

INSPECTION REPORT

ALLERTON HIGH SCHOOL

Leeds

LEA area: Leeds

Unique reference number: 108057

Acting Headteacher
Mrs C R Armitage

Reporting inspector: Mr John Stephens
1699

Dates of inspection: 13–17 November 2000

Inspection number: 223833

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of students: 11 to 18 years

Gender of students: Mixed

School address: King Lane
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West Yorkshire
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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Ms Eileen Moxon

Date of previous inspection: 20 November 1995

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			The school's results and students' achievements
			How well is the school led and managed?
			What should the school do to improve further?
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			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
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Elizabeth Godman	1682	Team inspector	Equal opportunities
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Peter Cummings	31578	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
Joe Walsh	31463	Team inspector	English
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Barbara Lawson	24056	Team inspector	Music
Keith Massett	23947	Team inspector	Personal and social education
			How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
			How well does the school care for its students?
David Thompson	18681	Team inspector	History
			Youth Awards
Steve O'Hara	17832	Team inspector	Post 16
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			Business education
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Allerton High School is an 11-18 mixed comprehensive school situated in a North Leeds. There are currently 1054 students, including 155 in the sixth form. Three quarters of the students are white, with the rest coming from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, the largest group being of Indian origin. There is a significant representation of students from Jewish families. Both the number of students who qualify for free school meals, and those with special educational needs, are in line with national averages. There is specialist provision for students with speech and language difficulties. Standards achieved by students on entry to the school are broadly similar to national averages, but with few students of the highest academic ability. Sixteen per cent of students speak English as an additional language, but very few of these are at an early stage of language acquisition.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school provides a good standard of education for its students. The temporary senior management team is providing strong leadership and rapidly dealing with weaknesses in self-evaluation and support for the progress of students. The school is very successful in promoting personal and social education. Recent improvements in the effectiveness of the school mean that it is now giving good value for money.

What the school does well

- Strong focused leadership is provided by the acting headteacher and senior team
- Excellent personal and social education teaching which has an impact across the whole school
- The teaching in most subjects is good
- There are good attitudes to learning on the part of the students, and they behave well in the classrooms
- The provision for students with speech and language difficulties is good, and learning support assistants are used effectively
- Overall standards at GCSE which are above average in comparison to similar schools
- The standards of boys' attainment have been greatly improved
- There are good relationships and cultural harmony
- The speaking and listening skills of the students have been developed effectively

What could be improved

- The monitoring and evaluation of teaching
- Marking and assessment of the students' work
- The breadth and relevance of the Key Stage 4 curriculum; the development of strategies for promoting literacy and numeracy across the curriculum
- The provision of information technology at Key Stages 3 and 4
- The quality of information given to parents in relation to their children's progress, and to the curriculum
- The induction of new and newly qualified teachers, and the professional development of staff
- The poor state of parts of the building

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in November 1995. There has been at least satisfactory improvement in the majority of the key issues identified in that report. Standards have risen at Key Stages 3 and 4, and there has been a marked improvement in the performance of boys. The quality of teaching in maths, business studies and information technology is now good. There are now effective links between the support department and other departments. The teaching time has been extended and the curriculum is more balanced. More time is allocated to the teaching of religious education, and the subject now meets statutory requirements at Key Stages 3 and 4. There have been recent improvements in the monitoring role of the senior managers, and in the management skills of the heads of department, although in both cases further development is needed. The budget deficit has been eradicated, and there are improved resources for special educational needs and information technology. However, there are still insufficient opportunities for students to use information technology in a range of subjects.

There has been insufficient improvement in dealing with weaknesses in accommodation. Progress in the development of literacy across the curriculum has also been unsatisfactory.

STANDARDS

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

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

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

In National Curriculum Tests for fourteen year-olds, overall standards reached in English, mathematics and science have been consistently above the national average for the last four years. Compared with schools whose students come from similar social backgrounds, results are also above average, and well above in science. A particular feature at Key Stage 3 is that boys reach higher standards than the national average figures, and do particularly well in English.

Overall GCSE examination results are just above the national average. However, the percentage achieving five or more grades A*-C is consistently above the national average, and very high in comparison with similar schools. The number gaining five or more A*-G grades is close to the national average, but a larger than average number of students gain no GCSE passes, although there was a significant improvement in this area in 2000. Although girls do better than boys in most subjects, boys' results have improved in each of the last five years, and the gap between the performance of boys and girls is much smaller than nationally. The school sets appropriately challenging targets for performance at GCSE; this year the target was just exceeded.

Attainment at A-level is above the national average, although the school has identified some under-achievement at this level and is putting strategies in place to improve standards.

Standards seen in lessons during the inspection were not significantly different to those attained in national tests. Standards were at their highest in English, science, geography, history, art, drama across the school, and in information technology and business education at Key Stage 4. Standards are high in physical education, but at Key Stage 4 the girls do not achieve as highly as boys. Students with special educational needs achieve well, particularly those with speech and language disorders.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
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Attitudes to the school	The students' attitudes to school and their learning are very good. The majority of students work hard and are attentive in lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is good overall, particularly in lessons, and this makes a positive contribution to learning.
Personal development and relationships	The personal development of the students is a strength of the school. Relationships throughout the school are very good. There is respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others.
Attendance	Levels of attendance are satisfactory overall.

These aspects make a significant contribution to the quality of education and standards achieved. Relationships in the school show a high degree of tolerance and respect. Recent strategies to support disaffected students have led to a significant reduction in the number of students who have been excluded.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching is good across the school. More than nine out of every ten lessons observed during the inspection were at least satisfactory, and in six out of ten the quality of teaching was good or better. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed in the sixth form. Teaching in English and science is good overall. In mathematics it is satisfactory overall, but the teaching is good at Key Stage 4, and there has been a significant improvement recently at both key stages.

Teaching in all other subjects is consistently satisfactory or better, with the exception of design and technology and music. In art, history, geography, drama and modern foreign languages no unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Particular strengths of the teaching include teachers' subject knowledge, clear instructions and explanations, and the use of questioning to check students' understanding. Some of the best teaching was seen in drama and in personal and social education with high expectations, students showing good understanding, and teaching methods making the lessons lively and enjoyable. The main weaknesses of the teaching are the quality of marking and assessment, and the limited range of teaching and learning styles used by some teachers. Although some good marking was seen, most gives too little information to students on how they could improve.

Outside English and mathematics lessons the teaching of literacy, numeracy and

information technology across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. The teaching of students with special educational needs is a strength in all subject areas. The teaching is very well supported by the classroom assistants. An effective start has been made in the use of national funding to support the teaching of gifted and talented students.

The quality of learning is good overall, and it is particularly good when the teachers share the purposes of the lesson with students, and find ways of checking what learning has taken place by the end of the lesson.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The balance of the curriculum has improved since the last inspection. However the curriculum overall is unsatisfactory as it does not provide adequately for developing literacy and numeracy skills, and it fails to meet statutory requirements for information technology skills at Key Stage 3 and 4.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Good. Students with special educational needs make good progress, they are integrated well, and receive good support from classroom assistants.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Good support is given to students and their parents when necessary. Teaching is provided in community languages.
Provision for students' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Overall provision for the students' personal development is excellent. Provision for moral, social and cultural development is good. Support for the students' spiritual development is not satisfactory. The school both supports and celebrates the range of cultures represented by the students.
How well the school cares for its students	Pastoral support for students is very good. They are taught in a secure and caring environment. Assessment and recording of student progress is not consistently satisfactory, although promising new systems are now in place.

The links between the school and parents are good, and parents are generally positive about the school. Arrangements for informing parents about the progress of their children are unsatisfactory. The curriculum conforms to statutory requirements in all areas except information technology in Years 7-11 and religious education in the sixth form. No vocational courses are currently offered, and as a consequence the choice of courses at Key Stage 4 is narrow. There is good extra-curricular provision, especially for sport. The school has many strengths in the area of pastoral care for students. New policies are now being put in place to make the monitoring of academic progress more effective.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The acting headteacher and senior managers provide strong and effective leadership which is increasingly focused on raising standards. The quality of management by subject leaders is largely satisfactory, but insufficiently developed in the areas of planning ahead and monitoring the work of teachers.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are supportive of the school and now have a more detailed knowledge of issues within the school than was previously the case. They are more effective in developing their monitoring role. The committee structure is efficient and meetings are well attended. The governors do not meet all their statutory requirements.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Until recently the school did not have effective policies for evaluating its performance. Good strategies have begun to be implemented in this area.
The strategic use of resources	The school efficiently manages its finance and resources. Financial planning is well linked to priorities at a whole school level, but less so in departments.

The school has a sufficient staff and resources are generally adequate. However, the need to reduce a budget deficit, a legacy of the school's re-organisation in 1992, has meant some deficiencies, notably in information technology. Teaching accommodation is good in some areas, for example most science laboratories, the drama studio and the sports hall, but some of the accommodation is in bad repair. The school is forced to spend much of its building budget on maintenance, rather than development.

The acting headteacher and senior managers have acted quickly to put in place a range of well-planned initiatives to make the management of the school more efficient. It is too early to judge the result. The governors do not meet their statutory requirements in respect of information technology at Key Stages 3 and 4, religious education in the sixth form, the provision of a daily act of collective worship, and the lack of attendance figures

in their Annual Report and the Prospectus. Overall the principles of best value are clearly applied to the school's management of resources and finances.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision for personal and social education • Support for students on transfer from primary school, and pastoral care of students generally • Policies for encouraging good attendance • The way parents' concerns are dealt with • The way bullying is dealt with • Music, drama, and the school's success in sport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality and erratic setting of homework • Consultation with parents after the year 10 examinations • The system of annual reports • Provision for information technology • The condition of parts of the building

Inspectors found the quality of homework being set to be satisfactory, but teachers frequently do not follow the published homework timetable, which can be confusing for students and parents. Inspectors agree that the system of issuing annual reports needs improving. Provision for information technology needs improvement. In some subjects teaching and learning is affected by the condition of the building.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Standards on entry to the school are broadly average and similar to attainment nationally. Overall standards at the end of both Key Stage 3 (age 14) and Key Stage 4 (age 16) are above the national average. Standards in the sixth form vary between average and above average, but are above average overall.
2. In the National Curriculum Tests at the end of Key Stage 3 the overall standards reached in English, and science have been above the national average for the last four years. In mathematics they have been close to the national average. The pattern of results for these years has been broadly in line with the national trend. When compared with similar schools the results in English and mathematics are above average, and well above in science. A particular feature of results in these subjects is that both boys and girls reach standards which are higher than national averages. Boys attain particularly well in English, where their performance is well above the boys' national average. Girls are above average in science, but reach standards just below the national average in mathematics at this key stage.
3. In the other subjects at Key Stage 3 standards are judged by teacher assessments which are made against national criteria. In these subjects most students are reaching the national standards by the age of fourteen, and many are exceeding them. The teachers assess the standards reached by girls to be higher than boys in all subjects except physical education. In history, geography, design and technology, information technology, modern foreign languages and art the teachers judge the difference between the standards reached by boys and girls are twice the national figure. Since these differences do not happen in the core subjects at the end of Key Stage 3, or in subjects generally at GCSE, there is some evidence of an overestimation of the performance of girls at the end of this key stage.
4. At GCSE the percentage of students who achieve five or more A*-C grades is consistently above the national average, and is very high in comparison to similar schools. The percentage of students who gain five or more A*-G grades is close to both the national average, and that of similar schools. The number of students who gained one or more A*-G grades was below the national average from 1997-9, and very low in comparison with similar schools. This is because the school had an unusually large number of students who do not complete the GCSE course. However, in the most recent GCSE examinations the figure for the number of students gaining one or more A*-C grades has improved, and is likely to be in line with the national average.
5. When the school's GCSE results are analysed by points score, a method which allocates a score to each grade, they are closer to the national average. This

indicates that fewer students than might be expected gain higher grades. However, the results of the 2000 GCSE examinations showed a improvement in this aspect of the school's performance. The results for the 2000 GCSE examination narrowly exceeded the appropriately challenging target which the school had set. The same target has been set for next year; the school regards this as a further challenge, as data shows the previous levels of attainment of this cohort of students to be lower than the previous one.

6. The boys' results have improved in each of the past five years. Although the girls do better than the boys in almost all subjects, the overall gap between the performance of boys and girls is much smaller than the national figure.
7. The GCSE results in English and science are consistently above average. Results in mathematics are just below the national average; standards have, however, started to show an improving trend. In history, geography, physical education, art and business studies GCSE results are above average. In French they are generally average, and in religious education and the food, graphics and textiles areas of design and technology they are just below average.
8. Average levels of attainment at A-level for the years 1998-2000 are just above the national levels for students entered for two or more subjects. The trend in the school's results is similar to the national figures. The school ranks just below the average for the other Local Education Authority schools. However, before 1998 the school's attainment at A-level was considerably above the national figures. The school has identified recent under-achievement at A-level, and appropriate strategies have been implemented to raise standards. In the most recent A-level examinations the number of students achieving higher grades showed an improvement.
9. Standards seen in lessons and students' work during the inspection showed a similar pattern to those attained in tests and examinations at the end of the key stages. At Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 standards were above average in English, science, geography, history, drama and art. Standards were above average in physical education, but the girls attained lower standards than the boys at Key Stage 4. At Key Stage 4 students in information technology and business education also showed good levels of achievement. In all other subjects achievement showed average standards at Key Stages 3 and 4, with the exception of design and technology at Key Stage 3, where achievement was below expectation. A-level students showed good levels of achievement in art, history and business education, and average levels in other subjects. Standards in information technology are unsatisfactory in the sixth form.

