

# INSPECTION REPORT

## QUEEN ELIZABETH HIGH SCHOOL

Bromyard

LEA area: Herefordshire

Unique reference number: 116930

Headteacher: Mrs. P. Jewkes

Reporting inspector: Mr. R. Palmer  
31198

Dates of inspection: 6<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> November 2000

Inspection number: 223914  
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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:	Ashfields Bromyard Herefordshire
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr W. E. Evans
Date of previous inspection:	4 <sup>th</sup> December 1995

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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Mr. R. Palmer 31198	Registered inspector		The characteristics and effectiveness of the school
			The school's results and pupils' achievements
			Teaching and learning
			Leadership and management
			Key Issues for action
Dr. T. Clarke 9115	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
			Pupils' welfare, health and safety
			Partnership with parents and carers
Mr G.Binks 8216	Team inspector	English	
		Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	
		Provision for pupils with special educational needs	
Mrs. J. Brookes 2212	Team inspector	Physical education	
Mr P. Hanafin 31693	Team inspector	Art and design	
Mrs. V. Maunder 23188	Team inspector	Science	Quality and range of opportunities for learning
Mr N. Mayfield 29510	Team inspector	Music	
Mr B. Medhurst 31986	Team inspector	Mathematics	
		Information and communication technology	
Mrs. S. Penny 16304	Team inspector	Design and technology	
Mr R. Pitcher 3930	Team inspector	Geography	
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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Queen Elizabeth High School is much smaller than other secondary comprehensive schools. It has 390 pupils on roll (207 boys and 183 girls) aged 11 to 16 years, compared to 351 at the time of the previous inspection in 1995. The school serves the small town of Bromyard and a surrounding, wide rural area. Pupils come from one main feeder primary school and five other smaller ones. The school attracts pupils with special educational needs from outside this area. Nearly 50 per cent of pupils travel by school bus. The social background of pupils is varied and ranges from professional to seasonal workers and unemployed. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals (10.3 per cent) is average. A low number (less than one per cent) of pupils speak English as an additional language. One per cent of pupils are of ethnic minority origin. The number of pupils joining or leaving during the course of each school year varies and was around fifteen per cent in the last school year. The ten travellers on roll in September had fallen to four by the end of October. All years contain pupils of a wide spread of attainment. Pupils' attainment on entry, based on results of reading tests and Key Stage 2 tests, has improved in each of the last few years. It was average overall for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 but below average for those now in Years 10 and 11. The number of pupils with special educational needs (24 per cent) is above the national average. The number of pupils with statements of special educational needs (5.6 per cent) is also above the national average.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

The overall effectiveness of the school is satisfactory. Standards relative to pupils' prior attainment are satisfactory overall. In recent years, pupils' results in national tests taken at the age of fourteen have been falling while the national trend has risen. However, in 2000, results in these tests improved well and were close to the national average overall. Since the previous inspection, GCSE results have risen faster than the national trend and in 1999 were above the national average. Many aspects of management are good and leadership is satisfactory. The quality of teaching and learning has improved significantly. The school has more strengths than weaknesses, continues to improve and provides satisfactory value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- GCSE results in 1999 were above the national average and the average for similar schools.
- Pupils achieve well in both key stages in art and design, religious education and information and communication technology (ICT).
- Teaching has significantly improved since the last inspection and is now often good.
- The large majority of pupils have positive attitudes to their work and behave well.
- A caring and supportive ethos supports pupils' learning.
- Pupils acquire a good awareness of moral and social responsibilities. They enhance their work in many subjects through participation in a good range of extra-curricular activities.

### What could be improved

- Attainment has been too low in many subjects by the end of Key Stage 3, particularly in English.
- GCSE results are below expectations in design and technology and modern foreign languages.
- The lack of a consistently applied policy to improve literacy skills hinders pupils' progress in a few subjects.
- The work for high attaining pupils is insufficiently difficult in some subjects.
- Monitoring and evaluation of classroom work and the sharing of good practice are insufficiently developed.
- The accommodation and resources in science are inadequate and adversely affect learning in the subject.

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

### HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made satisfactory improvement overall since its previous inspection in 1995. GCSE results have improved and were above the national average and the average for similar schools in 1999. The leadership of the headteacher and that of the governing body have improved and are satisfactory. Arrangements for strategic planning have improved and are now satisfactory. The quality of both teaching and learning has improved significantly and is now satisfactory and often good. There remains a need for good practice to be disseminated more effectively. The school now has appropriate aims to improve the quality of education. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has improved and is good. The school has developed procedures for monitoring its work but does not involve all staff fully in using the information obtained to raise the achievement of pupils in all subjects. The school still does not meet requirements for a daily act of collective worship.

### STANDARDS

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

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

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

GCSE results have improved faster than the national trend. The average total GCSE points scored per pupil in 1999 was above the national average and above the average for similar schools. In 2000, GCSE results declined slightly and were average. The trend in results in national tests for pupils aged 14 is below average; results were below the national average in 1999 and in the bottom five per cent of those of similar schools. Results improved well in mathematics and science in 2000 and were in line with national averages. They were close to the averages for similar schools and represented at least satisfactory progress compared with pupils' prior attainments. Results in English remained well below average and indicated underachievement in Key Stage 3.

In the classes seen, pupils' progress was good in mathematics in Key Stage 3 and satisfactory in Key Stage 4. In both key stages, it was good in art and design, ICT and religious education and satisfactory in English, science and all other subjects. Pupils with special educational needs and the small number of traveller pupils make at least satisfactory progress overall. The few pupils who speak English as an additional language make



satisfactory progress. The school sets suitably challenging targets for future improvements in pupils' achievements and, except in English in Key Stage 3, came close to achieving these in 2000.

### PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Overall good. Pupils are courteous and have positive attitudes
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. The management of pupils with behavioural difficulties is generally effective
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils are tolerant and respectful of the feelings of others. They are keen to accept responsibility
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory. The rate of unauthorised absence is average.

### TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years
Lessons seen overall	Satisfactory	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.*

Teaching and learning are good in English in both key stages. In mathematics, teaching is good in Key Stage 3 and satisfactory in Key Stage 4, and learning is good in both key stages. In science, teaching is good in Key Stage 4 and satisfactory in Key Stage 3, and learning is satisfactory in both key stages. The teaching was satisfactory or better in 96 per cent of the lessons seen, good or better in 62 per cent, very good in 13 per cent and unsatisfactory in four per cent of all lessons seen. The small amount of unsatisfactory teaching was in Key Stage 3 in science, art and design and physical education. Good relationships between teachers and pupils create a positive learning environment. Teachers have a good knowledge of their specialist subjects and manage their classes well. Most lessons are well planned and contain a good variety of structured activities that ensure pupils make progress. Pupils work hard and at a good pace in most subjects. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support in both key stages that helps them to make good progress. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are satisfactorily taught. The teaching of both literacy and of numeracy is just satisfactory overall but lacks consistency across subjects.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory in both key stages. Pupils enhance their learning through a good range of extra-curricular activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. There is effective support for pupils throughout the school. The support for pupils with statements of special educational needs is deployed appropriately in line with the written recommendations.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. Three of the four pupils with English as an additional language are progressing well. A fourth pupil, at an earlier stage of learning English, needs more help.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. The personal and health education programme helps pupils to become well aware of their duties and responsibilities as citizens.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Pastoral support is good. Staff care well for pupils. Teachers use assessment satisfactorily to help pupils improve their work. Procedures for monitoring attendance are very good.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	The school's partnership with parents is satisfactory.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides satisfactory leadership. Many aspects of management are good but job descriptions are insufficiently detailed to enable effective monitoring and evaluation of the work of departments and pupils' achievement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are supportive and carry out their duties satisfactorily. They monitor the school's staffing and finances efficiently.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Governors and senior staff have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Procedures for monitoring and evaluating the school's work have improved but are insufficiently effective to ensure the spreading of good practice across subjects.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes good use of its generally adequate staffing, accommodation and learning resources. It applies the principles of best value to its spending decisions.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children like school.</li> <li>• Pupils make good progress.</li> <li>• The teaching is good.</li> <li>• Parents feel comfortable about approaching the school with a problem.</li> <li>• Pupils are expected to work hard and achieve well.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some say there is too much homework; others say there is too little.</li> <li>• Many want better information about how their children are getting on.</li> <li>• Links with the school should be closer</li> <li>• The range of activities outside lessons is insufficient.</li> </ul>

Inspectors share parents' positive views except that in a few subjects the work for higher attaining pupils is not always difficult enough. Inspectors agree with parents that links with parents should be closer, even though these have improved and are now satisfactory. The reports on pupils' progress have improved and are satisfactory but do not provide enough information about attainment targets for pupils. The school's homework policy is appropriate but is inconsistently applied in a few subjects. Inspection findings do not support parents' views about the provision and quality of activities outside lessons, which are judged to be good and a positive influence on many pupils' learning.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and achievements**

1. Pupils' levels of attainment on entry to the school have risen in the last two years. Attainment is average overall in the current Year 7. The prior attainment of the current Year 11 pupils when they entered the school was well below average. This is shown by pupils' performances in the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Key Stage 2 and by their results in reading and other tests taken in Year 7.

2. Results achieved in GCSE examinations have improved since the previous inspection and have risen faster than the national trend. Results in the national tests for pupils aged 14 are usually close to the national average. They fell sharply in 1999 and rose again in 2000 and were close to the national average, overall.

#### ***National curriculum assessments at end of Key Stage 3 at age 14***

3. In 1999, the school's results in the national tests in English and science for pupils aged 14 were much lower than in previous years and results in mathematics were higher. The overall results in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science were below the national average and in the bottom five per cent of similar schools. The main reason for the decline in 1999 was the well below average level of prior attainment of that particular year group when it entered the school at the age of 11 and, particularly, a shortage of pupils of high attainment. This year group was the first to enter the school following its previous report, which had contained some serious criticisms, and contained many fewer pupils than other years.

4. In 2000, results improved well in mathematics and science and very slightly in English. In 1999, results in the national tests in English for pupils aged 14 fell to well below average and were in the bottom five per cent of similar schools. Results in the two previous years were average. Results achieved in 2000 were slightly higher than those for 1999 but remain well below the national average. Girls achieve better results than boys in English as they do nationally.

5. In 1999, results in mathematics were below the national average and well below the average for similar schools. Results achieved in 2000 were much higher and were average compared with all maintained schools and similar schools. Results in mathematics have improved over the last few years faster than the national trend. The results of boys and girls in mathematics are similar.

6. In 1999, results in science were below average and in the bottom five per cent of similar schools. Results in the two previous years were at least average. Results achieved in 2000 were much higher than those for 1999 and were average compared with all maintained schools and just below average for similar schools. In 2000, boys achieved much better results in science than girls, even more than boys did nationally.

7. In 2000, teachers' assessments showed that the number of pupils achieving the expected National Curriculum level or above was above average in art and design, music and physical education but below average in design and technology, geography and history. Boys attained much higher levels than girls in geography, history and design and

technology. In the other subjects, there were no significant differences in the levels of attainment of boys and girls.

#### ***GCSE results at end of Key Stage 4***

8. Results at GCSE have improved since the last inspection faster than the national trend. In recent years, boys' results have been close to the national averages for boys while girls' results have been well above the national averages for girls.

9. In 1999, the average total GCSE points score per pupil was above the national average and above the average for similar schools. Compared with pupils' prior attainment in national tests taken at the age of 14, the results in GCSE examinations in 1999 represent good progress.

10. GCSE results for 2000 were slightly lower than those for 1999 and close to the national average overall. When compared with pupils' prior attainments in Key Stage 3 national tests two years earlier these results indicate very good progress overall. The proportions of pupils achieving A\*-C grades in English, mathematics and science were slightly below the national average but above average expectations based on their prior attainments.

11. The proportion of pupils achieving the equivalent of five or more passes at grades A\*-C in 1999 was similar to the national average but below the average for similar schools. The proportion gaining five or more passes at grades A\*-G was above average and average for similar schools. These results indicate that pupils of all levels of prior attainment, including those with special educational needs, achieved well in many subjects.

12. Pupils' performances at A\*-C grades in 1999 were above average in mathematics and science but below average in English. Compared with the results achieved by pupils in their national tests two years earlier, the results were above average in mathematics and science but below average in English. Results at grades A\*-C were above average in art and design and geography, below average in French, design and technology and music and average in other subjects.

13. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades A\*-C has fluctuated since the previous inspection but is usually close to average. In this same period, the proportion gaining five or more grades A\*-G has been generally well above average.

#### ***Achievements in classes observed during the inspection***

14. Standards of work seen in classes in Key Stage 3 during the inspection were above average in art and design, below average in design and technology and physical education and average in all other subjects. Work seen in English classes was of a higher level than that indicated by national test results in the last two years.

