

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **PASSMORES SCHOOL**

Tendring Road, Harlow

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 115218

Headteacher: Mr P. F. Jarman

Reporting Inspector: Mr G. S. Bignell  
OFSTED Inspector Number: 1880

Dates of inspection: 27<sup>th</sup> November – 1<sup>st</sup> December 2000

Inspection number: 223982

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 - 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Tendring Road  
Harlow  
Essex

Postcode: CM18 6RW

Telephone number: 01279 431921/866211

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs M. Eggleton

Date of previous inspection: 26<sup>th</sup> February – 1<sup>st</sup> March 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Garry Bignell	Registered Inspector	Spanish	What sort of school is it?  The school's results and achievements  How well is the school led and managed?
John Duncan	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils?  How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Bill Gent	Team inspector	Religious education	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
John Hickman	Team inspector	English  Special educational needs	
Mike Bostock	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
Brian Moroney	Team inspector	Science	How well are pupils taught?
Bob Percival	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
John Stewart	Team inspector	Physical education	
Geoff Hunter	Team inspector	Mathematics	
Jane Connolly	Team inspector	Equal opportunities  English as an additional language  Geography	
Val Girling	Team inspector	Art  Design and technology	
Josanne Balcombe	Team inspector	Drama	
Robbie Cathcart	Team inspector	Music	
John Rowley	Team inspector	History	

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

1. Passmores is an 11 – 16 community comprehensive school with 792 pupils. The roll has been rising in recent years. 19 pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and 11 are learning English as an additional language. 167 pupils have some degree of special educational need, of whom 23 have statements. 104 pupils are eligible for free school meals. Though improving in recent years, the attainment of many pupils on entry to the school is well below the expected average for age 11.

### HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

2. The school is effective in helping those pupils who have low attainment on entry towards modest achievements when they take tests or examinations at the ages of 14 and 16. It does this through effective management, the establishment of good relationships and sound values, some good teaching in almost all subjects and strong support from parents and the community. In its use of staffing, accommodation, learning resources and budget it achieves satisfactory value for money.

#### What the school does well

- Relationships with parents, local businesses and the wider community are strong and supportive
- Support for pupils with special educational needs is of high quality
- Provision of and participation in extra-curricular activities are very good
- Links with primary schools and the introduction of pupils and staff new to the school are good
- Assessment of pupils' work, reviewing progress and reporting to parents are good and improving
- Pupils achieve well in music and take part in high quality drama productions

#### What could be improved

- Standards at age 14 and 16 are below those achieved in similar schools nationally
- Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in about one lesson in seven
- There is a lack of a whole school improvement strategy supported by a rigorous evaluation of teaching, learning and performance information
- The behaviour and attitudes of a minority of pupils, particularly boys, are disruptive to learning
- Pupils show low levels of initiative in class and rarely take responsibility for their learning
- Health and safety concerns exist in science, technology and drama areas

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

The school has substantial strengths and a firm basis on which to improve further.

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

3. The school was last inspected in 1996. Four key issues for action were identified at that time and progress on tackling them has been regularly monitored and reported to parents. Whilst some action has been taken on raising standards (*Key Issue 1*), this remains a major task for the school. Improved standards are only really becoming apparent at Key Stage 3 where more able pupils are coming through the school. Reducing the budget deficit (*Key Issue 2*) is on course thanks to a financial action plan which is proving effective. Improvements to the timetable, staff responsibilities and deployment (*Key Issue 3*) have been made in recent years, though there is still some way to go in rationalising the roles of some staff. Statutory requirements for collective worship, religious education and information and communication technology (*Key Issue 4*) are now met with the exception of the provision of a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. Though not a key issue at the last inspection, the

overall quality of teaching has improved.

Overall, progress since the previous inspection has been satisfactory, though much still remains to be done about standards. There is a degree of underachievement amongst pupils compared to their prior attainment.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				<b>Key</b>  well above average    A above average        B average                C below average        D well below average   E
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
GCSE examinations	E	D	E	E	

*"Similar" schools are those whose proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is comparable to that at Passmores.*

4. Standards at age 16 are well below the average compared with pupils' performance nationally and compared with pupils in schools like Passmores across the country. One quarter of pupils achieve five or more higher grades at GCSE, about half the national average. Standards are best in music, information and communication technology and textiles. Progress made by pupils, especially in Years 10 and 11, is unsatisfactory compared to their previous attainment.

5. Standards at age 14 are improving. The proportion of pupils achieving Level 5 (the expected level) in English, mathematics and science is broadly similar to schools nationally. Results in English and science tests in 2000 show better results at Level 6 than in 1999. Apart from in English, however, the average performance of Passmores pupils remains well below that in similar schools.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Satisfactory. Most pupils are pleased to be part of the school community. In lessons, attitudes can vary according to the quality of teaching.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory. Pupils are usually well behaved in lessons and around the school, although the behaviour of some boys can be disruptive.
Personal development and relationships	Good. In good lessons, pupils co-operate well in groups. Around the school, relationships are generally good and interaction is courteous.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Attendance rates have improved in recent years and are slightly above the national average.

6. The school has invested much effort in recent years to raise the school's profile in the community and continues to give a high priority to standards of behaviour, presentation and personal development. These measures have improved the image of the school and are largely responsible for its rise in popularity amongst parents. Pupils' ability to show initiative and take responsibility for their own learning is under-developed. Pupils and parents are aware



of the school's values, including determination, tenacity and respect for others. Exclusions are lower than average.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

7. Over half the teaching observed during the inspection was good or better and two English lessons were excellent. Much of the good teaching was seen in information and communication technology, mathematics, music, physical education and science. Some good lessons were seen in nearly all other subjects. However, almost one lesson in seven across the school was unsatisfactory which is a cause of concern. Pupils' learning suffers during lessons where teaching is not good, mainly because pupils are not challenged by the work and therefore do not make sufficient progress. Low teacher and pupil expectations were a feature of many poorer lessons. The teaching of personal, social and health education is often weak.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. Strong features include extra-curricular activities, careers education and guidance and the contribution made by the community.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. There is good management of provision and learning support assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. There are very few pupils in the school for whom this applies. The school ensures that they receive good support for their learning.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory overall. Moral development is strongest, with a clear emphasis on moral values and responsible behaviour. Spiritual development is weakest at subject level. Social and cultural development are strong in places, but limited in scope.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactory. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development, attendance and academic progress are good.

8. The above aspects are generally areas of strength. The school is developing good assessment procedures using computer software. The programme of pastoral support, academic reviews and mentoring all contribute to keeping pupils on the learning path. However, there is a lack of clarity about what spiritual, moral, social and cultural development actually mean in practice for the school. A daily act of collective worship is not provided. Some health and safety concerns exist over irregular electrical testing in science, unsafe lighting equipment in drama and technical support for technology.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory. The headteacher and senior staff manage the school effectively and support its aims and values. They have done much to improve the conditions for good learning, though they have not yet succeeded in making a significant impact on standards at age 16.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory overall. Governors are very supportive of the school and discuss strategic matters. The role of "critical friend" could be exercised more corporately and effectively.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Improving. The school's systems are being developed, but are at present insufficiently rigorous to identify and tackle weaknesses in teaching, learning and standards.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. Staff, learning resources and accommodation are used well. The budget deficit is reducing.

9. The school values its staff and places emphasis on the training and induction of teachers new to the school. Best value principles are applied to the management and use of resources, which are adequate for the teaching of the curriculum, although some subjects are less well provided for. The management team continues to be successful in developing the status and image of the school, but there has been insufficient urgency in tackling low standards, especially at GCSE. Development planning does not present a clear and coherent improvement strategy. Links with parents, including communication and involvement, are strong.

## 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>• Progress and achievement of pupils</li> <li>• Approachability of the headteacher and staff</li> <li>• Success in dealing with poor behaviour</li> <li>• Reports and other communication</li> <li>• Pastoral support and caring ethos</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arrangements for eating lunch outside</li> <li>• Provision of lockers for pupils</li> <li>• Updating of technology areas</li> <li>• Standards at GCSE</li> </ul>

10. The inspection team endorses many of the school's strengths listed by parents and agrees with areas for improvement. Parents are aware of the good work going on at Passmores and conveyed their satisfaction at the pre-inspection meeting and through the questionnaire. There is, however, a disparity between what parents regard as good progress by pupils and the low standards at GCSE. Inspectors disagree that progress is good for the majority of pupils. As with some teachers, parents' expectations of pupils are too low, which, in turn, leads to slow progress and underachievement.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

11. Standards achieved by pupils at Passmores are lower than in the majority of similar schools nationally. At the higher grades of GCSE, 25% of pupils achieved this standard in five or more subjects, compared to 49% in all schools nationally and against an average of 41% in similar schools. This figure is the same as that achieved by the school in 1994, though there have been better results in other years. The school performs well in comparison to others when lower GCSE grades are considered and few pupils leave the school with no qualifications.

12. It is now possible to compare the results achieved by pupils taking their GCSEs in 2000 with the average standard achieved by the same year group when they were tested at the end of Key Stage 3 (Year 9) in 1998. Using this "value added" measure, progress made by these pupils during Years 10 and 11 was below the national rate of progress and well below that of pupils in similar schools.

13. Results in almost all subjects are lower than national averages, and this was confirmed by the standards of work seen in the current Year 11. Only in drama, music, information and communication technology (ICT) and textiles do pupils approach or achieve national average standards at GCSE. In the majority of subjects, girls do better than boys, although this is typical of performance nationally. Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) achieve well in relation to their ability.