10. Students with special educational needs generally achieve well in the school. Levels of achievement for students with speech and language disorders are consistently high, and they make good progress. There are no marked differences in standards achieved by students from the various ethnic groups in the school, although the school has only just started monitoring performance on this basis. Strategies to raise standards for gifted and talented students, funded by a national initiative, have only recently been introduced. It is too early to judge the impact on the standards achieved by those students. However, results for the 2000 GCS A-level examinations show an increase in the number of students who gained grades at higher levels.
11. Overall standards of literacy are satisfactory. Levels of speaking and listening are good, and students speak confidently in lessons, and to adults. Most students have the reading skills to cope with the demands of the curriculum, and writing is often competent. However, the lack of a whole-school literacy policy means that there is little attempt to develop the skills of reading and writing across the curriculum. Standards of numeracy observed in lessons were also satisfactory. Students are usually able to apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum. A whole school numeracy strategy has recently been developed, and is in the process of being implemented. It is too early to judge the impact on levels of numeracy.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

12. The students' attitudes to school and their learning are very good. They are keen and eager to attend and parents agree that their children enjoy coming to school. The majority of students work hard and are attentive in class. In most lessons attitudes to learning are positive, with high levels of motivation and enthusiasm for work. The students know what is expected of them and want to succeed. The best examples are seen in English at Key Stage 4, science, art, drama, modern languages, geography, history and personal and social education. For example, in science groups of students worked together to produce outstanding posters to show what they understood about a topic. In Geography year 9 students explored the viewpoints of four community groups in relation to the siting of a wind farm, and produced impressive arguments when challenged by the teacher. In a Year 10 German lesson students enjoyed using their knowledge of the language to gather information from their fellow students. In a minority of lessons, where work is less challenging, some students are easily distracted, for example in a few English lessons at Key Stage 3 and in Jewish Studies.
13. At the last inspection standards of behaviour were judged to be good, and this is still the case. The behaviour and response of students makes a positive contribution to learning. A few instances of unsatisfactory behaviour were seen where lessons were less well controlled and students began to lose concentration. Behaviour at lunchtime and when students move around the school is satisfactory, if a little boisterous at times. In the dining room students sit together in an orderly fashion, and enjoy their lunch with others. They are generally polite and helpful and the great majority show respect for the school's

and each other's property. The school's behaviour policy is largely reinforced by the teaching staff and learning support assistants, although it is not always applied consistently. Students understand the school rules and generally believe they are fair. Parents report that the school deals quickly and effectively with any cases of bullying. The students agreed with this, but a few felt that there should be more consistency from some of the teaching staff in dealing with general issues of discipline. A successful 'Buddy' scheme, where Key Stage 4 students are available to support Year 7 students, allows the older students to show initiative and take responsibility.

14. The aim of including students who have become disaffected is a prominent feature of the ethos of the school. The strong focus on pastoral support, and the use of a unit to support students whose attitudes and behaviour are a cause for concern, have made a major contribution to the reducing number of exclusions. In the year before the inspection there were 4 permanent exclusions and 72 fixed term exclusions. This was a significant reduction on the previous year. The school's figures do not show a disproportionate rate of exclusions for ethnic minority students.
15. When opportunities are made available, students are prepared to take responsibility and work independently or in groups. They take part in school council meetings, act as 'Buddies' to Year 7 students, or staff the school reception desk. When working in groups the students organise themselves effectively and co-operate well. However, they would benefit from more planned opportunities to take responsibility and show initiative. For example, some students from Key Stage 4 felt that although the views of the school council were listened to, they were not often followed up. They also felt that, as in some other schools, the council could have a small budget at its disposal.
16. Relationships within classes and throughout the school are very good. Students show respect for others' feelings, values and beliefs, and listen to each other's contribution, for example in school council meetings. They understand the impact of their actions on others. Those with special educational needs are fully integrated into the school, and other students are generally tolerant and supportive. Students from different ethnic backgrounds work well together. There is a good response from students to opportunities to raise funds for charities and to help others. For example, the school council took responsibility for organising the school's fundraising for Children in Need.
17. Levels of attendance are satisfactory overall. At the time of the inspection levels of unauthorised absence were just above the national average. This was partly due to the school's strategy of recording latecomers without a note from parents as unauthorised, and also because some students who arrive late fail to register and are recorded as unauthorised. The school is making a concerted effort, through letter, phone calls and improved recording, to make parents and students more accountable for lateness and absence. The school reports that the absence of regular and sustained support from the Education Welfare Service has impacted on progress. Punctuality to school and to lessons is generally good.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

18. The overall quality of teaching is good. In more than nine out of every ten lessons observed during the inspection, teaching was satisfactory or better. In six out of every ten lessons the quality of teaching was good or better. The quality of learning is clearly linked to the strength of the teaching, as in nine out of every ten lessons the students' learning was judged to be satisfactory or better.
19. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. There is now more effective planning and better use of learning objectives for the students. A greater number of teaching groups formed according to ability, and changes to the timetable, have made teaching more effective. The needs of able students are beginning to be met. In some lessons there is a need for more pace and challenge. There are some inconsistencies in the teaching, for example in the teaching of similar classes in the same subject. The lack of effective monitoring means that inconsistencies in the provision are not effectively identified and addressed.
20. The quality of teaching does not vary greatly between the key stages, although it is marginally better at Key Stage 4. In art, geography, history, drama and modern foreign language lessons no unsatisfactory teaching was observed. This was also a feature of religious education and design and technology at Key Stage 3, and English, mathematics, business education and information technology at Key Stage 4. Teaching is best in the sixth form, where three quarters of lessons observed were good or better and no unsatisfactory teaching was seen; however, neither was any teaching at the highest level.
21. Teaching in science is particularly effective at Key Stage 3, where four out of five lessons were good or better. This reflects the work done by the department to improve by monitoring the teaching, and improving planning and schemes of work. Some of the best teaching in the school was seen in drama and in personal and social education. Among the characteristics of this impressive teaching were high expectations, recognition of the needs of individual students, clear learning objectives shared with the class and active learning methods which both interested and involved the students.
22. Planning of schemes of work and individual lessons does not make sufficient provision for the use of information technology, or for the development of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum. However, students with special educational needs and statements for speech and language disorders are well supported in the development of literacy by effective use of individual learning targets, good planning and adult support. Learning is particularly effective where programmes have been designed to target specific needs. The teaching of students with special needs is a strength of the school across all subject areas. These students are very well supported by classroom assistants. The rich cultural traditions of the school are valued by teachers. Teachers are effective in ensuring that the needs of all students, regardless of ethnic origin or gender, are

met in the classroom. There is no significant difference in the achievements of these groups.

23. The school benefits from funding from the national Excellence in Cities scheme, which is intended to enhance the education of students in urban areas. The additional funding is being used to support the needs of gifted and talented students, and the school has begun to implement plans to raise the attainment of the most able. Gifted and talented students have been identified in each year group, and are offered additional activities to extend their learning outside the classroom. These students are known to teachers who are aware of the need to extend and challenge them.
24. A strength of teaching is that the teachers' subject knowledge is good in almost all subjects. The teachers show a high degree of confidence in the classroom, and are largely able to meet the learning requirements of all students. They have high expectations of the students, although there is some evidence that students in the middle ability range are sometimes overlooked. Most teachers use language effectively when they give instructions and explanations, and this helps students to develop a good understanding of the subject. For example in Latin good links are made to words in English to enable students to consider the origins of the words and to make real gains in developing their vocabulary. Many teachers use good questioning skills to develop student understanding and to check that effective learning has taken place. This was seen in a Year 9 religious education lesson where students were asked to identify different forms of euthanasia. The teacher used strategic questions to enable the students to identify the different forms and make links to events in the media. In an English lesson in Year 9 on war poems the teacher engaged students through effective questioning.
25. The quality of learning in the school is good overall, and reflects the quality of teaching. Learning is most effective where teachers set out clear objectives in their planning and share these with the students. The majority of teachers in the school do this regularly and effectively. The impact is even more effective when teachers look at the learning objectives with the class at the end of the lesson to check that the planned learning has taken place. About half the teachers during the inspection followed this procedure and used the evidence to inform the planning of the next lesson.
26. Planning overall is satisfactory with a balance of strengths and weaknesses. It is good in art, religious education, mathematics and design and technology. It is best when based on a good scheme of work, in Key Stage 3 science for example. A weakness in some of the teaching is the lack of continuity and progression between lessons and students' earlier learning.
27. The quality of marking and assessment is poorly developed within the school. The marking policy is out of date and there is no standardisation of marking within the school. Even in subjects which have clear guidelines, such as science, there are variations in practice. The marking of work is largely up to date, but very little of the marking seen gives useful information to the students. The

school assessment policy has been recently developed, and has a timetable for assessments and target setting. This policy is still being implemented, and therefore students do not yet have individual targets in all subjects at Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4 effective use is made of target grades.

28. Although there is much good teaching in the school, a minority of teachers still use a limited range of teaching and learning styles. The result in those cases is that lessons are too closely controlled by the teacher, and do not encourage the students to gain independence as learners. This is not the case in the excellent teaching seen in drama and personal and social education, or in the provision for gifted and talented students. A wider range of teaching and learning styles was also seen in science, English, PE, art, geography, modern foreign languages, religious education and business studies. In these subjects particularly the teachers successfully motivate and inspire the students, and make the teaching relevant to their needs.
29. In nearly all classes the teachers manage the learning effectively. Relationships between adults and students are very good and this is a strength of the school. It enables students to learn in an environment where everyone is valued regardless of ethnic origin, ability or gender. The racial harmony is an outstanding feature of life at the school, and it contributes to a climate of respect and cultural richness where everyone can achieve. For example a Hindu Year 12 student was invited to talk to a group of Year 8 students about a pilgrimage she had made to Varanasi in India.
30. Overall the teachers make good use of the time available for teaching. Lessons start punctually and most students arrive on time. The new two week timetable arrangement allows good use to be made of time and is an improvement since the last inspection. Teachers make very good use of the available resources, with the exception of the use of information technology. In a few classrooms there is an over use of poorly designed worksheets. A strength of the teaching lies in the use of classroom support assistants to support learning. They receive in-service training and plan with the subject teachers to support both able and less able students. Their success contributes to good learning and the maintenance of discipline.
31. Parents expressed concern about the arrangements for setting homework, and the quality of the tasks. These concerns were not fully supported by the inspection. In most subjects good use is made of appropriate homework designed to support learning. The homework set is often challenging and interesting. Some departments, such as religious education, have strategies to monitor homework across the department to ensure consistency. Generally homework makes a good contribution to learning. However many teachers do not follow the homework timetable, and this is particularly confusing for parents.

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

32. Overall the curriculum is unsatisfactory as it fails to provide adequately for the development of the students' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills at Key Stages 3 and 4. In Year 12 and 13 the statutory requirements for religious education are not fully met.
33. The school does not meet the requirements of National Curriculum provision for information technology. At Key Stage 3 coverage of measurement and control is largely missing and at Key Stage 4 the majority of students have either no or very little access to the information technology programme of study.
34. The school's curriculum statement emphasises equal opportunity, equal access and entitlement. The school identifies the development of the 'whole person' as a key feature of the curriculum provided. The curriculum issues raised in the last inspection relating to allocation of time to subjects have been successfully addressed by establishing a two-week timetable cycle with fifty periods of sixty minutes per fortnight. The time allocated to the subjects at each key stage is satisfactory.
35. The school has made limited progress in the development of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum. Literacy and numeracy developments are not yet sufficiently considered when teachers are planning their schemes of work. There is a numeracy co-ordinator, but the school has been unsuccessful in their attempts to appoint a literacy co-ordinator. There is a clear action plan for numeracy but it is too early to measure any impact. There is no equivalent policy or development plan and no co-ordinated approach to the development of students' literacy.
36. With the exception of those instances noted above the school meets other statutory requirements for the National Curriculum. In Years 7 and 8 Jewish Studies is specially funded by the local authority and, and offered by the school to a small number of students who have been withdrawn from religious education. All students study French or German in Year 7 with almost all students studying a second language from Year 8. They can choose from French, German, Modern Hebrew, Panjabi or Latin. In Years 10 and 11 the school meets other statutory requirements for National Curriculum subjects. No students have been disapplied from the National Curriculum. The provision of vocational and college link courses at Key Stage 4 is underdeveloped. There is limited use of links with the local community.
37. Provision for personal and social education is a strength. The positive impact of this provision can be seen across the whole school, and both parents and students recognise the quality of the course. Personal and social education lays the foundations for the work of the heads of year and form tutors, and systems for care within in the school. Priorities for particular year groups are identified in discussion with pastoral support teams and the programme adapted accordingly. Issues concerning rights and responsibilities, health, sexuality, personal well being, human rights, parenting, citizenship and the law contribute to an interesting and relevant course.