15. In Key Stage 4, standards of work seen were above average in art and design, below average in English, mathematics, design and technology, history and modern foreign languages and average in all other subjects. Standards of work were close to national expectations in Year 10 overall. Standards in Year 11 classes reflect the low levels of prior attainment of these pupils in the 1999 national tests for pupils aged 14.

16. In Key Stage 3, the standards pupils achieve, relative to their prior attainments, as seen in scrutiny of pupils' written work and in classes, are good in mathematics, art and design, ICT and religious education, unsatisfactory in physical education and satisfactory in all other subjects.

17. In Key Stage 4, the standards pupils achieve, relative to their prior attainments are good in art and design, ICT and religious education and satisfactory in all other subjects.

18. Throughout Key Stages 3 and 4, most pupils of all levels of attainment make satisfactory and sometimes good progress. The work they are expected to do is generally well matched to their needs. However, in a few classes, as in science, pupils of higher attainment occasionally make slower than expected progress because they receive insufficiently challenging work. The progress of a few pupils is hindered because they do not have high enough expectations.

19. The school now has very useful data to track pupils' performances from before they enter the school right through to the end of Year 11. This data is not used efficiently to help monitor pupils' progress or to show pupils how to improve their work in a few subjects.

#### ***Pupils with special educational needs***

20. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress throughout the school in seven of the twelve main subjects, including English, mathematics and science. They make satisfactory progress in other subjects. Progress is at least satisfactory overall because most teachers prepare work of appropriate levels of difficulty and provide additional support for them during lessons.

21. Suitable targets are set for pupils with special educational needs in their individual education plans. In most subjects, teachers take careful note of these targets in planning their lessons to help these pupils make progress.

22. The small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language make good progress in music and often in ICT and satisfactory progress in other subjects.

#### ***Literacy***

23. Standards of literacy are satisfactory, but pupils are better at reading than they are at writing throughout the school. They are better in Key Stage 3 because pupils entering the school in the last year or so have had better skills in reading and writing than earlier intakes. The lack of consistency in applying the school's guidelines on improving literacy skills hinders pupils' progress in a few subjects, particularly those subjects which require much written work. In a religious education lesson, pupils enthusiastically showed good knowledge and understanding of their work in class but their progress faltered a little because they lacked confidence and competence in carrying out the writing tasks set for homework. Few pupils use the school library independently to improve their work through research or background reading

#### ***Information and communication technology***

24. Pupils' skills in ICT are improving and are average. They use their computing skills to good effect to enhance their work in many subjects, as in a French lesson in which pupils consolidated their knowledge of vocabulary and use of tenses through a carefully structured set of exercises which they could work through at a good pace.

#### ***Numeracy***

25. Standards of numeracy are satisfactory. The lack of an effective whole-school policy to improve pupils' skills in numeracy means that pupils do not sufficiently develop their

mathematical skills to assist their work in several subjects such as design and technology.

### **Targets**

26. The school sets suitably challenging targets for pupils and subject departments to achieve. Targets for examination performance are well based on pupils' prior attainments and comparisons with appropriate national data. The school came close to meeting its targets for GCSE in 2000.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

27. Pupils' attitudes to the school, their behaviour as well as their personal development and relationships are good. Attendance is satisfactory.

28. Pupils' attitudes are good. Most pupils enjoy school and show interest in their lessons. They answer questions readily, stay on task in the classroom and involve themselves in the wide range of other activities available to them. They are polite and courteous to adults and to each other. Pupils hold doors open for others and phrases such as "thank you" and "excuse me" are frequently heard. They are pleased to show visitors the way and tell them about the school, of which most pupils are justly proud.

29. The school has made good progress in tackling the key points for action on behaviour and bullying from the last inspection. Although the school has a small number of pupils with challenging behaviour, the behaviour both in the classroom and around the school is good. When poor behaviour takes place it is dealt with appropriately. No overt bullying was observed. When it occurs, pupils say that the school deals with it effectively. Pupils themselves play a major part in the prevention of bullying through the CHIPS (Childline in Partnership with Schools) and "Goodfellas" organisations. Pupils discuss bullying and how to deal with it in personal, social and health education lessons. The number of fixed term exclusions has remained constant at around twenty per year. Exclusion is used only as a last resort. A pupil is usually only excluded for an offence such as violence, premeditated bullying or persistent breach of rules. In the seven years, under the current headteacher, there have been only five permanent exclusions and two of these involved pupils who had been inappropriately placed at the school in the first place. The school prefers to use internal exclusion.

30. Pupils understand well the impact of their actions on others. Lessons in personal and social education help pupils to learn about this and they also learn to show respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others. Some such lessons observed included one in Year 8 on racism, two in Year 10, one dealing with stereotyping and another on resolving conflicts, and another in Year 11 in which the class discussed a current issue about the separation of Siamese twins and a hypothetical case about the dilemma of a girl, under sixteen, considering having a sexual relationship. The discussions in all these lessons were sensible, sensitive and mature.

31. Pupils show good initiative and take an increasing amount of responsibility as they move up through the school. Many become confident in presenting their own views as well as those of others. This in part results from their experience as spokespersons in lessons, particularly in personal, social and health education. All years send class representatives to the school council, whose views are listened to by the school and, in many instances are acted upon. The school allows girls to wear trousers as a result of a school council initiative. When pupils move up to Year 8 they are encouraged to support new pupils arriving at the school. Pupils in Year 10 can apply to become a senior pupil. If successful they can take on such responsible positions as head girl and head boy and can take part in CHIPS and become one of the "Goodfellas". The amount of responsibility taken on by pupils in the upper

school is very good, but is not quite so good in the lower school. Relationships across the school with adults and with each other are good. Pupils work well in the classroom individually, in pairs and in groups.

32. Attendance is satisfactory, in line with the national average. The level of unauthorised absence is also in line with the national average for secondary schools. Most pupils arrive before the end of registration and very little lateness occurred during the inspection. The overall level of attendance and the prompt arrival of pupils have a positive effect on pupils' attainment and learning.

## **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?**

33. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. It is often good. The teaching observed was satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4. This is reflected in the generally good quality of learning. Pupils made good progress in the great majority of lessons observed. The quality of learning is usually good because pupils behave well, are interested in their work and get on well with each other and their teachers. The pace of learning drops at times because a few pupils have low expectations of success.

34. Teaching was satisfactory or better in 96 per cent of the lessons observed; it was good in 49 per cent and very good or better in a further 13 per cent. Teaching was unsatisfactory in four per cent of lessons. In Key Stage 3, teaching observed was good in English and mathematics and satisfactory in science. In Key Stage 4, teaching was good in English and science and satisfactory in mathematics. In other subjects, teaching was good throughout the school in art and design, ICT, music and religious education and satisfactory in the rest.

35. Examples of very good teaching occurred in English, mathematics, science, art and design, music, physical education and religious education. Good teaching and satisfactory teaching were seen in all subjects. There was no unsatisfactory teaching in Key Stage 4. Teaching was unsatisfactory in six per cent of the lessons observed in Key Stage 3 and occurred in art and design, science and physical education. This was due to such factors as the teacher's lack of specialist knowledge, a lack of pace, ineffective classroom management and at times a lack of challenging activities for higher attaining pupils.

36. The teaching has many strengths. When teaching their specialist subjects teachers use their good subject knowledge to enthuse the pupils. This is particularly noticeable in ICT, religious education and design and technology. Most teachers manage their classes well and plan their lessons effectively. For the most part, teachers have suitably high expectations of their pupils. A few pupils do not have equally high expectations and occasionally do not make the progress expected of them. In most classes pupils learn well and reinforce their positive attitudes.

37. Teachers use a satisfactory range of teaching methods to try to ensure that pupils maintain their concentration and efforts throughout the lesson. In French lessons, for example, pupils often engage in a variety of exercises involving listening, speaking, reading and writing and use the computing facilities to extend their skills of independent learning. In many mathematics classes, pupils enjoy the well-structured lessons that begin with oral or written mental arithmetic and revision exercises and are followed by clear explanations of the work to be done which often lead to good class and group discussions. In these lessons, pupils reinforce their understanding of the work through the teacher's regular review of work done and by the effective use of a plenary session at the end of the lesson to consider progress made in that particular lesson and where the work was leading. Although the school has introduced a system for monitoring classroom practice, the system is not effective in



sharing good practice among all subjects. In a few classes, for example, occasionally in science, pupils become bored when the work lacks challenge or variety.

38. In the very good teaching observed, teachers skilfully use class discussion to develop pupils' understanding of topics at a fast pace. In a very successful English lesson in Year 10, the teacher effectively used her detailed knowledge of the play *An Inspector Calls* to guide pupils to a thorough analysis of a key scene. She made appropriate use of pupils' prior knowledge of drama techniques to assist their interpretation and understanding of dialogue between characters. All pupils were fully and actively engaged throughout the lesson in reading, in discussion and in suggesting how to stage the scene. In a very good lesson in religious education in Year 8, the teacher passed on his own enthusiasm for the subject to the pupils. The lesson on the theme of *The Suffering God* drew on pupils' knowledge acquired in a recent homework. The teacher then made very good use of the stimulating wall displays to encourage pupils to expand their knowledge, to develop their confidence in oral work and to think for themselves.

39. In many of the lessons where the teaching is good, teachers set appropriately challenging activities; work proceeds at a rapid but never rushed pace from a clear introduction, when the purpose of the lesson is made clear, to the end of the lesson. The teacher then reviews with the pupils what has been learned. In these good lessons, teachers plan carefully and in practical lessons prepare materials beforehand so that time in the lessons is not lost in managing and organising pupils and equipment.

40. In the 38 per cent of lessons where teaching was less than good, planning does not always ensure that good progress is made by both lower and higher attaining pupils. In a few lessons too much time is taken up with explanations or talk by the teacher. This was the case in a physical education lesson on volleyball in Year 9 when there was little contribution from the pupils and they were not actively involved in the lesson topic. The result was that pupils became bored and, although they did not misbehave, failed to concentrate and accordingly made slow progress. Pupils did not work well in a science lesson in Year 8 when they were unclear about the lesson's aims and the pattern of work was irregular. The teacher had not insisted on pupils copying up the results of previous practical work before moving on to the next topic and so the continuity of learning was unsatisfactory.

41. The teaching in personal and social education lessons is good. Teachers have good relationships with pupils. They use the time well to cover topics of interest and relevance to pupils who then, accordingly, feel the lessons to be worthwhile.

42. Teachers make satisfactory use of homework to reinforce pupils' knowledge and understanding of their work. Homework is inconsistently used to support pupils' learning, although in most subjects teachers regularly set homework of suitable challenge and variety, which helps pupils to improve.

43. The teaching of basic skills appropriate to individual subjects is satisfactory and often good. Pupils acquire a good understanding of their work in art and design, ICT, mathematics, music and religious education and a satisfactory understanding in other subjects. The overall teaching of literacy and numeracy skills is satisfactory but no more. The lack of a coherent whole-school approach to the development of pupils' literacy skills hinders learning and partially negates the effects of the valuable training exercise undertaken recently in which teachers observed literacy hour teaching in local junior schools. The school has suitable guideline documents in place in the staff handbook suggesting strategies for teaching literacy skills and for marking pupils' written work. Helpful notes are available also from the learning support area to guide subject teachers in helping low attaining pupils to succeed in different subjects. In many subjects, teachers display key words to help pupils to recognise and spell accurately the new vocabulary.

44. Teaching of numeracy skills is satisfactory in mathematics classes but there is little teaching of numerical skills in most subjects even though appropriate mathematical activity takes place within many subjects. The school is rightly developing a policy to guide and inform teachers in order to rationalise the teaching of aspects of mathematics across the curriculum and to obtain a measure of consistency in doing so.

45. In ICT lessons the quality of teaching is good and pupils are improving their competence and confidence in using their skills in the subject. Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to develop and use their computing skills to improve their learning in most subjects.

46. Pupils develop their creative skills well in most subjects and apply themselves eagerly to their work. In the large majority of lessons, pupils work at a good speed and usually complete the expected amount of work. In subjects such as English, mathematics, art and design, ICT, music and religious education they benefit from the good opportunities to work independently and to think for themselves. Pupils have a satisfactory overall knowledge of their own learning.

47. Pupils with special educational needs receive satisfactory and often good teaching and support. The individual education plans contain suitable guidance and targets. Most teachers take careful note of these targets in planning their lessons and these pupils often make good progress as a result of receiving work of an appropriate level of difficulty.

48. There is little specific teaching provision for gifted or talented pupils although the school's extra-curricular provision satisfactorily meets their needs particularly in music and physical education.

49. The school makes satisfactory provision for teaching the few pupils for whom English is an additional language. The mathematics department has contacted sources in Thailand to seek help for a particular pupil whose competence in speaking English is insufficient to ensure that his progress in mathematics is as fast as it should be. The head of department and a learning support assistant provide valuable assistance to help this pupil to improve. Another pupil who speaks English competently as an additional language made good progress in an English lesson in Year 7 when pupils were using a computerised program to improve their literacy standards and in particular to develop their skills in extended writing.

