

INSPECTION REPORT

WALKDEN HIGH SCHOOL

Worsley, Manchester

LEA area: Salford

Unique reference number: 105975

Headteacher: Elaine Hilton

Reporting inspector: Terry Parish
15465

Dates of inspection: 20th-22nd November 2000

Inspection number: 223889

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 to 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Birch Road Worsley Manchester
Postcode:	M28 7FJ
Telephone number:	0161 799 5525
Fax number:	0161 790 5556
Appropriate authority:	The Local Education Authority
Name of chair of governors:	Aled Owen
Date of previous inspection:	22/01/1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		
Terry Parish	15465	Registered inspector
Saleem Hussain	9981	Lay inspector
Stuart Johnson	12475	Team inspector
Geoffrey Price	19214	Team inspector
Judith Tolley	17404	Team inspector

The inspection contractor was:

Penta International

“Bradley”
15 Upper Avenue
Eastbourne
BN21 3XR

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

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Walkden, with 1, 184 on roll, is a larger than average mixed comprehensive school. Almost all pupils are white. Very few have English as an additional language. The number of pupils with special educational needs is below average. The socio-economic circumstances of pupils are above average and their attainment when they enter the school is above average. The school is a Language College and is designated a Beacon School for the high proportion of its pupils that take up further education when they leave.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school as pupils achieve well, their standards of work improving from above average to well above average. In 2000, pupils' GCSE results are better than their previous attainments, in Year 9, predict are likely. Teaching is good. Pupils' attendance is above average. Their attitudes and behaviour are very good and lead to an orderly community that they enjoy working in. The new headteacher is fully committed to school improvement and is supported by effective managers. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Maintains very good standards at GCSE.
- Fosters a well-ordered community where personal relationships are very good.
- Provides a very good range and quality of personal and social education.
- Liaison with primary feeder schools.
- Uses data to establish how well pupils are doing and to help them improve.

What could be improved

- Evaluation and development of teaching and learning in the classroom.
- Time available for some subjects.
- Provision for information technology and its use by teachers and pupils.
- Accommodation for some subjects and social areas.

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 February 1996. Since then pupils' GCSE attainment has remained above national averages and improved broadly in line with the national trends. This year GCSE results are above those of similar schools. Year 9 test results have fallen a little overall. 300 more pupils have joined the school whilst very good behaviour has been maintained. Accommodation has improved and new building continues but much remains to be done for which there is no planned finance or additional finance available. There have been some improvements in the provision for computers but the school remains poorly resourced in this area. School development planning needs further improvement but the new headteacher has it in hand. Health and safety issues have been addressed but need further development. Religious education in Key Stage 4 is better. Teaching time remains below recommendations and best practice and this adversely affects the curriculum. The school has acquired both Language College and Beacon Status and this is leading to useful dialogue between this school and others. The too small monetary surplus in the budget, commented on in the last report, deteriorated by July 2000 to a significant deficit that hinders future planning. Despite this, school improvement since the time of the last inspection is satisfactory.

STANDARDS

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

	compared with				Key
Performance in:	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	B	

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

Pupils' attainment on entry, determined from Year 6 results and a raft of school testing, is certainly above national averages. Their attainment in end of Year 9 test results has been maintained above the national average for at least the last four years but is slowly declining. It is getting closer to the national average. Mathematics and science have closely followed national trends whilst English, though keeping above average until 1998, has been erratic. Compared to schools with a similar intake, English results in 2000 are well below average whereas mathematics is above and science well above. These anomalous English test results have had no effect on English language GCSE standards that are consistently very high.

The average GCSE point score of pupils has been maintained well above the national average for the last six years. The proportion of pupils who achieved 5 A*-C grades in 2000, 64 percent, is well above the average for similar schools. It is also higher than the school's target of 61 percent. A high proportion of pupils attain A*-B grades.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactorily overall in Key Stage 3 and it is good in the core subjects. They achieve well in Key Stage 4 where GCSE provides a significant impetus to their work.