38. The school offers a balanced provision of eighteen advanced level courses. In September 2000, the school introduced the new AS courses and key skills provision for year 12 students. There are opportunities to re-sit GCSE English and mathematics. General Studies is offered to all students. Sixth form provision is enhanced by a wide range of activities such as sport and community work accredited through the Youth Award programme, which recognises student achievement outside their academic study. No vocational programmes are offered in the sixth form.
39. Some aspects of the school timetable adversely affect student progress. In English, continuity and progression are made difficult by some students having English twice on the same day and by having different teachers on different days. In physical education some students have a different teacher in week one and week two, which also adversely affects continuity and progression,
40. The school is currently undertaking a curriculum review. It has started to look at the appropriateness of the current curriculum and the issues raised by the current timetable. Initial meetings have recommended a range of immediate priorities, although there is not yet a development plan. Given the school's low figures for students gaining one or more A*-G passes at GCSE, the group has recognised the need to address the appropriateness of the Key Stage 4 curriculum, and the wider use of other courses for students who have difficulty studying at GCSE level. The school hopes that the group will provide an effective base from which to develop the curriculum, but it is too early to judge the impact.
41. Curricular provision for students with special educational needs is good. Students experience an appropriate curriculum when they are withdrawn from lessons to work in small groups, and when they supported in the classroom. However links between the two systems are not always sufficiently planned or explicit. For example there is no shared planning between English and literacy work in the special educational needs base and therefore no shared learning outcomes. There are positive curricular opportunities for students with English as an additional language. For native Hebrew speakers and for those where Panjabi is spoken at home provision is very good. These students can study these languages as a second modern language; they value the opportunity provided.
42. The school is very aware of equal opportunities issues within the curriculum. For example the school has actively sought to interest and involve boys in textiles, food and mixed physical education. Staff have audited and removed sexist and racist material from the library. They have received guidance about content, use of language and materials to promote equality of opportunity. There has been a particular focus on this in English, drama, personal and social education and religious education.
43. Provision for extra-curricular activities is good. Parents and students value the time given by teachers and the range of opportunity provided. There is a wide range of sporting activity offered. There are also instrumental opportunities, as well as opportunities linked to art, science and technology. Extra curricular

events also promote awareness of other cultures for example the Diwali exhibition and Asian fashion show. There are also music and drama productions, the Christian Union, the Asian Girls' Group, provision for Jewish students, and trips to France, Germany and the USA.

44. There is a good programme for careers education and guidance. This begins in Year 9, and there are good, well established programmes for Years 10 and 11. There is insufficient monitoring of the quality of learning which takes place in this programme. Careers education is delivered as part of the personal and social education programme by a specialist team of teachers.
45. The work experience programme is very well developed. All students undertake it during the first term in Year 11 for a period of two weeks. Students are well prepared for work experience, and many are encouraged to find their own placements. Many students had high quality placements and appeared to have thoroughly enjoyed the experience. They can explain clearly what they learned whilst on work experience. The monitoring and support they receive during their placement is good. Students complete a work experience booklet and receive a written report from the employer and from school staff who visited the placement, as well as completing a self-review. Appropriate debriefing takes place on return to school.
46. The school works closely with the local Careers guidance service. A comprehensive Partnership Agreement is produced annually. Progress is reviewed termly, and students are generally well prepared for their careers interviews. The careers library has been relocated into the main school library. It is usually open and staffed by an administrative assistant every lunchtime. It was closed for most of the inspection period due to inadequate heating in the library, and the installation of temporary heaters blocking access. There is inadequate provision for confidential careers guidance interviews.
47. Liaison with feeder schools regarding transfer of students is very good. Pastoral and academic issues are addressed. Subject departments have recently identified existing curriculum links with feeder schools with the intention of developing them further.
48. The provision for students', moral, social and cultural development is good. The school's aims explicitly include the moral and spiritual development of the students, of social development is implied, but there is no mention of cultural development. Provision for spiritual development is unsatisfactory. Assemblies observed failed to address spiritual issues. Religious education, personal and social education, history and drama lessons provide the main contribution to spiritual development. Elsewhere in the curriculum there has been little significant development.
49. The provision for moral education is good. It was seen in history in a discussion about Remembrance Day, in religious education in an exploration of ethical ideas on the value of life and work on the homeless, in geography where environmental and development issues were discussed, and in personal and

social education where moral issues around behaviour and prison were addressed. The school has high expectations of how students are expected to behave; the staff provide good role models.

50. Provision for social development is very good. The foundations are laid in personal and social education, where great emphasis is placed on social rights and responsibilities and developing the interpersonal skills needed to develop socially. Students are very supportive of each other. Students in Year 8 were working together to produce the first edition of a Year 8 Newsletter. The 'buddy' programme provides further opportunities for older students to support younger students. In English older students were working with younger ones to help develop social skills and support reading. In art and physical education students were seen working well together irrespective of ethnicity or gender. There is provision for students to work in pairs, small groups or whole classes across the school; this is particularly well done in drama lessons. In design and technology and science good social skills are developed during practical work.
51. The provision for cultural development is good. The school teaches students to appreciate their own cultural traditions, and the richness and diversity of other cultures. In religious education the study of Christianity and other world faiths is supported by visits, and speakers from a range of faiths and cultures. Teachers and students value and celebrate the cultural diversity within the school. In personal and social education cultural diversity was celebrated in a Year 8 lessons when students were encouraged to share personal views and feelings about their own cultures. In addition to the community languages taught within the curriculum, Gujarati is offered as an extra-curricular subject. The school is sensitive to the religious needs of some students at particular times of the year, and prayer rooms are provided at lunchtime when necessary. The school library and displays around the building reflect the cultural diversity of the school.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

52. Overall the support for the students' welfare, health and safety is very good, and students are taught in a secure and caring environment. There are relatively new policies in place for assessing and recording students' progress, and it is too early to judge their impact. There is insufficient and inconsistent use of assessment information to guide curricular planning and support students' academic progress. Care for students overall is therefore satisfactory.
53. The Child Protection Policy is recent, clear and practical and staff know what to do if they have concerns. The acting headteacher and pastoral co-ordinator are designated staff members with special responsibility for co-ordinating all matters regarding child protection. Health and safety arrangements are satisfactory and the school policy is currently under review by staff and governors.
54. The pastoral support and care of students is very good. Support is led by experienced heads of year who know the students well. Extra mentoring support can be provided by form tutor, head of year, subject staff or one of the Excellence

In Cities learning mentors. Form tutor time is mainly used for the tutors to check and sign student planners. There is insufficient consistency in the thoroughness with which this is done by different tutors; this is an area in need of monitoring. Students know who to go to for help and support. Systems for monitoring and promoting positive behaviour are good. Great emphasis is placed on the development of high personal standards of behaviour. The school has good systems for recognising and rewarding success. Parents speak highly of the system of sending postcards home to inform them of the good work their children have produced. There are few significant bullying or harassment issues, and any incidents are dealt with effectively. Staff are guided by a comprehensive Anti-Bullying Policy. Parents and students are very positive about the school's policies for dealing with bullying.

55. The school offers very good support to students during the transfer from junior school. Parents and students speak very positively about the process. Students in Year 6 visit the school and there is a transition programme involving students from Year 7. There is a comprehensive induction programme and the 'Buddy' system provides additional advice and support for students in Year 7. A system of rewards and responsibilities in Year 7 provides opportunities to take part in extra curricular activities and encourage a sense of responsibility towards self, others and the school community.
56. The school has effective policies for promoting good attendance. Attendance registers comply with local education authority guidelines and there are good procedures to monitor attendance. Students are encouraged to keep records of attendance in their personal organisers. Parents know the arrangements for reporting absence.
57. Procedures for identifying and supporting students with special education needs are good. The policy meets statutory requirement for students with statements. Individual Education Plans are in place. Progress of students with special education needs is monitored by the special needs co-ordinator through annual reviews of Individual Education Plans. There are good links between objectives arising from statements and annual reviews and the targets in the students' Individual Education Plans. The school recognises the needs of students with English as an additional language and an interpreter is brought in when needed. A specialist worker provides counselling to minority ethnic students and she is a role model for Asian girls.
58. Overall, the use of assessment information to guide curriculum planning or to help students progress is unsatisfactory. Marking policies are not applied consistently. Students are often not given adequate information about what they need to do to improve. These deficiencies are recognised by the school, and there has recently been significant progress towards the development of effective systems for assessment and monitoring of students' academic performance. Recent revisions to the policy have established a clear framework for monitoring and assessing students' work. Marking policies across the school are to be reviewed as part of the school development plan 2000-2002.

59. The school is developing a student progress record for all students in Years 7-11, which makes use of external test data and two internal assessments to set individual students targets for improvement. Challenging target grades have been set in each GCSE subject for students in Years 10 and 11. Target levels for Key Stage 3 National Curriculum Tests for Year 9 have also been produced. Sixth form students have half-termly subject reviews with their tutors, and targets are set.
60. The school complies with statutory requirements for National Curriculum assessment. Annual reports to parents are adequate but often lack specific information on how to improve. Parents are not given enough information for them to understand how to help their child attain more. The school does not initially provide copies of student reports, so the original has to be returned to the school. This practice is regarded as unsatisfactory by many parents and students.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

61. In the last inspection, the links between the school and parents were judged to be positive and parents to be well informed about students' progress. Evidence from the parents' questionnaire and the pre-inspection meeting indicates that the majority of parents are satisfied with the provision made for their children. However, a minority do not believe that the school works closely with them. A significant number of parents expressed concern about the amount of homework set and questioned the extent to which they were informed about their child's progress.
62. A significant majority of parents and carers agree that teaching is good, standards of achievement are high and their children make good progress. They believe that behaviour is good and that their children enjoy coming to school. Parents and carers who attended the pre-inspection meeting reported that the school responds well to their questions and concerns. In particular, the office staff were seen to be friendly and helpful and to know students well.
63. The quantity and quality of information for parents and carers is unsatisfactory overall. The Governors Annual Report to Parents and the School Prospectus do not meet statutory requirements as they do not publish the rates of authorised and unauthorised absence. At the pre-inspection meeting, parents and carers expressed concern about the school's system for reporting academic progress to them. In particular they were concerned that they could not immediately retain a copy of the report. The inspection confirmed the unsatisfactory quality of annual reports of students' progress. The school recognises this as a weakness. In the majority of reports comments are insufficiently linked directly to the curriculum and what students can do. There are few indications of how students can progress. In addition to effort grades, the school should consider including National Curriculum levels of attainment.
64. The School Prospectus sets out the school aims and expectations, and provides

useful information for parents and carers. It does not, however, give sufficient information about the school's curriculum. At the pre-inspection meeting several parents were concerned that they received insufficient information about the curriculum and what was taught each year.

65. The majority of parents and carers willingly sign the home-school agreement which reflects the school's caring ethos, and clearly sets out the expectation of the parts played by the school and parents in the education of their children. The induction evening on the students' transfer from primary school is one of a number of evening events that the school arranges for parents and carers. At the end of Key Stage 3, parents and carers are invited in to school to see examples of work produced by students following GCSE courses, and the books and resources used. Meetings for parents are generally well attended. Regular newsletters from the headteacher are informative and formal meetings, which are arranged throughout the year for parents and carers to discuss their children's progress, are well attended.
66. The school works well with ethnic minority families to broaden their understanding of and support for the school's work. They make efforts to ensure that, where necessary, information is supplied in community languages for those parents whose first language is not English. At the pre-inspection meeting, a few parents of students with special educational needs expressed some dissatisfaction with the liaison between the school and themselves. The inspection did not find any evidence to support this. Parents and carers of students with special educational needs are properly involved in drawing up and agreeing Individual Education Plans and annual reviews. The school has a small but active Parent Teacher Association (PTA) which raises significant funds for the school, for example the new window blinds that have helped to enhance the school environment.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

67. At the time of the inspection the school had a temporary management team with an acting headteacher. This team had been in place for five months, following the early retirement in May 2000 of the school's headteacher. During this time an unusually large number of initiatives had been implemented quickly. It is the judgement of this inspection that these initiatives were necessary, as the school was lacking a range of systems and strategies which schools need in order to raise standards. The Local Education Authority review of the school in February 2000 confirmed this view. The initiatives put in place by the senior management team have been prioritised well in order to improve standards in the school. Since many of these important management strategies are so recent, it is difficult to judge their impact on the school, other than in the short term.
68. The acting headteacher and senior management team have provided strong and focused leadership in the short time they have been working together. The staff have fully supported their work, and recognise that there is now a clear direction for the development of the school. In particular the team has emphasised the

need to focus on strategies to support the students' academic progress. Previously the school has enjoyed a justifiable reputation for the pastoral support given to students, but the senior management team have rightly identified the need to balance this with equivalent good practice in raising attainment. The major initiatives implemented recently include: a cycle of classroom observation in order to monitor teaching; a strengthened system linking senior with middle managers; a shift in emphasis for senior managers, so that they can spend more time developing initiatives, and less on minor management issues; improved use of assessment information in order to raise standards; a stronger monitoring role for the governing body.

69. A first cycle of lesson observation by middle and senior managers has recently been completed. Although the intention was to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning, in order to identify areas for improvement, there is little evidence that this has happened. The observations took place, but there was insufficient training for the project, and the observations were not sufficiently rigorous. However, the experience has not been entirely wasted as lessons learned from the experience will inform practice in the next cycle. The initiative has also established the idea of classroom observation as an important monitoring tool, since the school has little history of such activity.
70. The link management scheme, which links all middle managers with a senior manager, has been in existence for three years. Its role has now been restated, and it is now seen as a central strategy for monitoring the work of the school, and working towards objectives in the school development plan. At least twice a term heads of department meet with their link senior manager to discuss a common agenda. This establishes essential lines of communication to and from senior and middle managers. The system is working well, enabling a more focused approach to management in the school.
71. The Local Education Authority review of the school in February 2000 noted that senior managers were spending too much time on the day-to-day running of the school, at the expense of strategic management. The present senior team has made progress in addressing this issue. Staff are now more prepared to deal with incidents themselves, rather than immediately pass them on to a senior manager. Part of this change has come about because staff can see the benefits of senior managers spending more time on strategic activities to move the school forward.
72. An indication of the changing culture in the school is the increasing use of assessment information to identify the school's own strengths and weaknesses, and to raise the attainment of students. One of the deputy heads, with part time secretarial assistance, is responsible for producing this data for staff and training them in its use. The collection of data on the progress of students is held centrally on a computer, and can be distributed for specific purposes such as key assessments of students and progress reviews. The use of this data is still at an early stage, but there are encouraging signs. Staff are becoming more expert in both interpreting the data, and discovering how to use it to raise the attainment of students.

