to balance the budget using an appropriate software programme. Year 10 pupils on the course were using database software and working on client codes. All were

able to discuss with confidence the purpose behind the activity and its possible commercial application. Although Year 11 pupils are not directly taught the subject, a large proportion of them are involved in either office technology, business studies or information and communication technology. The remainder of the year group have limited opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge in other subjects. Across all age groups, pupils' achievements are very good.

100. The quality of teaching is good. At Key Stage 3, teachers are well qualified and provide a broad range of opportunities. Basic skills are taught well and result in pupils progressing with confidence in all years. Expectations are high, with teachers providing the appropriate level of challenge. The teaching provides the correct balance between direction and support, with appropriate independence being afforded to the pupil. Pupils are assessed effectively and know how well they are doing in relation to the demands of the examination requirements. Pupils are aware of what is required of them and respond with enthusiasm. One Year 7 class displayed a high degree of excitement at the level of success they achieved importing pictures to illustrate their poetry.

101. At Key Stage 4, teaching is equally competent. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good and pupils respond well, making full use of the expertise available to them. They appreciate the lengths to which the teachers go in order to provide appropriate supporting materials. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. They settle down quickly, access the software efficiently and show a good level of interest in the tasks set. Pupils use the computers carefully and responsibly in and out of lesson times. They make good use of the rooms during lunchtimes and on the prescribed days after school. When required, they share computers well, discussing the tasks to be done and sharing ideas.

102. The department is managed by an experienced and skilled teacher whose knowledge supports the developments well. Planning is satisfactory although schemes of work are brief. The situation the school has been in over the past few years has affected the level of development planning, with the consequence that no plan exists beyond 2001. Since the last inspection, the level of resourcing in the department and across the school has improved. Statutory requirements are met and the planned programme throughout the first three years in the school is broad and challenging. The school has a third specialist room available for departments to book, in addition to departmental facilities. With the exception of physical education and music, most departments now have some access to appropriate equipment within their areas. The ratio of computers to pupils is significantly better than the national figure for 1999. Attainment at Key Stage 3 has moved beyond the national average and the success in GCSE has continued. There has been an improvement in the quality of teaching.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

103. There have been improvements in many aspects of the French department's work since the last inspection. However, attainment at GCSE remains below the national and the school averages. Inspection evidence indicates that standards are unlikely to rise in the coming year but the work of younger pupils suggests that some improvement is on the way. Teachers' assessments of pupils in Year 9 have been near to the national average for the past few years and a considerable improvement was reported for 2000. However, classroom observations and scrutiny of pupils' work indicate that the latest assessments have been too high, particularly as there is little supporting evidence and no reference portfolio of work assessed according to National Curriculum levels. This also goes some way to explaining the comparatively low proportion of pupils reaching higher levels. Nevertheless, the standards of work seen in Year 9 were in line with national expectations.

104. Pupils' listening and reading skills are close to the nationally expected levels at the ends of both key stages and writing is generally more accurate than in many schools. Speaking is the weakest skill, with pupils in some classes having difficulty putting even simple sentences together. The attainment and motivation of boys have been a serious worry in the past but this is now the department's most notable success. Strategies have been developed and results analysed so that, in most of the school, the gap between girls' and boys' attainment is lower than is seen nationally. Pupils with special educational needs are sensitively managed and make good progress in all four language skills.

105. Teaching is good and, in a quarter of lessons seen, it was very good. All teachers are good class managers and develop a strong working ethos in their rooms. They have a pleasant, understanding relationship with all pupils. As a result, pupils have very good attitudes to their work. When asked to listen to a recording or read a text to find detailed information, they do so with full concentration. Although too reliant on copying, they write accurately and are usually able to correct themselves when a mis-spelt word is pointed out. At the start of lessons, they are well aware of the need to communicate in French but they often slip unnecessarily into English later on, over matters of incidental classroom communication, ignoring the helpful wall sheets on display in all rooms.