50. The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the previous inspection. The quality of learning has also significantly improved. The amount of unsatisfactory teaching and learning has decreased considerably and was around four per cent overall in this inspection. There remains the need to disseminate good practice across the school and to continue efforts to ensure that lesson planning matches the needs of all pupils.

## **HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?**

51. The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements except for the provision of a daily act of collective worship. Curricular provision is satisfactory overall and is better in Key Stage 3 than in Key Stage 4. All pupils in Key Stage 3, including those with special education needs, have equal access to the full range of National Curriculum subjects as well as a personal, social and health education course. In Key Stage 4, a choice of subjects ensures greater variety to meet the needs, interests and aptitudes of the pupils. Most pupils enter GCSE examinations and the Certificate of Achievement is available to lower attaining pupils in English, French, geography and science. There is provision for a pre-vocational course in Key Stage 4, which covers horticulture, agriculture, stock handling and tractor driving. This leads to the Royal Society of Arts (RSA) certificate in agricultural studies and widens the opportunities available for some of the lower attaining pupils.

52. The length of the teaching week at 25 hours is in line with the DfEE's recommended time. The allocation of time to subjects is appropriate in most instances. However, there has been little improvement since the last inspection in those subjects which were reported as having too little time. The time allocation for art and design is still low, whilst for music in Key Stage 3 and physical education in Key Stage 4 it remains insufficient to ensure adequate coverage of schemes of work.

53. Since the last inspection there have been improvements to the curriculum, such as the timing of the school day to provide a longer lunch break, which enables a greater number of pupils to take part in extra-curricular activities. Options at Key Stage 4 have been reduced in time to two hours per week removing the 90-minute lesson adversely reported upon in the previous inspection. An extra option is now available providing broader choice and combination of subjects. All pupils study the short courses for religious education and ICT and both are running successfully. The library has been refurbished and there has been increased spending on library books and computers. The library is still, however, not fully supporting the curriculum because of the limited book stock available and insufficient opening hours. The governors' pupil and curriculum committee meets regularly to oversee the curriculum. Its members are well informed and contribute well to curricular debates. Governors visit departments and are fully involved in decisions concerning the curriculum.

54. For the last two years the school took part in the *School Centred Initial Teacher Training Project*. This has proved very successful not only for the trainees but also for subject mentors and training manager, who have had to look at teaching and learning from a different perspective.

55. Since the last inspection, improvements have occurred in all subjects in curriculum planning that caters for pupils of different abilities. The provision is satisfactory in almost all subjects although the needs of the higher attaining pupils are not always met in subjects such as science.

56. Pupils are in mixed ability tutor groups, but are placed into teaching groups according to attainment to facilitate a closer match of provision to individual interests and aptitudes. Pupils who experience much difficulty with literacy and numeracy skills are withdrawn from their normal classes and taught in small groups or given individual tuition in class with the help of members of the Learning Support Team. Throughout the school there is no consistent strategy for the teaching of literacy or numeracy across the curriculum. Standards in both literacy and numeracy are satisfactory, but whole school policies and strategies are necessary to raise standards further. Pupils have lessons in ICT at Key Stage 3 and use their ICT skills to enhance their work in many subjects, such as modern foreign languages and mathematics.

57. A well-planned personal, social and health education programme is provided for pupils throughout the school. This is effective in preparing them for adult life. Good systems are in place to monitor and evaluate the implementation of this programme and experienced and enthusiastic staff teach it. The programme includes health education, sex education, and issues around bullying and drug misuse, all of which are comprehensively covered. The scheme builds progressively throughout a pupil's school life.

58. The provision for careers education and guidance is good and increases pupils' awareness of the world of work. The programme in Key Stage 4 includes the opportunity for all pupils to have one week's work experience in Year 10 and a further week in Year 11. All work experience is well monitored, with careful preparation and follow-up during and after the placement, by members of the teaching staff.

59. Extra-curricular provision is good. Pupils benefit from a programme which complements, extends and enhances the curriculum. The number of after school activities is small, as many pupils have to travel long distances home by bus. Much of the provision takes place at lunchtimes. Provision for music is good, with high levels of participation in the school choir, musical concerts, carol service, bands, and music tuition. Competitive sport is well provided for, with teams in the major sports for both boys and girls, and regional achievements in football, netball, rugby, cricket, athletics, tennis and cross-country. Outdoor and adventure activities enhance opportunities for personal and social development, team-building and leadership. These include the Duke of Edinburgh Scheme, a sailing week, a skiing trip to Austria, a residential stay in Snowdonia and a day of leadership training for Year 10 pupils, provided by the Royal Marines. Exchange visits to France and Germany and other visits abroad have helped to develop language skills and an awareness of other cultures. Many subjects provide enrichment activities including computer and art and design clubs, visits to theatres, the opera, museums, galleries, places of historic interest, and field trips. These along with a homework club and booster classes in science and mathematics provide additional preparation and help for pupils, prior to Key Stage 3 national tests and GCSE examinations.

60. The quality of partnership and links with primary schools is satisfactory. There are good arrangements for easing the transfer process for pupils when they move from their primary schools. However, there are insufficient links between subject departments and their primary counterparts in order to improve the continuous development of pupils' learning. There are several good links with local primary schools, particularly in relation to the in-service training for teachers on the literacy hour. Primary pupils attend musical performances and take part in sporting activities at the school. There are strong connections with a college of agriculture for the RSA pre-vocational course and the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. The school has very good links with the wider community, which make a

very positive contribution to the learning opportunities available to pupils and to their progress and attainment.

61. There has been a good improvement in the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, since the last inspection. Provision is now good overall, but there are insufficient monitoring and evaluation strategies in these areas to ensure consistency in planning across the school.

62. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is good and occurs in many subjects and through assemblies. Religious education makes a significant contribution to the spiritual development of pupils in providing them with opportunities to study comparative values and beliefs, across faiths and within Christianity. In work seen on Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Christianity pupils gained an understanding of racism. In a Year 9 English class, examining the poem 'The Identification', pupils use techniques learned in drama to interpret the tragic aftermath of a death by burning.

63. Assemblies promote pupils' spiritual awareness effectively. This was seen in an assembly on the theme of remembrance when the teacher talked about the two world wars, looking to the past and the future in terms of the sacrifice of people and the loss of 20 million lives. A reading by one of the pupils, a prayer and music provided opportunities for reflection. Special assemblies are organised to celebrate Christian festivals. Local clergy from different denominations regularly lead acts of worship and one member conducted a very good assembly during the inspection.

64. Provision for pupils' moral development is good. It is supported by a strong and explicit code of behaviour, and is based on the principles of care, consideration and respect for others. Teachers and other adults in the school continually reinforce basic moral principles throughout the daily life of the school. Adults offer good role models through their moral and social attitudes. In English, there are frequent opportunities for moral issues to be explored. In studying the morality of the capitalist society of the early twentieth century in 'An Inspector Calls' pupils thought about right and wrong through the eyes of different characters. Every part of the religious education syllabus has a moral application, for example understanding the world and the problem of evil and temptation. Many subjects make a strong contribution by exploring moral themes.

65. Good provision is made for pupils' social development. This helps to promote the positive ethos that the school has established. Pupils' social development is encouraged as soon as they come to the school. The quality of relationships in the school enhances this aspect of their development. Many subjects provide opportunities to work together, relate together, or take some responsibility for others. In history, pupils debate the rights and wrongs of the exploitation of ordinary people in the *Industrial Revolution* and in science pupils explore the moral dilemmas of transporting a dangerous cargo of chemicals. Extra-curricular opportunities, such as the Duke of Edinburgh Scheme, the skiing trip to Austria, the residential stay in Snowdonia, the regular concerts and competitive sport, all contribute to the development of pupils' social skills. In English, political and social issues are brought into the study of media issues, including how newspapers and TV present information to the community.

66. The school makes good provision for pupils' cultural development. Aspects of work in a number of subjects enhance pupils' appreciation of their own and other cultural traditions, although there are no arrangements to check that this is consistent across the school. The English curriculum provides a wide range of opportunities for pupils to read and discuss poems, novels and plays by Asian, African and North American authors in addition to the literary texts from their own culture. In trips to other countries, particularly foreign exchange

trips, pupils explore and contrast the cultures of the United Kingdom, France and Germany. In art and design, pupils collect work off the Internet, from diverse backgrounds and cultures, including Japanese and American art. A lesson on Caribbean dance in physical education provided an opportunity to discuss Caribbean culture and style. In religious education pupils visit different churches and there is a Sikh visit to the school. In music, in Key Stage 3 pupils are able to study African and Indian Music. All these opportunities benefit pupils' personal, social and cultural development and enhance the quality and breadth of their experiences.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

67. Pupils receive their education in a secure, caring and supportive environment. Very good progress has been made in dealing with the two key points from the last inspection concerning the monitoring and development of the personal, social and health education programme, including sex education, and the development of the health and safety policy to include policy guidance on pupils' safety on school journeys and educational visits. The school's care of pupils is well supported by a good personal, social and health education curriculum taught by some of the school's experienced teachers and outside specialists.

68. The school has proper child protection procedures in place in line with those of the local authority. The headteacher is the designated adult and has received the full training in child protection. All members of staff, particularly pastoral staff, are kept up to date with the proper procedures. The school has a good relationship with Social Services, which give informal advice when requested, without always insisting on a formal referral. The pupils have a particularly close relationship with Childline through their CHIPS programme. The school cares well for the two or three pupils usually on the "at risk" register at any one time.

69. Other procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare are good. The health and safety policy follows that of the local authority. Regular risk assessments are carried out across different departments as well as for school visits. A few minor health and safety issues were brought to the attention of the heads of the relevant departments during the inspection and are being dealt with. Minor as well as more major accidents are meticulously recorded and all relevant recording forms are in place. The school administrator and a number of other members of staff have received training in first aid. In addition to the first-aid boxes placed strategically around the school, the availability of "grab bags" for emergencies is a particularly good feature. The school secretary ensures that, on school trips, emergency equipment is in place as well as appropriate medication for those pupils requiring it. This is very good practice. Counselling is available for pupils and parents and the school nurse runs a weekly "drop in" session.

70. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are very good and have some excellent features. Among the latter is the exemplary co-operation between the education welfare officer and the heads of year. The former visits the school twice weekly, checks the school registers and picks up any new referrals. He has a close liaison with the heads of year about regular absentees and school refusers. Proper procedures are in place for following up any absences. Certificates are awarded to pupils for one hundred per cent attendance. To encourage pupils with a poor attendance record to improve, the school sets an attendance target and rewards pupils who reach this target. This approach has been successful in helping a pupil with a poor record of attendance to achieve good GCSE

results. The education welfare officer is responsible for the feeder primary schools and close links with these schools have enabled school refusers to be monitored in Year 7.

71. Systems for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour are good. There is a formal behaviour policy in place with an appropriate range of rewards and sanctions. The rewards start with merits for good work or good behaviour and these lead to the award of certificates, which pupils keep in their record of achievement. If a pupil behaves inappropriately in a lesson the class teacher fills in a yellow slip, a copy of which is passed on to the form and year tutors who follow up incidents appropriately. Sanctions range from detention to the use of the "isolation" room and in extreme cases fixed term or permanent exclusion. The success of the procedures can be measured in part by the good behaviour observed during the inspection. When bullying occurs it is dealt with appropriately and pupils are encouraged to report any incidents to an adult. The subject of bullying is well covered in the personal, social and health education lessons. Pupils are well supported through pupil mentoring as well as the CHIPS and Goodfellas schemes.

72. Arrangements for assessing pupils' attainment and progress and the use of the assessment to help teachers plan their lessons are satisfactory with some good features. An appropriate whole-school assessment policy is in place. Assessment starts in Year 6, with the information from Key Stage 2 national results. This is used to group pupils according to their levels of attainment when they arrive in Year 7. Pupils undergo modular tests in their first term and there is a wide range of assessments in use during a pupil's progress through the school, including both statutory and non-statutory testing. Pupils say that the marking of work helps them to know how they are progressing. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 keep an upper school achievement card to record different targets. The heads of departments are responsible for seeing that pupils' records are kept up to date. Each term, teachers meet to review arrangements for grouping pupils and move pupils according to their progress. In a few subjects, such as art and design, music and religious education, assessment and its use are good, but this is not consistent across the whole range of subject areas. Targets are not always clearly defined and there is little reference to targets in the annual school reports. Practice is good in the special educational needs department.

73. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress are satisfactory. There is good liaison between the heads of department and the form and year tutors and information is kept in pupils' records and monitored through regular meetings.

