

INSPECTION REPORT

KINGSBURY SCHOOL

Birmingham

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103526

Headteacher: Ms P A Exley

Reporting inspector: Michael Owen
22926

Dates of inspection: 9-13 October 2000

Inspection number: 223947

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11-16

Gender of pupils: mixed

School address: Kingsbury Road
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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr T Fuery

Date of previous inspection: 30/09/96

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Kingsbury School is a mixed comprehensive school for pupils aged 11-16. There are 948 pupils on roll and the school is over-subscribed. Most pupils come from the surrounding area, which contains a wide social and ethnic mix. Nearly one in three pupils is from ethnic minority groups, predominantly Indian, Pakistani and Caribbean. The percentage of pupils speaking English as an additional language is high. The main languages spoken other than English are Punjabi and Urdu. The school is a good focal point for its community, providing a wide range of leisure activities during the evenings and at weekends. Thirty-six per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is above the national average. One hundred and ninety-four pupils have been identified as having special educational needs, which is in line with the national average. There are sixty-six pupils on the school's register of special educational needs, of whom nineteen have Statements of Special Educational Need, which is below the national average. The majority of these statements are for specific learning difficulties or general literacy problems. Attainment on entry is below average but has been rising in line with the national trend. The school aims to help pupils to realise their full potential, to raise their self-esteem and to reduce barriers to learning. This is reflected in its motto: "Proud to Achieve". The Excellence in Cities project is a valuable support in this aim.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Overall, the school's effectiveness is satisfactory. Standards have been rising faster than the national trend at Key Stage 3 and while below the national average, they compare favourably with similar schools. At Key Stage 4 standards are well below the national average, though they are close to average when compared with similar schools and taking into account pupils' prior attainment. Pupils have a satisfactory attitude to the school and relationships are good, but the poor attendance of many undermines their achievement. Overall teaching is good except where there are gaps in provision caused by staffing difficulties. The curriculum is good and provision at Key Stage 4 is improving. Procedures for care and guidance are good and the school's partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. The school has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection and continues to work hard to raise attainment. The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory and resources are well managed in a way that provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Attainment and achievement in Key Stage 3 are improving
- Overall teaching is good
- Relationships are good and the school cares well for its pupils
- A number of aspects of the curriculum are good – provision for literacy, extra-curricular sport, personal, social and health education, careers and work experience, community links and relationships with partner institutions
- Financial planning is good

What could be improved

- Attainment and achievement at Key Stage 4 are not high enough
- Attendance is poor and procedures to promote attendance are not effective
- Use of assessment data to set effective targets for raising standards is under-developed
- Monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance leading to effective action is not rigorous enough
- The provision for spiritual and cultural education is unsatisfactory, including the multi-cultural dimension, the expressive and performing arts and religious education

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 since the last inspection in 1996. It has improved attainment and achievement at Key Stage 3 but not at Key Stage 4. Attendance continues to be poor. The level of language skills across the curriculum has been raised through the literacy project. There has been satisfactory improvement in action planning and target setting but it is not good enough to ensure that the school's plans are implemented as effectively as they should be. Management responsibilities have been clarified and they are stronger in some respects, but the monitoring and implementation of school plans and policies is not rigorous enough. Vocational courses have improved the provision at Key Stage 4 but need further development. The requirement for a daily act of collective worship is still not fully met. The health and safety issues noted in the last report have all been dealt with.

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

At the end of Key Stage 3 results have been improving. Although they remain below the national average they are well above those in similar schools based on the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals. 2000 results in English, mathematics and science are below average by comparison with all schools, but well above average by comparison with similar schools. The school trend has been above the national trend pattern and the school has exceeded its targets, which are appropriately challenging. Girls do better than boys in English but boys do better than girls in mathematics and science. Overall achievement at Key Stage 3 is good.

In GCSE the proportions of pupils achieving at least 5 A*-C grades and 5 A*-G grades in 1999 (the last year for which national comparisons were available during the inspection) are well below the national average. While the overall trend in results has been upwards it is less than the national trend. By comparison with similar schools and based on pupils' prior attainment, the proportions of 5 A*-C and 5 A*-G grades are close to average. However, the proportion of pupils achieving at least one A*-G grade is below average. In English and mathematics they were below the national average and well below in science. In English literature they were above average but they were well below average in art, design and technology, geography, history, modern foreign languages and religious education. Pupils' best results, compared to their results in other subjects, were in art and design, English literature and information and communication technology (ICT). Poorest results were in history and mathematics. Results in 2000 improved slightly.

In work seen during the inspection, at the end of Key Stage 3 standards in English, mathematics, science, art, design and technology, geography, history, and physical education are in line with the national expectations for 14 year olds; in modern foreign languages, music and religious education they are below. In Key Stage 4 standards in mathematics, design and technology, physical education and business education are in line with the national average; in English, science, drama, art, geography, history, modern foreign languages and ICT they are below; in music and religious education they are well below.

While the achievement of those who complete their courses is satisfactory, the school has not met its Key Stage 4 targets for 1999 or 2000 – largely because of the impact of poor attendance.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Satisfactory. Most pupils have a positive attitude to the school

Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory. The majority of pupils behave well but there is a small minority who have not developed self-discipline and consideration for others.
Personal development and relationships	Good relationships throughout the school have a positive effect upon the learning of pupils of every level of attainment and background.
Attendance	Poor. At 86 per cent it is well below the national benchmark of 92 per cent. Attendance gets worse at Key Stage 4, especially among boys.

Most pupils are helpful and work together well in lessons. They speak with confidence about their experiences and are loyal to the school. Pupils with special educational needs respond well. Pupils from a variety of ethnic heritages mix well together. Pupils are willing to take responsibility but are less confident about using their initiative. Last year only 56 per cent of pupils in Years 7-10 attended for more than 90 per cent of the possible time. Year 11 boys' attendance is worse than girls' and for this reason it is not surprising that their GCSE results are also worse. Too many parents allow their children to stay away from school for inappropriate reasons.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Ninety-two per cent of teaching is satisfactory or better, 15 per cent is very good or better, but 8 per cent is unsatisfactory. Teaching at Key Stage 3 is good in English and satisfactory in mathematics and science. At Key Stage 4 it is good in English and mathematics and satisfactory in science. Teaching of literacy is good and of that of numeracy is satisfactory. In other subjects teaching is good at Key Stage 3 in design and technology, geography, history, ICT, religious education and physical education. It is satisfactory in art and modern foreign languages and unsatisfactory in music. At Key Stage 4 teaching is good in geography, history, ICT, religious education, physical education and business education. It is satisfactory in art, design and technology and modern foreign languages and unsatisfactory in music.

Good teaching is characterised by good planning of interesting and challenging assignments, good pace and good use of resources. Weaker teaching is characterised by planning which does not ensure that tasks are matched to pupils' attainment levels and that pupils are kept busy throughout the lesson. Overall teaching meets the needs of all pupils. Pupils learn well, increasing their knowledge and skills and showing interest in their work. But they do not know the levels they are working at or what they need to do to improve; in consequence they tend not to show much initiative in taking control of their learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good overall – the curriculum meets statutory requirements; it is broad and balanced, and meets pupils' needs
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. There is good in-class support for pupils but recording of progress is unsatisfactory.

Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Unsatisfactory. There are weaknesses in assessment and management. There is currently no provision because the school has been unable to fill staffing vacancies.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Overall satisfactory. Provision for moral and social education is good; pupils are taught to distinguish right from wrong, relationships are good and pupils work together well. However, the spiritual dimension is neglected and the cultural, especially the multi-cultural, is not given enough attention.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The school looks after pupils well and promotes good behaviour. Although it works hard to try to improve attendance, measures have not been effective. Assessment and monitoring of progress is not rigorous enough to give pupils a clear idea of what they need to do to improve.

The school's links with parents are satisfactory, but the extent of parents' involvement in the work of the school and contribution to their children's learning is unsatisfactory, particularly with regard to attendance. The curriculum now makes better provision at Key Stage 4 for the needs of all pupils, but the school's provision for the expressive and performing arts is inadequate in quality and range. Literacy, extra-curricular sport, personal, social and health education, careers and the work related curriculum, community links and relationships with partner institutions are all strengths. Good support is provided for all pupils, many of whom have to cope with difficult family circumstances. Procedures for child protection and first aid are satisfactory. Attention to health and safety is satisfactory, though risk assessments are insufficient. Good provision is made to meet the needs of pupils who have difficulty with behaviour. Measures to improve attendance have not succeeded. The school has satisfactory procedures to assess and monitor pupils' progress but it is not yet using the data that is generated sufficiently well to guide its planning or identify individual pupils' strengths and weaknesses.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory. The headteacher's commitment to raising achievement is good and is shared by all staff. Educational priorities are appropriate, but are not pursued with urgency by management at all levels.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. Relationships with the school are good. Governors know its strengths and weaknesses but do not find out enough for themselves about how the school is improving. Statutory responsibilities are not fulfilled with regard to collective worship, risk assessments and the annual report.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Unsatisfactory. The school is aware of its strengths and weaknesses but does not monitor performance closely enough.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The school targets resources towards identified development priorities.

Although there are problems in recruiting staff, the match of staff to the curriculum is satisfactory. There are good facilities such as the library and sports hall; overall the accommodation is adequate and is well-maintained. Resources are satisfactory and the school provides satisfactory 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"> Children like school Children make good progress They feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem The school expects their children to work hard and achieve their best 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Behaviour in the school Provision of the right amount of homework Information about how their children are getting on The extent to which the school works

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The school helps their children become mature and responsible 	<p>closely with parents</p>
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The inspection team agrees with the pleasing aspects of the school, although our view is that the progress of too many pupils, particularly at Key Stage 4, is held back by poor attendance. With regard to the areas for improvement, poor behaviour is limited to a small group of challenging pupils and we consider the school is improving measures to deal with this. We agree that the provision of homework is not consistent. We agree that the quality of information provided for parents could be improved and that the working relationship with parents needs to be closer. Our view is that this also requires many parents to show a more responsible attitude, for example, by ensuring their children attend school on time and co-operating with the school's efforts to improve attendance.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Pupils' attainments on entry to the school are below average. In English attainment is below average, although the attainment level of the current Year 11 was well below average when they began Year 7; in mathematics it is below average; in science it fluctuates from below average to close to the average. There is a high percentage of pupils for whom English is an additional language, although there is no recent record of who these pupils are. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs, including statements, is broadly in line with the national average.
2. In 1999 the school's Key Stage 3 assessment results were below the national average. The percentage of pupils reaching the national expectation or higher was well below the national average in English and science and below in mathematics. However, pupils' performance in the national tests compare favourably with the average for schools that have a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. On this basis results overall are well above those of similar schools: in English they are in line, in mathematics they are very high, in the top five per cent nationally, and in science they are above. In 2000 the results overall continued to be below the average for all schools but again, compared to similar schools, they were well above average. In English they were below the national average but well above those of pupils in similar schools, in mathematics they were well below but in line with similar schools and in science they were below but above similar schools. In English, girls do better than boys, but in mathematics and science boys do better than girls. Taking the overall performance of all pupils in all three subjects, results have steadily improved over the last four years; the trend has been above the national trend and the school exceeded its targets, which are appropriately challenging.
3. In 1999 the proportion of pupils achieving 5 or more A*-C grades at GCSE was well below the national average for all pupils. Girls performed better than boys. In 2000 the proportion gaining 5 or more A*-C grades was lower than the previous year. The proportion of pupils obtaining 5 or more A*-G grades in 1999 was also well below the national average. In 2000 there was a modest improvement in 5 or more A*-G grades and the percentage of pupils who gained at least one grade improved, as a result of a concerted effort by the school to get pupils in to sit their examinations. National comparisons for 2000 were not available at the time of the inspection. The average GCSE points score in 1999 was well below the national average and while the trend overall is upward it is below the national trend. Girls obtained better results than boys and the difference was slightly greater than the national difference. By comparison with similar schools, the picture is better. Based on 5 A*-C grades, 5 A*-G grades and average points scores in 1999 it was close to the average. Based on prior attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 it is also close to the average. However, the proportion of pupils obtaining at least one A*-G grade is below average both by comparison with similar schools and based on prior attainment. The school has not achieved its targets for 1999 and 2000, largely because achievement is affected by poor attendance and the school has considerable difficulty in getting a significant number of pupils to complete their courses and turn up for examinations.
4. The proportion of pupils achieving GCSE A*-C grades in 1999 in English and mathematics was below the national average; in science it was well below. By comparison with similar schools it was above average in English and science and in line with the national average in mathematics. In 1999 GCSE results were above the national average in English literature, in line with the national average in information and communication technology (ICT), below in drama, music, physical education and business education and well below in art, design and technology, geography, history, modern foreign languages, and religious education. Some of these results are a reflection of entry policies. For example, a large proportion of pupils was entered for GCSE short courses in religious education. A small proportion of the year group is entered for English literature by comparison with the average school and only a very small number of pupils are entered for music.

5. In work seen during the inspection, at the end of Key Stage 3 standards in English, mathematics, science, art, design and technology, geography, history, and physical education are in line with national expectations for 14 year olds; in modern foreign languages, music and religious education they are below. In Key Stage 4 standards in mathematics, design and technology, physical education and business education are in line with national expectations; in English, science, drama, art, geography, history, modern foreign languages and ICT they are below expectations; in music and religious education they are well below.
6. Overall achievement is satisfactory. At Key Stage 3 it is good in English, mathematics and physical education; it is satisfactory in science, art, design and technology, history, geography and ICT; it is unsatisfactory in modern foreign languages, music and religious education. At Key Stage 4 achievement is good in physical education; it is satisfactory in English, mathematics, science, art, design and technology, history, geography, business education; it is unsatisfactory in ICT, modern foreign languages and music, and it is poor in religious education.
7. Where achievement is good at Key Stage 3 it is because improved levels of literacy in particular and good teaching are raising standards. Some of the unsatisfactory achievement can be explained by unsatisfactory curriculum provision and teaching. But the poor attitudes of some pupils and the lack of parental support which leads to irregular and poor attendance is the single factor that most undermines progress and achievement. Not only is the progress of those pupils who are regularly absent at stake, but other pupils are disadvantaged by the need for teachers to spend time in most lessons sorting out those who have missed previous lessons. At Key Stage 4, the situation is made worse by the need for consistent application to complete satisfactory coursework. Too many pupils, especially boys, give up at this stage and their poor attitudes are reflected in poor progress and attainment.

Literacy

8. Standards of speaking and listening skills are satisfactory. Most pupils talk confidently, listen well and vary their expression, although their use of Standard English is not consistent. Higher attaining pupils at Key Stage 4 express complicated ideas with clarity and conciseness. Lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, have difficulties in making longer spoken contributions, although they give short answers clearly.
9. Standards of reading meet expectations and the majority of pupils at Key Stage 3 read extracts from challenging texts with some fluency. Average attaining pupils understand and explain the main events in the plays they read. Higher attaining pupils read with good expression, understanding that texts have different interpretations and meanings. They readily identify different features of characters in literature and find quotations to support their judgements. Lower attaining pupils' reading skills are well below the expected standards because of weaknesses in word recognition and fluency, but their good concentration helps them to know what happens in the books they read. At Key Stage 4 standards of reading are below expectations. Fluency is good but too many middle attaining pupils, when analysing a literary text, rely too much on re-telling the plot rather than using the text to support judgements. A small proportion of higher attaining pupils produce very high standards, for example in a detailed analysis of characters in Shakespeare's plays, including lucid explanations of the impact of Shakespeare's language.
10. In geography pupils identify key technical terms and use information from a text to identify causes and consequences of developments and phenomena. Pupils read aloud fluently in ICT and design and technology. In these subjects the availability of dictionaries that match different reading levels enhances the pupils' understanding of the terms they need to use. In religious education reading standards meet expectation but the limited nature of the materials prevents pupils from developing their independent reading skills. Pupils in history can read accurately enough to extract relevant information from texts, but do not use their own words sufficiently to show they understand what they have written.
11. Standards of writing meet expectation in Key Stage 3. Higher attaining pupils write with accurate control of sentences, use paragraphs well, and select a range of vocabulary and phrasing that makes their work engaging. Most middle attaining pupils have more limited

vocabulary but their paragraphing, spelling and basic punctuation are sound. Another group of average attaining pupils is less accurate in paragraphing and punctuation, and they lack the required range of formal written expressions. The skills of lower attaining pupils, mostly boys, are well below expectation because of frequent inaccuracies, although they make good progress in handwriting. In Key Stage 4, standards are below expectations because of weaknesses in punctuation and standard written expression. Nevertheless, pupils make good progress in paragraphing and writing substantial assignments. Although a proportion of average attaining pupils reach the expected standards too many of them do not because they cannot sustain crisp, well structured expressions and phrasing in their work. A small proportion of higher attaining pupils write at the very highest standards, using a mature, discursive style when, for instance, writing an analysis of characters in a novel by Jane Austen. However, some pupils' progress is hampered by their poor attendance. In other subjects such as business studies, standards meet expectation when the teachers help pupils plan tasks in small stages and have high expectations of presentation and accuracy. High expectations also lead to better standards of spelling in geography through the teachers expecting pupils to learn spellings accurately. Pupils achieve better standards after re-drafting their writing in religious education but at both key stages the range of writing required is too narrow. When evaluative writing is used it tends to be very short and consequently pupils do not have enough opportunity to improve this aspect of their writing.