106. A few lessons are unsatisfactory in some respects. Some of the preparation for dialogue work concentrates far more on answering questions than on asking them and pupils are insufficiently trained to take the initiative. Some lesson plans do not have a coherent balance of skills and overdependence on supporting text is allowed to stifle oral fluency. The importance of communication is not always placed firmly at the centre of classroom practice. On the other hand, in the best lesson seen, a lower ability Key Stage 4 group was kept very firmly on task in a lesson where almost all the work was oral and pupils clearly enjoyed the experience. They produced more complex sentences than their general ability might have indicated and the decision to enter them for GCSE rather than the lower level Certificate of Achievement is obviously justified.

107. The subject is very well managed in almost all respects and the head of department leads by fine classroom example. The documentation is thoughtful and helpful and sets out clear aims. Higher-attaining pupils do not have the option of studying a second foreign language. Assessment is a weakness and too little use is made of the National Curriculum both for lesson planning and for planning pupils' progress. Lessons take place in excellent accommodation with very good and varied display. All teachers are appropriately qualified and experienced but no foreign language assistant hours have been bought this year. Resources are sufficient and well used, except for computers.

108. There has been considerable improvement since the last inspection, particularly in boys' attainment, pupils' grammatical awareness and departmental management. GCSE results and assessment remain as concerns

MUSIC

109. Music is currently taught at Key Stage 3 only. It has not been taught for the GCSE examination since the last inspection. After a period of staffing difficulties, the subject is now taught by a part-time teacher who has been in post for one year.

110. Attainment of pupils in Year 9 is broadly at the expected level. Most pupils can understand notation sufficiently well as to read basic chords and tunes, such as twelve bar blues, and can locate and play them on keyboards. They make sound use of their knowledge to compose their own words and music. However, some pupils have difficulty in performing quite simple raps effectively. Singing is a feature of the curriculum and satisfactory intonation

and musicality are evident. The school possesses a full Javanese gamelan, the use of which promotes much good, concentrated listening and performance of a highly disciplined kind, enabling pupils to acquire at least satisfactory and sometimes good understanding of performing in a group to a steady pulse and contributing an effective part to the ensemble. It also provides them with some knowledge of another culture. Critical listening skills vary from good in the top sets to weak in the lower sets.

111. A small number of pupils extend their musical experience with additional instrumental lessons and many others do so by participating in extra-curricular activities, such as the gamelan group, the choir or an instrumental group. Recent concerts by these groups have been very successful and much appreciated by parents.

112. The quality of teaching is always satisfactory and sometimes better. In the least successful lessons, control of pupils is sometimes insecure and the aims of the lesson are insufficiently clear. Where control is good and aims are clear, lessons are effective and pupils make good progress. Good knowledge and understanding of the subject ensure that planning is generally sound and very good progress has been made in translating the new National Curriculum orders into practical schemes of work and in developing appropriate assessment arrangements for the new attainment target. The department is strongly committed to developing music inside and outside formal lessons. The quality of learning is satisfactory and sometimes better. Pupils acquire knowledge, understanding and skills as well as expected and those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are generally satisfactory but some poor behaviour led to unsatisfactory learning because of poor concentration. The best lesson seen was in a lower set in Year 7 where pupils made concentrated and very effective use of the gamelan, with every pupil maintaining concentration throughout and contributing correctly to the whole ensemble.

113. The department is not well equipped. Almost all the keyboards are old and only three-quarter size and none of them is touch-sensitive. There are no keyboards with MIDI and no computers or appropriate software. Lack of equipment of this sort limits learning opportunities at Key Stage 3 and would be a severe handicap for GCSE work, should it ever be established. The department is unable to develop skills in information and communication technology and the range of opportunities to learn to play instruments is also limited. For example, there are no guitars and no drum kit. Since the last inspection, attainment in music has marginally improved but little else has changed and resources are slightly worse.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

114. In the 1999 GCSE sports studies examination, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C was well below the national average and results were below those achieved in most other subjects in the school. The trend in results since the last inspection has been in line with the national average. However, the provisional results for 2000 are well above the average for similar schools and better than those gained by most other subjects in the school. In work seen during the inspection, the standards attained by fourteen year-olds were above those expected nationally for pupils of the same age. Standards in Year 11 are in line with national expectations.

