

INSPECTION REPORT

TOOT HILL COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

Bingham, NOTTINGHAM

LEA area: Nottinghamshire

Unique reference number: 122865

Headteacher: Mr C Williams

Reporting inspector: Mrs J Greenfield
7070

Dates of inspection: 18 - 21 September 2000

Inspection number: 223939

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 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	The Banks Bingham NOTTINGHAM Nottinghamshire
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Brian Howes
Date of previous inspection:	5 February 1996

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Toot Hill Comprehensive School, which caters for boys and girls aged 11 – 18 years, is a larger than average comprehensive school situated in the market town of Bingham, eight miles to the east of Nottingham. There are 1,207 pupils on roll, 173 of whom are in the sixth form. The total number of pupils has risen since 1997 and further growth is anticipated over the next few years. There is comparatively little movement of pupils into and out of the school other than at the normal time of transfer at the age of 11. The majority of pupils are from relatively advantaged homes and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at 6.1 per cent is below the national average. Very few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and the proportion of pupils speaking English as an additional language at 0.3 per cent is low. One hundred and seventy eight pupils have special educational needs, which as a proportion of the number of pupils in the school is below that found in similar schools. Of these, five pupils, a much lower proportion than average, have a statement of special educational needs. The school caters for the full ability range, but has fewer higher attainers than usual. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is broadly average. The boys' literacy skills are generally weaker than those of the girls.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Toot Hill Comprehensive School is a good and improving school. Its strengths greatly outweigh any weaknesses. The school benefits from the vision of the headteacher who provides a clear sense of direction to its work. Staff are committed to helping pupils achieve high standards. The majority of pupils make good progress in their learning and achieve above average standards in most subjects through the good quality of much of the teaching. The school provides good value for money and the provision for the sixth form is cost-effective.

What the school does well

- Strong and purposeful leadership by the headteacher, with the support of the governing body and senior managers, sets a clear direction for raising standards in the school.
- Effective teaching challenges and motivates pupils to achieve good standards of work.
- Pupils with special educational needs are given very good support, which enables them to make the most of the opportunities the school provides.
- Positive attitudes enable the majority of pupils to make good gains in their learning.
- The school effectively enhances pupils' moral, social and cultural development and helps them to become mature young people.
- Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic and personal development are working well at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, and are satisfactory but improving rapidly at Key Stage 3.

What could be improved

- Teachers, other than in English, do not do enough to develop pupils' literacy skills.
- Reports do not give enough information to parents about pupils' achievements and progress.
- Insufficient provision is made for pupils' spiritual development, and statutory requirements are not met in the provision for religious education in the sixth form or for a daily act of collective worship.
- The programme of personal and social education is insufficiently coordinated.
- There are too few opportunities at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form for pupils to follow work-related or vocational courses.

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 good progress in implementing almost all of the key issues identified in the last inspection report. Management and strategic planning processes are effective. Monitoring and evaluation procedures to assure the quality and consistency of the school's work, especially teaching and learning, are good. The roles and responsibilities of staff have been redefined. Satisfactory progress has been made in improving standards and the quality of class music at Key Stage 3, although some weaknesses in managing pupils effectively remain. The requirements of the programmes of study in information and communication technology are fully met at Key Stage 3 and standards have improved throughout the school. Very good progress has been made in developing further pupils' self-assessment and target setting. Some progress has been made in providing religious education for students in the sixth form but it remains insufficient, as the time allocated to the subject is not enough to meet the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus. The school does not yet meet statutory requirements in the provision of a daily act of collective worship.

The school has maintained its above average standards in the Key Stage 3 tests and in the GCSE examinations since the last inspection in February 1996 and has improved its performance broadly in line with the national trend. Performance at GCE A-level has been close to the average over the past four years, although there was a slight dip in 1998. A high proportion of the teaching is good and much of it is very good. It is a strong feature of the school, and makes a significant contribution to pupils' above average attainment.

The school has shown that it has the capacity to improve what it does. It has a very clear view of its priorities and it is well placed to bring about further improvements in its provision and the standards that pupils achieve.

STANDARDS

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

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

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

Overall results in the Key Stage 3 national tests for 14 year olds, based on the average points score, have been above the national averages between 1996 and 1999 and have been improving in line with the national trend. In 1999, pupils' performance in mathematics and science was better than their performance in English, which was close to the national average. When compared with similar schools, the school's performance overall, and in English in particular, was well below average. The unconfirmed results for 2000 show some improvement over those for 1999, both for the average point score and in the proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels. On the evidence of their current work, standards at Key Stage 3 are above average in mathematics, science, art, design and technology, geography, history, physical education and religious education and are satisfactory in the remaining subjects, including English, information and communication technology, modern languages

and music. Pupils are generally attaining slightly higher standards than their earlier attainment on entry to the school might indicate.