Numeracy

12. Standards of numeracy across the curriculum are satisfactory. At Key Stage 3, pupils collect and represent data in ICT and make good use of bar graphs, grid references, scale, measuring and co-ordinates in geography. Pupils develop their number work in French and, in a Year 8 Spanish lesson, they added up restaurant bills in the target language. They use measurement and simple calculations for their drawings in design and technology. At Key Stage 4, pupils show confidence in using percentages and in a Year 11 geography lesson, made good use of graphs of birth and death rates to identify population patterns. In a Year 10 chemistry lesson, pupils showed a good understanding of the relationship between the slope of a graph and the rate of reaction and in a Year 11 physics lesson, they demonstrated good algebraic skills in using and manipulating formulae. Pupils make good use of calculators in their science lessons.

Information and communication technology

13. Though many individual pupils have good skills, for example in word processing, they are not given the range of ICT experiences necessary to develop their skills to a high standard in all areas of the curriculum. More opportunities need to be provided in all subjects if pupils are to develop fully their ICT skills. Standards are in line with national expectations. Skills across the curriculum vary according to the subject and the aspect of ICT being handled. In some subjects such as art and music there is little opportunity for pupils to develop their ICT skills while in others such as history and English pupils word process their work, using a variety of fonts. In modern foreign languages at Key Stage 4, they know how to insert accents when word processing work. Pupils also use desktop publishing to develop and present their ideas, such as making a presentation on whether part of the school field should be sold for development. They make choices between different software packages in order to investigate and record their findings on the pros and cons of genetically modified foods. They know how to import text and pictures to improve the presentation of their work. Pupils use a computerised independent learning programme to help develop their literacy and numeracy skills. The Internet and CD-ROMs are used for research. In design and technology all Year 9 pupils take a short course on the use of the Internet. This further develops and enhances pupils research skills that they use when they are designing their projects. Pupils in Key Stage 4 taking the business and information studies courses extend their ICT skills and work more independently. In ICT lessons pupils with special educational needs benefit from the use computers to present their work. They enjoy seeing their work well presented on screen and this increases their self-esteem.

Special educational needs

14. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress across the curriculum. Their progress is good in mathematics at Key Stage 3, and in physical education and in English across both stages. It is unsatisfactory in religious education because of unsatisfactory provision in the subject. Most pupils now in Year 8 who had the lowest scores

in reading in Year 7, have made satisfactory or better progress over the past year and a good number show very good improvement. However, nearly a third of these made very little or no progress. There is evidence of some recent improvement, with fewer pupils in 2000 achieving lower levels in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in English compared to 1999. Moreover, far fewer pupils left school without any passes at GCSE in 2000 than in previous years. The school still does not clearly evaluate the progress of pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Need against targets in their individual educational plans, a weakness noted in the previous inspection report. As a result, there is insufficient evidence to judge whether progress for these pupils is as good as it should be.

English as an additional language

15. The school does not know how much progress is made by pupils who speak English as an additional language either in their acquisition of English or across the curriculum. Although there is some documentation giving numbers of bilingual pupils, this information is out of date. Teachers and learning support assistants do not know who bilingual and developing bilingual pupils are because they are not fully informed. There is insufficient evidence on which to base a judgement about these pupils' attainment and progress. This was also the case at the last inspection, although at that time provision had not been established for long enough to be evaluated fairly.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

16. Pupils' attitudes towards school, their standards of behaviour and their response towards the opportunities provided for them to take on responsibility are all satisfactory. One of the school's strengths is the quality of relationships that prevails between pupils and with staff, and the harmony that exists between those from different ethnic heritages. Pupils' behaviour and good relationships have been maintained since the previous inspection and have a positive effect on the quality of learning throughout the school.
17. Most of the pupils spoken with during the inspection expressed positive feelings about the school, and most parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire indicated that their children like school. There is a reasonably good take-up for the many extra-curricular activities on offer, particularly those relating to sport, and pupils generally show an interest in lessons.
18. A relatively high percentage of parents expressed concerns about pupils' behaviour, but during the inspection behaviour was judged to be satisfactory overall. Although there were instances of unsatisfactory behaviour both in and out of lessons, much good behaviour was evident. The school operates as a lively yet orderly community, with pupils who can be quite noisy in lessons and on the corridors but who are mostly polite and friendly. Where staff have high expectations, provide interesting activities and maintain a suitable pace for pupils' levels of attainment, as is often the case in, for instance, physical education, when they behave well and try hard to improve their performance. However, there is a minority of pupils who have not developed sufficient self-discipline and consideration for the needs of others. The quality of their behaviour is too often directly related to the quality of teaching so that, where they sense a weakness in control, pupils grow challenging towards the teacher, wander around, fail to concentrate on the task in hand and generally make a nuisance of themselves. The number of exclusions is slightly below the average for schools of this type, involves only a small number of pupils, and is generally effective in improving behaviour, since most of these pupils are excluded on only one occasion. The main cause of exclusion is pupils' verbal abuse towards members of staff.
19. Good relationships are evident throughout the school and have a positive impact on the quality of pupils' learning. Pupils are helpful towards each other and collaborate well in lessons. They are sufficiently confident to speak about their own experiences in, for instance, form tutor periods. They respond well to the relaxed humour that some teachers adopt, for instance in the mathematics department, maintaining suitable respect while indulging in some light-heartedness. Pupils with special educational needs who receive small group tuition attend and respond well, as do older pupils who have recently started a cleverly devised programme of communication, social and problem-solving skills. Pupils from a variety of different ethnic heritages mix well with each other, and show tolerance of different

beliefs and ways of life. As in other schools, some bullying does happen, but pupils do not consider that it is a common occurrence, and the overwhelming majority agrees that the school deals well with the problem, once it is known about. Pupils are willing to take on responsibilities but they show less confidence about using their initiative in order to move their own learning onwards.

20. Attendance levels are poor and, despite efforts on the part of the school, show no improvement on those at the time of the previous inspection. In the most recent academic year only Year 7 pupils' overall attendance was above ninety per cent, while that of Year 11 pupils, up to the date in May when official statistics are collected, was only seventy-seven per cent. Only fifty-six per cent of pupils in Years 7 to 10 attended for more than ninety per cent of the possible time last year, while one in five pupils in these year groups took the equivalent of one day off per school week throughout the year. It was not possible during the inspection to analyse the attendance of Year 11 pupils in a similar way. The school does not have information about the attendance patterns of pupils from different ethnic groups or of different abilities, including those with special educational needs, but the attendance of boys and girls is broadly similar, except in Year 11 where boys' attendance is noticeably worse than that of girls. Boys' success rate at GCSE is also below that of girls. Too many pupils, around half of whom are of black Caribbean heritage, also arrive at school late.
21. A high percentage of pupils attend school sporadically, which means that although the numbers in lessons may be broadly similar from week to week, the actual pupils differ. Because of this, teachers have to spend too much time providing materials to help pupils catch up on missed work, and pupils have gaps in their understanding which adversely affect their ability to achieve high standards of work. This lax approach to attendance increases as pupils progress through the school, and it has a severe effect on the GCSE coursework of those in Key Stage 4. As the backlog of work mounts up, pupils grow disheartened and, in an unacceptable number of cases, fail to turn up for their exams. The incidence of unauthorised absence is well above the national average, and too many parents allow their children to stay away from school for inappropriate reasons, informing the school of their absence and attributing it to illness or family circumstances. It is very telling that the attendance of Year 10 pupils during their two weeks' work experience was above ninety per cent whereas that for the year as a whole was only slightly above eighty-four per cent. Their attendance during the last two weeks of the summer term was just above sixty-six per cent.
22. Improving the levels of attendance of pupils from all year groups is a major issue for the school to tackle in its efforts to improve their standards of achievement.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

23. The quality of teaching at both key stages is good. This results in good learning. The proportion of lessons judged to be satisfactory or better was just over 92 per cent, and the proportion judged to be good or very good was 58 per cent, representing an improvement from the last inspection.
24. Teaching in English is good at both key stages. Teachers use their knowledge of the subject to provide challenging and well-planned lessons that engage pupils in effective learning. They make good use of a range of resources and work well with good support staff to encourage pupils with special educational needs to concentrate well and develop their knowledge and understanding of books being studied. A weakness is that assessment does not always make clear what needs to be done to get to the next National Curriculum level or GCSE grade. In addition, writing skills are not given enough attention. Teaching in mathematics is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. Where specialist teachers know their subject well, they enthuse pupils to work hard and enjoy their mathematics. This is seen particularly in the commitment of a group of able Year 10 pupils who attend an extra evening class to enable them to take GCSE mathematics a year early. Some non-specialist teaching lacks confidence and consequent impact. As in English little reference is made to National Curriculum levels so that pupils are unclear about the progress of their learning. Teaching in science is satisfactory at both key stages, with many good features. Teaching is well planned and structured. Teachers recognise their responsibility to teach basic skills and there is a good attention to literacy and numeracy. They also make

good use of assessment information to track progress and set targets for pupils. There are some weaknesses in teachers' subject knowledge and some lessons do not start on time.

25. In other subjects teaching is good at Key Stage 3 in design and technology, geography, history, ICT, religious education and physical education. It is satisfactory in art and modern foreign languages and unsatisfactory in music. At Key Stage 4 teaching is good in geography, history, ICT, religious education, physical education and business education. It is satisfactory in art, design and technology and modern foreign languages and unsatisfactory in music.
26. Teachers' expertise is good in most subjects and very good in geography and physical education. Lack of specialist knowledge in some subjects, such as religious education, leads to too much reliance on text-books and worksheets, leaving little opportunity for pupils to learn for themselves. In general learning is improved when teachers provide more opportunity for pupils to take responsibility for their learning, to solve problems and make use of the library and new technologies to improve their research skills. This is seen in design and technology, and in the GNVQ courses, for example, leisure and tourism, where pupils research local facilities and amenities. The effect of the drive to raise levels of literacy is reflected in lessons. Many teachers display key words in classrooms to support the learning of specific subject vocabulary: in history good use is made of the blackboard to present key words and in science they are displayed on walls. Planning is good and results in well-organised lessons, though there are instances of lack of pace, for example in geography. In art, planning is unsatisfactory because teachers have not thought out how to challenge pupils by making clear what is expected and allowing them the opportunity to learn in a creative and independent way.
27. As in the previous report, expectations are not always high enough. When they are good, pupils respond and learn well. In a Year 11 netball lesson, the teacher expected all the pupils to think hard about what type of throw to use and who the best player would be to throw to. She made sure the pupils knew what was expected of them and she increased the difficulty and pace of the task in a way that ensured they were learning how to make fast decisions in a game. By contrast, in a Year 8 music lesson, the teacher had not taken sufficient account of the capability of some instrumental players in the class who were able quickly to read the music provided and had little to do while the rest of the class was learning. Such situations lead to unrest and poor discipline. For the most part, however, teachers used good strategies to manage their classes, despite the difficulties posed by poor attendance and a minority of pupils whose behaviour presents particular challenge and gets in the way of good learning. Sorting out who is present and who was not present in previous lessons wastes a significant amount of time. However, teachers use time well when they allow opportunity to recap and consolidate what is learnt at the end of the lesson, as was seen in geography and modern foreign languages, or to summarise the key points from the previous lesson at the start of a lesson, as happens in science.
28. Most teachers use the school's resources well and the deployment of support assistants is good. Foreign language assistants increase pupils' awareness of other cultures and stimulate their interest. Although business education teachers make good use of ICT, its potential is not fully exploited in most subjects as a learning tool. Teachers generally assess pupils' work in an appropriate manner, except in art, though some teachers praise poor work too generously, focussing on effort and not on attainment. As in English and mathematics, they do not link work to National Curriculum levels and they do not make clear what is needed to take the next step towards appropriate targets. This was evident in geography and religious education. Little use is made of the multi-cultural dimension, except in English and religious education, and in consequence the potential to enrich learning with a spiritual and cultural dimension is often lost. The use of homework to promote independent learning is uneven; the parents who raised this in the questionnaire have a point. In the same way, study planners are not always used effectively and the opportunity to involve parents more closely in pupils' learning is yet to be realised.
29. The quality of teaching by special needs staff is satisfactory overall. There is good teaching in literacy for all Year 7 pupils, including those with special educational needs, using a computerised learning system supplemented by other methods. As a result, pupils who learn

in different ways have their needs met effectively. Teachers across the curriculum are well aware of the special educational needs of pupils in their lessons. They take account of this in lesson plans but only a few departments have incorporated this planning into schemes of work. Strategies employed to match work to individual needs are not yet fully effective in some departments, with some over-reliance on worksheets. While effective in organising information, these can and often do constrain the development of writing skills.

30. There is no specialist teaching for pupils for whom English is an additional language, apart from a very small number who also have other learning difficulties and are on the school's register of special educational needs. These pupils receive additional help for literacy skills. However, the impact of their developing bi-lingualism is not fully appreciated. This was illustrated in one very small withdrawal group where the skilled member of staff was unaware that one of the pupils speaks Arabic at home.

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

31. The school has made much progress in responding to the issues raised in the last inspection report, although much of this work has only recently tackled. Some weaknesses still remain, but, overall, the curriculum is judged to be good. Curriculum provision in the core subjects is good and shortfalls in the provision for art and ICT have been addressed, although creative and expressive arts as well as cross-curricular work in ICT remains unsatisfactory and this has an adverse effect upon standards. The curriculum meets statutory requirements but the taught week of 24 hours and 10 minutes is on the low side.
32. The Year 7 curriculum provides a useful bridge with work undertaken at Key Stage 2 and there is an appropriate emphasis on literacy and numeracy, using a computerised learning system. Differences in time allocations for design and technology allow these lessons to be effectively offered as double lessons in Years 7 and 8, although increased time for modern foreign languages in Year 9 means that the time allocation for history and geography is on the low side. Staffing difficulties in music have resulted in extra time being given to English in Key Stage 3, which has a detrimental impact on progress in music, because of reduced time.
33. In Key Stage 4, pupils follow a basic curriculum and there is a good degree of choice appropriate to their ability, aptitude and preferences. Pupils take courses in religious education and physical education leading to GCSE short course certification for many of them. Lower attaining pupils can broaden their curriculum with office studies, communication skills and "Compact 2000", an appropriate course to develop pupils' self-esteem as well as their skills. Higher attaining pupils can take GCSE mathematics at the end of Year 10 and study GCSE statistics in Year 11 as well as take GCSE business and information studies with certification equivalent to two GCSE examinations.
34. Overall, the breadth, balance and relevance of the whole curriculum are good. There is an on-going commitment to enrich the curriculum through the "Out of Hours Learning" programme. Curriculum enhancement is offered in Key Stage 3 through a series of work related curriculum days involving all pupils out of school to look at the changing world of work. They develop their problem-solving skills and are involved in the annual Industry Day. The responsiveness of the curriculum is highlighted with the recent introduction of a GCSE course in media studies. But the provision of vocational courses in Key Stage 4 remains too narrow to meet the needs of those pupils who would be better motivated by a work-related course.
35. The quality and extent of provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory on balance, with some notable strengths. Learning support staff provide very good support overall in lessons. Its particular strength is the focus on attainment, not just care. It is not uncommon for support teachers to develop good materials to make it easier for pupils with learning difficulties to understand their lessons, but it is very unusual to see a wealth of excellent materials, including tapes, developed by classroom and integration assistants. Moreover, this includes revision materials. All pupils in Year 7 follow a well-planned programme to develop their reading and numeracy skills, using the computerised learning system to best effect. There is also skilled small group provision in language and literacy for many pupils at stage 2 and above on the special needs register. This provision, however, is

not continued in Year 8, except for a small minority of pupils who have a formal Statement; but there is a significant minority of pupils who still needs it.