14. It is important to put the above judgements on standards in context. The prior attainment of pupils is a significant factor in their eventual results in public examinations. The majority of those pupils who have now left the school and whose results at GCSE are reported above, together with many pupils now in Key Stage 4, entered Passmores with low levels of attainment. Measures of social deprivation (an indicator of pupils' attainment at school) show Harlow to be the most needy area in Essex. Based on the results of Key Stage 2 tests from pupils leaving primary school, plus reading and other tests on pupils in Year 7, the attainment of pupils on entry to Passmores is improving, but remains considerably below expected levels for pupils of that age.

15. Taking standards at age 16 as a whole, the school gets good results from pupils at lower GCSE grades, but progress made by pupils generally and those capable of higher grades in particular is unsatisfactory. However, the overall trend in performance at GCSE over the five years to 1999 was slightly above the national trend of improvement. Starting from its lower baseline, there is considerable capacity for the school to improve further.

16. Targets set by the school for its 2000 results were challenging: the target for five or more higher grades was 35% (actual result 25%); for at least one GCSE it was 97% (actual result 94%) and for average points it was 30 (actual result 30.3). Targets for 2001 are higher and are only likely to be achieved if pupils are set challenging individual targets and make better progress than in the past. In some subjects such as science and geography, pupils' targets focus on effort or presentation rather than gaining the knowledge, skills and understanding that will improve their attainment.

17. In national curriculum tests at the end of Year 9, pupils' standards are improving in English, mathematics and science. In 2000, the proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 (the

expected level) was higher than those in previous years and broadly in line with pupils nationally. Standards in English rose substantially in 2000 and performance was above the average, although girls performed significantly better than boys. Taking pupils' performance at all levels into account, attainment in mathematics and science remains well below the average for similar schools.

18. Elsewhere in the Year 9 curriculum, pupils' standards are broadly in line with the national expectation in art, design and technology, history and music. Standards in other subjects are mainly below what is expected by the age of 14.

19. Literacy skills are developing satisfactorily across the school, especially in those subjects where key words are emphasised and support is provided with writing. This happens regularly in English, history and science, but less frequently in other subjects. Insufficient opportunities for writing at length mean that pupils do not practise the use of a range of vocabulary associated with different subjects.

20. Pupils demonstrate satisfactory use of numerical skills in their work across the curriculum. The teaching of numeracy in subjects other than mathematics is satisfactory. In geography, for instance, which was criticised in the last inspection for its teaching of the use of data analysis, a concerted effort has been made to improve. In design technology, pupils are given the opportunity to draw graphs and bar charts, to measure and to calculate amounts of ingredients and materials, which they do successfully. The fact that the school does not have an agreed policy for teaching numeracy means that departments lack a common approach in their teaching and, therefore, pupils' learning is less effective.

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

21. Much has been done in recent years to raise the profile of Passmores, both within the school itself and in the wider community. Many pupils now express pleasure at being a member of the school and most pupils wear their uniform smartly.

22. Within school life as a whole, pupils' attitudes to learning are variable. At best, they are very good. In musical activities and in lunchtime extra-curricular activities, for example, pupils demonstrate enjoyment in group activities and a quiet confidence. Pupils presently at the school who attended the annual awards ceremony during the week of the inspection showed poise and a mature understanding of what standards are expected during a public occasion. The prizes awarded for tenacity, for determination and for service to others exemplified some of the key values which are held to be of worth in the school.

23. Behaviour in lessons overall is satisfactory, though sometimes boys in particular cause disruption through, for example, calling out answers in an indisciplined manner. A sense of disaffection pervades the attitudes of a prominent group of older boys.

24. The school uses fixed-period exclusions appropriately and with care; the number being lower than the average for schools nationally. The admission into older year groups of pupils excluded from other schools has presented challenges to staff, which some teachers deal with more successfully than others.

25. Pupils usually co-operate well in small groups, particularly when the composition of the groups has been chosen to encourage specific learning objectives. Co-operative attitudes are a strong feature of practical work in science and ICT. Across all lessons, however, pupils are not given sufficient opportunity to work in planned groups in order to learn

from each other.

26. In lessons, pupils' attitudes are too dependent on the quality of teaching. When lessons are well structured, and teachers firm and confident, pupils are willing to contribute and, at best, to risk uncertain ideas or answers. When the onus is on themselves, however, they can show a reluctance to take the initiative. In the case of poor teaching, some pupils demonstrate a sense of resignation rather than a desire to make good the situation through their own contributions. Pupils are not encouraged to challenge creatively in lessons. On occasions, low level activities are used as a means of control, in order to subdue anticipated spirited behaviour.

27. Relationships between pupils, and between adults and pupils, are generally good. In lessons such as drama, pupils are supportive when watching each other's work. At best, the relationship between pupils and teachers is warm and mutually affirming. Many pupils exhibit a concern for the well-being of others and a ready sympathy for their plight. A solemn and poignant atmosphere pervaded a Year 10 assembly which looked back to the life of a pupil who had died of leukaemia.

28. The majority of pupils are polite and helpful. Assistance is offered to visitors to the school in a pleasant, unpretentious manner. Except for the occasional eruption of high spirited or aggressive behaviour, which is sometimes either caused or exaggerated by the narrowness of many of the corridors, there are no obvious signs of oppression, bullying, racism or sexism.

29. Appropriate attendance targets have been set for each year within the school. Pupils' attendance continues to be broadly in line with the national average. Though, overall, attendance figures are satisfactory, there were surprisingly large gaps in some classes during the week of the inspection.

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

30. In most subjects, the overall quality of teaching is satisfactory, and teaching is good or better in five out of ten lessons. However, there is unsatisfactory or poor teaching in approximately one in seven lessons, which is a cause of concern. Lack of challenge and expectation are the main weaknesses. Pupils' learning and progress are generally satisfactory but below that expected in similar schools, although improving through Key Stage 3.

31. Teaching is mainly good or better in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. In English, for example, one in five lessons was excellent and four out of five lessons were very good or better. In both key stages, teaching is good or better in history, geography, music, physical education and information and communication technology (ICT). Teaching in design technology and modern foreign languages is satisfactory overall. In art, teaching is good at Key Stage 3, though variable and often poor at Key Stage 4. Weaknesses in the teaching of religious education outweigh the strengths. There is also some poor teaching combined with low expectations in drama at Key Stage 3, although these lessons were taught by a student teacher. The teaching of personal, social and health education (PSHE) is weak.

32. Teachers' subject knowledge and understanding is good in both key stages and there is some developing good practice in the teaching of the basic skills of numeracy and literacy. In science, for example, key words are highlighted on the board at the beginning of each lesson and in mathematics good teaching in a Year 10 lesson starts with a "warm-up" number exercise which involves all the class. In general, insufficient opportunities are

presented for using basic skills in real contexts and for pupils to work on extended written tasks and thereby consolidate their use and understanding of specialist vocabulary.

33. Where teaching is good or better, careful short-term planning takes account of the varying needs of all pupils in the class and all are appropriately challenged so as to make progress in their learning. Pupils with learning difficulties are given good support from learning support assistants in meeting their targets together with an increasing use of ICT. In good lessons, teachers communicate a real enthusiasm for the subject; use skilful questioning to check pupils' understanding and promote further and deeper consideration of their work; and have well-established parameters of acceptable behaviour. In a Year 11 history lesson, for example, good teaching was observed in studying the rise of Hitler where good subject knowledge was very effective in making difficult concepts understandable for all pupils.

34. Across the curriculum, however, there is some mediocre teaching which limits pupils' learning through presenting insufficient challenge. For example, a Year 8 homework in religious education which set the task of drawing Islamic flags and pictures of prayer mats. In a Year 11 French lesson, teaching was too dependent on the textbook and used examples of language remote from pupils' own experiences. Where teaching is beginning to have higher expectations of achievement for all pupils, good use is being made of pupils' self-assessments. In science, for example, Year 9 pupils are able to talk about their individual progress and what they need to do to increase their attainment at the end of Key Stage national tests. Homework is regularly set, but is variable in quality and pupils need greater clarity as to its purpose. Teaching often lacks imagination which means that pupils' creativity and sensitivity are not sufficiently drawn upon. The musical life of the school demonstrates that this can be done very successfully.

35. At the time of the last inspection, teaching was unsatisfactory in one lesson in five. There are now fewer lessons which fall into this category. Teachers' subject knowledge is now much improved together with short term planning of pupils' work, time tabling and deployment of staff. Although the amount of unsatisfactory teaching has reduced, further improvements need to be made.

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

36. The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum at both key stages, covering all the national curriculum subjects and religious education. A Part One GNVQ course in Leisure and Tourism was introduced this year and has proved popular. Basic skills are offered to those pupils who study a single award science. The school holds a Schools Curriculum Award for the contribution made by the community to its work.

37. The school meets statutory curriculum requirements for the teaching of subjects including religious education. All subjects of the national curriculum are taught at Key Stage 4. Most subjects lead to examinations at GCSE, but GNVQ is also available. The time allocated to history, geography and physical education is at the lower end of the national average time and this restricts how much of the teaching programme can be covered in sufficient depth in each of these subjects. ICT is taught at both key stages, but opportunities to use ICT across subjects are currently underdeveloped.

38. In modern foreign languages the most linguistically able pupils study a second foreign language from Year 8 within the time allocated to one subject. At Key Stage 4, pupils

discontinue one of these languages. The most capable pupils therefore enter Key Stage 4 having spent less time on their foreign language than pupils in most schools. This arrangement does not help to improve standards in this subject.

39. The extra-curricular dimension to the work of the school offers a rich additional experience for pupils and is a strength of the school. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities made available over the school year in the areas of sport and music. A range of activities also takes place in particular curricular areas, including visits, field trips, public speaking competitions and summer schools. Over the course of the year there are concerts and productions. The school has been successful in each of the last three years in a Polymath competition.

40. The school lunch hour provides an extensive programme of extra-curricular activities and additional learning opportunities, in which a significant number of pupils participate. The programme includes homework clubs and additional study time in most subjects. Teachers readily give their time to these activities, and pupils generally are appreciative of this strong feature of school life.

