

INSPECTION REPORT

EARLS HIGH SCHOOL

Halesowen

LEA area: Dudley

Unique reference number:103860

Headteacher: Mr Tom Johnston

Reporting inspector: Mr John D Collins
8163

Dates of inspection: 25 – 28 September 2000

Inspection number: 223879

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11-16 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Furnace lane
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West Midlands
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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Rev Geoffrey Johnston

Date of previous inspection: 23 January 1995

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Earls is a popular 11-16 co-educational school of above average size providing comprehensive education for 1176 pupils whose overall attainment on entry is broadly average. The school is situated in Halesowen, Dudley, and draws its pupils from its immediate geographical area and wider surrounds; it has National Sportsmark Gold and Sainsbury's Arts awards.

The standard admissions number is 230 (eight forms of entry) and numbers have grown steadily to this figure over the past five years. Around 66 pupils have a home language other than English. There are 213 pupils on the special educational needs (SEN) register of whom 90 are at stages 3 to 5 of the Code of Practice to recognise a range educational difficulties requiring external support from the school. At the time of the inspection, less than one per cent of pupils had Statements of Special Educational Need, which is well below the national average (1.8 per cent). Pupils at all stages of the Code of Practice attend mainstream classes. The school has, for 1998-2000, set many targets for improvement. The most significant are for standards of attainment by age 14 years; induction of new teachers; able pupils' and boys' achievement; equal opportunities/race relations; improving literacy; and improved provision for information and communication technology (ICT). It has high on its agenda the monitoring, evaluation, review, and development of all that it does.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Earls High School is a very effective school and has many outstanding features. The overall quality of teaching and the leadership and management of the school are good. Pupils' attitudes to work and to the school are very good. Because of these important strengths, standards are high and pupils achieve results which are mostly well above national averages and above the average for similar schools. In particular, the school excels at sports and arts subjects and has received nationally recognised awards for this. It gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- The leadership and management of the headteacher and key staff are very good.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good and contribute to pupils' enjoyment of learning, their hard work, and mostly very good behaviour.
- Pupils' personal development is very good and they have very good attitudes to learning. These, and the good teaching they receive, enables them to achieve well above average standards of attainment.
- The school makes very good provision for pupils' social, cultural and moral education
- The procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare are very good.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is outstanding in many ways.

What could be improved

- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve, particularly in the 11-14 age range, are sometimes not high enough.
- The achievement of girls at GCSE is significantly greater than that of boys by a difference far greater than the national average. This is an issue which the school has recognised and must continue to address.
- Provision for religious education could, and should, be improved. Insufficient time is allocated to the non-GCSE course in Years 10 and 11.
- There are insufficient learning materials, such as books, in the library.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Overall, the school has made satisfactory progress in tackling the key issues for action from the last inspection. Most of them have been successfully addressed. Monitoring and evaluation systems are now used effectively to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the school's provision for pupils (Key Issue 1). The curriculum for art has been reviewed and amended and matches the requirements of the Programmes of Study of the National Curriculum (Key Issue 2). Parents are now properly notified of their right to withdraw their children from sex education and the requirements for reporting to parents on matters concerned with their child's progress are now met. The great majority of parents find the reports very helpful (Key issue 4). The requirement to improve the health and safety of pupils has also been largely met.

The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is not as well balanced in its provision as it could be (key issue 4) because the length of the school week remains less than that recommended and the allocation of time for non-examination religious education still does not enable statutory requirements for the teaching of the subject to be met. There is still no daily act of collective worship though there is a well-planned programme of assemblies.

The school has nevertheless made considerable progress. For example, conscientious use is made of the results of tests and examinations to monitor the progress of individuals. Arrangements for the assessment of pupils in all subjects have been much improved but work needs to be done in producing a more uniform approach across the curriculum to enable clearer understanding by pupils, parents and staff. Considerable improvement has also been made in the provision of information and communication technology, though there is room for improvement in the way the Programme of Study of the National Curriculum is taught and used in some subjects. Provision for gifted and talented pupils is much improved.

