

INSPECTION REPORT

ROYDS HALL HIGH SCHOOL

Huddersfield

LEA area: Kirklees

Unique Reference Number: 107755

Headteacher: Mr S W Bradbury

Reporting inspector: Dr D A W Biltcliffe
1025

Dates of inspection: 9th - 12th October 2000

Inspection number: 223933

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Ms C A Pattison
Date of previous inspection:	4 th - 8 th March 1996

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Mr H Meggitt 13452	Lay Inspector		Partnership with parents
Mr H Heller 5038	Team inspector	Special educational needs English as an additional language	Pupils' attitudes and values; school's care for pupils; leadership and management
Mr J Paine 11479	Team inspector	English; drama	
Mr R Heath 1262	Team inspector	Mathematics	
Dr D E Ward 4607	Team inspector	Science	
Mrs W Burke 11190	Team inspector	Art	
Mrs S M Mansell 17277	Team inspector	Design and technology; Information and communication technology	
Mrs H Boyle 30749	Team inspector	Geography	
Ms C Evers 8873	Team inspector	History	Efficiency/ staffing, accommodation and resources
Mr G Henshall 27082	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This comprehensive school for 11-16 year olds has 763 pupils on roll. The social and economic background of pupils is well below average overall. The overall attainment of pupils on entry to the school at age 11 varies very widely: it has been much lower overall than the national average in most years, but is rising. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational need (SEN) is about double the national average. About one third of pupils come from families of ethnic minority heritage, but only a handful are at an early stage of learning English.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a sound school that is steadily improving. It is effective on many fronts, but still has a few things to put right. Standards rise a little as pupils move through the school. In GCSE, standards are at least comparable with those in similar kinds of schools and in some years are better. Teaching is good overall. Management and organisation are generally effective. Leadership is highly committed and visible. The school gives sound value for money. Overall, it has more strengths than weaknesses and is on a steadily upward path.

What the school does well

- Science is well taught and very effectively managed. Pupils make good progress in the subject.
- Modern foreign languages and photography are also strengths: good standards are achieved.
- By the end of Year 11 pupils usually do at least as well as pupils in similar kinds of schools - and often better.
- Attendance has improved noticeably since the last inspection and is now good overall.
- Pupils' personal development and pastoral care are well promoted.
- The school provides sound value for money.

What could be improved

- The regularity and depth of monitoring of the quality of teaching.
- The frequency and quality of discussions in class.
- The tracking of pupils' progress and achievements in Years 7-9.
- Statutory requirements are not met for religious education, daily collective worship and reports to parents.
- More textbooks and the better decoration and adequacy of accommodation.

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 progress on most of the weaknesses identified in 1996. For example:

- the quality of teaching and learning is now satisfactory overall in Years 7-9;
- the school tackles most pupils' reading and writing satisfactorily, but speaking is not good enough;
- most heads of subjects manage their departments well;
- senior management monitors what happens in the school satisfactorily, but more remains to be done; and
- boys (until GCSE in 2000) generally achieved nearly as well as girls and better than they did at the last inspection.

Attendance has also improved significantly over the last few years. Very little progress has, however, been made in improving the following weaknesses identified in 1996:

- religious education (RE) is still taught very little in Years 7-9 and in Year 11; and
- the school is far from providing a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.

Pupils' overall standard of attainment in GCSE examinations is a little higher than it was at the last inspection: girls, for example, achieved far and away their best results in 2000 (57 per cent gaining five or more A*-C grades), but a few boys' serious underperformance in 2000 pulled down the rapid improvement of boys over the 1995-1999 period. The school's teaching has improved further. Its senior management pays attention to monitoring and evaluating performance, but still more is needed. The school has the required quality of leadership and management to make good progress in the future.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with				Key
	all schools			Similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
GCSE examinations	D	D	D	B	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E

The school's results in the national tests for 14 year olds were below average in each of the years 1997-1999. In 1999 they were average in English, below average in science and well below average in mathematics. A significantly smaller proportion of pupils reached the higher Level 6, compared with Level 5, than is the case nationally. The 1999 results were, however, above average for schools of a similar kind (as measured by the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals). Standards rose over the 1996-1999 period, broadly in line with the rise nationally, but fell in 2000. By the end of Year 9 the standard of attainment across the curriculum varies very widely from well above to well below average, but is below average overall in most subjects. It is broadly average, however, in science, modern foreign languages and physical education (PE). Pupils generally make satisfactory progress in their studies from Year 7 through to Year 9.

Results in GCSE were close to the national average in 1999 for the proportion of pupils achieving at least five grades A*-C. They dropped a little in 2000, however, because, although girls did better than in the previous year, a few able boys made little effort and did much worse. Although the proportion achieving five or more grades A*-G was close to average in 1998, it has subsequently been below average. The overall standard (as measured by "points scores") was average in 1998, but above that generally achieved in schools of a similar character in 1999. The strongest subjects in GCSE over the 1996-1999 period were science and modern foreign languages. Photography achieves well. In most of these years English, art and geography were weaker subjects. Standards are low in RE throughout the school. Pupils generally make satisfactory progress in Years 10 and 11.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Positive. Most pupils are keen to come to school and join in its good range of activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory overall: most pupils well behaved, but a minority are impulsive and troublesome.
Personal development and relationships	Sound, usually harmonious and caring. Most pupils respect others' views and beliefs.
Attendance	Good overall and much improved since the last inspection - a good achievement. Punctuality for school is good. Exclusions are low.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years
in the 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 was at least satisfactory in 91 per cent of lessons seen, good in 48 per cent and very good in 12 per cent. Nine per cent of lessons had unsatisfactory (and very occasionally poor) teaching. In well-taught lessons pupils make good progress through clear explanations, a brisk pace, rigorous work and good discipline. Unsatisfactory teaching is characterised by low intellectual demand, a slow pace or the weak management of classes. Teaching in English and mathematics is sound overall.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Sound range of courses. Good extracurricular activities and careers advice. Sound planning except for religious education.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Help for pupils carefully planned and targeted. Reasonable level of in-class support. Pupils are well taught.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Pupils are carefully assessed and receive thoughtfully planned help. Good provision that is well taught and led. New liaison worker a big help for links with pupils' homes.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory overall. Promotion of spirituality is thin, but some significant provision. Strong moral and social development. Cultural provision is satisfactory. The school has more work to do on these aspects.
How well the school cares for its pupils	High quality of care and guidance. Pupils feel valued and secure. Good links with caring agencies. Good mentoring and monitoring.

The school's curriculum is generally broad and balanced, but its provision for RE is poor. Both RE and the provision of daily collective worship still do not meet statutory requirements. Links with parents are good: half of the parents (a high proportion), for example, returned the pre-inspection questionnaire, but the school keeps looking for ways to make its partnership with parents closer. The school is caring and vigilant about matters of child protection. Health and safety matters are taken seriously, but the school's main entrance and driveway are hazardous.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The school has clear aims and values. Headteacher has effective commitment and visible presence, very ably supported by associate headteacher. Middle managers good overall (a few very effective), but still more monitoring needed of teaching and of standards reached.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Governing body has a strong commitment to the school and encourages continuing improvement. Good financial monitoring and control, but inadequate information on how well the school is doing.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Development planning very good. Most aspects well monitored, but system for judging overall academic performance not robust enough.
The strategic use of resources	Educational priorities are well supported through careful financial planning and management.

Senior management has a strong commitment to keep on improving the school. Most planning is bearing fruit, although RE is a major, unresolved deficiency. There is satisfactory staff coverage of subjects, though some gaps in English, food and textiles, information and communication technology (ICT) and RE. The school's attractive site is let down by generally poor decoration and inadequate accommodation for science, art, ICT and the library. Much increased recent spending on resources still leaves a legacy of insufficient textbooks in art, design and technology, history and ICT. Management embraces most of the "best value" principles.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What some would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school expects children to work hard. Children like school and make good progress. The school is approachable and tries hard. A high level of care is shown to all. Children are treated as individuals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Closeness of the links with parents. The quality of accommodation.

Inspectors' judgements support the positive views that parents express. Teachers generally expect pupils to work hard and do their best. Pupils feel confident in the pastoral care they receive and feel that their views are carefully listened to. The provision of more curricular information in particular, however, would strengthen the school's links with parents. Accommodation is scheduled to be improved very significantly in the near future through a public-private programme of funding. Overall, parents and the wider community have a favourable view of the school and what it does for their children.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. The standard of attainment of pupils in the school varies very widely from above average to well below average, but is below average overall both at the end of Key Stage 3 (Year 9) and at the end of Key Stage 4 (Year 11). Pupils' overall level of attainment is also below average in the national tests in Year 9 and a little below average in GCSE examinations. The level of attainment in the Year 9 tests and in GCSE over the last few years has risen broadly in line with the national trend.

2. When pupils come to the school in Year 7, their overall level of attainment is below (and in nearly all years well below) average. Although the school has very incomplete information before 1999 about pupils' national test performances in their primary schools, nearly two-fifths of the school's pupils in 1999 and 2000 started their secondary education with an overall standard in English and mathematics below the yardstick of Level 4 - a higher proportion than normal. Other test evidence indicates that the overall capability of pupils coming to the school in Year 7 has been rising over the last few years, but that it has been well below average overall for those pupils on whom this report's test and examination data are based.

3. In the national tests in the three core subjects taken at the end of Year 9 in 1999 (the latest year for which full national comparisons are available) the proportion of pupils who achieved the national standard of at least Level 5 was average in English, below average in science and well below average in mathematics. The proportion reaching the higher Level 6, in contrast, was well below average in English and mathematics, but average in science.

4. On the average "points" scored in the Year 9 tests over the 1996-1999 period, pupils' attainment was below average overall - close to average in science, below average in English and well below average in mathematics. The best overall performance was in science as a result of thorough teaching and very good departmental management. The lower performance in mathematics was partly owing to a degree of unsatisfactory teaching in the past. The trend of the school's results over the 1996-1999 period was upwards, broadly in line with the national trend.

5. Girls do better than boys overall in English by the end of Year 9. In mathematics and science, in contrast, boys' overall attainment over the 1996-1999 period was a little higher than that of girls. Over the same period both boys and (except in 1999) girls have performed close to their respective sexes' national averages in science - albeit at a level slightly below average. Teachers' assessments of pupils' performances are usually fairly similar to the external test results pupils achieve (although they were much lower in English in 1998 and 1999).

6. When the school's 1999 Key Stage 3 results are compared with those in schools which have a similar background (as measured solely by the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals), pupils in this school performed in line with the average of their group. Pupils did well in both English and science. Their performance in mathematics was, however, below average. The position was fairly similar in 1998.

7. In the five other (non-core) subjects formally assessed at the end of Year 9 in 1999, teachers judged the overall attainment of pupils currently in Year 10 as below average in all of design and technology, geography, history, information and communication technology (ICT) and modern foreign languages. Inspectors concur with these judgements. The overall trend of these assessments over the 1998-2000 period has been downwards in contrast to a slightly rising trend nationally. The attainment of pupils in modern foreign languages, however, has been assessed at a similar level during these years.

8. In GCSE examinations in 1999 pupils' overall attainment was below average for pupils' average points scores and well below for the proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades A*-G. The proportion gaining five or more grades A*-C, however, was close to average, shows a rising trend over the last few years and in 1999

was at its highest level in the school's history as a comprehensive school. The overall position was similar in 2000. In judging these results, it should also be borne in mind that the school has about double the national average of pupils with special educational needs. The proportion of pupils gaining 5A*-C grades represents a sound achievement by the school.

9. Over the period 1994-1999 the trend in the school's GCSE average points' score was broadly in line with the rising trend nationally. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more of the higher (A*-C) grades over the 1994-1999 period was 22-39 per cent against a national average of 41-46 per cent. In 2000 36 per cent of pupils reached this level. The GCSE results of 1999 and 2000 indicate that, overall, pupils made satisfactory progress in their studies through the school.

10. Pupils' achievement of grades A*-C in GCSE in 1999 was close to the national average (and better than those in the previous two years) in mathematics and science. It was, however, well below average in English and broadly similar to the previous two years' results in the subject. When pupils' performances in the various subjects they took in 1996-1999 are compared with one another, pupils did significantly better in at least three of these four years in science and French, but worse in English language, art and geography; lack of continuity in teaching and some unsatisfactory teaching in the past are major reasons for this underperformance. No pupil achieved the highest A* grade in 1999 or 2000 in English (of the core subjects). A quarter of the school's pupils gained a grade in the range A*-C in all of English, mathematics and science in 1998 and 1999.

11. In contrast to 1995, when girls achieved a much greater proportion of the higher A*-C grades in GCSE than boys, the gap between the sexes was slightly less than the gap nationally in 1996-1998 and boys did a little better overall than girls in 1999. Boys' improvement in 1999 was owing to their own higher achievement rather than a relative decline by girls. In 2000 the gap in performance between boys and girls was, however, very wide: 57 per cent of girls gained 5 A*-C grades, but less than half that percentage of boys (22 per cent) managed to do so. The valid reasons for the lower overall performance by boys in 2000 are well documented by the school. Based on pupils' average points scores at GCSE, boys in this school have not usually been as far behind girls as boys are nationally, until the major drop of 2000.

12. When the school's average points scores at GCSE are compared with those in schools with a similar "free school meals" background, this school's performance was similar to most in 1998, but better than the group average in 1999. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades A*-C was in line with the group average in 1998, but well above it in 1999. By the same measure, pupils' overall performance was average in 1999 in English, but well above the group average in both mathematics and science.

13. As pupils move through the school from Year 7 to the end of Year 9, the limited evidence available suggests that they generally make satisfactory progress, even though their level of attainment is, overall, below average. The school does not, however, have an adequate method of measuring pupils' overall progress through these three years of Key Stage 3: it has neither a comprehensive baseline nor sufficiently coherent sets of subsequent data for making such judgements. The progress of most pupils is satisfactory through Years 10 to 11. The school's targets for GCSE in 2001 are reasonable.

14. In work seen during the inspection pupils' standard of attainment varied from well above to well below average: overall, however, it was lower than the average nationally for pupils of similar ages. Attainment is, relatively, slightly higher by the end of Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3. Taking into account the fact that the capabilities of recent Year 7 intakes, as indicated by tests from the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), have been rising, most pupils make sound progress overall as they move through the school.

15. In English high-attaining pupils produce work of a good standard, but the overall attainment of pupils is below average by the end of both key stages. Pupils' reading is below average overall: pupils skim texts adequately, but most are not fluent on the few occasions when they read aloud in class. The amount and quality of note-taking are broadly satisfactory, but most writing, including standards of presentation and handwriting, is below average. Most pupils listen carefully in class. The use of technical literary terms is satisfactory, but most pupils are rather weak at sustaining a discussion.

16. In other subjects across the school pupils' overall standard of reading is below average in fluency,

accuracy and expression, although a minority of pupils are very capable and enthusiastic readers. There is less reading aloud in class in this school than is often found and a lower than usual competence in such techniques as skimming or trawling written material for information. This partly contributes to a minority of pupils being unsure about the significance of what they read or, for example, struggling to understand the meaning of questions in mathematics.