41. There is a good range of instrumental provision providing musicians for numerous bands and choirs. There are senior and junior choirs, senior and junior clarinet choirs and an evening Music School which involves around 15% of pupils. There are sporting events in gymnastics, football, rugby and netball. Achievements have been recorded in cricket, tennis and cross-country.

42. The form tutor plays an important pastoral role in providing a point of contact for pupils regarding general issues and in presenting, through tutor periods, a programme which incorporates personal, social and health education (PSHE), including sex education. The PSHE programme has been well planned, though weaknesses in some of the teaching need addressing. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 carry pupil planners in which they record their timetable, attendance, targets and homework. These are used effectively by tutors and subject teachers to record and monitor pupils' progress.

43. There is an emphasis on continuity from primary school and transition to the tertiary college. The school has very good links with its partner primary schools, which include meetings between teachers in each phase to review the progress of pupils transferring to Passmores and lesson sampling by Year 5 and 6 pupils. There are joint concerts involving primary and secondary pupils.

44. The school's careers programme overall is well-organised, thorough and effective. Careers education is provided at both key stages. A good range of information is provided through a careers library, which is open before and after school and at lunchtimes. Careers events are organised in both key stages. There is a careers day in Year 9 which offers workshops on a range of aspects including self-awareness and decision-making.

45. At Key Stage 4 there is an annual programme of mock interviews, action planning and guidance, involving members of the local business community. This is an example of where members of the community make a good contribution to pupils' learning experiences. Other examples include talks by the Police Liaison Officer and health workers.

46. Year 11 pupils undertake action planning for entry to further education, supported by lunchtime talks. A group of pupils with statements undertake taster courses at the college to help them to develop their personal effectiveness skills, including making presentations. The careers programme offers effective support for pupils' transition to further education.

47. The school aims to promote continuity for pupils from the primary phase in regard to the development of literacy and numeracy. Summer schools have promoted numeracy and literacy through practical project work over the last few years. Teachers of English have visited literacy lessons in the primary schools with the aim of continuing this approach with the teaching of English in Key Stage 3. Use is made of teaching materials which link to the National Literacy Strategy, although only brief references to these are evident in the planning of English lessons.

48. There is good equality of access for all pupils to both the curriculum and extra-curricular opportunities. Effective in-class support is provided by special needs staff and is a strength of the delivery of the curriculum. Individual review and guidance was provided in many practical lessons observed, and teaching approaches matched to pupils' needs contribute to making the curriculum accessible for all learners. A gifted and talented pupil programme, including a Summer school, has started in Year 8 and this will place an emphasis on stretching the most able pupils.

### *Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development*

49. The effectiveness of how the school cultivates pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is restricted because the school has yet to analyse what each of the four terms means in practice. Though a mark of progress, the recently produced school policy statement is limited as a tool for monitoring, evaluation and development.

50. Pupils' spiritual development is unevenly cultivated across the school, but is satisfactory overall. Some outstanding examples do exist. The Year 9 visit to World War One battlefields, for example, is obviously a moving experience for many of those who go. Two boys commented on how surprised they were at the young ages recorded on many of the gravestones. Members of the senior choir are encouraged to reflect on the words they are singing: the words of the song 'Both Sides Now', for example, were explained as being about "the unpredictability of life". In being asked during an assembly to think about the life and death of a former student, Year 10 pupils were given the opportunity to reflect on such values as courage and determination.

51. It is at the subject level, however, that there is insufficient cultivation of spiritual development. The analysis of ideas and concepts does not feature strongly enough in mathematics, for instance, where there is little fascination with number. There are insufficient opportunities for the exploration of thoughts and feelings with meaning and conviction in drama. The exercise of the imagination in making responses is not developed sufficiently in geography.

52. The weekly year group assembly is a significant event, though not all assemblies contain an act of collective worship. Features of best practice have yet to be defined and this means, amongst other things, that not all assemblies contain specific opportunities for pupils to reflect or contemplate. Not all leaders use music to create atmosphere. The tone of the occasion is lessened because, during the presentation by the assembly leader, form tutors remain standing at the sides in order to check registers and behaviour. In so doing, they appear to fulfil more a supervisory than a participatory role in assemblies.

53. The school cultivates pupils' moral development well. The school is concerned that its pupils learn to live responsible lives and this is reinforced in much that it does. A code of behaviour is displayed throughout the school buildings. The Key Stage 4 RE course, focusing on a range of contemporary ethical issues, should make an increasingly valuable contribution



to this aspect of pupils' education. So too will the unit on the Holocaust which the history department is planning: teachers have already attended a course at the Imperial War Museum and visited Auschwitz.

54. The promotion of pupils' social development is satisfactory. Outside lessons, opportunities are provided to assume responsibility or serve others. The paired reading scheme in which a number of older pupils take part each week at a nearby special school is a very positive social experience. Year 10 pupils can apply to become school prefects who, amongst other things, contribute effectively to the induction of new pupils into the school. When the school is asked to send representatives to events elsewhere, it is practice for pupils as well as staff to attend. The school council has recently been re-started and is beginning to develop as a forum for sharing concerns and ideas. Representatives have received training in their responsibilities. The arrangements for peer support whereby pupils act as counsellors to others are being revived. Though pupils already have the opportunity to work productively in groups in some subjects (such as drama, food technology, music and geography), this practice needs to be extended to others.

55. Provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory overall. There are examples of very good practice. The annual school production has a very positive impact on school life, as do the many musical activities. Some departments, such as geography and science, organise residentials and day trips for pupils. In some parts of the curriculum, however, opportunities for pupils to develop their own cultural awareness and skills are limited. The diversity and richness of culture in Britain is under-represented in much of the literature, art, music and language to which pupils are exposed. The 1996 report noted that teachers needed their understanding of multi-faith and multi-cultural issues expanding. This need has not been addressed in any substantial way.

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

56. There are many good features in the school for ensuring the welfare of pupils, including the school's procedures for child protection which are known to all staff members. Health and safety concerns, however, cause the school's overall effectiveness in ensuring the welfare of pupils to be just satisfactory. Among the potential hazards are an unsafe overhead light in the drama area; the operation of an upright drill by an unsupervised pupil wearing a flapping necktie and without appropriate coveralls; and electrical equipment in science which has not been safety-checked since 1996. These concerns have been brought to the attention of the school management.

57. Most teachers and support staff know pupils well, including those with special educational needs (SEN). They relate well to them and provide a supportive and caring environment. Strengths of the school are the SEN co-ordinator and the learning support assistants whose planning and support for pupils with special educational needs make an enormous impact on their learning.

58. The school promotes good behaviour through agreed, shared and successfully implemented policies. A well-planned pastoral support programme helps pupils to avoid being excluded. Procedures for dealing with first aid, accident-reporting and pupils who are unwell are good. There is a well-equipped medical room. The member of staff responsible for this area is a great asset to the school, looking after pupils' individual needs with sensitive and sympathetic support. Lunchtime can, however, be a rushed and unpleasant experience for lower school pupils. Service in the dining area is sometimes offered in a surly manner. Upper school arrangements are better, although parents were concerned that pupils are

encouraged to leave the dining area promptly to attend lunchtime clubs.

59. The induction of new pupils, which begins with Year 5, is very good. It is supported by such initiatives as Year 6 Taster Days and Partnership for Learning which involves parents, pupils and governors. The new Harlow Progress Bridges Project will allow curricular links with primary feeder schools to be further extended.

60. Procedures for monitoring attendance and punctuality are very good and have improved since the last inspection. Weekly absence and punctuality reports are prepared for year heads and are acted upon. The school is to be commended for appointing an Attendance Officer and installing a dedicated telephone line for parents to use in reporting pupil absences or lateness.

61. In preparation for the very good work experience programme, Year 10 pupils formally apply for a job and undergo a mock interview with a person from the business community. The revitalised careers library provides both traditional and tempting ideas for careers and further education. The successful mentoring programme by local business people for Year 11 pupils is now being extended to include some Year 10 pupils whose expected GCSE C/D grade might be raised to B/C. The school has also taken steps to encourage pupil responsibility in the upper years: the paired reading of Year 10 pupils with pupils in the nearby special school is a prime example, as is the Year 11 peer support group which is being revived.

62. Good assessment procedures supported by computer software are being established. Records of pupil achievements are maintained in most aspects of the core curriculum, and individual action plans are in place to help monitor the progress of all pupils with special educational needs. Pupil review days – a strategy which places great stress on involving pupils themselves in bringing about improvement – are gradually being introduced into the school. These procedures lay a firm foundation for the raising of standards.

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

63. The strong relationship between the school and its parents has become even firmer since the last inspection. It is a significant strength of the school, having a positive impact on pupils' learning, particularly on their personal and social development. Parents are predominantly satisfied with everything the school provides. They are proud of the school, its music and drama presentations, its sporting achievements and the wealth of other accomplishments. They feel involved, supportive of the school and its policies and contribute to the school in many ways. The Friends of Passmores School actively raise funds and organise social events. Many parents participate in the Music School on Tuesday evenings and join in other activities centred round the school.

64. Prospective parents are invited into the school from as early as Year 5. Taster Days and evenings are organised for pupils who will join the school in September to meet their tutors and see the form rooms where children will begin their secondary education. There is also a Partnership for Learning meeting involving parents, governors and staff to go through school procedures. This culminates with the formal signing of the home/school agreement by pupil, parent and tutor. Parents value this personal introduction to the school.

65. The overwhelmingly positive attitudes exhibited at the pre-inspection meeting with parents and in their responses to the questionnaire made clear their feeling of privilege at being part of this school. While there is some parental concern about the behaviour of some pupils and about the amount of homework set, in the main parents praise all areas of the

school, including its leadership. They believe that their children are making good progress in all aspects of their education, though inspectors' judgements do not entirely support this view. The exchange of information between home and school is effective. Parents are given the opportunity to find out all they need to know about their children's education as well as to provide specific and useful information to the school about their children.