The GCSE results have been consistently above average since the last inspection, with the rate of improvement from year to year broadly in line with the national trend. When compared with similar schools, the results at five or more grades A*-C and for the average points score are broadly average. The average points score for 2000, as yet unconfirmed, shows a slight decrease over that for 1999. The strongest subjects in the GCSE examinations in 1999 were physics, design and technology, geography, German and statistics; the weakest subjects were French and drama. In line with the national picture, the girls outperformed the boys in nearly all subjects. On the evidence of the work seen, standards at Key Stage 4 are above average in mathematics, science, art, design and technology, geography, history, and physical education; they are average in English and information and communication technology; and are slightly below average in French. In most subjects, pupils are achieving higher standards than might be expected when account is taken of their attainment on entry to the school.

Since 1996, the A-level results have been close to the national average, although there was a slight dip in 1998. The best results in 1999 were in art and design, design and technology, French, geography, physics, sociology, performing arts and physical education, with all students gaining pass grades. There were no particularly weak subjects. In 2000, the unconfirmed results indicate that the average points score is slightly lower than 1999 but that the results in individual subjects are broadly similar to those for 1999. On the evidence of their current work, most students are attaining standards that are slightly above average in relation to A-level course requirements.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils enjoy coming to school. Most pupils are eager to learn and want to do their best. They listen carefully to their teachers and show interest in their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils are courteous to visitors. They generally behave well in class and around the school. Occasionally, when teachers are not firm enough, some pupils do not behave as well as they might.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils work well together, both in lessons and in other school activities. Relationships are positive and pupils are encouraged to be responsible for their own safety and that of others. They are confident in expressing ideas and opinions
Attendance	Good. Attendance is above average for secondary schools and the rate of unauthorised absence, which was broadly average in 1998/99, has decreased considerably in the past year.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. The teaching is at least satisfactory in 95 per cent of lessons; good in 40 per cent of lessons; and very good and sometimes excellent in 41 per cent of lessons. The teaching of English and mathematics is predominantly very good. The teaching of science is good, as is the teaching in almost all other subjects observed. The skills of numeracy are taught effectively across subjects; the skills of literacy are taught satisfactorily in English, but are not taught consistently enough across other subjects of the curriculum. Nearly all teachers provide challenging activities for pupils of all abilities, including pupils with special educational needs, which enable them to learn effectively and make good progress. The best teaching makes intellectual demands on the pupils and captures their interest and attention. The vast majority of pupils work hard in lessons and are keen to learn. On the few occasions when the work is insufficiently demanding, pupils' concentration and application can wane, which affects the pace of learning. The teaching in a small number of lessons, including food technology, music and personal and social education, has some weak features, stemming mainly from difficulties in managing pupils' behaviour and response effectively, a lack of challenge in the work, and weak planning and organisation. In these lessons, pupils failed to make enough progress in their learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The curriculum is broad and balanced, and generally well planned and presented in a stimulating and lively way. The quality of extra-curricular activities, mainly in sport, music and drama, is good, but there are insufficient opportunities provided by other subjects. The range of vocational courses is narrow and there are weaknesses in the coordination of the personal and social education programme. The provision for religious education in the sixth form does not meet statutory requirements.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated into the school community. They receive very good support both in lessons and when withdrawn for specific help in literacy and numeracy. The systems for identifying pupils' needs are good and their needs are addressed at an early stage.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. The school provides appropriate support for the very small number of pupils with English as an additional language.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. The provision for pupils' moral, social and cultural development is very good. The provision for pupils' spiritual development is unsatisfactory, with missed opportunities, both in assemblies and lessons, for pupils to engage in discussion and reflect on their own and others' lives and beliefs.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The school is a civilised community. There is a strong commitment to pupils' achievements and welfare, with good procedures to support them. Pupils' progress is monitored and supported effectively, especially in the sixth form. Reports to parents are not

	sufficiently diagnostic.
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HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher leads and manages the school very well and has a clear vision of what sort of school it should be. He is effectively supported by his senior staff who work well together as a team. There is good delegation to staff with management responsibilities and a shared commitment by all staff to improvement and the achievement of high standards.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors are fully involved in the school. They have a very good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses through the excellent quality of the reports they receive from the headteacher and from their own visits to the school. With the exception of ensuring a daily act of collective worship, the governing body fulfils its statutory responsibilities well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Systems for monitoring and reviewing the work of the school, including its own performance and the quality of teaching and its impact on learning, are robust. The school takes appropriate action to continually improve and extend the provision. The careful analysis of data enables staff to track the performance of individuals and groups of pupils effectively.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The school uses its resources well for the benefit of the pupils and to meet clear educational priorities. Financial planning and administration are good, and expenditure is closely linked to the priorities in the school's strategic plan. The school is making very good use of new technologies.