17. Pupils' standard of writing varies very widely from very good to poor, but is below average overall. In a few subjects such as design and technology and history pupils are usually able to structure their work soundly because of clear guidance and practical tips from their teachers. The careful drafting of work is undertaken in a few subjects, but note-taking is very infrequently practised and is often of a low standard (in contrast to what is seen in English). The quality of handwriting and of the presentation of work varies from the exemplary to the scruffy, but is below average overall: much depends on the degree to which individual teachers insist on high standards in these matters, although a small minority of pupils prove largely oblivious to guidance.

18. Most pupils listen carefully to their teachers, but a minority find it difficult to listen to their peers in class. Although pupils converse readily (and often animatedly) in informal situations, their capability in formal speech is generally limited. A minority are very competent and articulate in presenting their views cogently and many use technical language soundly. Many pupils, however, tend to give very brief answers or to mutter in discussion: they do not find it easy to sustain a line of argument or to take part in an extended discussion in class. This major weakness is partly the result of low oral confidence and partly because pupils are not given enough opportunities in class to discuss, to debate or to make presentations.

19. In mathematics and in numeracy across the curriculum pupils generally handle numbers adequately, although many too readily forget what they have been taught. Competence in mental mathematics is below average. Pupils do not have a strong feel for the significance of numbers and are too ready to use calculators, but this over-reliance is being thoughtfully addressed in mathematics in Key Stage 3. Pupils generally handle the collection and recording of data appropriately.

20. Science is a strength of the school and pupils' overall attainment is broadly average by the end of both Year 9 and Year 11. Pupils are generally interested in the subject and have a reasonable grasp of its basics. By the end of Year 9 most pupils have a fair understanding of such aspects of information and communication technology (ICT) as word processing and the use of databases and spreadsheets. The overall standard in all aspects of the subject is, however, below average by the end of both key stages.

21. In most other subjects the overall attainment of pupils is below what pupils achieve nationally. Their attainment is, however, close to average at the end of both key stages in modern foreign languages and PE. Attainment in photography at the end of Key Stage 4 is above average and a strong feature of the school. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language generally make satisfactory progress.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

22. Overall, pupils show positive attitudes towards the school and the provision it makes for them. They are generally keen to come to school, as the high level of attendance indicates, and to take advantage of the many opportunities presented for them to learn. There is good take-up of activities outside the classroom: more than two-fifths of pupils, for example, participate in extracurricular sports.

23. Attitudes and behaviour in lessons are generally positive. In about six out of every ten lessons behaviour is good (and is very good in nearly one third of these). It is satisfactory in a further three out of every ten lessons. Pupils' attitudes are, however, unsatisfactory or poor in one lesson out of twelve. In these lessons a minority of pupils show impulsive or poorly controlled behaviour. They fail to settle quickly and teachers have to intervene frequently to restore calm, only for the disruption to emerge once again. Such situations occur where teachers fail to establish clear control at the start of lessons or do not present a firm plan and clear structure for pupils' learning.

24. Behaviour in and around the school is generally satisfactory. There are, however, high levels of noise and crowding in circulation areas at the beginning and end of school sessions. This situation is exacerbated by the absence of clear guidelines on pupils' circulation (as, for example, an insistence on "keeping to the left") and bottlenecks in the internal lay-out of the buildings. Pupils generally show respect for the building and its property: there are few graffiti and little litter. The toilets, however, are subject to damage and disrespect from some pupils.

25. There is no evidence of serious bullying or harassment amongst pupils. Where such behaviour comes to light, the staff, led by senior managers, intervene swiftly and effectively. Pupils often reflect sensibly on the impact of their actions on other people, but a small minority tend to resort to actions that do not show consideration for others.

26. Overall, pupils form sound and constructive relationships with one another, with their teachers and with other adults. They are welcoming to visitors to the school. They show respect for other people's values and beliefs. This contributes significantly to the harmonious relationships generally evident across different social and ethnic groups.

27. Pupils show a satisfactory capacity to take on formal roles and their associated duties - such as Senior Student or library helper. They also participate in a small amount of voluntary work within the wider community and feeder primary schools. The number of such opportunities is, however, limited. At present, for example, there is no school council to supplement and exemplify the school's interesting work on citizenship.

28. Compared with similar schools in the area, the number of both permanent and fixed-term exclusions is low and falling in number. Against national figures for schools of a similar size, the number of permanent exclusions is lower than usually found. This is partly the result of the school's patient methods of counselling and guiding pupils.

29. The attendance of pupils is now good overall and is a significant improvement on the level at the last inspection. In the 1998-1999 academic year pupils' overall attendance was 91.9 per cent, a little higher than the national average of 91.0 per cent. In the last academic year attendance was higher still at 92.8 per cent. The level of attendance has risen fairly consistently each year since its unsatisfactory level of 88.5 per cent in 1995, owing to a concerted effort by staff within the school and by the very effective efforts of the school's education social worker.

30. The level of authorised absences in 1998-1999 (7.3 per cent) was close to, but a little better than, the national average and dropped further to 6.2 per cent in 1999-2000. The amount of absence without good reason (0.8 per cent) in 1998-1999 was also a little better than the national average. All absences are examined (and, if necessary, tackled vigorously) by both the school itself and its education social worker. Examination of attendance records indicates that absence is owing to a small minority of pupils having very low attendance, including long periods abroad or extended illness. It is now rare for the overall attendance of any class or year group to fall below 90 per cent: none of those in Year 11 in the last academic year, for example, did so. An indication of the school's success is the fact that, although it lies seventeenth out of 25 on its local authority's ranking for free school meals, it is ranked eighth for attendance.

31. The school puts a high degree of emphasis on pupils' achievement of regular attendance and punctuality. Where necessary, parents are reminded by individual letters, too, of the need for their children to attend school regularly. The school has detailed and effective systems for recording and analysing pupils' attendance and for pinpointing problems.

32. Pupils' punctuality for school is generally good. That for lessons is variable: in most lessons pupils arrive promptly, but a small minority of pupils sometimes dawdle on their way to lessons - a problem that has, however, improved significantly since it was identified as a major weakness at the last inspection. The school has satisfactory systems in place to combat truancy.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

33. The quality of teaching is good overall - satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4. It is at least satisfactory in just over 90 per cent of lessons - satisfactory in nearly one third and good in about half. Additionally, about one eighth of the school's teaching is very good. In 17 out of the 194 lessons inspected (nine per cent), however, teaching was unsatisfactory. The quality of teaching is fairly similar throughout the school, but slightly better overall in Years 10-11 than in Years 7-9. The limited evidence available from the last inspection in 1996 suggests that teaching has improved over the last four years.

34. Teachers generally have good knowledge of the subjects they teach. This often shows itself in their clear introductions to lessons, comprehensive but succinct reviews of previous learning and presenting pupils with a clear, well-sequenced view of what is to be learned. In the best lessons they make appropriate reference to the broader aspects of their subjects, so that pupils acquire a firm and rounded picture of their studies. They make sure that new material is carefully graded and that essential elements are thoroughly learned.

35. In a lesson on Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, for example, the teacher's extensive knowledge of the text enabled her to focus pupils' attention on a wide variety of literary techniques. History teachers are very knowledgeable about the listed building which forms the hub of the school and have compiled detailed resource material about it. The teaching of some of the elements of the new combined RPSHCE course (on religious, personal, social and health education and on citizenship), in contrast, is hampered by some teachers' lack of confidence and knowledge of their material, as well as appropriate teaching methods, as they work through the course for the first time.

36. Basic skills are well reinforced in Year 7 by specific teaching of these elements within the school's literacy strategy, to try to address the fact that pupils' overall accuracy on these aspects is below average. Key technical language is prominently displayed in most classrooms, regularly referred to and used precisely. For example, pupils are reminded of, and encouraged to use, such terms in English as imagery, simile and metaphor. A minority of teachers, however, pay too little attention to the accuracy of spelling and punctuation, insufficiently encourage pupils to take a pride in their work or monitor closely enough what is being written. Aspirations and practical steps to improve literacy, though significantly increased since the last inspection, are not sufficiently embedded in all subjects.

37. Many teachers set suitably high standards for pupils. In the best lessons they insist on good standards of explanation, description, writing and speech. They require pupils not only to think carefully and analyse deeply, but also to explain how they arrive at their conclusions. In these lessons teachers extend pupils' thinking by using "why?" or similar interrogatives or by such phrases as "I want you to think further about..." and then skilfully draw a diversity of possible answers to a firm conclusion. They discourage muddled or sloppy thinking and superficial learning. Such teaching engages the interest of pupils - even the significant minority who find it difficult to concentrate - and ensures that they improve their knowledge and understanding. Pupils themselves also learn to appreciate, and aspire to, high standards.

38. In a small minority of lessons, however, teachers do not stimulate pupils enough. Sometimes they talk too much themselves and do not expect pupils to contribute much, or at all, to classwork. On a few occasions a monotony of voice or activity rapidly loses pupils' interest or pupils' poor presentation of work does not attract appropriate criticism. Pupils are particularly held back, however, when teaching lacks rigour, dynamism, a creative spark or intellectual bite.

39. Lessons are nearly always well planned - sometimes in meticulous detail. Most teachers presented inspectors during the inspection with plans that had very clear objectives and structure and went into fine detail. Most lessons begin with a clear and brisk review of previous learning and mapping out of the stages of the current lesson. The best lessons include an appropriate range of activities that are well sequenced, varied and timed and conclude with an appropriately brisk and comprehensive review of what has been learned. A small minority of lessons are, however, unclearly introduced, vaguely organised (because the purpose of the lesson is not clear) or abruptly terminated as soon as the bell goes.

40. Most teachers use a sound range of effective teaching methods. A typical, successful lesson follows the pattern of a quick review of previous content and pupils' understanding, an explanation by the teacher of the purpose and main features of the lesson, some investigation or discussion by pupils in pairs or small groups, and a summarising conclusion. A significant proportion of teachers are very successful in helping pupils to work constructively together in groups and in making learning enjoyable. They move purposefully around the class, asking questions, checking work and giving encouragement. In contrast, teachers make insufficient use of such elements as brainstorming and note-taking.

41. Many teachers orchestrate plenary discussions satisfactorily. After successful group work in a Year 8 lesson in English on Simon Armitage's poem, *Cataract Operation*, for example, the teacher elicited very sensitive feelings about human reactions. Insufficient time or value is, however, given to the part that debate or whole-class discussion can play in improving the quality of pupils' learning. Many teachers make simple listings of key points on whiteboard or blackboard very effectively or occasionally (as in mathematics) use well a computerised, interactive whiteboard to develop and emphasise significant points. In the minority of cases where teachers do not maintain a brisk pace or introduce sufficient variety into learning tasks, however, pupils easily become restless and sometimes disruptive.

42. Most lessons are well managed. Teachers in this school work hard to keep many pupils on task. Some are very skilled at keeping firm control through humour without confrontation. Although a significant minority of pupils can be impulsive - and a few have little self-control - most teachers very quickly get pupils' attention, settle them down to work without fuss and ensure that lessons proceed smoothly. As a result, pupils work well, take a serious interest in lessons and readily accept teachers' guidance. Teachers' relationships with pupils are generally warm, encouraging, good-humoured and very patient.

43. In a small minority of classes poor attitudes are allowed to prevail: pupils enter noisily, continue to gossip, "mess about", speak out of turn or occasionally shout raucously. In a few cases teachers do not obtain pupils' attention and quiet before they give out explanations and backchat is not promptly dealt with. In these classes pupils learn little and the education of the majority of well-behaved children is unfairly hampered.

44. Time is normally used well. Lessons begin on time and usually proceed at an appropriately brisk pace. In most a reasonable amount of ground is covered in the time available. The various stages of lessons are often well timed. Classroom support assistants are well used both for pupils with special educational needs and for those who are in the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The marking of pupils' work is reasonable: most work is marked up to date and often has constructive comments, but a small amount of marking is superficial, does not point out fundamental inaccuracies or give a clear indication of what pupils have to do to improve their work..

45. Teaching is predominantly good throughout the school and particularly so in Key Stage 4. It is satisfactory in Key Stage 3 in mathematics, art, ICT and music and throughout the school in drama. It is unsatisfactory in geography in Key Stage 3, but very good in photography in Key Stage 4. In all other subjects and key stages it is good. Three-quarters of subjects have at least some teaching that is very good and at least a quarter of it is of this high quality in science and RE. Teachers work hard to provide a sound standard of education for pupils. Homework is generally set appropriately to reinforce or extend what has been learned in school. In the early weeks of the current academic year homework was generally well recorded in pupils' planners and monitored closely by teachers.

46. Most pupils make satisfactory progress in their studies both in lessons and over longer periods of time. In over half the classes they make good progress and, occasionally, very good progress. Not enough progress in learning occurs in about one in every ten classes. The rate of progress increases slightly as pupils move through the school. Pupils make satisfactory progress in their learning in Key Stage 3 in English and music; in Key Stage 4 in geography, modern foreign languages and (in the time available) in RE; and throughout the school in mathematics and art. They make unsatisfactory progress in geography in Key Stage 3. Pupils generally make good progress in other subjects and key stages.

47. Where teaching is of good quality, pupils learn with interest and sometimes with great enthusiasm. They readily get down to work, take a full part in lessons and are eager to answer teachers' questions. They are willing

to work productively for the whole of lessons and occasionally show clear initiative. Where teaching is unsatisfactory (and in some lessons where teaching is broadly satisfactory) pupils take too long to settle down to work, pay insufficient attention to their teachers, frequently stray away from what they should be doing or are too noisy.

48. High-attaining pupils, especially when they are taught in groups of similar ability or attainment, generally make sound progress. Those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language receive teaching of a good standard. As a result they usually make appropriate progress.

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

49. The school's curriculum offers a sound range of opportunities for learning. Although the school does not provide separate vocational courses, the breadth and balance of the curriculum are largely satisfactory and appropriate for pupils' needs. In Key Stage 3 (Years 7-9) each subject of the National Curriculum is appropriately covered, in line with statutory requirements.

50. All pupils in Year 7 study both French and German. In Years 8-9 all study either French or German, but one third study both of these languages. Additionally, all study elements of religious, personal, social and health education and citizenship (RPSHCE) within a unified course and are largely taught by different teachers for the discrete elements of the course on a rotational pattern. Pupils have a good opportunity to study the performing arts in music, dance and drama.

51. A generally good range of curricular provision is offered in Key Stage 4 (Years 10-11). All pupils study the core subjects of English, mathematics and (double) science, as well as information and communication technology (ICT), a modern foreign language, PE and RPSHCE. Pupils choose further subjects from an appropriate list of 11 subjects that includes both French and German, a Youth Award scheme and photography. Religious education does not, however, appear in the option blocks. In Year 11 a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) course in construction is offered at a local college of further education. No courses are offered towards General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ).

52. The school's provision meets all the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum. It does not, however, meet national requirements for RE in Years 7-9 or in Year 11. The previous inspection report also indicated that there was inadequate provision for this subject at Key Stage 4. In Years 7-9 RE is taught as part of the rotational system of RPSHCE, but pupils receive only about one fifth of the taught time necessary to cover a suitable course of RE in sufficient depth and breadth. Statutory requirements for RE are met in Year 10, because all pupils receive one hour's teaching each week. There is currently very little teaching of RE in Year 11, but firm plans have been made to extend the provision currently made in Year 10 into Year 11 from September 2001. The school has done very little since the last inspection to remedy the paucity of RE.