74. Arrangements for monitoring pupils' personal development are good through the effective pastoral system. Pastoral meetings are held every morning and involve the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and all the heads of year. Issues of pupils' personal development are picked up at any level, through departments, form tutors or heads of year. As the school is small pupils are known well by the staff. Problems are discussed with pupils and, if necessary, with parents, and appropriate targets are set for improvement, such as that for attendance.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

75. The effectiveness of the school's links with parents and the impact of parents' involvement in the work of the school are satisfactory. Satisfactory progress has been made on a key point raised in the last report about developing closer links with parents and providing more information about the curriculum and pupils' progress. The governors' annual meeting for parents is now less formal and parents are encouraged to ask questions. Two governors attend parent consultation evenings to receive comments and feed them back to the next governors' meeting. Parents' comments on pupils' reports are displayed in the staff

room. The prospectus contains some good information on the curriculum, but the school rarely arranges parents' meetings specifically to discuss curricular matters. The school writes letters to parents informing them when their children have received certificates of achievement.

76. Parents' views of the school as expressed at the parents' meeting and in the answers to the questionnaire were mostly positive. They say that pupils like coming to school. They feel that their children are expected to work hard and that they make good progress. Parents are justified in holding these positive views except that in a few subjects, pupils of higher attainment do not always progress as fast as they should because work is not always difficult enough.

77. Parents have some concern that the school does not work closely enough with them and that the school does not keep parents' informed about how well pupils are progressing. The school is aware of this feeling and is seeking ways to involve parents more closely in school life. A sizeable minority of parents feel that pupils do not receive the right amount of homework and that there is an insufficiently interesting range of activities outside lessons. The school has an appropriate policy for homework, which operates well in most subjects, but there is inconsistency in its application by a few teachers, which justifies parents' views. Inspection findings do not support the views of some parents about the quality of extra-curricular provision. The school provides a wide range of outside activities of good quality and teachers often go out of their way to ensure that pupils can get home after the school bus has left.

78. The effectiveness of the school's links with parents is satisfactory. The school provides a wide range of information of good quality for parents, which includes a full and detailed prospectus and a comprehensive annual report from the governing body, both of which contain the relevant statutory information. The school issues regular and informative newsletters. Annual reports inform parents about pupils' attitudes and behaviour but are not specific enough about the extent of pupils' progress in subjects. Pupils and parents both have the opportunity to comment on the reports and the school properly considers these comments. The information in the report on pupils' attendance is given in greater detail than in most school reports. However, the reports do not include future attainment targets for pupils. The school also issues a helpful short interim report, which gives a brief summary of pupils' progress both academically and personally. The school holds regular parents' evenings, at which they can discuss the progress their children are making. When issues arise the form tutor or head of year contacts parents.

79. The impact of parents' involvement on the work of the school is satisfactory. As in most secondary schools, there is not the same level of participation in the workings of the school as there is with primary schools. Very few parents help in the school as volunteers, but there is a parent helper in the special educational needs department and a few parents accompany pupils on school visits. Parents can become involved with homework. The small and active Parent Teacher Association sets an annual target for fundraising, which was exceeded last year. Money raised is allocated across departments by negotiation. In this way parents make a positive contribution to pupils' learning at school.



## HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

80. The overall quality of leadership and management in the school has improved since the last inspection and is satisfactory. The headteacher, deputy head and the governors have a satisfactory understanding of the school's strengths and those areas for development that will further enhance pupils' standards of attainment. The headteacher provides satisfactory leadership. Many aspects of management are good but job descriptions are insufficiently detailed to enable effective monitoring and evaluation of the work of departments and pupils' achievement.

81. The school now has a clear set of aims to underpin and guide its work. These aims are reflected in its day-to-day life and contain a suitable emphasis on improving pupils' standards of academic achievement within a caring environment. There is a purposeful and friendly ethos. The school is making useful progress towards meeting the current top priority of 'improving standards through improved teaching'. This is seen in the improved results in GCSE examinations and the large amount of good teaching and learning observed during this inspection. This success has been achieved both through changes in staffing and through the staff development programme. Teaching and learning have improved as a result of the school's in-service training provision. However, the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are insufficiently rigorous and do not ensure that good practice is spread or that unsatisfactory features are always eliminated. The appointment of new teachers in recent times has had a very positive influence on standards in subjects such as English and modern foreign languages.

82. Procedures for planning have improved and are satisfactory. The school has made satisfactory progress in dealing with the criticisms made in the last report. Governors are now more closely involved in curricular and financial planning and monitoring. Suitable programmes for long-term school improvement are in place. They include raising pupils' achievements and their skills in literacy and numeracy, continuing to improve the quality of teaching and learning, reviewing the quality and amount of homework, reorganisation of the pastoral system to incorporate better systems of assessment of pupils' work, and improvements to some of the accommodation. These plans require more effective monitoring and evaluation to secure their successful implementation.

83. The annual school improvement plans and the closely linked departmental plans now contain suitably challenging targets. They list the proposed actions, monitoring arrangements, success criteria, people responsible, costs and time-scales to achieve whole-school priorities. Although the plans are well considered they are not always carried out effectively because a few teachers are unclear about their particular roles and leave matters to be handled by others. The school has much useful data to plot the progress of pupils from before they enter the school until they leave at the age of sixteen. However, this data is not always shared effectively among teachers. This was illustrated when the history and geography departments were not as aware as the headteacher was of the much better performance by boys than girls in recent assessments carried out in Key Stage 3. This meant that the departments concerned had not considered whether teaching strategies needed amending to ensure that girls maximised their achievements, or whether the department's assessment systems needed review.

84. The school now sets demanding targets for pupils' achievements in GCSE examinations and for the end of Key Stage 3 national tests. Most pupils are aware of the levels at which they are currently working and what their realistic capabilities are. The use of assessment data has been increasingly used to make pupils and teachers more aware of what progress could reasonably be expected. The headteacher carries out a thorough analysis of pupils' previous and current attainments. She has begun to use this information to

help raise expectations of both pupils and teachers.

85. The governors are supportive of the work of the school. They carry out their duties responsibly. They satisfactorily monitor and evaluate the school's performance and take increasingly effective action to make improvements, particularly in appointments of staff. Governors and senior staff now have a satisfactory understanding of the school's strengths and those areas for development that will further enhance pupils' standards of attainment. The nominated governor for special educational needs liaises effectively with the school.

86. The quality of leadership and management in subject areas is very good in English, and religious education; it is good in art and design, mathematics, ICT, music and special educational needs and satisfactory in all other subjects. The heads of year provide good leadership and carry out their responsibilities effectively.

87. The school fulfils all its statutory requirements, including those for special educational needs, apart from the provision of a daily act of collective worship.

88. The governing body is fully involved in planning, setting and monitoring the school's budget. It relates spending decisions to the school's educational priorities. The school's finances are well managed. Financial administration is detailed and thorough. Spending is closely monitored to ensure that value for money is obtained. Governors apply the principles of best value to their spending decisions. Specific grants received for special educational needs, staff training, ICT and other national initiatives are all spent as intended. They are effectively used to improve educational provision. The most recent auditor's report of February 2000 found that the school's financial procedures were of a high standard. Resources throughout the school are used effectively to meet the school's priorities for development.

89. The number, qualifications and experience of the teachers satisfactorily match the demands of the curriculum. However, pupils' progress in a few classes in subjects such as art and design is hindered when the teacher is a non-specialist. There is an appropriate level of support staff, including that for pupils with special educational needs. Arrangements for staff appraisal are not entirely effective in sharing good practice. Arrangements for the induction of new staff are satisfactory.

90. Overall, the staffing, accommodation and learning resources allocated for special educational needs are satisfactory and are well managed in addressing the identified needs of pupils.

91. The accommodation is satisfactory overall. The science accommodation is unsatisfactory and limits the range of pupils' learning activities and teaching methods. The work of pupils displayed in classrooms and around the school is good and well used to assist learning.

92. The provision of learning resources is adequate in all subjects apart from science and design and technology in which the quality and amount of resources are unsatisfactory and restrict pupils' learning. Pupils have good access to computing facilities and make effective use of their computing skills to enhance their work in many subjects. The supply of books and the use of audio-visual equipment are at least satisfactory in most subjects.

93. The school library does not sufficiently support the development of pupils' reading and research skills. Nor does it provide appropriate support to the wider curriculum of the school. Book stocks are low, both in fiction and in non-fiction. Resources for ICT equipment are limited. The school intends to reopen the library to pupils at break times and lunchtimes each

day when a new library assistant takes up a post in the near future. There is a need, however, to carry out a thorough appraisal, with professional librarian help, to determine how the library might support more fully the needs of the school.

94. As a result of improvements in leadership and of maintenance of good management, the school has made satisfactory improvement overall since its previous inspection in 1995. Through participation in a series of appropriate leadership training courses the headteacher has improved her leadership which is satisfactory and provides suitable direction for the school's work. The governing body is in the process of change as several governors are recent appointments. It has become more active in the decision-making processes of the school, is increasing its involvement in monitoring and evaluating the school's performance and carries out its duties responsibly and satisfactorily. Arrangements for strategic planning have improved and are satisfactory. There remains a need for good practice to be disseminated more effectively. The school now has appropriate aims to improve the quality of education and has the commitment and capacity to do so. The school has developed procedures for monitoring its work but does not involve all staff fully in using the information obtained to raise the achievement of pupils in all subjects. The school still does not meet requirements for a daily act of collective worship.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

95. To improve further the quality of education provided, the school should:

- (1) raise standards of attainment in all subjects in Key Stage 3 and particularly in English;  
(Paragraphs: 4, 96, 104)
- (2) improve GCSE results in design and technology and modern foreign languages;  
(Paragraphs: 12, 140, 146, 174, 175, 179)
- (3) improve pupils' literacy skills, especially in writing, through the effective and consistent implementation of a whole-school policy to teach these skills in all subjects;  
(Paragraphs: 23, 56, 96, 100, 105, 142, 145, 156, 160, 197)
- (4) ensure that all pupils achieve their potential in all subjects by:
  - consistently providing work of suitable challenge and difficulty for pupils of high attainment;  
(Paragraphs: 18, 40, 55, 76, 123, 126, 129, 133, 145, 146, 156, 196)
  - providing sufficient time for all National Curriculum courses to be fully covered;  
(Paragraph: 52)
  - making more effective use of the library to enhance pupils learning;  
(Paragraphs: 23, 53, 93, 154)
  - improving the teaching of numeracy skills in all subjects;  
(Paragraphs: 25, 56, 120, 145)
- (5) improve the monitoring and evaluation of classroom work to ensure greater consistency of pupils' learning experiences and to share good practice in teaching and in the use of assessment;  
(Paragraphs: 19, 37, 50, 66, 72, 81, 82, 89, 94, 129, 131, 138, 156, 163, 179, 193)
- (6) as resources permit improve the accommodation and learning resources for science.  
(Paragraphs: 91, 132)

In addition to the key issues above, the following less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

- make the quality of homework consistently good in all subjects;  
(Paragraphs: 42, 148)
- further improve the quality of information in school reports so that they help pupils and parents to understand how improvement can be made;  
(Paragraph: 78)
- meet statutory requirements for the provision of daily collective worship.  
(Paragraphs: 87, 94)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	113
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	44

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	12	49	34	4	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	390
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	40

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	22
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	95

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	4

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	32
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	12

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.8
National comparative data	7.9

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.6
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
	2000	44	32	76

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	18	31	31
	Girls	17	22	16
	Total	35	53	47
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	46 (42)	70 (55)	62 (38)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	12 (15)	43 (25)	22 (15)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	28	31	33
	Girls	21	21	23
	Total	49	52	56
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	64 (41)	68 (57)	74 (61)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	20 (19)	30 (28)	35 (26)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	30 (28)

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	35	34	69

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	11	31	32
	Girls	20	34	34
	Total	31	65	66
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	45 (36)	94 (97)	96 (98)
	National	47 (45)	91 (90)	96 (95)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	42 (39)
	National	38 (37)

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	12	83
	National		N/A

### **Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	392
Any other minority ethnic group	4

### **Exclusions in the last school year**

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	17	0
Other minority ethnic groups	3	0

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

### **Teachers and classes**

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	24.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.2

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	143

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	73.3
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	22.6
Key Stage 4	20.9

### **Financial information**

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	945 494
Total expenditure	891 527
Expenditure per pupil	2 449
Balance brought forward from previous year	29 017
Balance carried forward to next year	53 967



## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	390
Number of questionnaires returned	126

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	30	57	7	5	1
My child is making good progress in school.	38	39	7	1	15
Behaviour in the school is good.	26	46	10	3	15
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	18	48	14	5	15
The teaching is good.	28	52	9	2	9
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	27	36	16	4	17
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	48	38	7	0	7
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	49	38	4	0	9
The school works closely with parents.	29	39	20	2	10
The school is well led and managed.	38	37	11	3	11
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	31	42	12	0	15
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	24	38	15	6	17

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

**ENGLISH**

96. The attainment of pupils at the age of fourteen is close to the national average. In the past two years, however, pupils' scores in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 have been well below both the national average and the average for similar schools and have been consistently below the levels the pupils have reached in mathematics and in science. Girls achieved much better marks in the 1999 tests than boys and better results also in 2000, particularly in the number reaching level 6. An examination of the most recent test papers shows a relative weakness in pupils' unaided writing when compared to their writing in response to reading. This is an area of the English curriculum which the new head of department and her colleagues are now working to improve. Speaking and listening skills, reading, and the redrafted writing of pupils are close to the national average by the age of 14.