73. The school development plan is accessible and clear, and has efficiently identified the right priorities for the school. Governors have been properly involved in the plan, and there are satisfactory links between the whole school plan and those of individual departments. However, the plans do not sufficiently focus on raising standards. Very often success is expressed in terms of a task having been completed, rather than whether improvement has taken place.
74. Like the senior management team the governing body is acquiring a more strategic role that they had previously. The governors now have a good knowledge of management and performance issues in the school, and are in a much better position to fulfil their monitoring role. The governing body has an efficient committee structure, and meetings are well attended. They discharge all their statutory duties with the exception of the curriculum issues of information technology at Key Stages 3 and 4, and religious education in the sixth form, the provision of a daily act of collective worship, and the lack of attendance figures in their Annual Report and the Prospectus.
75. The school's finances have been dominated over the last few years by the need to eliminate a large budget deficit. This was a legacy of staffing decisions made, following external advice, on staffing levels when the school converted to an 11-18 comprehensive school. The budget has now been balanced, but the need to deal with the deficit has overshadowed developments in the school for some time. There has been less money to spend on resources than the school would have wished, particularly in the area of information technology. Nevertheless the school has been efficient, and extremely careful, in the managing of finance. The bursar provides comprehensive and detailed information to the senior managers and governors. Spending has been carefully linked to educational priorities, with the exception of the system of allocating money to curriculum departments. This is mainly based on historical funding, and departments are not sufficiently accountable for the ways in which they plan to spend their money. The school is well aware of the need to apply principles of best value to its use of resources, and it does so. Specific grants, such as the Excellence in Cities funding, are being well used for their designated purpose. Taking account of the attainment levels of the school's intake, the standards reached and the level of finance which the school receives, it gives satisfactory value for money.
76. There are an adequate number of qualified staff to teach the curriculum, and only in information technology are there significant instances of staff teaching outside their subject area. In reducing the budget deficit the school has had to be very careful in the number of teaching staff which it employs. The percentage of the budget spent on teaching staff is low, and this has meant some class sizes at Key Stage 3 which are larger than the school would wish. The inspection found no evidence that the large classes are affecting standards, although this is because the teachers have to work very hard to compensate.
77. The preparations for the national systems of performance management are proceeding satisfactorily. The school's procedures for the induction of newly

qualified teachers are unsatisfactory. The teachers report that they receive good support from within their own subject departments. However, with one exception all the newly qualified staff teach more periods than they should. (The school has pointed out that they are not required to cover for absent colleagues.) At a whole-school level the induction sessions are too infrequent, and there is insufficient formal observation of the teaching of the newly qualified teachers. The professional development of staff is also not sufficiently structured. Records are not complete, and there is too little evidence of links between professional development and the school's priorities.

78. At the pre-inspection meeting many parents voiced concerns about the state of the school buildings. These concerns were also expressed by the governing body, and by many of the students who were interviewed during the inspection. The building is a mixture of old and new accommodation, and there are some problems with both. Some of the roofs leak, and there are damp and loose windows in the sixth form block, which is only eight years old. The school heating system has never worked properly, and during the inspection portable gas heaters were used to try and heat areas such as the library and the drama studio.
79. In some areas there are good facilities which support learning well. With one exception the science laboratories are modern, there is an excellent drama studio and the sports hall is well equipped. However, there are examples of the quality of learning being affected adversely by poor accommodation. Some of the English and mathematics rooms are small, and do not enable the teachers to use a range of teaching methods. There are still health and safety problems in one of the food studies rooms and the ceramics room. The hall's floor and acoustics are unsuitable for dance. In a few rooms the paint is flaking off the walls, and this is potentially a problem for computers in one of the information technology rooms.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

80. In order to improve further the quality of education and the standards achieved the governors and headteacher should:
- (1) Improve the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in the school by:**
- providing further training in classroom observation for senior and middle managers;
 - ensuring that future lesson observations are properly focused on the quality of teaching and learning;
 - promoting consistency between subject departments in the practice of monitoring and evaluation, including observation of teaching and examination of students' work;
 - ensuring that information gained from monitoring is fully evaluated and is used both to raise standards and disseminate good practice.

(Paragraphs 68, 69, 70)

(2) Improve strategies for raising the attainment and achievement of students by:

- ensuring that data on students' attainment is used by teachers to set targets with the students;
- providing further training for teachers in the use of assessment information to improve standards;
- implementing a consistent and effective whole-school marking system, which identifies what students need to do to improve.

(Paragraphs 27, 58, 72)

(3) Improve the quality of the curriculum by:

- broadening the range of courses offered at Key Stage 4 in order to reduce the figures for the number of students who leave without completing the GCSE course;
- appointing a literacy co-ordinator as soon as possible; developing an effective range of strategies for supporting literacy and numeracy across the curriculum;
- complying with statutory requirement for the teaching of religious education in the sixth form.

(Paragraphs 32, 33, 35, 36, 38, 40)

(4) Ensure compliance with the requirements for information technology in the National Curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4 by:

- Increasing the provision of computers, replacing the out-of-date computer network; and obtaining the full range of software required to meet the needs of the National Curriculum;
- planning and implementing aspects of measurement and control at Key Stage 3; and developing course provision at Key Stage 4, to ensure that the programme of study in information technology is part of the learning programmes for all students;
- planning and implementing the use of information technology to support teaching and learning in all required subjects.

(Paragraphs 32, 33, 149, 155)

(5) Improve the quality of information for parents and carers regarding their children's progress by:

- providing parents with fuller information about the curriculum;
- improving the quality of the students' annual reports, and the system for giving them to parents;
- making sure that parents are aware of targets set for their children in order that parents can support their children in working towards them.

(Paragraphs 58, 63)

(6) Improve the quality of induction and staff development by:

- establish a more coherent and focused programme at whole school level for supporting newly qualified teachers;
- setting up a programme to support teachers who are new to the school;
- linking the professional development of staff more closely to the school's development priorities.

(Paragraphs 76, 77)

(7) Improve the quality of the building by:

- dealing with the health and safety issues in the ceramics and food studies rooms as a matter of urgency;
- improving the heating so that portable heaters do not have to be used;
- repairing all the roofs which are leaking;
- refurbishing rooms which are in a poor decorative state.
(Paragraph 46, 78, 79, 134)

The governors and senior managers should also consider what action to take to address the following matters raised in the report:

- The provision for spiritual education.
(Paragraph 48)
- The monitoring of the use of tutor periods in order to ensure consistency.
(Paragraph 54)
- The lack of adherence to the homework timetable.
(Paragraph 31)
- The provision for Jewish Studies.
(Paragraph 92)

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

SIXTH FORM

81. Candidates entered for two or more A/AS courses in the last three years (97-99) have achieved above the national average. The number of students achieving higher grades is below the national average, although this has shown a significant increase in the most recent examinations. The school offers a wide range of advanced level courses. New AS courses and key skills provision for Year 12 students have recently been introduced, and opportunities exist for students to resit GCSE English and mathematics. However, the school does not offer any GNVQ courses, which restricts the provision. Sixth form provision is enhanced by a wide range of activities such as sport and community work accredited through the Youth Award programme, which recognises student achievement outside their academic study.
82. Students follow courses appropriate to their ability that will fulfil their career aspirations. They feel that they were given a realistic understanding of the demands of the sixth form through the information provided in conjunction with the careers service prior to entry to the sixth form. There is a strong programme of careers support throughout the sixth form.
83. Relationships with teaching staff are good and are valued by the students. They

appreciate the teacher's knowledge and feel comfortable in approaching teaching staff to obtain help. They value the tutor system that provides a contact for personal support. The tutor is also central to the recently introduced system for monitoring academic progress. This is more rigorous than previous systems, and is designed to make a positive contribution to raising academic standards further.

84. Students respond well in class. Teaching in the sixth form is good. The quantity of work set is adequate and at an appropriate level. Subjects offer a wide range of learning opportunities using a range of opportunities and materials. There is insufficient space for quiet private study. Students respond positively and confidently creating a productive working atmosphere. They discuss issues within groups, deliver presentations to the class and offer critical but supportive comments. Where subjects demand they use number skills to analyse and evaluate data, and they have sound information technology skills.
85. A programme is in place for all students to increase their skills and obtain a qualification in information technology. This has been incorporated within the existing general studies programme and has added additional opportunities for accreditation. Results in this area fell last year. Initial analysis has already highlighted the need to further develop the students' skills in mathematical reasoning and extended writing.
86. The smaller group size of sixth form classes increases the cost per student beyond that of pre 16 students. Financially, it requires additional resources from other year groups. Sixth form students make a significant contribution to school life. They are active in the community through the Youth Award programme and support younger students in school through the 'buddy scheme'. School managers have made the decision to support the sixth form on broad educational grounds.

SPEECH AND LANGUAGE RESOURCE

87. The school's provision for students with severe speech and language disorders and difficulties is a major strength of the school. Currently there are fourteen students from Years 7-11 with speech and language disorders on roll. All have a statement of special educational needs. Students attending the provision are with mainstream classes for most of the timetable, but receive some separate teaching and individual speech and language therapy according to their particular needs. Management of the speech and language provision is an integral part of the school's overall provision for students with special educational needs. In 2000, all students from the provision gained at least one A – G in their GCSE courses.
88. Students attending the speech and language resource make good progress against the individual targets set for them because they are taught well. The special educational needs co-ordinator, and the specialist staff who work with her, set suitable targets. Most teachers in other subject areas are aware of

these and use these targets when planning lessons. Some teachers are very sensitive to individual needs and ensure the students' success in the lesson. The quiet, but effective, support provided by learning support assistants makes a major contribution to the students' progress. The speech and language therapist assesses their speech and language needs very carefully. Records show good progress in developing communication skills over time.

89. This good progress is evident also in mainstream lessons, because students can apply their skills to the demands of the lesson or subject. Examples of this were seen in geography, art, drama, science and design and technology. A number of students participate well in lessons and are confident when addressing a class or group, despite their particular difficulties. In some cases, written presentation in lessons across the curriculum is of a low standard. Handwriting, spelling and the skills of how to organise work are taught to students in their lessons with the special needs staff. However, they do not always use these skills consistently in other lessons. Their teachers do not always insist on careful presentation and marking does not always give constructive feedback as to how the work can be improved. The students show positive attitudes to their learning and their behaviour is consistently good. Students from the speech and language resource participate fully in the life of the school and they mix well with their peers.
90. The effective management of the provision makes a positive contribution to the students' progress. Support staff, who are well trained and clear about their roles, are deployed to good effect. The school values the contribution of the speech and language therapist and other specialist staff and uses their advice effectively in planning and teaching. Students' work is matched to their assessed needs and the targets set for them in their individual education plans. The school involves parents and external agencies appropriately in reviews of students' progress. The provision would be improved further if special needs staff and teachers from classes where students are withdrawn were to plan work together. This would assist transfer back into mainstream lessons for the students involved. Suitable improvements have been made since the last inspection, particularly in the increased support staff levels, increased involvement of specialist staff, the development of resources and the use of individual education plans. There is still insufficient monitoring and evaluating of the effectiveness of the provision in all subjects.

JEWISH STUDIES

91. The school allows the provision of Jewish Studies for students in Year 7 and Year 8 of the Jewish faith who have been withdrawn from religious education lessons by their parents. Levels of attainment are not high. Some students demonstrate an understanding of how Maimonides' Thirteen Principles of faith relate to daily life but other students struggle with the concepts. All students have a clear understanding of the power of God but during the inspection very few students were able to compare aspects of Judaism to Christianity and Islam.

The depth of understanding about Jewish festivals is varied, with some students not possessing a secure knowledge.