53. All pupils can study the full range of subjects provided by the school. The school does not, however, have a policy to identify and guide its work with gifted or talented children. Pupils are normally taught in mixed-attainment groups in Year 7. Teaching of the literacy booster course in Year 7, however, is done in "setted" groups for two periods each week. Pupils are also taught in sets of similar attainment for mathematics and science after the October half-term. This setted teaching continues for the rest of Key Stage 3 in mathematics and science. These subjects are joined by teaching through attainment-sets for Years 8-9 in design and technology, geography, history and modern foreign languages. These arrangements are largely effective, although many sets still contain a wide spread of ability. In the main, teachers match the difficulty of the work they set pupils of differing capability in a satisfactory way, but do not do it well enough overall in English, art, design and technology, geography and history.

54. Partly as a result of a major weakness identified at the last inspection, the school has developed a thoughtful strategy for raising the standard of pupils' literacy in Year 7, seeing it as a key to pupils' capability in a wide range of subjects. A suitable range of training, planning and incorporation into subject schemes of work has been undertaken. Key technical words are widely displayed and used, but there is insufficient coordination of this initiative across all subjects on such matters as spelling and punctuation. The monitoring of the impact of the last academic year's experimental programme in Year 7 has not been rigorous enough.

The result is that the school does not fully know the extent to which its good ideas have been effectively translated into practice, that its financial investment was worthwhile or that the ideas should be adopted more widely. Work to raise standards of numeracy, as part of the national numeracy strategy, has recently begun, but only in mathematics.

55. English is allocated a particularly good amount of teaching time in Years 7 and 10 and mathematics has more than the usual amount of time in Years 10-11. The time allocated for science, geography and history in Year 7 is a little low. The time for art is on the low side throughout the school. The time allowance for RE is very small, as noted earlier, except in Year 10. The total teaching time each week (24.5 hours) falls slightly short of the minimum of 25 hours recommended by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) for at least Years 10-11.

56. The procedures for curricular planning are sound. Those for monitoring the effectiveness of the curriculum are light. The school's management has experimented thoughtfully with several schemes to establish clear links of accountability between itself and subject departments, but its present structure is insufficiently clear and relies too heavily (and exclusively) on the headteacher and associate (deputy) headteacher. Schemes of work are very good in science, modern foreign languages and music and of good quality in English, mathematics, art and ICT. They are inadequate in geography and drama and have a few unsatisfactory features in design and technology. There is no scheme of work for history, a major weakness that the new head of department is already tackling with vigour.

57. The school provides a good range of extracurricular activities to enhance the curriculum. A wide range of subject clubs (including such interests as journalism and photography) is complemented by an activity week at the end of each summer term: the latter includes visits to Bude for five days for pupils in Years 7-8, a camp at Ashbourne in Derbyshire for pupils in Year 9, and other residential study visits for Year 7 pupils to France and pupils in Years 8-10 to Germany. A small range of dramatic and musical events takes place. There is a wide range of other activities at lunchtimes (particularly) and after school, in addition to occasional visits from a variety of performers.

58. There is a substantial range of sporting activities, the majority of which take place very regularly. As a result, the school has gained the Sportsmark Award. About two-fifths of pupils are involved in competitive sports and there is a willing commitment to these from seven members of staff and other adults. Study support is available to pupils each lunchtime and pupils in Years 7 and 8 are well supported by homework clubs.

59. The provision for careers education and guidance is good. An appropriate scheme for careers education is organised by the careers coordinator and is taught within the RPSHCE programme over Years 7-11 largely by form tutors but, in Key Stage 4, by more specialist staff. The coordinator has carefully organised a suitable careers programme, but neither teaches the course nor has had, until very recently, the opportunity to monitor it systematically. Impartial careers advice of good quality is given by the careers service, which is regarded as an essential and close partner in careers education. Its assistance is made readily available to pupils in an appropriate range of formal and informal ways. The school has an adequate careers library that is accessible throughout the day, because it is located in the main school library. Further information is readily available on computer.

60. All pupils in Year 10 spend two weeks on work experience. This is well organised through a close working partnership between the school and the careers service. Pupils are prepared effectively for their placement and visited on site, but there are no structured opportunities to undertake comprehensive follow-up work after the placement.

61. The school has sound links with its local community. It is working hard to provide support and guidance for those families that wish to improve their standards of literacy. Through Compact Plus it supports some challenging pupils in acquiring social skills and in planning for the future. Many firm links have been established with local employers through the work experience programme. A wide range of visitors to the school enhances the school's teaching expertise. The school maintains good links with a range of sporting clubs.

62. The school's curricular links with its contributory primary schools vary widely: they are strong in ICT, weak in English, science, art, geography, history and PE, and reasonable in mathematics, design and technology and in music. Until the last two years, however, the school has had very little information about primary pupils' attainments in national tests. The school has established strong links with three local colleges that provide education for pupils after the age of 16. The school participates strongly and successfully with higher education in initial teacher training.

63. The school's provision for pupils with special educational needs complies with the national code of good practice. Provision is carefully targeted at withdrawing pupils from lessons to concentrate mainly on improving their literacy skills. This provision, together with specialist "dyslexia" tuition, is provided within the school's special unit. An additional reasonable level of support is provided in classes by eight learning support assistants. They are well deployed, suitably interactive and of good quality. Most departments have sound strategies for matching the level of work to these pupils' needs, but there is no whole-school policy for it and insufficient monitoring. The coordinator for special educational needs (SENCO) has good links with heads of years and "schools", but no clear mechanism for influencing all subject departments.

64. Pupils who are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language are carefully assessed and receive well-targeted help. The teacher directly responsible for this element of the school's provision uses his time well to focus on key groups, working in close and effective partnership with departmental staff. Specialist tests, statistics and other analyses are well used and sets of attainment data are thoroughly and sensitively interpreted. The recently appointed home-school liaison worker is active in school and is beginning to make a significant contribution to home-school contacts and relationships.

65. The school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. Although very little RE is taught in most years, all pupils experience spirituality in the lessons that they do have and in meetings held in the teaching base of the head of the RE department. Here they learn about, and come to respect, holy books, artefacts and symbols from different religions - as, for example, The Bible and Koran or the use of candles lit in commemoration rituals. Some assemblies provide a strong sense of the spiritual dimension, as when pupils learned about the moving events of Louis Braille's life and listened to music by Mozart. A sense of spirituality is not generally promoted strongly within the daily curriculum. In ICT, however, pupils research the meaning of symbol and gesture in different religions, and in PE their experience of solitary locations on outdoor pursuits gives them good opportunities for personal reflection.

66. Pupils' moral education is well promoted. The school has a clear code of conduct that is prominently displayed. Most staff insist on acceptable standards of behaviour and courtesy. There is a well-understood system of sanctions for poor behaviour. Aggressive incidents that occur from time to time are dealt with calmly and in a positive manner. One fifth of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire expressed a degree of dissatisfaction with behaviour. The vast majority of parents believe that their children look forward to coming to school.

67. Pupils who were interviewed during the inspection were generally confident about the way any aggression and bullying are dealt with by staff. Some teachers are seen as especially caring and very approachable when serious problems need attention. Overall, the school provides an environment in which pupils feel secure. Although there is a system that enables senior pupils to exercise responsibility and serve as role models for others, the school misses many opportunities to provide for these experiences. Moral development is well reinforced in some lessons - as, for example, in English when pupils consider racial issues in their study of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. They also meet moral issues in history when dealing with such topics as slavery and fascism. In PE, pupils learn about the advantages of team work and the need for rules and fair play.

68. Provision for pupils' social development is good. The school makes good use of the spaces it has available where pupils can socialise (although their quality varies considerably) - by, for example, comfortable seating in part of the dining hall and a designated room for pupils in Year 11. Many corridors, however, are narrow: as a result, some serious bottlenecks occur when there is insufficient staff supervision or intervention as pupils move around *en masse*.

69. Outside lesson times pupils engage in a good range of activities, especially in music and PE. These activities offer pupils many opportunities to make new friends. A range of educational visits further extends pupils' social horizons. For example, residential visits to centres in Cornwall and Derbyshire, involving outdoor pursuits in unfamiliar surroundings, provide especially good social experiences. Pupils visit North Yorkshire to meet representatives of other schools in competitive games. The school also has a successful steel band which often plays at local events such as the Calderdale Fair and the Paddock multicultural festival. In several subjects - for example, design and technology, history, music and PE - pupils regularly work together in pairs or groups. Through contacts made in connection with PE, pupils have very good opportunities to join outside sports clubs that further extend their social life.

70. The school makes satisfactory provision for pupils' cultural development. It is itself an orderly community which includes pupils from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. Pupils thus share knowledge and ideas about beliefs and traditions that are different from those they acquire in their own homes. They study the literature of different countries in English lessons. In music they hear, and sometimes take ideas from, African, Chinese, Latin American and Caribbean music to use in their own compositions. Pupils visit Austria, France and Germany in connection with their language studies and often discuss in lessons the similarities and differences of habits and customs that they observe in these countries.

71. From time to time senior representatives of the major faiths meet pupils to talk about their beliefs. The school has an Asian liaison worker who is, amongst other things, successfully fostering closer home-school links. Whilst provision for the cultural development of pupils is satisfactory overall, the school has a limited range of ways to increase pupils' awareness and knowledge of social, artistic and work cultures that are markedly different from their own.

72. The school falls well short of meeting the legal requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils, since there is no whole-school provision on two days each week and no element of worship in most tutorial sessions.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

73. The school offers a high quality of care and guidance to its pupils. There are generally very positive relationships between pupils and staff. Pupils feel valued and secure in the school. The school has sound policies for ensuring the health and safety of pupils and is very concerned for their welfare. There are, nonetheless, a small number of current aspects of the school which present hazards: the entrance drive to the school is narrow, in disrepair and presents risks to pedestrians (especially at the beginning and end of the school day); chemicals are insecurely stored in the science area and the servicing and provision of basic essentials in pupils' toilets are inadequate.

74. The school's policy and practice on child protection are good. Staff are well informed about their responsibilities and have substantial links with appropriate external agencies. Systems for promoting high attendance are very good. Those for maintaining good behaviour are sound, regularly reviewed and generally very effective. There is little overt evidence of bullying and pupils have confidence that staff will deal promptly with any such incidents.

75. The programmes of study for RPSHCE have recently been revised and cover a broad range of suitable issues. Adequate time is made available for the teaching of this programme. The quality of teaching the course, however, is only just satisfactory. The large team taking the course is not sufficiently coordinated, prepared or monitored for this work and a restricted range of teaching methods is used.

76. Pupils are offered good personal support for their work and development. They see, for example, their form teachers, heads of year, heads of upper and lower schools, as well as the headteacher himself, as significant figures who are readily available to help and guide them. Across the school there are sound coordination of information about pupils and carefully graduated systems to enable staff to support and mentor their conduct and progress.

77. Pupils' academic achievements are carefully monitored, although the limited quantity of valid data on attainment in Key Stage 3 limits its effectiveness. The provision made for pupils with statements of special educational need complies with the specifications of those statements. Pupils have suitable opportunities to consult the school's staff about personal needs or problems. Additional, regular support and counselling of good quality are provided by external agencies and support workers. The school nursing service offers a confidential "drop-in" service for pupils that is well used and appreciated.

78. The school has a good assessment policy that gives clear guidance on the assessment, recording and reporting of pupils' work and the collection of data. The policy sets out very clearly for staff the purposes of assessment and definitions of terminology. Since the previous inspection heads of subject departments have improved considerably their understanding of assessment provision and practice and the need to share and analyse data across the whole school.

79. Within most subject departments the quality of day-to-day assessment of individual pupils' work is at least satisfactory. Assessment in science is very good, but is unsatisfactory in design and technology, geography, history and RE. In Years 10-11 teachers use the conventional grading system for GCSE work. In Years 7-9, however, because systems vary both across and within departments, the school does not have a reliable way of ensuring that grades given in different subjects are of equal worth. In those subjects which require assessment to be made to national criteria, the day-to-day evaluations of pupils' work relate satisfactorily to those levels except in design and technology and in history. In Years 10-11 assessments relate firmly to the requirements of external examinations and, as a consequence, give both good indications of the progress of pupils and clear targets for improvement.

80. Procedures for assessing, recording and monitoring pupils' attainment and progress across the school are satisfactory overall. The analysis of the progress of individuals and groups moving through Years 10-11 is very thorough. It provides reliable information for tracking individual pupils' progress and for monitoring overall standards. In Years 7-9, however, there is a significant weakness, because the school has neither a comprehensive baseline of information about pupils' attainments on entry nor a reliable common criterion for judging their subsequent attainment across all subjects. Annual reports to parents do not fully meet statutory requirements, because pupils' attainment and progress are not recorded for RE nor, in Year 9, for ICT.

81. Pupils' Records of Achievement to mark the end of compulsory education are of satisfactory quality. They show pupils' broad achievements and final levels of attainment, including evaluations written by both the school and pupils themselves. The school does not, however, have a system to enable pupils to collect significant examples of achievement over the whole time they are school. Assessment provision and practice are systematic and of good quality both for pupils with special educational needs and for pupils for whom English is an additional language.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

82. The school continues to maintain the good links with parents that were reported at the last inspection. There was a very positive response from parents to the pre-inspection questionnaire. On most points parents strongly support the school. Only pupils' behaviour, homework and the range of links with parents attracted a less favourable response by a minority of parents.

83. The school has a thoughtful, caring and welcoming atmosphere for parents. Parents indicate that they find the staff very approachable and helpful. In particular, the induction of Year 7 pupils to the school and their early years in school are carefully and sensitively supervised. The education social worker and the newly appointed, multilingual, home-school partnership officer make a major contribution to the school's work with a broad cross-section of its parents. The much improved levels of attendance and the rise in the number of pupils coming to the school are a tribute to the care and attention the school pays to its links with parents and to the principles of its Partnership document.

84. The Student Planner is well used by teachers, pupils and parents. It provides a good method of communication and links closely with the school's homework policy and schedule. The parents' consultation

evenings and review days are well supported and organised. A record of attendance is kept to ensure that parents unable to attend are contacted by another means.

85. The school's newsletter is published by the Junior Journalist Club. This attractive, colourful journal carries a wide variety of interesting reports, interviews and news of forthcoming events and always includes a leading article from either the headteacher or deputy headteacher. The Friends of Royds Hall organise regular, interesting events that are well supported by both staff and parents. Whilst a few parents work in the school as classroom assistants or lunchtime supervisors and help with school outings, none are involved in other areas of the curriculum or in technical support.

86. The interim and annual reports to parents are presented in a standard format. Most written comments about pupils' work are suitably informative, although several subject reports have insufficient clarity and detail about pupils' attainment and progress. The reports do not convey fully comparable subject information in Years 7-9 nor usually indicate what pupils need to do in order to improve; a significant minority of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire expressed dissatisfaction with the information they receive, particularly in relation to their children's progress. There are very good links with parents of pupils with special educational needs and a high level of cooperation with external agencies.