97. The current work in English seen in Key Stage 3, particularly in years 7 and 8, suggests that standards are rising. Completed writing based on the reading of myths and legends in Year 7 is lively and imaginative. Pupils' response to literary texts such as 'To Kill a Mockingbird' and 'The Machine Gunners' in Year 9 is perceptive and mature for this age. Many pupils are able to empathise with the major characters in 'To Kill a Mockingbird' and write well about the central theme from different perspectives. Pupils with special educational needs receive effective teaching and support to enable them to follow the full English curriculum as well as to make progress with basic literacy skills.

98. The attainment of the current group of pupils at sixteen is below the national average. However, in the most recent GCSE examinations in 2000 over 50 per cent of the pupils achieved an A\* - C pass in English Language and a similar proportion gained a higher-grade pass in English Literature. This is slightly below the expected national average but it represents an improvement since the last inspection in 1995 when just over 33 per cent gained an A\* - C pass in English Language and less than 50 per cent of the pupils were entered for English literature. The overall performance of pupils in GCSE English examinations in 1999 was below that achieved in mathematics and science. In the optional drama course in Key Stage 4 almost 80 per cent of pupils achieved an A\* - C grade in GCSE examinations in 1999 and 50 per cent of the entrants reached this level in 2000. Pupils with special educational needs follow the same English curriculum as the other pupils. Most make good progress and achieve a graded GCSE pass.

99. There is variation of attainment between the year groups within Key Stage 4. Year 10 produce work broadly in line with what is expected for that age group, whereas the Year 11 written work overall is below the national average. The highest attaining set in Year 11 showed competence in examining an information leaflet and then rewriting it in language to appeal to younger readers. However, a similar group of higher attaining pupils in Year 10 showed much livelier oral skills in analysing the characters in 'An Inspector Calls' and discussing how a particular scene might be effectively staged. A number of pupils here displayed a wide vocabulary and a perceptive understanding of theatrical techniques.

100. Pupils make good progress in understanding and practising dramatic techniques in the optional drama course in Years 10 and 11. Enthusiastic and energetic teaching leads to enjoyment and hard work from most pupils. Pupils in Year 10 worked particularly well when dramatising Simon Armitage's poem 'About His Person.' They developed their skills in mime and at the same time explored thoroughly the poem's meaning.

101. Teaching in English and drama is good. All the lessons observed were taught satisfactorily. More than 90 per cent of lessons were of a good standard or better and almost 20 per cent of the teaching reached a very high standard. This represents a considerable improvement since the previous inspection. Lessons are planned well to make the best use of the time available. Some lessons for younger pupils of different attainment levels follow similar patterns to those of the primary school literacy hour. These ensure regular practice in reading, discussion and writing, with appropriate changes of activity within. They encourage pupils to retain good learning habits of making sensible choices about their own reading and writing materials. In literature lessons teachers have detailed knowledge of texts and communicate their own enthusiasms well. The successful examination in depth of a key scene in 'An Inspector Calls' was made possible by the skilful prompting of the teacher, who led discussion but encouraged pupils to reach their own conclusions. Similarly, in a Year 9 lesson, the teacher selected a Roger McGough poem, 'The Identification', which engaged the pupils fully in making a group dramatisation and developing a greater understanding of characterisation and motive. Teachers regularly encourage pupils to use computers to write and improve their work. As a result, most folders of completed writing by pupils of different levels of attainment contain well-presented word-processed work. Year 7 pupils produced particularly interesting work after a lesson about newspaper headlines and news stories when they were asked to design and lay out their own newspaper front pages in the computer room. The pupils who speak English as a second language are making satisfactory progress.

102. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good in English lessons. Pupils' behaviour is good. The work set in lessons is challenging for all pupils and there is regular encouragement for the successful completion of written work. Teachers show skill in motivating older pupils who find some aspects of the examination work difficult.

103. The department is very well led. In a short space of time the new head of department has begun to strengthen the Key Stage 3 curriculum and to identify particular weaknesses in pupils' performance in external examinations. The regular meetings of all English teachers to examine the best written work done by their pupils is particularly helpful in encouraging the sharing of good ideas and the improvement of standards.

104. The English department has made progress since the last inspection in a number of important areas. Teaching and learning in lessons are now of a good standard at all levels. The proportion of pupils achieving higher grade (A\*-C) passes in the GCSE examinations is considerably better than it was in 1995. The curriculum has been broadened to include media studies in Key Stage 3 and to offer a successful optional drama course in Key Stage 4. There has been some improvement in the range and quality of books available in classrooms although some sets of books still in use are in poor condition. The most important area still to be improved is that of pupils' performance in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3. This remains unsatisfactory, although it does not reflect fully the quality of the pupils' work in English in school.

105. The school has guideline documents in place in the staff handbook suggesting strategies for teaching literacy skills and for marking pupils' written work. Helpful notes are available also from the learning support area to guide subject teachers in helping low attaining pupils to succeed in different subjects. In some subjects teachers display key words to help pupils to recognise and spell accurately the new vocabulary. There is considerable variation, however, in how successfully individual teachers approach the teaching of literacy and oracy. It often varies within subject areas. The use of key words to help pupils' understanding and spelling is often good in subjects such as mathematics and science. Pupils develop their speaking skills in many classes in most subjects through good opportunities to discuss and debate their work. There is a need for a more coherent whole school approach to the development of pupils' literacy skills, particularly in writing, to build on the valuable training exercise undertaken recently where teachers observed literacy hour teaching in junior schools.

## **MATHEMATICS**

106. Attainment in mathematics is average at the end of Key Stage 3 when pupils reach the age of 14 and below average at the end of Key Stage 4 when they are 16.

107. Results in the 1999 national tests in mathematics for pupils at the age of 14 were below the national average. Those achieved in 2000 were significantly higher than the 1999 average and were above the national average. The 1999 results, when compared with those achieved by pupils in schools of a similar nature, were well below the national average. The 2000 results, however, indicate a much better situation, placing the school near the middle position of the range of similar schools, with 70 per cent of the pupils attaining at level 5 or better, and a significant 43 per cent attaining the higher levels of 6 to 8. Using the comparison with similar schools as an indicator, pupils' results in the 1999 national tests in mathematics were better than those achieved in English and science. Over the past four years there has been no significant variation in average scores obtained, neither has there been much difference between the scores obtained by boys and girls.

108. Results in GCSE examinations in 1999 were above national averages for grades A\* - C and for grades A\*-G. Those achieved in 2000 were just below for A\*-C grades. It is noticeable that in the 1999 examinations the girls outperformed the boys for grades A\* -C in excess of the national difference, but that the proportion of boys achieving the highest grades A\* and A was three times the proportion of girls. During the inspection such variation was not seen in the work of the above average pupils in Years 10 and 11. The 1999 GCSE results compare favourably with those of most other subjects within the school; they were above those obtained in English and just below those in science. In 2000, GCSE results achieved were similar to those achieved in English and below those in science.

109. Over recent years most pupils in Years 7 to 9 have made good progress in mathematics. This is confirmed by comparing test results at age 11 with those at age 14. This comparison shows that these pupils have achieved well and evidence from the inspection indicates that they are still doing so. Similarly, the progress made in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory over time, and this again is clearly measured by comparing GCSE outcomes with the previous national tests at the age of 14.

110. Factors contributing to pupils' generally good achievement include predominantly good teaching, the use of ICT to enhance pupils' learning, the adoption of the *National Numeracy Strategy*, and the good attitudes and behaviour of most pupils, whatever their prior attainment. This was confirmed through lesson observations during the inspection, speaking to pupils and from a scrutiny of their written work.

111. Many pupils are confident with most aspects of the mathematics programmes of study, including using and applying mathematics. There is, however, a minority of otherwise average and below average pupils, in Years 9 to 11 particularly, who are insufficiently adept at manipulating and handling simple operations with whole numbers. The department is doing much to solve this problem through regular practice and consolidation exercises. Standards of attainment, as seen during the inspection, are markedly different between Years 10 and 11. On average pupils in Year 10 are working at or near to the national expectations, whilst average performance in Year 11 is below this. The number of high attaining pupils in Year 10 far exceeds the number in Year 11.

112. Throughout the department, teaching is predominantly good and there are pockets of very good practice. An example of very good teaching occurred in a Year 8 class of below average pupils, many of whom are recognised as having special educational needs. The teacher, whom pupils clearly respect and appreciate, began the lesson with a revision exercise. He simply asked them to tell all they knew about the number thirty. Pupils responded in an orderly fashion, drawing upon a wide range of previous knowledge and experiences, demonstrating that they were thinking about mathematics, not just repeating mechanical processes. Many answers were articulate, reasoned explanations, as required by the teacher. More and more pupils expressed views about factors, days of the month, fractional parts and other aspects. Some even progressed to include decimal notation. The main theme of the lesson was concerned with collection and presentation of data and here the pupils used appropriate mathematical terminology, demonstrating their knowledge and understanding of correct methods. At the end of the lesson pupils critically analysed the teacher's suggestions for various items. Hence the pupils learned well, made good progress in a short time, were suitably challenged and enjoyed their work.

113. In most lessons, teachers begin by telling pupils what they are expected to learn during the session. This usually focuses pupils' attention upon the tasks in hand and, along with the generally good summaries of what has been learned during the lesson, enables them to gauge their progress as they work. In the best cases, the pupils are expected to draw upon previous learning, use and apply it in new situations and then learn new material. Teachers nearly always provide a good range of activities so that lessons are divided sensibly into manageable sections that keep pupils participating and on task. Even though pupils are put into teaching groups according to their levels of attainment in the subject (setting), which proves effective, in these sets there is still a wide range of attainment. Nevertheless, through good planning and class management, opportunities are provided for all pupils to work at rates suited to their capabilities. In this way high attaining pupils through to those with special educational learning needs are enabled to achieve well.

114. Very few shortcomings were observed in teaching during the inspection. Those that were included inappropriate use of calculators and some uninformative marking.

115. Because of the good teaching, pupils' learning, whatever their prior attainment, is good in most lessons. There is an obvious enthusiasm for the subject, even to the extent that on a number of occasions during the inspection pupils were reluctant to stop working at the end of the lesson. Such motivation and enjoyment of the subject do much to maintain a good rate of progress and to extend pupils' understanding and knowledge. In many classes, pupils asked the teacher questions to confirm or extend their understanding, not just accepting the

initial information. In other classes, as in a Year 11 set in which pupils are preparing for different tiers of GCSE, pupils work hard, taking the initiative for their actions, not making undue demands upon their teacher. This is good learning.

116. The progress made by pupils with special educational needs is good. These pupils benefit from the setting system for classes that allows them to learn at an appropriate pace. They receive good assistance from learning support staff and, where applicable, through the application of their individual education plans. The department does not specifically track the progress of pupils for whom English is an additional language or of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds. Teachers are aware of pupils' strengths and weaknesses. They do what they can to help whenever possible, including seeking help via the Internet and direct contact with overseas agencies in the case of one Thai pupil.

117. All learning occurs in an ordered environment. In no lessons was learning adversely affected by disruptive behaviour. Pupils' behaviour is good, they respond well to teachers and they concentrate on their work.

118. The teaching of literacy skills is satisfactory and teachers make effective use of key words to help pupils' understanding.

119. Appropriate mathematical activity takes place within a number of subjects such as science, geography and design and technology. Pupils make satisfactory use of their numerical skills in many subjects, but their measuring skills are inadequate in design and technology. In order to rationalise the teaching of aspects of mathematics across the curriculum and to obtain a measure of consistency in doing so the school is rightly developing a policy to guide and inform teachers to help the development and application of pupils' numerical skills across all subjects and thus avoid confusion among pupils about which methods or terminology to use.

120. Progress since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Test and examination results have improved, the difference between boys' and girls' performance is less marked, using and applying mathematics is better taught, most pupils use calculators more effectively, and monitoring of progress and teaching is better established. There is still some inappropriate use of calculators and a minority of pupils still find very basic number work too difficult.

## **SCIENCE**

121. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3, the proportion of pupils achieving level 5 or above was well below the national average. The proportion reaching level 6 or above was below the national average. The average point score based on all the pupils' levels was below average compared with averages for all maintained schools, and in the bottom five per cent for similar schools. Boys achieved better results than girls at this stage. Results in science in 1999 were better than those in English but slightly below those in mathematics. Over the three years between 1997 and 1999 there was a steady decline in test results from broadly in line with the national average in 1997 to below national average in 1999. Results for 2000 show a significant improvement and are once again broadly in line with national figures and are also similar to those at the last inspection. Results, however, are still below those for similar schools.