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

66. The headteacher and senior staff manage the school effectively and provide leadership which supports its aims and values. There has been a clear emphasis in recent years on laying a sound foundation for better teaching and learning. This can be seen in improvements to the school premises, a focus on pupils' behaviour and attitudes and the development of strong links with parents and the community. As a result, the school has become more popular and has seen its roll rise significantly over the past five years. Parents and governors are extremely supportive of the school and express their satisfaction with its achievements.

67. Despite these undoubtedly positive developments, standards of achievement have improved little in recent years. There has been a lack of urgency in tackling the causes of under-achievement, particularly at age 16, where overall examination results are well below those of similar schools around the country. This failure to make any real impact on standards is a weakness of leadership and management, and is attributable to a number of causes.

68. Firstly, although the school development plan shows "raising achievement" as its main priority, it does not amount to a clearly focused and coherent improvement strategy which is seen in operation throughout the school. Outcomes are often unclear and not measurable in terms of pupils' performance. Some subject department planning, for example in English, science and religious education, is weak, poorly focused and bears little resemblance to the whole school plan.

69. Secondly, the school's systems for collecting, analysing and using performance data to raise standards are still being developed. There is some analysis of pupils' prior attainment, both individually and across year groups. However, targets for individual pupils are largely based on predictions of future performance with little added challenge which can then provide the focus for the combined efforts of teachers and pupils to improve grades. Targets in several subjects, including science and geography, relate to pupils' efforts or standards of presentation rather than making gains in the knowledge, skills and understanding that will improve their attainment. The school has rightly identified this as an area for development.

70. Thirdly, the governing body is appropriately organised to discharge its statutory responsibilities and governors discuss a range of strategic issues at their meetings. In its role of "critical friend", however, it does not sufficiently hold the school to account for the standards achieved by pupils. Some individual governors ask challenging questions and pupil performance is discussed in one governors' committee. However, examination results and other matters relating to standards do not regularly feature on the agenda of full governing body meetings. This makes it difficult for the governing body as a whole to have sufficient grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses, including, for example, disparity in standards achieved at Passmores and other comparable schools.

71. The school's aims are shared by governors, staff, parents and pupils. They include an entitlement to a rich and varied curriculum and achievement of an individual's potential. The school has developed its curriculum in recent years and has had this recognised through a national award. In most lessons, where teaching is good or better, pupils do learn well and make progress towards realising their potential. In a significant minority, however, this part of the school's aim is not realised because teachers' expectations of what pupils can and should be achieving are too low.

72. Organisationally, the school functions through a faculty/year group structure where each of five faculties includes a group of subject departments and takes pastoral responsibility for a year group of pupils. The problem of staff carrying multiple responsibilities, identified as a concern at the time of the last inspection, has been eased by some re-organisation and a strengthening of the role of personal tutor (form teacher). However, difficulties remain in some faculties where the demands of subject, pastoral and managerial roles are proving hard to discharge effectively.

73. The school's main system of quality assurance for teaching, learning and standards is a rolling programme of "mini reviews" of faculties. These involve senior staff, governors, heads of faculty and departments in lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work. Whilst this system provides useful information for intensive discussions with subject leaders and teachers, it has not been sufficient to evaluate and significantly improve the quality of teaching and learning since the previous inspection. More recent developments in using self-evaluation models are promising, although there is a need for increased rigour and frequency in the review process.

74. The school has established links with a Beacon school in Braintree for the purpose of sharing good practice and raising standards. This is bringing benefits for subjects such as mathematics and science.

75. Overall, careful financial management and efficient use of resources have set the school on course to eliminate its budget deficit within two years. This is a significant achievement and has satisfactorily addressed one of the key issues from the previous inspection report. The principles of Best Value are applied in the management and use of resources. Audit report recommendations have been dealt with and the school has good systems for monitoring and managing income and expenditure.

76. The quality of accommodation is generally good and provides an environment conducive to learning. Exceptions to this are some parts of the science and technology areas which are shabby and require modernisation. The dining area used by younger pupils is poor. Learning resources, including books and computers, are mainly sufficient for pupils' needs, though there are deficiencies in subjects such as modern foreign languages, geography, drama and science.

77. The school is adequately staffed with suitably qualified teachers and support staff. The contribution made by learning support assistants considerably enhances the progress made by pupils with special educational needs. Teachers new to the school receive a good induction and those newly qualified benefit from a good quality programme of support and guidance during their first year. The school provides student teachers with training opportunities and takes part in the graduate teacher programme. This commitment to staff development has been recognised by the school's further accreditation as an Investor in People.

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

78. In order to improve the quality of education provided by the school and to raise standards of achievement, the headteacher, staff and governors should:

- (1) Develop and introduce a whole school improvement strategy which is clearly understood by all and is implemented in all subjects by all staff. This should include specific action to use performance data and monitoring information more effectively and to raise standards at GCSE in all subjects. Initially, the aim should be to achieve standards in line with the average performance of pupils in similar schools.
- (2) Improve the quality of teaching and learning where it is weakest and share the good teaching that exists in the school. In particular, the expectations of teachers, parents and pupils should be raised so that all abilities are challenged to improve and enabled to make progress towards achieving their potential. Pupils should be encouraged to take more initiative and responsibility for their own learning.
- (3) The behaviour of a minority of pupils, predominantly boys, should be the target of urgent and concerted action by all staff with support from senior managers where appropriate.
- (4) Health and safety concerns in science, technology and drama areas should be addressed and systems put in place to ensure regular compliance with safety regulations.

79. In addition to the key issues listed above, there are a number of other areas for improvement which should be considered by the school. These can be found in the following paragraphs of the report:

19, 20, 25, 32, 34, 37, 38, 49, 51, 52, 54, 55, 58, 69, 70, 72, 89, 100, 108, 113, 119, 127, 141, 146, 155, 163, 170 and 178.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	153
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	57

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	19	35	31	9	5	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	792
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	104
Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	23
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	167
English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	11
Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	39
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	32

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.5
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	2000	91	76	167

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	38	40	42
	Girls	54	49	41
	Total	92	89	83
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	65 (61)	63 (59)	58 (46)
	National	63 (64)	65 (62)	59 (54)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	24 (17)	28 (29)	17 (15)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	31	42	44
	Girls	56	49	46
	Total	87	91	90
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	61 (63)	64 (63)	63 (54)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	29 (28)	34 (34)	10 (24)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	2000	75	65	140

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	18	71	73
	Girls	20	58	61
	Total	38	129	134
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	25 (30)	92 (93)	94 (99)
	National	49 (47)	89 (91)	94 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	30.3 (32.3)
	National	38.7 (38.0)

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	2
Black – other	11
Indian	1
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	773
Any other minority ethnic group	3

### Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	4	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	100	2
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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



### ***Teachers and classes***

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	46.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

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

Total number of education support staff	10.5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	385

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

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	73.4%
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	25.5
Key Stage 4	25

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	2,142,611
Total expenditure	2,085,807
Expenditure per pupil	2785
Balance brought forward from previous year	- 75,293
Balance carried forward to next year	- 18,489

## ***Results of the survey of parents and carers***

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	792
Number of questionnaires returned	155

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	40	56	3	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	39	58	1	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	35	50	7	1	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	22	63	12	2	0
The teaching is good.	32	63	1	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	36	51	10	0	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	57	40	1	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	71	26	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	47	41	9	0	3
The school is well led and managed.	47	49	1	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	38	53	4	0	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	38	51	3	1	8

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

### **ENGLISH**

80. There was a significant improvement in the end of Key Stage 3 test results in 2000 with 65% of pupils gaining at least a level 5. This is above the national average and puts the school in the top 40% of schools with a similar intake. It is an improvement on the previous year's results and indicates a good level of progress during Key Stage 3. However, the boys lag behind the girls by 23% and, although this reflects a general trend, the gap exceeds the national figures.

81. At Key Stage 4, there was a significant fall (of 16%) to 29% in the numbers gaining higher grades in English in 2000 - well below the national average. This was, however, offset by a more emphatic rise (of 23%) to 60% in the numbers gaining the higher grades for English Literature and this is a significant achievement - particularly as more than 85% of the year group was entered for the examination. Key issues emerging from both sets of results have been accurately identified and measures have been put in place to rectify the shortfall in English and to build on the success of Literature. Targets for 2001 are realistic.

#### *Reading*

82. The department usefully emphasises reading and every lesson begins with a short period of silent, individual reading. This helps to assert the importance of reading and to generate a calm, working atmosphere at the start of every lesson. It is enhanced by a well-organised library induction programme at the beginning of Year 7. As pupils progress through the school, they are challenged to engage in increasingly sophisticated responses to fiction and non-fiction. This is most effectively promoted when the work is rooted in complete texts that are being studied by the class, rather than in piecemeal exercises. A particularly good example was when a Year 9 class, as part of the study of a novel, was skilfully encouraged not simply to identify imagery used, but to analyse its effectiveness in terms of the author's craft. Many of the available class texts are rather dated and, although there has been a recent injection of new stock, there is still insufficient material to stimulate consistent, whole-class interest throughout the key stages. The structures for the recording and assessment of reading are strong, but the quality of individual reading records is variable and there is a need for a tighter monitoring process. A number of Year 10 pupils regularly engage in a paired reading project with the neighbouring special school - an excellent initiative that is much appreciated by both the teachers and the pupils.