36. The school has increased curricular choices for pupils at Key Stage 4 since the last inspection, but for pupils with special educational needs, the choice is not greatly improved. There is the good new "Compact 2000" provision, but there are no longer any GNVQ courses at foundation level and there is no link course with local colleges. Some subjects offer a short GCSE course but more could do so, and some departments, such as English and history are taking steps to introduce certificate of achievement courses.
37. Improving the quality of provision to develop literacy across the curriculum was identified as a key issue at the last inspection. The school has responded well to this. A comprehensive policy sets out expectations and gives clear advice and guidance to all teachers. There is evidence of a good response from most subjects, especially in the learning and use of key vocabulary and in the provision of appropriate texts for reading. Further support is provided by two literacy lessons a week for all Year 7 pupils. Each tutor group has a weekly session of private reading, using good quality texts provided by the well-stocked library. A steering group led by an assistant headteacher and consisting of staff from a range of subjects continues to review developments. The group has rightly identified writing as a priority for future development and has introduced in Year 7 tutor time a "Writing Skill of the Week" programme which is being followed appropriately by all pupils.
38. There is currently no provision of specialist support for those pupils for whom English is an additional language. The school has not yet been able to fill two posts for support assistants vacant since the start of the term. Some developing bilingual pupils benefit incidentally from other support in lessons, and from the school's effective development of literacy skills, especially in reading. However as there are no detailed profiles of developing bilingual pupils' continuing linguistic development, nor a list of pupils currently in school indicating their language levels in English, even incidental support cannot be targeted. The lack of assessment of and provision for pupils who speak English as an additional language means that they do not have equality of access and opportunity.
39. The school's comprehensive language policy rightly recommends that all staff should ensure that bilingual pupils view their linguistic abilities as positive achievements of which they should be proud. This is not happening. Not a single example of the use of an ethnic minority mother tongue was seen in lessons during the inspection. Pupils report that they learn from each others' languages in breaks but not in the classroom. There is no evidence that the rich linguistic and cultural mix of pupils and staff in the school is celebrated, either in display, in materials in the library, in the level of provision for drama or in school productions. The school reports that pupils and parents are reluctant to reveal bi-lingualism, but it is giving no lead to encourage them to do so.
40. Provision for the development of pupils' numeracy skills across the curriculum is satisfactory. There is a good numeracy policy detailing mathematical skills and how they should be taught across the curriculum but cross-curricular links with other departments are not sufficiently developed and the use of numeracy across the curriculum is not sufficiently audited. There are some good examples of numeracy being developed effectively in subjects. In business studies numeracy is stressed through the teaching of key skills and in science teachers make good use of the mathematical methods identified by the mathematics department. But the lack of clear whole-school guidance means that many opportunities are being missed.
41. Provision for able and talented pupils is satisfactory. Through the Excellence in Cities initiative good additional funding has been used to provide for up to 10 per cent of each year group, judged by academic attainment and artistic, dramatic or sporting talent. Pupils have benefited from visits to universities, the Imperial War Museum, and summer schools, raising aspirations and stimulating interest and attainment. Resources are also used effectively to provide additional teaching, for example for a fast track mathematics group in Year 10, sports coaching or to acquire additional resources such as a CAD/CAM sewing machine for design and technology. There is some good provision in mathematics and physical education, some satisfactory provision in English, design and technology, ICT, geography and history but in art, music and religious education it is unsatisfactory. The identification of

gifted and talented pupils has not yet resulted in well-planned provision in lessons throughout the school and careful tracking of progress by teachers and form tutors.

42. The provision for extra-curricular activities is good. Subject specific activities cover a variety of areas ranging from history visits to the Black Country museum, English trips to a workshop and performance of "Twelfth Night" and a Year 10 business studies trip to Cadbury's World to study food production processes. Extra curricular activities are a strength of the physical education department with a full programme of teams and clubs in a range of activities. Individual pupils gain representative honours at district, county and, sometimes, regional and national levels. Residential trips and outdoor education experiences are also regularly offered to pupils and, this summer, twenty Year 10 pupils completed the expedition for their Bronze Duke of Edinburgh Award, which is well established in the school. The provision of extra-curricular activities in creative and expressive arts is unsatisfactory.
43. The curriculum provides equality of opportunity for all pupils in most respects. However, in physical education only girls are allowed to study dance. The unsatisfactory planning of the art curriculum does not ensure equal opportunity for all pupils because there is no means of ensuring they all cover a similar scheme of work.
44. Provision for personal, social and health education is good. The school offers a well thought out programme which is broad and balanced and covers health education (including sex education and drug education), environmental education, economic and industrial understanding and citizenship. The co-ordinator has conducted a comprehensive audit of how each department contributes to pupils' personal and social education within their subject areas, and introduced a good commercial scheme to ensure that all other areas are covered by the topics considered in PSHE lessons. The school makes good use of outside speakers and groups to bring pupils' learning to life in this subject. An appropriate policy on sex education is agreed by the governors and highlighted in the school's prospectus.
45. Careers education is very good. There is an appropriate emphasis on the work related curriculum throughout Key Stage 3 and in Key Stage 4 careers education is supported through the personal, social and health education programme, an adequate careers library and an annual 'Careers Roadshow' for Year 10 and Year 11 pupils and their parents. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, undertake a two week work experience placement in Year 10 and the high rate of attendance is testimony to the success of this programme. Work experience provision is highly endorsed by the Birmingham Careers and Education Business Partnership's 'Recognition of Quality Award', whose Stage 3 award has only been presented to a small number of secondary schools in Birmingham.
46. The contribution of the community to pupils' learning is good and the school maintains strong links with local industry and commerce through its work experience placements, which are managed well by the school. The school makes good use of the local community as evidenced in a Year 10 leisure and tourism lesson, where pupils visited the local leisure centre and shopping mall for a project on producing promotional literature. Relationships with partner institutions are good and the school is very supportive of primary initiatives, with regular literacy and numeracy meetings as well as the sharing of expertise on the use of ICT. Good curriculum links exist in mathematics, art and design and technology although other areas remain under-developed. There is a thorough preparation for post-16 transfer including the development of a limited number of A levels on the Kingsbury site in association with the local sixth form college.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education

47. The school makes satisfactory provision overall for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development but there are strengths and weaknesses within this.
48. The school's provision for pupils' spiritual development is unsatisfactory. In English, pupils encounter a good range of topics and texts and there are regular opportunities to focus on spiritual aspects. Through poetry, for example, they write their own poems from a personal perspective, exploring their own hopes and aspirations. In Year 11, pupils consider the religious background to the troubles in Northern Ireland through the poem, 'Belfast Confetti'. However, apart from English, other areas of the curriculum, for example, art, music,

geography and science, have a limited impact upon pupils' spiritual development. This means that there are occasions when the opportunity is missed for pupils to reflect and gain insight at a deeper and more personal level.

49. Assemblies encourage pupils' spiritual awareness in a satisfactory manner. They include opportunities for pupils to pause briefly to reflect on the main theme, or to pray, and careful account is taken of the different faiths represented within the school. The school does not fulfil the legal requirements for a daily act of worship. Whilst the Thought for the Day sessions that occur in tutor groups often promote moral and social themes, not all include an element of collective worship. Some are very rushed and, because of this, are not effective in nurturing pupils' personal development.
50. The school's provision for pupils' moral and social development is good. Again, English contributes well to both these aspects. Pupils study texts such as "Merchant of Venice", and "Of Mice And Men" in which moral issues are clearly to the fore. In one Year 10 lesson, it was clear this work was influencing pupils' attitudes to learning, when they discussed with relish the way Shylock is described by the Christian characters in the play. In several subjects, including English, drama, media studies, history, physical education and music, pupils have the opportunity to work together in groups on a range of tasks. Pupils work well together in pairs and groups to communicate in modern foreign languages. On the other hand, in science, there were few opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively during the inspection and the samples of pupils' written work showed limited evidence of pupils' considering the moral implications of scientific themes. Through physical education lessons, and the extracurricular sports programme, pupils learn the importance of fair play and the value of working as a member of a team. Similarly the Duke of Edinburgh Award, residential trips and Active Curriculum Enhancement programme all make a good contribution to pupils' social development.
51. The school's personal, social and health education programme makes a strong contribution to pupils' moral and social awareness. It is well planned and covers a good range of moral and social themes. The lessons encourage pupils to think for themselves and to consider their own stance on aspects such as drugs, life-changing events, racism and gender roles. Some pupils show they have given topics great thought. In Year 7, for example, one pupil wrote, "Nearly my greatest moment of my life was when my two-year-old stepsister was born. I felt really happy and loved holding her".
52. The school's provision for pupils' cultural development is unsatisfactory overall. The most effective provision arises through English and geography. The English curriculum ensures that pupils encounter a good range of texts as they move through the school, including multi-cultural texts such as "Chandra" and "Underground to Canada". Pupils' cultural awareness is also encouraged through literacy days, visits and entering writing competitions. In geography, pupils have regular opportunities to learn about their own culture, through local studies, as well as the cultures across the world. However, the school is not making the most of the contribution that music, art, dance and drama can make to all pupils' cultural development and this is a significant weakness. There are limited opportunities for pupils to encounter the work of artists and musicians through, for example, professional artists visiting the school. Discussions with pupils show that they learn a lot about other pupils' cultural backgrounds through their personal friendships. However, the school could do a lot more to develop pupils' awareness of the diversity of cultures represented within the school, the local community and beyond.
53. Overall, the school has made unsatisfactory progress in improving provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development since the last inspection. Assemblies do now fulfil the statutory requirements for worship but the Thought for the Day sessions are still variable in their quality and the extent to which they incorporate an element of worship. The school has maintained the strong provision for moral and social development but little progress has been made in improving the provision for pupils' cultural development, particularly the multi-cultural dimension.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

54. The school provides good levels of care for pupils, some of whom have to cope with difficult family circumstances. Pastoral staff are prepared to spend much time helping individuals, and the school also takes a reasonably flexible approach towards offering support, making appropriate use of external agencies when necessary to provide an extra dimension to the care that is on offer. Parents and pupils alike praise the good arrangements that help pupils' move from primary to secondary school to go as smoothly as possible.
55. Support for pupils with special educational needs is a strength in the school. Learning support staff focus on building pupils' self-esteem by maximising their achievements. Transfer arrangements for pupils with a formal Statement in primary schools are unusually thorough, with support assistants working alongside these pupils in some of their lessons over a period of weeks. This also enables information about other pupils' difficulties to be gathered, but it has not contributed to building up profiles of the language acquisition of bilingual pupils transferring to Kingsbury School. There is good support from external agencies such as the Pupil Support Service and for a small number of pupils with visual impairment or difficulties. Through this support, some pupils are involved in the Schools' National Football Tournament.
56. The procedures to ensure child protection are satisfactory, as are those relating to first aid, although not all the relevant staff have received recent training in this area. The building services supervisor is particularly vigilant over matters of health and safety, and the school has good arrangements to cope with fire. However, it does not yet conduct formal risk assessments relating to, for instance, the day-to-day use of overhead projectors or the hazards created by the movement of large numbers of people around the extensive site. Some health and safety concerns, such as the need for a fume cupboard in a science laboratory, and the hazards of sharing clarinet reeds, were raised with the school during the inspection. The school has dealt effectively with the concerns raised in the previous report.
57. Staff work together effectively to ensure good standards of behaviour and discipline and to eliminate bullying. They make appropriate use of rewards and sanctions, and the school has recently developed various new initiatives designed to help pupils who find it difficult to behave well all the time, to improve their self-discipline. The two learning mentors, who have been in post since the summer term, provide good support on a one-to-one basis, helping pupils to build up their self-esteem, sustain their concentration and co-operate with the rest of the community. This term has seen the introduction of the school's internal Learning Support Centre. This provides an opportunity for extra support for those who are having a difficult time at home that is impinging on their academic progress, or whose behaviour is likely to lead them towards exclusion. They work in a calm atmosphere with very few other pupils but supervised by dedicated members of staff. It is too early to judge the value of this provision, but those observed in the centre feel that it is helping them to succeed where previously they have failed.
58. Since the previous inspection, the school has expended much energy aimed at improving pupils' levels of attendance but, so far, this has been to little effect. Registration procedures are rigorous, and everyone is made aware on a weekly basis of which forms have the best, and the worst, attendance. Individuals who attend well are rewarded and senior staff work closely with the education social worker to pursue some of those whose attendance is of greatest concern. A member of the administrative staff works tirelessly to contact those parents who have not informed the school about their children's absence. The school's registration system allows the production of much information, but it is only with the very recent advent of the educational attendance officer that this information is beginning to be used effectively to highlight trends in absence. The school does not monitor the attendance of pupils who have special educational needs so cannot evaluate the effects of absence and fluctuating attendance on their progress. This year the school has increased the variety of subjects available to pupils at Key Stage 4 in the hope that they will find the curriculum more interesting and, therefore, feel more inclined to attend more regularly. It is too early yet to judge whether the current initiatives will prove more effective in improving attendance than those embarked on hitherto.
59. At the time of the previous inspection different departments worked in different ways to assess and monitor pupils' academic progress. Since then, and particularly since January

this year, the school has worked hard to develop a system to be used by all staff across all subject areas. Governors have invested in a commercial system that was first used by the school to register pupils' attendance and which has now been extended to track their progress. Currently, subject teachers record pupils' examination marks and use these to produce interim or full reports on a termly basis. The system will also allow them to record pupils' class marks, which can then be used to keep close track of individuals' progress. However, as yet staff have not used this facility, nor has the data so far accumulated been analysed or related to pupils' previous success in cognitive ability or end of key stage tests. This is due, in part, to technical glitches that arose with the introduction of the new system. Alongside the introduction of this new system, the head of Year 10 has developed a very useful programme that makes use of pupils' prior test results to identify those who are underachieving or making more progress than expected. However, this programme has not been extended across the school.

60. Departments currently vary in the use that they make of assessment information. In English staff do not use available information sufficiently well in order to set precise targets for individual pupils to achieve. The mathematics department analyses available data well, but teaching staff, particularly those who are non-specialists or are acting as supply staff, confirm that information about individual pupils' prior attainment is insufficient. Assessment in the science department is rigorous and is used well to improve pupils' standards of work. In history, there is satisfactory use of assessment in order to organise pupils into sets with others of similar ability, but not to identify focussed targets for individual pupils. The physical education department has made a good beginning towards adopting the new National Curriculum 2000 assessment levels and is bringing its own system into line with school policy. In art, assessment criteria are poorly defined and not consistently applied, with the result that pupils are unclear about their strengths and weaknesses. In both art and music, the departments' on-going assessment systems do not tally with that in the rest of the school, and the grades given on pupils' reports are opposite to national requirements and, hence, confusing.
61. Procedures for identification of pupils with special educational needs are comprehensive and systematic, with a good range and efficient administration of testing to ensure learning difficulties are understood. The local audit system ensures that assessment and provision are directly linked for pupils at stage 2 and above on the school's special educational needs register. Provision meets statutory requirements as outlined in pupils' formal Statements. There are clear procedures for pupils whose progress is giving cause for concern to be referred for further assessment and very good day to day monitoring of progress towards targets by support staff. This includes daily checks on phonic skills for some pupils and even five times daily for a few! Medium and longer term monitoring and evaluation of progress remain a weakness from the last inspection report. Individual educational plans (IEPs), for pupils at and above stage 2 of the special needs register, contain much good advice and useful strategies, but they do not show clearly the extent or rate of progress of pupils in reaching their targets. Consequently progress for individual pupils with special educational needs is not properly evaluated. The school could provide no evidence of proper evaluation of progress based on targets in IEPs. Recording of information is satisfactory, overall, but too often key documents in pupils' files are not dated."
62. There is no meaningful assessment of bilingual and developing bilingual pupils' acquisition of English language. The school has used appropriate testing in the past but none was done over the last academic year nor has yet been done in the current one, even for new Year 7 pupils. The comprehensive literacy testing for all pupils which does take place, is not sufficient, as it does not address oral skills. There are no detailed profiles of developing bilingual pupils' linguistic development, as there should be, even though there was funded support provision in place up to the end of the summer term. As a consequence, there is no information to direct temporary support for pupils until the vacancies for support assistants are filled. Bilingual pupils who are fluent speakers of English, especially at Key Stage 4, yet who often experience difficulties related to the greater demands on formal and abstract language associated with coursework and examinations, are not identified, let alone catered for. There were more pupils exhibiting difficulties associated with English language acquisition pupils in a Year 11 geography class than were identified by the teacher. This may well be a contributory factor in the relatively weak standards in examinations at GCSE.

63. Overall, the school has satisfactory procedures available to assess and monitor pupils' progress. But it is not yet using the data that is generated sufficiently well in order to guide its planning. It does not identify individual pupils' strengths and weaknesses, so that teachers can focus their teaching and pupils are clear about their learning, with a view to raising attainment.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

64. The school has developed a satisfactory partnership with parents and is eager to involve more of them in support of their children's learning. Those who attended the meeting prior to inspection were positive about what the school has to offer, and in recent years the school has been oversubscribed, which indicates that local parents consider it to be a good school. Responses to the questionnaire were less positive, with an unusually high percentage of parents expressing the opinion that the school does not keep them sufficiently well informed about their children's progress, nor does it work in close partnership with parents.
65. Over the past year, the school has improved the quality of information provided on pupils' termly interim, and final written reports. These are still variable in the amount of subject specific information they contain, with too many teachers commenting more on pupils' attitudes towards their work rather than their strengths and the areas on which they should particularly concentrate on in order to improve. However, the grading system, which indicates individuals' coursework, examination and final marks, together with their achievement and effort, gives a clear picture of how well they are performing. Parents can also keep themselves well informed about their children's progress if they make suitable use of the good homework planners supplied to all pupils. Other information provided by the school, such as the lively Kingsbury News gives a good overall picture of the life of the school. The useful curriculum sheets issued by some departments, such as modern foreign languages, include hints on how families can help their children with their learning, and the well-produced prospectus emphasises the importance of parental partnership. But the rather dull Governors' Annual Report fails to include all the required information, for example about access for disabled pupils or staff training beyond that for whole school issues. There is nothing about provision for pupils for whom English is an additional language. The report includes a meagre entry about provision for special educational needs which does not give a clear picture to parents of how successfully the governors' policy has been implemented.
66. Parents' response to the school's invitations to partnership is not yet satisfactory. A small, dedicated team of parents organises social and fund-raising events through the Parents and Friends Association and provides good support at, for instance, open evenings. When contacted by members of the pastoral team over concerns related to their own child, parents usually respond positively. Some parents are very supportive, attending curriculum evenings, taking part in workshops, cheering on sports teams and ensuring that their children arrive at school regularly, promptly and with the correct equipment. However, overall attendance at evenings to discuss pupils' work is low, ranging between forty and sixty-eight per cent last year. Many parents make little use of pupils' homework planners to track their progress and effort, and far too many parents are prepared to allow their children to stay off school for inappropriate reasons. It will be important for the school to gain the active support of more parents if it is to achieve its goal of improving pupils' attendance, and thereby their standards of work.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

67. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher provides good, clear direction for the school, which is reflected in its motto: "Proud to Achieve". Pupils, staff and parents all know this is what the school is about and there is a good commitment at all levels to meeting the needs of pupils and achieving success. She and the senior management team have promoted good relationships at all levels; pupils are well cared for and parents are confident about the welfare of their children. Following the previous inspection the governors' action plan focused on the key issues which became incorporated into the school development plan. Progress has been satisfactory but not spectacular. Working along with various initiatives such as the literacy and numeracy projects and Excellence in Cities, the

school has undoubtedly raised standards of attainment at Key Stage 3. Parents see that the school is improving and more wish to send their children to it than can be offered places in Year 7.

