

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **EMERSON PARK SCHOOL**

Hornchurch, Essex

LEA area: Havering

Unique reference number: 102340

Headteacher: Mr S J Berwitz

Reporting inspector: Mrs S D Morgan  
1355

Dates of inspection: 25<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> September 2000

Inspection number: 223972

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

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11-16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Wych Elm Road Wingletye Lane Hornchurch Essex
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Ms P Brown
Date of previous inspection:	March 1998

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mrs S D Morgan OIN 1355	Registered inspector	Equal opportunities	What sort of school is it?
			The school's results and pupils' achievements
			How well are pupils taught?
			What the school should do to improve further?
Ms V Phillips OIN 9053	Lay inspector	-	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Ms S McConville OIN 24142	Team inspector	English	How well does the school care for its pupils?
Mr G Loach OIN 23082	Team inspector	Mathematics	-
Mr M Davidson OIN 2396	Team inspector	Science	-
		Special educational needs	-
Mr B Munden OIN 2495	Team inspector	Design and technology	-
Mr D Gutmann OIN 10060	Team inspector	Information technology	-
Ms R Fox OIN 4617	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	-
		English as an additional language	
Ms M Currie OIN 30893	Team inspector	Geography	-
		History	
Ms R Alison- Smith OIN 2051	Team inspector	Art	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
Mr R Coulthard OIN 11746	Team inspector	Music	How well is the school led and managed?

		Religious education	
Ms B Colley OIN 30800	Team inspector	Physical education	-

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London WC2B 6SE

## REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>6</b>
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>	
<b>HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?</b>	<b>11</b>
The school's results and achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
<b>HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>28</b>

## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Emerson Park is a comprehensive school with 881 pupils on roll. It has more boys than girls in all year groups and is smaller than most other secondary schools. At the time of the last inspection, the school roll was falling. However, this situation has been reversed, the school has become more popular, and with the exception of Year 10 is oversubscribed in all years. The attainment of the pupils on entry is average. Almost eighteen percent of pupils have been identified as having special educational needs, which is broadly in line with the national average. These pupils have a range of difficulties, with about half having emotional and behavioural difficulties. An average proportion of pupils have statements of special educational need. Pupils come from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, although most are white. The number of pupils speaking English as an additional language is a bit higher than in most schools, but very few are at an early stage of learning the English language. The percentage of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly in line with the national average.

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

This is an effective school. GCSE results are average and pupils are achieving appropriately. Pupils make steady progress in almost all subjects, although they do not make enough progress in modern foreign languages and the use of information technology by other subjects. The quality of teaching is at least satisfactory in almost all subjects, and good or very good in several including art, business studies, drama, media studies music and religious education. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour have improved, relationships are positive and pupils show enthusiasm for their work. The outstanding leadership being provided by the headteacher has been very successful in remedying the serious weaknesses that were found at the time of the previous inspection. The school is currently providing satisfactory value for money.

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

- Good teaching in several subjects enables pupils to achieve well.
- Staff and pupils share a commitment to raising standards of achievement, and pupils' successes are celebrated.
- Pupils are happy at the school and are loyal to it.
- The school has gained the confidence of parents and is now oversubscribed.
- A very good range of extra-curricular activities is provided and many pupils are involved.
- Provision for pupils' social and moral development is good, this helps pupils to enjoy school.
- The headteacher is providing outstanding leadership and is helping the school improve rapidly.

#### **What could be improved**

- Standards in modern foreign languages are too low; teaching is unsatisfactory and statutory requirements are not met for all pupils in Year 10.
- Pupils are not covering all the requirements for information technology within other subjects.
- A small proportion of teaching is unsatisfactory, poor or very poor. These weaknesses mainly occur when groups are taught by non-specialist temporary teachers.

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

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

The school was last inspected in March 1998 and has made good improvement since then. The key issues identified in the last inspection have been dealt with very purposefully and almost all have been successfully addressed. Good administrative, academic and pastoral structures have been set up which are clearly focussed on establishing a caring learning environment in which pupils achieve appropriately. Satisfactory standards have been maintained in almost all subjects. The quality of teaching has improved with a significant proportion being very good. The senior management team is effective and vigorously supports the headteacher. Staff morale is good and the school has the commitment and capacity for further improvement.



## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
GCSE examinations	C	B	C	C

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

Results of the 1999 GCSE examinations were average when compared to all schools and similar schools. This has been a consistent picture over the last three years. The school's GCSE results have improved at the same rate as the national improvement. The 2000 results show an improvement in many subjects such as English, mathematics and science, particularly the proportion of pupils gaining higher grades.

The overall results in the 1999 national assessments at the end of Year 9 were average for all and similar schools. This has been a consistent picture over the last four years. The 1999 results in English and science were average and just below average in mathematics. The school has taken appropriate steps to raise standards in mathematics and so this is not a key issue.

As part of its strategy to improve academic standards, the school set itself high targets for GCSE results in 2000. Although these targets were not fully met, this was mainly due to considerable pupil mobility within the year group. A significant number of pupils joined at various times during the examination course. A number of pupils did not sit the examinations and this had a negative impact on results. Equally challenging targets have been set for the future and agreed with the local education authority.

Standards are generally average in most subjects throughout the school. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory in relation to standards they attained previously and they make steady progress. Standards in religious education are above those expected and pupils' achievements are good. In Year 11 standards in art are above average and pupils make very good progress. In modern foreign languages, standards are below average in Years 7 to 9 and well below in Year 11, pupils are underachieving and making unsatisfactory progress. Pupils do not achieve well enough in their use of information technology in other subjects. Pupils with special educational needs achieve standards that are appropriate to their levels of prior attainment.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils are well motivated and keen to do well. They show enthusiasm for their work, especially when teaching is good. Pupils with special educational needs mainly have positive attitudes and try to do their best. Pupils are keen to participate in extra-curricular activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Behaviour in class is good and this helps pupils learn in the vast majority of lessons. Pupils listen to teachers and do what is asked. Pupils' behaviour around the school is responsible. The number of exclusions has been high but is now falling. There have been no permanent exclusions since the time of the last inspection.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are good and support pupils' commitment to work. Pupils show respect for different points of view and are protective and supportive towards each other. Pupils take their responsibilities seriously, such as



	membership of the school council.
Attendance	Satisfactory.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

<b>Teaching of pupils:</b>	<b>aged 11-14 years</b>	<b>aged 14-16 years</b>
Lessons seen overall	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

*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.*

Overall, 94 percent of the teaching was satisfactory or better with 23 percent being very good or excellent. It was unsatisfactory, or occasionally poor or very poor in six percent of the lessons. The quality of teaching is consistent across the school, although weaknesses do occur when groups are taught by non-specialist temporary teachers who are covering for staffing vacancies or teachers who are on long-term sick leave. For pupils of all ages, teaching is satisfactory in English, mathematics and science. With the exception of modern foreign languages, teaching in all other subjects is satisfactory or better. In many lessons, strengths in the teaching included well organised and resourced activities with teachers having high expectations of pupils' behaviour and performance. Teachers communicated their enthusiasm for the subject matter very well and had good subject knowledge. This motivated pupils to work hard. Teachers effectively managed their lessons and this ensured that the whole class could work productively. Relationships were good and this resulted in an orderly-working atmosphere where pupils could develop their skills and understanding. In many lessons teachers focussed on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Where teaching had weaknesses or was unsatisfactory, or occasionally poor or very poor, lessons lacked pace and challenge. Teachers had not planned the work to meet the needs of all pupils, they did not challenge poor behaviour in the class and pupils made insufficient progress. Their expectations of pupils were too low. This resulted in higher attaining pupils making insufficient progress and lower attaining pupils struggling. In the vast majority of lessons, however, teachers provide work that meets pupils' needs and this enables them to make satisfactory progress.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory in most respects. A major strength is the variety of extra-curricular activities and the high number of pupils who take part in them. The programmes for personal, social and health education and for careers education are well planned. Relevant work related courses in Years 10 and 11 have also been developed. The main weaknesses however, are the lack of provision of a modern foreign language for all pupils in Year 10 and the lack of provision of information technology across the curriculum. Therefore, the curriculum is unsatisfactory overall.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. The arrangement of classes by ability in most year groups benefits pupils with special educational needs as their classes are usually smaller than others so that these pupils can receive more individual teaching.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory provision for the few pupils who are at an early stage of learning English.
Provision for pupils'	Good for moral and social development. Pupils are expected to help

personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	others and take responsibility. The good relationships within the school and personal, social and health education lessons support pupils' personal development well. Satisfactory provision for pupils' spiritual development which is well supported by religious education lessons, although assemblies vary in quality and do not meet requirements for a daily act of collective worship. Satisfactory provision for pupils' cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Overall, good arrangements are in place for the care of pupils. Pupils receive good guidance and support and are well known by staff. Child protection arrangements are good. Staff make use of assessment data to identify underachievement. This is used particularly well in Year 11. The use of assessment information by some departments is particularly effective in supporting pupils' progress.

The school has worked hard to build positive working relationships with parents. This results in good links with most families and these support pupils' achievements effectively. This is seen in better attendance at school events such as parents' evenings. Most information provided is of good quality. However, parents do not find written reports as helpful as they would like because the grades are confusing. Care is taken to involve parents whose children have special educational needs as fully as possible in their education.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Outstanding leadership by the headteacher. He has successfully worked with staff to remedy the serious weaknesses that were found in the previous inspection. Senior managers now form an effective group. They work as a cohesive team committed to promoting high standards and improving the quality of teaching and learning. The leadership of most departments is at least satisfactory and often good or very good.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors fulfil their responsibilities satisfactorily. The effectiveness of the governing body has increased considerably since the previous inspection and governors are now much more aware of developments in the school. They have a good knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The practice of monitoring the quality of teaching is now firmly established. This process is successful and valued by individual teachers. The standard of teaching has improved since the previous inspection. Careful analysis of data is undertaken to evaluate the success of teaching and learning and to set future targets.
The strategic use of resources	Financial planning is astute. All expenditure is very carefully justified in terms of the school's and departmental development plans. The school applies the principles of best value through efficient financial management.

There are some weaknesses in staffing. The school has faced difficulties in recruiting permanent staff in some subjects, and specialist temporary teachers are not always available to cover vacancies. This has had an impact on pupils' attainment in some subjects. Overall, resources and accommodation are satisfactory.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children like school.</li> <li>• The teaching is good.</li> <li>• The school is approachable.</li> <li>• Their children are expected to work hard and do their best.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> <li>• The school helps their children to become mature and responsible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Standards and teaching in modern foreign languages.</li> <li>• Behaviour and overcrowding on the buses.</li> </ul>

At the meeting for parents and carers held before the inspection, parents were very positive about improvements that had taken place since the appointment of the new headteacher. Inspectors agree with almost all of the parents' views. Teaching, however, is satisfactory rather than good. Pupils behaved well when they boarded the buses and supervision by senior staff was found to be good.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. In this report, the term "standards" refers to pupils' attainment relative to some clear benchmark, such as National Curriculum levels at the end of a key stage. "Above average standards", for example, means that a higher proportion of pupils of a particular age are succeeding at or beyond the level set than in the majority of schools. 'Achievement' on the other hand, reflects the accomplishments of pupils in relation to what you would expect of these particular pupils. The pupils' prior attainment, what they can already do, is the reference point for pupils' achievement.

2. Overall, the school's results in the national assessments at the end of Year 9 in 1999 were average. This has been a consistent picture over the last four years. The 1999 results in English and science were average and just below average in mathematics. The school has taken appropriate steps to raise standards in mathematics and so this is not a key issue. Results have improved at the same rate as national improvement. The performance of both boys and girls was close to the national average. The results in 2000 for English and mathematics were broadly similar to those for 1999, although in science they fell below those for 1999. In all three subjects, pupils' achievements and progress are satisfactory. Standards in almost all other subjects, as observed in lessons and through recorded work, are broadly average and pupils' achievements are satisfactory. In religious education, standards are above those expected by the locally agreed syllabus, and pupils' achievements are good. This is because the curriculum is very well planned and teaching is very good. In modern foreign languages, standards are below average and there is underachievement by pupils. This is because of weaknesses in teaching and staffing difficulties.

3. Compared with similar schools, overall results at the end of Year 9 in 1999 were average. English standards were average for similar schools, in mathematics they were marginally below average and below average in science. The trend in the school's average point score for all core subjects was broadly in line with the national trend over the past three years. Overall, the teaching of English has been more effective than in mathematics and science, which is the main reason why English results are higher. In the mathematics department, there have been a number of staffing changes and this has had a negative impact on pupils' learning. The results of nationally recognised tests taken by pupils in Year 7, when they enter the school, indicate average attainment. Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress during Years 7 to 9 and reach broadly average standards.