#### *Writing*

83. Where the teaching of writing is strong, there is a clear emphasis on the purposes and structures of different types of texts with specific guidance and explicit models exhibited on the walls in all classrooms. There is also very good use made of the key words displayed clearly on the walls. There is, however, only a superficial reference in teachers' planning to the foundations laid by the National Literacy Strategy in primary schools. There is good, if limited, use of writing frames - particularly as a useful method of supporting pupils; but there are insufficient opportunities for the type of extended writing that *regularly* challenges pupils to explore, create and experiment. In pupils' books, there are large numbers of writing exercises which are often decontextualised and rooted in aspects of grammar and spelling that would be better taught through an analysis of texts that are either being read or written by the pupils. Although many pupils word-process their work, there is little evidence of a structured approach to ICT, although a Year 7 unit of work is being devised and more hardware is being made available. The department's ICT policy has not been updated since 1996. Displays of pupils' writing in every classroom help to celebrate and to demonstrate good work.

### *Speaking and Listening*

84. There is an appropriate emphasis on talking and listening in both the medium-term plans of the department and the short-term plans of individual teachers. In the majority of lessons, however, strategies for developing these skills are fairly unimaginative. All teachers are extremely skilled in leading whole-class question and answer sessions. Formal talks are a very useful feature of departmental plans. However, there is insufficient evidence of sharply focused pair work, well-structured group work or more creative oral responses in a range of contexts. There is a core of potentially disruptive pupils in a number of classes. These are, on the whole, extremely well managed but they do tend to inhibit the more creative instincts of many teachers. However, in two low ability classes - one in Year 7 and one in Year 11 - all the pupils were creatively involved in oral activities that were challenging, enjoyable and controlled. It is important that the department creates opportunities to share these types of successful strategies that are used in different classrooms.

85. In terms of teaching, the department starts from a position of strength: in the lessons observed, 89% were satisfactory or better and 55% were good or very good. Where the teaching is good, lessons are tightly planned, learning objectives are clear and are contextualised in the work in progress, parameters of acceptable behaviour are well defined and pupils are given some responsibility for their learning. Many of these factors are present in the satisfactory lessons but, in general, there are very few opportunities for responsibility to be devolved to the pupils: this tight teacherly control sometimes stifles challenge and tends to lower expectations. In the two lessons that were less than satisfactory, the challenging behaviour of a small group of pupils tended to dominate and disrupt and this was exacerbated by an unfortunate choice of strategies and texts.

86. Record-keeping is thorough and detailed but, occasionally, the responses to written work tend to be rather superficial with about 85% of comments related to the surface features of language and insufficient emphasis on the compositional skills linked to purpose, style and audience. Individual targets are a useful part of departmental thinking, but there is a need for them to be much sharper.

87. Although the majority of pupils are polite and well behaved, there are pockets of very challenging behaviour - particularly that of boys - in many classes. In general, members of the English department manage these potentially difficult situations very well. There is a great deal of mutual trust and respect in evidence and this is fostered by an excellent knowledge of individual pupils - particularly those who have special educational needs. This strength is enhanced by the excellent work of the SENCO and the learning support assistants.

88. Departmental documentation is extensive and it is useful that it is often viewed as "work in progress". However, there is a need for a greater degree of coherence and incisiveness: the departmental development plan and the year planner are rather weak documents that require a sharper focus if they are to improve teaching. The scheme of work, although detailed, does not offer a coherent view of the curriculum or of the strategies that would help to translate it into effective learning in the classroom. One clear format is needed to encompass: an overarching aim/topic; explicit learning objectives; stages in the process/strategies and other factors. The reading policy makes a number of useful points but it needs refining so that there are specific guidelines about effective classroom strategies to develop critical reading skills.

### *Improvement since the previous inspection/Further points for action:*

89. There is a great deal of good practice and very strong foundations have been laid for future development; acceptable behaviour is well defined and pupils are given some responsibility for their learning.

- Devolve more responsibility to the pupils by widening the repertoire of talking and listening activities;
- Provide more opportunities for a range of extended writing;
- Take more account of the content of the primary school curriculum and of the strategies used in good primary classrooms;
- Develop departmental documentation - particularly a more manageable scheme of work - this should be a shared activity;
- Update the list of whole-class readers;
- Develop the use of ICT;
- Analyse and act upon what it is that enhances the behaviour and the performance of boys - this might be integrated into a whole-school initiative; and
- Share good practice across the department: not just what to teach but *how* most effectively to teach it.

## MATHEMATICS

90. Pupils' attainment in the national curriculum mathematics tests at the end of Year 9 in summer 2000 was in line with the national average for those achieving a Level 5 or above, and below the national average for those achieving Level 6 or above. The school's results at Key Stage 3 are broadly in line with those achieved in similar schools. Over the years 1997 to 2000, results have been below the national average, but improving at a similar rate.

91. The work done by the pupils in their first three years in school, as seen during the course of the inspection, was broadly in line with national standards. Higher attaining pupils show good numerical skills. They can round correct to two significant figures, and three decimal places, and solve straightforward algebraic equations such as  $5x - 5 = 2x + 4$ . They are, however, sometimes given to rushing their work and not reading the questions properly. Middle attainers show good mental arithmetic skills. They understand the difference between mean, median and mode. They can multiply and divide directed numbers. Several such pupils are, however, unsure when rounding decimals. Lower attaining pupils handle with confidence the four rules of arithmetic as related to money.

92. Results in the GCSE examinations for pupils gaining a grade A\* to C in summer 2000 were below national averages. When compared with similar schools, they were also below. The number of pupils gaining grades A\* to G was, on the other hand, above that found nationally and above results in similar schools. The proportion of pupils gaining A\* to C grades has made a small improvement over the years 1997 to 2000. The number of pupils gaining A\* to G has remained consistently above national standards over recent years.

93. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have not had the benefit of lessons planned within the framework of the National Numeracy Strategy. This shows in weaker numeracy skills at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3. In Year 10, for instance, top set pupils are able to answer questions on multiplication tables accurately, but slowly. They need to work the answers out rather than having them as a secure mental framework for use. Lower set pupils cannot give answers to  $7 \times 7$ ,  $3 \times 11$  or  $9 \times 10$ . High attainers in Year 11 can solve simultaneous equations by graphical methods and can solve algebraic equations containing brackets by balancing. There is, however, a great deal of ground for them to cover if they are to achieve grades higher than C in next year's GCSE examinations. Average attaining pupils can construct a cumulative frequency table and draw its graph, but are not clear as to how it can best be used. Lower attaining pupils can draw and label a pie chart, but have difficulty working out the correct size of the angles for the sectors.

94. Pupils with special educational needs, in line with their peers, make satisfactory

progress at both stages. They receive good support from well-qualified learning support assistants in their lessons. The teachers are aware of their needs and in most cases take good care to follow advice given to them by the special educational needs department to see that progress is made. Only two pupils with English as an additional language were seen in mathematics lessons during the inspection. Both were making satisfactory progress.

95. The teaching seen during the inspection was satisfactory at both key stages. Most teachers demonstrate good knowledge and understanding, plan lessons which involve a variety of activities and maintain order and pace in their lessons which enable pupils to learn well. Marking of pupils' work is in many cases constructive, although there is a degree of inconsistency which needs to be eradicated. There were two examples of unsatisfactory teaching. In each case, a number of children were not content to settle to their work and the pace of the lesson was too slow. For each of these teachers, the children's books showed satisfactory progress and indicated that they had put substantial time into marking the work and supporting pupils' progress. In almost two thirds of the lessons seen, the teaching was good. Characteristically, these lessons showed clear explanation, good pace, varied activities, and very good pupil management. No lessons, however, ranked as very good or excellent. This was because, in general, there was a lack of challenge, excitement and sparkle.

96. There is planning in the scheme of work for pupils to learn how to use ICT. Good lessons were seen showing effective learning of how to use spreadsheets, for instance. Literacy skills, whilst not ignored, in that spelling mistakes are noted and corrected, are not fully addressed within the schemes of work or in the day-to-day delivery of lessons. For example keywords are not, in general, written on the board to bring them clearly to the notice of the pupils. Nor are pupils required to copy important words into their books and learn their spelling. The contribution of mathematics lessons to the learning of basic skills is, therefore, satisfactory overall.

97. The vast majority of pupils behaved well in all of the lessons seen. They worked hard, listened to the teachers, and related well both with their teachers and their peers. They are cheerful and purposeful in class. Most admit to enjoying their mathematics lessons. Their exercise books are immaculate. In too many classes, however, there was a significant minority of pupils whose minds were not on their work. Even in good lessons, these pupils demanded an inordinate amount of the teacher's time and effort.

98. The mathematics curriculum is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements. Lessons learned from the National Numeracy Strategy are being incorporated into the schemes of work for Key Stage 3. Attention needs to be paid to incorporating the spiritual aspects associated with mathematics into curriculum planning. Both the head of department and her deputy spend a very considerable amount of their own time assisting pupils on a voluntary basis during the lunch hour. There is substantial benefit for the many pupils who take advantage of this.

99. Departmental leadership is satisfactory. The team consisting of nine teachers is relatively large and disparate. All are well qualified to teach mathematics. Two, who are members of the senior management team, have themselves been heads of mathematics departments. Their contribution in terms of experience and advice to their colleagues far outweighs the fact that they cannot always attend or arrive promptly to meetings. However, mathematics is taught in a number of rooms which are not all close together. Although plans are afoot to rectify this position, currently it is affecting standards because it affects the cohesiveness of the department.

*Improvement since the previous inspection/Further points for action:*

100. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory. A substantial degree of work has been put into the development of the schemes of work at Key Stage 3 to reflect the National Numeracy Strategy. Standards at Key Stage 3 have risen so that they are now broadly in line with those nationally. Improvement at Key Stage 4 has been more modest. In general, teaching is still good. The last report noted that there was a large number of staff teaching mathematics which made effective meetings and professional development more difficult. There are still nine teachers of the subject.

## **SCIENCE**

101. At the end of Key Stage 3, the most recent national tests show results which are broadly in line in comparison with all schools. This is a significant improvement over the previous four years where the attainment of pupils was below average in comparison with all schools and well below the average of similar schools. The performance of boys and girls is similar, although girls' attainment was higher over the previous four years.