STANDARDS

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

| Performance in: | compared with | | | | Key well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E |
|-------------------|---------------|------|------|-----------------|--|
| | all schools | | | similar schools | |
| | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 1999 | |
| GCSE examinations | A | A | B | A | |

GCSE results are good, particularly in the core subjects. Results in mathematics are weaker than in other subjects. This is because teachers' expectations are sometimes too low. There are also significant differences in the achievements of boys and girls at GCSE above those found nationally. Although overall attainment at GCSE is high these factors combine to reduce the overall achievement

to below what would otherwise be achieved. This is most noticeable in the proportion of pupils obtaining A* and A grades. Because the pupils achieve broadly what is expected when they enter school and achieve above average results when they leave at 16 their progress is good, and this contributes substantially to the judgement that the school is very effective.

At age 14 years, pupils' attainments in the national tests in English, mathematics and science over the past four years have exceeded the national average and the trend in the pupils' improvement for these subjects is broadly in line with the national trend. In fact, the results indicate that *overall*, the pupils at Earls are more than a term ahead of the average in their attainment. Girls' attainments are better than boys', but not much more than that expected nationally. However, the pupils achieve a lower proportion of the highest levels (Levels 7 and 8) than expected nationally. This is an area that the school should try to improve. The quality of learning for more able pupils in this age range is lower than it could be because the tasks set are sometimes insufficiently challenging. This is particularly noticeable in design and technology, religious education and mathematics. Even so, some work of very good quality was seen, for example in history, modern languages, physical education, and science. In the 14 –16 age range, pupils' standards of work are generally above average and work of good quality was seen in most subjects.

The school targets, agreed with the local education authority and the governing body, for the proportion of pupils reaching the 5 A*-C standard at GCSE are not sufficiently challenging and are regularly exceeded.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|---|
| Attitudes to the school | Very good. Pupils clearly are proud of their school and eager to attend. |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms | Very good. Although there are occasional exceptions, pupils generally behave very well in lessons and around the school. |
| Personal development and relationships | Very good. Pupils form constructive relationships with each other, their teachers and other adults in the school. |
| Attendance | This is good. Pupils say they enjoy coming to school. In general, they are punctual to lessons, despite the long distances they walk between lessons. |

TEACHING AND LEARNING

| Teaching of pupils: | aged 11-14 years | aged 14-16 years | aged over 16 years |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| Lessons seen overall: | Satisfactory | Good | Not applicable |

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.

Overall, the quality of teaching in the school is good. Teaching across the school was judged to be satisfactory or better in 92 per cent of lessons. Slightly more than half the lessons were judged to be good or better and about one in every ten was very good or excellent. In each of the lessons that were less than satisfactory, expectations of what the pupils could achieve were far too low and resulted in them making unsatisfactory progress. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is, overall, better than in Years 7 to 9. This reflects the greater challenge and higher expectations of what the older pupils can achieve.

The teaching of basic numeracy in subjects other than mathematics is sometimes in conflict with the methods used in mathematics. There is no whole-school numeracy policy and this needs attention. The school is making strong and effective efforts to improve pupils' literacy skills. The strategies include a summer literacy school, daily extra reading help for Years 7 and 8 pupils and the

widespread emphasis in all year groups on the use of key words in all subjects in line with the school's internal report on language and learning.

Assessment procedures are generally very effective in helping pupils to learn well. Regular and appropriate homework is used in most subjects to support learning. Pupils speak highly of the helpful written and oral comments made by their teachers. However, inspection evidence indicates that the marking policy could be more consistently applied to pupils' work, though the majority of teachers' comments make clear how pupils can improve their work. Some parents feel that too much homework is set for pupils and others feel that it is insufficient. During the inspection, the samples of homework seen (mostly from over the past year) were appropriate in amount for pupils' ages and in line with government recommendations. There was, however, some evidence that homework had not been recorded in pupils' homework planners and, in these cases, the planners were unsigned both by the parents and by the form teacher.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