Over half the pupils' work seen during the inspection is above average. In English there are good examples of writing, story telling and poetry in Key Stage 3. There is good analysis of 'factual' information in Key Stage 4 and pupils are very aware of the implications of how television and newspapers report news. Spoken work is very good across the school. In mathematics pupils have very good mental arithmetical skills. This is particularly well illustrated in multiplication table work in Key Stage 3 and trigonometry in Key Stage 4. In science, pupils follow instructions closely and perform experimental procedures well. Their written work is detailed and well laid out. They understand the implications of their results and can form conclusions based on evidence. The most significant weakness in pupils' work is the little evidence of any significant use of information technology. It does not go much beyond word processing and some Internet research except in information technology lessons. These are limited in time, particularly at Key Stage 4. Design and technology provides opportunities for some computer graphics work; mathematics has a spreadsheet module and English a word processing module at Key Stage 4.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils generally keep to rules, get to lessons and do their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Most often very attentive in lessons. Despite narrow corridors and general overcrowding pupils move around very well.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils work well in groups in science, music, drama and English. A School Council operates. Year 11 mentors help younger pupils.
Attendance	Good. Above average. Holidays in school time are unfortunately increasing.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

In this short inspection not all teachers were seen and some departments were visited more often than others. In total 53 lessons were observed. 94 percent were satisfactory or better, some 68 percent good or better, 11 percent very good or excellent and six percent, three lessons, unsatisfactory or poor. Pupils' work was also scrutinised outside of lessons and helps support overall judgements that teaching in English and science is good, in mathematics very good. The teaching of numeracy in mathematics, for example through multiplication table practice, is very good. Teaching to help raise standards of literacy is good in English and within special educational needs. The relatively small numbers of pupils with special educational needs have good support and gifted and talented pupils are well provided for. In music, the proportion of pupils receiving instrumental tuition is more than double the national average. The choir is very good.

In almost all lessons, teachers manage pupils very well and teachers' knowledge and understanding of the work in hand is very good. Overall, teachers' expectations of pupils are high and their teaching methods and use of time and resources are planned well. In the best lessons these characteristics stand out more and there is a significant increase in pace. Pupils are stretched and supported, cajoled and driven. They are encouraged to participate and do their best. The teaching of basic skills is satisfactory overall but the use and encouragement of skills in information and communications technology, within most lessons, is poor. Day to day assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory with the quality of marking patchy. Homework patterns are variable, particularly in Key Stage 3, and pupils often have too little or too much work to do. In satisfactory or weaker lessons any of the following may be present: insufficient attention to what pupils already know; objectives unclear; too much class control and too little pupil participation; scant attention paid to the individual education plans of pupils with special educational needs; unsatisfactory management of pupils. There are few weaknesses in pupils' learning where teaching is good or better. They work at a very good pace producing substantial amounts of work. They are well motivated, concentrate, show

interest and acquire new skills and knowledge well. Their understanding of how well they are doing is variable, not helped where marking is thin but improved by one to one support where teaching strategies allow it. Year 11 mentoring helps those pupils to understand their strengths and weaknesses. Pupils with special educational needs learn well when supported appropriately.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. Very good range of subjects in Key Stage 4. Teaching time is insufficient or tight for several subjects. Insufficient extra-curricular boys' sport in Key Stage 3.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good for the small number of children with special educational needs currently at the school. Gifted and talented pupils well recognised.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The very few pupils with English as an additional language appear to have no language difficulties and learn as effectively as their peers. Consequently provision for them is good.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Very good social and moral development. Satisfactory cultural development and there are good experiences for pupils able to go on trips and overseas visits. Daily act of collective worship not fulfilled.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Sound procedures for child protection. Health and safety policies sound but practices need further evaluation. Very good academic monitoring throughout and induction of pupils on entry.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	New headteacher is fully committed to improvement. The management of the school by senior and middle managers has significant strengths and is good overall. Evaluation of teaching needs improving.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors now fulfilling their responsibilities well. Inaccurate information made available to them in recent years has resulted in unsatisfactory financial control.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory overall. Very good use of data about pupils allows targets for improvement to be set and strategies to meet them to be devised. Weaker on evaluating and developing classroom teaching and learning.
The strategic use of resources	Unsatisfactory accommodation is used as well as possible. Financial resources have been insufficiently husbanded to meet ongoing needs. Provision for information and communication technology is poor. Best value for services and contracts not pursued well enough.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress pupils make Behaviour of pupils 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homework, particularly Y7 and Y8 Information about pupils' progress.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expectations of pupils • Teaching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Links with parents. • Accommodation / dining • Boys' extra-curricular sport in Y7-9.
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Inspectors generally agree with parents' comments. The setting and timing of homework could be improved. Pupils' reports are satisfactory although aspects could be clearer. Links with parents are developing. The school is crowded. Teaching and other areas are often cramped. A lot of specialist accommodation is unsatisfactory. Dining arrangements are poor. Extra-curricular sport for boys in Key Stage 3 is essentially restricted to teams. Opportunities are better for girls.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Maintains very good standards at GCSE