122. In the GCSE examinations in 1999 the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*–C was above the national average; a few boys but no girls gained the highest grade. On the basis of average point scores, girls' performance in the examinations was better than that for boys. GCSE results in 1999 were considerably higher than those in 1998 when they were below the national average. Science GCSE results overall were higher than in English and mathematics. Results for 2000 indicate a decline in A\*–C grades, but not to the same degree as in 1998, being broadly in line with the national average.

123. From the work seen during the inspection, pupils' standards of attainment at Key Stage 3 are in line with those expected for pupils of the same age nationally. These standards reflect the attainment in the most recent test results. In lessons at Key Stage 3, most pupils are acquiring scientific knowledge and vocabulary at a satisfactory rate. However, a small, but significant number of higher attaining pupils in some classes, do not have sufficient depth of knowledge, nor are they able to apply their knowledge and understanding, because of weaknesses in subject planning and teaching methods. For example, in a Year 8 class on food and diet, most pupils knew the main components of a healthy diet but were not able to discuss and apply their knowledge to unfamiliar problems. Similarly, in a Year 9 class on the skeleton, most pupils were able to name the main bones but not able to explain the importance of the skeleton in movement. Most were aware that levers were classified into three types, but showed little understanding of the many practical situations, which use them. Pupils make satisfactory progress in developing experimental and investigative skills, though there are too few opportunities for them to make their own predictions, or define problems based on scientific knowledge and understanding and plan their own investigations. Pupils have the skills to conduct experiments planned by the teacher or themselves, are able to record observations and take measurements, and present data in the form of charts and graphs, reaching at least average levels of attainment. Graphical skills are good.

124. By the end of Key Stage 3, most pupils, including those with English as an additional language are achieving at least satisfactory standards in relation to their prior attainment. Pupils with special education needs make good progress because teachers have high, but realistic expectations of them. Generally the development of pupils' literacy skills is well supported by the department, most pupils having at least satisfactory and sometimes a good understanding of basic scientific terminology. Numeracy skills are satisfactory and pupils' information and technology skills, though improving, are not well used to improve their work in science, because of the lack of opportunity to use the computer.

125. Pupils currently enter the school with levels of attainment broadly matching the national average in science, though in 1999 they were slightly below. By the end of Key Stage 4, their overall achievements are broadly similar to what might be expected in relation to their earlier attainment, and they demonstrate satisfactory progress. In the work seen during the inspection, pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is below that expected for pupils of the same age nationally, because of a weak Year 11 cohort going through the school. By the end of the key stage most pupils know about the composition of blood and can explain the role of its components in relation to the body's defence against microbes. Others can recall facts about how electricity is made and can explain the energy changes that take place in the various parts of a conventional power station. Practical skills have improved and pupils are generally able to draw conclusions that are consistent with the evidence, and explain these in terms of their scientific knowledge and understanding. Investigative skills such as making predictions based on scientific knowledge and understanding, and planning and evaluating their own investigation, are not well developed.

126. Most middle and lower attaining pupils, continue to achieve standards that are in line with or better than might be expected of them. The same is true for those pupils with English

as an additional language. Pupils with special educational needs progress well, because they are in teaching groups with small numbers and their teachers have high but achievable expectations. As at Key Stage 3, a significant number of higher attaining pupils in a few classes are achieving less than might be expected because the tasks they are set are not sufficiently demanding and because they cannot relate the work to everyday situations. Their depth of knowledge and understanding is insufficient to enable them to achieve the higher grades of GCSE. Overall, pupils attain equally well across the three attainment targets: life processes and living things, materials and their properties and physical processes. Attainment is weaker in experimental and investigative science.

127. Pupils' attitudes and responses to science and their behaviour are good. In Key Stage 3, pupils are enthusiastic experimenters, are willing to try out new ideas and techniques and are keen to ask questions. They have good relationships with one another and collaborate well in their practical groups. In Key Stage 4, pupils' attitudes are less positive and they often lack real enthusiasm and determination to broaden their scientific knowledge and skills. They are good listeners, but their responses generally lack fluency and they show little initiative in raising scientific questions or ideas.

128. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, ranging from very good to unsatisfactory. It is better at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3. The range in quality of teaching means that not all pupils have the same experience of science as they pass through the school. There is inadequate monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning and insufficient sharing of good practice. The difference in teaching quality between lessons produces marked differences in pupils' response. The most effective teaching stems from the teacher's good knowledge and expertise, high expectations, good planning and enthusiasm that transmits itself to the pupils. The pupils then recognise and respect the teacher's expertise and high expectations and have the confidence to respond positively and to work hard. In the better lessons, teachers challenge pupils by the use of carefully chosen, open-ended questions to explore their understanding and to make them reflect and think about the subject more critically. They make appropriate use of resources to stimulate pupils' interest, and help their understanding. For example, in a Year 10 class there was effective use of models to emphasise the limitations of water driven turbines compared with those driven by steam, in the production of electricity.

129. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, time is wasted during the lesson, the pace is often slow, and poor classroom management skills have a detrimental effect on the quality of learning and standards of achievement. In some satisfactory lessons where pupils are quiet and compliant, learning is often passive and insufficiently demanding. Other weaknesses lie in planning that does not clearly identify the specific learning outcomes expected. Questions are not used sufficiently to check for understanding during tasks or at the end of lessons. The expectations of the quantity and quality of work, including homework, are not made explicit, and the middle to highest attaining pupils are not fully challenged.

130. The department runs a suitable course for lower attaining pupils in Key Stage 4 that leads to a Certificate of Achievement in science. The course increases pupils' opportunities because it gives them a chance to gain a GCSE single science qualification if they make good progress during the course.



131. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The day-to-day management of the department is good and the staff work well as a team. However, strategic leadership is unsatisfactory. There is insufficient emphasis on monitoring and evaluation strategies to lead to improvement in pupils' standards. Evaluation of the quality of teaching is unsatisfactory. The development plan for the subject is skeletal and short term, and fails to prioritise the actions required to improve. Some deficiencies in the management of health and safety were drawn to the attention of the department and were acted upon during the inspection.

132. The provision of laboratory accommodation is inadequate overall and has an adverse effect on the quality of teaching and learning, and therefore on standards. Pupil numbers have increased over recent years and laboratories built for class sizes of 24 pupils, are now too small for groups of 30 to 35. Consequently the range of practical and other class activities that can be attempted by these classes is limited. All laboratories are in need of some refurbishment. The poor layout of services and facilities provides little flexibility and restricts the range of teaching styles that can be used. There are shortages of basic laboratory equipment such as Bunsen burners, tripods, retort stands and clamps and of larger pieces of equipment, such as low voltage power packs, circuit boards and some form of overhead projection. In addition, insufficient resources for ICT restrict pupils' progress.

133. Overall, satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection. Though pupils' attainment remains broadly the same at Key Stage 3, improvement has taken place at Key Stage 4. Standards in science lessons are still very variable and there remains underachievement among higher attaining pupils in a few classes. Pupils with special education needs made satisfactory progress at the last inspection but this has improved and is now good. Assessment, particularly at the end of topics, has improved, though at Key Stage 3 this could be improved further by providing testing more similar to that found in the National Curriculum tests. Work is marked regularly but the marking sometimes lacks rigour. Comments are usually encouraging, but do not always show pupils what they need to do to improve the quality of their work. Whilst there has been some improvement in the use of ICT, pupils have insufficient first-hand experience of data logging and other applications.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

134. Standards in art and design are good. At the end of Key Stage 3, on the basis of teachers' assessment and of the work observed during the inspection, most pupils are working at or beyond expectations. At the end of Key Stage 4 most of the school's Year 11 pupils have studied art and design and entered the GCSE examination. Results are higher than national averages at both A\*-C and A\*-G grades. GCSE results have improved since the previous inspection at more than the national average. The attainment of boys and girls is closer than is the case nationally. The figures for 1999 show that pupils did as well in art and design at grades A\*-C, as in other subjects in the school. Pupils' work in Key Stage 4 classes indicates that they are reaching above average standards of work.

135. In Year 7, pupils gain a good understanding of a series of techniques in painting, drawing and collage, exploring the local landscape. In Year 9, sustained study of natural forms produces sensitive drawings of skulls and shells showing well-developed use of line and tone. Techniques and skills are developed year on year. Pupils of all levels of attainment make good progress over the key stage, including pupils with special educational needs, who are well supported through differentiated work and extra classroom support, as necessary. Girls make better progress than boys, as is the case nationally. Since the previous inspection pupils have made some progress in the correct use of specialist language but it is still unsatisfactory. Few pupils record, learn and remember any information about the artists whose work they are studying.

136. In Years 10 and 11 pupils work on extended projects that enable them to develop highly individual pieces reflecting their own varied interests. They sustain their studies well, recording and analysing information and developing a personal response in a good variety of media and working in a range of scales, including large and ambitious three-dimensional pieces. Higher and mid-attaining pupils are able to use the study of artists' work to inform their own work, often comparing and contrasting elements from two artists in a single piece of painting or sculpture. A pupil's studies of the paintings of Modigliani and Schiele were developed into a sculpture which successfully blended elements of the two artists' work. Some lower attaining pupils used images, which they had sourced from the Internet, in an indiscriminate way, showing little knowledge or understanding of the meaning of the image or of the artists' intentions. All pupils make at least satisfactory progress, including those with special educational needs, because they are interested in their work and are well motivated. Girls achieve only slightly better than boys though there are more higher-attaining girls than boys. One pupil who speaks English as an additional language made excellent progress and was producing work of a high standard. While pupils make good use of ICT in sourcing information from the Internet, no work is being developed using the computer as a tool to develop their ideas and to refine and modify their work.

137. The quality of teaching is good when done by the specialist staff but is occasionally unsatisfactory when done by a non-specialist. Lessons are well prepared with resources of high quality. Materials of good quality have a positive effect on the quality of work that pupils produce. Teachers have a wide range of knowledge and skills in art and design and use displays and examples of artists', pupils' and teachers' own work to motivate and inspire the pupils. Teachers use demonstration very well to teach new techniques. In a Year 7 lesson with a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs the teacher showed pupils how to mix and lay down a wash. All pupils were able to produce a landscape background using the technique and to use the correct term to describe it. A strength of the department is the use made of individual support and timely help by the teacher, including good one to one discussion, which enables pupils to clarify their thinking about their work. In Key Stage 4, most pupils are able to describe how they have developed a piece of work and how it might be completed. However, they are less able to describe their intentions and feelings for their work. The work of one lower-achieving Year 11 group was too dependent on direction by the teacher for this stage in their course, resulting in pupils not being able to identify or discuss the relevance of the reproductions they were working from. The department makes efforts to support the achievement of boys, particularly in Years 10 and 11, without losing sight of the needs of girls in these groups.

138. The department is well managed though some non-specialist teaching is not monitored closely enough. Assessment and recording are well organised through the use of a computer, though pupils' individual progress is not monitored in a formal record. Insufficient work has been done with partner primary schools to help pupils to build on their prior learning effectively. Teachers work hard to provide a stimulating and attractive environment for pupils. Teachers give their time generously and pupils work at lunchtime and almost every evening after school. This enables many pupils to improve the standard of their GCSE coursework and pursue their own interests. The department has made good progress since the previous inspection.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

139. Standards of attainment are below national expectations at the end of Key Stage 3, as shown by teachers' assessments in 2000 and the evidence of the inspection.

140. GCSE results are below the national average and below those achieved in other subjects by the same pupils. Results in food technology, which is studied mainly by girls are in line with the national average. Results in the resistant materials course, however, which is mainly studied by boys, are below the national average and below what might have been expected of the pupils concerned.

141. At the end of Key Stage 3 a significant number of girls attained levels lower than boys in 2000. However, work seen during the inspection indicated no significant differences of attainment and progress between girls and boys. Pupils with special educational needs, including those with statements, are making good progress and attaining levels higher than expected in food technology, in which, with guided support, they design and manufacture with confidence. They make satisfactory progress in the other aspects of the subject.

142. Attainment in the majority of practical work is similar to national expectations in Years 7 and 8. However, poor presentation and written work, especially in Year 9, result in an overall below average level of work at the end of the key stage. Teachers do not capitalize sufficiently on the pupils' good levels of interest and enthusiasm to raise their standards higher.

143. The short practical tasks result in a broad base of experience for pupils, although the limited amount of time spent on them restricts the range of ideas that pupils can employ and the depth of specialist understanding they gain. Pupils develop their understanding and skills in the subject through such experiences as designing and making bridges and electronic games.

144. In food-based work, in both key stages, pupils display good insights into the tasks set and show evidence of satisfactory research to support their ideas. Overall, pupils acquire satisfactory and occasionally good practical skills, knowledge and understanding in the workshops and food area. This is an improved situation since the previous report when many limitations were found in some areas of the subject.