68. But standards have not risen fast enough in Key Stage 4, though there are signs that the current Year 10 will produce some better results – provided most of them continue to attend school. Herein lies the greatest challenge, the single most important factor in meeting the school's attainment targets. But despite a raft of measures introduced by the governors and senior management team, the problem of ensuring that pupils attend school, particularly at Key Stage 4, is not yet solved. To the credit of the governors and senior management, considerable resources have been directed towards dealing with the problem, such as the provision of a computerised registration system. It is to be hoped too that the most recent appointment of the school's own attendance officer will make a difference. But what seems to have been missing so far is a more rigorous and analytical approach to using the data that a computerised system can generate. For example, the school is not monitoring the attendance of different groups of pupils, such as those from different ethnic backgrounds, or pupils of differing levels of attainment. In consequence it is not known if particular attention needs to be given to certain groups.
69. In the same way, following the previous inspection, the school recognised the need to give more attention to assessment data to inform teaching and learning. The commitment was there and some progress has been made with good intentions for more progress. But it is still the case that assessment data are not being used effectively by all heads of department, heads of year and all teachers to drive up standards, by ensuring that specific, measurable, challenging but achievable targets are in place at all levels. Pupils and parents do not know clearly where they are in relation to National Curriculum levels in each subject and what they have to do to get to where they might be. Too many parents are indicating they do not have enough information about their children's progress.
70. At the heart of an effective school is effective teaching. The inspection judged teaching to be good, and leadership and management at all levels can take some credit for this improvement from the last inspection. There has been good leadership from the headteacher in providing in-service training on teaching and learning. Senior management, heads of department and heads of year are aware to some extent of strengths and weaknesses in provision and have taken action. For example, a working-party has looked at how to tackle the under-achievement of boys. But although classroom monitoring has been introduced and a 3 year review cycle put in place for departments, this process is too slow to deliver the information needed to evaluate strengths and weaknesses to support further improvements in teaching and learning. Senior managers are linked to departments and there has been some tackling of performance issues. However, the music department has been allowed to drift, in the absence of its head of department. It is recognised that middle managers must be more closely involved in effective monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning. But action plans have tended to focus too much on processes, which have taken too long to get into place. There has not been enough concentration on *outcomes* in terms of the impact on pupils' learning. The questions have to be asked: "What have we learnt from the data we have collected about teaching and learning? What action is needed to strengthen and disseminate good practice at the same time as eliminating weaknesses?"
71. The headteacher has re-defined senior management responsibilities in an appropriate manner since the last inspection. More recently the senior management team has been strengthened by the addition of a newly appointed co-ordinator for Key Stage 3. The previous holder of this post has become the assessment co-ordinator, in an attempt to tackle more effectively the issue of data management. Roles and responsibilities are clearer. But at this level and at middle management level there is not always enough clarity about expectations: what, precisely, needs to be in place within a given time frame? How will success be measured by the impact upon the quality of learning in the school and improved attainment?
72. The governing body contains a core of governors who give a great deal of support to the school. Their relationship with the headteacher and staff is good, at the same time as providing an element of challenge. The strategy, policy and resources committee has been an effective means of agreeing development priorities and tying in appropriate resources to

support them. The curriculum committee has run into difficulties because key members have not been available. It has not been effective for over a year. Governors regularly attend school events but there has not been a programme of regular school visits to monitor the work of departments. Understanding of strengths and weaknesses in the school is satisfactory, but a more rigorous strategy is required to monitor the impact of agreed actions and targeted resources. Statutory responsibilities are met with the exception of the daily act of collective worship, conducting formal risk assessments beyond those relating to fire and contractors on site, and a statement about provision for the disabled in the annual report.

73. Provision for special needs is well organised, particularly on a day to day basis, but the main weakness from the last inspection, with regard to measuring progress over IEP targets, has not been addressed. More needs to be done at a senior level, including by the governing body, both to support the special educational needs co-ordinator and to monitor and evaluate provision for special educational needs.
74. Leadership and management of provision for pupils who speak English as an additional language is poor. Staff have insufficient information on which to base their planning. Assessment for identification and monitoring of pupils' progress is not being done, nor has been, at least over the last year. The neglect of attention to bilingual and developing bilingual pupils may well have a negative impact on their learning; it is certainly an equal opportunities issue. The language policy with regard to English as an additional language is not being implemented or evaluated. In consequence the school does not celebrate its rich mix of language, culture and race as it could and should. This is an area of missed opportunity in the personal development of pupils.

Staffing

75. The school benefits from a good level of staffing comprising appropriately qualified and experienced teachers and support staff for the effective delivery of the curriculum. The ratio of teachers to pupils is better than the national average although the effect of this is reduced by the demands of additional courses offered post-16. In addition, the school has experienced some difficulty in filling vacancies in some key areas, notably English and mathematics. This has resulted in the temporary appointment of some non-specialist teachers. The potential negative impact on learning is effectively managed and minimised by the efforts of senior and subject managers and there is currently no effect on standards. The school is taking appropriate measures to fill the six vacancies with permanent specialist teachers. The procedures for the induction and support of staff new to the school, including newly qualified teachers (NQTs), are good. Documentation to support new permanent and temporary teachers is comprehensive and effective. However, there is a need to re-assess the effectiveness of direct support and guidance for NQTs, in particular where support or coaching by senior staff is not monitored to ensure it is effective.
76. Arrangements for staff development and training are well managed and in most cases linked directly to priorities in the school's development plan. School systems for allocating training opportunities are not always as successful in addressing needs at subject level and this will require some attention in order to ensure appropriate development is secured on a broad front.
77. The process for the appraisal of teachers has currently stalled and new arrangements for performance management will be in place later this year. Progress on staffing issues since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

Accommodation

78. Significant improvements have been made in the accommodation since the last inspection. The library has been successfully developed into a very good learning resources centre, and the new multi-purpose dining area has been effective in reducing the time spent on lunches, as well as improving the quality of the pupils' lunchtime experience. A major refurbishment has also been made to some of the toilet facilities for pupils. The accommodation meets the needs of the curriculum in the majority of subject areas. Improvements in the facilities for design and technology and ICT have had a positive effect on the quality of pupils' learning. However, the accommodation for music is still unsatisfactory, because there is insufficient provision for the group work required. There is also a shortage of departmental office space

in many subject areas. Access for wheelchairs to the buildings is limited. The general appearance of the school is good, reflecting the care of staff and pupils. The management and maintenance of the site and buildings are very good, and the school is doing as much as can be expected to make the best of the available accommodation.

Learning resources

79. The school's expenditure on learning resources is high in relation to national averages, and provision is sound overall. Provision is good in English, history, geography, modern foreign languages, business education, physical education. Provision of books for pupils with special educational needs is good, but there are no portable computers for pupils with a Statement for learning difficulties. Provision is, however, unsatisfactory in religious education, where a shortage of textbooks both for class use and individual pupil research is adversely affecting achievement. It is poor in music, where the lack of resources is having a detrimental impact on standards, including on pupils' attitudes towards the subject. Elsewhere provision is satisfactory, although pupils do not enjoy sufficient access to ICT in some subjects, such as English and art.

Efficiency

80. Educational developments are supported through good financial planning. The governors' strategy, policy and resources committee has targeted funds towards agreed priorities such as improving attendance, raising standards of literacy, and increasing opportunities for pupils to become independent learners through the library learning resource centre. Pupils made good use of this facility during the inspection week and clearly appreciated it.
81. The school has a clear understanding of the distinction between financial management and financial administration, and its finances are well administered on a day to day basis. The most recent audit report found that its financial systems were sound and improving. The school is well administered: there are clear procedures, and pupils, teachers, parents and governors receive good support in their daily work. Effective use is made of new technologies for financial and other administration. However, although the school has invested in ICT systems to monitor pupil attendance and achievement, it has yet to make the most effective use of the data generated by them.
82. Specific grants, such as the Standards Fund, are effectively used for their intended purposes. The principles of best value are applied to spending decisions. Unit costs are high in relation to national averages. The majority of pupils make good progress at Key Stage 3, and sound progress at Key Stage 4. Consequently, the school offers satisfactory value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

83. In order to raise standards of attainment and achievement, the governors, headteacher and staff should continue to work together to:-

- 1) Improve the achievement of all pupils at Key Stage 4 by paying particular regard to all of the following key issues at this stage of the school * (*paragraphs 3-7,9,11, 68*);
- 2) Improve attendance by strengthening the school's relationship with parents, by developing the work related curriculum further and analysing in more detail patterns of absence in order to target resources more effectively * (*paragraphs 7, 20-22, 58-60, 66*);
- 3) Use assessment data more effectively to set challenging and realistic targets for raising the attainment of each pupil, each class and each subject, ensuring that pupils, teachers and parents are clear about what the expectations are and that all are aware of their accountability for meeting them * (*paragraphs 60-63, 69*);
- 4) Develop a more rigorous approach to monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance leading to effective action; ensure that judgements concentrate on the impact of its provision on pupils of different levels of attainment, boys and girls, pupils from different ethnic backgrounds, pupils for whom English is an additional language * (*paragraphs 59-63,70-72*);
- 5) Make better provision for the spiritual and cultural dimension of the curriculum, including meeting statutory requirements for collective worship, making much more of the richness of the multi-cultural dimension and strengthening the extent and quality of the provision for the expressive and performing arts and religious education (*paragraphs 31,47-49,52,53*).

84. In addition the governors and the school should consider addressing the following less important, but significant issues in their action plan:

Provision for pupils for whom English is an additional language (*paragraphs 30,38,39,62,74*); ensuring that all subject areas have access to appropriate ICT equipment and that ICT is taught fully across the curriculum across the curriculum * (*paragraph 13,31*); inserting a separate statement about access for the disabled in the Annual Governors' Report (*paragraph 65*); increasing opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their learning (*paragraphs 26,28*); increasing curricular choice for pupils with special educational needs at Key Stage 4 (*paragraph 36*); dealing with the health and safety issues raised (*paragraph 56*); working to increase the co-operation of parents * (*paragraphs 7,28,64-66*).

Those items marked with an asterisk () are included, to a greater or lesser degree, in the current school development plan.*

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	179
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	76

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	15	42	34	7	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7– Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	954
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	368

Special educational needs	Y7– Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	19
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	194

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	86

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	15
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	42

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	11.6
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	2.8
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	111	75	186

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	30	52	39
	Girls	49	49	37
	Total	79	101	76
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	43 (42)	54 (42)	41 (35)
	National	63 (65)	62 (59)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	10 (17)	27 (18)	11 (9)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	48	49	64
	Girls	58	51	55
	Total	106	100	119
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	57 (39)	53 (51)	64 (48)
	National	64 (62)	64 (63)	60 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	17 (11)	25 (12)	23 (17)
	National	31 (29)	37 (35)	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
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Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	1999	84	86	170
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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	15	69	74
	Girls	25	70	79
	Total	40	139	153
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	24 (11)	82 (81)	90 (81)
	National	46 (41)	91 (90)	94 (95)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	27 (23)
	National	38 (37)

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

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	99
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	0
Indian	26
Pakistani	80
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	4
White	677
Any other minority ethnic group	67

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	1	4
Black – African heritage	3	
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	10	4
Other minority ethnic groups		

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)	57.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.7

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	17
Total aggregate hours worked per week	461

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74.9
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	22.9
Key Stage 4	21.4

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	2528583
Total expenditure	2652996
Expenditure per pupil	2847
Balance brought forward from previous year	426647
Balance carried forward to next year	302234

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out

948

Number of questionnaires returned

157

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	48	45	3	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	46	46	3	2	6
Behaviour in the school is good.	31	47	8	2	12
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	35	47	10	6	3
The teaching is good.	37	51	3	2	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	32	43	15	2	8
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	62	33	3	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	71	26	1	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	32	44	16	1	6
The school is well led and managed.	41	47	5	1	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	43	48	4	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	44	38	4	2	12

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

ENGLISH

85. Information provided by the school shows that pupils' attainments in English on entry are below average, although the standards of the current Year 11 were well below average when they entered the school.
86. Standards in the 2000 national tests for pupils at the end of Year 9 were below the national average, but well above the standards achieved by pupils from similar schools. The proportion achieving the expected level 5 or better was below the national average but well above the average for pupils from similar schools. The proportion obtaining the higher level 6 or better was well below the national average but in line with the average from similar backgrounds. From 1996-99 standards improved at a faster rate than nationally but remained well below average overall. The standards achieved in the 2000 national test were on average nearly one level higher than those achieved in 1996. Girls achieved better standards than boys.
87. In the 1999 GCSE English examination at the end of Key Stage 4, the proportion passing at C or higher was below the national average but above average for pupils from similar schools. More pupils passed at C or better than was anticipated by their earlier Key Stage 3 test results and this was a good achievement. The proportion passing at G or higher was below the national average. Nearly 10 per cent of the entry did not pass, and illustrates the impact that above average absence has on attainment. Girls outperformed boys by a greater margin than is found in most schools. Nevertheless, boys and girls did better in English than in most of their other subjects. In the 1999 GCSE English literature examination the proportion passing at C or higher was above the national average, although the overall rate of entry was significantly below the national average.
92. In work seen during the inspection the standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are in line with those expected for 14 year old pupils. This improvement reflects the good progress achieved by a significant proportion of pupils whose writing skills improve to standards that are above expectation. Most pupils talk confidently, listen well and vary their expression, both in English and in other lessons. Standards of reading meet expectations and the majority read extracts from Shakespeare texts with some fluency. Middle attaining pupils understand the main events in "Macbeth" and, with the help of their teacher, explain how some events add to dramatic tension. Higher attaining pupils read with good expression. They understand that texts have different interpretations and meanings. They readily identify different features of characters in 'Twelfth Night' and find quotations to support their judgements. Standards of writing meet expectation. Higher attaining pupils write with accurate control of sentences, use paragraphs well, and select a range of vocabulary and phrasing that makes their work engaging. Most average attaining pupils have more limited vocabulary but their paragraphing, spelling and basic punctuation are sound. Another group of middle attaining pupils are less accurate in paragraphing and punctuation, and they lack the required range of formal written expressions. Lower attaining pupils at Key Stage 3, including those with special educational needs, have difficulties in making longer spoken contributions, although they give short answers clearly. Their reading standards are well below the expected standards because of they struggle to recognise many words, but their good concentration helps them to know what happens in their texts. Their writing skills, especially those of the boys, are well below expectation because of frequent inaccuracies, although they make good progress in handwriting.
93. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are below average for 16 year olds, primarily because of weaknesses in punctuation and standard written expression. Nevertheless, pupils make good progress in writing substantial assignments and paragraphing. However, some pupils' progress is hampered by their poor attendance. Standards of speaking and listening are average in English and across the curriculum. Most pupils express themselves clearly, although their use of Standard English is not consistent. Higher attaining pupils express complicated ideas with clarity and conciseness. Standards of reading are below expectations. Fluency is good but too many middle attaining pupils, when analysing a text, rely too much on

retelling the plot rather than consistently using the text to support judgements. A small proportion of higher attaining pupils produced very high standards in a detailed analysis of Malvolio's character, including lucid explanations of the impact of Shakespeare's language. Writing standards are below expectation. Although some middle attaining pupils reach the expected standards, too many of them do not because they cannot sustain crisp, well structured expressions and phrasing in their work. A few higher attaining pupils write at the very highest standards; they show a mature, discursive style when analysing the development of the relationship between Jane Bennett and D'Arcy in "Pride and Prejudice". A small group of pupils, including those with special educational needs, attain at levels that are well below expectation. When speaking in class they tend to use short, unexpanded phrases. Their reading lacks fluency, although they do explain the cause and effect of events in texts such as 'Of Mice and Men', and their writing contains too many basic errors.