1. Except for a dip in 1995, GCSE results have been well above national averages since 1994. The difference between school results and national ones has remained about the same and the school trend is in line with the national trend of gradual improvement. 2000 is a particularly good year and results are also above those of similar schools. The GCSE pattern, over time, is of pupils' standards always well above national averages and most often above those of similar schools.

2. Though there is some fluctuation over the years, boys do comparatively well compared to girls. There is no evidence of either boys or girls underachieving.

3. National comparative subject results are only available up to 1999. At Walkden the following subjects did particularly well compared to national figures: English language; mathematics; combined science double award; design and technology; French; food technology; information technology and statistics. The following subjects did less well than their appropriate national average: history, geography and German. They also did less well if internal school comparisons are used and chemistry did significantly less well, in those comparisons, too.

Fosters a well-ordered community where personal relationships are very good

4. During the inspection week the weather was often wet. Despite this adding to pressures on the capacity of corridors and buildings to cope with the large number of pupils, their behaviour was very good. This was particularly evident during breaks and lunchtimes where many pupils formed orderly queues for food, found somewhere to eat it, or moved promptly for the start of the next lesson or activity. The 'fast food' provision by the caterers would generally foster a litter problem but it does not at Walkden. There is some litter and there should be none but standards are far better than at many schools, particularly one like this that is crowded, has a complex site and building works.

5. Pupils' attitudes to the school are very good. They are supportive in their comments, recognise weaknesses and use the School Council to air some of them. They also discuss any perceived problems with their form teachers. When asked how could the school improve, to make it better for them or their peers following through, the most common comments related to accommodation and dining arrangements. They are generally happy with their academic provision and enjoy many subjects. Boys would like more opportunities for sport in Key Stage 3. Most pupils would like to be able to eat food in a more civilised way and certainly girls would like better toilets. Year 7 pupils commented that larger and older pupils sometimes push them on corridors. However, pupils in Year 11 took the assembly about this to heart and no problems were observed during the inspection. Narrow corridors, very limited 'crush relief' spaces and a very full school are only possible because of the very good attitudes pupils have. These attitudes are also exemplified by how well pupils follow rules including strict guidance on uniform. They commented sensibly on this too. Most teachers apply the rules fairly and sensibly and add regulations about when jumpers can be

worn seem to have faded. On the question of girls not wearing trousers – pupils found this anomalous on issues of warmth and that of peer pressure to wear short skirts.

6. Pupils' attendance is above average. There is some evidence that holiday costs are persuading more parents to take holidays during term time. This is understandable but may obviously adversely affect the work of individual pupils. The good attendance of pupils, coupled with the fact that, for social and safety reasons almost all stay on site during lunchtime, adds to the strain on accommodation.

7. Pupils work well in groups. Particularly good examples of this were seen in science, music, drama and English. Forty-five pupils attended a lunchtime choir practice. Their singing was well above average and supported by very good teaching. Pupils asked for auditions to get into the Chamber Choir, they were very enthusiastic and well behaved. There was also a turnout of forty-two pupils for the lunchtime band rehearsal. They were well-motivated and showed good rehearsal discipline. The number of pupils taking instrumental lessons is twice the national average for this size of school. In science and English pupils are able to research work and create presentations for their peers who appreciate each other's efforts.