102. Pupils in a mixed ability Year 7 class work confidently in small groups to prepare a short verbal presentation on foetal development using information sheets and models to show the growth of the baby during pregnancy. A middle ability Year 8 group are developing their understanding of how to extract metals from ores whilst heating a mixture of carbon and lead oxide. They all handle the apparatus with confidence and wear eye protection throughout the process. Some pupils are able to offer explanations for the reaction and why pure lead remains after intense heating. Year 9 pupils in an upper ability set are gaining experience in planning a scientific enquiry into the effect of resistance on current and voltage. Through experimenting with varying the thickness of the wire, most pupils are able to relate their predictions to the data being collected.

103. Although stocks of textbooks are being increased, there are some instances where pupils are sharing one textbook between two. Progress during the key stage is good and builds upon the increasing levels of attainment of pupils entering in Year 7. Those pupils with special educational needs receive good support both from teachers and learning support assistants. For higher achieving pupils in Year 7, a two-day 'creative science' course is organised in collaboration with a local industrial partnership at Harlow College.

104. By the end of Key Stage 4, the most recent examinations in Double Award Combined Science GCSE show a continuing downward trend in results. Although nearly one third of all pupils achieved at grades A\*-C, a further half of all pupils gained grades D and E; and boys did less well than girls at grades A\*-C. Pupils currently in Year 10 are following a recently introduced Modular Science GCSE course. Progress during the key stage is satisfactory and pupils with SEN receive good support in lessons.

105. In both Key Stages 3 and 4, pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. They come prepared for learning and are eager to participate in lessons, for example: collecting and using apparatus sensibly and safely; working co-operatively in small groups and showing respect both for each other, their teachers and other adults. In a Year 11 lesson, for example, pupils were considering the impact of greenhouse gases and the recent failure of the World Climate Talks. Year 9 pupils are able to talk about their individual achievement and what preparation is needed to improve attainment in national curriculum tests, such as using technical vocabulary and interpreting data.

106. Teaching in science is good. During the inspection no unsatisfactory lessons were seen and teaching is good or better in nearly two-thirds of lessons at both key stages. All lessons show careful planning and begin with clearly stated objectives, maintain a good pace

and include a variety of activities. In a Year 11 lesson very good teaching included a demonstration showing the heating of magnesium ribbon and powder which readily stimulated pupils' interest into considering the effects of surface area on the rate of chemical reactions. Another Year 11 lesson with very good teaching ensured that there was sufficient time before the end of the session for all pupils to draw a graph of results and probing questions from the teacher continuously checked pupils' knowledge and understanding. Very good teaching in Key Stage 3 included an opportunity for pupils to review marked examples of work using grade criteria to promote their individual understanding of how to improve attainment.

107. The leadership and management of science are good, but a more structured development plan is needed. The schemes of work for both key stages meet national curriculum requirements. The technical staff provide good support and resources for teaching are satisfactory. All the laboratories are in need of refurbishment and some lessons are taught in a classroom which restricts opportunities for pupils to undertake practical work. The monitoring and assessment of pupils' work is well supported through the use of topic review sheets which are involving pupils at both key stages in self-assessment and setting future targets. However, it would be helpful to set learning targets which are more specific than many of the current presentational aims. The department must ensure that it now begins to use pupil assessment data more rigorously to target those groups and individuals whose motivation and aspirations have reduced overall performance at the end of Key Stage 4.

*Improvement since the previous inspection/Further points for action:*

108. There have been changes in staff since the last inspection. The department has actively developed the level of pupils' process skills through scientific enquiries. Pupils are showing greater confidence in applying their knowledge and understanding in unfamiliar situations at both key stages. The recent introduction of the ICT suite is having a very positive impact on pupils' use of information technology in their work. There is evidence of pupils becoming more conscious of wider scientific issues, for example global warming. The department is keenly aware of the need to increase pupil motivation to succeed and reduce low expectations through providing a more relevant curriculum at Key Stage 4.

- As a matter of priority, take action to test the safety of all electrical equipment in the department;
- Use assessment data to target pupils' achievement through tracking across the key stages, especially in Years 9, 10 and 11;
- Ensure departmental planning focuses on teaching and learning as the attainment of pupils entering from Key Stage 2 changes over time; and
- Continue to increase the number of textbooks for all pupils.

## **ART**

109. By the end of Key Stage 3, both boys and girls are working broadly in line with national expectations. Pupils in Year 7 show that they can draw lifelike portraits and make the necessary adjustments to create caricatures. Those in Year 8 are able to develop their observational work on onions into three-dimensional (3D) models using *papier-mache* technique. By the age of 14, pupils understand how to convey an impression of distance and demonstrate this by the use of aerial perspective in a painting exercise. Progress during the key stage is satisfactory and pupils of all abilities are achieving lesson objectives.

110. By the end of Key Stage 4, standards are well below national expectations for girls and below those expected for boys. This is largely due to unchallenging teaching which does not develop the skills acquired earlier. Pupils in Year 10 are able to use objects found in the



school grounds to create works based on those of Andy Goldsworthy. By the end of Year 11, pupils show that they can develop self-portraits into effective life-size 3D sculptures. Progress during the key stage is unsatisfactory taking into account the level of technical skill evident at the age of 14.

111. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils in both key stages are satisfactory or better. Pupils listen attentively, respond positively to instructions and answer questions eagerly. They are polite, helpful and show respect at all times.

112. Teaching overall is satisfactory, and better at Key Stage 3 than at Key Stage 4. Teachers have clear expectations of behaviour and ensure that conduct is conducive to learning but, because expectations at both key stages are low, progress is stifled. Lessons are well organised with appropriate resources, although these could be enriched to provide greater visual stimulus. The wish for pupils to succeed results in most of the outcomes being teacher-directed. There are insufficient tasks to develop pupils' creativity.

*Improvement since the previous inspection/Further points for action:*

113. There has been a considerable improvement in examination results since the last inspection. In 1995, results were around 30% below the national average, but are now barely 10% below. From evidence seen, there is a slight improvement in the frequency of working from direct observation as a starting point. Although there are some references to art from cultures other than from the West, this was not seen in lessons.

- The use of sketchbooks is variable across the key stages and is an area worth developing;
- Greater emphasis on experimentation, modifying and refining ideas and the role of the sketchbook as a personal visual diary would have a positive impact on the personal development and individuality of pupils; and
- Work inspired by artefacts and designs from multi-ethnic sources needs to have a more prominent place in the work of the department.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

114. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils are working broadly in line with national expectations. Year 7 pupils show that they can use their own research to inform their decisions about designing a holder in textiles and can collect and collate information about types of bread tasted in food technology. Year 8 pupils demonstrate their skills at making a desk tidy from wood and acrylic, making cheese dishes and using ICT to help them design cushions and to draw geometric shapes. Pupils aged 14 are capable of collecting and using research to help them design a bag and good quality work is in progress making picture frames using a variety of resistant materials. Progress throughout the key stage is at least satisfactory and often better.

115. By the end of Key Stage 4, standards in textiles are in line with those expected, but below national expectations in food and resistant materials. Pupils in Year 10 show that they can use ICT for orthographic drawing and can use the Internet to research their graphics project on designing a package for videos. By the age of 15, pupils can take part effectively in role-play, simulating the processes involved in manufacturing hats and can use criteria to evaluate a model toy being made. Progress during lessons is satisfactory.

116. The attitude and behaviour of the majority of pupils are satisfactory. Pupils show they can work keenly, responsibly and creatively. However, a small number are poorly motivated and can be noisy. Personal development is promoted in all areas of technology and

throughout the key stages by allowing elements of choice in each project. Pupils can choose which recipe to try; whether to make a holder for a mobile phone, make-up or something else; make a personalised photo frame and design cushions, bags and toys. Projects are designed to appeal to both boys and girls and encourage discussion of tastes and preferences.

117. Teaching is good overall but better in Key Stage 3 and strongest in textiles. Where teaching is good, planning and expectations are clear with objectives visible on the board. The use of must, should and could (do this...) enables tasks to be matched to ability and encourages pupils to extend their learning. Discussions about opinions and taste are valued and contribute to pupils' learning. Where teaching is not so good with unclear lesson objectives, insufficient planning and ineffective evaluation, pupils find it difficult to measure the progress they are making.

*Improvement since the previous inspection/Further points for action:*

118. The staff of the technology area has totally changed since the last inspection. Key members have only been in post one or two years. The impact of these appointments cannot be felt fully in such a short time, but the foundations have been laid for success. This can be seen by the changes made to schemes of work to make them appeal to boys (in textiles) and to girls (in graphics.)

119. The main area of concern arises from the lack of a full-time workshop technician and the health and safety issues resulting from this. There is a noticeable impact on learning when teachers are forced to take time out from teaching to deal with machinery, equipment and materials that would otherwise be dealt with by a technician.

- The arrangement for the use of computers is improving, but still unsatisfactory. Software is also necessary to enable the control boxes to be used fully;
- The improvement of examination results is a priority and is already being addressed.

## **DRAMA**

120. Drama is a popular and successful GCSE subject option at Key Stage 4 and entry numbers have doubled, attracting almost equal numbers of boys and girls. It is taught to all pupils at Key Stage 3 by five teachers all of whom have considerable responsibilities in other subject and management areas in the school.

121. Standards achieved at the end of Key Stage 3 are below national expectations. Less able pupils achieve standards above their ability when the teaching is very good, but all pupils' lack the skills to develop their ideas into meaningful drama. There is no evidence that, after three years of being taught drama, pupils know and understand how to use a range of drama forms and techniques to explore and present their ideas and feelings with concentration and commitment. Progress is, however, being made at both key stages in the development of speaking and listening skills and pupils gain confidence as performers and sympathetic audiences.