4. In 1999, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSE A\*- C passes was broadly in line with the national average. This has been a consistent picture over the last three years. The proportion of pupils gaining five A\*- G grades, was well above the national average, and average for those gaining one or more grades A\*- G. The school's average total GCSE point score per pupil has been rising in line with the national trend. Over the last three years, boys' results have been above the national average, and girls' close to the national average. The difference in performance is due to the smaller number of higher attaining girls in particular year groups. The school's analysis of assessment data indicates that girls attained the grades expected. The results for individual subjects varied considerably. Comparing pupils' results in each subject shows that they did relatively well in art, English literature, English language, information technology and mathematics. They did least well in French, communication studies, history and business studies. The 2000 results show an improvement in many subjects such as English, mathematics and science, particularly in the proportion of pupils gaining higher grades. About seven percent of the year group did not sit

the examinations. Many of these pupils were admitted at a time when the roll was falling, after being excluded from their previous schools.

5. Compared with similar schools in 1999, the proportion of pupils attaining five or more A\*-C grades was average. The proportion gaining five or more A\*-G grades was well above average. The proportion achieving one or more A\*- G grades was above average. As part of its strategy to improve academic standards, the school set itself high targets for results in 2000. Although these targets were not fully met, this was mainly due to considerable pupil mobility within the year group. A significant number of pupils joined at various times during the examination course and this had a negative impact on the results. Equally challenging targets have been set for the future and agreed with the local education authority.

6. In most subjects, standards of work for pupils in Year 11 as observed in lessons and through recorded work are average and pupils' achievements are satisfactory. In art and religious education, standards are above average and pupils make very good progress. In the case of information and communications technology (ICT) across the curriculum, the requirements of the National Curriculum have not been fully met and this leads to underachievement throughout the school. Standards in modern foreign languages are below expectations in Year 10 and well below in Year 11, and pupils are underachieving. This is because of weaknesses in teaching and staffing difficulties.

7. There is satisfactory development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills as they move through the school. Much work has been done by the school to focus on literacy skills across all subjects. There is evidence that standards of literacy are improving and some good practice in subjects such as geography, mathematics and science. However, spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors are not consistently corrected in all subjects. Pupils apply their numeracy skills in a number of other subjects. For example, in science, history, physical education and design and technology.

8. Pupils throughout the school whose special educational needs relate to learning difficulties generally make satisfactory progress and reach standards in line with their various starting points. Occasionally, as in art, pupils do better than expected. This is often the case also when learning support assistants are available to work closely with pupils during lessons. Pupils whose special educational needs relate to behavioural difficulties also mainly achieve satisfactorily. Occasionally, however, when teaching is not as effective as it could be in managing the behaviour of these pupils, they do not progress as well as they could. The small number of pupils with English as a second language make satisfactory progress.

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

9. Pupils are well motivated and show enthusiasm for work, especially when teaching is good. In particularly lively lessons, they respond very well to the challenges set, as in a Year 9 discussion in English on persuading people to think differently about homelessness. Parents were very positive about their children's attitudes to school. Many felt that staff set a good example and the school was a happy place, which was successful in motivating their children. Inspectors agreed with their views.

10. Good behaviour helps pupils to learn effectively in the vast majority of lessons. They listen to teachers and do what is asked. A handful of pupils, with limited experience of the school and its codes of conduct, have not yet developed good learning habits or an understanding of the conventions that are accepted by everyone else. As a result these individuals behave inappropriately in particular lessons. In very rare instances, their behaviour disturbs the work of others, but usually, disruption is limited, as teachers make it very clear that much better

self-discipline and conduct are required. Around the school during break and lunchtime, pupils behave responsibly. After a period when exclusion rates were justifiably high, in order to raise standards of conduct and reduce the number of instances of poor behaviour, the number of exclusions is falling to normal levels. Exclusion is used appropriately. Permanent exclusion is rare. No pupils have been permanently excluded since the time of the last inspection.

11. Relationships in the school are good and support pupils' commitment to their work very helpfully, even when the content of the lesson is not matched well to what they need to learn, for instance, occasionally in French. Pupils are good at listening to each other and showing respect for different points of view, such as those offered in stimulating religious education lessons. They are kind and protective of very vulnerable individuals with particular difficulties or disabilities. This is reflected in a community that is lively but civilised and in which bullying is unusual.

12. The school council is developing into a forum where pupils can raise issues and bring about changes such as the way the school shop is managed. There are also opportunities for pupils to take responsibility by becoming prefects and for older pupils to work with those new to the school. However, opportunities for all pupils to work independently and take responsibility, including organisation of their own work in class and at home, need further development. In one or two cases, pupils who do less well in school have particularly weak organisational skills, sometimes linked to erratic attendance and a low standard of work done at home. Otherwise pupils work constructively on their own and with good levels of co-operation in groups. Personal development and relationships contribute well to the standards pupils achieve.

13. Pupils with special educational needs mainly have positive attitudes to school: they try to do their best, co-operate well with their teachers and support assistants, and join in lessons with interest. A few pupils whose special educational needs relate to behavioural difficulties are not as self-disciplined as they need to be to take full advantage of their lessons. Pupils with special educational needs take part in the very good range of learning opportunities outside lesson time, for example using the facilities of the learning support room, singing in the choir and participating in sporting activities. This develops their self-esteem and their enjoyment of school.

14. Attendance rates are similar to the national average and are satisfactory. The school recognises that its authorised absence rate is higher than it should be, largely because there are too many families who take holidays in term time without fully appreciating the negative effects this has on their children's achievements. Unauthorised absence is low. Most pupils arrive on time regularly unless there are problems with the buses.

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

15. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection. Then it was satisfactory or better in 87 percent of lessons observed, whereas in this inspection the figure was 94 percent. Overall, the teaching is satisfactory. It is consistent across the school, although weaknesses do occur when groups are taught by non-specialist temporary teachers who are covering for staffing vacancies or teachers who are on long-term sick leave. Some variation between subjects was found. Teaching was very good in religious education throughout the school, and in art GCSE lessons. It was good in ICT, music, physical education, drama, in art in Years 7 to 9 and business education and media studies GCSE lessons. In English, mathematics, science, design and technology, geography and history it was satisfactory, but in modern foreign languages it was unsatisfactory.

16. Teaching was very good or excellent in 23 percent of the lessons observed. These lessons were characterised by teachers planning activities very thoroughly and ensuring that lessons were interesting. For example, in religious education pupils were motivated by compelling introductions to lessons which captured their interest and were set tight deadlines to complete their work. Teachers took care to find out what pupils remembered and understand about previous work and then built upon this. In the best science lessons pupils were taught what to do next so that they could quickly move onto the next stage of learning and make good progress. Art teachers have excellent subject knowledge and set challenging activities which inspire and motivate pupils.

17. A considerable number of strengths were seen in teaching and learning in many lessons that were satisfactory or better. Practical sessions were well organised and resourced, and teachers had high expectations of pupils' behaviour and performance. In physical education, for example, activities were intellectually and physically demanding and this challenged pupils' ability to sustain concentration and persevere. Teachers communicated their enthusiasm for the subject matter very well and had good subject knowledge. This motivated pupils to work hard. Pupils were encouraged to ask questions if they did not understand and teachers' explanations were clear. Relationships were good and this resulted in an orderly-working atmosphere where pupils could develop skills and understanding. Teachers appreciated pupils' views and used praise to increase their confidence. They also encouraged pupils to be open-minded during discussions. Teachers focussed on developing pupils' skills in writing, for example, through the use of outlines or "frames" which provided a structure to follow. This was particularly useful for lower attaining pupils and effectively used in geography lessons. Teachers effectively managed their lessons and this ensured that the whole class could work productively. Good work by pupils was celebrated and this motivated pupils to take pride in their work and respect the efforts of others. Appropriate homework was set regularly and pupils work was carefully and constructively marked. This helped pupils to see how they could improve their performance.

18. Where teaching had weaknesses or was unsatisfactory, or occasionally poor or very poor, lessons lacked pace and challenge. Teachers had not planned the work to meet the needs of all pupils, they did not challenge poor behaviour in the class and so pupils made insufficient progress. Their expectations of pupils were too low. This resulted in higher attaining pupils making insufficient progress and lower attaining pupils struggling. In some modern foreign language lessons, work was not linked to the National Curriculum and there was insufficient emphasis on pupils memorising or using the work taught. Consequently pupils had difficulty in recalling previous learning. In some lessons too few opportunities were provided to promote independent study.

19. Over the last two years, the school has experienced difficulty in recruiting staff in some subject areas such as English, mathematics and design and technology. This has had a negative impact on pupils' learning and standards. Most of the staffing difficulties have been overcome and specialist staff appointed, but some staffing shortages remain. A member of the modern foreign languages department is currently on long-term sick leave and the school has been unable to recruit a specialist temporary teacher. Current arrangements for teaching modern foreign languages to a quarter of the pupils are unsatisfactory and this is having a negative impact on the learning.

20. Satisfactory support is provided for pupils with special educational needs. They show interest in their lessons and work is well planned to meet their needs. A few pupils whose special educational needs relate to behavioural difficulties are not as self-disciplined as they need to be to take full advantage of their lessons.

21. The school provides sound support for the small number of pupils with English as a second language and implements the borough guidelines effectively. A good start has been made to identifying support for gifted and talented pupils and all staff are fully aware of the issues.

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

22. The quality and range of learning opportunities in the curriculum are satisfactory in most respects. A major strength is the variety of extra curricular courses, clubs and sporting opportunities open to pupils and the high numbers that take part in them. This was a weakness in the last inspection and is now a major strength of the school. In the week of the inspection over two hundred pupils were seen in, for example, dance workshops, choir, trampoline, football, rugby and basketball matches or practise sessions. In addition, and throughout the academic year, pupils take part in - or attend in large numbers - music and drama productions and recitals. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have opportunities to take part in revision and "catch-up" clinics, both in term time and during the Easter holiday period before GCSE's.

23. In Years 7 to 9 all the National Curriculum subjects and religious education (RE) are in place, however, there is a lack of ICT across the curriculum. The curriculum is enriched by the addition of drama and personal, social and health education (PSHE). In Years 10 and 11, the National Curriculum subjects are offered together with a range of optional subjects. The introduction of media studies and work-related courses provide added breadth and are very popular with pupils and parents. A small number of pupils, for whom the full quota of GCSE courses is inappropriate, benefit from the vocational opportunities jointly offered by the school and the nearby college of further education. A course in hairdressing and another in motor vehicle maintenance offer alternative learning opportunities relevant to the needs of a small group of pupils. The courses are successful in keeping pupils in school and actively involved and positive about their education. A group of these pupils were observed during a visit to a local supermarket where they had the chance to see for themselves the steps taken to ensure the health and safety of both employees and customers before going on to write a report and log their findings as part of the ICT element of the course. The main weaknesses in the curriculum are in the inequality of opportunity for a group of sixty pupils who do not study a modern foreign language and for whom formal procedures for disapplication and alternative courses have not been provided and the lack of provision of ICT across the curriculum. In these respects, the curriculum whilst having considerable strengths in some areas, does not fully meet statutory requirements and is unsatisfactory.

24. The school provides an appropriate programme of careers education and guidance. Positive relations have been developed with the local community and this has resulted in several curriculum initiatives. The links between the school and local employers have been crucial in the development of work-related courses, extending the range of learning opportunities in several subjects and providing placements for the work experience programme. An employers' conference and opportunities to visit a range of work environments to talk to prospective employers, have 'practice' interviews, and the chance to receive feed-back and guidance, are all highly valued by pupils and parents.

25. There is appropriate provision for sex education and attention to drugs misuse. The recently introduced PSHE programme has been well planned and suitably resourced. It provides relevant activities and materials, for example, how to maintain a healthy life style, the importance of being able to plan, organise and complete homework, crime and punishment and aspects of personal relationships. The course makes a sound contribution to the



development of pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural education. The teaching of PSHE has been removed from tutor time to a weekly lesson. However, the school has not yet fully addressed how best to use the remaining one hour a week of time with the form tutor, which is frequently swallowed up by form administration. The proposed plans for improved liaison for co-ordination of cross-curricular issues and themes for PSHE and the Citizenship programme, indicates a high level of commitment and readiness to implement the revisions to the National Curriculum over the next two years

26. The curricular requirements in the statements of special educational needs are met. Pupils with special educational needs have access to the same curriculum as all other pupils, though this means that those in the second band in Year 10 are unable to study a modern foreign language. The arrangement of classes by ability in most year groups benefits pupils with special educational needs as their classes are usually smaller than others so that these pupils can receive more individual teaching. All pupils on the special educational needs register who should have an individual education plan have one. These plans are detailed and all written to the same format, enabling teachers and support assistants to focus readily on the key features, especially the targets. Targets generally are precise and measurable: this also helps pupils to understand them. Appropriate emphasis is placed on developing the basic skills of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum.