Provides a very good range and quality of personal and social education

8. The school provides pupils with good quality advice and guidance to help their personal development. All pupils receive an appropriate level of personal and social education through lessons dedicated to a wide variety of topics. Teachers with specific training deliver these lessons in Years 7, 8 and 9. This also introduces pupils to teachers they will meet in their academic subjects chosen for Year 10 and 11, building relationships and boosting pupils' confidence and security for future learning. Pupils' personal development is very good.

9. Many important topics are sensitively taught in personal and social education. These include: study skills, self-organisation, information retrieval skills and how to deal with bullying in Year 7. Such skills are built upon in subsequent modules in Year 8. Parenting and childbirth is taught in Year 10 within the context of a family structure. Personal and social education observed during the inspection was of a high quality. For example, inspectors were impressed by the quality of learning and whole class discussions about the potential medical and social consequences of passive and active smoking. Pupils in Year 9 demonstrated that they were able to identify many positive and negative consequences, mindful of moral dilemmas.

10. The school makes good use of external agencies and guest speakers to enhance personal and social education. For example, the police service is a very frequent and regular contributor to lessons and assemblies covering topics such as citizenship, crime, bullying and personal safety. A summer school provided Year 11 pupils not necessarily considering Further or Higher education an opportunity to attend 'taster' courses at local universities.

11. "Tolerance is well promoted in this school", is a comment made and supported by parents who are happy with the level of personal development.

Liaison with primary feeder schools

12. Walkden High school uses a very wide range of strategies to work with primary schools and provide information to potential pupils and their parents. This work is more laudable because Walkden is a very popular school with more parents wanting to place their children in it than it can cope with. There is no need to 'sell' the school.

13. The head of Year 7 has the equivalent of half a day to interview all parents of Year 6 pupils likely to want to attend the school. Around 60 percent of parents take this offer up and are well informed about the style the school adopts and expectations it has. In addition a 'road-show' visits all primary feeder schools before parents have to decide about secondary provision. This 'road-show' is unusual in that, as well as a presentation of key school features, enhanced by the use of computer technology, Year 7 pupils formerly from the primary school attend. They wear their uniform and are on hand to tell pupils and parents about what it is like to start at Walkden. This 'pupil link' is continued later on when Year 11 prefects visit primaries and the Year 10 drama syllabus allows pupils to take their production on tour around the primaries.

14. The head of Year 7 also visits primary teachers every six weeks to discuss curriculum issues and arrange any links between their teachers and specialist staff at Walkden. For example, there may be a design and technology focus to look at what skills are needed or art teachers could provide a workshop. Recent developments in the National Grid for Learning (Internet use) have also been jointly considered. Through Language College activities Year 6 pupils have begun lessons in modern languages taught by Walkden staff. These take part within literacy work in the primary schools. It is too early to judge the effectiveness of this initiative.

15. There are 'bridging' projects in English, mathematics and science where Year 6 pupils begin work in primary school that is completed at Walkden.

16. Summer schools have been successful. One for gifted and talented pupils worked with both Year 6 and Year 7 pupils so those primary pupils form relationships with pupils who will be in Year 8 when they arrive. Another, more unusual, uses money available for social inclusion to provide activities for pupils who may have difficulty settling down when entering secondary school. Thirty-four pupils were catered for this summer, some with special educational needs.

Uses data to establish how well pupils are doing and to help them improve

17. An assistant headteacher accrues significant assessment data about pupils as they enter the school and move through it. This includes Key Stage 2 SAT test results, Cognitive Ability Test (CAT) scores, internal test marks and Key Stage 3 SAT test results at the end of Year 9. This wealth of information is processed using a computer software package and presented to heads of department in a way that will best help them, for example to assist setting in mathematics or determining how work should be managed for a broader range of ability in English. Heads of department devolve the data to classroom teachers where it can be found in mark books as a prompt and check to professional judgements about whether pupils are working appropriately, or are doing as well as such data seems to suggest they can. Regular testing establishes whether pupils are making sufficient progress and form tutors have time to discuss progress with individual pupils when reports are made. The setting of academic targets for pupils, based on data, is less consistently done, though pupils acknowledged they were better and clearer in English, mathematics and science, particularly

biology. Reports to parents are twice a year, the first indicating the efforts made by pupils and the second also including an attainment grade. School guidance says that good reports will give targets for improvement. These are variable, some lacking clarity or sharpness. Pastoral managers target pupils whose effort grades have deteriorated and monitor future progress.