94. Standards of literacy across the curriculum meet expectations at Key Stage 3 but are below average at Key Stage 4. The majority of pupils at Key Stage 3 read extracts from challenging texts with some fluency. In geography pupils identify key technical terms and use information from a text to identify causes and consequences of developments and phenomena. Pupils read aloud fluently in ICT and design and technology. In these subjects the availability of dictionaries that match different reading levels enhances the pupils' understanding of the terms they need to use. In religious education reading standards meet expectation but the limited nature of the materials prevents pupils from developing their independent reading skills. Pupils in history can read accurately enough to extract relevant information from texts, but do not use their own words sufficiently to show they understand what they have written. Standards of writing at both key stages reflect those in English. Pupils achieve better standards after re-drafting their writing in religious education but at both key stages the range of writing required is too narrow. High expectations also lead to better standards of spelling in geography, because the teachers expect pupils to learn spellings accurately. In history and business education, attainment is held back by inadequate writing skills, though improvements are seen when pupils word process their work. When writing involves analysis and evaluation, it tends to be very short and consequently pupils do not have enough opportunity to improve this aspect of their writing.
95. Teaching is good at both key stages and results in good learning. The teachers' good subject knowledge has led to the development of a good curriculum available to all pupils. The pupils read a great deal of Shakespeare, other pre-twentieth Century writers and a good range of texts from other cultures. Careful planning leads to lessons that are busy and purposeful, with the pupils working hard. Teachers often use lively teaching methods that motivate and enthuse pupils. This was clearly evident when groups of Year 10 pupils discussed the treatment of Shylock and analysed the relationship between Petruchio and Katherine with great gusto and enthusiasm. In most lessons the management and control of pupils are good. Consequently, pupils concentrate well. An example was the middle Year 11 set analysing "Flannan Isle" for the first time. Teachers sustain pupils' interest through good use of resources. In addition to good quality books, they frequently use video and audio tapes and overhead transparencies. As a result, more pupils sustain their concentration and remain busy. However, pupils do not use ICT frequently enough, because computers are not available close to the English classrooms. In consequence, their use of computers seldom goes beyond word processing. The role of support staff is very good. In a Year 9 lesson on 'Twelfth Night' the pupils concentrated well and improved their knowledge of the text because the teacher expected them to do well and support staff gave them good encouragement. The best marking is very strong but some marking does not specifically ensure pupils know exactly what and how they must improve. There is not enough use made of National Curriculum level criteria at Key Stage 3 or GCSE grade criteria at Key Stage 4. Most lessons are brisk and well paced but in lower attaining groups there tends to be too few tasks and too much time allocated to each one. Curriculum and lesson planning does not address the development of writing skills explicitly enough, given the difficulties that a significant number of pupils have in using a range of appropriate written expression.
96. The department has responded well to the last report. Standards at Key Stage 3 have improved considerably. The identified weaknesses in teaching have been addressed and the teacher assessments at Key Stage 3 more accurately relate to test assessments. There are fewer shared classes, despite some current short term staffing difficulties, which are being

well managed. The head of department provides good leadership, is well supported by her second in department and there is a high level of commitment and teamwork from the other teachers. Some monitoring of teaching and learning takes place, but lesson observations are not systematic enough. The content of the department's curriculum makes a good contribution to the pupils' moral, social and cultural development. There is not enough use made of assessment information to set expectations and to supporting the pupils in meeting their targets and fulfilling their potential. The department has identified some sound areas for future development but the targets lack sharpness and rigour.

Drama

97. In the 1999 GCSE drama examinations the proportion passing at grade C or higher was below the national average. Provisional results for 2000 suggest a similar situation. In work seen during the inspection standards were below average. Pupils are very enthusiastic and clearly enjoy the subject. They show good initiative and invention in improvisation work. However, their awareness and competence in other aspects of drama, especially performance and evaluation skills, do not meet expectation. Drama is not taught as a separate subject at Key Stage 3 so pupils do not experience the grounding in the subject that is seen in many schools. Consequently, they lack the foundations for higher attainment at Key Stage 4. Teaching is good and focuses on helping to compensate for the gaps in the pupils' previous experience. Pupils are responding to these high expectations but it requires some adjustment on their part. Accommodation, a shared and converted classroom, lacks the ambience provided by a dedicated room or studio.

Media Studies

98. The school has introduced a course in GCSE media studies. Pupils from the current Year 10 will be the first candidates. At this early stage of the course they are making good progress and standards are on line to meet expectations. Their competence in the correct use of the subject's technical vocabulary is improving and in a lesson they showed they could use correct terms to analyse a trailer for a marketing campaign. They show a positive interest in the work and clearly appreciate the good teaching and support they receive. A notable strength of the teaching is the well-prepared lessons and well devised resources that help the pupils' structure their answers as a basis for essay work. The teacher's good subject knowledge extends the pupils' understanding of their new subject.

MATHEMATICS

99. Attainment on entry to the school is below average. In the 1999 Key Stage 3 tests results were below national averages but very high in comparison with similar schools. The pupils' results in the 2000 tests were well below national averages but above the average for similar schools. In 2000 the number proportion of pupils reaching level 5 was well below the national average but above the average for similar schools, while the proportion of pupils reaching level 6 was below the national average but well above that for similar schools. The results have remained consistently below national averages over the past three years and boys, generally, perform better than girls. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is below national average. As a result of the impact of the numeracy initiative, evidence of work seen in lessons shows that pupils' progress at Key Stage 3, which has been satisfactory in the past, is now good.
100. The pupils' results in the 1999 GCSE mathematics examination were below national averages but in line with similar schools. In relation to the grades obtained in their other subjects in 1999, pupils tended to do less well in mathematics. The results have remained consistently below average over the past three years and girls, generally, perform better than boys. The 2000 GCSE results in mathematics were comparable with 1999. Eighteen pupils in Year 10 took their examination a year early and successfully achieved grade A*-C passes, although one in six pupils failed to gain any GCSE certification in mathematics. Overall, pupils did better in the 1999 GCSE examinations than would have been expected from their Key Stage 3 test scores in 1997.

101. At the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, standards seen in lessons and work samples are in line with national expectations. At Key Stage 3, pupils demonstrate a growing confidence in their number work and their numeracy skills are enhanced in Year 7 with discrete timetabled numeracy lessons. At Key Stage 4, pupils have a good understanding of algebraic techniques but there is an over emphasis and over reliance on rules rather than understanding. In a Year 10 lesson, pupils successfully found the general term of a quadratic sequence and linked this to their earlier work on patterns of numbers from different arrangements of cubes. Pupils' work on using and applying mathematics is not sufficiently encouraged and developed in all lessons and poor levels of attendance adversely affect attainment across all year groups.
102. Teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. As a result pupils learning is good and they apply themselves willingly to their work. They demonstrate positive attitudes to their studies, take a pride in their work, respond well to challenges when these are presented and apply intellectual effort to their work when encouraged. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge as well as a good awareness of examination syllabuses. Lesson planning is clear and detailed but rarely linked to National Curriculum levels. This has an adverse effect upon learning because pupils have little idea of their own mathematical ability and less idea of what they must do to improve. Lessons start promptly and, in a Year 7 lesson, pupils' interest and involvement was aroused by an informative discussion on the Japanese number system. Pupils are managed well and teachers make good use of praise and encouragement to motivate them. Teachers have a good rapport with their pupils and relationships are always good humoured. Teachers demonstrate high expectation through challenging work but, in some cases, they allow too much work to be left incomplete and there is too much emphasis on copying out notes, especially at Key Stage 4. In some lessons, learning is inhibited through pupils' over-reliance on the teacher and their difficulty in sustaining concentration through double lessons. Weaker teaching in Key Stage 3 is evident where classes are taught by non-specialist teachers whose planning and teaching is too dependent on the textbook and whose exposition and explanation lack confidence and conviction. Teachers work well with curriculum integration assistants to provide good support for pupils with special educational needs, so that the quality of their learning is good. The more able pupils are suitably challenged with the possibility of taking their GCSE examination at the end of Year 10.
103. The curriculum meets statutory requirements, although the department's schemes of work are too brief and do not include sufficient reference to National Curriculum levels or provide links with using and applying mathematics or ICT. Pupils' literacy skills are good and in a Year 7 lesson, technical vocabulary such as "vertices", "edges" and "faces" were suitably highlighted and emphasised. The provision for ICT is satisfactory, although opportunities for pupils to use the computer are limited. In a Year 10 lesson, an overhead transparent calculator was used to demonstrate the efficient use of a calculator and in a Year 9 lesson, good use was made of a laptop computer to demonstrate the loci of a series of points. The computerised independent learning programme for numeracy is well received in Year 7 but does not provide sufficient challenge for the most able pupils.
104. The provision for numeracy across the curriculum and the effectiveness of strategies for teaching numeracy skills are satisfactory. There is a good numeracy policy detailing mathematical skills and how they should be taught across the curriculum. However, cross-curricular links with other departments are not sufficiently developed and the use of numeracy across the curriculum is not sufficiently audited. At Key Stage 3, pupils collect and represent data in ICT and make good use of bar graphs, grid references and co-ordinates in geography. At Key Stage 3, pupils collect and represent data in ICT and make good use of bar graphs, grid references, scale, measuring and co ordinates in geography. Pupils develop their number work in French and, in a Year 8 Spanish lesson, they added up restaurant bills in the target language. They make use of measurement and simple calculations for their drawings in design and technology. At Key Stage 4, pupils showed confidence in using percentages and in a Year 11 geography lesson, made good use of graphs of birth and death rates to identify population patterns. In a Year 10 chemistry lesson, pupils showed a good understanding of the relationship between the slope of a graph and the rate of reaction and in a Year 11 physics lesson, they demonstrated good algebraic skills in using and manipulating formulae. Pupils make good use of calculators in their science lessons.

105. The leadership of the department is good. Leadership ensures clear education direction and the head of department engenders a good team spirit among his core team of teachers. There is a shared commitment from this dedicated team for improvement and they have the capacity to succeed. The head of department provides good support for non-specialist and supply teachers and copes admirably with problems surrounding the rapid turnover of staff. He has a good idea of the departments' strengths and weaknesses but there is insufficient monitoring and evaluation of the teaching through direct observation and the analysis of data to identify more precisely strengths and areas for further improvement.
106. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests and GCSE results remain below national expectations and significant numbers of pupils still fail to sit the exam. Setting has brought about teaching that is better targeted at different levels of attainment in Year 7 but insufficient regard is still given to the spread of attainment levels within classes. Expectations of pupils are high across the department and pupils are set challenging work. Pupils in Key Stage 4 continue to lack confidence in their own potential although the department is addressing the needs of the most able through its "fast track" programme. Pupils remain unclear about their GCSE targets. The department does use a wider variety of teaching strategies especially with regard to pupil grouping and the effective use of resources.

SCIENCE

107. In national tests for 14 year-olds at Key Stage 3 in 1999, results were well below the national average but well above the average of similar schools. Boys did better than girls. In 2000, a marked improvement was made. Though still below the national average, the proportion in 2000 achieving Level 5 and above, and the proportion achieving Level 6 or better was greater than in 1999. Boys did slightly better than girls. The overall trend in Key Stage 3 tests is upward, and is rising at a faster rate than the national trend.
108. In 1999, one in four pupils gained A*-C grades in science GCSEs, which was well below the national average; the proportion that gained A*-G grades was also well below average. When compared with schools of similar intake, however, these results were above average, both in the level of grades A*-C and the GCSE points scored per pupil. In 2000, there was a decrease in the proportion of pupils achieving A*-C grades and also in that achieving A*-G grades. National comparisons for 2000 were not available at the time of the inspection. In both 1999 and 2000 girls did much better than boys, and those of Asian origin did better than others. Results have fluctuated year by year; this is most likely explained by differing standards of attainment on entry to the school, and also the degree of absence. The general trend has risen more slowly than the national trend. Boys do significantly better in science than in the other subjects they take; girls do slightly less well.
109. In work seen at Key Stage 3, the standard achieved by pupils in Year 9 is closer to the national average, though it remains slightly below expectations. The science department has put much effort into this key stage, addressing literacy and numeracy well, along with investigative skills, such as finding relationships between variables, predicting, and testing fairly. The work done through the use of a commercial initiative has been instrumental in achieving this. Higher ability pupils know many of the symbols for elements on the periodic table and use these to write equations for chemical reactions, though they are not yet able to balance these without help from the teacher. Average attaining pupils know the difference between temporary and permanent magnets, and use small compasses adequately to plot magnetic fields. Lower attaining pupils have difficulty in identifying all the food webs present in an ecosystem. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. ICT skills are not up to expectations. Pupils are starting to use science CD-ROMs and the Internet for research, but they do not yet have the opportunity to use sensors to follow the course of investigations.
110. Standards seen at Key Stage 4 during the inspection are below average, and in agreement with the results achieved at GCSE in 1999 and 2000. The standard of work in Year 11 is below average, though it varies with the sets. These pupils entered the school with well below

average levels of literacy and have made at least satisfactory progress through the school. Standards seen in the top sets are mainly commensurate with higher GCSE grades. Higher ability pupils have a good knowledge of the rock cycle, processes involved in the formation of sedimentary, metamorphic and igneous rocks, and the pressure and energy charges involved. But pupils in a lower set are not able to put into sequence the stages of sedimentary rock formation without help. Pupils of average ability manipulate formulae to get correct values when solving problems to do with electrical power and charge; lower ability pupils, with help, identify plants and animals related by a food web in a pond environment; those with special educational needs continue to make satisfactory progress. GCSE coursework is of high quality and good practical work raises attainment. Pupils' investigations put their study of science into familiar contexts by looking at, for example, the rate at which carbohydrate foods are broken down by the enzymes in saliva, and the resistance of different thicknesses of wire, relevant to many household appliances and their fuses.

111. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall with many good features in both key stages. Pupils' learning is correspondingly satisfactory. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen. Half the lessons seen in Key Stage 3 were good or very good, as were over one-third in Key Stage 4. Lessons are planned from well thought out schemes of work, currently being revised to take into account the requirements of Curriculum 2000. They make good use of guidance from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and the school's own resources for Key Stage 3. The structure gives teachers good support for their work, ensuring continuity of learning within each key stage and between them. New teachers and those on temporary contracts are able quickly to fit into the department's way of working. This was seen in a Year 7 lesson with a supply teacher. The teacher made effective use of brainstorming and key points, starting with rainforest habitat. This enabled pupils to work out effectively ways that animals adapt to other different habitats, such as polar regions.
112. Literacy is an important element in the raising of standards at Key Stage 3, with an emphasis on making work accessible, including adapting work for different levels of attainment. This is a strong feature, even within sets of similar attainment where good use is made of different worksheets and textbooks in class, and crosswords and word searches for homework. It is having a good effect on presentation of work, which is invariably neat, and the majority of pupils tabulate results well, though graph drawing is less precise. An example was seen in the graphic representation of the rate of reaction between magnesium and hydrochloric acid, where lines of best fit were inaccurately drawn. Key words displayed in laboratories help pupils' understanding, as does the practice of key point summaries of the previous lesson's work completed before the start of each lesson. As an example pupils revise terms such as "producer", "consumer", "predator" and "prey" before beginning a lesson on ecology, which enables them to identify these categories easily. Vocabulary, spelling and meaning are all reinforced at this time. Numeracy is evident particularly in using algebra to manipulate formulae to find, for example, the power generated by an electric appliance, with insistence on correct units. Basic scientific skills of pattern finding and investigation, sensibly using variables, hypothesis and fair testing, are all taught well, enabling pupils to make predictions. From the start of Key Stage 3 they use simple techniques which are of positive benefit in getting pupils to think scientifically about relationships and non-relationships between variables. As a result, pupils can work out, for instance, several different relationships between blue and red shapes being manipulated by the teacher. Teachers make thorough use of their assessment of pupils' work and this extends through vigorous day-to-day marking to double moderation of coursework and the extensive use of assessment in tracking progress and setting targets. Consequently, pupils know how well they are doing and make further self-assessment confidently, identifying strengths and weaknesses.
113. Other aspects of teaching have strengths but are weaker in certain ways. Teachers' knowledge and understanding is satisfactory overall, and strong in physics and biology. It is used to good advantage in Key Stage 3 with specialist teaching in Year 9 and has been instrumental in raising standards. However it has some weakness in chemistry, where for example, inexperienced teachers' knowledge of safety precautions when using halogens and alkali metals is insecure. Teachers' expectations are generally appropriate to the sets they are teaching, but sometimes, the reasoning power of the less able is misjudged, for example their ability to put events into sequence, such as the stages in the formation of sedimentary rocks. Experienced teachers maintain good discipline and the generally calm working

atmosphere is conducive to learning. Less experienced teachers have difficulty with some classes, particularly where there are lower attaining pupils. One or two pupils in some classes can be disruptive, but this is dealt with swiftly and effectively by the head of department and senior management team. Teachers generally make satisfactory use of the time available for the subject. However, some lessons do start late, particularly after assemblies when not all teachers are ready for their classes.

114. The curriculum is satisfactory and meets statutory requirements. Its strength lies in the rigour with which it is planned, in the matching of work to all abilities, and in the emphasis put on the separate sciences at Key Stage 3. It has weaknesses in the provision for ICT, which is below what is expected of a modern science department: there are not enough computers or software easily accessible. The provision of single science GCSE for the least able Key Stage 4 pupils is not really suitable because of its abstract content, which is better suited to brighter pupils. Nevertheless, all those who attend regularly and finish coursework do get a grade.
115. Leadership is good. There is clear educational direction aimed at improving standards. The head of department leads by example and promotes high standards in his own classes. Good teamwork is evident, and good support is given to new and temporary members of the department. The technicians are fully part of the team and are equally valued for the work they do. Classroom assistants offer valuable support and have done particularly good work in taping the Key Stage 3 summary notes for pupils who are dyslexic or poor readers. However, the main shortcoming in leadership is the lack of formal monitoring of teaching, which makes it difficult for the department to evaluate its performance fully.
116. The laboratories are generally suited to their purpose, with facilities for isolating gas, electricity and water supplies safely. They provide good learning environments with key words and concepts displayed prominently. However, it is difficult to transport resources between buildings, creating extra work for technicians and unavoidable interruptions to lessons by them moving equipment. The lack of a fume cupboard in the annex prevents safe chemistry from taking place there, which is very restrictive in Years 7 and 8, where combined science is taught rather than single subjects.
117. Since the last inspection, standards have improved and continue to do so at Key Stage 3. Assessment and target setting has improved, as have investigative skills. Knowledge and understanding have improved by the use of key points summaries after lessons, and the specialist lessons in Year 9. Attainment in science investigation work has been maintained at a high standard, and scientific literacy has improved by the good attention paid to it. Textbooks are introduced at appropriate levels and are a good resource. Teaching standards have been maintained, with strengths in curriculum and assessment. The high absence rate has not improved, and still contributes towards the relatively low standards, particularly in Key Stage 4.