27. Considerable progress has been made since the last inspection, particularly in terms of developing a curriculum that is more relevant and appropriately matched to the needs of pupils. A working party made up of governors, teachers and employers actively sought the views of pupils and parents during the period of change and review. The success of these communications can be seen in the high level of parental satisfaction indicated in the responses of parents at the parents' meeting and to the parent questionnaire. Since the last inspection, considerable progress has been made in improving the curriculum for music and ICT. Nevertheless there still remains much to do in ensuring that coverage of ICT across the curriculum is realised, for example in science, modern foreign languages, design and technology and art.

28. There has been satisfactory improvement in the school's provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which is now satisfactory, overall. Current provision for moral and social development is good.

29. Spiritual development is supported particularly well by religious education lessons where there is a consistent focus on encouraging pupils to reflect on their own and other people's experiences and beliefs. Lessons in art, music and drama make a useful contribution to spiritual awareness, as does dance where pupils show a sense of joy and fascination in their work. In other areas of the curriculum, opportunities to share awe-inspiring moments are missed. Assemblies vary in quality and do not provide a sense of occasion consistently, nor do they meet statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship in full. When assemblies are well thought out with a clear theme, such as pride in effort and achievement linked to the Olympic motto, they contribute well to spiritual development. In general, provision is adequate.

30. In the everyday life of the school, there is strong encouragement for moral and social development of pupils. For example, there are consistently high expectations of standards of behaviour, so pupils are left in no doubt about what is right. In physical education lessons, there is an appropriate emphasis on fair play and games being played in the right spirit. Pupils are expected to look out for each other, particularly anyone who is unhappy or needs help. This is linked to a focus on developing a school community in which all pupils thrive and can learn effectively.

31. Cultural development is satisfactory. Lessons in art, drama and music, including good links with the Queen's theatre, help pupils to recognise and value their own cultural heritage and traditions. Extra-curricular music provides many opportunities for pupils to take part in a range of concerts and performances. In religious education lessons, pupils are encouraged to develop good understanding of major world faiths and to respect different beliefs and cultures. In art, pupils have valuable opportunities to consider the significance of work by artists from around the world. Less attention is paid elsewhere in the curriculum to the vital contributions made by other cultures to modern life, including developments in science, mathematics and technology. Opportunities are missed to help pupils to understand and value people from backgrounds different from their own through use of relevant stories and poetry. As a result, pupils are not particularly well prepared for life in the richly diverse society beyond the local area.

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

32. Overall, the school has good arrangements in place for the care of pupils. Improvements have been made in many areas since the last inspection and strengths have been maintained.

33. The pastoral system of the school is well organised. It is one of the main mechanisms for the delivery of support and guidance. Heads of upper and lower school, appointed since the last inspection, have further improved pastoral provision. Through them, transition from primary schools at the age of eleven and to further education at 16 is well managed. Pupils receive good guidance and support at both stages. Heads of each year and teams of form tutors move with their classes from Year 7 to Year 11 so that pupils and their families are well known to the staff. This helps to create positive relationships. Form tutors are the first point of reference for parents and provide an important pivotal role in the discipline and progress of the pupils.

34. Many new and refined systems are in place for dealing with issues of behaviour, bullying, underachievement and attendance. These have helped to combat poor behaviour and identify at an early stage any pupils having difficulties. Staff and pupils are well aware of the procedures and methods of communication about pupils and the action taken has improved since the last inspection. Staff understand and make use of assessment data to set targets and identify underachievement. When it is well used, it offers a good support to progress. In English, science and art, for example, pupils value the oral and written feedback on their work and the guidance they are given on how to improve. The well established review of pupils' progress in Year 11, prior to GCSE, has been strengthened. Pupils' work, attitudes and targets for examinations are monitored and tutorials held with a member of the pastoral team or another teacher of their choice. Any pupils falling seriously behind in Year 11 or on the borderline of GCSE grades are quickly identified and have regular tutorials with a senior member of staff. This system of private tutorials has proved successful in raising standards and is one which the school is developing for all other years.

35. There is a sustained effort by the whole school to recognise and celebrate achievement and this is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Pupils respond well to merit marks, commendations, awards and certificates. This has had a positive impact on motivation, achievement, self-esteem and a respect for hard work and success in others. The

school works hard to monitor and encourage better attendance. Attendance patterns are regularly reviewed and the school works closely with the education welfare service in cases of repeated absence.

36. The policy on child protection is clear and informative and members of staff are well briefed about procedures. There is a well planned PSHE programme. This is taught by staff with secure subject knowledge, who have good relationships with pupils and encourage the discussion of issues. Policies on school security and health and safety are in place and well understood by staff. Governors and the site manager are fully involved with senior staff in checking the grounds and the buildings and organising repairs. There is a conscientious effort to improve the working conditions and appearance of the buildings to ensure a safe and pleasant working environment. There is nevertheless a problem of litter, particularly metal drink cans which are dangerous when left on the school field. In the design and technology area, there is no dust extraction equipment in any of the workshop areas and equipment containing asbestos has been condemned, but has not yet been taken away or replaced. These health hazards, of which the school is aware, must be resolved.

37. The head of learning support gathers as much information as possible about pupils with special educational needs prior to them joining the school. This information is used to make decisions about class groupings in Year 7 and to write individual education plans which are commendably available to teachers from very early in the autumn term. Pupils' progress in literacy is regularly tested and the information is used during reviews. Before termly and annual reviews, information on pupils' progress is gathered from teachers to inform discussions on how well they are achieving. In this way, all teachers can contribute to planning the next stage of learning for these pupils.

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

38. Links with parents have improved steadily since the last inspection and are now more effective. This is because the school has made great efforts to involve parents in its life and their children's work through better communication.

39. Parents have positive views of the school and feel confident to approach staff with concerns or problems. Almost all parents who attended the parents' meeting or replied to the questionnaire said that the school responds quickly and tried to resolve issues. They recognise that there have been improvements in standards of achievement and behaviour, which pleases them. Parents are no longer kept at arm's length. The school has worked hard to build positive working relationships with parents, resulting in good links with most families that support pupils' achievements effectively. This is seen in better attendance at school events such as parents' evenings and increasing understanding of why regular attendance and homework matter.

40. Parents do not find written reports as helpful as they would like because the grades are confusing. Individual teachers or subjects describe effort and achievement in ways that are not easily understood, particularly when they use standardised scores instead of the expected 1-5 grades or National Curriculum levels. Reports often describe pupils' attitudes rather than what they know, understand and can do. This makes it difficult for parents to understand what their children need to do to improve and how the family can help. Other information such as that in the prospectus is clearer and more helpful for parents.

41. An active core of parents who work hard for the school as governors or members of the parents' association helps to provide useful input to development of policies and ways of improving communication. Many parents help their children with work at home using

computers because their own jobs involve similar skills. A few parents help by running school teams. Others attend the parents' forum each term to find out what is expected of them. A few families are less supportive, in spite of the school's considerable efforts to involve them in their children's welfare and success at school. Parents as a whole make a reasonable contribution to their children's work by encouraging them to come to school on time, to do their homework and to follow school rules. The overall effect is that, in general, the school and parents are working together constructively to support pupils' achievements.

42. The head of learning support takes care to involve parents whose children have special educational needs as fully as possible in their education. Parents are invited to attend termly reviews at the time when their children's progress is being considered. Parents also are invited to attend annual reviews for those children who have statements of educational needs: about two-thirds of parents attend. The head of learning support telephones parents from time to time when need arises. In these ways, the school works in partnership with parents of children who are on the special educational needs register.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

43. The headteacher exercises outstanding leadership. His vision for the development of the school reflects both the school's aims and his own respect for the pupils. In the plan for remedying the serious weaknesses that were found in the inspection that preceded his appointment, and in planning for the school's subsequent development, he has set up effective administrative, academic and pastoral structures. These are clearly focused on establishing a purposeful and supportive school environment. This is designed to enable pupils to achieve well and develop attitudes and behaviour that will equip them to become valuable members of adult society. The senior management team vigorously support the headteacher and share his vision. They and the headteacher lead by example, maintaining a high profile around the school. They ensure good order and encourage pupils, all of whom they know well as individuals. The school's aims and values are shared with all staff and conspicuously promoted on a day-to-day basis, and this is an important factor in sustaining and developing further the positive ethos that now clearly exists. There is a strong sense of common purpose amongst staff and their morale is now high.

44. All staff have job descriptions in which their responsibilities are clearly defined. Staff are encouraged to show initiative, there are clear lines of accountability and communication at all levels are very good. The effectiveness of the senior management team is constantly under review and staff are encouraged to comment on its effectiveness. This is clear evidence of the spirit of openness in which the school is managed. Pastoral management has become very effective following the creation of the posts of head of upper and lower school. The management of individual subjects is mostly good and in some cases very good. Members of the senior management team are line managers to individual departments. The agenda for the line-management is set by the senior management team and is common to all departments. It focuses on the raising of standards of attainment. There is a good system for reporting back so that the senior management team is well informed. Nevertheless, there remain weaknesses in the management of history and modern foreign languages. The effectiveness of individual departments is further promoted through a formal process of self-review that is implemented annually.

45. The effectiveness of the governing body has increased considerably since the previous inspection and governors are now much more aware of developments in the school. They have a good knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Communications were poor but are now very good. The fullest possible information is circulated before their twice-termly meetings. There are appropriate committees and each governor is now linked with a

department. There are good relationships between staff and governors. As yet there is no procedure for governors to report formally on their visits to individual departments and their role as “critical friend” is not yet clearly defined. Governors are now well aware of their responsibilities and discharge them satisfactorily. For the moment the governing body remains heavily dependent on the headteacher over important aspects of their responsibility, such as setting targets for raising attainment and in shaping the strategic direction of the school.

46. There is a very good policy for developing the effectiveness of teaching. Over the past two years the practice of monitoring the quality of teaching has been firmly established. The line manager watches the head of department teaching and completes an observation sheet. This becomes the basis for a subsequent discussion and target setting. It is the responsibility of heads of department to monitor and report on the teaching of their department following the same formula. Heads of department also monitor written work and marking. The inspection found that, despite some inconsistency, this process is successful and valued by individual teachers. The standard of teaching has improved since the previous inspection. Plans for the performance management of teachers have been agreed and will shortly be implemented.

47. The school's priorities for development are very good. The overarching priority is to raise attainment. The school analyses data from national and other tests to calculate the success of teaching and learning. All departments have the fullest available information on pupils' attainment and potential so that teachers can have appropriate expectations of their progress. Targets for future attainment are carefully set. The school fell short of achieving the targets that it had set as a goal for GCSE attainment in 2000, but these were very challenging. The recent agenda for development has centred round the Key Issues from the previous inspection, which have now been fully or substantially met. The current wide-ranging school development plan is a model of clarity and very well constructed. Costs have been carefully calculated, with suitable monitoring procedures, timescales and criteria for success. Specific targets are directly related to the status, size and effectiveness of the school. The plan was compiled after wide discussion; it reflects departmental priorities and a very strong and shared commitment to improvement amongst departments, the senior management team and the governing body. The school now has appropriate structures in place for raising attainment. There is a strong capacity in almost all areas of the school for successful further development.

48. Satisfactory improvement in the school's provision for special educational needs since the last inspection has been maintained. The budget for special educational needs has been increased significantly, adding to that already earmarked in the school's overall budget allocation. This increase enables the head of learning support to have more time than previously to organise the special educational needs provision and to liaise with outside agencies. The school has appointed a team of support assistants: they are having a clear impact on pupils' progress and attitudes. The deployment of the support assistants is better organised by the head of learning support than was previously the case. The arrangement for overseeing their work, while useful as far as it goes, does not involve any firsthand observation of their in-class support activities. The majority of learning support assistants have received suitable training.

49. Financial planning is astute and the school applies the principles of best value. Financial management is the responsibility of a deputy headteacher. The school has now used the surplus funds that had accumulated two years ago to enhance the level of resources. All expenditure is very carefully justified in terms of the school's and departmental development plans. There is appropriate tendering and research to secure best value for money. Specific grants, such as that for special educational needs, are scrupulously spent for their designated purpose. The very careful financial prediction and monitoring are carried out with the aid of

computers. The widespread use of information and communication technology for administration significantly enhances the efficiency of the school's day-to-day organisation, record keeping and communications. To improve efficiency, appropriate accommodation has been provided through adaptations of existing rooms for the enlarged senior management team. The head's room is now situated suitably close to the main area of circulation to confirm the high profile he constantly maintains with the pupils.

50. The number, qualifications and experience of staff in almost all subject areas are satisfactory. However, the school has faced difficulties in recruiting permanent staff in some subjects, and specialist temporary teachers are not always available to cover vacancies. This has had an impact on pupils' attainment in subjects, such as design and technology. Staffing shortages within modern foreign languages have resulted in a significant number of pupils being denied the opportunity to pursue the study of a language beyond Year 9. A significant number of new staff have been appointed over the past two years in order to meet the demand of rising rolls. Pupils' learning is enhanced by the effective use of learning support assistants who provide valuable support for pupils with special education needs. The numbers of technicians and clerical staff have been increased in line with the increase in pupil numbers.