18. The data is also used to help identify gifted and talented pupils. Local Education Authority data is used as one indicator. Subject departments then nominate pupils on the basis of assessments they make. The school makes the final decision and works to the nominal 10 percent of pupils recognised nationally. The school goes further than most in actually following up this work. There is very good practice in many subject areas including advanced reading in English, special setting in mathematics and differentiated tasks in science. Provision is being made for pupils to follow a third language in modern languages. A high level of extra-curricular work takes place in music.

19. In Year 11 assessment data continues to be used, this time to ensure that GCSE results at least meet school targets. As these were significantly exceeded in 2000 it is reasonable to judge that using data contributed to the success. In October of Year 11, information on all Year 11 pupils is brought together: estimated grades, evidence of underachievement, grade C/D borderline cases, A*/B possibilities, pupils struggling with study skills (a part of personal and social education). Letters are sent to parents if there are particular problems. Two learning mentors are employed to help pupils with difficulties. Volunteer teachers take on two pupils each, in the C/D borderline, to help them. Senior managers see potential high flyers and those who are underachieving significantly about once per week.

20. Parents expressed at least satisfaction with the efforts the school makes to promote good standards of work and to help pupils attain appropriately.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Evaluation and development of teaching and learning in the classroom

21. During this inspection 6 percent of teaching was found to be unsatisfactory or worse and around a quarter to be satisfactory. The rest was good or better. The definition of satisfactory teaching is that it has strengths and weaknesses with the strengths outweighing the weaknesses. All teachers were not seen but inspection evidence also includes the scrutiny of pupils' work. Taking the quality of this into account, teaching is good overall. Older pupils perceptions are that half of teaching is good or better (some outstanding) and around 1 in 10 lessons are not good enough – or are weaker than the others. Parents expressed no general concerns about teaching though they said some aspects of it, like marking, are “patchy” and “depend upon the subject and the teacher”.

22. The school analyses GCSE examination results and produces ‘residuals’ which compare pupils’ performances across subjects. Where there are several groups taking a subject it is possible to provide valid comparisons between them. A review based on subject comparisons then identifies any problems. Teachers, within subjects, can also be compared and heads of department can use ‘the figures’ to open a discussion about classroom work. To a lesser or greater degree this is done by all departments in the school. There appears to be a belief that good results mean good teaching. This is a little simplistic and the parallel “poor results mean poor teaching” would, quite rightly, not be tolerated.

23. There is very little classroom observation of teaching. Other teachers do not take part in much peer observation to identify weaknesses or share good practice. Heads of department do not generally carry out their quality assurance management role in this respect and senior managers do little moderation of heads of departments' judgements. Some evaluation of teaching has begun in English and in modern languages. Historically, classroom observation may have been done but faded when appraisal ceased due to local and national problems. However, a planned sequence of observation of teaching and learning is going on in many schools and it leads to a better understanding of what actually makes a good lesson. As performance management unfolds, classroom observations of some kind are likely to become a key feature.

24. In satisfactory or weaker lessons any of the following may be present: insufficient attention to what pupils know already; objectives unclear; too much class control and little pupil participation; scant attention paid to the individual education plans of pupils with special educational needs; unsatisfactory management of pupils. These weaknesses are obvious to a trained observer, some to a casual observer, and could easily be picked up by internal monitoring. Advice, support, instruction or training could then be provided. In addition, a closer scrutiny of pupils' written work would bring all marking up to the standard of the best practice.

Time available for some subjects

25. The school operates a 24 hour taught week and, effectively, a four lesson day as almost all work is done in double sessions. The length is one hour short of recommendations for Key Stage 4 and was so at the time of the last inspection. More than half of secondary schools now operate a 25 hour teaching week and it is certainly best practice to do so. The national pattern of lessons is more varied, 5, 6, 8 a day, more some days than others, a continuous day with timetabled lunchtime, all quite often on a two week timetable. Four lessons is more unusual, lacks flexibility and only operates at Walkden due to sophisticated blocking of some subjects against others and subject rotation arrangements.