The deployment of staff makes good use of their expertise. Accommodation is adequate, with newly refurbished areas of good quality but other areas that show considerable signs of long-term neglect. Resources used in the classrooms are generally good and are used well to support pupils' learning. Suitable procedures are in place to ensure that the school gets best value for money from its expenditure, enabling it to provide good value for money.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems. • Their children like school. • The school expects pupils to do their best and achieve a good standard of work. • The children make good progress. • The school helps children to become mature and responsible. • The teaching is good. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The consistency of the homework arrangements. • The information that is provided about their child's progress. • Closer links developed between the school and parents. • Some pupils' behaviour. • The provision of a wider range of activities outside lessons.

Parents are mostly pleased with the school and the education it provides. Inspectors' judgements support all of the positive views expressed by the parents. Inspectors support the parents' views regarding homework and find that the school's policy and guidance to staff are inconsistently applied. This inconsistency is also confirmed by the pupils themselves. Most of the pupils' behaviour during the inspection was good and inspectors saw no evidence to support parents' adverse comments, which related in the main to behaviour out of school. The school provides good quality extra-curricular activities mainly in sport, music and drama but inspectors judge that there are insufficient opportunities provided for pupils in other areas. Written reports provided for parents do not give enough detail about their child's progress and attainment and what pupils need to do to improve, but information about the life and work of the school provided through the regular newsletter is very good.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Strong and purposeful leadership by the headteacher, with the support of the governing body and senior managers, sets a clear direction for raising standards in the school.

1. The headteacher is committed to improving standards in the school and brings a clear vision and purposeful sense of direction to its work. Since his appointment, following the last inspection in 1996, he has placed a specific focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning, establishing robust systems for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress and achievement, and for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the school's work. His approach of delegating clear responsibilities to staff and working for consensus, although taking longer to implement change, has successfully gained the confidence and commitment of staff to moving the school forward.

2. This has required changes to some established practices and traditional patterns of organisation, such as moving from a 'house' system to a 'year' system and changing the timing of the school day. These changes, undertaken with the full support of the governing body, have not been well received by a number of parents who expressed their concerns in their responses to the parents' questionnaire and at the meeting held for parents prior to the inspection. Inspectors find that the new arrangements are working effectively and that pupils, in particular, like the change to the year system. Staff, some of whom initially had some reservations about the change, also indicate that the new arrangements have considerable advantages in monitoring and maintaining an overview of pupils' progress across the year group. Changes to the timing of the school day, which resulted in a shorter lunch break, were mainly made on safety grounds but have, according to parents, reduced the number of extra-curricular activities available for pupils at this time. Inspectors consider that the dispersed nature of the school site and the lack of adequate hard play areas make it very difficult for staff to manage pupils over an extended period of time. However, they judge that the length of the lunchtime break is now marginally too short for both staff and pupils and would merit further review by the governing body. A slight increase in the lunchtime break would allow more time for lunch and also for additional extra-curricular activities. The school accepts that better communications with parents could have alleviated some of their concerns and is reviewing its approach.

3. The headteacher is effectively supported by his senior managers and by the governing body. The senior management team has recently been reconstituted into a leadership team, with a far stronger focus to their work on improving standards and raising pupils' achievements. A change in their roles has given them specific responsibilities and more time for line managing some middle managers, providing advice and challenge as well as holding them to account. It also enables them to have a more prominent role in monitoring and evaluating aspects of the work of the school. These changes are beginning to take effect as members of the leadership team become more confident in their roles. Meetings of the leadership team are purposeful and all members of the team are given opportunities to contribute their ideas.

4. The governing body plays a strong role in providing strategic direction to the school's work, especially through the work of the strategic development committee. In common with other governing body committees, this committee works well. Governors are very supportive of the school but also provide a good level of challenge to the headteacher and the leadership team. Governors are kept very well informed by the excellent quality of the headteacher's termly report to the governing body and through their links with individual curricular areas, enabling them to have a very clear idea of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.

5. Strategic planning is effective and provides a focus for departmental planning and for the allocation of resources. The observation of teaching is an established part of the school's work and the current programme of monitoring has been closely related to the school's priorities, for example, a focus on teaching and learning in Years 7 and 8. The school is moving towards a model in which all teachers will be observed on a more regular basis. The procedures for monitoring and evaluating other aspects of the school's work to ensure quality and consistency are good and are being extended.

Effective teaching challenges and motivates most pupils to achieve good standards of work.

6. The high quality of most of the teaching makes a significant contribution to the above average standards achieved by the majority of the pupils. Most teachers provide challenging tasks, suitable to meet the needs of individual pupils, and have high expectations of what pupils will achieve and their response in lessons. The school is clearly benefiting from the emphasis it has placed in recent years on developing the skills and understanding of staff about the ingredients of effective teaching.

7. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. Across the school as a whole, the teaching is good overall, with just over four-fifths of the teaching good or better and around two-fifths very good and sometimes excellent. There are some slight variations between the key stages. By comparison with Key Stage 3 and the sixth form, there is a smaller proportion of good and very good teaching at Key Stage 4 and a slightly greater number of lessons where there are some weaknesses. In the sixth form, the teaching is never less than good and in just under two-thirds of lessons it is very good and sometimes excellent. At Key Stage 3, the quality of teaching is at least satisfactory in 96 per cent of lessons, good in 45 per cent of lessons and very good or excellent in just under a half. The teaching in Year 7 is never less than good and in two-thirds of lessons it is very good. At Key Stage 4, the teaching is at least satisfactory in more than nine out of ten lessons, good in 38 per cent of lessons, and very good and occasionally excellent in a quarter of lessons. At Key Stage 3, there is more flair in the teaching and a greater propensity for teachers to experiment, take risks and try out ideas. These approaches maintain pupils' interest in, and enthusiasm for, learning. The approach at Key Stage 4, with the emphasis on completing the GCSE syllabus, is rather more predictable, lacking the spark that is frequently found in lessons with the younger pupils.

8. The school's emphasis on improving planning and the structure of lessons, areas identified in the evaluation of teaching and learning in Year 8 in 1999, is having a considerable impact on improving the quality of the teaching and in accelerating the progress of the pupils. These improvements have not as yet had sufficient time to have a major influence on improving the schools' performance in the Key Stage 3 tests or GCSE examinations but the evidence from the inspection suggests that a good platform has been established on which further improvements in the school's results should be possible.

9. Most pupils' attainment is broadly average when they arrive at the school. From the work seen during the inspection, including classwork and the scrutiny of their books and other work, most pupils are achieving well in relation to their earlier attainment on entry to the school and their attainment in most subjects is above average. By the age of 14, pupils' attainment is above the standard expected nationally in most subjects observed, including mathematics, science, art, design and technology, geography, history, physical education and religious education. In English, information technology, French and music, pupils' attainment is in line with national expectations for pupils of this age. The standards found in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science are broadly similar to the school's performance in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3.

10. In 1999, pupils' overall performance in the national tests, at the age of 14, was above average in mathematics and science and was average in English. The results at Level 5 and above were

average in English, above average in mathematics and well above average in science. At the higher levels, the school's performance was above average in mathematics and science and average in English. The unconfirmed test results for 2000 indicate that the school's results at Level 5 and above have remained broadly the same in English and mathematics, with a slight dip in performance in science, but with a considerable increase in the number of pupils gaining the higher levels in all three subjects, especially in English. The school's emphasis on raising standards and improving teaching and learning at Key Stage 3, together with its recent involvement in the National Literacy Strategy Pilot scheme, is beginning to have a positive impact on raising standards in English.

11. On the evidence of their current work, standards at Key Stage 4 are above average in mathematics, science, art, design and technology, geography, history, and physical education; they are average in English, drama and information and communication technology; and are slightly below average in French. In most subjects, pupils are achieving higher standards than might be expected when account is taken of their attainment on entry to the school. This picture is similar to the school's performance in the GCSE examinations in 1999. The GCSE results have been consistently above average since the last inspection, with the rate of improvement from year to year broadly in line with the national trend. When compared with similar schools, the school's performance is broadly average. The strongest subjects in 1999 were physics, design and technology, geography, German and statistics; the weakest subjects were French and drama. In line with the national picture, the girls outperformed the boys in nearly all subjects. The school's performance in 2000, as yet unconfirmed, shows a slight decrease in the average points score and in the proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades A*-C, but an increase in the proportion gaining five or more grades A*-G and one or more grades A*-G.

12. In the sixth form, students' attainment is slightly above course expectations, with examples of students achieving high standards in some lessons in English, art and design, physical education and religious education as a result of the high expectations teachers have of the students' response and the challenging work they set. In these lessons, the pace of learning is brisk, demanding good levels of concentration from the students. Since 1996, the A-level results have been close to the national average, although there was a slight dip in 1998. The best results in 1999 were in art and design, design and technology, French, geography, physics, sociology, performing arts and physical education, with all students gaining pass grades and many achieving grades A or B. There were no particularly weak subjects. In 2000, the unconfirmed results indicate that the average points score is slightly lower than 1999 but that the results at grades A-E in individual subjects are broadly similar to those for 1999. Students are generally achieving better than their performance in the GCSE examinations would indicate.

13. Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs are making particularly good progress and are achieving well in relation to their abilities through the good support and teaching they receive, both from class teachers and when they are provided with additional support. The marked differences that were found between the results of boys and girls in the national tests and public examinations were not particularly evident in pupils' work seen during the inspection. The school has already identified strategies for raising the attainment of boys and these are being implemented effectively in most lessons.