| Aspect | Comment |
|---|---|
| The quality and range of the curriculum | The curriculum is broad and mostly well balanced. However, in Years 10 and 11 it provides insufficient time to meet the statutory requirements for religious education. For most pupils in Years 10 and 11, the option arrangements provide an acceptable range of choice. The curriculum is much enriched by the variety of after-school activities, trips and visits provided. |
| Provision for pupils with special educational needs | Excellent. The provision for special educational needs by the learning support team is a model of good practice in many ways. Elsewhere in the school, the provision is mostly very good. |
| Provision for pupils with English as an additional language | The needs of the relatively small number of pupils with English as an additional language are well provided for by the learning support department. |
| Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | Very good overall. However, to improve further, there is need for a more planned approach to pupils' spiritual development and the provision made for pupils to learn and appreciate their own culture and that of pupils from other countries and communities could also be further developed. There are very good opportunities for pupils to take on social and moral responsibilities in lessons, in the recreation areas and elsewhere in school activities. |
| How well the school cares for its pupils | This is a strength of the school. The staff take great care to know their pupils' strengths and weaknesses and to ensure that they are happy. Pupils acknowledge this and appreciate it. |

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|---|
| Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff | Very good. The leadership of the present and previous headteacher, ably assisted by the two deputies and other key staff, has resulted in an excellent ethos for learning in which most pupils make good progress. |
| How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities | Good. The governors take their role seriously and are committed enthusiasts in matters related to the school. They are clearly focused on improvement in provision and standards but are not as active in the strategic management of the school as they should be. The governing body applies the principles of best value extremely well. |

| | |
|--|---|
| The school's evaluation of its performance | Very good. The school has recently developed sophisticated and effective procedures to raise standards and ensure good pupil progress. These are securely embedded in all that it does. |
| The strategic use of resources | Satisfactory. People are well managed and motivated to give their best. Teaching resources are mostly of good quality but often insufficient in quantity. They are used well to promote pupils' learning. |

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

| What pleases parents most | What parents would like to see improved |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The high standards the school achieves • The good progress pupils of all abilities have made by the time they leave • The expectations of pupils to do their best • The values the school promotes • The school is very approachable • Their children like coming to school • Support for new pupils • Range of out-of-school activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More time at parents evenings for parents to discuss their child's progress • High achievers to take examinations earlier • Opportunities for closer involvement with parents • The amount of work to do at home |

The inspection team agrees with almost all the parents' positive views about the school. However, the inspectors found that teachers' expectations of pupils were not always high enough and could in some cases be improved by use of more demanding learning resources. The school accepts that the new meeting arrangements for the parents of Year 7 pupils do not provide sufficient opportunities for parents to meet with their child's teachers. Appropriate action has been taken to improve future meetings. High achievers in art are now able to take examinations earlier. This situation is kept under continual review. Over 80 per cent of parents feel that they work closely with the school. The inspection team was impressed by the frequency with which parents receive helpful written information from the school. The number of planned meetings per year for parents is high, and there is an open invitation for parents to arrange to visit the school for discussion about their child's progress. Home visits by staff are sometimes made. The arrangements for homework are mostly in line with government recommendations. There are occasional variations in this. Parents are advised to comment about such matters in the homework planner or to contact the school directly.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The leadership and management of the headteacher and key staff are very good

1. The school's well-considered aims and objectives provide a secure framework within which the school can develop. The new headteacher, in keeping with the philosophy of his predecessor, and ably supported by his senior management team and the governing body, is providing clear leadership to assist the school's development. Much of what is intended is achieved and there is a continuous drive to promote high standards. The school has a very good ethos, promotes equality of opportunity and seeks the very best for all its pupils. The school does very good work in preparing its pupils for the next stage of education and the world of work, even though it does not include such activity within its aims and objectives.
2. The results of internal and national tests are analysed thoroughly, and discussions are held with subject leaders to ensure that suitable and determined strategies for improvement are happening. Staff understand the role they are encouraged to play in the development and running of the school and know that their contribution is appreciated. Most know that they are able to influence the way policies are developed and implemented so as to enable pupils to learn more effectively and efficiently. They are encouraged to observe each other teach and to share ideas and practice. This happens in all subjects and the school makes clear that teaching and learning are at the heart of all its work. The quality of teaching is systematically monitored by faculty heads, members of the senior management team, and by subject specialists from the local education authority. Effective practice is shared and weaknesses are rectified. A very good example of this is in the development of the modern languages department which, as a result of such monitoring and support, has shown significant improvement in the quality of teaching and in the achievement of its pupils. It is now a stronger and more vigorous department.
3. Clear priorities and targets for improvement that are focused on pupils' needs are set, and agreed with staff where necessary; the outcomes are reviewed regularly. These procedures also enable staff to spot difficulties in particular areas of work and to predict the chances of pupils obtaining levels of attainment in the national tests that are in line with their previous achievement. One example of this is the follow-up programmes of support, guidance and work provided for those pupils in Year 10 whose score in the national tests at age 14 years indicated that they were underperforming.

Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good and contribute to pupils' enjoyment of learning, their hard work, and mostly very good behaviour

4. Relationships, between staff and pupils, and between pupils themselves, are of a high quality and create a supportive and caring atmosphere in which pupils flourish. Planned discussions with groups of pupils from years 7, 9 and 11 enabled them to describe in their own words what they liked most about the school. High on their list of positive comments was the very good relationship between teachers and pupils. The pupils' feelings were expressed in statements such as: 'they care about us and help us to do better' and, from a pupil who had previously had learning difficulties, 'when I first came here I was worried because I wasn't good at my work. The teachers here have all been very helpful and I am now doing really well in school and I did very well on my work experience'. Whilst the ethos of the school shows a clear commitment to raising standards, the relationships that exist between staff and pupils and amongst pupils themselves are very conducive to good learning and underpin much of the school's success. This was clearly evident in the great majority of lessons seen during the inspection.

5. The behaviour of the vast majority of pupils is very well managed throughout the school and is generally very good. Pupils understand the school and classroom rules and know what is expected of them. On the occasions when a difficulty arises with a pupil, the teacher and support staff work well together to minimise any potential disruption to the lesson. Apart from occasional isolated incidents, pupils respect each other's feelings and opinions and show a friendly interest in visitors. Pupils say that bullying is rare and, if it happens, it is dealt with very quickly and effectively by the staff.

Pupils' personal development is very good and they have very good attitudes to learning. These, and the good teaching they receive, enable them to achieve well above average standards of attainment

6. The personal development of pupils is a strength of the school. There is a strong sense of belonging and pupils are encouraged to become responsible members of the school community. They are aware of the 'Golden Rules' (responsibility, self-control, consideration for and co-operation with others) and appreciate the importance of complying with them.
7. There is a very good system of rewards and sanctions which 'accentuates the positive' and effectively addresses, when necessary, the need to deal with unacceptable behaviour. For example, the 'Going for Gold' rewards scheme enables pupils to work towards bronze, silver or gold awards. The house system provides a sense of being part of a team and motivates pupils to take part in and do well in the many activities on offer within and outside the school. House points are awarded for good work and effort and are valued by pupils as part of the 'you can do it' belief that is promoted for all pupils. Many pupils excel at art, music and sport and are spurred on to achieve excellence through this system.
8. Pupils respond very well to the many opportunities for taking responsibility. All pupils are involved in fund-raising events through the year, organised by the pupils' school council; the money raised is donated to charities of their choosing. They have a well-developed sense of responsibility towards other people. For example, many Year 11 pupils provide support and encouragement for younger pupils; they receive training for this in their own time from a qualified counsellor. Pupils from Years 10 and 11 help pupils in Years 7 and 8 to develop their reading skills as part of a paired reading programme. In addition, the whole school takes part in fund raising for charity through an annual 'red nose' day.
9. The attitudes of pupils towards school and towards their lessons are very good. They enjoy being at school and enthusiastically join in the activities prepared for them. They show interest in their work and are willing to apply themselves to the tasks set. Most pupils set out their written work with care, ask and answer questions readily, and are eager to contribute during lessons. When faced with interesting and challenging activities, they concentrate well and want to succeed. For example, in a Year 9 art lesson, pupils who were engaged in a painting project discussed in a mature and enthusiastic way how an artist's emotions could play a significant part in the style and techniques used in painting. Many pupils contributed to this discussion, learning and using inventive language such as gliding, layering, dabbing and stipple to describe in graphic terms what they could do and would be doing. Pupils with learning difficulties made excellent progress and were indistinguishable in their work from others in the class.
10. Overall, these very good attitudes to all aspects of school life make a powerful contribution to the good progress pupils make.