26. The most obvious casualty is information and communications technology. Pupils do not get enough of it, in a form that leads to continuity and appropriate progress from Year 7 to Year 11. This is described in more detail in the next section.

27. Another casualty is music. This subject goes from one lesson each week in Year 7 to a carousel with Personal and Social Education in Year 8 that means two terms of one lesson each week, to half a year of one lesson each week in Year 9. This hardly aids continuity, though extra curricular music, the icing on the cake, is very good. The argument that little take-up by pupils at Key Stage 4 means provision at Key Stage 3 can be weak may be self-fulfilling.

28. Provision for religious education at Key Stage 4 has improved and GCSE pupils have sufficient. Most pupils have barely the time to meet the needs of the agreed syllabus.

29. There is a shortfall in the amount of English time in Year 8 though a case for increasing it is difficult. English Year 9 SAT results are relatively low and the head of department says time might be a factor.

30. Both parents and pupils complained that there was insufficient extra-curricular sport for most pupils in Key Stage 3, particularly boys. If there is a barrier to all pupils having opportunities to participate in team sports, within extra-curricular activities, then more space needs to be found on the timetable if parents' wishes are to be realised.

Provision for information technology and its use by teachers and pupils

31. The number and quality of computers, their general use, the accommodation available for it and the use of information technology in lessons and by Key Stage 4 pupils in particular, were all criticised at the time of the last inspection. Despite some improvements, largely due to National Grid for Learning (NGfL) money, all those criticisms still remain. The ratio of computers to pupils is worse due to the increase in the numbers of pupils. The infrastructure, or lack of it, and the availability of computers and software to pupils is generally very poor. The school is well behind general practice and far, far, behind best practice.

32. There is no network across the school. In other words it is not possible to work from any computer to save and access data from a common fileserver. In effect you have to go to the room you last worked in, sometimes the same computer. This is archaic and prevents resource sharing. It is also inefficient and does not reflect common practice. In a school of this size, with a difficult site to move round in, it is the key to future developments.

33. There are two types of computer and several operating systems in use. The two types are various models of Apple Macintosh and various models of IBM clones – PCs. There is nothing wrong with either and the Apples in the school are generally better than the others except for the room fitted out with NGfL PC machines. These are newer, networked within the room and have Internet access. The problems with having two types of machine are compatibility, networking and general maintenance. They can be solved or at least eased at a price. Many pupils have PCs at home. With good virus protection it is becoming common for pupils to carry discs between home and school to continue their work. It is likely to be easier to move towards a common PC platform than persuade parents to provide Apple Macs. Both could be maintained at a cost. The problems with having different operating systems of the same computer model are similar to having different computers – compatibility. Much recent software works best or only on Pentium systems or their equivalent. Many of the machines in one computer room are older than this so cannot open files created in the new room. Similarly pupils using new Apple Macs in the library could not open files created on old Apple Macs, upstairs in another room.

34. The ratio of actual working computers to pupils is, at best, 15:1 and at worst 30:1. It is difficult to establish the actual figure. The average ratio in a high school is now reckoned at 7:1.

35. The time available for information and communications technology lessons is either insufficient or arranged inefficiently. It is insufficient in Key Stage 4 where around half of pupils receive only two accredited modules of work: word processing in English and spreadsheets in mathematics. The other half follow GCSE courses containing significant amounts of ICT work, though one of these courses is Information Studies which has a high proportion of non ICT work too. It is good practice for all pupils to follow some kind of accreditation or certification, often vocational, in ICT. Pupils, who are above average, as these are, cope very well. In Key Stage 3 there is mixed provision. In Year 7 half classes are taught in double lessons every other week. In effect this means half the computers in a room lie idle, unavailable for anyone else to use, and pupils have some continuity problems. In Year 8 a blocking system operates which means a double lesson a week throughout the year. In Year 9 pupils get the same time as in Year 7 but in blocks and computer control is taught via physics. This mixed bag of provision is at least partly due to an historical and ongoing shortage of computers and accommodation. Over the three years pupils move through most elements of the National Curriculum programmes of study though data capture and monitoring, taught in science, is thin. However, very little ICT is done in subject areas and the

National Curriculum does require pupils to apply their ICT skills and for ICT to be used appropriately in every subject. Design and technology has got recent resources and does some graphics work. Music has some composition software. Pupils' files on machines in the library revealed some limited word processing and minor graphics from Year 7 to Year 11. As regular access to sufficient numbers of decent computers by subject teachers and their pupils is all but impossible this is hardly surprising.