14. Examples of very good teaching occur in a number of subjects, for example in English, mathematics, science, French, physical education, information and communication technology, and religious education at Key Stage 3; in English, drama, mathematics, business, and the teaching of pupils with special educational needs at Key Stage 4; and in English, science, and religious education in the sixth form. Some excellent teaching was seen in a number of lessons, including mathematics in Year 8 and Year 11, religious education in Year 9, art in Year 12, and physical education in Year 13. In all of these lessons, which are lively and demanding, pupils make particularly good progress in their learning,

achieving for the most part well above average standards. Where learning is most effective and consequently standards of pupils' work and their responses are higher, teachers use the following strategies consistently and well. They plan and structure the work effectively so that time is used to best effect; use their subject knowledge well to provide challenging tasks and activities to meet the needs of all pupils in the class; set out clearly and share with pupils the intentions of the lesson at the beginning and provide opportunities at the end to review what they have learned; use a variety of approaches to generate interest and enthusiasm from the pupils; and make good use of questioning to challenge pupils and make them think. Relationships in most lessons between teachers and their pupils are very positive and in some of the best lessons, humour is used very effectively to reinforce a constructive working relationship. Occasionally, relationships and attitudes to work become a little too relaxed and informal, as for example in a Year 11 physical education lesson. As a result, the quality and pace of learning are adversely affected.

15. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and most use this knowledge effectively to ensure that the work is appropriately challenging for the pupils. The quality of the planning is generally good, although some is too focused on activities to be undertaken rather than on identifying more clearly the learning intentions of lessons. Most teachers manage their pupils well and expect high standards of behaviour and response from their pupils. In a small number of lessons, the teaching has some weak features. Sometimes, the work is insufficiently demanding, as for example in a personal and social education lesson in Year 10. In others, the teacher's unclear expectations and management of the pupils, seen in a Year 9 music lesson, resulted in much wasted time and insufficient learning, and weak planning and organisation during a Year 10 food technology lesson led to pupils making insufficient progress.

Pupils with special educational needs are given very good support, which enables them to make the most of the opportunities the school provides.

16. The school's provision for pupils with special educational needs is of high quality. Pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated into the school community. The school has allocated a greater proportion of its budget than it receives towards supporting pupils with special educational needs. These pupils receive very good support both in lessons and when withdrawn for specific help in literacy and numeracy, which enables them to make good progress in their learning. Resources and teaching approaches are carefully matched to their needs and the work is purposeful and valued by the pupils.

17. The systems and procedures for identifying pupils' needs are good and their needs are addressed at an early stage. Statements and reviews are in place and up-to-date, and paperwork is well ordered. The arrangements fully meet statutory requirements.

18. A wide range of opportunities has been developed both for pupils themselves and to support individual teachers and departments. These include drop-in sessions for individual pupils to receive planned and targeted support from teaching assistants and specialist teachers; negotiated support every fortnight for pupils with a special needs mentor; specific literacy and numeracy support for pupils who achieved Level 3 in the Key Stage 2 tests; and other support for pupils from the learning support assistants in class or in withdrawal sessions. The Toe-by-Toe scheme, which is a highly structured multi-sensory approach to literacy, significantly adds value in raising standards. Pupils make very good progress, especially in their reading.

19. The Toe-by-Toe scheme and the other special needs support systems are very effective in promoting pupils' self-esteem and improving attitudes. The commitment and involvement of the governor with responsibility for this area in supporting pupils with special educational needs makes a

valuable contribution to the quality of their learning. This term, in response to parental requests, the special needs co-ordinator has organised a monthly review meeting, to which parents are invited to attend. This is in addition to the normal meeting times.

20. Older pupils in Key Stage 4 are able to follow a Youth Award option as an alternative non-academic course. The teaching of this course is appropriately planned with a sensible structure and timescales to ensure that pupils are kept on task. Relationships with the pupils and between the pupils themselves are good. The vast majority of pupils who take this option are keen to learn, courteous and make good progress in their learning.

Positive attitudes enable the majority of pupils to make good gains in their learning.

21. Pupils are generally positive about the school and appreciate the support they receive from staff. They enjoy coming to school and value the opportunity they are given to take responsibility for themselves and their actions, and the trust that is placed in them.

22. Attitudes to work are generally good throughout the school, being particularly positive in Year 7, Year 8 and the sixth form. Pupils are interested in their work, and often enthusiastic, particularly when the teaching is demanding and the work interesting. Most pupils are well motivated and are able to sustain their concentration throughout the one-hour lessons. They settle to work very promptly, although there are examples of some lateness which results in a slow start to lessons. This is mainly, but not always, a result of the dispersed nature of the school site and the need to travel some distance between buildings to the next lesson. The school makes no allowance for this in the timing of the school day. Pupils contribute well in lessons and are confident in asking questions of their teachers. The vast majority are willing to take part in the range of activities that teachers provide. Most pupils maintain a clear focus and involvement, and persevere when the tasks are challenging. Where the teaching lacks spark and challenge, pupils are cooperative but their attitudes become a little too relaxed.