92. Teaching shows very good subject knowledge. However, clear learning objectives are not consistently provided and the small steps that make effective learning possible are not always identified. There is no evidence of assessment or marking to inform students about their attainment in the subject, or to assist future planning of lessons. Teaching is therefore unsatisfactory. Management of the students is unsatisfactory overall, although the teacher does attempt to use a variety of teaching styles. In lessons where the students disrupt the lesson, learning is unsatisfactory and little progress is made. The Hazak programme of study produced by the Jewish community provides a good framework for learning but success in achieving its objectives for Jewish students relies on the quality of teaching. Although some able and conscientious students were observed undertaking the programme during the inspection, at least half the students do not value the programme. They are inattentive, often talk when the teacher is talking, and object to the setting of homework.
93. The subject is overseen by the religious education co-ordinator, who has strongly supported the teaching of the subject.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	190
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students	74

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4	17	39	33	7		

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 students

Students on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	899	155
Number of full-time students eligible for free school meals	147	

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	46	
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	127	

English as an additional language

	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	177

Students mobility in the last school year

	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	19
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	20

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.6
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.7
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	1999	107	73	180

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	60	71	67
	Girls	57	47	40
	Total	117	118	107
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	65 (65)	67 (66)	61 (59)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	27 (27)	34 (32)	27 (27)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	60	78	71
	Girls	55	54	54
	Total	115	132	125
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	67 (67)	75 (72)	72 (70)
	National	64 (61)	64 (64)	60 (61)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	35 (35)	41 (39)	39 (38)
	National	31 (30)	37 (37)	28 (30)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	1999	90	92	182

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* - C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	43	78	83
	Girls	59	86	87
	Total	102	164	170
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	56 (50.6)	90 (90.6)	93 (94)
	National	46.6 (44.6)	90.9 (89.8)	95.8 (94.1)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	39 (37.6)
	National	38.0 (36.8)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those students who achieved all those they studied	School	0	n/a
	National	n/a	n/a

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	1999	34	62	96

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	17.8	18.8	18.5 (18.4)	0	n/a	n/a (0)
National	17.7	18.1	17.9 (17.6)	2.7	2.8	2.8 (2.8)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate	
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those students who achieved all those they studied	School	0	n/a
	National	n/a	82.5

Ethnic background of students

	No of students
Black – Caribbean heritage	34
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	18
Indian	127
Pakistani	37
Bangladeshi	4
Chinese	12
White	798
Any other minority ethnic group	22

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	9	
Black – African heritage		
Black – other	11	
Indian	3	
Pakistani	1	
Bangladeshi	1	
Chinese		
White	42	4
Other minority ethnic groups	5	

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	60.6
Number of students per qualified teacher	17.4

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	28
Total aggregate hours worked per week	794

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78.2
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 3	23.4
Key Stage 4	18.5
Post 16	16.9

Financial information

Financial year	1998/1999
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	£
Total income	2,806,694
Total expenditure	2,772,807
Expenditure per pupil	2,624
Balance brought forward from previous year	-25,340
Balance carried forward to next year	8,547

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1054
Number of questionnaires returned	155

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	71	72	10	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	54	86	9	3	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	34	83	26	6	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	29	80	30	14	2
The teaching is good.	31	100	9	2	10
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	38	68	39	7	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	64	71	13	4	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	70	75	7	2	0
The school works closely with parents.	29	71	40	6	7
The school is well led and managed.	32	86	13	3	18
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	57	79	7	4	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	26	66	24	10	26

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

ENGLISH

94. The majority of students come into the school with attainment levels in English that are similar to those achieved nationally. During the three years from entry to the end of Year 9, students make satisfactory progress in English. Over the four years 1996 to 1999 students in the school achieved results above the national average in National Curriculum English Tests taken by students at age 14. The results were above average when compared with schools with students from a similar background. The performance of boys, in particular, was well above the national average in these tests during this period.
95. Students make good progress and achieve well in Years 10 and 11. The GCSE results are consistently above the national averages for attainment at grades A*-C in both English and English Literature. Although girls outperformed boys in both subjects, boys have attained above the national average for the last three years. Over the last two years some of the highest attaining students in English in the school were boys. Advanced Level results are in line with national averages.
96. Standards of speaking and listening are high, and a real strength. Students are confident and articulate, matching their talk thoughtfully and appropriately to the demands of different situations. In their reading, students are able to identify depths of meaning in a piece of writing and produce a personal response to it. Standards of writing are generally high. In Years 7, 8 and 9 the majority of students write well, though the work of a significant number of students contain errors in spelling and punctuation. Writing standards are very strong at GCSE and in the sixth form where students write longer essays with a greater degree of accuracy and control. Students at these levels use the skills of literary analysis very well and are increasingly competent in using technical language. Some of the written work seen was outstanding, for example some GCSE essays on Arthur Miller's 'Death of a Salesman', on 'Macbeth' and on media topics.
97. The overall quality of teaching is good. English is taught by a team of well-qualified and hard-working teachers. Two out of every three lessons seen were good or better, with some very good and excellent teaching. Relationships between teachers and students are very good and students have a positive attitude towards their learning. In the best lessons, learning objectives are clearly explained to students at the beginning of the lesson, and the learning which has taken place is checked at the end. In most lessons, the pace and levels of difficulty are appropriate for students. Teachers plan lessons well, taking into account the needs of all students and providing activities that are well matched to their abilities. The department promotes speaking and listening skills in a variety of effective ways, including frequently organising group and pair work in lessons. In one lesson where the students were studying Swift's 'Gulliver's Travels', the teacher challenged Year 11 students to discuss in pairs the ways in which Swift

presented a satirical view of the law in the novel. The brisk pace, clear focus and time limits given for each activity enabled students to make excellent progress.

98. The few unsatisfactory lessons observed were all at Key Stage 3. These lessons lacked pace and focus, and the activities failed to challenge or stimulate students. This sometimes resulted in restlessness and students becoming distracted. Attitudes to English among students generally are very good and this helps them to make good progress in lessons. Teachers help students to develop their understanding of literature through structured activities and sensitive questioning. For example, a Year 8 class was observed reading and discussing Thomas Hardy's short story 'The Withered Arm'. Students used skills of inference and deduction to reflect on the feelings of the main characters in the story and they also made astute comments on the author's use of dialect, comparing it to their own language use. The teachers' emphasis on the importance of revising writing in order to make improvements is having a positive effect on the quality of written work.
99. Teachers set homework regularly and monitor it carefully. Marking written work is generally helpful, with constructive comments and the highlighting of areas for improvement. The department has developed an innovative system of assessment in Years 7, 8 and 9 which encourages students to reflect on their own progress in the light of teachers' comments. However, this system needs to be refined further and implemented with more consistency in order to sharpen students' focus on areas where they need to improve. At GCSE and at Advanced level the teachers use examination grades when they mark work, which helps students to know how well they are doing.
100. The department does not yet make sufficient use of information technology. For much of the year there is no access to computers as they are being used by other departments. The department makes a contribution to the enrichment activities of the school through theatre trips and visits to literary conferences, and through arranging visits by theatre-in-education companies. It also co-ordinates a scheme whereby older students help lower attaining students to improve their reading.
101. The department has maintained high standards since the last inspection and has made satisfactory progress. It is addressing weaknesses in spelling and basic skills through the development of specific spelling and grammar programmes in Years 7 and 8. These are not yet sufficiently included in the current schemes of work. The department has ensured that an adequate number of dictionaries are available in each room, and there has been some improvement in resources, but there is still a shortage of good quality copies of prose, poetry and drama texts. Accommodation is still barely adequate, with some rooms being too small for the large classes being taught in them, which restricts the range of teaching methods available to the teachers.
102. The management of the department is efficient and effective. There are clear schemes of work and the departmental action plan is effectively linked to the school development plan. A lack of clarity about time scales makes it difficult to

monitor the progress of the plan. The programme for monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning within the department is not yet fully developed or sufficiently systematic. The Head of Department is aware of the issues that need to be addressed and the department is now well placed to improve further.

MATHEMATICS

103. The school's results in the Key Stage 3 National Curriculum Tests in 1999 were close to the national average and well above those of similar schools. The percentage of students attaining level five and above in 2000 improved in line with the national increase, whilst those attaining level six and above showed an even greater increase. This was achieved because teachers had higher expectations of the students and taught more of the work needed to gain higher levels.
104. In lessons most Year 8 and 9 students are already attaining at or above the expected levels of attainment. Students in middle ability groups in Year 9 confidently undertake calculations of mean, mode and median and work out missing angles. Higher attaining groups are being challenged with difficult ideas on probability. Most Year 7 students are given appropriate work and making progress, but some able students are doing work that is too easy for them.
105. In 1999 the number of students who attained grades A* to C was close to the national average. There has been a steady improvement in GCSE results over the last few years, which continued in 2000. When individual students' results in 1999 were compared with their results in other subjects, they did significantly less well in mathematics. However, this difference was considerably reduced in 2000 because teachers used a greater range of teaching methods, such as identifying students who needed extra help and making sure they achieved their best. The concern raised in the last inspection that large numbers of students did not obtain any grade is no longer the case.
106. The attainments of the current Key Stage 4 students in most areas of the subject are good. High attaining groups in Year 10 are already successfully tackling work of GCSE grade C standard, such as trigonometry and standard index form. Those in Year 11 are practising the higher skills of algebra and calculations of compound interest. Year 11 students in lower groups are making good progress, particularly when teachers' expectations are high.
107. In recent years an increasing number of students have taken A-level mathematics each year. A further sign of the improving profile of the department is that numbers have doubled this year. The overall results have improved, particularly the numbers achieving the highest A and B grades at A-level, which have increased from 20 per cent in 1998 to 60 per cent in 2000. A small numbers of students failed to obtain a grade in 1998 and in 2000. The monitoring of students in the sixth form has been improved to avoid this in future. The present sixth form students work very studiously on appropriately challenging work.

108. Overall, teaching is satisfactory, and slightly stronger at Key Stage 4, where over half the lessons observed were good or better. Only one of the lessons observed during the inspection was unsatisfactory. In the majority of lessons, students respond well to the teaching and get on quickly with the tasks they are given. When teaching is less effective, students are poorly behaved, lack attention and consequently time is wasted.
109. Most teachers have very good knowledge of mathematics. They structure their lessons step by step and explain the work well. Particular features of very good lessons include the excellent match of teaching methods to the ideas being taught and the creation of a supportive ethos in the classroom where learning can flourish. For example, when members of a Year 12 class presented their findings from a survey, perceptive questioning by the teacher enabled them to see how they could improve, and led them to understand the interpretation of each other's statistical diagrams.
110. A range of teaching methods was observed during the inspection. This is an improvement on that seen during the last inspection. These included: practical work to develop understanding of trigonometry; experimental work to teach ideas of probability; work with 'LOGO' on the computers; tasks to develop thinking skills; and some investigative approaches to gradients of graphs. Students were seen working in pairs and groups and some were sufficiently confident to explain their work on the board. However, the lack of space in the smaller rooms restricts the range of teaching methods. In a few lessons students spend too much of the time in repetitive practice. This results in lessened understanding and too much reliance on procedures. For example, some able Year 11 students could use a formula to find the approximate area under a graph, but did not understand what the result meant.
111. To meet weaknesses identified in the last inspection, teachers are including more activities on using and applying mathematics. Most teachers are not integrating this aspect into lessons very well yet because the work is being done mostly as a separate activity. Work on numeracy is infrequent and does not properly develop the students' understanding. For example, when mental calculations are included in lessons, most teachers are practising simple recall of number facts, rather than teaching new strategies to the students.
112. The provision of information technology equipment is inadequate to support the needs of the mathematics department. Expenditure on information technology, visual aids, practical equipment and some books is not properly planned to meet the demands of the changes in teaching, the new examinations and the introduction of the national Numeracy Strategy into Key Stage 3.
113. There are important weaknesses in the teachers' marking and assessment practices. Assessment information is recorded, but is not used to track students' progress year to year, to focus teaching or to set targets to raise standards. There is little evidence in the teachers' marking of proper identification of the students' errors, or of comments to help students improve. In

some cases marking is not up to date.

114. The department is strongly led by a very effective Head of Department who has initiated noticeable improvements in the two years he has been in the school. He has correctly identified issues from the last inspection, plus some other weaknesses, and a range of appropriate actions have been taken. Some of these, such as the improved range of teaching methods, are already raising standards. There has been insufficient improvements to the schemes of work, or in the monitoring of the work of teachers and the progress of students.

SCIENCE

115. The standards achieved by students in the National Curriculum Tests at the end of Key Stage 3 are above the national average and have been over last four years. The standards are well above those attained in similar schools. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, attainment was well above the national average and in 2000 it was above the national average. Since the last inspection, the department has worked hard to improve further the performance of students who show a talent for science, and this has resulted in a significant increase in the number of students achieving higher levels at GCSE and at the end of Key Stage 3. Students, including those with special educational needs, are making good progress.
116. Results at A-level are below national averages. However, the number of higher grades has improved in chemistry and physics, and is now at the level of those achieved in biology. Many more students are taking science in the sixth form with the introduction of the new AS level courses. Insufficient progress has been made in improving the students' use of information technology at all key stages.
117. Standards in lessons observed during the inspection were similar to those attained in tests and examinations. Standards were good at Key Stages 3 and 4, and improving in the sixth form. Students with special educational needs make good progress, and are assisted very effectively by the learning support assistants.
118. The overall quality of teaching is good. In nine out of every ten lessons observed teaching was at least satisfactory, and in nearly two thirds it was good or better. Teaching was particularly good at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form. The science teachers have good subject knowledge and can explain scientific ideas clearly and accurately to their students. Teachers are good at asking students questions to test what they know, understand and can do. They use praise effectively when students achieve well and provide encouragement for others. In the better lessons, teachers adjust what they teach to take into account what students have already learned. For example, in two lessons observed teachers reviewed topics that had confused students in recent tests and carefully checked their understanding before moving on.

119. In the very best lessons teachers have very high expectations of students, challenging them with probing questions, stimulating their curiosity and the desire to excel. For example, one teacher inspired groups of students to work together to produce posters of outstanding quality to show what they understood about the topic. In the few lessons where teaching was unsatisfactory, students were not given enough opportunity to think of their own ideas, plan ways forward or evaluate their work. Some teachers are using effective strategies to develop students' literacy skills, but this practice is not seen consistently across the department. However, students of all ages are able to talk appropriately about their work in science.
120. Nearly all students are attentive in lessons and are keen to do well. They generally respond well to the teaching and concentrate on their work. This is particularly evident in the lower school and the sixth form. When given the opportunity students are confident about taking responsibility for their learning. For example students carry out research as part of homework and present their findings back in school. During a 'Science Challenge' day, students in Year 10 helped groups of students from Key Stage 3 and from primary schools to produce scientific games of high quality. Relationships between students and teachers are nearly always positive and students work well together, regardless of gender or ethnic background. In the few instances where students behave inappropriately, teachers usually deal with the situation quietly and constructively so there is little disruption to learning. Students are not always clear about the progress they are making. The use of the department's new marking policy and the setting of improvement targets for students are not yet consistent features of the department's work.
121. The department is very well managed and administered. There are clear policies and guidance for staff, and the head of department monitors students' work and observes staff at least once each year. Regular evaluation of standards leads to action to address weaknesses. The departments' development plan has insufficiently clear targets and the outcomes are not always adequately focused on the raising of standards for students. Good use is made of the accommodation and there are lively displays of students' work, explorations of social and ethical issues and the history and nature of science. Accommodation for science is generally good, but one laboratory is in poor condition and has a layout that impairs teaching and learning.