ART

118. In 1999 standards achieved in GCSE were well below national averages for schools of this type for grades A*-C, although A*-G grades were broadly in line with national averages. Results have been similar over recent years and the trend has been level. The percentage of A*-C grades achieved in 2000 was below that of the previous year, although the performance of current Year 11 pupils is likely to produce results in line with 1999 results. Pupils have regularly performed better in art than in their other GCSE subjects. Girls have achieved less well than boys, with a higher than expected proportion achieving grade D.
119. Standards in lessons observed during the inspection in Key Stage 3 are in line with the national average for 14 year-olds; at the end of Key Stage 4 they are below the national average. Key Stage 3 pupils develop satisfactory practical skills in a range of media, although their mastery of some techniques and processes – printmaking for example - is limited by poor quality materials and few opportunities for experimentation. Many pupils develop some competence when using and applying the formal elements of line, tone and form but the lack of work from direct observation results in drawing skills being less well developed by the end of the key stage than expected. Skills in handling 3D materials, particularly clay, are

satisfactory. The development of individual ideas and experimental work is not apparent in most project work at this stage and whilst most projects employ a structured framework for development, emphasis is too often placed on the outcome rather than the exploration of materials and their properties. The understanding of the methods and styles of other artists is variable in quality across the key stage. Some good work relating to the study of the *Pointillist* method is seen in Year 7, where pupils are able to demonstrate their understanding of other artists' techniques in their own work. Too often however the study of other artists and cultures is not carried out in sufficient depth and connections with pupils' work are superficial. Reference to, and understanding of, multicultural aspects of our society are often limited to patterns copied from poor quality resource sheets. There are no examples of study from contemporary artists. ICT skills are under-developed.

120. By the age of 16 pupils have worked in a good range of materials and developed skills in using mixed-media, ceramics, printmaking and painting. Some pupils develop sound drawing skills although too often their experience of direct observation is carried out at home where the expert advice and guidance of the teacher is unavailable. As a result, standards of drawing at this stage are lower than expected. By Year 11 many pupils have a sound understanding of the research process and can systematically work through their projects. Their work however lacks sufficient depth and experimental work does not inform the development of original and exciting ideas. The shortfall in this area is limiting the achievement of higher grades, particularly for higher attaining pupils. In addition too much work at this stage relies on secondary source material – photographs and pictures of artists' work – rather than first hand experience and the exploration of media and techniques. The real interest, knowledge and commitment of many pupils is therefore not reflected in their output.
121. Teaching in art and design is satisfactory, with some significant examples of very good lessons seen at Key Stage 4 and unsatisfactory ones at Key Stage 3. Teaching was deemed unsatisfactory when the task was too prescriptive and failed to provide opportunities for exploration and extension of learning for many pupils. Not enough was expected of pupils and so they all produced similar work with no opportunity for individual flair. In the majority of lessons, however, teaching promotes satisfactory learning. The tasks may not always provide appropriate challenge to all pupils, but teachers' methods usually address the range of attainment levels within groups. Teachers use their knowledge of the subject to enhance learning through demonstrations and the interaction with individuals. In some Year 8, 10 and 11 lessons the teacher presented clear objectives and made reference to assessment criteria. This has a positive impact on the rate of learning and acquisition of skills. For example, a Year 11 group had made good progress through an open-ended project because guidance had focused on assessment requirements, informing pupils of their strengths and weaknesses and clarifying the requirements of the project. The promotion of more effective learning and higher levels of achievement are not explicitly central to most lessons and teaching too often focuses on low-key tasks set within a rigid framework for developing ideas. The effectiveness of learning is in some cases promoted by good quality resources but there is a general lack in all lessons of specific guidance and support via carefully structured project notes that set out the demands of the project. Assessment does not feature in teaching and therefore pupils are unclear about the direction their work should take and their strengths and weaknesses. The subject does not contribute enough to the spiritual and cultural experience of pupils.
122. Leadership of the subject is unsatisfactory. While day to day management is satisfactorily, leadership is currently not focused sufficiently on strategic, continuous improvement. The head of department has not provided appropriate levels of guidance and planning to drive the subject forward or to ensure standards are raised for all pupils. Subject documentation has not been updated to take account of some key issues raised at the last inspection via a systematic, measurable plan of action. The strengths within teaching and the established good relationships – built on high expectations of behaviour and conduct, provide a sound basis for development. The opportunities for improvement should be explored with some urgency. The planning for coverage and development of the curriculum is currently lacking in important detail. Schemes of work are incomplete and are not monitored to ensure coverage and balance. Subsequently there is a risk that pupils' learning does not follow a well-planned path and no one can be sure they have all had equal access to a similar curriculum across

Key Stage 3. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning and the effectiveness of curriculum provision is not systematically carried out and the strengths in teaching, whilst recognised, are not sufficiently analysed and shared.

123. Progress since the last inspection has been poor. Improvement has been made in the management of pupils in the classroom and now the behaviour and attitudes of pupils is invariably good. But there has not been the expected progress in curriculum planning, development planning and the drive for improved standards of achievement.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

124. Standards in design and technology at Key Stage 3 are in line with the national average but at Key Stage 4 they are below. Results at Key Stage 3 have improved over the last three years and the 2000 Teacher Assessments of pupils are above the national average. At Key Stage 4 the number of pupils gaining A*-C grades and A*-G grades are below national expectations. The combined results across all elements of design and technology have been below national expectations over the last 3 years. The 1999 results showed an improvement on the previous year but the results for 2000 show no further improvements. The average points score for 1999 is also below national averages. Boys are achieving lower standards than girls. The results are very varied between the design and technology subjects. Textiles achieves consistently good results, but food failed to gain any A*-C grades in 2000. The specialist teacher for food left part way through the course and the school was not able to appoint a replacement until September 2000. High pupil absenteeism in the school has a detrimental effect on standards. Pupils are not always able to complete the necessary coursework to ensure they achieve the GCSE grades of which they are capable. Boys do better in design and technology than in their other subjects, but girls do significantly less well.
125. The standard of work seen during the inspection was varied, but overall close to the national average for the ends of both key stages. At Key Stage 3 pupils are able to satisfactorily develop their design and technology skills in a number of areas including food, textiles, pneumatics, graphics, electronics and resistant materials. In textiles pupils make fabric bookmarks which involve weaving material. In graphics pupils were developing a specification from a task brief and researching ideas in order to design and make a pop-up card and in electronics pupils were at various stages in designing and making a battery tester. Pupils make good progress over the key stage. During Year 9 pupils have the opportunity to further develop their research skills through use of the Internet and an introductory course on the use of the Internet has been introduced. In some instances pupils had a poor knowledge of technical vocabulary used in design and technology and this limited the progress they were able to make. ICT is not yet fully developed within the department and more opportunities to use ICT would enhance the quality of the work.
126. At Key Stage 4 pupils extend their knowledge and understanding and further develop their skills in their chosen element of design and technology. They work with increasing care and precision and the quality of their portfolios improves over the key stage. They learn how to use appropriate research techniques. For example, in graphics they visit local primary schools to research a project on producing a book for young children. They further develop their modeling skills and in engineering they produce prototypes in wood and plastic of metal punches and injection-moulding dies they are designing and making.
127. Pupils with special educational needs usually work satisfactorily within the department at both key stages. Learning support assistants, when they are available, ensure that pupils with special educational needs are supported adequately. However, in some cases pupils find activities such as evaluation of their work particularly difficult and there is not enough extra support.
128. Teaching is good overall at Key Stage 3, and satisfactory at Key Stage 4. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and they know their pupils' strengths and weaknesses. But teachers do not have a clear indication of the design and technology skills, knowledge and understanding that pupils bring with them when they enter school in Year 7, so they fail to capitalise on pupils' potential at this stage and pupils' learning marks time. Apart from this,

teaching is well planned and clear expectations are set for the pupils. The design sheets and prompts that guide planning are good and promote good designing and making skills. Because of teachers' enthusiasm and good organisation pupils enjoy the subject and make good progress, particularly where teachers enable them to work in their own way and on problem-solving activities they can easily relate to. This was seen in a good graphics lesson in Year 10, when pupils were making a prototype. They were developing their own ideas, had organised their own work schedules and each had appropriate learning targets. Teachers usually identify potential behaviour problems before they are allowed to develop and they are good at managing the classroom activities. They maintain the interest of the pupils when they organise learning activities to create a good pace in the lessons. In several lessons pupils were monitored while they were working and teachers explained what they needed to do to improve and they were encouraged and praised when they were successful. There is a good scheme for assessing pupils' work and pupils are encouraged to modify their work and set targets. A small percentage of unsatisfactory teaching was seen at Key Stage 4. Some poor classroom management leads to poor behaviour and a consequent lack of attainment. Where teachers do not choose projects that enthuse the pupils sufficiently, work is unsatisfactory. But where the projects were based on real life situations and pupils were encouraged to use the wider environment as a learning resource, learning is good and pupils make good progress.

129. The department is well led and good schemes of work have been introduced. The head of department has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the department and is aware of the strategies needed to make further improvements. The provision of after school clubs and Easter revision classes is a good example and these are well attended. ICT is not used enough in the department and has been identified as a priority for development. The lack of access to suitable ICT equipment within the department has had an adverse effect on attainment. However, the establishment of a further shared ICT room should go some way towards overcoming the problem. Staff work well together, ensuring that pupils have a coherent and broad experience of design and technology activity. Good use is made of data and analysis is used effectively to moderate the standards achieved and identify areas for further development.
130. The department has dealt satisfactorily with a number of issues identified in the previous report. Pupils' skills in using hand tools have improved at Key Stage 3 and their graphic skills have improved across both key stages. New dust extraction equipment has been installed and a number of improvements have been made to the accommodation and resources. In addition, behaviour has improved.

GEOGRAPHY

131. Attainment at age 14 in 1999 was below the national average, based on the teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3. However the proportion of pupils attaining Level 5 or more was well above that for similar schools. In 2000 the proportion of pupils attaining Level 5 was lower, but there were more pupils attaining Level 6 or above. Attainment seen in lessons was on the whole in line with national expectations, although this varied with topic, teacher and time of day.
132. At the end of Key Stage 4 in 1999 the proportion of A*-C grades was significantly below the national average. These pupils entered the school with prior attainment well below national averages. Although the proportion of A*-C grades had steadily risen since the last Inspection, results in 2000 did not follow this trend, with an even lower proportion of A*-C grades. Nearly one in five pupils entered for geography did not achieve a pass grade, the main reason being non-appearance at the final examination. Overall boys attained significantly lower grades than girls and boys' results were significantly lower than for their other subjects.
133. In work seen during the inspection in Key Stage 3, attainment is broadly in line with the national average; at Key Stage 4 it is below. At Key Stage 3 it varies from above average for higher attaining pupils in some top sets to well below for other groups. Literacy skills are usually good, aided by displays of key words, with glossaries written in exercise books as soon as words are encountered. Writing frames have helped the higher and average

attaining pupils achieve better extended writing than at the time of the last inspection. Some excellent reasoning was seen in a Year 9 lesson dealing with a safety plan for Montserrat during the recent volcanic eruption. Because the work provided for lower attaining pupils is not structured in simple steps, they do not produce writing of which they can feel proud. They do not have enough guidance to enable them to work effectively in groups, for example on the tropical rainforest project. Numeracy skills are good on the whole, used frequently and specifically referred to by the geography teachers. There has not yet been enough use of ICT to allow pupils to develop their skills, although the Key Stage 3 schemes of work for the new text-book include opportunities to use computers, and appropriate software has been purchased.

134. At Key Stage 4 attainment in work seen is often better than the examination results would indicate, although below national expectations overall. The higher attaining pupils in Year 11 discussed the global shift of industry and the inaccuracy of stereotypes, revealing considerable knowledge and understanding. The third set in Year 11 were using and interpreting a graph showing birth rate, death rate and total population, revealing a good understanding of the four stages of demographic transition. The attainment of some individuals in a Year 10 lesson on the River Tees was affected by their lack of effort and concentration during the video, although the majority of the class gained knowledge and understanding about the stages of river development.
135. Teaching is good in both key stages, an improvement since the last inspection. Nearly half the lessons seen were very good and there was one unsatisfactory lesson. The three main teachers of geography have a very good knowledge and understanding of their subject, and the head of department has a wealth of local knowledge. Effective planning is shown in the schemes of work and the lesson plans, with learning objectives shared with the pupils at the beginning of lessons. A variety of activities throughout a lesson at a level to match the pupils' prior attainment and effective use of varied resources lead to good learning. Where teaching is less successful the pace is not always appropriate, higher attaining pupils not sufficiently challenged, or too much is expected of lower attaining pupils. Those with special educational needs or with English as a second language do not receive sufficient attention in some lessons to address their needs. Although the department identifies gifted and talented pupils, there is little provision for them apart from the normal extension activities set in each lesson. The use of recall of previous learning, eliciting responses from pupils, works well. The most successful teachers use time effectively to finish the lesson with a review of learning achieved
136. On the whole pupils show interest and apply themselves to the work set. They listen to their teachers and contribute in discussion. Behaviour is good overall, with a few minor exceptions, and most teachers have effective pupil management skills. Mutual respect is evident, with good relationships between teachers and pupils as well as among pupils themselves, who readily help each other. The multi-cultural background of many pupils is not being fully exploited, although teachers encourage good knowledge of different countries around the globe, and concentrate on thorough knowledge of their local environment and culture. Although geography has ideal opportunities to develop the spiritual dimension, insufficient attention is given to this aspect.
137. On-going assessment is good, and most pupils' books are marked regularly, often with helpful comments. Verbal and written congratulatory comments were effective, though sometimes over-used with insufficient rigour or constructive criticism, especially for the higher attaining pupils. Homework is regularly set, and marks recorded. Poor attendance creates difficulty in chasing up pupils not completing homework, as well as hindering progression for individuals and continuity of the curriculum. The newly introduced self-assessment booklets for Key Stage 3 should have a positive impact on assessment and achievement, helping the pupils set realistic individual targets, and involving parents. National Curriculum levels and descriptors are insufficiently used in Key Stage 3. The head of department's close involvement in the GCSE examination board helps to improve the quality of assessment at Key Stage 4. Assessment data is not used effectively enough to help pupils improve, and to underpin monitoring and evaluation of work.

138. Leadership and management is good, with a very experienced and enthusiastic head of department. Learning resources are very good, including the new text-books for both key stages, the prepared worksheets, aid the use of video and overhead projector. Accommodation in three rooms close together is a benefit, although storage space is tight. Display in these rooms is good, and aids learning. As well as the three main teachers, there is one specialist teaching geography for 6 periods, and four non-specialists teaching 1, 2 or 3 periods, mostly to split classes in Years 7 and 8. This is an unsatisfactory situation. It affects pupils' interest in and enjoyment of geography, possibly their attendance, and thus their achievement.
139. Since the last inspection, standards have improved in both key stages, teaching is better and resources and schemes of work have improved. However the use of ICT has not developed enough and there is not enough monitoring and evaluation of the work of the department, making greater use of assessment data to drive up standards.