23. Relationships among pupils and between pupils and their teachers are constructive. In most lessons, pupils listen well to their teachers and to one another, valuing and accepting the contributions and views of others. Collaborative work is usually good and pupils are mutually supportive and encouraging. In many lessons, the teachers' skilful use of questioning to provoke thought and test pupils' understanding generally gets a confident response. At times, pupils demonstrate real maturity and respond well to the challenge of the questions.

24. The behaviour of the majority of pupils is good. They are courteous to one another and to adults. The behaviour of a small minority is unsatisfactory in some lessons, especially when the teachers are not so adept at managing pupils or where expectations are not clear enough. In such lessons, they sometimes disrupt the learning of others. The generally good standard of behaviour, both in lessons and around the school, makes a positive contribution to the way in which the school operates as an orderly and civilised community. Considerable numbers of pupils participate enthusiastically in out of school activities. Of particular note are the large numbers of pupils who use the computers in the learning resource centre each day to develop their independent learning skills. The pupils' high levels of attendance and their positive attitudes to the school and to lessons help them make good gains in their learning and assist in the achievement of high standards.

The school effectively enhances pupils' moral, social and cultural development and helps them to become mature young people.

25. The school's aims outline a clear commitment to enabling pupils to fulfil their potential and develop a strong sense of citizenship and moral values, together with individuality, enthusiasm and commitment to learning. The ethos that permeates the school enables pupils to become more mature and responsible as they progress through the school. The personal and social education programme, which covers a range of topics such as prejudice, crime, punishment and bullying, enables pupils to consider a range of moral issues. Assemblies visited by inspectors generally had a moral, rather than a spiritual, focus and clearly affirmed the values for which the school stands. Pupils listen attentively and thoughtfully in assemblies. They also respond well to the school's code of conduct, exercising good self-discipline both in and out of lessons. They generally show considerable respect for one another, staff, and in their use of resources. Teachers are good role models for their pupils and they lead by example. This results in a caring and calm community where pupils learn right from wrong and develop clear moral values. There is a strong commitment to pupils' achievement and welfare and a strong emphasis on working together. When pupils leave school they have grown in confidence as a result of the school's philosophy, which is embedded in its everyday practice.

26. There are numerous opportunities for pupils to learn good social habits. Pupils consider the school to be a safe and secure place to be. Pupils give due care and attention to visitors, are polite and open doors. They work in pairs and small groups very successfully and understand that the needs and views of others need to be considered in addition to their own. Their social development is expanded and fostered through many subjects, particularly in art, music, physical education and drama. The recently introduced Complementary Studies programme in the sixth form will provide opportunities for work experience and a community programme. Opportunities are available for pupils to exercise personal responsibility and to show initiative, including membership of the school council. There are many opportunities for pupils to perform in public and to participate in the large number of out-of-school activities, which include team games and other sporting activities, music and drama. Pupils in Year 8 participate effectively in the school's 'buddy' system, which involves selected pupils in Year 8 acting as a mentor to small groups of Year 7 pupils. Sixth form students support pupils with special educational needs with their reading and other literacy skills. Pupils also support a number of charities. They like the newly implemented year system, finding that it gives them the opportunity to make a wider circle of friends than was possible under the house system.

27. Cultural activities are very strong in the school and many pupils take part in the wide range of sporting, music and drama opportunities that are available. During the school's annual activities week, pupils have the opportunity to experience a variety of different activities, including residential visits. There are many opportunities to learn about other cultures in subjects of the curriculum. Pupils visit Mosques and Synagogues in religious education. In art, pupils consider the impact of other cultures on art: for example, tribal masks of Africa that are reflected in Picasso's paintings and Cubism, and influences on textile patterns. Theatre and dance companies visit the school to perform and lead workshop sessions with pupils. Links have been established with schools in Paris and in Germany. The school has hosted visiting musicians from Australia. All these opportunities benefit pupils' personal, social and cultural development and enhance the quality and breadth of their experiences.

Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic and personal development are working well at Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, and are satisfactory and improving rapidly at Key Stage 3.

28. There is a strong commitment to supporting pupils' achievements and welfare, and good procedures are in place, although they are not equally well established in all parts of the school. Pupils' progress is monitored and supported effectively and this is particularly successful in the sixth form. The form tutor has the main responsibility for tracking pupils' personal development. The change from a house to a year system has provided better opportunities for staff, including heads of

year and form tutors, to monitor pupils' progress effectively. Staff, some of whom were unhappy with the proposals, have already recognised the benefits that have accrued from the change. The school's procedures for monitoring attendance and pupils' behaviour are good.