51. All staff are encouraged to pursue their own development and be aware of training required to implement the school development plan. Progress has been made in training teachers to use ICT within their teaching. A programme of training to introduce new teachers to the school is well established. Newly qualified teachers are able to observe good practice and become familiar with the school by joining the school towards the end of the summer term before their teaching duties commence.

52. The school has adequate accommodation for the number of pupils currently on roll. Pupil numbers are expected to rise over the next five years and the school has identified a need for an improvement in areas such as the science accommodation. The replacement of a poor quality laboratory is soon to take place. Displays of pupils' work and school life are visible in classrooms and corridors and are an attractive feature of the school. Pupils have expressed their appreciation of the benches and tables that have been provided for their use outside. Accommodation issues identified in the previous inspection report have been addressed, particularly with regard to technology.

53. Resources for learning are satisfactory overall, and good in many areas of the curriculum. Departments have had an increase in funding since the last inspection and this has enabled issues raised in the previous report to be addressed. Further investment in computers is necessary if the school is to allow access in areas other than business studies and ICT. The school library opening hours have been extended since the last inspection: governors have recognised the need to improve further library facilities and provide a resource centre that will incorporate the use of ICT.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

54. Building on the good improvement made over the last two years, and to raise standards further, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

- (1) improve standards in modern foreign languages by;
  - improving the quality of teaching and ensuring that pupils are taught consistently by specialist staff with full knowledge of the National Curriculum;

- ensuring there is equality of opportunity for pupils in Years 10 and 11 to study a modern foreign language;
  - meet statutory requirements for modern foreign languages in Years 10 and 11 by ensuring that the correct procedures for disapplication from the National Curriculum are followed and alternative courses are provided;
  - improving the quality of leadership and management of the department;  
*(2, 6, 15, 18-19, 23, 44, 50, 120-128)*
- (2) meet statutory requirements for information technology within other subjects, so that pupils cover National Curriculum requirements and achieve appropriate standards;
- the school has identified this as an area for improvement in the school development plan and work is already under way;  
*(6, 23, 27, 64, 76, 85, 90, 92, 97, 114, 117, 119, 150, 156)*
- (3) improve the quality of teaching, particularly when pupils are taught by non-specialist temporary staff by;
- further sharing the good practice that exists;
  - ensuring that work is well matched to the needs of all pupils in a class;
  - ensuring that all staff are aware of school procedures;
  - ensuring that temporary teachers are given clear and detailed guidance on what should be taught in each lesson;
  - further developing teachers' skills in the management of pupils with behavioural difficulties.  
*(18-20, 50, 63, 73, 83, 92, 103, 110)*

*(The numbers in italics show the main paragraphs in which these issues are discussed within the report.)*

55. The report also identifies some other issues which governors may wish to include in the action plan to be developed following this inspection. They include:

- further increase opportunities for pupils to work independently and take responsibility, including organising their own work in class and at home;  
*(12,88)*
- ensure that spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors are consistently corrected in all subjects; *(7, 61)*
- improve leadership and management in history; *(44, 110)*
- increase opportunities for pupils to understand and value people from backgrounds different from their own; *(31)*
- consider how best to use the one hour a week of time with the form tutor;  
*(25)*
- improve the quality of written reports for parents, particularly the grading system; *(40)*
- address the health hazards, as planned; *(36. 97)*
- improve the library facilities, as planned; *(53)*
- meet statutory requirements for a daily act of worship. *(29)*

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	131
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	49

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	22	39	32	4	1	1

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

### Information about the school's pupils

#### Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7– Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	881	-
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	104	-

#### Special educational needs

	Y7– Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	14	-
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	155	-

#### English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	25

#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	36
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	19

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.9
National comparative data	7.9

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
National comparative data	1.1

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



### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	1999	88	71	159

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	52	62	49
	Girls	51	33	30
	Total	103	95	79
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	65 (59)	60 (65)	50 (42)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	21 (24)	30 (33)	13(13)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	55	65	56
	Girls	48	38	30
	Total	103	103	86
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	66 (71)	66 (66)	55 (63)
	National	64 (62)	64 (64)	60 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	32 (35)	31 (37)	29 (27)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (31)

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	74	63	137

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	26	73	73
	Girls	33	59	60
	Total	59	132	133
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	43 (50)	96 (96)	97 (100)
	National	46.6 (44.6)	90.9 (89.8)	95.8 (95.2)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	37 (37)
	National	38 (36.8)

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

### Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	5
Black – other	0
Indian	10
Pakistani	4
Bangladeshi	2
Chinese	6
White	773
Any other minority ethnic group	21

### Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other	1	
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	100	
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)	44.0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.9:1

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

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

Total number of education support staff	15
Total aggregate hours worked per week	337

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

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7– Y11**

Key Stage 3	27.4
Key Stage 4	22.0

### **Financial information**

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	2225736
Total expenditure	2230396
Expenditure per pupil	2994
Balance brought forward from previous year	82245
Balance carried forward to next year	77585

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	881
Number of questionnaires returned	93

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	54	40	5	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	47	42	4	0	6
Behaviour in the school is good.	29	59	4	1	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	30	52	12	1	5
The teaching is good.	47	45	2	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	46	35	5	1	12
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	69	27	3	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	70	27	2	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	47	42	5	0	5
The school is well led and managed.	68	28	0	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	46	45	2	0	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	42	40	5	0	13

### Other issues raised by parents

56. At the meeting for parents and carers held before the inspection, parents were very positive about improvements that had taken place since the appointment of the new headteacher. Some parents felt that standards and the quality of teaching in modern foreign languages were too low. A few parents expressed concern over pupils' behaviour on the school buses and perceived overcrowding. During the inspection week inspectors checked as pupils came into and left school. A good level of supervision by senior members of staff was observed. This ensured that pupils got onto the buses in an orderly manner. The school has successfully negotiated with the bus company to get an additional bus.

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

### **ENGLISH**

57. Results in GCSE English and GCSE English Literature have improved since the last inspection in line with the trend nationally. In 1999, the results were close to the national average. Compared with the results in other subjects in 1999, pupils did better in English than in mathematics or science. Girls outperformed boys, but the difference was not so great as the difference nationally. Overall, the results for 2000 were similar to those for 1999. However, the proportion of pupils, especially boys, gaining GCSE A\* and A grades rose significantly from 1999. Although an unusually high twelve percent of the year group was not entered for either examination, all other pupils were entered for both subjects.

58. The evidence of pupils' work and from observing lessons shows that pupils presently in Years 10 and 11 are achieving satisfactory standards and making sound progress. Pupils become more fluent speakers. They readily volunteer to answer questions in class and an emphasis on working in pairs and groups gives good opportunities for learning through oral activities. Most however still lack confidence in more formal speaking or in developing their ideas in discussion and debate. Pupils at this age show less interest in reading for pleasure. Pupils are involved in reading novels and plays for GCSE and, with teacher guidance, are successful in reading texts closely to look for information to support their work. Even the weaker readers volunteer to read aloud in class and enjoy taking a part in play scripts. Accurate writing continues to present a problem for many pupils although they are helped to develop their ideas and correct their mistakes by thorough drafting and the use of structured writing frames. There are some notable achievements amongst the lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs. Amongst the higher attainers, there are cases of well crafted extended pieces of writing, produced independently, particularly in response to GCSE literature texts, media and language assignments. Year 11 projects on stereotypes on the football field and another on stereotypes in the classroom were highly amusing, cleverly written and immaculately word processed. Pupils' knowledge is good as a result of sharply-focused teaching, which prepares them thoroughly for their examinations, and well chosen subject matter and texts which interest them. Many display high level skills in drafting and redrafting and, when using a computer, their work is thoroughly checked and excellently presented.

59. Results in the statutory national tests at the end of Year 9 have risen over the past four years in line with the national trend. In 1999, pupils reached standards which were in line with the national average for all schools and average for similar schools. As in GCSE, pupils did better in English than in mathematics and science and, although girls did better than boys, the gap between them in English at this stage was not as significant as that found nationally.

60. In the lessons observed and as shown by the work in their books, pupils in Years 7 to 9 are achieving satisfactorily. Overall, pupils join the school with average attainment and make steady progress. Pupils speak with ease when answering direct questions from the teacher and giving straight answers but they frequently lack the opportunity to give longer presentations to the class. Reading standards vary widely. Good progress is often made as a result of regular use of the library, reading initiatives in lessons and form tutor time; this is having a positive impact on reading standards and on the pleasure pupils gain from reading. Most pupils write satisfactorily in a variety of styles depending on the task and they are helped to structure their work by simple writing frames. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress especially when receiving extra support in class. Pupils in a Year 9 class working on the theme of 'Friendship' used appropriate language, imagination and

humour in their plays, advertisements and magazine problem pages. Higher attaining pupils have the concentration and perseverance to spend time refining and polishing their writing. However, the quality of pupils' finished work is sometimes affected by weaknesses in reading and writing and their poor pronunciation affects spelling. Many pupils confuse standard and colloquial English for different types of writing.

61. In other subjects, the skills of reading and writing are satisfactory. Much work has been done by the school to focus on literacy skills across all subjects. There is evidence that standards of literacy are improving where opportunities are created for wide reading and a range of writing styles and when teacher expectations of literacy are high. In geography, there are examples of writing frames which help pupils to plan, take notes and structure their work, and also good systems of drafting and redrafting for refining ideas in finished essays. There is an awareness in some lessons, for example, in science of the need to develop extended writing. In most subjects teachers insist on the use of correct technical vocabulary. In drama, for example, even the youngest pupils finish their lessons by writing down what they have learned with definitions of the new techniques encountered like 'role play', 'freeze' and 'group and team support'. However, pupils' written work is often marred by poor spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors, and without a consistent approach to correcting errors, pupils are often careless.

62. Pupils' attitudes are good. They behave well in lessons, are polite and they rise well to challenges that are presented to them. They enjoy the topics studied. In Year 11, for example, pupils were clearly moved the moment they discovered that the characters in the novel 'Of Mice and Men' were all lonely and isolated. Classroom relationships are particularly good. Pupils like knowing their levels of attainment and how they are progressing. They all have targets to aim for – though they are not always clear on how to achieve them. They appreciate and respond well to the detailed marking and monitoring of work by their teachers. However, some opportunities are missed by pupils to use their own initiative and develop their work independently because of over-reliance on their teachers.

63. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. A significant proportion of the lessons seen were good or very good, particularly in Years 10 and 11. The best teaching is characterised by good planning, very good preparation of materials and high expectations of pupils' work and conduct. Good work by pupils is celebrated with merit certificates and attractive displays on classroom walls. This motivates pupils to do their best, take a pride in their work and have respect for the efforts of others. Lessons start promptly, instructions are clear, a number of short, timed tasks are set and activities are varied to keep interest alive. The quality and use of assessment data is good and, by linking test scores to current work, teachers are able to identify underachievement and potential at an early stage. Homework is regularly set. However, several weaknesses were observed in lessons in which the teaching was just satisfactory. The start of lessons is sometimes too slow with too many distractions and pupils' interest is lost when learning objectives are not explained or are too vague. Pupils are sometimes taught as if they all work and learn at the same pace and this creates a lack of challenge for the higher attaining pupils whilst leaving the lower attainers struggling. The recent promotion of a teacher to another school has left a gap that is proving difficult to fill and this is having an impact on teaching within the department.

64. The English curriculum is carefully planned to give pupils a wide range of experiences including some media study as they move through the school. The 'Holiday Journal' for personal writing, given to all eleven year olds in the summer before they start Year 7, creates a very good link between primary and secondary school. Extra-curricular provision is good. It includes visits to the theatre, 'catch-up clinics' and extra revision sessions before the examinations. Provision for ICT is adequate but pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to use computers as a source of reference in lessons, nor for working independently. However,

much work is word processed by pupils at home. The department has good shared leadership and a committed team. It has clear educational direction, evident in its planning, and well managed and produced resources.

65. Strengths noted in the last inspection have been sustained. There is an improvement in attainment at GCSE. Access to the library has improved with its longer opening times, though it is short of books and media material. The strong ethos of working for success in the department continues to make a good contribution to the standards pupils achieve and the progress they make.

## **MATHEMATICS**

66. GCSE results in mathematics have fluctuated since the last inspection. In 1999 the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\* to C fell below the national average for comprehensive schools: for grades A\* to G however, the performance was above the national average for both boys and girls. Pupils did better in mathematics than in many other subjects. In 2000 there was an improvement in performance at grades A\* to C bringing results closer to the national average. In both 1999 and 2000 the performance of girls was better than that of boys.

67. The evidence of the pupils' work and the lessons observed showed that throughout Years 10 and 11 pupils' achievement is satisfactory and they make satisfactory progress. There were examples of good work seen at all ability levels. High attaining pupils were able to use algebraic and graphical methods with confidence and accuracy. Good work from lower attaining pupils was particularly noticeable in the handling of data, they were able to calculate and interpret measures of averages such as mean, median and mode. Pupils with special education needs make satisfactory progress.