36. The head of ICT and his staff do a good job under the circumstances they find themselves in. The head of ICT has been pro-active in acquiring NGfL funding for the school and forming appropriate links with feeder schools. He has also negotiated and sorted New Opportunities Fund (NOF) training for teachers in the use of ICT in their lessons. Unfortunately the accredited trainer chosen has not proven satisfactory in this school and enthusiastic teachers are feeling a little let down. The computers in the library do not fall under the remit of the ICT department. Files on them are currently unprotected and it is possible to access and amend both pupil and staff files at will. That no-one apparently has is a credit to the school, though accidental deletions can always happen. There is no Internet access in the library, usually a focus for it in many schools. A member of staff is on duty during opening hours.

37. One computer room is particularly poor, being crowded with a low ceiling, very poor natural light and oppressive strip lighting. It is a credit to the teacher whose room it is, that she has brightened it up and makes the best of it. Simple document holders would help improve pupils' keyboard skills. Providing adjustable chairs, needed in all ICT rooms, would improve pupils' posture and the way that they use computers. Easy access to the Internet, scanners, digital cameras, palm computers and decent printers would also raise the standard of the newspaper project Year 7 do. All these resources are commonplace.

38. This is a successful school in many ways but it is not successful in its use of ICT. Over the years insufficient money has been spent inappropriately and advice either ignored, not offered, or been wrong. The planned facilities in the new languages building will not solve significant problems.

Accommodation for some subjects and social areas

39. At the time of the last inspection accommodation at the school was criticised. Since then much work has been done, funded by the school, but many criticisms made then still remain. The number of pupils in the school has increased significantly and this has been the principle reason for new and continuing building. Where possible, exits and entrances have been widened to reduce crushes but the school is effectively fuller than its capacity. The safe movement of pupils, when all are on the corridors at the same time, is only possible due to supervision and the good behaviour of pupils. Tortuous links between rooms, small staircases and odd corners add to the problem. Most classrooms, old and new, are also rather small, particularly for Year 10 and 11 pupils. The average number of pupils in classes is smaller than in most schools as a decision was made to increase teacher numbers to help raise standards. This is fortunate, as it is difficult to see how larger classes could be accommodated. A large mathematics class is taken in a laboratory as they just fit in. Many older classrooms are also badly lit with poor natural light, strip lights with no diffusers, or both problems. A mathematics classroom is right over the boiler house, generally packed with pupils and is too hot on a cold autumn day. Other areas are too cold. Several letters from parents expressed concern about overcrowding issues.

40. Changing and showering accommodation for physical education and sport is inadequate and well below the standards that pupils, teachers and parents should expect. The sports hall is too small for the numbers of pupils that have to use it and the noise from one group interferes with instructions for another. Workshops are little changed from 25 years ago. One has no proper floor surface as tiles were removed after water damage and hazard lines were lost at the same time. Lying dust is thick and a consequence of poor extraction and cleaning. Better dust extraction is in the pipeline. The electronics area has no extraction for etching fumes. Food technology areas have to use the same surfaces for food preparation and written work. There is no extraction. The old science laboratories may be structurally sound but the holed, rotting and collapsing external cladding does not impress and it would not be difficult to enter the building through the walls. There are insufficient and inadequate spaces for music and drama. Many pupils are encouraged to take up musical instruments but lack practice rooms; drama lessons often take place in small classrooms containing tables that have to be moved. In one, a torn carpet poses a safety risk. Art is conducted in small rooms in a decaying block lacking proper light or room for large-scale 3D work. Careful organisation overcomes many problems but the curriculum is restricted by the accommodation. The library is well organised and attractive. However, it is about one third of the size it should be if it is to be used appropriately by most pupils.