29. Since the last inspection, the assessment arrangements have become more structured, with the experience gained in developing procedures in the sixth form and Key Stage 4 permeating down into Key Stage 3. A computerised assessment system has been introduced and plans are in hand to use it alongside standardised data for more accurate target setting with pupils. Data are analysed carefully to look at trends and value added issues as they apply to individual students, pupils and to the school as a whole. Data on individual pupils, together with their targets, are readily available to all staff and included in the staff handbook. The use of data to inform the process of target setting is developing well and has been the focus of sustained activity in recent times. Many departments are making good use of assessment data to help them track pupils' progress and achievements and to help them set targets for individual pupils.

30. Pupils with special educational needs who are withdrawn from lessons for individual support are monitored carefully, and a learning support assistant checks with the subject teacher that any work missed is covered. A mentoring scheme is in place to support pupils in Year 11 preparing for GCSE, with a particular focus on raising the attainments of boys. Mentors include senior staff and external business people. An assessment week is planned for each year group in Key Stage 3 and in Key Stage 4, which will contribute towards the process of setting targets, and which will be shared with pupils and parents. The sixth form has good procedures for target setting and reviewing students' progress. Students contributed to a staff training event on their preferred learning approaches and identified a need for more regular target setting and review, to which the school has responded. Opportunities for pupils to undertake self-assessment are well developed.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Teachers, other than in English, do not do enough to develop pupils' literacy skills.

31. The school is participating in the Key Stage 3 National Literacy Strategy pilot scheme, which is already beginning to have an impact on teaching and learning in English and leading to improvements in pupils' literacy skills. In other departments, there is little awareness of their role in developing pupils' literacy skills and consequently the approaches undertaken in English through the pilot scheme are not being reinforced or consolidated in other subjects. This adversely affects the standard and quality of pupils' work. At present, the school has no whole-school literacy policy to guide developments within subject departments, although plans are in hand to remedy this through staff training using the strategy training materials. Nor does it capitalise sufficiently on the literacy skills that pupils bring with them from their primary schools. The school recognises that further work is necessary in this area.

32. From the scrutiny of pupils' work, marking pays insufficient attention to improving pupils' writing, including spelling and grammatical awareness. Work tends to be marked for subject content rather than for accuracy. Spelling errors, including the misspelling by pupils of technical terms in the subject, are frequently ignored and corrections are not in evidence in many exercise books. Insufficient support is given to pupils, particularly the lower attainers, through the use of word lists and writing frames. In lessons, teachers' expectations of pupils' responses are not always high enough, especially in their use of Standard English.

Reports do not give enough information to parents about their child's achievements and progress.

33. Reports to parents are very helpful in providing good opportunities for pupils to comment on and evaluate their own performance and set personal targets, and for giving teachers an opportunity to write general comments on the progress made by individual pupils. Many parents expressed concern, both at the parents' meeting and in their responses to the parents' questionnaire, that the reports provide them with insufficient information about how well their children are doing. Inspectors' judgements support the parents' views. The reports are insufficiently diagnostic and do not indicate to pupils and their parents what needs to be improved. In addition, they do not include enough information about pupils' attainment in relation to the National Curriculum levels and their individual targets, or a detailed assessment by the teacher of pupils' progress and current performance. The school is aware of the need to modify the reports and is taking steps to do so.

Insufficient provision is made for pupils' spiritual development and statutory requirements in the provision for religious education in the sixth form and for a daily act of collective worship are not met.

34. The school's provision for pupils' spiritual development, although improving, is unsatisfactory as was the case at the time of the last inspection. Assemblies have a strong moral tone, but lack a consistent spiritual dimension, with missed opportunities for pupils to reflect on their own lives, values and beliefs and those of others. The school does not comply with the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship and is therefore in breach of its statutory duties. Elsewhere in the curriculum, other than in religious education, there are few planned or overt opportunities for any discussion on aspects of human existence to develop pupils' spiritual awareness and self-knowledge. Provision for religious education in the sixth form has improved since the last inspection but the time allocated for it is insufficient to meet the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus.

The programme of personal and social education is insufficiently coordinated.