68. In the national tests at the end of Year 9 results have fluctuated since the last inspection. In 1999 results were just below the national average. The school has taken appropriate steps to raise standards in mathematics and so this is not a key issue. Results were marginally below those of similar schools. They were better than those obtained in science and below those obtained in English. The results for 2000 were broadly similar and there is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and that of girls.

69. When compared to their earlier attainment, pupils' achievement in mathematics is satisfactory with sound progress being made by pupils at all ability levels. Higher and middle attaining pupils in Year 9 were able to use and understand scale factors. They demonstrated good knowledge of data handling and were confident when working with algebraic expressions and equations. Pupils in the lower ability groups grasped the concept of symmetry and were confident in drawing statistical tables and plotting co-ordinates. Pupils with special educational needs made satisfactory progress and demonstrated a sound understanding of basic arithmetical operations.

70. Pupils apply their numeracy skills in a number of other subjects. For example, in science pupils measure, weigh, estimate and record results. In other subjects such as history and physical education, pupils demonstrate skill in interpreting statistical information. In design and technology, pupils plot results onto graphs and interpret the results well.

71. Overall, the teaching observed was satisfactory. Almost all teaching was satisfactory and there were a number of good or very good lessons. Teachers are confident and secure in their subject knowledge; this confidence extends to those who teach part time or on an occasional basis within the department. In general, the management of pupils is good and there is a good rapport between teachers and pupils. Where teaching is good, lessons are well prepared, teachers have high expectations and lesson objectives are clearly conveyed to

pupils. The short, sharp focus on mental arithmetic, which is used at the start of most lessons, is effective and enjoyed by pupils. Homework is regularly set. Pupils' work is thoroughly marked and they receive encouragement for good work. Good practice was observed in those cases where the marking contained constructive advice for improvement.

72. Teachers are aware of those pupils who have special needs and for whom individual education plans exist. Learning support staff worked well alongside teachers and are a valuable resource in the bid to raise standards of attainment. The effectiveness of the learning support varied as prior discussion between teacher and support staff had not always taken place. Overall, the support provided was satisfactory.

73. The weaknesses observed were few in number and occurred mainly in aspects of classroom management and effectively involving pupils in their work. For example, the mixed ability grouping in Year 7 was not always fully catered for and the more able pupils were not given extension activities to enable them to make rapid progress.

74. In almost all lessons, pupils' attitudes and behaviour were good or very good. In cases where behaviour was unsatisfactory, pupils had insufficient work to challenge them or there had been a lack of resources. For example, Year 8 pupils became frustrated over a lack of scientific calculators which were essential for the work that had been set.

75. The department provides extra support for pupils through lunchtime clubs, which are open to pupils in all year groups. Some pupils returned at the end of school for further help and encouragement. Revision classes held during the Easter holiday attracted in excess of 50 pupils and were led by teachers.

76. Leadership of the department is good. Colleagues within the department are valued and contribute towards the push for higher standards of attainment. There is regular monitoring of pupils' work, and target setting is taking place. The use of ICT is limited by the availability of the specialist rooms. Issues raised in the last inspection have been addressed and the department has the capacity to improve further.

## **SCIENCE**

77. GCSE results in 1999 were similar to those reached at the time of the last inspection. In 1999, the results for double award science, the examination taken by 95 percent of the year group, were just below the national average for grades A\*-C and just above average for A\*-G. Compared with GCSE results in their other subjects in 1999, boys did relatively better than girls who did not attain in science as well as they did in their other subjects. The results for 2000 show some improvement compared with 1999 and are close to the better results obtained in 1998. Boys and girls reached similar standards in GCSE science in 2000. Two-thirds of the small number of pupils entered for single award science gained a pass grade. Overall, the results for the past four years have been near to the national averages.

78. The evidence in pupils' work and from observing lessons shows that pupils presently in Years 10 and 11 generally are achieving satisfactory standards, particularly in developing knowledge of science. Occasionally, the work does not challenge the more able pupils sufficiently, so that they do not have to work as hard as they could to develop their understanding. This applies particularly during practical work where pupils are not required to show much initiative in planning and carrying out routine investigations. As a result, their skills and understanding are not developing as well as is their knowledge. The written reports of these investigations are often short and superficial. Opportunities are missed, therefore, to develop pupils' writing skills through science: expectations are not high enough in this respect.



Despite these weaknesses, achievement by pupils preparing for both double and single award GCSE is satisfactory.

79. In the 1999 statutory tests for fourteen year olds, pupils reached standards that were broadly in line with the national average for all schools. This was an improvement on the result of the previous year and similar to that at the time of the previous inspection. However, the 1999 results were below the average for similar schools. Pupils at the school attained higher in English and mathematics than they did in science. Over the four years to 1999, boys did better than girls, though both fell below their national averages for science by a significant amount. Boys also outperformed girls in 2000, when the overall result fell below that for 1999, though the national average stayed the same.

80. In the lessons observed and as shown by work in their books, pupils in Years 7 to 9 are achieving satisfactorily. Pupils join the school in Year 7 with average attainment. They progress steadily during the next three years and reach broadly average standards. However, in lessons when teaching is good or better, pupils achieve particularly well. For example, in a lesson on acids, pupils did not lose a moment when they worked together learning how to detect the strength of acids, and achieved well. The same good achievement occurred in another class where pupils were studying patterns of chemical reactions. Here also, high teaching expectations, a very orderly learning environment and the brisk pace of learning led to these good results. Weaknesses in practical skills, particularly testing hypotheses, seen at the time of the last inspection continue in some classes.

81. Pupils with special educational needs, both those with learning needs and those with behavioural difficulties, make satisfactory progress in science. The great majority of these pupils are interested in the work provided for them and try hard. When special educational needs support assistants are allocated to science lessons, their contribution is shown in the further progress pupils make.

82. Judged by its impact on pupils' learning, the quality of the teaching observed during the inspection was satisfactory overall, with a significant minority of good and very good teaching. Teaching and learning in this sample was better in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. While there are still some weaknesses, teaching has improved since the previous inspection. In the best lessons, planning is thorough so that all pupils have enough work to keep them busy learning. In these lessons, care is taken to find out what pupils remember and understand of previous work, and then to build on this. Pupils are taught what to do next so that they do not have to wait for others to finish before going on to the next stage of learning. Consequently, time is very well used, helped by the preparation of resources by the well organised technicians. Teaching explanations are clear and pupils are encouraged to ask questions if they do not understand. Relationships are very good, leading to a busy working atmosphere in the laboratories where pupils enjoy the scientific investigations and other interesting work. They work hard and develop their scientific knowledge, understanding and skills. Homework tasks follow on from the lessons that often finish with a check on what pupils have learnt.

83. There are, however, some weaknesses in teaching, in addition to the lack of match of work to the needs of all pupils in a class. These weaknesses are present in teaching which is otherwise satisfactory overall, and slow down the rate at which pupils learn. Insufficient attention is paid in some lessons to developing scientific procedures, particularly making predictions based on scientific knowledge and understanding and carrying out investigations using the fair test principle. This weakness means that pupils do not develop their understanding as quickly as they could. Very little use is made of ICT due to lack resources.

84. The great majority of pupils are well behaved in the laboratories, show interest in science and co-operate with their teachers. They concentrate during teaching, some readily try to answer questions and a few ask questions of their own. Equipment and materials are used safely. Pupils work together well during practical work: in this way science contributes to pupils' social development. Occasionally a few boys call out during lessons and are a distraction to others; this slows down the pace of learning and teaching does not always manage this unsatisfactory situation successfully. Overall, however, pupils' behaviour in laboratories has improved, compared with that reported at the last inspection.

85. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. The quite recently appointed head of department is working effectively with the science teachers to bring about further improvements, all with the aim of raising standards. The teaching scheme for pupils aged eleven to fourteen is being changed to follow that recommended nationally: this will enable teachers to plan more readily for the more able pupils in a class. The arrangement of classes by ability in Years 8 and 9 is generally working well. It is helping teachers to cater more easily for the whole ability range, including pupils with special educational needs. Teaching is by permanent science specialists and the management of the department has been further strengthened by the appointment of key stage co-ordinators. The necessary improvement to the use of ICT is at an advanced planning stage, with a science ICT co-ordinator appointed to lead this development. Weaknesses in teaching now should be addressed so that the benefits from improvements to the curriculum will result in higher standards by pupils.

## **ART**

86. Standards in GCSE art examinations are well above the results nationally and the standards in schools with a similar intake. Overall, pupils perform considerably better in art than in other subjects. The number of A\*-C grades and the number of higher grades has increased over recent years. Overall attainment of pupils currently enrolled on the examination course is above average. Pupils seen during the week of the inspection, including those with special needs, were making very good progress. They showed a developing understanding of artists' work, from different times and cultural traditions, and used this to inform large-scale paintings, drawings and three-dimensional work. Whilst some pupils rely heavily on the class teacher to suggest how their ideas can be extended and developed, for example in different materials and media, most work independently with imagination and increasing confidence. Higher attaining pupils make good use of assessment information to address any weaknesses and gaps in their coursework portfolios and build on their strengths. Many use computers to gather historical research but very few have the skills to use them creatively to manipulate images.

87. Standards at age fourteen are in line with those expected for the age group. A significant number of pupils attain higher standards. The standards seen in lessons suggest whilst pupils enter the school with limited skills and experience of the subject they make good progress. After only three weeks in the school pupils in a Year 7 class were able to use their drawings and close observations of snail shells to model and build a hollow container based on the shell shape. In Year 9, although the work of previous years seen in their sketchbooks did not always reflect the high quality work and the same rate of progress seen in lessons, pupils showed a high level of critical decision-making and creativity. For example, in a lesson where pupils were introduced to the work and influences of fashion designer Issey Miyake, they used the clothing found on 18th century Japanese wood-blocks as inspiration for their own designs. The resulting sketches and drawings on the human figure were in proportion, showed an understanding of tonal wash and line drawing and imaginative folding, twisting and

draping of the fabric. Attainment by the majority of pupils in this higher band class was above the standard expected for their age.

88. Learning is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. New and established skills are systematically developed and refined leading to very good achievement. Time is well used and a lot of work is covered during lessons. Pupils work hard, have very positive attitudes and behave well. However, skills for independent learning are less well developed. Some pupils cannot maintain the same high standard and the depth of study in their homework as they can in lessons. In Years 10 and 11 pupils' independent learning skills are helped considerably by the structure of the examination course and the use made of assessment criteria. It is very effective in helping pupils sustain their interest and motivation. Only a small number, whose behaviour and commitment to succeed is less positive, need the constant attention of the class teacher to ensure they complete the body of work required of them. The department has a record of success in helping disaffected pupils become interested and involved in their work and go on to achieve good examination results.

89. Teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in the Year 10 and 11 examination classes. Most of the teaching observed during the inspection was very good. Teachers have excellent skills, knowledge and understanding and their expertise and experience is very effective in motivating and inspiring pupils. The activities are carefully planned, stimulating and very challenging: expectations are very high, reflected in the very good achievement seen in lessons. Excellent use is made of the available time and resources. Pupils are encouraged by the progress they make and, in turn, this contributes to the good relationships and behaviour and a shared determination for higher standards. A promising start has been made to develop aspects of the school literacy policy within the subject. In Years 7 to 9 the quality of work seen in the majority of sketchbooks although broadly satisfactory, in some cases does not mirror the same progress and high standard of work seen in lessons.

90. The subject is very well managed. Standards have continued to rise since the last inspection and the quality of teaching has improved significantly. The development of computer aided imagery, highlighted in the last inspection report as an area for development, remains a key point for action.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

91. GCSE results in design technology have improved considerably since the last inspection. However, in 1999 the results were still slightly below the national average for comprehensive schools. The proportion of pupils gaining A\* to C has risen significantly, and the proportion gaining A\* to G increased to above the national average. The upward trend has been maintained in 2000. However, a significant number of pupils were not entered for the examination. If these pupils are taken into account the proportion gaining at least a G grade is well below the national average. Pupils continue to do better in the graphics examination than in other design and technology subjects. However, the results for other subjects have also continued to improve. Higher attaining pupils gain A\* and A grades. Girls outperformed boys in 1999, and did well in relation to girls nationally in terms of the proportion gaining A\* to C and A\* to G grades.

92. Pupils make satisfactory and often good progress in the production course work folders. Content is often well researched and presented to a very high standard in all design technology subjects, and the best work is of an excellent standard. The structured approach used to address the design process enables all pupils to organise their work, carry out research, develop their ideas and produce solutions to identified problems. However, in some cases the time and effort used in presenting work is not matched by the depth and quality of

the content included. The quality of work varies with ability but many pupils with special educational needs achieve good outcomes. There is very good use of ICT in some folders. However, overall there is insufficient evidence of the use of computers to support pupils' work. Finished products indicate that pupils develop satisfactory practical skills using a variety of materials. Some graphics work is outstandingly good. In the current Year 11 some groups of pupils lack sufficient depth in their knowledge of materials and techniques to complete practical assignments of good quality. This is the result of frequent staff changes which have taken place over the last year.