145. Standards achieved at the end of Key Stage 4 are below the national average, though for many pupils this represents a reasonable level of achievement given their attainment when they started at the school. The presentation of many pupils' work is poor. Many have difficulties with written English and spelling is particularly poor. In resistant materials and graphics courses, diagrams and design work are below expectations for the higher attaining pupils, especially in Year 10. A few pupils of low attainment in Year 11 have weak skills in measurement and the teacher has to spend much time in translating pupils' roughly drawn designs and ideas into three dimensions. Progress with these pupils is steady and just satisfactory.

146. Many pupils in Year 11, though they enjoy the subject, do not put the same amount of commitment and effort into their design and technology work as they do in many do in other subjects. Pupils say that they spend more time on coursework in other subjects at the expense of preparation for food lessons.

147. Teaching in both key stages is satisfactory. Teachers' knowledge and understanding are reflected in the good teaching of basic skills in the subject. Teachers have a good relationship with pupils. Lessons have clear aims well matched to National Curriculum requirements and have a good balance of exposition by the teacher and activities for the pupils to take part in. A limited range of teaching styles is used but these are generally appropriate to the range of attainment within the groups. A greater range of presentation techniques, especially in graphics, in which only a chalkboard is used for demonstrations, is needed to give pupils a clearer understanding of their work. Pupils with special educational needs are well taught and enhance their learning through the very good use of support staff.

148. Homework is infrequent and irregular. Homework tasks are not used appropriately to initiate ideas, reinforce and follow up work undertaken in lessons. There are inconsistencies in the marking and correction of written work. Teachers give good written feedback on pupils' written work in food technology, drawing attention to misspellings and grammatical errors and pointing out how to improve further.

149. There is little use of ICT to help pupils to improve their work. Satisfactory use is made of desktop publishing in Year 11 food technology in which pupils use computer packages effectively to create questionnaires, generate graphs and charts and obtain background research. Pupils rarely use ICT in other parts of the course. There is insufficient use of the computer-assisted design and making facilities to extend pupils' learning. Access to computers in practical lessons is limited and restricts pupils' progress.

150. The new management has taken over a department where the documentation is limited and does not adequately plan for the continuity and progression of pupils' learning. Schemes of work at Key Stage 3 whilst broad and balanced do not provide a suitable basis for subsequent work in GCSE courses in Key Stage 4 and do not cater fully for all pupils of different levels of attainment. There is insufficient cooperation with local industry and feeder schools to provide joint project work and enrich the teaching.

151. The good assessment policy has clear guidelines and procedures which reflect the policy of the school. It is consistently applied within the department at the end of all projects. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. The continuous publication of assessment outcomes of pupils' work produces a competitive spirit to improve especially among girls. All pupils are aware of the levels that they have attained and the curriculum content that they have covered in relation to the design and technology courses.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

152. Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 as indicated by teachers' assessments is below national expectations. In 2000, boys achieved higher than national expectations, 65 per cent reaching level 5 or above. The girls, however, were well below average with only 20 per cent reaching this level. The school has not been able to identify the reasons for this very large discrepancy between boys' and girls' attainments. At the end of Key Stage 4, GCSE results were above the national average in 1999 and 65 per cent of entrants gained A\*-C grades, but this proportion fell to 49 per cent in 2000 for a group that contained pupils of lower potential. Despite this decline, the levels of attainment at Key Stage 4 exceed the average rate of higher-grade passes in the local education authority. Pupils achieved higher GCSE grades in geography in 1999 than the average grade achieved in their other subjects.

153. Despite the below average levels of girls' attainment in geography at Key Stage 3, standards of work of both boys and girls as observed in lessons and books were satisfactory. Pupils in Year 8, having done fieldwork at a local river, were able to present their findings both graphically and in extended reports. Throughout Key Stage 3, pupils acquire a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the geography course through well-devised and diverse schemes of work covering local geography and representative studies of Europe, Africa, and Asia. They gain an appropriate knowledge of physical and environmental geography and develop their skills in map reading and interpreting and drawing scaled representations. The knowledge gained acts as a good preparation for the examination courses at Key Stage 4. Flexible bodies of knowledge are developed which link, for example, soil erosion and population migration in Kenya. This helps pupils to compare activities within and between regions as in studies of farming and modern industry in Japan and Italy.

154. In Key Stage 4, pupils' work in class is in line with national expectations and they make satisfactory progress throughout Years 10 and 11. The subject is popular among pupils and around 80 per cent choosing to study it. Pupils increase their understanding of geography through a similar pattern of examining the changing face of the world in studies such as National Parks, farming systems, North Sea oil and Brazil. Pupils gain a good understanding of the physical consequences of soil erosion through studying glaciation, floods and hurricanes. Pupils acquire satisfactory geographical skills through a rich curriculum and some invaluable experiences involved in the local geographical and personal enquiry course work. The lowest attaining pupils achieve well in the Certificate of Achievement course. The library does not adequately support the curriculum if pupils wish to extend their studies.

155. The teaching of geography is satisfactory and occasionally good. Its main characteristic is the creation of a pleasant learning environment and highly structured lessons. The planning and explanations are thorough and the pace of the lessons is steady. The uniformity of the teaching methods shows how carefully the head of department manages his team of teachers, but there is a lack of variety in teaching methods, which results in pupils losing concentration at times. The literacy policy is at an early stage of development and has little effect on helping pupils to improve their writing or reading skills to assist their work.

156. Pupils have few opportunities to develop their independent learning skills and do not often use their computing skills to enhance their work in geography. The marking of pupils' work is kept up to date. The quality of pupils' work is directly related to the thoroughness of marking. Pupils who have special educational needs are satisfactorily taught in smaller classes and with special simplified textbooks, but a few pupils would receive more suitably challenging work by following a GCSE course. The highest attaining pupils do have extension textbooks, but they are not always set work of sufficient difficulty. This is an important issue for the department to tackle as an increased number of high attaining pupils moves through the school. Appropriate and selective use is made of video clips, but these are rarely used in an open-ended, problem solving approach to encourage pupils to think for themselves. The department gives strong support to the moral, social and cultural education of pupils throughout the school. This is seen both in terms of content of the lessons and the manner of pupils' learning. The department has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection. Further work remains to be done on the issue of providing work suited to the needs of all pupils.

## **HISTORY**

157. Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 as indicated by teachers' assessments was below national expectations in 1999 and in 2000. Boys achieved in line with national

expectations in 2000 but girls' attainments, as in geography, were well below average.

158. Attainment in history at age 16 as measured by GCSE results was above average in 1999. There was a decline in GCSE results in 2000 reflecting the lower prior attainment of the year group. Pupils' GCSE results in 1999 were higher than their average grades in other subjects.

159. Observation of classes and scrutiny of work show that pupils' attainments by the age of 14 are below national expectations. In the light of prior attainment, however, pupils are making satisfactory progress. Pupils in the top set in Year 9 reach nationally expected levels. These pupils made good progress in evaluating the need for speedier transport in response to improvements in agricultural production. The higher attaining pupils shape their responses in the context of past learning as well as information currently to hand to give considered and structured responses to questions. Lower attaining pupils are restricted to simple short factual responses. A low attaining class in Year 9 is making steady, small gains in factual knowledge about children's experiences in the mills. Their problems with writing are being helped through the provision of accessible resources and adult support to assist pupils with special educational needs in articulating their thoughts and converting them into written form.

160. Standards of attainment observed in classes and in scrutiny of work in Key Stage 4 are below average overall. They are closer to average in Year 10 where they reflect the higher levels of prior attainment of that year group. In working on railway expansion in the nineteenth century, higher attaining pupils in Year 11 produced some good writing and assessment of the sources, of a standard expected of the age group. They not only wrote an account of the navvies' experiences but considering and evaluating the status of the evidence sources from which they were working. However, the majority of pupils do not develop their responses beyond simple narrative accounts of possible experiences. Good work was seen in Year 10 on the agricultural depression of the nineteenth century when pupils begin to consider possible government responses to the plight of poor farmers and labourers through letters to *The Times*, drawing on moral as well as practical considerations of the situation, and moving away from short simple factual accounts.

161. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in Key Stage 4. In Key Stage 3 it is satisfactory and occasionally good. A good lesson for a class of lower attaining pupils in Key Stage 3 was characterised by the teacher's choice of attractive, appropriate and accessible materials, including a vivid video clip of heretics being taken for burning. A lively pace and challenging questioning led to some pupils being able to describe and explain some key events and issues in the succession of Edward VI, while those pupils for whom this was too much of a challenge were able to match short descriptions to pictorial events with the aid of a support assistant. Written responses for these lower attaining pupils were assisted by the provision of key words on display or on the whiteboard as requested.

162. Appropriate planning ensures that the National Curriculum and GCSE courses are properly covered. Departmental documentation is in place for all aspects of teaching the curriculum and incorporates school policies and priorities. The main history room has attractive displays of pupils' work and activities, for example the recent visit to the trenches of Northern France. These displays are suitably used to assist pupils' learning in the subject. The head of department was absent during the inspection, as was her long-term supply teacher replacement. Staff absence has adversely affected pupils' achievement in history.

163. Areas for development identified in the previous inspection included extending the text resources available for pupils. There is still a need to develop materials appropriate for the different levels of attainment within and between classes to support the history courses of study. Few of the many possibilities afforded by the new technology were evident during the

inspection. Careful marking makes constructive comments and targets are set for pupils. However, the absence of a uniform marking and assessment system prominently displayed in classrooms and pupils' workbooks hinders pupils and teachers from identifying progress and attainment. There is no systematic monitoring and evaluation of pupils' progress by teachers or pupils themselves.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

164. Attainment in ICT is close to national expectations at Key Stage 3, when pupils are aged 14 and at Key Stage 4, when they are 16. This is confirmed by teacher assessment at the end of Year 9 and by the results in the GCSE short course examinations, taken by all pupils at the end of Year 11. The difference in performance between girls and boys, with boys outperforming girls, is broadly the same as the difference nationally.

165. Work in classes in Years 7 to 9 is in line with national expectations. Many pupils can judge the best way to use the technology that is available, and whether to use it at all. Almost all pupils in Year 9 are able to use a spreadsheet to save time with calculations and to model real life situations. These skills have been developed over time and the pupils demonstrate much confidence when using available facilities. Pupils in Year 7 have already made good progress and they can organise and present information in a number of ways, using a variety of aspects of word processing, such as inserting graphics and clipart in an appropriate manner. Through the good teaching received, pupils from the whole range of attainment are independent in their learning. They are not heavily reliant upon their teachers for direction; they investigate software properties and make good decisions about the use of various aspects of it.

166. In Years 10 and 11 pupils continue to make good progress according to the well-planned provision made for them. Again pupils show a fluent competence with the computers and the software, and a few pupils have used the technology imaginatively and with a high level of skill, as can be seen in their portfolios of assessed work. This was particularly clear when Year 11 pupils used a presentation package to prepare an item for showing parents aspects of school life through a multimedia show.

167. Pupils with special educational needs of different kinds progress well with the work, often helped effectively by learning support staff. The small number of pupils with English as an additional language generally achieve well, often helped by their classmates, but on occasions their lack of language skills causes them to make less progress than would be the case otherwise.

168. In both key stages, learning is good overall. Pupils are quickly mastering the new skills and techniques such as designing an eye-catching poster. The pace of work is good. Behaviour in the ICT rooms is good. Pupils respond well to the good encouragement and challenging activities they receive from the teacher.

169. The quality of teaching is good. Pupils are made fully aware of what is required of them at the beginning of lessons and this engages them early and enables them to gauge their own progress. They are then encouraged to work independently, making decisions about what to do to improve their work without requiring too much guidance from the teacher. Sensitive intervention is used most effectively to redirect pupils if necessary, but this is always through questioning and prompting, never through demonstrating or taking over pupils' work. In this way pupils' understanding is enhanced and their skills are improved.

170. Pupils are encouraged, on occasions, to step back from using the computers and to reflect on how they are used. They use discussion to explore the skills and concepts and their relevance in today's society.

171. The coordination of ICT is well managed. Through a good training programme, nearly all teachers in the school are confident enough to use the new technology to advantage in their subjects. Good work was seen in a number of subjects including mathematics, English, food technology and French. A well-organised assessment system allows progress made in ICT in other subjects to be recognised and recorded.

172. Satisfactory progress has been made in dealing with the few weaknesses highlighted in the previous inspection report. Most pupils now reach nationally expected levels of attainment and all pupils are entered for external examinations. Although the use of ICT across the curriculum is often good, a few subjects rarely use ICT to enhance pupils' learning.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

173. Pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 in French and German, the latter a second language begun in Year 8 by higher attaining pupils, is close to the national expectation. Teachers' assessments in 2000 showed that boys were achieving levels slightly above average for boys nationally, but girls' achievements were below their national average. Pupils' understanding is satisfactory: they understand the teacher's use of the foreign language in the classroom and are able to extract information successfully from cassettes. Oral skills and pronunciation are satisfactory. Average attainers in French in Year 8 can name many different places in town and give directions. Higher attaining beginners in German in Year 8 speak in complete sentences about pets. Most pupils write with reasonable accuracy, but there is little evidence of pupils writing for a purpose. In French, both higher and average attaining pupils in Year 9 are familiar with the perfect tense. Some of the pupils in the latter group produce in class sentences for completing a diary that they had previously practised in the ICT room.

174. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A\* to C in the GCSE examination in French in 1999 was below the national average. Girls were close to the national average for girls, but boys were well below the national average for boys. However, all pupils entered for the examination gained a grade. Compared with other subjects in the school, French results were below average. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A\* to C in German for a smaller group, mainly of higher attainers, was above the national average. In the GCSE examinations for 2000 results for French at grades A\* to C dropped by 10 per cent: boys performed as in 1999, but the girls' proportion of grades A\* to C was almost halved. A very large majority of all entrants failed to perform as well in their oral exam as in the other three components. The proportion of pupils in the smaller group which gained grades A\* to C in German fell by just over 50 per cent. This group had been taught by a succession of different teachers during the course, and the discontinuity has had a poor effect on their progress and motivation.

175. Pupils' attainment in French and German by the end of Key stage 4 is below average.



Understanding is generally satisfactory, although average attainers in a Year 10 French lesson found short passages on cassette difficult, even with repetition. A satisfactory knowledge of topic vocabulary has allowed lower attaining pupils in Year 11 French to complete some assignments in the Certificate of Achievement course successfully. In their written work, higher attaining pupils in Year 10 displayed good understanding of the imperfect tense in French, when they wrote about how they used to be when young; and in German of different forms of word order. Scrutiny of coursework in Year 11 showed good preparation. Pupils had a satisfactory knowledge of the relevant topic vocabulary; inconsistency in grammatical accuracy accounted for differing marks.

176. The quality of teaching and learning, which received adverse comments in the previous report, is much improved. All three teachers have joined the school since the last inspection. In the lessons observed in the current inspection, the quality of teaching was satisfactory overall, and good in about 33 per cent of the lessons. Teachers have good knowledge of their subject and use the foreign language to good effect in many lessons. Resources are well used, and homework is set regularly. Teachers know their pupils well, and relationships are good. When the teaching is good, pupils are challenged to think and to use their memories. They are productive. The short sessions in the ICT room, with classes from both key stages, were particularly effective; when pupils returned to the classroom, the challenge was again repeated with worksheets to be completed. A few lessons lack sufficient challenge, both to individual pupils, after chorus work for instance, and to the class. Pupils do not make prolonged use of the foreign language in lessons and are too dependent on English in their written and oral work.

177. Pupils' achievement in relation to their prior attainment in French and German at both key stages is satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 3, and good progress at Key Stage 4. All pupils who entered, excluding three pupils who failed to complete the required number of modules, gained a level 3 in the Certificate of Achievement by the end of Year 11 in 2000.

178. Attitudes and behaviour are always satisfactory, and generally good. Pupils listen well, work well together in pairs, enjoy the songs and respond enthusiastically to the tasks in the ICT room. This marks an improvement since the last report.

179. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection report. However, a few issues remain. The department insufficiently monitors and evaluates pupils' achievement, both at Key Stage 3 in response to the new syllabuses, and at Key Stage 4, in order to raise attainment in external examinations in both languages.

## **MUSIC**

180. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 as measured by teachers' assessments in 1999 and 2000 is above average. Standards of attainment observed in lessons and through scrutiny of work are at least in line with national expectations in this key stage.

181. At the end of Key Stage 4 GCSE results in recent years have been well below the national average for the subject. In 1999, pupils' grades in GCSE music examinations were below their average grades in other subjects. However, in 2000, results improved significantly and were above the local authority's average for music. There is a good uptake of the subject in Key Stage 4..

182. By the end of Key Stage 3 the great majority of pupils have reached average attainment in performance and composing; however, their knowledge of some technical language is limited. Year 9 pupils can memorise and improvise variations on a television jingle. At both key stages pupils with special needs and with musical gifts make good progress through differentiated tasks.

183. Standards of work observed in lessons and in classroom recordings indicate that standards in listening at the end of Key Stage 4 are generally below national expectations but that in Year 10 standards in composition and performance are average within wide variations in attainment. Year 10 pupils write music with great attention to accuracy.

184. All pupils enjoy their music and the atmosphere in the class is one of strong mutual respect laced with good humour. This is due to good discipline and firm management by the teacher. In all lessons seen pupils make sustained efforts to work on the task in hand.

185. In Key Stage 3, the quality of teaching is good or better. In Key Stage 4 it is consistently good. In all classes seen, pupils were very well managed and discipline was good. The teacher has a good knowledge of the subject and lessons are well planned. The pace of teaching is good and high expectations are set for the pupils. The variety of teaching methods is always good, ranging from rehearsing a full-scale tribal ceremony in Year 7 to tutorial teaching in Year 11. The pace of lessons is always brisk and resources are suitably deployed to enable pupils to respond well. Work is effectively assessed and recorded on a regular basis on paper and on audio tape. Pupils track their own progress through self-assessment. Homework at both stages is relevant and is regularly set and marked and is an important factor in pupils' often good progress.

186. Pupils receive a broad and balanced music curriculum, which meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. They improve their standards through a strong emphasis on a range of performing skills in singing and playing keyboards as well as tuned percussion. The provision of instrumental teaching has been increased recently and growing numbers of pupils enhance their musical education through involvement in this as well as in band, choir, ensembles and the school production. Pupils with special educational needs take up these opportunities, which assist their access to the music curriculum.

187. The new head of department has a clear vision for the subject and has made a good impact on music in the school. Developmental planning meets school targets and schemes of work are detailed and relevant. The effectiveness of teaching is regularly evaluated and monitored by senior staff. The curriculum is regularly reviewed. The quality of accommodation is good and contributes positively to pupils' good learning in music.

188. Since the last inspection there have been wide ranging improvements in this area. Standards of attainment at Key Stage 4 have improved. Attitudes of pupils at Key Stage 3 are better. Singing is now a regular feature of class work and the school has improved the quality of resources to a good standard. Schemes of work, assessment procedures and regular homework are now in place.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

189. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 as measured by teachers' assessments was just above national expectations in 2000. There is no GCSE course in physical education.. A good number of pupils, nearly 40 per cent, improve their attainment in physical education through participation in extra curricular sport..

190. In Key Stage 3, standards observed in classes are just below national expectations for pupils of the same age. A few pupils in Year 9 are underachieving. Creative use of resources and good teaching enabled pupils in a Year 8 dance lesson to plan their responses to the task and to develop creativity and control. Once engaged in activity Year 9 pupils demonstrated satisfactory stamina and strength in a football fitness lesson. The competitive aspect of the lesson improved pupils' motivation. Ball handling for a significant number of pupils in a Year 9 indoor netball lesson lacked precision and had an adverse impact on the fluency of the game. Pupils in two Year 7 gymnastic lessons demonstrated a limited range of movement and poor understanding of basic skills such as rolling and balancing. There was some improvement in pupils' gymnastic skills in a Year 9 lesson but standards are below the level expected for 14 year olds because the teaching of this aspect is insufficiently developed.

191. Standards of attainment in classes in Key Stage 4 are in line with those expected nationally for pupils of the same age. Many pupils in Year 11 are already achieving standards expected at the end of Key Stage 4 across most aspects of the syllabus. Pupils' skills in a Year 11 basketball lesson were below average. However, the non-participants in physical activities in this lesson improved their understanding of the aspects being taught through carrying out tasks such as observing and evaluating pupils' progress in such skills as shooting and dribbling. In another lesson in Year 11 one of the non-participants learned to referee part of a football game during which most pupils displayed at least satisfactory skills in passing. Pupils showed good skills in carrying out aerobic sequences at a good speed in a Year 11 lesson. In a Year 10 aerobics lesson pupils made good progress in understanding the relationship between pulse rates and exercise.

192. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall in both key stages and slightly better in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3. Very good teaching in a Year 11 aerobics lesson provided pupils with the opportunity to plan and carry out a major part of the lesson, which they did with maturity, resulting in good achievement. In one Year 9 volleyball lesson, at the beginning of the unit of work, unsatisfactory teaching left pupils with a task beyond their understanding and skill level that led to confusion and lack of focus. The lack of appropriate teaching strategies for dealing with any poor behaviour restricts the range of activities pupils take part in. Teachers sometimes spend too much time talking and provide insufficient time for pupils' activities. Pupils benefit from good opportunities to plan work in gymnastics, dance and some games lessons. They are insufficiently involved in evaluation of their own work. Pupils' attitudes to physical education are generally positive as demonstrated by the very small number of pupils who did not take part physically in lessons. Non-participants were always given tasks related to the lesson. Behaviour is good, particularly in mixed gender lessons and only occasionally do pupils have to be reminded to listen.

193. Since the last inspection improvement has been satisfactory and the achievement of pupils at Key Stage 4 has improved. An accredited course, Junior Sports Leaders Award, has been introduced. Curriculum time at Key Stage 4 remains inadequate to cover the National Curriculum in depth. Teachers now give timely help in most lessons asking relevant questions enabling pupils to make progress. The process of monitoring and evaluation of standards is inconsistent and therefore there is insufficient sharing of good practice. The department has inadequate teaching strategies to take into account the challenging behaviour of many pupils and to raise standards of attainment further. Pupils have insufficient opportunities to evaluate their work and that of others. Emphasis on improving the teaching of gymnastics is a priority in order to improve pupils' levels of achievement.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

194. In 1999, pupils' standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 were in line with the expectations of the Hereford and Worcester Agreed Syllabus. At Key Stage 4, every pupil studied the short GCSE course and attained results slightly above the national average. In 2000, the Key Stage 3 levels were maintained but the short course GCSE results dropped back slightly at A\*-C grades, but every pupil in Year 11 passed with a grade A\*-G. This represents a significant improvement on levels of attainment at the last inspection. GCSE results now exceed the local education authority's averages.

195. In Key Stage 3, standards of work seen in lessons and books are rising steadily and indicate good progress. A good feature is the growing success of the teacher in promoting pupils' standards by developing their independent learning skills. Currently this approach is insufficiently supported with a wide enough range of research and learning materials but is proving to be a successful strategy for raising standards and preparing pupils for the examination course at Key Stage 4. Pupils in Year 8 intelligently examined a set of twenty paintings from different parts of the world which illustrated aspects of *Holy Week* in a lesson about *The Suffering God*. The pupils were ready to empathise with the artists and also to ask incisive questions. A wide range of religious topics is studied with evident understanding. Although Christianity is the lead faith, the pupils grasp the basic premises of Judaism, Islam, Hinduism and Sikhism. This is partly achieved by the good use of artefacts, which illustrate the history, beliefs, worship, festivals, and family life of each faith. Pupils made good progress in a lesson about prayer that drew on several of the physical senses. Most pupils demonstrate their attitude to the subject by the quality of work, which is normally very well presented and shows a high degree of reflective thought.

196. In Key Stage 4, lower attaining pupils are making particularly good progress whilst the higher attaining pupils are achieving the good levels expected of them. In a lesson about values, pupils examined confidently the values prevailing in contemporary society and their validity. They drew heavily upon previous knowledge and related it to the GCSE units about believing in God, life and death (particularly abortion and euthanasia), sexuality, marriage and life, social harmony and wealth and poverty. Although the pupils are being well educated the highest attainers are not studying to the depth required if they should want to pursue religious studies in Years 12 and 13. The requirements of pupils who can attain more highly in the GCSE are insufficiently met.

197. The teaching of literacy within religious education is satisfactory and a policy for teaching literacy skills is being developed. Pupils show weaker skills in writing than in their oral and reading skills. This was demonstrated when pupils found difficulty in writing up their classroom discussions as homework.

198. The teaching is good and leads to good attitudes towards the subject among the pupils. The teacher has excellent subject knowledge and appropriately uses the skills developed during his previous experience as a minister to structure the lessons. The schemes of work and lesson plans are detailed and show the care with which work is planned and evaluated. Pupils are stimulated by the range of learning experiences which they have in most lessons. They respond well to the support given in their examination work and their involvement in the assessment of their work. At the heart of the good learning is the teacher's appreciation of the pupils' work and respect for them as individuals. ICT has become an integral part of the teaching methods. A good link with a person in Monmouth who sends email letters answering the pupils' questions assists pupils' learning. Working with the art and design department has produced good work about the early Old Testament stories. Pupils learn well through a good diversity of opportunities such as the residential course for Year 7 pupils at a Christian activity centre. Currently a 'Quiet Room' is being decorated and set aside for pupils' reflective work. This already contains an impressive display of Muslim and Sikh artefacts, which assists pupils' understanding of different faiths.