35. Some of the teaching of the personal and social education programme is good but the overall programme lacks coherence and a clear structure. Many aspects of the work of the school contribute to, and influence, pupils' personal development but the content of the personal and social education programme, which is taught by a small number of staff, has a number of weaknesses. There is no overall scheme of work for the programme, although individual staff have developed specific units of work. These units, in the main, identify topics and issues to be covered rather than the specific knowledge, skills and understanding to be developed. This makes it difficult for staff to build on pupils' previous experiences and to help them apply their skills in a wider range of contexts. In addition, at Key Stage 4, lessons are timetabled once a fortnight, which makes it difficult to maintain continuity in the development of pupils' skills. Occasionally, pupils are given insufficient opportunities to engage in the lesson, to discuss issues that are relevant to their lives or to develop the skills of making informed choices. The learning intentions of lessons are not always identified clearly enough in the planning, resulting in a lack of focus and challenge to some of the work. There are insufficient links between the careers education and guidance provided in Key Stage 4 and that provided in the sixth form, and between the programme of careers education and the personal and social education programme. The school is aware of weaknesses in the provision of these aspects of pupils' personal development and has recently appointed a new coordinator to oversee this area.

There are too few opportunities at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form for pupils to follow work-related or vocational courses.

36. Although the school provides a good range of A-level courses in the sixth form, it makes little provision for students for whom A-level courses are not appropriate. Entry into the sixth form is

generally on the basis of a student achieving five GCSE grade A*-C passes and most students study three A-level subjects. The academic nature of the sixth form and the entry requirements have limited the opportunity for less academically successful students to continue with their studies in the school and to follow courses that are more appropriate to their needs than A-level courses. As a start, the school has introduced a GNVQ Advanced course in business this year. Similarly, at Key Stage 4, a Youth Award scheme has been introduced for a small group of pupils for whom a full range of academic courses is not appropriate, and an individually negotiated programme arranged for one pupil who has particular difficulties. Pupils in Year 11 and students in the sixth form also participate in a work experience programme. Other than these opportunities, pupils do not have access to any other vocational or work-related courses.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

37. The school should now:

(1) improve the teaching of literacy across the school, by:

- developing a whole-school literacy policy;
- integrating literacy strategies in schemes of work;
- providing training for all staff;
- monitoring the marking of pupils' books more frequently.

[Paragraphs 32-33]

(2) improve the quality of written reports to parents, by:

- providing more detailed information about pupils' progress and achievements;
- making them more diagnostic;
- discussing with parents the kind of information they require.

[Paragraph 34]

(3) improve the provision for pupils' spiritual development, by:

- providing training for staff to increase their understanding about this aspect of pupils' personal development;
- ensuring that departments have strategies in place to contribute to pupils' spiritual development;
- using assemblies and personal and social education more effectively;
- meeting statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship and religious education in the sixth form.

[Paragraph 35]

(4) improve the planning and quality of the personal and social education programme, by:

- developing a coherent scheme of work that systematically develops pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills and helps them make informed choices;
- providing more time for personal and social education in Year 10 and Year 11;
- incorporating careers education more closely into the programme and improving the links between careers education at Key Stage 4 and that provided in the sixth form.

[Paragraph 36]

(5) increase the range of vocational and work-related courses available for pupils at the school at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.

[Paragraph 37]

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	59
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	28

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
8	32	41	14	2	3	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1,034	173
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	68	-

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	5	-
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	173	5

English as an additional language

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	25
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	28

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.2
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.4
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	1999	93	83	176

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	51	67	63
	Girls	61	63	58
	Total	112	130	121
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	64 (66)	74 (71)	69 (65)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	23 (28)	40 (47)	26 (30)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	70	70	59
	Girls	73	66	63
	Total	143	136	122
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	81 (80)	77 (75)	69 (66)
	National	64 (64)	64 (64)	60 (61)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	35 (35)	47 (45)	41 (39)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (30)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	1999	99	92	191

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	49	88	93
	Girls	58	89	91
	Total	107	177	184
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	56 (57.7)	93 (94.3)	96 (97)
	National	46.6 (44.6)	90.9 (89.8)	95.8 (95.2)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	43 (42.8)
	National	38.0 (36.8)

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

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	1999	36	49	85

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	15.1	17.2	16.3 (14.1)	4.0	2.0	3.0 (6.0)
National	17.7	18.1	17.9 (17.6)	2.7	2.8	2.8 (2.8)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	3
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	5
White	1,206
Any other minority ethnic group	1

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	67.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.3

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	14.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	332

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	80%
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 3	25.0
Key Stage 4	21.3

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	22	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Financial information

Financial year	1999/00
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	£
Total income	3,107,008
Total expenditure	3,165,861
Expenditure per pupil	2,623
Balance brought forward from previous year	71,839
Balance carried forward to next year	12,986

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1215
Number of questionnaires returned	201

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	33	55	10	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	28	58	11	2	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	11	56	20	4	10
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	13	44	30	12	0
The teaching is good.	17	65	8	2	8
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	17	45	29	9	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	37	52	8	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	35	53	9	1	2
The school works closely with parents.	13	47	27	7	5
The school is well led and managed.	21	49	10	6	15
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	20	63	12	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	16	47	17	7	12