The school makes very good provision for pupils' social, cultural and moral education

11. The provision for pupils' spiritual education is good but could be improved. Whilst some opportunities are provided for reflection in assemblies and in some subjects such as English, art and religious education, these are insufficient. The school policy is that there should be planned opportunities in all subjects for pupils' spiritual development but, during the observation of 53 lessons, only two examples were seen. After having listened to a sad piece of music, pupils could have been asked to think about how the music made them feel, and to describe what they thought the mood of the composer might have been whilst composing it. In discussing the life of a child of their own age in a third world country, pupils might have reflected on the advantages and/or disadvantages they have in their own experience of everyday life. In science, pupils might have been led to wonder at the time it takes light to reach earth from the sun or the incredibly fast transmission of thought and feelings through our brains and bodies. Conversation with staff indicates that such events happen from time to time but are not planned for sufficiently to provide adequately for the range of spiritual responses that are necessary to promote pupils' understanding and appreciation of their lives and of the world in which we live.
12. Many opportunities are planned and provided for pupils' social education. As a consequence, pupils are polite to each other and to adults they meet. Lessons give pupils opportunities to work as a whole class, in small groups, in pairs, and individually. Pupils respond very well to this range of groupings and learn to work collaboratively as part of a team as well as to share ideas and thinking with a partner. Other opportunities for social education abound, for example in dance, drama, the arts and through the substantial amount of sporting activity such as mixed football, cricket, canoeing and sailing. Many joint works of art are attractively displayed and are of a high standard. Music, which is a strength of the school, provides good opportunities for pupils to perform with others through, for example, the recorder group, choir and chamber orchestra. Much of this strength comes from pupils' enthusiastic participation in extra-curricular music activities. There are many such examples to illustrate the breadth and high quality of pupils' social education.
13. The provision for pupils' moral education is very good. Pupils clearly know the difference between right and wrong and are expected always to display the principles of honesty, equality and fairness. They are strongly encouraged to have an awareness of responsibility and respect for self and others. The school promotes these important values through its teaching, tutor time and assemblies and in all its contacts with pupils.
14. The personal and social education course ensures that sex and drugs education takes place within a moral context and gives good opportunities to discuss ethical issues in general. Pupils are encouraged to raise issues that concern them and to speak out when they know something is wrong. The school has recently decided to sponsor a child in India, encouraging pupils to look beyond the immediate environment, to the world outside, raising awareness of other cultures. Pupils also learn to appreciate the achievements of others, listening attentively to the reasons why awards have been made and applauding to congratulate those chosen. In physical education, English, music, and other subjects pupils have the opportunity to perform or give their views or present their work for the appraisal of other pupils. They learn to accept constructive criticism as well as praise. The pupils are aware of the high expectations of their teachers and the ways in which their work and behaviour can improve still further.
15. Provision for pupils' cultural education is good and is supported by the frequent use of visiting speakers who talk about their religion, culture and sometimes about their travels. Pupils have regular opportunities to take part in school productions and musical events. They also visit art galleries, and the theatre. In religious education, they have opportunities to visit places of worship of other faiths in the area and elsewhere. There are links with Africa and with India through the visits of staff. There is good coverage in art and design, geography, history and religious education where pupils learn aspects of different cultures. There is little evidence that

pupils learn of the contributions made to the development of mathematics, science or technology by other cultures. However, the school celebrates the diverse cultures of this country and other countries through high quality, informative displays.

The procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare are very good

16. Every effort is made to ensure that good provision is made for pupils' welfare, health and safety. Clear child protection procedures are in place and conform to requirements. The school's claims to care and excellence in its partnership with parents and feeder schools are well borne out in practice. Even before pupils arrive at the school, they are visited by staff, in their primary school, and receive a pen-pal letter from Year 7 pupils. Great effort is made to acquaint the pupils with all the school has to offer. A good example of this was seen during the inspection when Year 6 pupils from a nearby school were being shown around. Their shining faces and the many questions they asked indicated they were clearly enjoying the visit. During the summer term, these and other primary-age pupils spend two days at the school to experience the routines of a big secondary school, including some lessons. Many primary age pupils have well-established links with most subject departments in the year before they arrive at the school. Every pupil is well known by at least one member of staff and usually more. Their progress throughout the school both academically and socially is known by a form tutor who, in the main, remains with them throughout their time in the school. Extra support and counselling are available for those who need it, and many have benefited from this. The well-structured personal and social education programme and the high quality careers programme also make valuable contributions to pupils' development. These factors taken together ensure that pupils receive many opportunities to grow into well adjusted, caring and responsible young adults who learn well and can take their place in society with confidence.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs is outstanding in many ways

17. The provision made for pupils requiring learning support is outstanding for two reasons: firstly, because the meticulous manner in which the progress of every child is monitored and the high quality of support provided ensure their continued progress; secondly, because the learning support in the school is exceptionally well managed. Great care is taken by each member of the learning support team to learn what is essential about each of the pupils they support in order to promote good learning. The targets set for pupils in their individual education plans (IEPs) are appropriate and very well focused. They are well used by most subject teachers to aid their lesson planning. Staff work very well under the direction of the head of learning support in association with subject teaching staff, ensuring that they know what the lessons are about, how the pupils' work is to be assessed, and which resources will be needed. They question pupils skilfully and provide sufficient assistance to enable a good pupil response without 'de-skilling' them by doing the work for them. The work of the department is also concerned with provision for gifted and talented pupils for whom they are able to provide very effective and motivating guidance and advice. Consequently, pupils requiring learning support, whatever their ability, generally make very good progress and sometimes outstanding progress through the school.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve, particularly in the 11-14 age range, are sometimes not high enough

18. The teaching of pupils in some lessons lacks challenge. This occurs mostly in the 11-14 age range. The problem is mainly because the tasks set for the pupils to complete are in themselves too restrictive, limiting the depth at which the pupils can respond. This was evident in some

design and technology, mathematics, religious education, and English lessons. For example, in design and technology, the materials used to support the teaching of the units of work are often devised in a way that prescribes the activities so as to restrict the creativity of both teachers and pupils. As a consequence, pupils have insufficient opportunities to engage with the design aspect of the work. The pupils, especially the boys, tend to stick closely to the examples given in the booklet rather than responding in more creative ways. Also, in some lessons, insufficient use is made of probing questions and so opportunities are missed to reinforce to the class as a whole what is good about the high quality answers that might otherwise be given by individual pupils.

19. Following an earlier English lesson in which pupils had worked closely with their teacher to analyse a poem, in a follow-up lesson they analysed a poem about the environment largely by themselves. However, because they had insufficient guidance and discussion from the teacher to make clear what was expected, their analysis was very superficial.
20. In mathematics, pupils' numeracy skills are unsatisfactory. A high proportion of pupils in Years 7 to 9, when asked, could not give correct or sensible answers to questions such as 'what is 30 per cent of two pounds (£2)', or 'roughly how tall are you in metres'. Those who knew their height in feet and inches did not know the relationship of inches to feet and could not give a sensible demonstration with their hands of what the measure of a foot looked like. In some lessons in Year 8, pupils were unchallenged, and in some cases bored, by work on elementary statistics which they had been taught previously in Year 6 (primary school) and Year 7. No attempt was made by the teachers to extend their knowledge or understanding of the topic to a level appropriate for their age and ability. Examples such as these were not uncommon and illustrate the findings of the inspection that expectations are lower than they should be for pupils in this age range. Most lessons seen for pupils in Years 10 and 11 provided a good level of challenge and the proportion of lessons for which this was not the case was much lower than that for the younger pupils.