87. The school's prospectus informs parents, in the usual outline detail, about the activities and aims of the school. The curricular information given for Years 7-9, however, is sketchy and not further extended for parents in written form during their children's time in the lower school. The GCSE options booklet is clear and adequate. The school's development plan contains an appropriate level of commitment to improving further the partnership with parents and the community.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

88. The school has clear, engaging and well set out aims and values. These appropriately embrace positive relationships, equality of opportunity and aspirations for high achievement. These aims and values are well reflected in the daily life and work of the school. Following a period of considerable change, particularly in heads of subject departments, the school is entering a more stable phase of its development.

89. The school's leadership establishes well-defined priorities and direction for the school. The headteacher has a clear vision of the qualities he wishes the school to embody, in line with the goals above. He is very visibly committed to the school and its values. He gives generously of himself to serve the school and its wider community. He provides highly professional and humane leadership to the school and ensures that he is accessible to pupils, staff and parents. This wholehearted commitment to the school is equally demonstrated by the associate (deputy) headteacher. She takes a full and very effective part with the headteacher in every aspect of the school's life, ensuring that the school's aims and values are realised through effective systems of management.

90. The role of the wider senior management team is in transition. It makes a major contribution to the smooth running of the school, but does not fully achieve the function of translating all policies into effective action. The headteacher and associate headteacher carry line-management responsibility for all the heads of subject departments and pastoral teams. This very wide span of responsibility does not allow them, because of their other necessary commitments, to undertake sufficiently regular and detailed oversight of this important tier of managers.

91. The effectiveness of subject and pastoral team leaders ranges from very good to unsatisfactory, but is sound overall. There has been a significant turnover of post-holders at this level over the past three years and there are now clear signs of an improved performance in both subject and pastoral management over that period.

92. The governing body has a clear commitment to the school and to its continuing improvement. It has satisfactorily addressed some relevant targets, including many of the key issues arising from the last inspection, and provides encouraging support for the school's management. It has not monitored closely enough, however, such targets for improvement as the Year 7 literacy initiative or those key issues from the

last inspection concerning RE and collective worship. The governing body operates through an appropriate series of committees and working groups. Its work is now reinforced by a standing Review Group of governors that is beginning to take a more strategic view of the school's future needs.

93. The senior management team has developed good sets of procedures to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching both within departments and across the school. Appropriate training and development have been invested in this work which, it is planned, will be subsumed within the performance management system, now required of all schools by national regulations. These procedures are ambitious and of good quality. A good start has been made on monitoring teaching, but not yet with the requisite regularity or consistent follow-up.

94. The school's development plan is a very clear, concise and well-written document, containing explicit priorities, costings and success criteria. It builds upon similarly structured and dovetailed development plans for each subject area, so as to secure consistency and continuity. Although the absence of regular interim reviews and checks to enable each target to be tracked to completion sometimes weakens its implementation, this good system is a first-rate basis for corporate planning and development.

95. The school's educational priorities are well supported through sound financial management and planning. The governing body is well informed about the school's patterns of spending and monitors expenditure carefully, although infrequently taking the initiative on financial issues. The school carries forward a small surplus to allow for contingencies. As at the time of the last inspection, there is effective financial control and administration. A very recent audit did not raise any major issues; the ones identified at the previous audit have been dealt with satisfactorily.

96. Spending by heads of departments is carefully monitored. The school has made appropriate use of funds for staff training. The impact of professional training is now monitored, an improvement since the time of the last inspection. The school makes good use of new technologies such as e-mail, CD-ROMs and the Internet - as, for example in the electronic monitoring of attendance and the use of the Internet to purchase books. Spending on such services as water and electricity is monitored and the school has taken the decision to remain with its local authority's purchasing scheme.

97. The proportion of the school's budget spent on teaching staff is below average. This provision is satisfactory overall, but there is insufficient specialist expertise to teach ICT and RE. The majority of lessons are taught by specialists. There are sufficient, appropriately qualified or trained staff both for pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. Technical support is good in ICT, but insufficient in science and in design and technology. The school has sufficient administrative support. The ratio of teachers to pupils is broadly average. The total teaching time of 24.5 hours per week is half an hour less than the minimum recommended nationally for at least Years 10-11.

98. There is an effective programme of induction to the work of the school for teachers new to teaching. Opportunities for staff training are used appropriately. The good overall standard of teaching and learning in the school indicates that the school is capable of being an effective provider of initial teacher training.

99. The school is situated on an attractive site. There has been little improvement in the provision of accommodation, however, since the time of the last inspection, when several major deficiencies were identified. Accommodation is still poor in science and ICT and very poor in art. The gymnasium is in a poor state of repair. The plans in hand to improve these areas through the *Public-Private Partnership (PPP)* promise to remedy the problems.

100. Although the school has some attractive internal areas (notably the main entrance area of the original house), much is rather drab and poorly decorated, in spite of some teachers' attempts to use displays of work to brighten the environment. The library is welcoming, but is much too small for a school of this size. The layout of the room makes it difficult to accommodate whole classes or to supervise pupils effectively. There are firm plans to relocate the library to a much larger area.

101. The accommodation for pupils with special educational needs is good and well used. The *Centre*

(located in the same area) is a pleasant room and used effectively to provide space and support for vulnerable or disruptive pupils for an individual lesson or half a day. Access to any of the upper floors of the school is extremely difficult for people with physical disabilities and the school has no toilet provision for disabled people, a serious weakness. There are, however, plans within the *PPP* scheme to remedy most of these deficiencies.

102. The school's spending on resources is above the national average. The provision of resources is unsatisfactory, however, owing to several years of low spending when the school's budget was in deficit. There are shortages of books in art, design and technology, history and ICT and of equipment in art. The centrally provided ICT facilities are satisfactory. Subject departments have at least one up-to-date computer each and most have many more, a fair level of provision.

103. The library is not a satisfactory centre in which pupils can work independently. The stock of books is too small (the result of the small size of the room) and, although the Internet is available, the lack of staff training for its use has resulted in it not being accessible to pupils. Pupils with special educational needs have good access to ample resources: these include six industry-standard computers (PCs) that are well used and have appropriate software, as well as very good provision of a computerised learning system that is also used across Year 7 by the English and mathematics departments.

104. Overall, taking into account the sound quality and range of education provided for pupils and the satisfactory progress pupils make as they move through Years 7-11, set against the amount of money received for its work, the school gives sound value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

105. In order to improve pupils' standards of attainment and build upon the sound quality of education they already receive, the governors and senior management of the school should:

- (a) increase still further the amount of regular monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching by senior and middle management, in order to reinforce what is good and to remove the weaknesses identified in a minority of lessons (## 23 35-36 38-41 43-44 46-47 90).
- (b) increase the frequency of rigorous discussion and the quality of oral presentations made by pupils, in order to give them the confidence and capability to express their views clearly and articulately (## 18 41).
- (c) ensure that statutory requirements are met by:
 - providing sufficient teaching of religious education to cover the Agreed Syllabus adequately in Years 7-9 and in Year 11 [insufficient progress has been made on remedying this weakness identified at the last inspection] (## 52 55 92 240-246);
 - providing a daily act of collective worship for all pupils [the school has also made very little progress on this weakness since the last inspection] (## 72 92); and
 - ensuring that all reports to parents comment on pupils' attainment and progress in religious education and, in Year 9, in information and communication technology (# 80).
- (d) measure clearly pupils' level of attainment and rate of progress throughout Years 7-9 by establishing a clear baseline when pupils join the school and by judging their subsequent attainment to a consistent criterion across all subjects and year groups (## 2 13 79-80 86).
- (e) continue to reduce the deficit in learning resources by the provision of more textbooks in art, design and technology, history and ICT (#102).
- (f) improve the quality of the decoration and adequacy of accommodation, as indicated in the main body of the report, in order to bring the poor standard of much of the school's accommodation up to the level of the best (## 99-101).

In addition to the key issues above, other less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the school's future plan of action. These are indicated in paragraphs 24 27 53-56 60 62 68 71 73 79 81 94 96-97 103 of the main body of the report and in appropriate subject sections.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	194
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	95

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	12	48	31	7	2	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	763
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	204

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Y7–Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	34
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	251

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	154

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	43
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	46

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.7
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.8
National comparative data	1.1

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for 1998-1999.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	1999	76	69	145

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	46	40	39
	Girls	51	26	27
	Total	97	66	66
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	67 (57)	46 (45)	46 (54)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	13 (17)	21 (23)	22 (25)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	28	37	40
	Girls	25	25	32
	Total	53	62	72
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	37 (42)	43 (48)	50 (48)
	National	64 (62)	64 (64)	60 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	12 (17)	26 (25)	21 (25)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (31)

Percentages in brackets refer to 1998.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	1999	78	59	137

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	32	63	70
	Girls	22	54	58
	Total	54	117	128
Percentage of pupils achieving The standard specified	School	39 (32)	85 (88)	93 (92)
	National	47 (45)	91 (90)	96 (95)

Percentages in brackets refer to 1998.

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	32.5 (31.1)
	National	38.0 (36.8)

Figures in brackets refer to 1998.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	24
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	0
Indian	28
Pakistani	130
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	507
Any other minority ethnic group	48

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	1	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	1	0
Pakistani	3	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	31	1
Other minority ethnic groups	4	1

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	43.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.5
Average class size	22.6

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	168

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	1,792,840
Total expenditure	1,719,832
Expenditure per pupil	2,433
Balance brought forward from previous year	14,914
Balance carried forward to next year	87,922

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	850
Number of questionnaires returned	418

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	32	52	8	3	5
My child is making good progress in school.	31	54	2	1	12
Behaviour in the school is good.	22	49	15	5	9
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	23	46	12	2	17
The teaching is good.	23	53	5	1	18
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	25	43	11	2	19
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	44	46	5	1	4
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	53	42	2	1	2
The school works closely with parents.	27	42	16	2	13
The school is well led and managed.	26	56	4	1	13
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	29	48	6	2	15
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	28	40	11	1	20

Other issues raised by parents

There were additional comments from parents on 28 of the 418 questionnaires returned.

Amongst the positive points mentioned were:

- the school's efforts to help children to make good progress; and
- the school's care and concern and its willingness to do all it can to help pupils.

Amongst the very few concerns expressed in questionnaires was:

- the disruption caused by a few pupils.

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

ENGLISH

106. On entry to the school in Year 7 pupils' overall standard of attainment is below (and in most years well below) the national average. Results in the national tests in English at the end of Year 9 over the period 1996-1998 and in 2000 were below the national average, but in 1999 were close to average and well above the average for similar kinds of schools. During the same period the attainment of both boys and girls was below the national standard overall. Over the 1997-2000 period results in GCSE in both English language and English literature were well below national averages, but in 1999 results were in line with the average for similar kinds of schools. The attainment of girls was higher than that of boys throughout the period.

107. By the end of Year 9 pupils' work seen during the inspection ranged from well above to well below average, but was below average overall. In Year 7, for example, pupils appropriately "brainstormed" the reasons for creating life, whilst studying the stories of Frankenstein and Prometheus. In Year 8 they understood sensitively the tone of a war poem. Through a study skills programme that focuses on the planning and organisation of different writing tasks, sentence structure, spelling, layout and presentation, pupils in Year 7 gain confidence and competence in basic literacy. Their capability is further enhanced by the increasing use in a few other subjects of "writing frames" to help pupils to organise their writing. Pupils in Years 7-9 read thoroughly or skim an appropriate range of fiction and non-fiction books. They use technical terms reasonably to identify such literary features as metaphor and simile when, for example, discussing Alfred Noyes's poem, *The Highwayman*.

108. By the end of Year 11, attainment is below average overall. In lessons in Years 10 and 11 pupils use a suitable range of reading approaches to examine the texts they read. In considering the social status of characters in Harper Lee's novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, for example, pupils created different diagrammatic representations to classify the characters and identify well the links between them. Pupils planning an essay on Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* explained carefully and logically the purpose of an opening paragraph. All pupils explore and develop fair insight into literary themes and more able sets of pupils enjoy discussing their work. Pupils' fluency and accuracy in reading are, nevertheless, below average overall. There is little reading aloud of texts to improve these elements of reading.

109. Whilst the quality of presentation in written work improves over Years 10-11, the overall standard of work is unsatisfactory. A small amount of writing is of a high standard, but much is marred by poor syntax, misspelling and untidy handwriting. Note-taking is, however, satisfactorily practised and of a reasonable standard. The majority of pupils make fair progress over the two years and higher-attaining pupils organise their examination coursework well.

110. The majority of pupils listen carefully and respond to teachers' questions appropriately. Pupils' standard of speaking varies very widely. A minority of pupils are articulate and express themselves clearly, but the audibility, confidence and expression of the majority are below average. The overall standard of discussion and of the handling of argumentation is below average. There is, however, quite a wide use of appropriate technical vocabulary.

111. Across other subjects of the curriculum the standard of literacy is below average overall. In most subjects key specialist words are used soundly and are prominently displayed to ensure accuracy of use. The central skills of reading with accuracy and fluency and of tackling a range of reading effectively are, however, below average across the school. The writing skills of many pupils are insufficiently mastered to enable them to write legibly and accurately and with a sense of style. Pupils' focused listening and command of formal speech in the classroom are also below average. This is partly because they have infrequent, structured opportunities for discussion in most subjects. The quality of pupils' speaking is, however, generally good in science and music. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make satisfactory progress.

112. The quality of teaching is good overall throughout the school. A well-structured sequence of activities for Year 8 pupils, for example, enabled them to use their existing knowledge and experience thoughtfully to interpret Tennyson's poem, *The Lady of Shalott*. In a Year 11 class the teacher had high expectations of pupils and questioned them rigorously in their study of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The department's specialist teaching is a strength: the careful planning of lessons, incorporating clear objectives and timings, helps to raise pupils' expectations and learning.

113. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in English are good throughout the school. In a Year 7 class, for instance, pupils settled well and quickly took a serious interest in the lesson. In a Year 11 class pupils had very positive attitudes to their studies and were keen to complete their work. They generally make satisfactory progress in their learning, especially in Years 10-11 where they acquire deeper understanding and tend to make greater effort.

114. The department contributes effectively to the moral, social and cultural development of pupils. In the literature that is taught throughout the school pupils are introduced to the English literary heritage as well as to poems and novels from other cultures. The use of such novels as *Abomination*, *Buddy* and *The Tulip Touch* encourages pupils to consider moral and social issues thoughtfully. Consideration of the social status of the characters in *To Kill A Mockingbird* draws appropriate attention to cultural differences. The range of multicultural literary texts across both key stages is, however, limited. The department organises visits to theatres and employs a writer to work with pupils during Book Week.

115. The staff are well motivated. Since the last inspection new appointments to the post of head of department and second in department have brought much-needed stability and a clear vision of what needs to be done in the department to improve pupils' attainment. A new scheme of work has been produced for Key Stage 3 to help to secure more effective planning and cohesion in what is taught. The department has, however, insufficient links between good "literacy hour" practice in primary education and Year 7.

116. The department is well led. It has successfully introduced a programme to monitor teaching; this includes planned feedback time and the setting of targets. Planning for the future is sound, but the monitoring and tracking of pupils' work are not detailed enough in Years 7-9. Each classroom has access to a computer, but they are underused. Accommodation is satisfactory. Resources for teaching are adequate.

117. **Drama** is taught to all pupils in Key Stage 3 and is provided as an option in Key Stage 4. Over the past four years it has not been regularly offered as a GCSE option, but small groups of pupils have been entered for either drama or performing arts.