ART AND DESIGN

122. Overall attainment in art is above average. Most students come to the school in Year 7 with skills, knowledge and understanding at Level 4 of the National Curriculum, which is appropriate for their age. A small number of students have reached higher levels, and a very small number are working below Level 4. At Key Stage 3 most students make good progress in their development of skills, especially in relation to their use of a wide range of materials and techniques. By the end of the key stage most students have reached Level 5 or 6; and some are working beyond this. This is slightly better than national expectations.

123. At Key Stage 4 students continue to develop their skills in the use of a wide range of materials and techniques and by the end of Key Stage 4, 64% of students achieve A*-C grades at GCSE; which is above the national expectation. However, the numbers of students achieving the very highest grades is below average. In the sixth form the standards of achievement are very high, with a good proportion of students gaining the highest grades.
124. Progress in art since the last inspection has been satisfactory overall. Levels of attainment have risen and work to address the under-achievement of boys has been effective. There has been some monitoring of teaching and homework but this is still insufficiently developed. The accommodation and information technology provision continues to have serious shortcomings, although there have been some improvements. The ceramics room is continuing to affect student achievement because of the issues it creates for staff communication, health and safety and management of resources. The staff have been very successful in making the environment visually rich and stimulating for the development of students' creativity and making skills, but other forms of learning such as investigation, research, literacy and numeracy are not yet properly implemented.
125. Teaching is good overall. At Key Stage 3 teaching is at least satisfactory, and good or better in eighty per cent of lessons observed. At Key Stage 4 teaching in all lessons observed was never less than good. In the sixth form teaching was satisfactory in one lesson and excellent in another. The curriculum is well structured, and ensures that the National Curriculum is covered, that lessons are well planned and that the sequence of lessons allows the students to build upon skills from one lesson to the next. Teachers' explanations and demonstrations establish high expectations of students' in terms of safety, response, behaviour and relationships. Informal assessment during lessons is well done, but more formal assessment procedures do not always give sufficient information to students on how they might improve.
126. Teachers use the work of a number of carefully chosen artists, designers and craftspeople to exemplify styles. Students show an openness to the influence of these on the development of their own work. In addition the teachers' use of artwork and artefacts from a variety of cultures effectively develops students' design ideas and personal responses. For example, in a Year 8 textiles project, students' motivation and learning were supported by the use of various artefacts from several continents. In lessons students undertake projects that are designed to promote existing skills in drawing, painting, collage, printing, 3D and textiles. In Year 7 teaching includes a focus upon technical vocabulary which successfully introduces students to a good range of new words, but this is not developed in subsequent years. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form the teachers' very good subject knowledge enhances students' confidence in exploring and experimenting with a wider and more sophisticated range of materials and techniques.
127. The majority of students take a keen interest in their work and respond

enthusiastically to the tasks set, including homework. Students demonstrate a high level of respect for the subject and, in particular, the art work produced by other students. They listen carefully to instructions and work with consideration for others. They readily help each other when required.

128. The curriculum and resources are well managed by two members of staff who have undertaken joint responsibility for leading the department. Information provided for staff is clear and work in the subject is agreed by the whole department.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

129. Teacher assessment at the end of Year 9 indicates that students in the lower school are reaching standards in line with those found nationally at Levels 5 and 6. However, lesson observation and analysis of students work across the lower school indicates that standards are below the national expectation. There are insufficiently rigorous assessment strategies, and moderation between all staff is not done well. Students do not make adequate progress in knowledge, skills and understanding in the first three years. The development of design and graphic skills is particularly weak. Able students are not sufficiently challenged through the content of the design project. Students with special educational needs achieve well in relation to their ability, through the good work of the learning support assistants.
130. In 1999 only a small number of students from the Year 11 age group studied the subject to GCSE level. These students attained grades above those found nationally and better than their grades in other subjects. However, in 2000 when the whole year group studied the subject, standards at GCSE level overall were below the 1999 national average. Those students studying the course in resistant materials achieved good grades in relation both to their ability and to local education authority and national standards. In food, textiles and graphic products students under-achieved in relation to their other subjects in the school.
131. At GCSE level standards in lessons are higher than those attained at Key Stage 3, due to then greater continuity in teaching and a more structured course. Gifted and talented students are able to attain the highest A* grades and use computers effectively. Attitudes, behaviour and personal development within the subject are good.
132. The subject has not moved forward in any significant way since the last inspection, since there has been ineffective leadership and a lack of carefully focused teaching. Intended improvements in the use of computer aided design and manufacturing, identified in the previous report, have at best been limited.
133. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. It is better at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3. The most effective teaching targets particular students and uses open questioning to promote, evaluate and consolidate learning. For example, in a lesson using resistant materials, the teacher conducted a whole class evaluation of progress on the major project by each student. This was done by

highlighting the techniques and processes used, by questioning the student concerned and other students in the group using similar skills. In too many lessons, particularly in the lower school, learning objectives are unclear and not shared with the students. Objectives are often geared to completing the task and not to what students will learn through the task. Students do not build effectively on learning in one unit of work when they move to the next, because the teacher does not make the connections. This limits overall progress in the subject. There is not enough good and very good teaching which would motivate all students, especially the most able.

134. There is a lack of strategic thinking about development within the subject and no clear sense of what it stands for and where it is going. Consequently at a professional level, staff work in relative isolation. The long term absence of the head of department has led to a recognition of the need to change practice and bring documentation up to date. A useful start has been made in developing the schemes of work and policies, but further refinement is necessary, especially about how to ensure continuity and progression in learning. There is some good practice in the assessment of GCSE projects, where students are given help on how they could improve, but the use of assessment information and other data to target teaching and change existing practices, is not yet effectively used or understood. The development of facilities for information technology using computers, appropriate software and hardware is weak. That which is available is not exploited regularly or its use built into schemes of work. There are continuing concerns about the adequacy of ventilation and hygiene issues in one of the food rooms.

GEOGRAPHY

135. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is above the national expectation. In the most recent teacher assessments undertaken at the end of Key Stage 3, results indicated that both boys and girls achieved levels above the national average, with girls obtaining higher levels than boys. Results in GCSE examinations are above the national average particularly at the higher levels. In the 2000 examinations three quarters of the students achieved A* to C grades, and 21 of the 45 students achieved an A* or A grade. Girls achieve better than boys, Standards achieved by students in the sixth form in Advanced Level examinations are slightly below the national average but, above the national average for A and B grades. Boys achieve better than girls.
136. The progress of students is good at Key Stages 3 and 4 and satisfactory in the sixth form. At Key Stage 3, the majority of students have a very sound knowledge and understanding of geographic processes and patterns and they are developing skills of interpreting, evaluating and analysing data. The range of knowledge and skills was displayed in a Year 9 lesson, where students had to explore the viewpoints of four community groups in relation to the siting of a wind farm, before making brief presentations on the strengths of each. When challenged by the teacher they were able to provide reasoned arguments for their conclusions. In another Year 9 lesson, students had to apply their knowledge and apply evaluative skills to justify a decision on the location for a factory site using a range of variable factors such as transport and land costs.
137. Students with special education needs make good progress as a result of work which is matched to their ability and the support provided by learning support assistants. The majority of students are confident and willing to answer and ask questions, and all are fully involved in the lesson. When asked to work in groups students co-operate effectively with each other, listen to the point of view of others and reach joint conclusions amicably. For example, in a Year 7 class a well-structured exercise on map work involved students working in groups. They had to use existing knowledge of scale, compass points, symbols and grid references to write clear sequenced instructions that another group had to implement to locate the objects. Each group then had to provide an evaluation of the instructions, which was honest and relevant.
138. By the end of Key Stage 4, most students have a sound grasp of concepts and skills, the result of building effectively on earlier experiences. Most plan and research competently. During the GCSE course students carry out an extended study based upon fieldwork activity. They use previous knowledge and understanding to investigate a topical issue such as the building of a town bypass in a national park. The work shows that students have good understanding of the method of geographical enquiry, competently collect and analyse information, and draw appropriate conclusions. Students have very good skills in extracting and using information from a wide range of resource material, including textbooks and maps.

139. The majority of students produce written work that is of good quality and extended writing is well structured, featuring both analysis and evaluation. However, lower ability students tend to offer limited explanations using simple sentences. Students use statistics with confidence and can construct and interpret a wide range of graphs effectively. The use of information technology is limited, and as a consequence students are not properly supported in their studies.
140. The quality of teaching overall is good. In nine of the ten lessons observed teaching was good or very good and it was never less than satisfactory. The quality is consistent across Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form. In all lessons, the good subject knowledge of teachers is conveyed to students through clear explanations. Lessons proceed at pace and homework is satisfactory with tasks related to the topic. Good use is made of text books and additional written materials to reinforce student understanding. In a Year 13 lesson on hazards, local statistics were used to stimulate student interest on the incidence of crime, to explore the reasons for variance and question the validity of the statistics.
141. Teachers have high expectations of the behaviour and performance of students. They make good use of questions to challenge and develop students' understanding. Marking is inconsistent and few comments are made which could inform students of how they could improve. Procedures for the assessment and recording of student work need to be reviewed to secure consistency and provide further information to students on how to improve. The department has developed additional material to support learning, which is well matched to the needs of individual students. Group work using teacher specified groupings are effective in enabling students to support each other in their learning.
142. The management of the department is effective and all the issues from the last inspection have been resolved. The accommodation for teaching the subject is satisfactory. There are insufficient displays of the work of students. The schemes of work for geography are a little dull, but they meet statutory requirements. The plans developed by teachers for individual units are of higher quality and these should be incorporated within departmental documentation. Fieldwork is a strength of the department and makes a significant contribution to GCSE and advanced level work.

HISTORY

143. Standards of work at Key Stage 3 are good, and generally above those achieved nationally. Girls achieve particularly well in history at this key stage but there is a degree of under achievement for some middle and low attaining boys. Students have a good knowledge and understanding of events, people and changes in the past. For example many Year 9 students can describe in detail the life of soldiers in the trenches during World War One. Most students produce

written pieces of work that are detailed and accurate. The skills required to undertake independent research into history are less well developed.

144. At Key Stage 4 standards in history are good and above average. In 1999 the percentage of students gaining A*-C grades at GCSE was well above national averages and the 2000 results are even higher. The percentage of students gaining A* - G grades follows the same pattern. There was no variation in attainment between boys and girls in 1999, but the figures for 2000 show that boys performed much better than girls both in terms of overall standards and achievement. Most students, but particularly boys, performed very well in history when compared to their other subjects. Knowledge and understanding is a strength with Year 10 students, who are at ease, for example, when discussing the causes and consequences of the Great Depression in America.
145. Standards of work in history at A-level are good. In 1999 the A-level grades for the school were broadly in-line with national averages, although there were fewer passes at grade A than found nationally. Provisional results for 2000 indicate that the overall pass rate has further improved and the percentage of grade A passes are in-line with national averages. At this level students have a depth of knowledge and understanding that enables them to study very complicated periods of modern world history with confidence. Many students can give very fluent, accurate and detailed responses to challenging questions. They can describe and explain why different professional historians have differing interpretations of events.
146. Since the last inspection a number of weaknesses identified at Key Stage 3 have been addressed. The progress made by students is now satisfactory overall although the progress made by girls is better than the progress made by boys. Teachers regularly build on learning from previous lessons and there has been some improvement in the range, quality and suitability of resources provided. Students with special needs are well supported by learning support staff who, when given the opportunity, produce learning resources for use with students. However, as at the time of the last report, the range of teaching methods observed was limited. There is still too much emphasis placed on whole class teaching to the disadvantage of some students, for example high attainers keen to press ahead with their work. Although information technology features within the department development plan, there has been no progress in its use.
147. The quality of teaching overall is good. The best teaching was seen in A-level classes, where subject knowledge and understanding is very good. This allows teachers to engage in very effective discussions which challenge students and clearly develops their understanding of topics such as the rise of Stalin. In both A-level and GCSE lessons teachers are knowledgeable and experienced in preparing students and students for examination. Other strengths in teaching include the effective use of support staff, good classroom management in most lessons and the good use made of homework. Written work at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form is often carefully marked and students are clear how good their work is in relation to the demands of the examination courses. Despite the over

reliance on whole class teaching there were examples of very effective and challenging teaching which actively involved the students. Teachers use responses given in class to quickly assess and clarify levels of understanding among students and allow them to progress. In less effective lessons there was a lack of challenge, with tasks requiring little more than copying information into note books, or teachers establishing all the answers with the class before activities were undertaken by individuals. Lessons are planned, but the lesson objectives are often too broad and the purpose of the lesson is not always shared with students. Students who opt to study history at A-level and GCSE have a genuine interest in the subject and this has a positive impact on their achievements.