The achievement of girls at GCSE is significantly greater than that of boys by a difference far greater than the national average. This is an issue that the school has recognised and must continue to address

21. The school is well aware of this problem through its extensive analysis of examination and test results both internal and external to the school. It has tried many and various strategies to improve. For example, extensive in-service training of staff on teaching and learning strategies, the development of helpful guidance and a revised teaching and learning policy, consultations with groups of pupils and parents, revision of the equal opportunities policy and practice to take account of new information and best practice, support for low achieving pupils and many other well-considered initiatives. The problem still remains because the school's analysis of underlying causes is inconclusive. The school should explore the appropriateness of its curriculum provision in the light of staff changes to ensure that this issue remains a high priority. In particular, ways of making achievement and success attractive to boys must become more evident through the work and ethos of the school.

Provision for religious education could, and should, be improved. Insufficient time is allocated to the non-GCSE course

22. A new and very enthusiastic head of religious education has recently been appointed along with another similarly enthusiastic new member of staff. The current optional GCSE course is well taught and successful. However, the existing schemes of work for non-GCSE pupils, on which teaching is based, do not meet the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus. The teaching for 11 to 14-year-olds and for 14 to 16-year-olds is based on these schemes and this, together with the seriously inadequate teaching time allocation for 14 to 16-year-olds, results in inadequate provision. Despite the limited allocation of time in Years 7 to 9, pupils spend time on activities which do little to promote real understanding of relevant issues in religious education: for example, the illustration and poster design in Years 9 to 11. The carousel of activities in Years 10 and 11, which includes information and communication technology, religious education and personal and social education, denies pupils equality of access to the curriculum. Provision of time among these subjects, and as a result the amount of religious education available, has no apparent rationale.

There are insufficient learning materials, such as books, in the library

23. At the time of the inspection, the very pleasant library had insufficient books and other learning resources, for a school of its size, to adequately support the various Programmes of Study of the National Curriculum and religious education. In particular, the inspection team judged there is insufficient material to provide sufficient challenge for the school's most able pupils. However, there was insufficient inspection evidence to judge the impact on standards this may have. The school is well aware of the need to improve this situation and has placed orders for a substantial increase in these essential learning resources.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

24. The school should now:

(1) Raise teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve, particularly in the 11-14 age range by:

- reviewing schemes of work to enable teachers' planning of lessons to develop greater challenge for pupils;
- making increased use of probing questions in lessons;
- ensuring that pupils' good quality answers are made use of to develop the understanding of all pupils;
(Paragraphs 18, 23)

(2) Continue to seek ways to raise the attainment of boys by:

- exploring and using ways of making achievement and success attractive to boys;
- ensuring that relevant information concerning teaching styles and pupils' performance when monitoring teaching are reported back to the teacher and form part of a bank of central information to be considered and acted on;
- sharpening the focus of lesson observations to include consideration of the attainment and progress of boys and girls;
(Paragraph 21)

(3) Improve the provision for religious education by:

- reviewing schemes of work to have proper regard for the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus;
- ensuring that an appropriate amount of time is allocated to enable the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus to be met;
(Paragraph 22)

(4) Increase the range and quantity of books and other learning materials in the library.
(Paragraph 23)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

| | |
|--|----|
| Number of lessons observed | 53 |
| Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils | 26 |

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

| Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| 4 | 8 | 42 | 38 | 6 | 3 | 0 |

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

Information about the school's pupils

| Pupils on the school's roll | Y7 – Y11 | Sixth form |
|---|----------|------------|
| Number of pupils on the school's roll | 1176 | 0 |
| Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals | 97 | 0 |

| Special educational needs | Y7 – Y11 | Sixth form |
|---|----------|------------|
| Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs | 5 | 0 |
| Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register | 213 | 0 |

| English as an additional language | No of pupils |
|---|--------------|
| Number of pupils with English as an additional language | 66 |

| Pupil mobility in the last school year | No of pupils |
|--|--------------|
| Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission | 11 |
| Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving | 15 |

Attendance

Authorised absence

| | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 6.4 |
| National comparative data | 7.9 |

Unauthorised absence

| | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 0.4 |
| National comparative data | 1.1 |