118. In Key Stage 3, pupils are introduced to a range of drama skills and techniques. They use their knowledge of characters reasonably when identifying dramatic situations. The lack of self-control of a minority of pupils undermines their own learning and that of others. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall in Years 7-9 and most pupils make satisfactory progress in their learning.

119. In Key Stage 4 pupils prepare for an external examination that provides structure for the content of lessons. By the end of Year 11 many pupils respond satisfactorily to high expectations, although others have difficulty in expressing their ideas. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall in this key stage: the exploration of characters and the use of character games in Year 10, for example, help to improve the quality of learning. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are, in the main, satisfactory.

120. The drama department has a policy, but no scheme of work or development plan, for the subject. The result of this weakness is that clear objectives, continuity and progression cannot be guaranteed, especially in Years 7-9. The use of assessment at the end of Year 9 does not dovetail sufficiently with the assessment for speaking and listening in English. The head of department is a member of a consortium of drama teachers that has proved to be an essential reference point and has helped to ensure the standardisation of assessment. The subject makes a sound contribution to the social and cultural development of pupils through such activities as those based on *The Pearl* and the *Allotment Incident*. Accommodation for drama does not provide facilities for stagecraft or lighting. Resources are otherwise satisfactory.

MATHEMATICS

121. The proportion of pupils who achieved the basic standard expected of 14 year olds in the 1999 national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 was well below average. The proportion achieving the higher levels was also well below average. Based upon the average points gained by all pupils, the school's results were well below average compared with all schools and were below average when compared with those of schools in similar social circumstances. The results in previous years have, overall, shown a downward trend and have always remained significantly below the national average. Before 1999, boys' overall attainment was below that of girls but, as a result of changing the scheme of work and methods of teaching, the performance of boys was higher than that of the girls in 1999 and 2000, contrary to the national trend.

122. The proportion of pupils who achieved grades A*-C in the GCSE examination in 1999 was close to the national average. The proportion achieving the highest grades (A* or A) was also close to average, but a lower than average proportion achieved a grade in the range A*-G. Boys' overall attainment was significantly better than that of girls, contrary to the national picture. The results over recent years have remained well below average, but with a significant improvement in 1999. Results in 2000 went back to their previous lower level. When compared with those of schools in similar social circumstances, however, the results in 1999 were well above average. Based upon the average grade achieved by all the pupils in the school who were entered for the examination in 1999, pupils achieved better results in mathematics than they did in most of their other subjects.

123. By the end of Key Stage 3 the standard of work of most pupils is below what is expected of 14 year olds. Higher-attaining pupils reach the expected standard in the usual areas of study such as arithmetic, algebra and geometry. For example, they multiply and divide fractions accurately and solve linear equations and inequations with confidence. They are quite adept at identifying patterns in sequences of numbers and use algebra well to describe the general term of such sequences. In one such lesson, pupils in the top set in Year 9, through careful and systematic teaching, developed a general formula for calculating the value of an investment over successive years, given the annual rate of interest. About one third of the class, however, did not readily follow the elegance of the argument.

124. Many pupils in Year 9 work at a steady pace in lessons and, with help, make satisfactory progress towards completing successfully the work expected of them. Their achievement, however, is limited by poor recall of previously learned skills and techniques and by insufficient understanding of earlier work. For example, a small minority of pupils in the second set lacked confidence in the process of substituting values of the variable x to find the corresponding values of the variable y , when given a simple relationship between x and y . Pupils are generally slow in recalling number facts and lack confidence and accuracy in mental methods of calculation. Pupils with special educational needs make steady progress in a limited range of mathematics through careful and systematic teaching. Their success is frequently enhanced by systematic use of ICT that builds both confidence and accuracy.

125. The attainment of many pupils on arrival at the school in Year 7 is well below average. During the first half-term they consolidate much of what they learned at primary school and go on to extend their skills and knowledge of number towards the expected level. They use computer programs successfully to build up their speed and accuracy of response. Worksheets of carefully graded examples, incorporating a wide variety of mathematical terminology, both consolidate and extend their confidence in handling numbers and simple algebra. Pupils also improve their data- handling methods by, for example, comparing the text in a range of newspapers by analysis of the lengths of words, sentences and paragraphs and the proportion of space given to pictures. In such work they generally increase their knowledge of graphical representation of data. Occasionally in such activities, however, progress is too slow because of teachers' poor organisation and management of the learning that leads to a lack of urgency on the part of pupils.

126. In Year 8, pupils generally make steady, systematic progress and acquire a suitable range of skills and techniques of the subject. They generally respond well to the teaching of numeracy, increase their speed of recall of basic facts and improve their mental methods of calculation. Nevertheless, their achievement is still below what it should be. Pupils' lack of retention of earlier work often impedes their progress. For instance, even the top sets from each half of the year group require extensive revision of their basic

knowledge of angles before embarking upon practical work in geometrical construction and learning the angle properties of polygons.

127. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' attainment is below average overall. Higher-attaining pupils achieve the standards expected of 16 year olds. They gain a good working knowledge of arithmetic, algebra, geometry, trigonometry and data-handling and use the skills they learn to solve successfully problems in everyday contexts. A few of these pupils show flair in completing extended investigations of mathematical situations.

128. Only about half the pupils in the top set, however, are entered for the higher tier of the GCSE examination; most pupils in the year group are entered for the foundation tier. Most pupils require further work in using and applying mathematics in everyday contexts in order to attain higher GCSE grades. For example, all Year 11 pupils prepared the same piece of GCSE coursework which required them to consider data on car sales, make hypotheses, analyse the data and then represent it in suitable graphs to check their hypotheses. A significant proportion of the pupils in the middle sets worked at a very low level. Their initial ideas were poorly thought out, trivial in analysis and represented by low-level bar charts that established, in many cases, little worthwhile. Although these pupils learn many basic skills and techniques, they lack confidence in applying them in unfamiliar situations. They have little sense of urgency or determination to make better progress, in order to gain a firm understanding of the subject. In consequence, their attainment in GCSE examinations is below what it could be. In contrast, pupils with special educational needs responded positively to very skilful questioning by their teacher: this enabled them to make suitable hypotheses about the data on car sales and confirm their ideas by drawing appropriate graphs.

129. Progress in Year 10 is unsatisfactory overall. Pupils in the middle sets respond well to good teaching and acquire skills and knowledge at a satisfactory pace. They are expected to work quickly and accurately through routine examples; they achieve accuracy and understanding to the level expected. In work on time and finding the times of journeys from bus or train timetables, for instance, the work was extended into a suitable level of challenge by asking for an estimate of the age in seconds of a person one day before her thirteenth birthday. The task led to a good discussion of appropriate methods of estimation using large numbers. In contrast, in the same class there were those who relied too heavily on calculators to find the number of hours in 180 minutes. Low-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are taught thoroughly and systematically and make suitable progress in consolidating basic number skills. The progress of pupils in the top set is unsatisfactory, because they are not made to work with sufficient commitment and concentration. Slovenly and untidy written work is not challenged sufficiently and consequently their attitudes to the subject are poor.

130. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are, however, good overall. A significant proportion of pupils make a very good response to the teaching they receive and most are cooperative in undertaking tasks. Many are willing to answer questions and respond well to encouragement, especially when asked to explain their thinking. On the other hand, a significant minority are too ready to admit defeat. They care little about the quality of presentation of their written work and show no interest in learning the subject. Many answers are sequences of unexplained calculations, lacking any mathematical precision, and fail to convey pupils' understanding, especially when the final answers are wrong. In contrast, for those teachers who insist on good presentation of written work, pupils' answers to textbook questions and to extended mathematical investigations are neatly written and argued in mathematically correct format and terminology.

131. Behaviour in lessons is usually good. Classrooms are generally orderly and teachers are generally vigilant and effective in controlling minor disruptions. Most pupils respect their teachers and respond positively to admonition. They form constructive relationships with their teachers and their peers, and enjoy humour. They frequently help one another to clarify misunderstandings.

132. Almost all the teaching is competent. Half of it is at least good and in one lesson in every eight it is very good. Teaching is satisfactory overall in Years 7-9. It is generally good in Years 10-11, although a small amount is unsatisfactory (and very occasionally poor). The weaknesses in teaching identified in the last inspection as a feature of Years 7-9 (for example, low expectations and insufficient clarity of objectives in some lessons) still remain, but are now mainly in Years 10-11, despite several changes in teaching staff.

133. Teachers are suitably qualified. Good subject knowledge generally ensures that teachers plan lessons to match the needs of pupils well. Their expectations of what pupils can do, however, are sometimes too low to ensure that pupils achieve as well as they could. For example, in several lessons the teaching was too tightly structured and the pace of the lessons slow, in order to accommodate the rate of learning of the lowest attainers, with the result that the higher-attainers of the class were held back. In such lessons questioning and discussion do not sufficiently challenge the majority of the class. In a few other lessons the amount of time spent practising newly learned skills, revisiting those learned previously or the repetitive triviality of some homework seriously underestimates what pupils could do. One or more of these factors were evident in lessons for some of the top two sets, explaining partly why pupils do not achieve as well as they could in national assessments and examinations.

134. Methods of teaching include many clear demonstrations and explanations of mathematical skills and techniques. In the best lessons good questioning develops well pupils' understanding and confidence. The higher attainers in the top set of Year 9, for example, through skilful questioning by their teacher, rose to the challenge of developing a formula for the annual growth of an investment at a given rate of interest. Equally, a top set in Year 8 derived a formula for finding the sum of the angles of a polygon, when given the number of its sides, through careful and systematic questioning. On the other hand, in several lessons teachers are too eager to tell pupils what to do or, by closed questions, lead them to the right answer without them having to think much about it. This resulting high dependence of pupils on their teachers also partly accounts for examination results being lower than they should be.

135. Skills and routines are generally practised effectively. In the best lessons routine work is thoughtfully interspersed by short discussion and checking of answers that revive pupils' motivation. Occasionally the pace of lessons is too slow, because pupils do not have targets to be achieved in a specified time. Computers are used well to enhance learning and confidence in the subject, but pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to improve their confidence in presenting mathematical reasoning. Many lessons have a carefully planned sequence of activities that develops pupils' confidence and mastery of appropriate skills. Teachers usually manage pupils' behaviour well, but occasionally try to talk above a background of noise when many pupils are not listening. The pace of a minority of lessons is too slow. Teaching resources are used well - especially the computer-controlled, electronic whiteboard.

136. During lessons teachers generally make good, ongoing assessment of pupils' understanding and quickly clarify many misunderstandings. Formal written assessments are made with sufficient regularity. The marking of pupils' work is generally regular: brief, encouraging and at times challenging comments are added, but not consistently so across the subject. Homework is set regularly: it usually consolidates pupils' learning and is occasionally challenging, but it is generally underused as a vehicle for learning, especially in Years 7-9. The subject is well organised and enthusiastically led by a head of department appointed since the last inspection. Teachers' morale is generally good.

137. The general standard of numeracy of a large proportion of pupils is not good enough to support effectively their learning in mathematics and other subjects without constant revision and support. The teachers of mathematics are beginning to tackle the national initiative to extend into secondary schools the emphasis given to numeracy by primary schools. Frequent tests of pupils' knowledge of basic number facts and the development of methods of mental calculation are included in lessons. These are particularly effective in Years 7 and 8, but are not included systematically in other year groups. Most pupils use a calculator well and appropriately, but a minority are over-dependent on their use for simple calculations. Pupils use appropriate units of measurement in science and in design and technology. They construct appropriate graphs and interpret them well, recognising relationships between the variables (where they exist) in science, design and technology and in ICT.

SCIENCE

138. During the 1996-1999 period pupils' attainment in the national tests at the end of Year 9 was usually close to national averages. The 1999 national test results were below the national average, but above the

average for pupils in schools serving a similar type of catchment area. The proportion of boys gaining Level 5 and above is usually higher than that of girls.

139. The GCSE results at grades A*-C in 1996-1999 have been close to (and in 1999 a little higher than) national results. Overall they show good progress from pupils' earlier national test results in Year 9. When compared with figures for similar schools nationally, science does well. By the end of Year 11, boys usually achieve better results than girls (contrary to the national picture), but in 2000 girls performed better than boys overall. The majority of grades obtained in the range A*-C are at grade C.

140. The department enters four-fifths of pupils for double award science in GCSE, the same proportion as pupils nationally. Usually one set of pupils is entered for the higher-tier GCSE papers. A small number of pupils currently follow a Science Plus course, an approved non-GCSE award; it is planned that single award GCSE science will be available in 2001 to those pupils showing adequate progress.

141. Pupils' attainment and progress in lessons in Years 7-9 are generally good and consistent with their prior attainment. Pupils are interested in learning and those with higher results from Year 6 of Key Stage 2 maintain their lead during Years 7-9. During these years pupils gain a sound basic knowledge of the topics studied and are able to transfer their knowledge to new situations. Pupils in top sets generally have good understanding of what they are taught. Those in lower sets, though having a level of attainment that is below average, work hard and make sound progress. During a lesson on energy, for example, pupils in a low set demonstrated their understanding of types of energy and of energy transfer. The presentation, style of layout and attention to detail (including spelling) of many pupils have a wide range of weaknesses. The prominent display of key scientific words in laboratories, particularly for Years 7-9, however, is beginning to improve the spelling of some scientific words.

142. By the end of Year 11 the overall standard achieved by pupils is close to national expectations. Pupils in higher sets, for instance, show a good working knowledge of atomic structure, bonding and radioactivity and pupils in lower sets explain satisfactorily how parts of the body function. The graph work used liberally throughout books and files is generally of a sound standard - as, for example, on the decay of radioactivity, mass loss and the distance travelled on a momentum track by ball bearings. Pupils interpret graphically presented information satisfactorily and manipulate data into and out of tables. In Years 10-11 pupils usually make satisfactory progress. Pupils who have special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language usually make satisfactory progress, partly because of well-planned lessons and additional classroom support - as, for instance, in a lesson where pupils recalled the order of planets from the sun.

143. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are good overall, but are better in Years 7-9 than in Years 10-11. The vast majority of pupils respond instantly in class, during discussions and when approached as individuals. Relationships between pupils are sound and supportive. The department adopts an active policy of encouraging groups of mixed gender and ethnicity. This is a contributory factor to its success. Pupils in the top sets project an air of purposefulness. The interest and concentration of average and below average attainers are never less than satisfactory and usually good. Pupils respond positively to teaching that is well planned and has pace and variety.

144. Behaviour in lessons is never less than satisfactory. Pupils in all years are encouraged to participate orally: sensible and appropriate scientific responses are given, but pupils have insufficient practice in making sustained, argued responses rather than short (yet correct) answers.

145. The quality of teaching ranges from satisfactory to very good and is good overall throughout the school. All teachers are suitably qualified to teach the subject. Staff are enthusiastic to learn themselves and, along with colleagues in the English and mathematics departments, are actively pursuing the opportunities given by the national ICT scheme for teachers. The effects of this are already evident in such class activities as data-logging. Effective, teacher-led demonstrations are a feature of the department. During the inspection there were, however, few opportunities where pupils' investigative work provided challenge at different levels of complexity.