148. The department is very well led, and there are clear directions for development. At Key Stage 3 the revised scheme of work does not provide a sufficient base for teachers to plan their lessons; as it fails to ensure the building up of knowledge, skills and understanding across the key stage and it lacks sufficient coverage of local history. Teachers are beginning to monitor and evaluate standards and quality in a more systematic manner and some are aware of the availability and usefulness of data on the past performance of students. The department is only just starting to make good use of this information to bring about further improvements.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

149. When information technology is taught as a subject, standards are satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. However, the school is not meeting the requirements of the National Curriculum with regard to the use of information technology to support learning in subjects across the curriculum.
150. Standards of attainment at Key Stage 3 are good. Results in the most recent assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 show levels of attainment above national averages. This is a significant improvement over previous years. Standards of attainment in Key Stage 4 are good and the results in external examinations continue to be above national averages. This is also an improvement since the last inspection. In the sixth form attainment is unsatisfactory. The school offers no course in GNVQ or A-level in any subjects closely related to information technology. Other courses in Year 13 which involve the use of information technology do not provide sufficient depth. The school has recently introduced a Key Skills programme for all A-level students in Year 12, and within this attainment in information technology is satisfactory.
151. At Key Stage 3, the standard of students' work in handling and communicating information is usually satisfactory and sometimes good. For example, when students were preparing a poster advertising a charity event, they considered both the audience and the purpose of the poster, and the implications for the layout of the poster and the application of effects to text. Students made use of a spreadsheet to undertake a simple analysis of traffic flows from data gathered in a geography visit, and were asked to draw simple conclusions from charts

produced. However, there are fewer opportunities for students to demonstrate attainment in the other strands of the National Curriculum.

152. The Key Stage 4 Programme of Study for GCSE information technology is well designed in a series of assignments. For example, students, having produced a poster advertising a ski trip, could analyse and annotate the changes made throughout the creation and improvement of the poster. Students following the business studies course also make good use of information technology in handling and communicating information, and in modelling using spreadsheets, but this use does not cover the Programme of Study. The majority of students, who do not take either of these courses, have very little access to information technology. The school is not meeting the requirements of the Programmes of Study in Key Stages 3 and 4.
153. Within the information technology courses, the quality of teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good elsewhere. Lessons are carefully prepared with clear objectives. At Key Stages 3 and 4 these are based upon detailed schemes of work which provide an effective context for teachers' planning. Of the staff teaching information technology, only the head of department is a specialist, resulting in a lack of focus on information technology capability in Key Stage 3. The teachers provide effective support for students in the lessons, and good use is made of learning support assistants to support students with special educational needs. Teaching is well supported by an able and effective network systems manager, who by ensuring that the school's networks continue to function, makes a significant positive contribution to standards.
154. The students' attitudes to learning are generally good. Learning is generally characterised by good attention span and behaviour, mutual support and effective co-operative working. Students demonstrate greater independence and initiative in information technology lessons as they progress through the school. They make good progress, including those with special educational needs.
155. The role of information technology in supporting learning in other subjects has not improved since the last inspection. In Key Stage 3, some simple work is undertaken in preparing documents in English, and computer control is demonstrated in design and technology. In Key Stage 4, there was a good example of the use of student design using computer controlled stitching. In a sixth form geography session exemplary use was made of the internet and desk top publishing in the investigation and preparation of reports on the impact and causes of recent flooding. In this example, the immediacy and relevance of the investigation made a significant contribution to attainment, and indeed could not have been undertaken without the access to the internet. However, these are isolated examples. The school is not meeting the requirements of the National Curriculum with regard to the use of information technology to support learning in subjects across the curriculum.
156. Despite recent improvements, the school remains under-resourced in information technology and this is having a significant negative impact on

attainment. There is an ageing Acorn computer network, which is at the end of its useful life, and it progressively limits attainment as students move through the school. There are two other networks, one based on Macintosh computers and a very new PC network. The networks are used heavily and the opportunity for other departments to book time is limited. There are few if any computers in other departments. This lack of provision is preventing the proper development of information technology in the support of teaching and learning in other subjects.

157. The department is well led and managed. There is a detailed departmental handbook and schemes of work. There is a comprehensive information technology development plan, written for the purposes of obtaining funding for the school's National Grid for Learning programme. The information technology development plan is properly linked to the school development plan. The head of department regularly monitors the teaching of other staff to improve their teaching.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

158. Teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 indicate an overall level of attainment just below the national average in 1999 and just above in 2000. In lessons observed during the inspection, overall attainment at Key Stage 3 was in line with national expectations.
159. In 1999, the percentage of students achieving grades A*-C in the GCSE French examination was above the national average, as was the proportion of students who achieved A* or A grades. Students did as well in French as in their other subjects. In 1999, the percentage of students achieving grades A*-C in German was below the national average but a larger proportion of the year group was entered for the examination than is the case nationally. The percentage of students achieving A* or A grades was above the national average.
160. In 2000, the percentage of students achieving A*-C grades fell in both languages and was below national averages. Girls achieve better results than boys in modern languages at the end of both Key Stages 3 and 4. At Key Stage 4, in the lessons observed during the inspection, overall attainment was in line with national expectations.
161. In 1999, attainment in Advanced level French and German was below the national average. In 2000, results in German were above national figures and the number of students achieving higher grades improved significantly. In French, the majority of students achieved a pass grade, but only one higher grade was obtained.
162. At both Key Stages 3 and 4 most students show at least satisfactory understanding when reading or listening to French or German. High attaining students can pick out the main details from short passages in the text book and from extracts of spoken material. They produce pieces of accurate writing which display a range of vocabulary and structures. Overall achievement in speaking at Key Stage 3 is lower than in the other areas of language learning. The spoken

work of a significant number of students lacks confidence and fluency. They rely on the teacher for support when producing sentences. Lower attaining students, including those with special educational needs, understand simple pieces of written and spoken language and can communicate basic messages. In all lessons teachers insist upon good pronunciation when students read aloud.

163. Written work is well presented. At Key Stage 4, high attaining students produce written descriptions and letters which use a range of tenses and vocabulary. They write accurately and have a good grasp of the grammar and structure of the language. In speaking, high attaining students can give full descriptions and justify opinions. Middle attaining students demonstrate less independence in their writing and speaking. They can take part in short dialogues provided the task is closely structured. The majority of students, including those with special educational needs, make at least satisfactory progress. Students make faster progress at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3 because there is a strong focus on acquiring and practising the skills and knowledge necessary for success in the GCSE examination. Advanced level students make satisfactory progress. They can understand spoken and written material from a variety of sources and on a variety of topics. They produce extended pieces of writing which communicate and develop ideas and opinions. Spoken work is less confident overall but high attaining students write and speak with fluency and accuracy.
164. The department has made a satisfactory response to the issues raised at the time of the last inspection. The departmental development plan identifies appropriate priorities but does not focus sufficiently on the impact of actions on standards of achievement. Provision of text books is much better than at the time of the last inspection.
165. At all key stages, students work with interest, listen attentively and apply themselves well. Behaviour in lessons is good. Students respond enthusiastically when given the opportunity to work in pairs or independently. In a Year 10 German lesson students enjoyed the challenge of moving around the class to gather information from their fellow students. They organised themselves well and used the foreign language accurately and at length to ask and answer questions about school subjects. However, in a number of lessons, opportunities for students to work in pairs or independently to practise the language were missed.
166. The quality of teaching was good or very good in half of the lessons observed and satisfactory in the remainder. Teachers plan lessons conscientiously and their subject knowledge is good. In the most effective lessons, teachers use the foreign language consistently to challenge students who consequently make significant progress in speaking and listening skills. Where lessons are less successful English is sometimes used unnecessarily by both teachers and students. In the best lessons teachers make explicit the links to previous learning, students are aware of the purpose of the lesson and review the learning at the end of the lesson. In these lessons, teachers cover a range of attainment targets using appropriately varied tasks and resources. In a Year 8 lesson,

students were given a series of short activities which gradually increased in complexity, enabling them to move quickly from single words to the production of sentences to say why they liked and disliked certain hobbies.

167. The range and use of resources for information technology are unsatisfactory and restrict teaching and learning styles. At Key Stage 3, the scheme of work is not sufficiently linked to the revised National Curriculum. Procedures for formal tests are thorough, but the use of day to day assessment to inform planning is insufficiently developed. Whilst work is regularly marked and there are examples of very good practice, not all teachers give advice to students on how to improve their work. Teachers manage the behaviour of students very effectively. The quality of relationships between teachers and students is a strength of the department and results in a well ordered and positive working atmosphere. The quality of teaching and learning in the Modern Hebrew, Panjabi and Latin lessons observed was good. Teachers give students opportunities to make comparisons which improve their literacy skills and increase the appreciation of other cultures.
168. The team of teachers is well led. There is a shared commitment to raising achievement. The department has recently implemented procedures for monitoring and evaluating teaching and for the analysis and use of data to identify and set targets. It is too early to measure the impact of these strategies. Whilst the overall provision of time for modern language learning at Key Stage 3 is sufficient, in Years 8 and 9 it is shared between two languages. Evidence of overall attainment indicates that the present arrangements are not the most effective use of time and resources for the majority of students. The provision which is made for Modern Hebrew and Panjabi is appreciated by students. It reflects the value which the school attaches to all languages and cultures, and makes an important contribution to the school's work in preparing students for life in a multicultural society.

MUSIC

169. The number of students taking GCSE music examinations in recent years is too small for meaningful comparisons with national averages. In 1999 three quarters of the boys and all the girls gained grades A*-C. In 2000 3 out of 5 boys and 3 out of 4 girls gained A*-C grades. All nine GCSE music students in 2000 gained A*-G.
170. Standards observed during the inspection and the head of department's own assessments for the present Years 8 and 9, put standards of attainment below those expected nationally. For example, when recording compositions notation is very basic and mainly confined to using letter names of notes rather than the musical staff. The use of musical vocabulary is limited and there is little use of fingering technique when playing on keyboards. Attainment in Year 7 is in line with national expectations. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys or girls and the performance of students with special educational needs is equal to that of other students.

171. In GCSE classes students work at an appropriate level. They talk with confidence about music that they have performed and composed and they have good knowledge of music that they have listened to in class, for example the characteristics of Ragtime music. There is a very small group studying A-level music in Year 13, all of whom receive instrumental lessons and present well-rehearsed pieces, performed to a high standard. Information technology is not yet used to support composing or independent study.
172. Teaching and learning at Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory overall. This is due to weak classroom management, a lack of teaching of basic musical skills and knowledge and planning that does not always take account of the full range of ability that is found in classes. A lack of challenge for high attainers, particularly those who are learning to play an instrument, limits their potential progress. Questioning is not used sufficiently to determine what each student knows and understands. Insufficient singing takes place during lessons and little use is made of homework. Satisfactory learning takes place when students have a clear understanding of what is expected of them and work at an appropriate level. For example, three Year 8 boys recorded layers of improvised melodies over simple chords on an electric piano, discussed balance and considered the dynamics of the piece. There is insufficient evidence to judge the overall quality of teaching at A-level.
173. Relationships between teachers and GCSE and A-level students are very good. Students' attitudes are positive and they show respect towards adults and each other. In Key Stage 3 students' support others well when working in pairs and small groups and sharing instruments. The behaviour of students varies between satisfactory and good, but they do not always handle instruments with appropriate care. The department provides a range of extra curricular activities and the whole school choir of about 70 students, mostly girls, provides an opportunity for students of different ages, abilities and ethnic backgrounds to perform together.
174. A strength of the department is the wide range of instrumental teaching on offer to students, including Asian instruments such as sitar, tabla and harmonium as well as strings, brass, woodwind and percussion. The standard of instrumental teaching which was observed was good, and about 90 students benefit from lessons. Musical performances at events such as the Open Evening, Carol Service and 'Cabaret' are highly valued by parents.
175. Staffing in the department has fluctuated for a number of years. The head of department had an extended period of absence during 1999 -2000 and was unavailable for part of the inspection due to ill health. Little recorded evidence of musical performance was available. There have however, been some improvements since the last inspection. For example, more time is available for music, and there are very good quality instruments available for practical music making. Overall progress since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. The department's work is now supported and monitored by a 'link manager' who is a member of the school's senior management team. A formal monitoring system

has begun which has accurately identified areas for development. One of these is the new scheme of work being written for Key Stage 3, to ensure that all students cover the National Curriculum thoroughly and reach their full musical potential.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

176. There is no evidence of standards achieved in physical education on entry to the school in Year 7. However students make good progress and most are working at Level 5 or above by the end of Key Stage 3. The teacher assessment based on national criteria which takes place at the end of the key stage shows overall standards to be similar to those achieved nationally. However, the boys are performing above the national average, while the girls are not reaching it.
177. At Key Stage 3 the students perform skills consistently well and are able to select and combine these appropriately in ways that suit the activity. They make good evaluative judgements about their own and other's work and can suggest ways to improve. In basketball and netball they acquire a good understanding of attack and defence, have the skills and techniques to demonstrate this, and can recognise similarities and differences about other invasion games; for example, between soccer and hockey. In dance they plan co-operatively, with a partner, to perform sequences that show fluency and control.
178. In the main physical education programme at Key Stage 4 standards are satisfactory overall, although a small number of girls, with poorly developed skills and body control, are not achieving standards expected for students of similar age. At this key stage girls view the subject less favourably than do the boys, and very few Year 10 girls are following the GCSE programme. GCSE results were well above the national average in 1999 with 100 % pass rate and over 81% achieving A*-C grades. The provisional results for 2000 far exceed this figure with A*-G remaining at 100% and A*-C grades at almost 93%. Results in A-level are above the national average.
179. The quality of teaching in Key Stage 3 ranges from very good to unsatisfactory but overall it is good and this has a direct impact on the students' learning and their good progress. Teachers have good subject knowledge and break down skills into safe progressive steps. Lesson objectives and tasks are shared and students are given time to practise and consolidate their skills and techniques. Teachers make good use of demonstrations and questioning to establish understanding. The pace of teaching is good and as students acquire skills they are set new challenges; for example, small-sided competitive games in which students select and combine skills and tactics to outwit opposition. Effective grouping strategies ensure that students achieve their maximum potential and this keeps them challenged and motivated to learn. Teachers' good planning, organisation and use of resources keep all students actively engaged and on task. Support staff are used effectively to ensure that students with special educational needs are fully included and make good progress. Occasionally teaching does not allow students to be sufficiently active with too much time

taken to explain what students are to do.