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

| Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
| | 1999 | 119 | 116 | 235 |

| National Curriculum Test/Task Results | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above | Boys | 83 | 88 | 77 |
| | Girls | 104 | 87 | 79 |
| | Total | 80 | 74 | 66 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above | School | 80 (71) | 74 (70) | 66 (63) |
| | National | 63 (65) | 62 (60) | 55 (56) |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above | School | 32 (40) | 44 (45) | 23 (26) |
| | National | 28 (35) | 38 (36) | 23 (27) |

| Teachers' Assessments | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above | Boys | 73 | 76 | 75 |
| | Girls | 97 | 87 | 84 |
| | Total | 170 | 163 | 159 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above | School | 72 (61) | 69 (64) | 68 (61) |
| | National | 64 (60) | 64 (64) | 60 (61) |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above | School | 34 (30) | 42 (37) | 28 (30) |
| | National | 31 (28) | 37 (37) | 28 (29) |

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

| | | | | |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
| Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
| | 1999 | 105 | 121 | 226 |

| GCSE results | | 5 or more grades A* to C | 5 or more grades A*-G | 1 or more grades A*-G |
|---|----------|--------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified | Boys | 47 | 102 | 103 |
| | Girls | 83 | 117 | 117 |
| | Total | 130 | 219 | 220 |
| Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified | School | 58 (59.1) | 97 (97.3) | 97 (99.5) |
| | National | 46.6 (44.4) | 90.9 (89.6) | 95.8 (95.2) |

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

| GCSE results | | GCSE point score |
|-------------------------------|----------|------------------|
| Average point score per pupil | School | 44 (43) |
| | National | 38 (37.1) |

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

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

Ethnic background of pupils

| | No of pupils |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage | 11 |
| Black – African heritage | 4 |
| Black – other | 0 |
| Indian | 24 |
| Pakistani | 20 |
| Bangladeshi | 0 |
| Chinese | 0 |
| White | 1050 |
| Any other minority ethnic group | 33 |

Exclusions in the last school year

| | Fixed period | Permanent |
|------------------------------|--------------|-----------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage | | |
| Black – African heritage | | |
| Black – other | | |
| Indian | 1 | |
| Pakistani | 1 | |
| Bangladeshi | | |
| Chinese | | |
| White | 37 | 1 |
| Other minority ethnic groups | 39 | 1 |

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

| | |
|--|------|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 67.2 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher | 17 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

| | |
|---|-----|
| Total number of education support staff | 4 |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week | 104 |

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

| | |
|---|------|
| Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes | 70.4 |
|---|------|

Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

| | |
|-------------|------|
| Key Stage 3 | 26.2 |
| Key Stage 4 | 22.5 |

Financial information

| | |
|----------------|------|
| Financial year | 2000 |
|----------------|------|

| | £ |
|--|-----------|
| Total income | 2,927,424 |
| Total expenditure | 2,970,616 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 2526 |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | 60,906 |
| Balance carried forward to next year | 17,714 |

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate 24per cent

| | |
|-----------------------------------|------|
| Number of questionnaires sent out | 1153 |
| Number of questionnaires returned | 277 |

Percentage of responses in each category

| | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|--|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| My child likes school. | 39 | 54 | 5 | 1 | 1 |
| My child is making good progress in school. | 42 | 53 | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| Behaviour in the school is good. | 28 | 63 | 6 | 1 | 3 |
| My child gets the right amount of work to do at home. | 24 | 57 | 16 | 2 | 1 |
| The teaching is good. | 31 | 64 | 2 | 0 | 3 |
| I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on. | 34 | 47 | 16 | 3 | 1 |
| I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. | 53 | 43 | 3 | 0 | 1 |
| The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best. | 67 | 32 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| The school works closely with parents. | 33 | 49 | 15 | 5 | 2 |
| The school is well led and managed. | 45 | 48 | 2 | 0 | 5 |
| The school is helping my child become mature and responsible. | 40 | 53 | 3 | 0 | 4 |
| The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. | 43 | 46 | 1 | 0 | 6 |

Other issues raised by parents

The inspectors received 32 written replies of which 20 were very positive about the school and 12 were negative. These matters, both positive and negative, have been addressed within the body of the report.