146. Staff appreciate and respond well to the very clear leadership, participative management style and dedication of the head of department. The department has a culture of improvement within it and a willingness to share best practice. It has maintained steady progress since the last inspection. Schemes of work are comprehensive, but leave appropriate room for individual teachers to exercise choice and to respond to the needs and interests of individuals and classes. This approach works well amongst the present staff.

147. A strong feature of the department is a well-developed scheme of work that is supported by an extensive bank of enrichment and stimulus materials, suitably differentiated by ability level. These are used with pupils of all abilities in enhancing lessons and for homework. Topics are well structured and incorporate clear objectives. Pupils' attainment is carefully monitored by standardised tests, the results of which are used to check the progress of individual pupils and to form sets. There is appropriate movement between sets based on achievement; short-term change of sets is used to good purpose. The regularity with which suitable homework is set for all classes contributes to the success of the department.

148. Most laboratories have well presented displays. The fittings in the laboratories are outmoded and in need of refurbishment. Water fittings and waste pipes are often non-functional, so restricting the type of practical work that can be undertaken. The ICT equipment in the department is reaching the end of its natural life. The storage of chemicals and the procedures for checking both them and radioactive sources are inadequate and require immediate attention. The shortage of technician time and the poor state of facilities restrict the amount of practical work in class.

ART

149. Over the period 1997-1999 the proportion of pupils gaining grades in the range A*-C in GCSE was well below the national average; that of pupils gaining grades in the range A*-G was broadly average. More girls than boys achieved the higher grades. Pupils' performance in this subject in 1999 (and in the previous two years) was significantly below what they achieved in most of their other subjects. The GCSE results in 2000 showed a big improvement in the proportion of pupils gaining the higher grades and an upward trend in most grades.

150. By the age of 14 pupils' overall level of attainment is below average. Pupils' observational drawing, painting and three-dimensional skills are poor overall. Pupils satisfactorily follow instructions and copy from artists' work - as, for example, in using black and white illustrations of ethnic masks. At present there is no evidence that even potentially higher attainers have the confidence or motivation to draw directly from real objects: they still need much support from teachers' worksheets or from illustrations of simplified images.

151. Pupils have very limited knowledge and understanding of the work of artists from their own and other cultures and of how these might influence their own work. Work in sketchbooks is of a lower standard than normally found at this stage. At the time of the inspection pupils had produced no written research or graphics work with ICT. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 for the last academic year show that pupils' overall standard of attainment was well below what is normally expected.

152. By the age of 16 pupils' attainment is below average overall. Pupils carry out research, using magazines and books, and some have begun to make use of the Internet. Higher attainers show a fair awareness of the world around them and have reasonable confidence in choosing relevant information to use in their own work. Pupils with special educational needs make unsatisfactory progress on the whole. They struggle to explain why they are doing something and generally latch onto popular "street culture" - regarding images of graffiti, for instance, as something that it is "cool" to create. Middle and higher attainers fairly readily grasp the implications of carrying out research: they personalise themes to take account of their own interests and strengths as seen, for example, in the good thinking of a Year 11 girl's graphics display, based on the *Goosebumps* theme.

153. The quality of teaching ranges from good to unsatisfactory, but is satisfactory overall. It is better in Years 10-11 than in Years 7-9. Unsatisfactory teaching is in the minority. It occurs, however, in both key

stages where behaviour management is poor, the pace of lessons too slow or where a small number of disruptive pupils are allowed to limit the learning of the majority. Where teaching is good, expectations are high, resources are appropriate and demonstrations focus pupils' attention and understanding on the task they are about to undertake. Teachers generally have good subject knowledge and understanding. Homework is a strength of the department. It is set regularly and used thoughtfully to raise pupils' expectations and independence as learners. Support for literacy within the subject is weak. Teachers' blackboard work is poor, some written comments in sketchbooks are difficult to read and key words are not clearly displayed for pupils to see. Girls are often not given sufficient encouragement or equal opportunity to take part in whole-class discussions.

154. Pupils enter the school at the age of 11 with a level of artistic knowledge and skill that is well below average. In Year 7 they make satisfactory (and often good) progress, because work is well matched to their age and level of understanding - for example, when responding imaginatively to music, using various mark-making tools. Pupils in Year 8 learn to design lettering for packaging and use colour effectively. Many, however, fail to understand why they are doing the work, for whom they are designing their packaging or what the package would look like on a supermarket shelf. This lack of inquisitiveness limits their progress.

155. Pupils in Year 9 have not previously acquired the skills necessary to undertake drawing and painting from nature or the man-made world, to abstract ideas and to apply these to their own two- and three-dimensional work. These problems are, however, being addressed. Year 10 pupils are beginning to acquire sound skills in observing and recording shape, but lack sensitivity when rendering lighting effects; the results are often rather heavy and flat. Pupils in Year 11 are reasonably aware of examination objectives. Many of them are enthusiastic and keen to succeed at GCSE level.

156. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are generally good. Behaviour is satisfactory overall. In many classes a significant minority of pupils (often boys) tend to disrupt introductory and concluding activities. These pupils do not concentrate or listen to what the teacher says. Other pupils (and particularly Asian girls) do not try to talk in whole-class sessions when these boys shout across the room and dominate the talk. The majority of pupils, however, concentrate well during practical activities.

157. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory, with the potential to be good. A good start has been made on revitalising the department through sound documentation and schemes of work and with enrichment activities such as the planned art gallery visit in Year 10. The department has, however, several weaknesses.

158. The accommodation is very poor, with little provision for successfully implementing literacy or graphics. There is no printer or scanner for ICT use. Book resources are low, sketchbook quality is poor and there is no light-box for reproducing images. Timetabled provision is a little below what is normally found. Reports to parents do not give clear targets for improvement. Some classes containing pupils with behavioural problems have no classroom support.

159. The development plan for the subject, in contrast, is sound. Overall, the new head of department has made satisfactory progress in addressing most of the weaknesses highlighted at the last inspection. Those that remain (such as the state of the accommodation) are largely outside her control. National Curriculum requirements are met. Health and safety issues, though addressed, are not always satisfactorily resolved.

160. By the age of 16, pupils' attainment in **photography** is often above average. Pupils usually start this course in Year 10 with little understanding of the process or the possibilities of using digital imagery. The use of new technology and the freedom it offers stimulate pupils' imagination and aid their visual communication. Pupils in Year 11 record relevant images from the local environment. Portraiture is a strong feature. One particularly fine example of image manipulation is to be seen in the "eye" exploration display.

161. Pupils have gained great success in many local photographic competitions and exhibitions of their work have received outside acclaim. Visiting experts have added to pupils' knowledge and understanding - as, for example, in the silk-screen work displayed within the photography department. A number of ex-pupils have obtained positions as professional photographers.

162. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The photography department has been particularly good at negotiating outside funds for its activities. Displays within the school are stimulating, with pupils proud of their achievements. Links with art and other expressive arts within the school are very limited. Health and safety issues are appropriately addressed.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

163. At the end of both key stages pupils' overall level of attainment is below the national average. By the end of Key Stage 3 in both 1999 and 2000 just over one third of pupils achieved at least Level 5, the basic standard expected for their age - well below the most recent national average for all pupils. Girls' results were higher than those of boys, but by a much smaller margin in 2000 than in 1999. Boys' results in 2000 were much closer to the national average for boys than girls' were to the national average for girls. Girls' performance by the end of Key Stage 3 has fallen substantially since 1998.

164. Pupils' knowledge and skills in the subject in 2000 were low in comparison to their attainment in many other subjects. Pupils do not make the progress that they should in the rotated units of study in Years 7-9, partly because teachers' assessments of the work done in these units are not sufficiently robust. In work seen during the inspection pupils' overall attainment was well below that expected nationally and reflects closely teachers' assessments in 2000.

165. Pupils in Key Stage 3 collect and use information satisfactorily to create their designs, and show a fair awareness of design procedures to produce step-by-step plans. Most have a basic knowledge and understanding of tools, materials and processes and know how to work safely. They use a range of tools and equipment with reasonable accuracy. They work appropriately with materials such as wood, graphic media, electronic components and food, but have no experience in textiles.

166. Pupils use computers suitably to support their research and designing - as, for instance, to investigate how traffic lights are controlled or to find out about the principles of such mechanisms as gears and wheels, in order to make a moving display for a shop window. They use calculations to produce drawings accurately or to measure the nutritional content of food when, for example, producing scones from different flours. Higher-attaining pupils are competent at producing a range of ideas for their designs and drawing up a specification for their product. Many pupils find difficulty, however, in explaining their ideas clearly in discussion or written work. Pupils' standards of drawing are sometimes primitive, and handwriting, spelling and punctuation are quite often poor.

167. Attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is below average overall, although that of a minority of pupils (mainly girls) is average. Results in GCSE examinations have been well below average for the past four years. The 2000 GCSE results overall were below the national average for similar schools. The proportion of pupils gaining A*-G grades was in line with the national figure, although just under one third of pupils gained the higher (A*-C) grades, much lower than the recent national figure of 58 per cent. These GCSE results were well below average, in terms of pupils' overall average points score, and were below those in many other subjects in the school.

168. School data in 2000 indicates that pupils made best progress in food technology, compared with the other areas of the subject that they took, but that they did less well in textiles, resistant materials and graphic products. Usually, however, standards have been highest in resistant materials and graphics. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make reasonable progress. Standards overall have shown little improvement in the three years from 1998-2000, although the proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-G has risen slightly.

169. By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils' work is below average overall. A few pupils (mainly girls) have a higher, average standard. Current work with resistant materials, graphics, food and textiles shows secure knowledge and increasing precision in the use of tools, equipment and techniques. The skills of reading and handling information analytically and the use of databases to select relevant technical information are

generally below average. Pupils' mathematical skills are sound. They measure, calculate and use ICT effectively for graphs and tables to explain their findings.

170. In this key stage the work of higher-attaining pupils shows a systematic and detailed planning of projects in creating designs, selecting options and evaluating them carefully - as, for instance, when creating individual designs in wood, by graphics or for food packaging. The weaker work is characterised by rarely being produced in depth or systematically evaluated, and few pupils explain their ideas at length.

171. Over Key Stage 3, the majority of pupils make insufficient progress in learning, partly because the level of pupils' attainment on entry in Year 7 is very varied and usually well below the national average. Although pupils' practical projects show increasing levels of knowledge and accuracy over Years 7-9, lower-attaining pupils struggle to express their ideas in written work. Weak standards in literacy and mathematics contribute to the relatively low overall level attained by pupils in Year 9.

172. In Key Stage 4, pupils generally make satisfactory progress. They expand their range of design ideas and learn ways to improve the presentation of their work. They make good progress in methods of research that give them better independence in learning. In a lesson in Year 11, for example, pupils presented their research projects on food labelling to the class and discussed their findings well. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of materials, processes and tools develop quickly through focused practical tasks. For example, in a lesson in Year 10, pupils rapidly improved their standards of accuracy in measuring, shaping and assembly techniques by making a noughts and crosses game in wood.

173. Pupils have a good attitude to work in all years and behave well in lessons. They show interest in their work, listen attentively to teachers' explanations and work carefully to produce their best standard. Higher-attaining pupils are able to work confidently without close supervision. Pupils work safely and sensibly in cooperative groups, enjoy discussing ideas and value one another's contributions. Although teachers encourage pupils to think carefully about what they are doing, pupils are not trained to keep sufficiently detailed notes about their work as it progresses to evaluate it effectively. A minority of pupils need significant motivation to meet the minimum standards required. They dislike theory, are easily distracted and present work carelessly, with the result that the quality of their work suffers, despite the best efforts of their teachers.

174. The quality of teaching is always at least satisfactory and is good (occasionally very good) in the majority of lessons throughout the school. Teachers have good knowledge of the subjects they teach and plan lessons that, in the main, interest and challenge pupils appropriately. They provide clear explanations of new work, making good use of whole-class discussion and of questions to extend pupils' ideas - a much improved aspect of teaching since the last inspection. Assessment of pupils' standards is better in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3, but is unsatisfactory overall. In Years 7-9 the assessment of pupils' levels of attainment and rate of progress in the rotational units of study is not satisfactory. This is mainly because teachers do not have a sufficiently clear structure or understanding of assessment criteria and do not undertake effective measurement against National Curriculum criteria across all aspects of the subject. Insufficient progress has been made in remedying this weakness identified at the last inspection.

175. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. The lack of provision for textiles in Years 7-9, however, limits the range of opportunities for pupils in those aspects. There are insufficient textbooks throughout the school. Information and communication technology is used effectively to help pupils' research and for computer-aided design (CAD), but resources for computer-aided manufacture (CAM) are limited. Teachers create an attractive environment for learning the subject, but the deficiencies in accommodation highlighted at the last inspection have not improved. The rooms for food are small and the open-plan layout does not allow classes to function effectively. Technical support is of good quality, but its low level reduces the efficiency of the department.

GEOGRAPHY

176. Pupils' overall level of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is below the national average. Inspection evidence points to little improvement in standards since the previous inspection. There is little difference between the overall level achieved by boys and girls. During the inspection the standard of work of the majority of pupils was below (and in a significant minority of cases well below) the national expectation. Higher-attaining pupils reach an overall standard in line with the national average.

177. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 in the GCSE examination in 1999 was close to the national average. In 2000, however, the overall standard was well below average in terms of the proportion of pupils achieving A*-C or A*-G grades. There is no significant difference between the overall attainment of boys and girls. Results are below those of most similar schools and pupils usually (but not in 1999) perform worse in GCSE in this subject than they do in most of their other subjects. Results have been on a downward trend since the last inspection. In 2000 there was an absence of A* or A grades in GCSE.

178. Pupils' progress and achievement are unsatisfactory overall in Years 7-9. There is, however, evidence of an improvement in progress within some teaching groups. Higher-attaining pupils have good knowledge and understanding of geographical processes and analyse and interpret information satisfactorily. They make good use of these skills in class discussions and written work. This was well illustrated, for example, by pupils in a Year 9 class who were suitably able to predict, analyse and interpret climatic and atmospheric conditions that lead to the formation of thunderstorms.

179. In Years 10-11 many pupils have a good understanding of the methods of geographical enquiry, of collecting and analysing information and of how to reach valid conclusions. They generally make satisfactory progress in their studies. Middle- and lower-attaining groups, however, have limited skills of analysis because of poor graphic and numerical skills. This results in these pupils using a narrow range of techniques and types of graphs to analyse statistics. In these two years pupils have a sound understanding of such phenomena as the ways in which natural disasters can affect people in a wide range of places around the world. In Year 10, for instance, pupils worked well in groups to sift information from notes, textbooks and a video to assess the impact of earthquakes on economically rich or poor countries.

180. Although higher attainers make broadly satisfactory progress throughout the school, pupils in some classes underachieve, because the work they are set is not well enough matched to their level of attainment. Poor knowledge and understanding of geographical information and insecure basic skills in lower- and middle-attaining groups often limit pupils' contributions to discussions in class. Progress is further hindered by a generally low level of skill in reading, writing and speaking amongst many pupils in lower-attaining groups, particularly those with special educational needs or those for whom English is an additional language. There is, in contrast, generally good progress over time and within lessons in the effective use of key geographical terms. A significant number of pupils, however, and particularly higher attainers, are insufficiently challenged because they do not employ high-level skills or work with enriching materials.

181. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4. The majority of pupils respond well to instructions and settle quickly to work, when motivated and sufficiently stimulated. There is some unsatisfactory behaviour, particularly amongst lower-attaining classes, when teaching methods and the organisation of work are not well suited to their needs and abilities. Pupils concentrate well and work hard when tasks are appropriately varied, carefully structured and captivating. Behaviour is better in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3. In Years 10-11 pupils usually have a mature approach to learning, are able to work independently or collaboratively and sustain concentration throughout set tasks. Relationships between pupils and teachers are generally good.

182. The quality of teaching in Key Stage 3 was unsatisfactory in half the lessons seen. Although it was good (and occasionally very good) in the remainder, it is unsatisfactory overall. The quality of teaching was good in all the lessons seen in Key Stage 4. Successful teaching is characterised by skilful management of

pupils by means of high expectations, good discipline and a brisk pace of work, supported by a creative use of resources and a suitable variation of tasks. Teachers have secure subject knowledge, especially in Key Stage 4. This promotes pupils' confidence and provides a secure learning atmosphere. The best lessons are typified by high levels of concentration and interest, the full use of available time and a purposeful buzz to learning.

183. In lessons where teaching is unsatisfactory pupils are rarely inspired to share their teachers' enthusiasm. Progress is often hindered because of an over-narrow control by the teacher that inhibits pupils' interest and opportunity to work creatively. There is insufficient depth of knowledge in a minority of teaching in Key Stage 3, owing to unclear aims and the inadequate planning of lessons. Tasks are not always sequenced so as to match the learning requirements of pupils with different levels of attainment or understanding.

184. Some progress has, however, been made since the last inspection. The school has temporarily reorganised its teaching team because of the long-term illness of the head of department and humanities faculty. The new acting head of department has set clear aims and objectives and has incorporated literacy, numeracy and ICT provision within schemes of work. These programmes are not, however, clearly linked to teaching methods and learning tasks. The small team of geographers work well together, but insufficiently share ideas and good practice and do not participate in the mutual observation of lessons.

185. The issue of overall attainment being too low at the ends of both key stages remains to be addressed effectively. Assessment and monitoring procedures have insufficient rigour and the overall quality of teaching and learning, particularly in Key Stage 3, is not high enough. The programmes of study for the subject are not finely tuned to suit the wide range of abilities within most sets.

HISTORY

186. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment is below that expected nationally, a similar standard to that reported at the time of the last inspection. Most pupils begin their studies in Year 7 at a point well below the national average overall. Teachers assessed their pupils as being below the national average at the end of Year 9 in 1998 and well below in 1999; the standards reached in 2000 were assessed as much lower than those of the previous two years. The lack of an adequate system of assessing pupils' attainment and progress means that full reliance cannot be placed on these judgements. The overall standard of work seen during the inspection was below the national average by the end of Year 9. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make satisfactory progress and achieve standards in line with their earlier level of attainment.

187. Pupils in Years 7-9 have a fair understanding of the causes of past events and a minority successfully explain the reasons for actions taken by people in the past. They use a range of sources adequately to describe the past, but most are unable to evaluate the reliability or usefulness of historical sources. The highest attainers make valid deductions from sources and understand that an event in the past may have had more than one cause - as, for example, in work by pupils in Year 9 on the reasons for the abolition of the slave trade.

188. Pupils taking the GCSE course in Key Stage 4 usually reach an overall standard that is in line with the national average, an improvement on the standard reported at the time of the last inspection. In 2000, however, a higher proportion (two-thirds) of pupils taking the course gained a grade in the A*-C range. There has been a steady increase in the percentage of pupils achieving grades A*-C over the past three years. Boys' attainment in 1999 was well above the boys' national average. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A and A* was above the national average in 1999, but fell in 2000.

189. Only a small amount of work in Key Stage 4 could be seen during the inspection. The overall standard seen was below that expected nationally. Pupils taking GCSE successfully identify changes over a period of time in the past. They give valid reasons for events, but few have sufficient depth of understanding

to make complex links between causes. Pupils in Year 10, for example, identified some events leading to World War 1, but many were unable to explain the links between the events. Most pupils in a Year 11 class saw and successfully explained changes in attitudes to, and in the role of, women as a result of World War 1.

190. The quality of teaching is good overall throughout the school. It is occasionally very good and rarely less than satisfactory. This is an improvement on the standard seen at the last inspection. Teachers have a secure knowledge of their subject and communicate it clearly to pupils. As a result, the majority of pupils acquire good knowledge and understanding about the past. In a lesson in which pupils in Year 7 used local resources to research aspects of the history of their school, for example, the teacher's very good local knowledge helped to deepen pupils' understanding. In most lessons teachers have appropriately high expectations of pupils and set suitable work. In a minority of lessons the work does not make sufficient intellectual demands on pupils, and particularly on the highest attainers.

191. An appropriate variety of teaching methods, including individual study, work in pairs or groups and whole-class discussion, ensures that pupils have suitable opportunities to learn in a range of different ways. Many lessons consist of a series of activities, each followed by a check on the pupils' work. This approach helps to maintain the attention of the many pupils whose concentration span is short. Teachers manage their pupils well and ensure that there is a good working atmosphere in which all pupils who wish to learn may do so. Group work by pupils in Year 7 both inside the classroom and around the school is largely well organised and effectively managed. Most lessons have an appropriately brisk and business-like pace.

192. Most pupils show enthusiasm for their work. As a result, they usually make good progress in acquiring new knowledge and understanding. A minority of pupils in some lessons are less enthusiastic, occasionally attempt to prevent others from working and do not learn much themselves. Nearly half the pupils in a Year 11 class, for example, had failed to complete a homework task on time. The majority try hard, even with work they find difficult. Pupils in Year 8, for instance, worked well at an exercise in which they were asked to use short biographies to suggest which side in the English Civil War people at the time might have taken. Paired or group work is done with good cooperation and tolerance.

193. The subject meets statutory teaching requirements in Key Stage 3. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. This is an improvement from the time of the last inspection. There has, however, been no head of department for a year, and there are no schemes of work or any system for assessing pupils' progress in Key Stage 3. The very recently appointed head of department is taking active steps to remedy these weaknesses. There is a clear commitment to at least maintaining the recent above-average achievement in public examinations.

194. The time allocated to history in Year 7 is rather low and this contributes to a lack of both breadth and depth in the course of study. The provision of resources is unsatisfactory overall. Despite the recent purchase of some new textbooks, there are insufficient for all pupils to have a copy to use at home. The department has two up-to-date computers with CD-ROMs, but without printers, and uses the centrally provided ICT facilities only with pupils in Years 10 and 11. The lack of use of such off-site resources as fieldwork and museums is a weakness.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

195. Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is below average overall, but is broadly in line with the expected levels of attainment in the use of different systems for handling information and data. The level of attainment and coverage of other national units of ICT in Key Stage 3 is below average and partly restricted by resources.

196. Teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 suggested that pupils' overall attainment at Level 5 or above was low and well below what would be expected for their age. In 2000 the assessment of this level was noticeably higher, mainly because of increased lessons and improved resources in the subject. Boys' overall results were better than those for girls in 1999 and 2000, in contrast to the national trend. In

2000 just over half the pupils were assessed by their teachers as having reached Level 5 or above, and pupils' results in ICT compared well with their level of attainment in their other subjects.

197. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils are competent in word processing, desktop publishing, the use of databases to sort information and spreadsheets to calculate data. They are familiar with the Internet to search for information. Pupils have experience of simple programming as, for example, in design and technology to investigate the systems of control for traffic lights and in science for measuring and logging data.

198. In their ICT lessons in Year 9, pupils work individually to research and present information in order, for instance, to produce a project booklet on a topic of their choice. They understand the need to select information carefully and use "writing frames" to give structure to their analysis and design work. They know how to add text and graphics or pictures from different sources by scanning (for example), in order to improve the design of their project booklets and publish them to a good standard. Pupils often find it difficult to write down their ideas without considerable discussion. Pupils with English as an additional language or those having statements of special educational need improve their standards in English and mathematics by using specific computer programs for learning support.

199. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils achieve near average standards, mainly in handling information and data. Results in the full GCSE examinations in 2000, taken by a small number of pupils (mainly boys), were below the most recent national standard in terms of pupils' average points score. Nevertheless, all candidates passed and just over one third gained a grade in the range A*-C. Results in the short GCSE course in 2000 were significantly higher than the 1999 results and almost two-thirds of candidates achieved grade C. Comparison of examination results over 1998-2000 shows an upward trend of improvement. Girls tend to do better than boys, because many boys do not make the required effort with their coursework.

200. Pupils' learning is good in the timetabled lessons throughout the school. Pupils make sound progress in lessons, because they are encouraged to learn and understand through a range of carefully sequenced tasks that involve research, designing skills and the handling of information and data. These also contribute well to pupils' competence in spoken and written language, spelling and number. The poor concentration of some pupils with special educational needs limits the amount of work done without close support.

201. Throughout the school pupils are willing to learn and the majority behave well in lessons. They listen well and concentrate to learn new skills. Pupils are given good support to improve their work in lessons through whole-class demonstrations, detailed guidance materials and by individual discussion of their work with teachers. High-attaining pupils complete tasks with confidence - as, for example, when working on a GCSE data-handling project, making sure that their database has validation checks within it. Less confident pupils, especially in Years 7-9, rely heavily on their teachers for direction and are easily frustrated by their mistakes, sometimes losing motivation and achieving little. The common practice of setting targets at the start of lessons and of holding discussions at the end enables pupils to consolidate their learning. Pupils are usually cooperative, help one another and use equipment sensibly.

202. Teaching is satisfactory overall. It is often good and sometimes very good in the specialist-taught lessons. A significant minority of teaching was unsatisfactory in Years 7-9, mainly linked to weaknesses in lesson planning and to the inappropriate organisation of resources for large classes that contained a number of challenging and disruptive pupils. Relationships between teachers and pupils are usually very positive. The specialist teachers have a very clear understanding of the aims and purposes of ICT and plan well-structured lessons that meet the needs of pupils as well as National Curriculum and GCSE examination requirements.

203. The most effective lessons are thoroughly planned with clear, short-term objectives that contribute to a good pace. Clear explanations of new work enable pupils to make good progress. Teachers pay good attention to correct spelling and punctuation to improve pupils' standards of written work. The assessment of pupils' work is good in the specialist-taught lessons and is satisfactory overall - an aspect that has improved since the last inspection. Teachers set high but realistic targets for pupils to achieve and give good individual support to sustain their learning. Pupils' work is thoroughly assessed and teachers give helpful oral and

written comments. Assessment is effective, because it concentrates on what pupils have achieved and what they need to do next to improve their standard of work.

204. The quality of ICT in other subjects is varied, but improving. It is still not satisfactory overall. During the inspection it was judged to be good in lessons in science, design and technology, music and special educational needs and was satisfactory in mathematics and PE. It was unsatisfactory in English, art, history, modern foreign languages and RE, mainly because of the constraints of resources.

205. The school has made sound progress to improve its provision of resources since the last inspection and is meeting its targets for 2000-2001. The school has increased the teaching of ICT in both key stages to meet National Curriculum requirements. It was not effective in meeting reporting requirements to parents at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000, however, when pupils' experience of ICT was not reported separately from other subjects. The extension of taught lessons to all pupils in Year 9 from September 2000 is addressing this matter satisfactorily.

206. There are good central planning and assessment in the subject. Constructive use is being made of the new, non-statutory guidance to plan ICT effectively in other subjects. The full GCSE courses in ICT for all pupils introduced in Year 10 in 2000 are planned to continue in Year 11. The school has replaced its central computer facilities to a much higher specification. The ratio of computers to pupils is about average. The replacement of equipment in other subjects is ongoing, as the school awaits its planned refurbishment. Technical support is good for current demands and is used effectively to support teaching both in the school and in partner primary schools.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

207. At the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' overall level of attainment is close to the national average. Teachers' assessments in 2000 showed a significant overall improvement over 1998 and 1999. This was due to a substantial rise in the achievement of boys, who slightly out-performed girls, against the national trend. Higher-attaining pupils currently at the beginning of Year 9 already achieve above average standards in the four skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing. Middle- and lower-attaining pupils achieve a below average standard in line with their capabilities, but tend to perform better in listening and speaking than in reading and writing.

208. In 1999 the percentage of grades A*-C achieved in full-course GCSE French was close to the national average. In 2000, however, the percentage fell to a level well below the provisional national average. Since 1998 the percentage of pupils gaining grades A*-G has been higher than the national average. Pupils' standards in French compare favourably with standards achieved in most of their other subjects within the school. Standards achieved in German have been consistently higher than national averages since 1996, owing to the fact that the number of candidates for GCSE has been small, consisting mainly of higher-attaining pupils.

209. Pupils at the beginning of Year 11 achieve the standards expected at this point in Key Stage 4. Many middle-attaining pupils who are potential grade C/D candidates, however, show a reluctance to speak French in class to practise their oral skills for the examination. This, coupled with poor revision, appears to have been a contributory factor in 2000 to the drop in standards. Most higher-attaining pupils speak and write the languages with confidence and secure understanding; their standard of accuracy is generally high. The lowest-attaining pupils (mostly those with special educational needs) are placed in sets with small numbers and achieve reasonably in all four skills in relation to their abilities.

210. Despite the fall in the overall standard of French in GCSE in 2000, Key Stage 4 results have improved since the last inspection in French and have remained fairly constant in German. At the end of Key Stage 3 there has been a slight improvement from what was described in the 1996 report as "broadly satisfactory".

211. Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory overall, but there is often the potential for disturbance just below the surface, if pupils are not fully occupied and firmly directed. They are generally eager to contribute to

classroom dialogue, concentrate well during listening exercises and maintain a steady pace during reading and writing activities. They collaborate well in paired or group work and show positive attitudes towards the more challenging, higher-level work.

212. Relationships amongst pupils are good. They listen carefully to what others contribute to lessons and, for the most part, acknowledge the discipline of raising their hand before speaking. A small minority of pupils (usually with known behaviour problems), however, easily resort to disturbing the learning and progress of others. The rapport between pupils and teachers is good. Pupils react positively to the use of a foreign language in class, but do not use it between themselves outside set tasks.

213. Nearly all the teaching is at least satisfactory. Most of it is good (and occasionally very good) throughout the school. This represents an improvement since the last inspection. Teachers conduct lessons in the foreign languages for the most part, but the proportion of French or German to English is sensibly adjusted to the needs and level of understanding of the group. All the teachers have a secure knowledge of their subject, clear delivery and a high standard of fluency.

214. The marking of pupils' work is consistent and frequent, but does not always reflect attainment levels or GCSE grading. Teaching is strongest when teachers know the needs of their pupils well and have high expectations of their performance. Lessons are well planned, paced and timed, and include a variety of activities, covering different skills and effectively using different media, especially overhead projection. Appropriate homework is set. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, the pace of learning is inconsistent and pupils' concentration is allowed to wander, either when changing activities or allowing them to continue too long.