93. The results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 have been above the national average. However, the evidence gained from lesson observation and pupils' work indicates that these assessments tend to over estimate what pupils have achieved. The standard of work of pupils currently in Year 9 is in line with the national expectation. The curriculum is well structured and enables all pupils to take part in a variety of set tasks which develop their knowledge and skills, and apply these in appropriate designing and making activities which result in good practical outcomes in a variety of materials. The quality of work varies between teaching groups and the way in which individual teachers deliver the department's schemes of work. Some folder and practical work is of a high standard but, in some cases, individual pieces of work are not complete and not sufficiently well organised in folders to support future learning.

94. When compared to their earlier attainment, pupils make satisfactory progress through Years 7 to 9. In Year 7 pupils are quick to learn how to draw in three-dimensions. Year 8 pupils develop knowledge of metals, the tools used to mark out and shape mild steel, and the safe use of the drilling machine when working on a coat peg. Year 9 sketch a good range of individual ideas for a CD rack but are less successful in converting these ideas into working drawings. In most lessons, teachers develop aspects of technical language through oral work but this is not always sufficiently reinforced by written work. Opportunities to develop numeracy skills are included through measurement, marking out, electronics work, and recording the results of surveys in graphical form. The use of these skills in the practical context helps pupils to make progress. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress and pupils of higher ability make good progress.

95. In Years 7 to 9, almost all teaching was satisfactory or better. The range was from excellent to unsatisfactory. In Years 10 and 11, all teaching was satisfactory or better and some was good and very good. The most effective teaching was seen in graphics and resistant materials lessons. However, one resistant materials lesson was unsatisfactory because some unsafe practice in the use of cutting tools was observed. Most teachers have good technical knowledge and this is reflected in their lesson planning. There is some very good planning but in weaker lessons, pupils' activities are not sufficiently focussed and this results in ineffective use of time. In the majority of lessons, teachers' expectations of behaviour and performance are suitably high and pupils respond very positively by showing interest in their work and good levels of concentration. In the best lessons, for example in Year 8 resistant materials, the management of pupils and resources is very good with well prepared teaching materials and well structured pupils' activities. Assessment procedures are good with individual support and discussion about pupils' work. Marking is carried out regularly with some good use of written comments. The careful structuring of learning objectives in Years 10 and 11 enables pupils of all abilities, including those with special needs, to address the tasks set.

96. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are mainly good and very good. All pupils settle to work and there is a positive culture for learning in most lessons. Pupils respond well to their teachers' high expectations of behaviour. Pupils are keen to do well in their work. They concentrate in

lessons and many spend considerable time and effort outside of lessons in improving their work.

97. The positive developments in the use of computers within the department are being affected by the lack of access to appropriate hardware. Leadership and management are good and this has been instrumental in overcoming the problems caused by staffing difficulties. Departmental documentation is good and there is a very positive approach to monitoring the development and improvement of the subject. Accommodation for food technology is now satisfactory but aspects of provision for resistant materials are unsatisfactory. Some heat treatment equipment has been condemned and there is no provision for dust extraction in any workshop. Resources are generally satisfactory. Risk assessments are being carried out but need to be followed through more vigorously.

98. In spite of recent staffing difficulties, the department is improving. Although GCSE grades have been below the national average there has been a considerable improvement in all of the contributory subjects. Course work is of a good standard and higher ability pupils realise their potential by producing work of a very high standard and achieving the highest grades.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

99. GCSE results at A\* - C grades have remained below the national average since the last inspection. However, these results need to be seen in the context of the very small cohorts, which in 1999 and 2000 consisted of only thirteen pupils. The evidence of pupils' work and the lessons observed showed that standards at the beginning of Years 10 and 11 are broadly in line with the national standard and pupils are making satisfactory progress. The geography department also teaches GCSE travel and tourism. Standards achieved by pupils following this course are below national expectations, but reflected their lower prior attainment. This course will be examined for the first time in 2001.

100. The results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 1999 were broadly in line with the national average but, in contrast to the national picture, boys outperformed girls. In 2000, teacher assessments were below the national average. In both years, girls performed less well than girls nationally. When compared with their earlier attainment and their attainment in other subjects, pupils' achievement in geography is generally satisfactory and they make sound progress. Pupils with special educational needs also make satisfactory progress.

101. By the age of 14 pupils are beginning to use a range of geographical skills, which they have developed through enquiry work such as their investigation into microclimates within the school. They are also able to carry out surveys and present data using a range of graphical techniques. Pupils have a sound knowledge and understanding of places, patterns and processes and are able to use geographical terminology confidently, for example when discussing plate tectonics. Currently insufficient opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their fieldwork skills. By the age of 16, pupils have increased their geographical knowledge and understanding and are able to make good use of case study materials, as for example in their work on environmental issues such as flooding.

102. Teaching was at least satisfactory and was often good or very good. Strengths in the teaching included high expectations of pupils' behaviour that were consistent throughout the department. Good pace and a variety of challenging tasks were used with Year 10 when investigating the cause and effects of flooding. Teachers used skilful questioning, a range of resources and a thorough command of their subject to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding, for example in a Year 9 lesson on the consequences of earthquakes.

103. Weaknesses in teaching included a slow pace and the overuse of video. In Year 7 lessons, work did not always effectively build on pupils' existing knowledge and this resulted in pupils repeating work they had already completed in their primary school. The standard of marking varied with some teachers giving very little guidance on what pupils needed to do to improve their work.

104. The pupils' attitude and behaviour were always satisfactory and in half of all lessons it was very good or excellent. Pupils worked co-operatively and often with great enthusiasm, for example when Year 7 pupils conducted a class survey. Year 10 pupils also gave confident presentations on the causes and effects of flooding in two case studies.

105. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. More use is now made of the Internet for research purposes and the degree of challenge set in homework is appropriate. The department is now well placed for further improvement. The new head of department has a clear view of the changes needed to move the geography department forward. This includes improving the schemes of work to give greater emphasis to learning outcomes.

## **HISTORY**

106. GCSE results in History have fluctuated since the last inspection. Results at A\* - C grades in 1998 and 2000 were below the national average and in 1999 they were well below. Results at A\* - G grades were around the national average in all years. Pupils did less well in history than in their other subjects.

107. The evidence of pupils' work and the lessons observed showed that standards at the beginning of Year 11 are a little below the national standard. Most pupils are able to produce detailed notes and pupils with higher prior attainment are able to write structured extended answers. However, in response to textbook exercises or practice GCSE questions many pupils did not fully support and explain their answers. Some pupils also had difficulty in understanding concepts central to the course, such as communism and capitalism.

108. The results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were broadly in line with the national average in 1999 but, in contrast to the national picture, boys significantly outperformed girls. In 2000, teacher assessments were just above the national average with boys doing less well than girls but better than boys nationally. The standard of work of pupils currently in Year 9 was in line with the national average. Pupils are strongest when writing historical narratives and researching facts. Their historical enquiry skills are less well developed. When compared with their earlier attainment, pupils' achievement and rate of progress varies between classes throughout the school, and is closely linked to the quality of teaching.

109. Overall, the quality of teaching observed was satisfactory, but ranged from good to poor. This compares unfavourably with the previous inspection report. Strengths in the teaching included thorough planning and preparation, for example in a Year 11 lesson on the American civil rights movement. This enabled pupils to make effective use of the Internet for research and good teacher intervention kept them on task and challenged their thinking. Other strengths included good pace and a varied range of activities, as in a Year 9 lesson on Arkwright. Teaching was most effective when the teacher had good classroom management and high expectations of pupil behaviour. The weaknesses observed in teaching, in a few lessons, were mainly poor classroom management, low expectations and a slow pace. For example, in a Year 9 lesson on the Agricultural Revolution pupils were not encouraged to

develop their answers and poor behaviour went unchallenged. As a result little progress was made by the majority of pupils.

110. Overall, pupils' attitudes and behaviour were satisfactory, but ranged from very good to poor. Key features of their positive attitude were their ability to work co-operatively with great enthusiasm. They also applied themselves to challenging tasks and took pride in their written work. In the few lessons where pupils' attitudes and behaviour were less than satisfactory, they did little work, were noisy and did not listen to the teacher or their classmates. Such behaviour was linked to weaknesses in teaching.

111. The leadership and management of the department are unsatisfactory. There is no scheme of work for the GCSE course and planning for other years provides insufficient support for non-specialists on how to teach history. Progress since the last inspection is also unsatisfactory. Planning still does not take sufficient account of progression in skill development; a lack of challenge remains a concern in some lessons and GCSE results are still below the national average.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

112. In 1999 and 2000 pupils' GCSE results in ICT were slightly above the national average for all comprehensive schools and the school average, a significant improvement in the short time since the last inspection. In 2000, over half of all girls and boys entered achieved grades A\*-C, and girls' results were well above the national average. Nearly 100 percent of all pupils gained grades A\*-G, above national and school averages. Improved standards reflect new specialist staff and increased computer provision. Current pupils in the Year 11 GCSE option attain equally well according to the evidence of their work and lessons observed. Overall standards of attainment are satisfactory for GCSE pupils.

113. The results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 1999 were above national expectation. Evidence from work seen during the inspection suggests that the assessments tended to overestimate pupils' achievements in measurement and control, modelling and the applications and effects of ICT. Lesson time is limited in ICT for the majority of pupils from Years 8 to 11 because they have to share computers, although most pupils have computers at home, which they use mainly for word processing and, increasingly, for researching with the Internet. The improving GCSE results in Years 10 and 11 have not yet been matched by a consistent rise in pupils' ICT capability in other subjects, where lessons only occasionally involve the planned use of computers.

114. Whilst opportunities and access for ICT have begun to improve since the last inspection, statutory requirements for the provision of ICT across the curriculum are not fully met. Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to apply ICT skills in a significant number of subjects, such as mathematics, science, art, design and technology and French. However, the school is rapidly addressing the issues. In several subjects such as ICT, religious education, geography and business studies, pupils make appropriate use of the Internet for their projects. In geography and physical education, digital cameras are used although photos are not always combined with text. Most pupils use word processing but, outside ICT lessons they have limited opportunities to design and test systems, or to fully interpret and critically analyse data. Those opting for GCSE use a variety of packages with confidence, and so results are much improved.

115. Pupils use equipment safely, and all pupils, including those with special needs use ICT effectively to solve problems and develop competency. The discrete ICT lessons in Year 7 provide a sound basis for applying skills relevant to other subjects. Year 7 pupils use Corel

Draw to design badges. Year 9 pupils use desktop publishing (DTP) confidently to design a brochure for a leisure centre. Year 11 GCSE pupils design a customer database for a leisure centre and test their systems effectively.

116. Overall, the ICT teaching observed was good in all years. Teachers have good relationships with pupils and encourage positive attitudes to learning through their own enthusiasm. Teachers plan lessons well, set clear objectives, and review previous work. This results in an orderly working atmosphere where pupils learn to develop both skills and understanding. Teachers' good subject knowledge enables them to explain topics clearly and help pupils with a variety of needs, including pupils identified as more able and those with special educational needs. Teachers question pupils skilfully to ensure they understand the aims of software packages, and, above all, encourage pupils to be creative through exploring possibilities. The pace of learning for the majority of pupils and the standards achieved are, however, diminished because pupils in larger classes have to share computers. Homework is usually set when required although little evidence of written feedback was seen.

117. Teachers generally assess and monitor pupils' attainment and progress well in Years 7 to 9. In GCSE classes, assessment procedures meet external requirements. There is a need to involve pupils more in taking responsibility for tracking their own ICT progress in subjects in all years so that progress can be reported to parents. Teachers supervise popular computer clubs at lunchtimes and after school. In other subjects, teachers are beginning to develop expertise through recent training. Some parts of the National Curriculum are still thinly covered, such as measurement and control, data logging, the use of spreadsheets for modelling, and graphic design. Overall, pupils made good progress in the ICT lessons seen, and as shown by their work, in developing their capability and good independent study skills. However, progress in applying these skills to other subjects of the curriculum is unsatisfactory.

118. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in ICT lessons are very good in all years because work generally matches their attainment level and normally requires a practical response. Pupils concentrate very well on their tasks, co-operate both with each other and their teachers, and show a mature attitude to their work. Pupils are aware of the tasks they have to do and the progress they are making, particularly in GCSE. More able pupils often explore more advanced routines whilst waiting for teachers to help slower pupils.