122. Pupils' GCSE results are good for their ability with over half the pupils entered gaining an A\* - C grade. Pupils with special educational needs achieve significant success in this subject and some gain grades that are high for their ability. However, much of the practical work is immature and simplistic in style and content, although pupils of all abilities are set tasks which enable them to achieve success in the written evaluation section of the examination.

123. All pupils at both key stages are interested, involved and want to learn. They are supportive of each other when working in groups and watching each other's work. Behaviour is always satisfactory and sometimes very good. There is limited evidence of pupils initiating discussions when talking about the quality of their work and there are not enough opportunities for them to explore personal thoughts and feelings in depth, especially at Key Stage 3.

124. Teaching at Key Stage 4 is always good, but ranges from poor to very good at Key Stage 3. When teaching is good or better, work is carefully matched to pupils' abilities and all pupils are positively encouraged to build a drama with meaning and depth. There are high expectations, good use of time and an energetic and committed use of some appropriate teaching strategies such as forum theatre. Teaching is less than satisfactory when poor quality work is accepted without challenge, skills are not taught, opportunities to challenge all pupils are missed and the work lacks rigour and discipline.

125. Schemes of work have been put in place for the benefit of teachers whose main specialism is not drama, rather than the development of a coherent drama curriculum that meets the identified needs of all pupils. There is too much emphasis on naturalistic drama. It would be helpful to develop a wider range of more imaginative presentation styles, the use of physical theatre techniques and opportunities for pupils to explore cultural traditions other than their own. Homework is regularly set at Key Stage 3 and would benefit from being included in the school's homework timetable. The learning environment and the resources available also limit teaching strategies.

126. Pupils and parents are rightly proud of the high quality annual production, but there is no regular drama club or other extra-curricular performance opportunities. Drama makes a real contribution to some pupils' achievements in this school and has the potential to be a significant strength.

*Improvement since the previous inspection/Further points for action:*

127. The number of pupils taking GCSE has doubled and an effective assessment system is in place. However, standards of achievement at Key Stage 3, planning and curriculum development, and curriculum enrichment opportunities, are affected by the multiple responsibilities held by the staff managing and teaching drama.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

128. Geography is taught as part of a humanities course in Year 7 and as a separate subject in Year 8 through to Year 11. Attainment in geography is below national expectations by the end of Key Stage 3. The proportion of pupils' awarded Level 5 in teacher assessment at the end of Year 9 has risen from well below national expectations for their age group in 1999 to just below in 2000. A higher proportion of girls did significantly better than boys at the end of Year 9 in both years, reflecting national trends. At the age of 14, pupils can use geographical terms correctly in oral and written answers, describing facts about the climate, landscape and culture of a range of places, such as Brazil and Japan. They can describe patterns in population growth and decline in economically developed and less developed countries and some pupils are beginning to predict patterns in demographic trends. Pupils' map skills and ability to draw and interpret graphs are satisfactory, although they make careless errors in presentation. The majority of pupils write short answers which lack sufficient geographical detail and this depresses standards.

129. Attainment at GCSE is well below national standards and has not improved over the last 3 years. In 1998, 31% of pupils gained A\* to C grades and in 1999 the proportion had

fallen to 21%, less than half the national average. In 2000, 25% of pupils were awarded A\* to C grades, an increase from the previous year, but still well below national expectations. There was very little difference in the performance of boys and girls in each year. By the age of 16, pupils have a secure knowledge of the location of places they study. They develop a satisfactory understanding of geographical theories by applying them to the local area. Their interpretation of a range of maps and data is sound, but presentation is unsatisfactory as they make too many errors. Geographical coursework enquiries of Hatfield Forest, Purbeck and the local region show pupils have a reasonable understanding of how people can manage environments. They are able to collect evidence to test hypotheses and present sound information about their findings. However, the quality of many conclusions is basic, although a minority of pupils present well-written and detailed studies with well-substantiated conclusions. Pupils need more practice and support in structuring extended written answers.

130. Progress throughout Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 is satisfactory. Pupils with SEN are well supported and make satisfactory progress. Able pupils make satisfactory rather than good progress because too many lesson activities lack sufficient challenge.

131. In all lessons, pupils understand what they have to do, as the teachers' directions are clear. Behaviour was good in half the lessons seen, and satisfactory in the rest. Pupils respond well to high expectations for behaviour and listen attentively. A minority of boys in Year 11 do not have a good attitude to work and lack self-discipline, distracting others until their teachers put everyone back on task, and some Year 8 boys have to be reminded continually not to call out answers.

132. Teaching is satisfactory throughout with two good lessons seen, one in each key stage. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and they extend the facts pupils know already about Brazil, urban redevelopment and population growth through brisk questioning and brainstorming activities. Teaching of the basic skills is competent: pupils in all classes are systematically taught to acquire geographical vocabulary, to develop numeracy skills through data interpretation and in Year 9 to use ICT to draw and analyse scatter graphs. Planning is sound, setting out clear expectations for what is to be taught. Lessons are well structured and provide a variety of whole class, paired and small group activities. Classroom support for SEN pupils in Years 8 and 10 is good and extra prompts on map outlines help them to complete the task. Marking uses a clear grading system consistently and teachers' records show how individual pupils are progressing in their work. There is a good system for end of unit assessments followed by pupil target setting based on self-evaluation.

133. Homework is used to reinforce and extend class work, for example, Year 8 research an aspect of Brazil's geography and Year 11 prepare for an oral assessment where they have to speak in support of a new development in Purbeck or the local area. Some map work activities in Years 7, 8 and 11 fail to challenge more able pupils and the department needs to improve planning for this higher ability group. Teachers put an appropriate emphasis on teaching geographical vocabulary, but they are providing insufficient explicit support to help pupils improve the detail and structure of their extended writing. More opportunity for drafting and redrafting should be built into lessons and homework. Pupils' targets are currently mostly aimed at improving effort and presentation or going up a grade or level instead of describing what geographical knowledge, understanding or skill a pupil needs to concentrate on.

*Improvement since the previous inspection/Further points for action:*

134. There have been a number of improvements since the last inspection, although standards at GCSE have not risen. Some aspects of pupils' learning have improved, their knowledge of the location of places is secure, data interpretation is satisfactory throughout

and all pupils know about the tasks they have to complete in lessons because teachers communicate information clearly. There is some improvement in the quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11 and relationships are good in both key stages, although a small number of disaffected boys still create distractions to learning in Years 8 and 11.

## **HISTORY**

135. Achievement in history is good. There has been a substantial improvement in GCSE results compared to the time of the last inspection. In recent years, pupils have generally gained better results in GCSE history than in their other subjects. They also make good progress. Whilst the average of the GCSE history results have been below the national level in all years except 1999, pupils have done well from their low starting points to reach these levels. Achievement has been particularly good for the least able pupils and those with special educational needs. Very few pupils have not completed the history course and fewer than average GCSE passes have been at the very lowest grades. In 1999, GCSE results were slightly above the national average. In most years, there has been little difference between the results of boys and girls.

136. The most recent teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 show attainment which is close to the national average. Previous teacher assessments have been below average. Evidence from an analysis of pupils' work and the department's detailed assessment records shows that standards in history are rising in Key Stage 3. As with GCSE, this represents good progress for pupils who entered the school with limited historical skills and knowledge.

137. Across the school, the strongest aspects of pupils' work relate to the breadth and depth of historical knowledge. There are many good examples of well-researched projects leading to detailed knowledge of different times. Most pupils are good at extracting information from different source material, but they do not always reach conclusions about whether the information is reliable or useful. In general, extended writing is developing well. The department has made good use of school wide strategies to provide key words and writing frames to promote good written work. There are encouraging examples of individual pupils using ICT to research and present their work, but this is not general and the department has recognised this as an area for development.

138. During the inspection week, the great majority of pupils were keen and ready to learn. They work well in individual, group and whole class activities and show respect and warmth towards their teachers and each other. The small number of pupils who are less committed are well managed to keep them on task and avoid any disruption to the majority.

139. History teaching is never less than satisfactory and is good in most lessons. Lessons are carefully planned with a good mix of activities. Presentations show the teacher's love of history and are supported by detailed subject knowledge which is introduced in ways that pupils can relate to and understand. Good questioning involves all, draws out the pupils' knowledge and ideas and encourages further thought and explanation. A particular strength of the teaching is the attention given to the different abilities in the class. Additional support materials and individual help are provided with sensitivity to help pupils with learning difficulties and classroom assistants are fully involved. Similarly, extension activities and additional challenges are provided to the pupils with the most potential.

140. The history department benefits from good leadership. Management is unusual in that responsibility has been shared between two members of staff since the previous head of department left. However, they work closely together, have clearly defined responsibilities and

complementary skills. Resources are well organised, the rooms provide stimulating learning environments and the history curriculum is enriched by a programme of visitors, local visits and overseas trips. The systematic way in which portfolios of pupil work are built up from Year 7 to Year 11 and used to assess and develop standards is very impressive. Schemes of work are of a good quality. However, further consideration needs to be given to the way that they are linked to national curriculum and GCSE assessment objectives to ensure that sufficient attention is given to all aspects of history in a balanced way.

*Improvement since the previous inspection/Further points for action:*

141. The department has made substantial progress since the last inspection. Detailed development plans and a regular programme of self-review and external monitoring have led to issues being identified and addressed. Examination results have improved. There is no longer any unsatisfactory teaching and planning and assessment are much tighter.