115. Pupils enter the school with below average levels of attainment. However, they make good progress and, by Year 9, their achievements are better than might be expected in relation to this earlier attainment. Year 9 pupils understand the importance of warm-ups and most can plan their work. They show good levels of individual games skills and understand the basic principles of attack and defence. Higher attainers in badminton use good techniques to out-manoeuvre opponents by varying the length and width of their shots and by

disguise of service. They accurately analyse their own and others' performances. Lower-attaining pupils often achieve beyond the expected levels because teaching is well adapted to meet their needs. They show satisfactory individual skills but lack the necessary awareness of space to be effective when playing games. Their below-average hand-to-eye co-ordination is a limiting factor in badminton. The lack of a health-related fitness module for Years 7 to 9 limits pupils' knowledge of the many important associated issues.

116. Most pupils in Year 11 can effectively apply their knowledge of rules and tactics when playing a game. They plan appropriate drills and suggest ways of improving performance. Lower-attaining pupils lack the ability and confidence to use their individual skills under the pressure of match conditions. High-attaining Year 11 pupils can change tactics appropriately in a game. Many undertake either the GCSE examination or the Sports Achievement Award. They have a good understanding of the main physiological effects of exercise on the body.

117. Pupils working for the GCSE examination are on target to achieve pass grades. They understand the main theoretical aspects of the course, particularly anatomy and physiology. Their knowledge of the principles of training is not as well developed but standards of practical work are satisfactory. Their written assignments are usually well presented. A fair proportion of pupils in Years 10 and 11 improve their work through the application of information and communication technology, using word-processing and other computer programmes to tabulate fitness testing results. Confident use of the Internet to access information was very evident when pupils were researching for their Olympic Games project. Higher-attaining pupils can research information from a variety of sources, analyse the data and draw accurate conclusions. The use of information and communication technology is underdeveloped in Years 7 to 9, owing to a lack of opportunity.

118. Year 9 pupils are confident in oral work and the teachers' emphasis on key words encourages pupils to use technical words and terms. Pupils of all ages confidently use number in a variety of contexts. They accurately measure and record performances in athletics and show good mental arithmetic skills when scoring in games. All pupils in swimming and gymnastics lessons show good awareness and knowledge of safety.

119. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 7, 8 and 9 is good and in Years 10 and 11, it is very good. Teachers have good knowledge of their subject and plan lessons carefully. Good teaching and well-structured schemes of work support continuity and good progress throughout the school. Closer curricular links with partner primary schools will further aid continuity and progress. Teachers' good relationships with pupils have a positive effect on learning. Their expectations are high, particularly with regard to performance, behaviour, dress and safety. They make the aims of lessons clear so that pupils understand what they are expected to learn.

120. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. Most want to learn and they progress well. Their behaviour and the quality of their relationships are very good. On entry, pupils consolidate previous learning and quickly learn new skills, basic rules and tactics. Pupils are challenged to improve their knowledge and understanding. Teachers provide opportunities for independent learning in a good proportion of lessons. For example, a well-prepared and taught Year 8 netball lesson enabled pupils to plan drills for developing particular skills and then to judge the quality of performance. Learning is less effective in a small proportion of lessons where there is too much direction by the teacher and, in particular, where there is less opportunity for pupils to judge performance.

121. Teachers provide appropriate learning activities for pupils of all levels of attainment and those with special educational needs make progress matching that of others in their classes. In a Year 8 gymnastics lesson, the teacher used simplified tasks and instructions

and modified equipment to improve the success level of the lowest attainers. The learning of higher-attaining pupils is accelerated by more challenging tasks and appropriate grouping and through the opportunities provided by extra-curricular activities. The learning of pupils undertaking GCSE work is well supported by the use of information and communication technology. The marking of homework is thorough and written comments provide indications of strengths and areas for improvement. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

122. The physical education department is well led and managed, with a valuable contribution being made by the second in department. All major policies are in place and the requirements for National Curriculum 2000 are met. The school-certificated Sports Achievers' Course and the GCSE sports studies course enrich the curriculum in Years 10 and 11. Procedures for assessment, recording and reporting are well established. The department provides a successful extra-curricular sports programme in which a high percentage of pupils participate. Individuals and teams in a wide range of sports achieve good results at inter-school, area and county levels.

123. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. The quality of teaching and learning remains good in Years 7 to 9 and it has improved significantly in Years 10 and 11. The balance of the curriculum has been improved, with less emphasis on games and more on gymnastics. Appropriate in-service training is being undertaken to improve the quality of teaching in gymnastics. The trend in GCSE examination results is in line with that seen nationally. The proportion of A* to C grades achieved in 2000 is well above last year's national average. The standard of attainment in Years 7, 8 and 9 has improved. Short-term planning is now detailed and relates to schemes of work.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

124. Standards in religious education are below the levels set out in the locally Agreed Syllabus at the ends of both key stages, mainly because of the limited teaching time available. Pupils in Year 9 consider the main features of major faiths and the effect of belief on the lives of believers. They have an understanding of the concept of 'agape' and they can apply it to the treatment of social problems such as homelessness. They identify key stages in life and research the different rites of passage involved. They reflect on the nature of God and investigate the different interpretations of the creation of their world. Pupils can differentiate between fact and belief and consider the effects of belief on the lives of believers. However, the time lapse between lessons means that pupils have a poor recall of facts and their understanding is limited.

125. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 discuss contemporary moral issues in the light of religious principles. They recognise that religious belief may affect moral decisions and that different viewpoints may be equally valid. They consider questions such as the sanctity of life and discuss the issues surrounding abortion and euthanasia. Higher-attaining pupils develop arguments that are reasoned and clear. They have a sound appreciation of the problems of the world's economic divide and can suggest possible ways to support less developed countries.

126. The quality of teaching is good and classes are well managed. Lessons are well planned with clear aims and objectives. Teachers treat the opinions of their pupils with respect. As a result, pupils are willing to share their views and treat the opinions of their peers with equal courtesy. Pupils have good attitudes towards their studies and their behaviour is very good. They co-operate well and are generally quick to respond to questions. Relationships between pupils and teachers are mature and productive and teachers manage their classes very well. Pupils concentrate and remain on task with little

need for teachers to intervene. They have a clear sense of right and wrong and are willing to share their opinions on a range of contemporary issues. Teachers take care to involve all pupils in the lessons and they adopt a good variety of teaching strategies. A very good lesson was observed when role-play enabled Year 10 pupils to consider the problems of unwanted pregnancy.

127. Teachers have high expectations of work and behaviour and they make good use of recapitulation and questioning to encourage pupils to build on previous knowledge. The absence of homework in Years 10 and 11 reduces opportunities for pupils to develop their ideas and understanding. This, together with insufficient written work, means that teachers have few opportunities to assess the knowledge and understanding of individual pupils. There is no clear assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress and the lack of recorded evidence from the previous year means that pupils and teachers do not have a picture of their progress across time.

128. The department makes excellent use of opportunities to involve pupils in spiritually uplifting activities linked with the community. The pupils' participation in the local Armistice Day service and parade and the pilgrimage to present the school's millennium gift to Acton Church are just two examples. On the other hand, there are few visits to venues which might extend pupils' understanding or to non-Christian centres of worship. Information and communication technology is not built into the schemes of work in religious education, nor is it used as a means of supporting research or presentation. The department's planned contribution to the development of literacy and numeracy skills is still in the developmental stage although very good opportunities for the development of oral skills are provided.

129. The base room for religious education is not clearly enough identified through display and display is not used to extend pupils' learning or to raise the profile of the subject in the school. There is insufficient time to provide pupils in Years 10 and 11 with a course that could result in accreditation. As a result, pupils are not motivated to extend their knowledge and understanding is reduced.

130. Religious education provision does not meet statutory requirements as there is insufficient time to cover the locally Agreed Syllabus. This was the situation at the time of the last inspection. There has been some improvement in resources but there are still not enough materials to support independent learning or to meet the needs of pupils of differing attainment. The department makes a very good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils in the school.