HISTORY

140. Standards based on teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 are in line with the national average. In 2000 they are well below. The reason for the 1999 results is that teachers' assessments, based partly on an undemanding examination in Year 9, were over-optimistic, especially at higher levels; in 2000 teachers appear to have reacted to this situation by under-estimating attainment.
141. Standards at Key Stage 4, based on GCSE results in 1999, are significantly below average at both A*-C and A*-G grades. Over one in five pupils, both girls and boys, did not get a grade. Overall girls outperform boys at GCSE, as they do nationally, but the gap is wider in the school. Both boys and girls did significantly worse in history than in their other subjects. However, there is good improvement in the A*-C grades in 2000, including an A* and six grade As. The proportion achieving A*-G grades has also improved. It looks as if the poor results of the last two years have been reversed, and the trend is rising.
142. At the end of Key Stage 3 standards in work seen during the inspection are broadly in line with the national average for 14 year olds. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are below average overall but are in line in the current Year 11. Here, the pupils in the two sets are of higher prior attainment overall than in that of pupils in the four sets in Year 10. All pupils take either history or geography at Key Stage 4. This policy contributes well to pupils' moral, social, cultural development, as well as to citizenship, but it poses a very great challenge for many pupils who have considerable difficulties in reading and writing. The department is wisely considering alternatives to the full GCSE course for pupils in lower sets.
143. The strengths of pupils' attainment throughout Key Stage 3 are their oral knowledge and understanding, and their skills of historical enquiry and interpretation. Pupils in Year 7 know the circumstances and outcomes of the battle of Hastings sufficiently to understand the kind of problems William the Conqueror had, both in the short and long terms. Average and above average attaining pupils in Year 8 can apply their knowledge and understanding of the causes of poverty in medieval England in order to evaluate whether beggars in different circumstances were helpless, accidental or idle poor. Pupils across the ability range can understand the messages implicit in posters during the First World War and can empathise with soldiers in the trenches. Pupils' research skills are good, they rely too much on drawing and diagram, printing off information from computers. Many pupils cannot do justice to what they know and understand in their written work because they do not have sufficient writing skills. Nor do they get sufficient practice in continuous writing for this to improve enough to cope with the demands of GCSE history at Key Stage 4. In projects at home, some pupils draft their work before writing a final version but they do not do this in lessons, so many perpetuate their mistakes instead of learning from them.
144. At Key Stage 4 higher attaining pupils have good recall of work on the development of medicine. Their learning is consolidated and extended effectively by quick-fire tests at the start of a lesson, with the same test repeated another day to see if they can improve their scores - which they do. Pupils in a small set for lower attaining pupils in Year 10 could

explain what the Romans did to prevent disease, and one girl described what an aqueduct is and what it is for. Pupils in that class are attaining better in lessons than many in the higher set, where the class is much larger and many pupils do not always have the additional support they need. Many Year 10 pupils extract information from sources without understanding what they are writing. Year 11 pupils' coursework on Goodrich Castle shows good attention to evidence and painstaking work, including detailed drawings. In coursework on Ireland, some pupils point out not only what a source tells us but also what it does not: this is good evaluation. When pupils word process their work it results in higher standards but writing skills are generally not good enough to support high standards.

145. Work seen during the inspection showed satisfactory achievement at both key stages. Nevertheless progress could be better than it is. No lesson observed had full attendance. In one low set, five of eleven pupils were absent. In several lessons, teaching or support staff spent time helping pupils catch up after absence from school. In addition, progress across key stages could be better if pupils' writing skills were developed more effectively and much earlier on, and if additional support was provided in some lessons where there is a concentration of pupils with learning and behavioural difficulties. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. It depends to a large extent on how structured the teaching is and whether there is additional support in lessons. Reading standards are better than writing, helped by good development of vocabulary in lessons, although not much sustained reading was observed, nor reading aloud. Little use of numeracy was seen in pupils' work, with few time-lines and no graphs. Some pupils use computers at home for project work and the department has plans in schemes of work to develop ICT across other stages. The range of attainment in both key stages is similar to that at the last inspection, but results for 2000 suggest they may have improved a little.
146. Teaching is good at both key stages. Teachers have good subject knowledge combined with much enthusiasm. This rubs off onto most pupils, especially younger ones, and contributes to good learning at both key stages. Objectives are always clear and written on the board. Sometimes teachers invite pupils to think about these while the register is taken and this helps to settle and focus pupils on work, as do quick-fire tests with older pupils. Basic skills are taught effectively at Key Stage 3 and this is improving learning and attainment. In most lessons, teachers ask clear questions. Time is used efficiently, instructions are clear and pupils know what to do. Homework contributes well to pupils' learning. All teachers take into account the needs of pupils in their planning, including those with learning difficulties, and this ensures all can participate in the lesson. However, methods used are not always effective. For example, a worksheet with a table to complete helps to organise new information, but some pupils struggle to write on unlined paper in a confined space. This also constrains their writing development. Teachers taking mixed ability and higher attaining sets create good discipline, but this is not always so in lower attaining sets. As a rule, the more structured the lesson, the more effective the learning in lower sets. However, the deliberately provocative behaviour of a small minority of boys in one lesson at the end of the day, prevented all pupils from making sufficient progress, even though the lesson was well planned and pitched at the right level.
147. The department promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through topic choices, but there is no planning for in schemes of work, so the impact is not as strong as it could be. While marking is good and teachers' comments helpful, procedures for assessing pupils' attainment through Key Stage 3 are not sufficiently rigorous. The department does not yet analyse the information it has to track progress in order to set targets for individual pupils. New funding has enabled higher attaining pupils in Year 9 to visit the Imperial War Museum, deepening their knowledge and understanding. Resources are good, with books at different levels to suit all pupils' needs.
148. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection, taking into account the restricted opportunities to move forward during a period of unstable staffing over two years. Improvements have been made to the curriculum with a greater focus on literacy skills, local history and some development of the use of ICT. Teaching is still of good quality. The head of department monitors teaching, albeit informally. She displays a strong commitment to continued improvement and is willing to experiment. However she does not yet monitor pupils' overall attainment and progress with sufficient rigour.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

149. Standards in ICT at Key Stage 3 are close to the national average. However, at Key Stage 4 they are below. Pupils' levels of attainment at the beginning of Year 7 are well below national expectations. But at the end of Key Stage 3 teachers' assessments of standards are only slightly below national expectations. At Key Stage 4 in 1999 the number of pupils obtaining A*-C GCSE was slightly above the national average, and an improvement on the previous year; A*-G grades were below the national average. In 2000 results are lower. The standards achieved by boys are below those achieved by girls but both boys and girls do better in ICT than in their other subjects. Most pupils achieved at least satisfactory standards in relation to their attainment at Key Stage 3. The poor attendance of a significant number of pupils has a detrimental affect on their ability to complete coursework for examinations.
150. In work seen during the inspection standards at Key Stage 3 are in line with the national average. Pupils can use a variety of fonts in word processing and use desktop publishing to develop and present their ideas, such as making a presentation on whether part of the school field should be sold for development. They make choices between different software packages in order to investigate and record their findings on the pros and cons of genetically modified foods. They can import text and pictures to improve the presentation of their work. Year 9 pupils are able to refine and develop their work, using information from a range of sources. At Key Stage 4 pupils learn how ICT is used within the travel industry and undertake a number of tasks such as producing databases clients and word processing travel itineraries. The school does not have a system for identifying and recording the ICT skills pupils bring with them from home and the primary school on entry to Year 7. As a result, learning activities do not always build on previous knowledge and some pupils are repeating work in Year 7. At both key stages pupils with special educational needs benefit from the use of ICT to present their work. These pupils enjoy seeing their work well presented on screen and this increases their self-esteem.
151. ICT skills are also satisfactorily developed in other areas of the curriculum. In a number of subjects such as history and English pupils have the opportunity to word process their work. Pupils use a computerised independent learning programme to help develop their literacy and numeracy skills. The Internet and CD-ROMs are used well for research. For example in science pupils find the answers to questions about the solar system through use of the Internet. Pupils taking the business and information studies courses at Key Stage 4, extend their ICT skills and are able to work more independently. There are few opportunities for pupils to use ICT to control and adapt the environment such as using a computer to control a model vehicle or a machine.
152. Teaching is good overall at both key stages. The ICT team comprises of specialist teachers and others who come from different subject areas but have a particular interest in the subject. This interest and enthusiasm for the subject has a positive impact on learning, which is also good at both key stages. Work is well planned and there is consistency in the approach taken across the team. In consequence, attitudes and behaviour in ICT lessons are at least satisfactory and mostly good. This shows in that pupils arrive on time with appropriate equipment so that lessons start promptly. They then work well together on the computers and are able to share resources sensibly. Relationships between pupils and teachers are good. This helps pupils to enjoy ICT, particularly in Years 8 and 9, where they are able to recall enthusiastically previous learning. Teachers make good use of the resources available, such as whiteboards and overhead projectors, to emphasise learning points. The ICT technician makes a valuable contribution to the quality of teaching and learning by supporting teachers in lessons whenever possible. Teachers assess pupils' work regularly and when marking classwork provide useful comments to help pupils improve their work. Where teaching is less successful the teacher takes insufficient account of the pupils' previous knowledge and lessons do not provide sufficient challenge for all pupils. For example, a number of pupils learning the basics of desktop publishing had used the programme in their previous school. In consequence their attitudes deteriorate and they are not on task, talking to each other instead of concentrating on their work. The teaching of

pupils with special educational needs ensures that they make satisfactory progress. Support staff are sensitive to the needs of these pupils and assist effectively in their learning.

153. The department is well led and managed. The head of department has a good knowledge of the subject and has made a number of changes to the Key Stage 3 curriculum such as improving the system for recording pupil progress. There is good support for non-specialist and supply staff to enable them to develop their skills in teaching ICT. The discrete Key Stage 3 course gives pupils a sound grounding in the use of ICT. A modular course in ICT is being developed as part of the personal, social and health education course taken by all pupils. The modular course should satisfactorily develop ICT skills for pupils not taking information and business studies at GCSE level. There is good provision of school clubs, which enables pupils at both key stages to develop further their skills and understanding. However, the Key Stage 4 curriculum does not ensure that all pupils have access to the full National Curriculum programme of study for ICT. The use of ICT across the curriculum has not been audited sufficiently or monitored closely to ensure that all subjects are using ICT appropriately. There are not enough opportunities for pupils to evaluate and discuss how they use ICT to improve their ideas and the quality of their work. The head of department is developing systems for monitoring ICT and for recording pupil progress across the curriculum.
154. The department has been effective in dealing with a number of issues identified in the last inspection. The variable teaching has improved and no lessons seen were less than satisfactory. Pupil attainment is improving with the encouragement and commitment of the teaching staff. There is a focus on improving teaching through departmental reviews and classroom observation. Resources have been improved and the establishment of a new room for ICT allows greater access to equipment.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

155. Standards of attainment at the end of both key stages are well below the national average. Teacher assessments at Key Stage 3 in Spanish show attainment to be well below national expectations. In 1999, GCSE results in French at grades A*-C and A*-G, showed a significant improvement from previous years but remained well below the national average. Pupils' achievement in GCSE French compared to their other subjects also improved. However, the number of boys entered and their attainment was still significantly below that of girls. Last year, in GCSE Spanish, the percentage of A*-C grades increased further.
156. In work seen during the inspection, attainment at Key Stage 4 is below national expectations. At both key stages pupils' understanding of the spoken language is limited. They are reluctant to speak themselves without strong guidance from written prompts or the teacher and their reliance on dictionaries is, at times, counter-productive. Their written work shows that their understanding of written texts is restricted and their writing limited in accuracy and fluency. Some pupils in Key Stage 4 course work are able to write at length on a familiar topic and can distinguish between present, past and future tenses. At Key Stage 3 some pupils are producing good oral responses, as a result of interactive and enthusiastic teaching which engages their interest. For example, in Year 7, pupils respond well to the energy and enthusiasm of the teacher and are able to produce simple sentences in French, indicating whether or not they have items such as a book or a pencil. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress.
157. Teaching is satisfactory overall in both key stages and this results in satisfactory learning. A new team of subject specialists is in place for the first time in the term of the inspection and this is already having a marked impact upon the quality of teaching and learning and upon attainment. Some good and occasionally very good was observed. The strongest features of the teaching are the method of communicating in the language being learnt, the good relationships with pupils, the firm but gentle management of behaviour and the effective use of resources. In the best lessons, planning is comprehensive and detailed, with aims and objectives made clear to pupils, who are asked to reflect upon what they already know and, at the end of the lesson, on what they have learnt. A brisk pace and a variety of activities, along with a lively delivery, maintain pupils' attention and in consequence they make good progress. For example, in a Year 10 Spanish lesson, a brief revision of the key phrases

relating to household chores was followed by a carousel of activities pitched at different levels. This enabled all pupils to develop their reading, listening and writing skills. Pupils were also given the opportunity to improve their spoken Spanish by working with the enthusiastic Spanish assistant. As a result learning was good: pupils applied themselves well, enjoyed their work and made good progress, using both present and simple future tenses. The foreign language assistants are used effectively across year groups; they increase pupils' awareness of other cultures and are a significant factor in motivating many pupils.

158. At Key Stage 3, some unsatisfactory teaching is the result of ineffective class management or an unclear purpose to the lesson, so that the quality of learning becomes unsatisfactory. Weaknesses occur at both key stages where the target language is not used consistently, allowing pupils insufficient opportunities to hear the language over a sustained period of time. In these instances, both the teacher and pupils translate too much into English instead of learning through the language. At times, the pace of the lesson is too slow and in some mixed ability classes, tasks are not carefully matched to the needs of all pupils, who then struggle to make progress. Pupils behave well in the majority of lessons; they concentrate on the task set, work co-operatively in pairs and groups to practise new language and interact well with the language assistants. However, they rarely take the initiative, ask questions or respond at length in order to convey ideas or personal responses. In Year 11 there is still considerable apathy towards the subject, no doubt due to the number of different teachers pupils have had in the last four years. Nevertheless, the response to trips to France and Spain in 2001 is encouraging and the new language club is gaining in popularity.
159. The way in which both foreign languages are taught makes a modest contribution to pupils' literacy and numeracy skills through the use of grammatical terminology and the use of number in dates, times or simple calculations. ICT is used in Key Stage 4 to draft course work but could be used more imaginatively in both key stages, for example, by helping pupils to use the Internet to correspond with pupils in other countries.
160. Leadership and management are good. A great amount of time and effort has gone into producing good schemes of work, which give explicit guidance on how to ensure pupils' progress over time. The considerable investment in new resources and the attractive displays in well-maintained languages classrooms have improved the climate for learning. Assessment procedures are developing but more frequent reference to National Curriculum levels, both in class and when marking pupils' work, would increase pupils' awareness of their learning. The use of assessment needs further development, to set targets for groups of pupils or to inform planning for the next stage in pupils' learning.
161. Since the last inspection, a period of instability due to a high turnover of teachers has had an adverse effect on attainment and pupils' attitudes. Now, however, the department has strong leadership and a team genuinely committed to raising standards. At Key Stage 3 there has been an increase in time allocated to the subject in Year 9, which is improving levels of attainment. At Key Stage 4, GCSE results are improving. In Year 11 all pupils now study a foreign language, compared to only one in four at the time of the last inspection, and more pupils now study a full GCSE course. In contrast, the number of pupils studying a language in Year 10 has fallen dramatically since languages became an option. The time allocated to the GCSE short course remains insufficient at two periods per week. A more equal distribution of time across both key stages would support progress. Provided staffing remains stable, there are grounds for optimism regarding the continued improvement of pupils' attainment and attitudes.

MUSIC

162. Standards in music are below the national average at the end of both key stages. The end of Key Stage 3 teachers' assessments in 1999 showed standards were above the national average. However, the grading system used by the school differs from the national system and these results are therefore not reliable. The school did not report attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000 owing to staffing problems within the department. In 1999, the school's GCSE results were below the national average but the number of pupils entered was relatively small and this comparison must therefore be treated with caution. The 2000 GCSE

results were not as good as those of 1999 but, at the time of the inspection, no national data were available for comparison. Again, the number entered was relatively small.

163. At the end of Key Stage 3, standards in work seen during the inspection are below the expected level for 14 year olds. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are well below average. At both key stages, pupils are not achieving as well as they should be and their progress in acquiring musical knowledge, skills and understanding is unsatisfactory. There are several reasons for this: there has been a lack of leadership and direction in the department over the last year; music lessons are not taken seriously by a significant proportion of pupils; there are weaknesses in the quality of teaching; the time allocated to music in Key Stage 3 has been reduced, which means pupils do not have enough regular experience of music; the department's resources are poor.
164. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils learn about theme and variations through performing a simple tune and then varying the rhythm or melody. Only a relatively small number of pupils are able to do this successfully and, even then, they need a lot of direction from the teacher. Many cannot explain what is meant by theme and variations and most find it difficult to recall what they have learned previously. Throughout the key stage, pupils' performing skills are weak. Many use awkward fingering when playing keyboards, which makes it difficult for them to play with reasonable accuracy or fluency. In a Year 8 lesson, pupils' lack of technical ability on the keyboards meant that many gave up quickly when practising a melody. In most lessons, a small number persevere and practise their parts but most do not do this, and waste time playing anything on the keyboards. When pupils perform together as a class, almost all struggle to do this successfully. Even when they have practised their parts, pupils do not perform with a secure sense of the underlying pulse, which means they soon either lag behind others or speed ahead. They do not listen to each other when playing and therefore do not make the minor adjustments necessary to keep together. In Year 8, pupils' standards of singing are below what is expected of this age. Their singing is subdued and many are reluctant and self-conscious. This means they do not put much effort into singing, which in turn affects the overall musical experience and sense of enjoyment.
165. Pupils in Year 11 have a limited knowledge of musical vocabulary and find it hard to recall any particular musical devices or forms. They have done very little work to help prepare them for the listening component of the GCSE syllabus and have not acquired a suitable breadth of knowledge to compare the musical characteristics within a range of styles and traditions. Most find it hard to explain some of the musical terms and devices which are displayed around the classroom, such as ostinato, drone, bass riff and interval. Taped examples of pupils' work show that the higher attaining pupils can play with fluency and control but the extent to which they incorporate expression and mood into their playing is hindered by the limited scope of the keyboards, which are not touch-sensitive.
166. The quality of teaching is unsatisfactory overall in both key stages and in consequence learning is unsatisfactory. The themes that are planned for each year group are largely appropriate, they take account of the previous attainment of the pupils and the resource sheets are carefully written and of good quality. The teacher's subject knowledge is good and lessons include some effective demonstration and accompaniment on the piano. In consequence, most pupils in Year 7 listen carefully, respect each other's work and clap spontaneously when pupils perform well. But insufficient account is taken, when planning lessons, of those pupils who already read music or those who have special educational needs. For example, in one Year 7 lesson, a pupil who had piano lessons was asked to write the note names under the staff notation, which she could already play fluently. In another lesson, a lower attaining pupil struggled to complete a similar task and needed a much more simple task in order to achieve a musically satisfying result. The main weakness in the teaching centres on the teacher's difficulties in controlling pupils' behaviour and ensuring that all pupils work to the best of their abilities during each lesson. The expectations of how hard pupils will work and the extent to which they listen, concentrate and behave are too low, resulting in unsatisfactory attitudes. Apart from Year 7, in almost all lessons, a significant proportion of pupils does not take the lesson seriously. In general, this tends to apply more to boys than girls. In a Year 9 lesson, for example, four or five boys were regularly lifting the keyboard keys out of their 'seatings' when the teacher was explaining important points to them. This is one reason why half of the keyboards currently being used have missing notes.