119. Overall improvement of ICT since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Good progress has been made in improving teaching, equipment and access. Standards of attainment have been improved in discrete ICT lessons. However, further development of ICT across the curriculum is needed and is being planned for. The department is competently managed by an experienced teacher who maintains a positive, co-operative working environment with a supportive technician. Further staffing is appropriately planned to meet expanding curriculum and technical needs. Schemes of work are excellent. Accommodation is well-maintained and safe, although some rooms are too cramped for larger classes. Ventilation and sun-screening are unsatisfactory. Technical problems with the network sometimes affect achievement and several printers are awaiting costly repair. The number of computers available to pupils is in line with national averages, but there are insufficient machines for some larger classes, including GCSE, which affects standards. Access for other curriculum subjects during lesson time is now better. A good selection of software is available, including continuous access to the Internet. The ICT department is well placed to support further development in the school and there are appropriate plans for improvement.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**



## French

120. GCSE results in French have remained broadly similar to the results reported on for the last inspection. The proportion of pupils gaining A\* – C grades remained very low in comparison with national averages. During that period, however, examination entries increased significantly from 50 percent of the cohort entered in 1997 to 84 percent in 1999. Both boys and girls gained lower results in French than in other subjects. Girls outperform boys to a similar extent as nationally. GCSE results for 2000 show a slight decline.

121. The evidence of pupils' work and the lessons observed showed that standards in Year 10 are below national expectations and in Year 11 they are well below. Although the standards of higher attaining pupils are in line with national averages, the standards of lower attaining pupils are very low. In Year 11, able pupils identify rooms in the house from a tape played at near normal speed and in Year 10 they answer questions using short sentences about their preferred school subjects. Many pupils have poor recall of previous learning. In a Year 11 group, for example, a third of the pupils could not remember how to use the negative. Speaking skills are underdeveloped; pupils are reticent and reluctant to speak and writing skills are weak because pupils are provided with too few opportunities to extend their work or to practise the structures taught.

122. Results in the teacher assessments for fourteen year olds, in 2000, were below national averages. The standard of work of pupils currently in Year 9 is also below average. Higher attaining pupils understand the teachers' fluent use of French and some take risks with language when talking about their holidays and travel. The majority of pupils are less successful when required to regenerate language or to use the language taught within a more extended framework.

123. When compared to their earlier attainment, pupils' achievement in French is unsatisfactory throughout the school. When they enter the school in Year 7, most make a good start to language learning and most attain standards that are in line with national expectations. In one Year 7 class, pupils identified the nationalities of speakers from a tape played slowly. As a result of staffing difficulties, however, there are pupils in Year 7 whose language learning experience is unsatisfactory and they make poor progress from the beginning of their study of the language. This unsatisfactory provision adversely affects the performance of pupils throughout the school, with the result that in one class, pupils who had made a good start in Year 7 are regressing in Year 8 where they now have difficulty copying correctly or saying a few sentences without making mistakes. Pupils with special educational needs also underachieve because although teachers know pupils well and give good individual support, few provide additional material in lessons to support their particular learning needs.

124. Teaching in over two-thirds of lessons observed was good but in just under a third it was unsatisfactory and very poor. As a result, teaching in French is unsatisfactory overall. All full-time French teachers have good knowledge and understanding both of French and of the National Curriculum. They manage pupils effectively and their lessons are enhanced by a variety of resources. They use French throughout their lessons in an accessible way. They employ a variety of strategies to ensure that pupils understand what they are supposed to do and plan well to ensure good progress in developing skills. This was seen in a Year 9 class, where the teacher's high expectation of performance ensured that pupils made clear progress in developing their listening skills. Weaker lessons contained too much English and were inadequately linked to the National Curriculum. Pupils learn well in top ability groups, in the Year 8 top sets for example, where able pupils begin German in Year 8 and are making good progress in both languages, transferring their skills from French to support their understanding of German. A significant omission in many lessons, however, is the requirement for pupils to memorise or use the work taught. As a consequence, they have difficulties recalling previous learning, for example in GCSE examinations. Few activities are provided to promote

independent study such as reading for pleasure, pair and group work, dictionary use or using computers. Similarly, teachers do not assess pupils' work in a consistent manner, which means that their progress is not being adequately monitored or used to inform the next stage of learning. The current arrangements to cover the work of a long-term absentee are unsatisfactory and are affecting the attainment and progress of almost a quarter of pupils.

125. Pupils behave well in French lessons, including those currently taught by non-specialists. Occasionally they misbehave when the non-specialist teachers are unable to teach French.

126. The staffing difficulties within the department, which adversely affect the progress of so many pupils, render the curriculum unsatisfactory at both key stages. There is good provision for the most able in Years 7 to 9, with the introduction of German in Year 8. However, in Year 10, the school has allowed almost a third of the pupils, to drop French without following disapplication guidelines. ICT skills are not developed in French and the department is not meeting its statutory obligations in this area.

127. Teachers are conscientious and hard working and have a shared commitment to raising standards. There is a lack of clarity as to how this should be achieved. The development plan does not clearly identify the actions required to ensure success and the scheme of work and handbook do not adequately support the work of the department, particularly the work of new and inexperienced teachers. Teachers have attended little in-service training recently on the improvement of teaching and learning. There has been a reluctance to embark upon courses in Years 10 and 11, which might be better suited to the needs of lower attaining pupils. Staffing difficulties have led to disruption and poor provision for many pupils and accommodation is unsatisfactory since the lack of blinds means that pupils sometimes sit in hot sun for long periods of time. Although the procedures for assessment are in place, they are inconsistently applied and not used to inform the next stage of learning. There is informal monitoring of the work of teachers and ongoing, supportive dialogue but teachers are not held sufficiently accountable for the work they do. In the sample of work provided, for example, there were exercise books where either the work had not been marked for several months or where it had been ticked with no comments or marks from the teacher to show pupils how well they were doing. Scrutiny of mark books showed that few teachers had entered any marks for the first four weeks of the term. The departmental evaluation of this year's examination results, identified the pupils' lack of revision as the main cause of the decline, rather than the quality of teaching or a lack of consistency in implementing policy. As a consequence of these issues, management is judged to be unsatisfactory.

128. Since the last inspection, there has been some progress in that some teachers now teach through the medium of French with resulting improvement in listening skills in those lessons. This is not the case in every lesson, however, since there are teachers who continue to deliver lessons in English. The development of reading, writing and speaking skills remains an issue. Attainment at the end of Year 9 is still below national averages and at the end of Year 11, significantly below. There continues to be a large amount of copying work and limited use of French within a more extended context.

## **MUSIC**

129. There had been no GCSE music in recent years until 2000, when both candidates, who were taught outside class time, gained A grades.

130. Attainment in the current Year 11, where the first option group in music for some years is preparing for GCSE in 2001, is in line with national expectations for this part of the course. Pupils compose in their chosen style to reflect their strengths and interests. This results in a great range of approaches, from traditional to improvisatory composing. Some of the 22 pupils have well-developed instrumental techniques and are experienced in public performance, others are relative beginners. Some are classical musicians, while others

prefer to compose pop music. Some higher attaining pupils use ICT confidently and can layer sounds to build up a composition in a consistent style, with a good understanding of chord progressions and musical texture. Others use musical notation and all show a good understanding of the characteristics of the instruments or voices for which they write. Pupils' knowledge of different musical eras and important composers is below average. The subject was beset with staffing problems until nearly two years ago. This prevented pupils from receiving a thorough grounding in music earlier in the school. However, they are now making good progress.

131. The small amount of written work produced in what is essentially a practical course does not give a firm idea of how high overall standards were at the end of Year 9 last year. This year, pupils are attaining standards that are in line with national expectations in most aspects of the course. They are making good progress as a result of good teaching. Higher attaining pupils have a good working knowledge of the elements of music specified in the National Curriculum, such as pitch, texture and dynamics. In a project on modern dance music, pupils of all levels of ability quickly understood, and analysed the style, form and instruments used in a recorded example. Higher attaining pupils read simple rhythms from a chart and perform them confidently. They compose coherent rhythmic phrases and write them down in simple musical shorthand. Lower attaining pupils were uncertain over musical pulse and some found it difficult to read and perform quite easy examples. These pupils made good progress in developing skills and understanding when improvising rather than interpreting printed rhythms. Singing was robust but the chosen pitch was uncomfortable for many of the boys. Otherwise, there is little difference in the attainment of girls and boys.

132. Teaching is good throughout the subject. Sometimes it is very good. Teachers communicate their enthusiasm very well and this strongly motivates pupils to work productively. Teachers have a good range of practical musical skills, which they use readily. Their good knowledge of a wide range of musical styles enables them to give valuable assistance to GCSE candidates in the wide range of styles that these pupils choose for performing and composing. In a good lesson in Year 11, the teacher effectively consolidated pupils' understanding of the varied characteristics of baroque, classical and romantic music. This elicited thoughtful vocabulary from them as they described the examples they heard. At the same time, the teacher effectively shared her enthusiasm for the music with all of the pupils. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Lessons are well organised with clearly stated objectives. Resources are appropriate and well organised. Where pupils work independently on assignments for GCSE, the teachers circulate and give individual assistance, establishing a good pace of work and a productive ethos in lessons.

133. Pupils maintain a good standard of response, concentrating well and sustaining their effort throughout each lesson. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 behave well. They participate wholeheartedly in practical activities and generally listen attentively to instructions. They treat equipment responsibly and co-operate with each other purposefully in group tasks. Many in the GCSE sets are genuine enthusiasts, they show a high degree of independence and are strongly motivated.

134. The head of department, who was appointed less than two years ago, has dynamically re-established music as a worthwhile and successful area of the curriculum from the unacceptable state to which it had deteriorated due to long-term staffing difficulties. Extra-curricular music has been revitalised by the establishing of a good range of choral and instrumental ensembles, which are proving very popular with pupils. Numbers of pupils learning instruments from peripatetic teachers have risen impressively. Concerts are given regularly in school and elsewhere and there are strong performance links with dance and drama. These performances, which include events with feeder schools, provide pupils with

good opportunities for social and cultural development. Successful fund-raising concerts have recently taken place to support charities in Mozambique and Kenya.

135. There has been very good improvement since the previous inspection. To improve further, the department should refine procedures for assessment so that pupils' gains in skill, knowledge and understanding can be quantified and built on more methodically in the lower school.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

136. Since the last inspection, physical education GCSE has been introduced. In 2000 GCSE results in physical education fell. The results were below that of the previous year and below the national average. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A\* to C fell, and the proportion gaining at least grade G remained about the same. Pupils did about the same in physical education as in their other subjects. Numbers of boys and girls entered were roughly proportional to the numbers in the year group.

137. The evidence of the pupils' work and the lessons observed showed that Year 11 pupils' achievement is satisfactory. They do best in practical work and do particularly well in games. For example, in a Year 11 basketball class, pupils responded well to the incentives of an award scheme and met the challenges provided by the teacher. Higher attaining pupils understand the use of power and direction as well as body position in sending and receiving accurate passes and dribbling: they achieved higher targets. Lower attaining pupils pushed themselves hard and concentrated well on hand/eye co-ordination in dribbling to achieve some continuity: they achieved lower targets. Pupils' skills and knowledge are weaker in theory lessons; for example, low attaining pupils in a Year 10 lesson attempted to analyse movement and relate the practical to the theory. Pupils showed a lack of experience and weak organisation and produced work of variable quality. Physical education for their first three secondary school years was a practical subject and some pupils found the transition to related theory work, at the beginning of their GCSE course, difficult.

138. The results of teacher assessments at the end of the Year 9 were around the national average. The evidence of the inspection indicates that these assessments were about right and in line with pupils' achievements. The standard of work of pupils currently in Year 9 is also around the national average, or slightly above, which is the same as the findings of the previous inspection. Standards are being maintained because teachers work to their strengths and this influences the planning of the curriculum. Year 9 pupils are strong in games and girls achieve well in dance. In dance, thoughtful and creative work was observed in a Year 9 group. Higher attaining pupils had a good dance vocabulary, which they drew on to produce fluid sequences and good quality movement; they met the challenging work prepared. Lower attaining pupils found the retention of some sequence material difficult towards the end of a piece in a Year 8 lesson. Dance is a strong aspect of the curriculum programme. Boys in a Year 9 group quickly assimilated new skills in rugby. This group of high attaining pupils drew on their previous experience to exploit and explore different possibilities to move out of mauling. Pupils generally have good basic skills in games and use these skills confidently.

139. When compared to their earlier attainment, pupils' achievement in physical education is satisfactory and sometimes good. When pupils enter the school in Year 7 standards in physical education are below average. Pupils respond well to the positive ethos and high expectations of the physical education department. For example, in a Year 7 netball lesson, pupils found the task of running to catch the ball, jumping to receive the ball, landing to the stepping rule and then throwing the ball challenging. High achieving pupils showed

understanding and were able to execute most of the task but had poor positioning which spoilt accuracy in the throw. Lower attaining pupils were unable to control the jump to enable them to stop effectively so they were unable to fulfil the criteria for the stepping rule, they found positioning more difficult so few balls could be directed successfully in the throw. The benefit of this earlier work can be seen in later years. By Year 11, a group of low attaining girls were collecting the ball in a controlled jump, abiding by the stepping rule and pivoting their bodies automatically in the game, enabling them to make strong, accurate throws. All pupils accumulate skills and knowledge in a carefully structured way; they learn basic and then more complex techniques in a very supportive environment.

140. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress because these pupils are known to staff, teaching is carefully structured and usually covers small steps at a time. Tasks are repeated for clarity with emphasis on safety and teaching points and other important instructions. This teaching is well targeted at low attaining pupils and as a result, their achievement is satisfactory. This way of teaching is well received by all pupils. In a Year 11 boys' basketball lesson and in a Year 7 basketball lesson, with different teachers, instructions were clear and repeated carefully before activities took place.

141. Overall, the teaching observed was good. All teaching in lessons was satisfactory and some teaching was very good. Lessons were well organised and effectively planned. Teachers have good skills in managing pupils and relate well to them. These factors enable maximum time to be devoted to teaching and learning. Teachers have good subject knowledge, and so give good teaching points. They also question pupils skilfully to check and extend their understanding. For example, in Year 9, pupils in rugby were reminded through questioning of initial learning in practices so that these could be introduced in the game.

142. As a result of the physical education teaching, pupils' learning is good. Target setting was a feature of several lessons and these often guided pupils, frequently involving an element of competition and counting. In a Year 7 basketball lesson pupils strived for accuracy to get the highest number of shots. In competition against the clock they soon learnt that frequency of shot did not mean frequent scoring because time in preparation for the shot was lost and so was accuracy. Time was soon sacrificed to accuracy. The competition was valuable because of the pressure made on pupils to evaluate their choices and it prepared them for shots under pressure in the full game.

143. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good overall. Pupils work effectively with one another; they respond very enthusiastically to the challenging work set. Good relationships were seen in most lessons; teachers were respected and pupils were cared for and listened to. Ideas were valued. All this promoted good learning and trust. Pupils' behaviour was unsatisfactory in a Year 10 theory lesson, when class management was weak. The pace of learning was slowed when an inattentive, noisy group of pupils did not listen to instructions even when they were repeated.

144. The department's improvement since the last inspection has been good. Most of the strengths noted in the previous report have been sustained. The department has a clear view of where further improvements in teaching and the curriculum need to be made. The quality of teaching has been improved and development in assessment is underway; the present system of assessment is unsatisfactory for the present needs for GCSE planning. Staffing changes have been made to improve the planning and delivery of GCSE theory work. A major strength of the department is the variety of extra curricular sporting opportunities open to pupils and the high numbers that take part in them. The accommodation for teaching physical education is generally satisfactory.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

145. 133 of 152 pupils in Year 11 were entered for a GCSE short course in religious education in 2000. Of these, 91 pupils, or 68 percent, gained A\* to C grades. This is above average. Results in the previous two years were similarly high, but no national comparisons were published. Girls have each year achieved significantly more passes at grades A\* to C than boys.

146. In Year 11, much of the pupils' attainment in lessons and in written work from last year is above expectation. Standards of discussion are well above those expected over the whole range of ability. Pupils give carefully reasoned views in oral and written work. Written work is accurate, orderly and well presented, and religious education makes a good contribution to developing pupils' standards of literacy. Pupils weigh evidence carefully and display a good capacity for empathy. They avoid prejudice when discussing or writing about topics such as abortion and euthanasia. Pupils, over the whole range of ability can understand at a meaningful level ideas such as, "Love your enemies", and relate this to events, for example, in Northern Ireland. They have good factual knowledge of events like the Gulf War. When considering Christianity, pupils understand why God became human and they understand the doctrine of Atonement. Pupils are familiar with Muslim Festivals and understand the conflicts between materialism, socialism and spiritual values in Islam, through a study of the beliefs of Chris Eubank. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs understand the principal issues well, but their grasp of technical language is less thorough and their written work is less complete.

147. Standards at the end of Year 9 are above the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Higher attaining pupils have gained thorough background knowledge of the place of Muslims in Britain. They understand the importance of the Qur'an and have a thorough understanding of the significance of the Five Pillars of Islam in the life of a Muslim. They also are familiar with important aspects of Hindu ritual and worship. They understand the attitudes to death found in the major world religions. Standards of writing are high and, in discussions, pupils express their views thoughtfully, and use terms appropriate to the religion or topic they are studying. Lower attaining pupils have a less firm grasp of ideas, but listening skills are well developed amongst all pupils. Much written work is enhanced with pertinent illustrations.

148. Teaching is very good. Teachers are knowledgeable and teach confidently. Compelling introductions to lessons readily capture the attention of classes. For example, in Year 11 pupils were asked to memorise a variety of objects, from chocolate to an eraser, in a lesson about Jewish attitudes to conservation of trees. Lessons are taught at a good pace. Time is well used. Tight deadlines are set and this stimulates the pupils' pace of work. Teachers present information with impressive clarity so that all pupils understand the challenging ideas they present. Teachers use supplementary questions effectively to extend the thinking of higher attaining pupils. This enables them to make very good progress. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress because the lessons are planned at an appropriate level for each banded class, and learning support staff carefully assist those who need help. Teachers patiently help lower attaining pupils to formulate their views. Teachers appreciate pupils' views at all levels and there is much use of praise to increase their confidence. The supportive style of teaching enables pupils to absorb new ideas quickly, to question and develop their own points of view on difficult issues. This was clearly evident in a Year 8 class of able pupils who were studying the Temptation of Jesus. Pupils are encouraged to be open-minded and to demonstrate empathy. Teachers mark work regularly and constructively.

149. Pupils behave well in lessons. They take care with written work, they collaborate well in group work and they are prepared to be candid in discussion. The reluctance of some lower

attaining pupils to contribute orally is usually effectively countered by carefully targeted teaching. Just occasionally, boys dominate discussions too much.

150. The scheme of work is very good and conforms closely to the locally agreed syllabus. The very good range of teaching methods and the interesting resources that are used considerably enhance pupils' progress. Many valuable opportunities are provided for pupils to develop understanding of spiritual matters, and to consider moral and social issues. Religious education provides valuable insights into the world's principal religions and strongly promotes pupils' multi-cultural understanding. Pupils are encouraged to use computers for researching and presenting their work, but the use of ICT is inadequate. The department is very well managed. The teaching is well monitored and teaching strengths are shared. There is a good awareness of current developments in the teaching of religious education.

151. Provision for religious education has developed well since the previous inspection. There are no outstanding issues and it is now a strength of the school.

## **BUSINESS STUDIES**

152. GCSE results have improved slightly since the last inspection. In 1999 and 2000, the proportion of pupils gaining A\*-C grades were slightly below both school and national averages, but this reflects a slight upward trend since the last inspection. The most able girls and boys achieve above the school average, reflecting good, imaginative teaching and a syllabus that meets their needs. There is a considerable gap between boys' and girls' attainment. Boys' results are well below the national average but this reflects the large proportion whose attainment on entry is relatively low and who tend to have difficulty with number skills. The evidence of the pupils' work and the lessons observed showed that standards of the pupils in Year 11 are now in line with national expectations and their achievements are good.

153. Course work folders seen are neat, well-presented and generally well written. They show good notes on basic definitions, a variety of topical case studies and the effective use of ICT to word process reports and produce graphs from consumer survey data. There is some evidence of the use of spreadsheets for financial forecasting such as cash flow, although pupils do not always develop their ideas sufficiently. In a Year 11 lesson seen pupils worked well in groups to debrief a business game through which they had acquired key concepts relating to production in business. In a Year 10 lesson observed, pupils worked effectively in pairs on computers to design a market research questionnaire for a chocolate bar. A minority of boys in the lesson did not redraft their written answers to correct errors.

154. When they start the course the attainment of a significant proportion of the pupils is relatively low. However, the good and often very good quality of teaching enables pupils to make significant learning gains. They make particularly good progress in developing their speaking and listening skills through group and class discussion. The teacher's good subject knowledge and up-to-date contacts with local industry helps her plan lessons carefully, with a variety of practical case studies. Lessons are fun, well organised and based on a very good teacher/pupil relationship, based on trust, humour and high expectations. Coursework assignments supplied by the examination board have been rewritten so lower-ability pupils can more easily understand them. This has improved motivation and results, although the high level of numeracy skills required in the current syllabus affects results for lower attainers. Pupils develop their ICT skills increasingly well through extending their competence with DTP, databases and spreadsheets, although pupils have to share computers in larger classes, and this affects the pace learning. Most pupils have computers at home and many attend computer clubs at lunch times and after school. The teacher supports individual pupils very

well including able pupils and those with special needs. Group and class tasks consolidate previous learning. The focus on literacy helps pupils' drafting and evaluation skills. Homework is set and marked regularly, with frequent extension activities for the more able. The teacher provides prompt written feedback, indicating relevant targets for improvement. Revision classes are held, after school, in the spring term of Year 11. These are well attended.

155. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. They take a lively interest in lessons, and enjoy their work. They stick to their tasks and behave very well, helping each other where necessary. They co-operate fully with their teacher. The majority of boys and girls are well motivated to succeed, and develop a good capacity for independent study using ICT effectively to research the Internet. They also research in local businesses.

156. The department's improvement since the last inspection has been good and it is well placed to develop further. Business studies courses are well planned and managed. The teacher works with ICT staff as a committed, supportive team. Very good use is made of local business links. The teaching rooms are big enough for the majority of classes, but larger classes have to share computers, affecting learning. The main base room is poorly ventilated and has ineffective window blinds.

## **DRAMA**

157. GCSE results in Expressive Arts in 2000 were below the national average. All thirteen pupils who were entered achieved A\* to F grades. Drama is now taught as a subject separate from Expressive Arts and the first GCSE group will take the examination in 2001.

158. A small group of pupils in Year 11 is taught drama after school as an extra-curricular lesson, but, as in Year 10 where a larger group has lessons on the timetable, they take their performance work seriously. Pupils achieve average standards in practical work, but are below average in their written work. They show an understanding of drama language and conventions and display confidence when using these in their group performances. They support each other in a helpful, constructive way and evaluate their work thoroughly. This is the result of enthusiasm and positive criticism in the teaching. The pupils' written evaluation and explanation of methods, an essential part of the course work for GCSE, is weaker than their practical work. Many pupils experience difficulties with basic literacy skills and writing in sufficient depth.

159. Pupils attain satisfactory standards in Years 7 to 9. They made good progress in the lessons observed. Pupils work well in groups helping each other to plan and perform short, improvised scenes. A Year 9 class, working towards a class performance of a hijack, responded confidently and in character in the 'hotseat' to questions from the class about their background and motives. In Year 7, pupils are beginning to learn simple drama skills and the completion of their diaries each week helps them reinforce their learning and think about their work.

160. Pupils' attitudes to drama are good. They understand the discipline essential in the subject and this is underpinned by sharply focused teaching. They know what they are doing, co-operate willingly and try anything when asked. Enthusiasm characterises the lessons and this emanates from the teaching. Many return to the drama studio during the lunch break to rehearse their group work. Pupils with special educational needs also work well and make good progress.

161. The teaching observed was good. Lessons were well prepared and managed effectively. An overall plan of the techniques to be covered each year is enabling pupils to build on their learning and consolidate their drama skills. Work is marked and assessed although this is not yet fully used to target pupils' progress or evaluate the teaching. The



drama studio has been improved since the last inspection, but drama lessons in the hall suffer many interruptions. Better lighting and sound equipment, needed to teach technical skills in GCSE, are part of the departmental plan together with staff training in their use.

162. Under a new head of department, drama is beginning to make a significant contribution to the pupils' social, moral and cultural development. Good links have recently been made with a local theatre group who worked on separate projects with two classes in the week of the inspection. A successful school performance of 'The Wizard of Oz' has encouraged a new interest in theatre and drama and pupils are already referring to the auditions for the next production. These good extra-curricular activities are helping to establish drama as an important subject in the school.

## **MEDIA STUDIES**

163. Media Studies is taught by teachers in the English Department and has developed from staff and pupil interest into a very popular option for both boys and girls in Years 10 and 11. This year sees the first pupils taking GCSE.

164. Pupils start the course with a wide range of attainment and they achieve well. Current standards are average. Higher attaining pupils are confident in their analyses of film styles and technique, in using audience and listener preference research and in setting up their own projects using the appropriate methodology. Lower attaining pupils are motivated by the interesting content of the course and, with extra guidance from teachers, take pains over planning. Work in one Year 11 class on marketing a band or a solo singer successfully gripped the pupils' imagination. Pupils had so convincingly built up their family backgrounds, with photographs, magazine interviews, television appearances and concert advertising that it was easy to think these imagined characters were real. The standard of presentation of this project was good or very good though weak literacy skills lowered the standard of some pupils' writing.

165. The teaching observed was good. Teacher expectations of pupils' work and behaviour are high. Much effort is going into the development of the course. Resources include a large collection of films on video, which are well used. Restricted access to information and communication technology and the Internet is the main limitation in practical work and research. Opportunities for including essential cross-curricular contributions are at an early stage. The collection and use of a wider range of media resources and contacts is developing with the view to media studies taking a prominent role in the school.