180. Teaching in Key Stage 4 ranges from very good to unsatisfactory but is satisfactory overall. Most students are motivated to practise and improve, but tasks such as basic footwork and throwing and catching practices, are not always sufficiently challenging for older students. Teaching in all examination subjects is mostly very good, mainly because students are challenged to think and look for solutions to problems. The teachers' subject knowledge is very good and there is excellent use of real examples that relate to students' own sporting strengths and experiences. This results in highly motivated keen students. Students' behaviour and attitudes to learning are very good. They work enthusiastically and co-operatively, demonstrating good sporting attitudes and fair play. Relationships with each other and with their teachers are very good and independent learning skills are developed well. This effectively promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

181. The curriculum is broad and balanced with excellent extra curricular activities enhancing the programme. Students with special educational needs are supported well, and talented and gifted students have appropriate routes into clubs and representative teams. Information technology is not yet sufficiently used in physical education. There is good ongoing assessment in lessons, and examination theory work is marked constructively. However, schemes of work are skill based and the learning objectives do not link to the levels in the National Curriculum.

182. Subject leadership in the department is good and communication is effective. The subject development plan satisfactorily links to the school development plan but the targets for improvement are not sufficiently focused on raising standards. The timetable rotation has an adverse effect on continuity and progression, as the same teacher does not teach the students every week. Use of the sports hall for dance is inappropriate as it is too cold and the acoustics are not suitable for use of music.
183. Since the last inspection the department has made good progress. Examination courses have been effectively introduced, differentiation is good in most lessons and staff teach across all aspects of the subject. There is effective communication with senior management through the link manager.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

184. Standards of achievement in Key Stages 3 and 4 are satisfactory overall, but they are unsatisfactory Post 16.
185. On entry to the school students are attaining below the expected levels. However, they make good progress in the first few weeks at the school, and by the second half of the term many have already made up lost ground. They are able to describe some religious beliefs and festivals and recognise a variety of faiths. By November half of the Year 7 students are attaining at Level 4 in terms of knowing and understanding about a range of faiths. These students are beginning to compare religions and have an improved understanding of what belonging to a religious group involves. For example they make links between Christmas, Chanuka and Divali. There is little evidence of student progress in terms of evaluating and discussing religious beliefs before Year 9. However, Year 9 students who study contemporary moral issues make very good progress in relation to this part of the curriculum, and this suggests that good work in respect of values and attitudes has taken place in the previous two years. Able students achieve Level 6 by the end of their first term. They can relate contemporary issues to their lives and to the lives of others, for example in relation to euthanasia. Most students achieve Levels 4 to 5. They use their experience to answer difficult questions and include some religious teaching in their answers. Work on the homeless provides good examples of this. All students have a good to excellent knowledge of Judaism and most have a satisfactory knowledge of Christianity. Examples of good work were seen on festivals in Years 7 and 8 and creation stories in Year 7.
186. At Key Stage 4 standards vary from GCSE grades A* to G. Overall there is very good progress from Year 9. Students are able to write extended answers that demonstrate knowledge, understanding and evaluation. They handle sensitive issues well, for example on the life of a Jewish person living in Britain, and appreciate some of the advantages and disadvantages of their life style. More able students produce well argued responses that balance a variety of opinions. The 1999 GCSE group achieved 53.3% A* to C grades, which is a little below the national average but very good in terms of the school's overall performance.

Sixth form students have a half term module on religion in the media for part of general studies. They are working within the A-level general studies range of C to E in terms of the religious education observed. Lack of time for the subject in the sixth form means that standards in RE are lower than the national expectation.

187. Throughout the school the quality of teaching in religious education is good overall. Planning is very good and relates to the locally agreed syllabus. It provides for consistency in teaching. Learning support assistants are involved in planning and clear learning objectives are used effectively in most lessons. The subject uses a variety of teaching and learning styles. There are high expectations of students and good quality, appropriate resources are used effectively. The teachers are skilful in ensuring that the needs of all students are met in their lessons and therefore able students and those with special educational needs make good progress. Overall teachers have good subject knowledge and they set appropriate homework. The department has good strategies in place to monitor homework. The subject makes a significant contribution to the development of literacy in school through the use of appropriate vocabulary and a variety of writing styles.
188. The department is well managed and non-specialist staff are supported effectively. Marking and assessment are weak and in need of development, although students' self -assessment of their performance is good and used to inform planning. The development of the subject in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form is difficult as the department is understaffed. There is insufficient curriculum time to deliver the full GCSE course and sixth form provision. While the school meets the legal requirement for religious education in Key Stages 3 and 4 it fails to do so in the sixth form.
189. The subject makes a good contribution to the moral, social and cultural development of students. The provision for the multicultural development of students and the promotion of racial harmony and mutual respect are strengths. Good progress has been made since the last inspection on all issues with the exception of sixth form provision and the need for an additional teacher.

OTHER SUBJECTS INCLUDED IN THE INSPECTION

BUSINESS EDUCATION

190. Results in GCSE are well above the national average particularly at the higher levels. Boys achieve better than girls. Standards achieved by students in the sixth form are slightly above the national average but, are marginally below the average A and B grades. Girls achieve better than boys at this level.

191. The progress of students is good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. At Key Stage 4, the majority of students have a very sound knowledge and understanding of business concepts and terminology and they are challenged to apply this understanding continually. This was illustrated in a Year 11 lesson where students could clearly explain the financial problems linked to the Royal Armouries Centre. Having been given the task of examining the marketing strategy and conducting market research, they concluded that the target market was too narrow with an emphasis on family groups. Students suggested other target audiences and were able to confidently predict potential effects on income, cost and future investment requirements.
192. In the sixth form students continue to develop their knowledge and understanding and enhance their analytical and evaluative skills. In a Year 13 lesson, students had been provided with statistical data on the economy and they were able to accurately identify the position of the economy in terms of the trade cycle. They then illustrated a sound understanding of the linkages between and consequences of government actions as they confidently predicted the impact of changes in fiscal and monetary policies on inflation and unemployment.
193. The majority of students are confident, fully involved in the lesson and groups of students co-operate effectively to support mutual learning. For example in a year 12 class, small groups of students had been asked to research differing parts of the labour market. They successfully identified key points, gave brief presentations to the class and provided summaries of key points for other students.
194. Students are numerate, using graphs, charts and mathematical calculations in their work. They use information and communication technology extensively and effectively. This competent use of computers allows students to work on their own accessing material as needed and enhancing the quality and presentation of business reports. The majority of students produce written work of good quality and extended writing is well structured, but some sixth form students fail to explain their ideas in sufficient depth.
195. In three of the four lessons observed teaching was good or very good and it was never less than satisfactory. In the better lessons, the good subject knowledge of teachers is conveyed to students through clear explanations. Lessons proceed at pace with high expectations of student achievement, which provide the basis for good relationships. Tasks vary and good use of information and communication technology develops independent learning. Homework is thoughtful and related to the topic. Good use is made of additional written materials to reinforce student understanding. Marking is good with additional comments on marked work that inform students how to improve.
196. The management of the department is effective and all the issues from the last inspection have been resolved. The new accommodation for teaching the subject is good and evolving displays such as key words, both support learning and enhance the classroom environment. Schemes of work are comprehensive. The use of visits extends the range of learning opportunities and stimulates

student learning. Effective assessment and recording schemes have been evolved to support the requirements of the courses and provide students with informative comments on how to improve. As the department expands, effective monitoring and support systems need to be considered and implemented.

DRAMA

197. It was only possible to see three drama lessons during the week of the inspection. Further evidence came from looking at the department's documentation, and interviewing the head of department.
198. Results at both GCSE and A-level are good. The GCSE results are above the national average, and students achieve higher standards than the average in other subjects. Standards seen in the lessons during the inspection were very high. The students demonstrate an impressive range of drama skills. They are generally confident when performing, and creative in formulating ideas. They use mime well, with carefully observed and detailed movements. They negotiate well in groups, and perform improvisations skilfully. They can analyse their own and each other's work. The student's attitudes towards the subject are very good. They are enthusiastic, follow instructions and behave well. They co-operate effectively with each other. As well as speaking confidently they listen well. They use the space in the drama studio or the hall in a very disciplined manner. They are generous and appreciative about each others' work.
199. The quality of teaching is very good overall and varies from good to excellent. The teachers manage the classes very well. A particular strength is the way in which they make the students feel confident about expression and performance. In two lessons where issues of self-esteem were the basis for improvised performance the students felt able to include sensitive thoughts and feelings, in the knowledge that they were not vulnerable to adverse reaction from other students. The teachers have a very good subject knowledge, and model dramatic techniques very effectively. The lessons are challenging, and there are high expectations of the students.
200. The department has started to develop statements of assessment at Key Stage 3, so that the teachers can more accurately assess progress, and students can understand what they have to do to improve. The subject makes a significant contribution to the personal and social development of the students. Drama is very strongly led and managed, is well resourced, and has the use of a good drama studio. However, when two lessons are taking place simultaneously one has to be based in the hall. This provides a reasonable space, but cannot be used at various times of the year, mainly when examinations are taking place, and the drama has to move to a hut.

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL EDUCATION (PSE)

201. PSE is highly valued by students and parents, it is delivered by a specialist team of experienced teachers with strong support from specialists such as the police,

health and prison services. All teaching seen was at least good with the majority being very good and some outstanding. Teachers demonstrate an excellent knowledge of PSE issues and a consistent approach. There is a strong emphasis on active learning, enquiry and discussion to develop skills, knowledge, values and concepts. The use of information technology is not sufficiently developed. Ground rules are developed and consistently applied with students. Learning objectives are clear and students are aware of what they are learning and why. Teachers and visiting specialists have high but realistic expectations of the students.

202. The teaching is effective in meeting the needs of students with special educational needs. Procedures for special needs and gifted and talented students are outlined in the department handbook. A good example of support for a student with learning difficulties was seen when a teacher acknowledged progress towards and the achievement of specific targets set for the lesson. Other teachers challenged gifted and talented students through specific questioning and learning about the theory of knowledge acquisition.
203. Positive self-image and self-esteem is central to the learning. Students demonstrate high levels of respect and support for each other. This was best seen in a Year 8 lesson when students were able to speak openly about their families and their personal feelings. Students offered very effective peer support to those who found it very emotionally challenging to speak about personal issues associated with divorce, bereavement and disability.
204. Students are able to demonstrate their learning in PSE in other areas of the school. Students develop very good speaking and listening skills. Key skills are identified and recorded. Tolerance and respect for different religions and cultures is fostered. Students show very high levels of interest in PSE lessons.
205. At Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 students are appropriately challenged by the stimulating weekly PSE programme. PSE is not part of the post 16 provision. Schemes of work for Years 7-11 are comprehensive. They offer high quality and a wide range of learning opportunities in both key stages 3 and 4. All the activities are relevant to the students. Sex and drugs education is taught very effectively in PSE lessons. The curriculum offers excellent opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Careers education is delivered during PSE lessons, and further development is planned to meet the citizenship requirements for citizenship by 2002. The PSE department is well placed to address some of the development that has been identified, but further whole school activity will be required to meet all requirements of citizenship, particularly for community involvement and financial issues.
206. PSE lays the foundations for the work of the pastoral teams and systems for care within in the school. Priorities for particular year groups are identified in discussion with pastoral support teams and the PSE programme adapted accordingly. Issues concerning rights and responsibilities, health, sexuality, personal well being, human rights, parenting, citizenship and the law are well covered in schemes of work.

207. The teaching team is managed by an inspirational co-ordinator who is respected by staff and students and is an excellent role model. She offers excellent support in all aspects of the subject. Teachers new to teaching PSE receive appropriate and ongoing development and support. Monitoring of teaching and self-evaluation has identified strengths and appropriate areas for development, which are reflected in a good department development plan. Departmental meetings have a clear focus on the development of teaching and learning. Monitoring of teaching has started but does not yet include all teachers of PSE.

YOUTH AWARD

208. The enrichment programme in the sixth form extends the range of learning opportunities, and includes such diverse 'challenges' as the study of Japanese or ten pin bowling. The programme is accredited using the Youth Award Scheme. All students in the sixth form are registered and in previous years all have gained the gold award, with half of the students entered going on to gain the universities award. Currently all students are registered for, and are expected to achieve, the universities award. It was not possible to observe any teaching during the inspection mainly because many of the activities take place off site. Discussion with both the co-ordinator for the programme and students confirmed that the programme broadens educational experiences, develops key skills, promotes independence in learning and helps prepare students for higher education and employment. Students have some difficulty in gathering, collating and recording evidence of their achievements in order to claim the award. This is particularly the case in Year 12 where students are now following a greater number of the new AS Level courses than was previously the case, and consequently they feel that there are more important demands on their time. To ensure completion of portfolios of evidence a considerable amount of teacher support is required. The co-ordinator, who is highly committed to the programme, is well qualified and organised. However, the task of monitoring and assessing student performance in this area is extremely demanding, as it involves all students, and there is currently insufficient additional staffing time available.