41. Almost all pupils stay on the school site at lunchtime, as they should, and all eat, many buying food from the caterers. The dining hall can only cope with small numbers hence 'fast food' is marketed and eaten wherever there is a convenient space. The food type may or may not be suitable but eating arrangements are not. Either the space has to be made bigger or the numbers going through the system in any period reduced, or both. Several letters from parents expressed concern about dining arrangements. There are no substantial external hard areas or internal common areas where pupils can congregate socially at breaks and lunchtime to reduce the strain on corridors and classrooms. More use could possibly be made of inner courtyards when it is dry.

42. Toilets in the old areas of the school are criticised by many girls who said "Toilets are awful".

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

43. To further raise standards of pupils' work, the quality of their learning and life in the school the governors should:

1. Ensure a revised programme of classroom observation, monitoring and evaluation is begun, and the information used to help teachers raise the standards of their teaching further.
2. Increase the time available for some subjects by:
 - Increasing the length of the taught week to reflect DFE recommendations and best practice.
 - Reviewing the timetable pattern and the distribution of time to subject areas, particularly ICT and music.
 - Reviewing the opportunities available for extra curricular sport in Key Stage 3.
3. Improve the provision for ICT and its use by teachers and pupils by:
 - Seeking substantial funding to network the school and provide sufficient computers and support equipment.
 - Improving accommodation, including situation, lighting and seating.
 - Making sufficient time available for all pupils to continuously acquire new and appropriate skills and refine their work from Year 7 to Year 11.
 - Reviewing the training provision already made for teachers.
4. Improve accommodation for some subjects and social areas by:
 - Informing the Local Education Authority of problems once again.
 - Resisting any further expansion in pupil numbers.
 - Addressing any health and safety issues quickly.
 - Considering the advantages / disadvantages of operating a 'continuous day'.
 - Seeking very extensive funding for new building, refurbishment and repair.

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

17

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	9	57	26	4	2	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	1 184	N/a
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	91	N/a

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	14	N/a
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	129	N/a

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	7

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	25
Pupils 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	0.5
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 pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2000	121	115	236

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	65	86	84
	Girls	88	90	88
	Total	153	176	172
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	65(62)	75(68)	73 (73)
	National	64 (63)	66 (62)	60 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	19 (21)	51 (42)	35(32)
	National	24 (28)	38 (38)	26 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	74	78	78
	Girls	98	82	82
	Total	172	156	160
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	73 (76)	66(69)	68 (74)
	National	N/a (64)	N/a (64)	N/a (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	27(35)	36 (33)	35 (34)
	National	N/a (31)	N/a (37)	N/a (28)

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	2000	111	84	95

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	60	105 (94)	109 (81)
	Girls	64	82 (79)	84 (100)
	Total	124	187(173)	193(181)
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	64 (60)	96 (95)	99 (99)
	National	49 (46.6)	88.8 (90.9)	94.4 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	45 (43)
	National	38.7 (38)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	6
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	0
Indian	3
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	2
Chinese	4
White	1 167
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	2	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	26	0
Other minority ethnic groups	2	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)	75.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7-Y11

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	161

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 2	N/a
Key Stage 3	21.6
Key Stage 4	20.5

Financial information

Financial year	1999
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	£
Total income	2 477 151
Total expenditure	2 500 480
Expenditure per pupil	2 179
Balance brought forward from previous year	- 18 195
Balance carried forward to next year	- 41 524

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out

1000

Number of questionnaires returned

546

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	39	53	5	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	45	48	4	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	37	54	4	1	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	27	56	14	3	0
The teaching is good.	35	58	3	1	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	28	49	17	4	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	49	43	6	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	62	35	1	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	25	52	16	2	5
The school is well led and managed.	34	53	3	0	10
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	37	53	5	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	31	47	9	3	11

Other issues raised by parents

Through letters and comments parents expressed concern about: the numbers of pupils in narrow corridors; poor dining facilities; the apparent inadequate provision for boys' extra – curricular sport in Key Stage 3, the poor state of some of the accommodation.