In a Year 8 lesson, a group of pupils were flicking paper across the room behind the teacher's back when a new point was being explained. During practical work in almost all lessons, a good number of pupils do not carry out the required tasks; consequently, they do not consolidate their skills and they learn very little. Because the teacher has to intervene frequently to admonish pupils, the flow of both teaching and learning is disturbed. In several lessons, a good number of pupils left the classroom having learned very little because the teacher's attempts to address poor behaviour and sustain pupils' concentration had only a temporary effect. Over time, the weaknesses in teaching clearly affects the progress that pupils make and means they are not learning as quickly and securely as would normally be expected.

167. The leadership and management of the department are poor. As a result of the long-term absence and recent retirement of the previous head of department, no-one has had overall responsibility for improving standards, teaching and curriculum provision. For example, the Key Stage 3 scheme of work needs reviewing to reflect the reduced time now allocated to music and the fact that several classes in Key Stage 3 had very little music last year. No progress has been made in introducing the new National Curriculum programmes of study for Key Stage 3, which took effect from this term. Another weakness is that the department has no scheme of work in Key Stage 4, which means that pupils' learning is very disjointed and there are some significant gaps. There are insufficient resources to support learning in both key stages and the requirements for developing pupils' ICT skills in music are not being met satisfactorily. Many of the instruments are damaged and unusable and the range of percussion instruments and keyboards is narrow. The department does not have a suitable sound system in the main teaching room or a range of listening material to enable pupils to experience a breadth of music of different times, styles and cultures. The music teacher is in the early stages of his teaching career and has found himself in a challenging situation. He has worked with clear energy and commitment to build up the profile of music in the school but, without specialist support and leadership, progress is slow and his work is yet to have an impact upon those pupils who do not value or respect the opportunities offered through music.
168. Standards are similar to those at the time of the last inspection but current inspection findings show that the school's provision for music and the leadership of the department are weaker.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

169. GCSE was taken for the first time in 1999, and the proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C grades in the short course examination was below the national average. In the first full GCSE course taken in 2000, the proportion of pupils gaining A* - C was well below the national average, but all pupils who entered the examination achieved at least grade G. Four girls who took the GCSE short course as an extra-curricular activity achieved at least grade C. There is little difference between the performance of boys and girls or pupils from different ethnic backgrounds. Pupils' results in physical education are similar to those obtained in most other subjects.
170. In the work seen during the inspection pupils' attainment in physical activities at all levels in the school is in line with the levels expected nationally, with a significant proportion of higher attaining pupils achieving above average standards in games. This represents a good level of achievement, given pupils' prior attainment. Boys and girls are taught separately, but they make equally good progress. The reason for attainment being better during the inspection than in the examinations is that teachers prepared pupils for the examination for the first time in 2000 and had little experience of the requirements.
171. By the time they have reached the age of 14, most pupils perform skillfully in a range of games, and show sound or better understanding of the principles of play in the major games. This was well illustrated in football and netball lessons, where pupils used space well, showed the ability to anticipate play and communicated effectively. Year 7 boys make a very good beginning in rugby and basketball, and standards are high in the early stages of the course. Sound standards are achieved in gymnastics, where boys and girls of all levels of attainment show good control and body tension, as they successfully perform a sequence of movement based on locomotion and balance. Planning and performing skills are developing

satisfactorily in almost all lessons, but pupils' skills of evaluating their own and others' work are underdeveloped. There is a lack of opportunity for pupils to observe, analyse and comment on performance against specific criteria. Most pupils have a sound understanding of the effects of exercise on the body, know how to warm up before strenuous activity and can name the muscles that they are stretching. Pupils' literacy develops well in all lessons, particularly in relation to the use of the technical language of the subject.

172. In Key Stage 4 improvement in games continues. Many pupils, including those with special educational needs, effectively apply their knowledge, skills and understanding of rules and tactics in full games. Tactical awareness develops alongside technical skills, well illustrated in both netball and football lessons, where pupils demonstrated a good understanding of positional play, effective decision-making in attack and defense and the ability to officiate a game confidently and competently. Pupils who attend extra-curricular clubs make very good progress in their chosen activities, reflected in the successes of the school teams during the week of the inspection. The practical work of pupils studying for GCSE indicates sound or better standards, as seen in badminton. However, their written coursework reflects a generally below average knowledge and understanding of theoretical aspects. Some middle and lower attaining pupils do not express themselves clearly when answering written questions, and leave too many questions unanswered. Nevertheless, good work was seen in a Year 10 GCSE health and fitness lesson, where the majority of pupils had a satisfactory knowledge of cardio-vascular fitness, and could apply their knowledge to their own results in a fitness test. Higher attainers used this knowledge effectively to explain how this affects the rate of recovery.
173. Good standards are achieved in extra-curricular sport and nearly half of the school population participates regularly in the extensive programme of special events, clubs, inter-form and inter-school fixtures and competitions. School teams in football, netball, rugby, basketball and athletics have a good record of success in competitions at district and county level. Individual pupils gain representative honours at county, regional and, occasionally, national level. The school currently has thirteen pupils representing the county in seven different sports. In addition, three pupils have achieved the distinction of being selected for the Football Academies of local professional clubs.
174. The quality of teaching is good, resulting in good learning throughout the school. Teaching is very good in a third of the lessons. Teachers know their pupils well. Management and organisation of pupils is of a high order, and this contributes significantly to the pupils' very good behaviour, standards of dress and high levels of participation in lessons. Pupils are well-motivated, put good physical and creative effort into their work and have very good attitudes to learning at both key stages. Lively, dynamic teaching motivates pupils and stimulates learning at a brisk pace. Teachers have very good knowledge of their subject, and they make the objectives of the lesson clear, so that pupils know what they are expected to learn. Lessons are planned effectively, and well-selected tasks build on pupils' previous attainment, enabling them to consolidate their existing knowledge and skills through practice, to learn new skills and to develop a deeper understanding of strategic play in games. For example, in a Year 10 football lesson, the teacher organised the game, effectively to ensure pupils' success in a specific team tactic. The high quality of teachers' observation, assessment and feedback is a strength of most lessons, and promotes progress throughout the school. This is particularly effective where there is a specific learning outcome, and teachers give individual or group coaching to enable pupils to work at their own pace.
175. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into physical education lessons, and they achieve at the same rate as their peers. In a Year 8 boys' gymnastics lesson, for example, where nearly half the class was identified as having special needs, pupils were keen to participate, achieved well and took pride in their performance. The potential for higher attaining pupils to progress is exploited well in many lessons, through extension tasks matched to their abilities. It is also well catered for in the extra-curricular programme. Teachers' expectations of pupils are high and they insist on good standards in all respects; in their turn, pupils respond positively to the good-humoured encouragement of their teachers. The strongest teaching challenges pupils with a demanding pace of learning, uses probing questioning to make them think and enables pupils to take some responsibility for their own learning. This was well illustrated in a Year 11 netball lesson, in which pupils' evaluation of

their own performance was central to the learning process and discernible progress was made throughout the lesson. Opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own and others' work are missed in some Key Stage 3 lessons, and this aspect is an area for development. Similarly, more opportunities for pupils to take responsibility, make decisions and solve problems would be beneficial in promoting the depth of pupils' learning, and help them to gain independence. There are inconsistencies in the marking of pupils' GCSE written work. Although marking is regular, helpful and encouraging, there appear to be insufficient demands made on the pupils to correct mistakes, or complete unfinished work. Some marking does not provide marks or grades to give pupils a clear idea of the progress they are making. The teaching of literacy skills is sound, but this good practice should be extended to include numeracy and information technology more regularly.

176. Outstanding leadership by the head of department is at the heart of this strong, effective and highly committed staff team, who work well together with a shared sense of purpose. The good quality documentation has a clear educational direction, which supports the school's aims and policies, particularly in raising pupils' attainment. Very good progress has been made in implementing the new Curriculum 2000 assessment levels. The department has also been innovative in introducing new courses, including GCSE full and short courses, since the previous inspection. The extensive extra-curricular provision is a particular strength, not only in sport, but also in the wider context of community links, outdoor education and residential experiences both in this country and abroad. Curriculum planning is an area for further development, however. The Key Stage 3 curriculum for boys requires review to ensure that all National Curriculum programmes of study are pursued to an adequate depth, and to ensure equality of opportunity. For example, boys do not have the opportunity to study dance within the present curriculum. Physical education makes a good contribution to pupils' social and moral development, but the spiritual and cultural elements of the curriculum are also areas for development. At Key Stage 4, insufficient curriculum time is allocated to the GCSE short course. The monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching within the department is not fully implemented and there is not enough sharing of the very good teaching skills which exist. Accommodation for the subject is generally good, but the provision of a classroom resource base would help to produce the required improvement in GCSE results.
177. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. Standards of attainment have been maintained, with an improvement in pupils' attainment in games throughout the school. The quality of teaching has improved with an increased proportion of good and very good teaching. This strong department is well placed to take on future developments.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

178. At Key Stages 3 and 4 pupils pursue a course of study based on the Agreed Syllabus for the City of Birmingham. At Key Stage 4, they meet its requirements through studying for the GCSE short course examination. In the 1999 GCSE short course examination, the proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades was well below national norms for the subject. The proportion of A*-C GCSE grades has declined each year since 1998. It was significantly lower in the Year 2000 examinations than in 1999.
179. In work seen during the inspection, the attainment of pupils at age 16 was well below the expectations of the Agreed Syllabus for their age, and well below national expectations for the short course examination. Pupils have only a superficial knowledge and understanding of Christianity and Islam, and their analytical, interpretative and evaluative skills are poorly developed. At the age of 14, the attainment of pupils is below the expectations of the Agreed Syllabus for their age. Their knowledge and understanding of the richness and diversity of religion, of the place of Christianity and other principal religions in the country, of their distinctive features, and of how their adherents' lives are shaped by their beliefs, lacks depth. Their understanding of religious language and concepts, and their skills in applying religious insights to their own experience and that of others, are also underdeveloped.
180. The majority of pupils make good progress in individual lessons at both key stages. They do not, however, maintain this progress over time and therefore do not achieve appropriately at

the end of the key stages. At Key Stage 3, the overall progress of pupils is unsatisfactory; at Key Stage 4, it is poor. This is not a reflection of the quality of teaching, or of pupils' attitudes towards the subject, which are good overall. It is a consequence of serious weaknesses in the school's provision for the subject, which preclude pupils from building on prior attainment, and have an adverse impact on progress over time.

181. At both key stages the quality of teaching is good. Where teaching is strongest, teachers have a secure grasp of the subject, know clearly what they wish their pupils to learn, and have high expectations of them. Thus Year 7 pupils studying the Hindu festival of Holi and the story of Prahlad were led to penetrate behind the literal meaning of the story to its teaching about the power of Vishnu, and the triumph of good over evil. Teachers plan their lessons well to achieve their aims, and engage and hold their pupils' interest through a variety of interesting and challenging tasks and activities, which are well matched to their individual needs. For example, Year 9 pupils made good gains in understanding the teaching of the Biblical creation myths on the causes of suffering and death in an imperfect world through paired discussion, and reflection on audio-visual material. Higher attaining pupils in Year 8 studying the difference between the Orthodox and Baptist Christian traditions were set extension work demanding empathetic skills in considering infant and adult baptism from the point of view of members of those faith communities. Teachers use good questioning skills to extend understanding, as was well evidenced in a Year 11 exploration of religious responses to abortion. Pupils made good progress in understanding the concept of the sanctity of life, and the stances of the "Pro-life" and Pro-choice" lobbies on abortion. Teachers raise pupils' self-esteem through good use of praise and positive reinforcement. They manage time well, and maintain a brisk pace in lessons.
182. Where teaching is less strong, teachers' subject knowledge is less secure. Teaching is overly directive in style, and overly reliant on handouts and worksheets. Teachers give pupils too few opportunities for developing the skills of independent learning, research and enquiry, and for writing at length, and for a variety of purposes. All teachers enjoy good relationships with pupils, and manage their behaviour well. They mark work conscientiously and supportively, although marking does not always show pupils how to raise their attainment. Teachers do not, however, set homework regularly to provide opportunity for independent learning.
183. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection: there is now no poor teaching. The school has not, however, addressed the majority of weaknesses identified in the previous report, and improvement overall has been poor. Assessment procedures are still poor: pupils' academic performance is not effectively monitored. Improvements to the quality of teaching and learning have been a consequence of individual initiative: neither is effectively monitored. Non-specialist teachers have not received the subject specific training identified as a need at the previous inspection. The level of resources has not been raised, and the provision of textbooks is poor, hindering pupils' development as independent learners. The quality of schemes of work is unsatisfactory. Since the previous inspection levels of attainment have fallen at the end of both key stages.
184. This lack of improvement, and indeed regression in standards since the previous inspection, is a consequence of serious weaknesses in the leadership and management of the subject, which have been exacerbated by the extended absences of the head of department for reasons of health. There has been a lack of vision of the educational direction that the subject should take if standards are to be raised. Developmental work effectively ceased shortly after the previous inspection, and key issues have not been addressed. Schemes of work do not ensure that all pupils are appropriately challenged as they progress through the school. The other specialist teacher in the department has given of her best in trying to meet the needs of pupils and support non-specialist colleagues, but has faced an unreasonable challenge over time.

BUSINESS EDUCATION, INCLUDING VOCATIONAL COURSES

185. Business studies is taught only in Key Stage 4. The 1999 results for GCSE business studies were below the national average, though they were close to the national average for A*-C grades. Results were lower in 2000, with nearly one in five pupils failing to obtain a grade.

GNVQ Foundation Part One business results were poor in both years, although seven pupils passed all three units in 1999. Results have improved since the last inspection but are adversely affected by poor attendance.

186. In lessons and the portfolios of work seen during the inspection attainment overall is in line with the national average. Year 11 coursework on marketing demonstrated standards in line with pupils' prior attainment. In Year 10 the pupils in the double option GCSE business studies and information systems course develop their ICT skills satisfactorily while learning about organisations. Lower attaining pupils in the Year 10 office applications course develop their word processing and text editing skills, mostly at a low standard. Their low literacy levels cause difficulties, and the attention span of many is very limited, even though they enjoy using the computers. Pupils in the Year 10 business studies single option GCSE course make good progress learning about the public sector of business, grasping how "mind maps" diagrams are a useful tool. Pupils taking the new Year 10 GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism course visited a local shopping and entertainment complex during the week of the inspection, and as well as follow up work, began valuable research into local facilities and amenities. The GNVQ method suited most pupils: the teacher guides pupils' learning well, with the result that they take more responsibility for their work. Considering their prior attainment, they were achieving in line with national expectations.
187. Teaching overall is good and learning is satisfactory. The subject knowledge of teachers in the GCSE business studies and GNVQ areas is good, as is their understanding of the course requirements. They successfully state and share with pupils the learning objectives of each lesson and each unit, which helps their learning because they understand why they are doing what they are doing. Learning is also helped because pupils are taught the criteria by which their work is assessed, and their assignments are well marked and monitored. Teachers know their pupils well and their friendly but firm style promotes good relationships and encourages positive attitude to work. The more successful lessons include a variety of interesting activities, and there is an appropriate pace to lessons. In spite of this, some higher attaining pupils learn at a slow pace and they do not produce enough work. Because literacy problems are not always addressed by teachers, many spelling errors appear on pupils' work. Learning support assistants in office applications lessons are very useful in helping pupils with special educational needs to manage the requirements of the course. Teachers use the plentiful resources of textbooks and computers well, and pupils access these with confidence and competence.
188. Although a register is kept of attendance and punctuality is stressed, the pattern of low and irregular attendance affects the progress of individuals. The very good links with sixth form, further and higher education institutions enable pupils to know about opportunities for further education. Very good links with local industry and developing links with many other businesses are a benefit for pupils and staff. The head of department has accomplished a great deal in the three years since appointment. She has expertise in the GNVQ methodology that helps the planned increase in vocational courses. Many of the criticisms of the previous report have been addressed. Teaching is now good overall, the coursework is well organised, subject specific vocabulary is well used, and an appropriate curriculum is in place. Pupils' knowledge and understanding seen in lessons are now more in line with national expectations, and examination results have improved. The insufficiency of vocational courses is still an issue, for although some progress has been made, there is room for further development to meet the need for a work related curriculum appropriate to many pupils.