215. In good lessons the quality of pupils' learning is enhanced by recall of previous knowledge at a simple level. Pupils then extend and consolidate that knowledge through increasingly challenging activities. This is combined with a pace appropriate to the nature of the group and a variety of activities with a firm time limit for each. A mixed-ability French group in Year 7, for example, had previously learned, copied and practised the alphabet, and were recalling it in a song. They listened to French people saying and spelling their name, then circulated around the classroom, asking each other their name and how to spell it. The "fun" element ensured that all participated and were determined to complete the tasks. In a Year 10 German set, containing a wide range of higher- and middle-attaining pupils, the teacher used revision of previously learned vocabulary about places in town and opinions of them to practise recognition of compound nouns. This led to using a complex and challenging reading comprehension text, of the sort encountered in the GCSE examination, to enhance research, dictionary and writing skills, as well as the examination techniques of recognition and "evidence-seeking". The work was effectively consolidated by an appropriate video portraying aspects of Berlin.

216. The curriculum meets statutory National Curriculum requirements. All pupils study French and German in Year 7, though not in equal proportions. In Years 8 and 9 they can opt to continue with one language only. By the beginning of Year 10 those still studying two languages can opt to continue with one. The number of pupils offering two languages at GCSE is small. French and German clubs operate in school. Annual study visits to France and Germany and links with French and German schools offer extended experience of the foreign languages.

217. The department is well organised and managed. The departmental development plan closely follows that of the school in its priorities. A very detailed scheme of work links course materials to National Curriculum attainment targets and levels at both key stages. There is careful provision of differentiated materials for the highest and lowest attainers. Pupils' attainments are well documented. In Key Stage 3, pupils have the responsibility of recording their own learning and progress by entering on to profile sheets the levels they achieve in their work. In Key Stage 4 pupils receive full, constructive feedback on major pieces of work that explains exactly what they have achieved and what is required to progress to the next level.

218. All teachers in the department are language specialists, including a native speaker of each language. This has removed the non-specialist teaching of French mentioned at the last inspection. The provision of textbooks is adequate: each teaching room contains sets of the relevant course books and class sets of dictionaries, none of which are issued individually to pupils. To compensate for this, the department gives

priority in its funding to providing photocopied workbooks and other materials to support pupils' learning and as tools for revision. The department has built up a good stock of ICT material to support the teaching of the course, but is awaiting coordinated access to centralised facilities and networking of the material before it can be fully integrated. Classrooms for languages are adjacent to one other, are well equipped and are enhanced with effective displays of pupils' work and basic classroom vocabulary.

MUSIC

219. By the end of Key Stage 3 the overall attainment of pupils is below the national average. Pupils perform, improvise and compose on electronic keyboards where, for example, they play *Frere Jacques* using simplified notation. They use the tune to compose variations, in the process of which they acquire general notions about how composers use different rhythms, keys and accompaniments. In this activity they learn well how to use the controls on the keyboards to produce different beats, timbres and tempi. They also acquire broad ideas about melodic and harmonic features of music as, for example, how chords "fit" melodies. By the end of Year 9, most pupils have an elementary knowledge of orchestral and popular instruments, simple musical forms such as rondo and ostinato, and of styles of music (for example, jazz, blues and worksongs).

220. Pupils' overall level of attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is broadly in line with the national average. In the 1997-1999 GCSE results, taken together, 13 out of 30 pupils gained grades in the range A*-C. None gained an A* grade. In work seen during the inspection the overall standard of composition in both Years 10 and 11 was average. Standards in other aspects of GCSE work were variable. At the previous inspection the attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 was reported to be below average and it remains so; in Key Stage 4 pupils then had no opportunity to study music at GCSE level.

221. Only a small proportion of the pupils currently on the GCSE course play individual orchestral instruments, piano or guitar. Extra tuition in piano playing, singing, percussion and steel band enables pupils to take the performance element of the examination with reasonable confidence. Pupils compose well. Compositions are normally in a conventional tonal style - for example, a two-part invention or a piece for piano. Pupils also acquire fair background knowledge about modal music and its links with music of the medieval period as well as a broad knowledge of music of the six main historical periods.

222. The quality of learning in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory overall. Pupils enter the school with attainments that are usually below average and (in many cases) well below average. Most pupils are not quick learners. Many have persistently immature attitudes that lie at the root of a poor attention span and poor retention of lesson material. This immaturity also results in limited progress within lessons, although limited progress is also the result of weaknesses in teaching in some lessons. Within most class lessons, however, the majority of pupils learn what is set for them and what is expected of them by the teacher. Over Years 7-9 most pupils do increase their knowledge, understanding and musical skills, albeit slowly and usually as a result of much repetition of material. This material includes common musical forms - for example, call and response, the use of drone, ostinato and variations, and regular practice on keyboards to underpin pupils' knowledge and skills in relation to melody and harmony.

223. In Key Stage 4 pupils learn well. After a tentative start in Year 10, pupils settle down to serious work in order to reach the required standards in performance, composition and musical understanding. For some the act of performing before their peers is daunting. Although pupils have to acquire a good working theory, much of this comes through their regular practical work. In one successful lesson, for instance, a recorded example of a former candidate's work was played to the pupils, who identified musical features in it, using correct musical terminology. They also practised aural skills, in order to identify the roots of chords, as well as working on keyboards to learn how chords may be broken in order to produce variations and figurations for accompaniments. By the time they reach Year 11, most pupils have adapted well to the demands of the course. Many have developed mature working practices and a fair understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses. Many lower-attaining pupils do well, within the context of their capabilities, in the GCSE examination.

224. Overall pupils' attitudes to learning are good throughout the school. Most are interested in the

subject. As long as the level of work is carefully matched to their capabilities, they work with sustained interest. Attitudes to work and behaviour are generally better in Years 10-11 than in the earlier secondary years. Whilst there is some variation amongst the classes in Key Stage 3, many pupils lack maturity and are quick to indulge in irrelevant behaviour, if they feel any lack of firmness of the part of the teacher. In a few classes this results in a significant loss of pace, productivity and consequently unsatisfactory progress in learning. Where the teaching is firm and consistent, pupils settle well to work and usually make at least satisfactory progress within lessons. In general, however, many pupils have insufficient interest to assimilate over time what they learn. Consequently, material has to be repeated or reintroduced in a different form.

225. Overall, teaching is satisfactory. It is better in Years 9-11 than in some of the earlier classes. The main teacher has good subject knowledge and satisfactory expertise to teach the basic skills of literacy and musicianship effectively. Planning is good. Lesson preparation is very thorough and well thought out. In Key Stage 3 the teacher's expectations have been appropriately modified, so that pupils can experience success with easy material. Expectations of pupils' conduct in Key Stage 3 are, however, too low. Pupils are often allowed to mutter or fidget whilst instructions are being given.

226. On practical tasks some classes become very noisy, with the result that many pupils' inappropriate behaviour is not noticed and corrected quickly enough. This results in some inefficiency in the use of time in lessons. Usually, however, resources are used extensively and well. Extra support provided for pupils with special educational needs is used very productively. The day-to-day assessment of pupils' work is good, although many younger pupils do not concentrate well enough when required to judge work presented by their peers. In Key Stage 3 pupils do not evaluate their own work well enough. Homework is set appropriately for most pupils.

227. The department is well managed. Visiting part-time teachers are clear about their responsibilities and appropriate communication between them and the head of music is maintained. Schemes of work have been recently revised, partly to take account of the recent revision of the National Curriculum. Procedures for assessment are also being reviewed, in order to keep abreast of recent national initiatives.

228. At present about 30 pupils receive individual instrumental lessons and 80 are involved in extracurricular activities. The latter include wind band, rock choir, GCSE study groups and steel band ensembles. The steel band is a strength of the department and an asset to the school. Pupils rehearse regularly and take part in frequent performances at local events as well as at workshops for primary schools. Music makes a good contribution to the social and cultural life of the school, especially through extracurricular activities and community work.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

229. At the end of both key stages pupils' overall standard is broadly in line with that found in most schools. Many pupils perform the basic skills of catching, passing and shooting to a sound standard and, by the end of Year 9, use them effectively in games adapted to their needs and abilities. In a football lesson for boys in Year 9, for example, many passed accurately and then quickly found space to receive a return pass. These pupils also made excellent use of high quality work cards to devise tactics to meet the demands of a range of situations they could encounter in a game. Similarly, many girls in Year 9 transferred their competence as passers and catchers of a netball into competitive situations.

230. In gymnastics lessons boys and girls plan their sequences to a good standard. Many pupils have a clear understanding of the concepts of balance and counter-balance. Their standard as performers is a little lower and their movements sometimes lack clarity and precision. They use large apparatus confidently and usually, but not always, erect and dismantle it carefully. In dance lessons pupils plan their sequences and motifs well and move with much enthusiasm. Girls dance with more finesse and control than most boys.

231. In Years 10-11 pupils continue to improve their skills and tactical awareness, increasing their competence and confidence as both players and officials. Many boys have a good knowledge and understanding of the effects of exercise on their bodies and know the names of muscle groups used in fitness

training. They perform exercises to a standard higher than is often found.

232. Results in the GCSE examination have improved significantly since 1996, when only six per cent of pupils achieved a higher (A*-C) grade. In 1997 and 1998 about a quarter of pupils entered achieved one of these higher grades. In 1999 the figure rose to just over two-fifths, but was still a little below the national average and also below the average points score that pupils achieved in most of their other subjects. In 2000 all pupils passed the examination and half achieved a higher grade. Pupils currently studying for the examination are maintaining this improvement, especially in their practical work. Many, especially boys, find the scientific aspects of the work difficult.

233. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make largely good progress in their learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. Particularly good progress was seen when, for instance, girls in Years 10 and 11 significantly improved their skill as umpires and scorers in netball lessons. Key factors in this success and in many other lessons across the school are the pupils' positive attitudes to work and the high expectations of their teachers. In lessons pupils sustain a good level of enthusiasm and commitment, as exemplified by the high rate of participation in practical work and the pupils' desire to improve.

234. Pupils dress well and usually quickly. In lessons they are usually attentive and observe demonstrations carefully. They work well with partners, as members of a group or in teams. They compete fairly, with due regard for rules and the spirit of the games. Many pupils taking the GCSE course maintain their files carefully and take a pride in their achievements. A few, however, do not complete a considerable number of their homework assignments.

235. In Key Stage 3 over half the teaching is good and in Key Stage 4 most of it is good. In the remaining lessons it is satisfactory. This represents a significant improvement since the 1996 inspection when a significant minority of teaching was reported to have shortcomings. The report also indicated that in some lessons teachers had an insecure command of their subject. Teachers now have a good knowledge of their subject and all teaching is by appropriately qualified specialists who prepare their lessons in detail and expect much of the pupils. In many of the lessons where the teaching is good, pupils are grouped according to their ability and prior level of attainment, a strategy that results in all pupils being appropriately challenged as they practise. Written GCSE assignments do not, however, always challenge the higher-attaining pupils.

236. In 1996 it was reported that curricular planning did not meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. It does now. Schemes of work are good and ample guidance is given to teachers, all of whom have been involved in considerable recent and relevant professional training. The chief catalyst for this improvement is the head of department who was appointed in 1997. She has successfully addressed the issues raised in 1996 and leads a now vibrant department with a positive ethos.

237. The procedures for assessing and recording pupils' attainment and progress are sound. In 2000, however, assessment at the end of Key Stage 3 lacked rigour and some of it was inaccurate. This has made the data difficult to use to promote pupils' progress or curricular planning. This issue is now well in hand and indications are that future assessments will be more accurate. Pupils' written work is marked regularly, but too often lacks comments that would help pupils to understand what they must do to improve. Similarly, not all reports provide parents with enough clear information about what pupils understand and can do.

238. Accommodation for teaching is adequate overall. There are some problems, however. The panelling in the ceiling of a boys' changing room is in a poor state of repair and the gymnasium is in a poor decorative state, with some crumbling plaster. The tennis courts lose much of their effectiveness because of the lack of perimeter fencing. Much of the glass covering the walkway to the department is missing, cracked or broken. It is a potential hazard to the safety of all who use it.

239. The curriculum is complemented by a sound range of extracurricular activities, in which about two-fifths of pupils participate and thereby significantly enhance their skills and personal and social development. Seven teachers and a number of parents and other adults give up much time to coach, supervise and officiate at these activities.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

240. Except in Year 10, the subject is taught through the medium of the school's programme of religious, personal, social, health and citizenship education (RPSHCE). In Years 7-9 and 11 RE is not taught as a separate subject, nor is it provided in accordance with the statutory requirements of the agreed syllabus. The GCSE course in religious studies is not available as an option in Key Stage 4. The school intends to begin the GCSE short course in RE with pupils currently in Year 10 who have, since September 2000, been given a weekly lesson of one hour on their timetable. The school also intends that, from September 2001, all pupils in Key Stage 4 should have one hour's lesson each week and that all should follow the GCSE short course, with a view to entry for the examination.

241. Standards are very low throughout the school. Pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is well below expectation. Pupils learn about Christianity, but their knowledge of Christian beliefs and practices is sketchy. They have very little knowledge of other religions. Neither the role of important religious figures nor the influence of religion today in many people's lives is satisfactorily understood. Pupils' writing about religion is supported by illustrations and diagrams, but is generally brief and lacking both depth and detail. Standards are very low, because there is far too little teaching time and no continuity of provision.

242. Pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is well below expectation. Pupils learn about moral values in relation to marriage and about such principles as the sanctity of life, but their knowledge and understanding are superficial. Most pupils bring with them very low levels of prior attainment. Those in Year 11 have had even less time in Key Stage 4 than they had in Key Stage 3. They are far from covering the content or achieving the learning specified in the agreed syllabus.

243. Despite the shortage of time and lack of continuity on the timetable, most of the teaching in Years 7-9 is very good. In the vast majority of lessons pupils have the benefit of specialist teaching. The teacher's good knowledge and understanding of religion ensure clear presentation and explanation. Pupils are managed and motivated well. All, by listening carefully, develop their thinking. Some written tasks are open-ended and encourage extended writing. The account of the Walk around Paddock, for example, works very well and both higher-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs gain much from it. Some other written tasks are undemanding and elicit neither intellectual effort nor a creative response.

244. In Key Stage 4 teaching is good overall. Specialist teaching continues to motivate pupils. Pupils give their full attention, because the presentation of information or exploration of ideas has been prepared well and is usually supported by good visual and other resources. Sometimes the teachers' input and oral work, though good, continue too long and pupils are left with insufficient time for written work. Some written tasks are undemanding and do not develop pupils' writing skills or their subject knowledge. When pupils do not receive specialist teaching, they lose confidence and tend to take little part in learning.

245. Provision for the subject has worsened since the last inspection. The 1996 report made implementation of statutory requirements at Key Stage 4 a key issue for action. The introduction of a weekly lesson in Year 10 is a recent response to this, but there has been a lack of preparation for it by the school. There is no reference in the curriculum section of the school's development plan, for example, to the change, to preparation for its introduction or to staffing, training or resource implications. Meanwhile, the school is now also in breach of statutory requirements across the whole of Key Stage 3. The time provided for teaching falls far short of the recommended minimum of one hour each week.

246. The subject suffers from other weaknesses. There is no system of assessment and the school does not meet its statutory obligation to give an annual report on RE to parents. There is no departmental development plan and no written evidence of commitment to giving pupils this part of their educational entitlement. There has been a lack of direction and priority for the subject within the school. Since the last inspection pupils' attainment has declined and RE fails to make its expected contribution to the moral, social and cultural dimensions of pupils' personal development.