- Develop the use of information and communication technology; and
- Evaluate the scheme of work to ensure that it reflects the different approaches to teaching history.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

142. Attainment at the end of all Key Stage 4 is higher than national expectations in the combined information and communication technology (ICT) and business GCSE course. An unaccredited ICT course provides an ICT entitlement to all pupils at Key Stage 4. Pupils' ICT skills are well developed by this key stage. They can use a spreadsheet to analyse the correlation between sets of data and create a line of best fit. They can create a branching multimedia presentation by combining information from different sources, including the Internet. They can move information from one software application to another to create a desk-top-published document. Pupils following the GCSE course can use a spreadsheet to create a user application which can calculate the costs of tiling an irregular-shaped swimming pool from its dimensions. There are some good examples of pupils' ICT skills being applied to their work in subjects at Key Stage 4, for example in mathematics and design and technology, but overall, the use of ICT in subjects is currently underdeveloped.

143. Pupils' levels of attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 are below national expectations. ICT is taught in Year 7, but the teaching is devolved to subject areas in Years 8 and 9. Pupils use ICT to create three-dimensional shaded shapes in art, to analyse information captured by a data logger in science, and to create documents that mix text and picture in history and modern foreign languages. They use ICT for designing and to study computer control in design and technology, and for analysing performance data in PE.

144. The quality of teaching in this subject is generally good or very good at both key stages. Teachers plan ICT lessons in detail relating the goals to national curriculum or subject requirements. They have a clear understanding of the learning needs of individual pupils. Teachers provide individual guidance and support to pupils during lessons and plan extension activities for early finishers. In lessons where pupils made the most progress, spreadsheet templates were used to provide suitable starting points.

145. Computer systems are managed by the subject leader with some contracted technical support. There is a developing range of computer software and CD ROM applications to support work in subject areas. The school is building a school web site and a local Intranet to make information and electronic sources available during lessons. There is a team approach to developing the subject, which has, in a short time, begun to make ICT a more central feature of the work of the school.

*Improvement since the previous inspection/Further points for action:*

146. Standards in ICT have improved at Key Stage 4, but have fallen in Key Stage 3. Overall provision, which did not meet national curriculum requirements in 1996, now does so. The quality of teaching and learning in this subject has improved since the last inspection. The school has made a strong commitment to bringing about improvements in recent years in this subject, in regard to levels of resources and opportunities for pupils to use ICT. The planning of ICT courses in Year 7 and at Key Stage 4 has led to pupils making good progress in the acquisition of skills.

- Further staff training is needed to ensure that the ICT skills that pupils acquire make a more significant impact on the quality of their work in subject areas.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

147. Standards have not improved enough since the last inspection. Standards overall are still lower than expected. In 1999, less than one in five pupils gained a higher grade in their foreign language at GCSE, and the results in 2000 were not significantly better than this. In both these years, girls did better than boys, but not to a significant extent.

148. Pupils' standards at Key Stage 3 are little better in relative terms than at Key Stage 4. At both key stages pupils are working at lower levels than expected. Standards are similar to those expected nationally in less than a quarter of lessons. Underachievement is equally evident in French, German and Spanish. The pupils should be doing better.

149. All the teachers are expert in the languages they teach. They plan and prepare their lessons with care. There is a good balance of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Their enthusiasm for language teaching is a benefit to the pupils. All the full-time language teachers can manage even difficult and unwilling pupils with some immediate success. They are able to make almost all their pupils focus on the work and learn from it. Pupils' written work is marked helpfully. Mistakes in class are correctly diagnosed and the help teachers give is effective. The teachers all work as a team and are well led.

150. However, strategic planning is weak. There is poor continuity from year to year which has an adverse effect on standards. Pupils change their teaching group or teacher too often. Schemes of work and systems for tracking pupils' progress are not good enough to cope with this.

151. The most linguistically able pupils in Years 8 and 9 learn two foreign languages, but the time allocated to each language is reduced because of this. The pupils take longer than they should to begin using either foreign language without constant support from their teachers. They move through the syllabus at a good pace, but they are given too little time to practise using the language they have learned. Moreover, when they enter Year 10 they continue with one language only and abandon the other. The way the second foreign language is provided has a detrimental effect on standards.

152. Pupils do not have a textbook they can take home to help with homework. To compensate for this, the teachers themselves have produced well-designed and helpful workbooks, and pupils keep their own vocabulary and grammar notes. Nonetheless, the pupils are at a disadvantage. They cannot refer to work covered earlier in the textbook or use complete glossaries and grammar notes.

153. In class, pupils have too little opportunity to work on their own or in small groups.

Most pupils cope well with routine exercises at basic levels, but they do not learn to work independently or to use their foreign languages to communicate with each other. When pupils do have the opportunity to work without close supervision, they do well. For example, Year 7 pupils used computers to word-process familiar text, while others in the same class read simple books. They learned from working things out for themselves, gained confidence and enjoyed the experience.

154. The large majority of pupils behave well in class and put effort into their work when asked. However, there is unsatisfactory behaviour in too many classes. In most lessons, teachers have to work hard to motivate and inspire reluctant pupils. They ensure that the work of the many is not spoilt by the poor attitude of the few. Long-term strategies for improving pupils' attitudes and behaviour need to be reviewed. New teachers need more support in managing pupil behaviour.

155. *Improvement since the previous inspection/Further points for action:*

- Pupils should be given more scope to take responsibility for their learning and show initiative and invention in their work;
- Pupils should have better access to textbooks and become less dependent on their teachers for support;
- More and better use should be made of ICT;
- The place of the second foreign language, departmental schemes of work; and
- Pupil tracking systems should be reviewed to provide coherent pathways from Year 7 to Year 11.

## MUSIC

156. By the end of Key Stage 3, standards are well in line with national expectations with some pupils showing evidence of exceptional performance in both the fields of performing and composing. A Year 9 group, for instance, was writing a piece for voice, saxophone, clarinet and piano in the Dorian Mode, which effectively blended the range and sound qualities of those instruments. Listening skills are good and students are able to evaluate their own work as well as that of others using technical terms, such as pedal note, appropriately. Pupils demonstrate confidence when performing and composing and show good concentration when engaged in these activities.

157. Standards at Key Stage 4 are very good with 70% of students gaining A\* - C in the most recent GCSE exams. There is a good understanding of technical vocabulary which pupils use in class discussions with ease (e.g. accidentals, polyphony, homophony, and antiphonal). Neither are pupils afraid of new terms and ideas. They are then able to identify and apply newly learnt concepts that would be suitable for use in their own compositions. Pupils are able to follow four-part scores and can notate their work using staff notation, some of which is to a sophisticated level involving complex rhythmic ideas. Pupils can learn and sing four-part unaccompanied madrigals quickly with good intonation. Progress made is very good.

158. Overall, attitudes are very good and sometimes excellent, especially at Key Stage 4. Pupils form constructive work-focused relationships with staff and each other. They listen to each others' compositions and performances with keen interest, work as a team and maintain a tidy working environment. The response by pupils involved in the various wind bands is excellent with more experienced pupils helping with the more junior groups as seen with the Junior Clarinet Choir. The commitment shown by the pupils is reflected by the



quality of their work.

159. Teaching in the department is good with some examples of very good teaching. Very good lessons are evident when subject knowledge is put across clearly in a way all pupils understand; the teacher provides a good musical role model for pupils; planning enables theory to be put into practice; good explanations with examples are given for technical terms; and a wide range of questions are used to test listening skills and pass on additional information.

160. A Year 10 lesson on Medieval and Renaissance Music had many of these features. Musical vocabulary was developed building on prior knowledge and related to features in the musical score, leading to the group learning a four-part madrigal. The teacher had a good command of the song, knowing the various parts and providing good vocal demonstrations. By paying particular attention to diction, dynamics and tempo, the teacher effectively developed the quality of the performance. The progress made and standard of work were very good.

161. The department is well managed. The schemes of work for Key Stage 3 are very comprehensive and detailed, although less so for Key Stage 4. Assessment procedures take into account the new national curriculum levels and arrangements are in place for the moderation of teacher assessments within the department. The lack of computer hardware makes it difficult for the department to develop ICT within the curriculum.

162. Extra-curricular activities are a strength of the music department. There are activities every lunchtime and an evening Music School with about 15% of pupils involved. There is a good range of instrumental provision providing musicians for the numerous bands and choirs. There are concerts both within school and at outside events regularly throughout the year.

*Improvement since the previous inspection/Further points for action:*

163. The department has made good progress since the last inspection as is evident by the standards achieved at the end of Key Stage 3 and the results at GCSE. The main points for action are:

- Improve the schemes of work at Key Stage 4; and
- The further development of ICT in both key stages.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

164. All activities in Year 7 are taught in mixed gender and mixed ability groups. By the end of the year, pupils are set into mixed gender groups based on games ability for most activities, apart from some invasion games, and they remain in these groups for the rest of the key stage. In Key Stage 4, pupils are allocated one hour for core activities, but this is insufficient to develop their skills in depth. Additionally, they are offered either GCSE Games or the Junior Sports Leader Award (JSLA).

165. Standards in GCSE physical education (PE) are well below national averages. In 2000, 26.3% of pupils achieved A\* - C grades compared to 49.4% nationally. None of the three girl candidates achieved these grades. The majority of the pupils taking the course were boys and, of these, 30% achieved higher grades. No pupils gained A\* or A grades. Attainment in the theory papers is below that in the practical activities. Teacher assessments made in 2000 indicate that standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are well below national averages, but have shown substantial improvement over the previous four years.

166. During the inspection, standards observed throughout the school were slightly below national expectations. The attainment of boys is better than that of girls. However, in Key Stage 3, the more able pupils in Year 9 Hockey attain above the expectation in dribbling and tackling skills and, in Year 9 gymnastics, the more able girls perform sequences with good quality. By the age of sixteen, the majority of pupils studying GCSE have developed individual badminton skills that are in line with the expectation and the more able boys can use a range of shots and tactics to outwit opponents. Pupils on the JSLA course can organise and adapt games for younger pupils from a primary school. However, standards of performance, knowledge of positions and tactical understanding in Year 10 JSLA volleyball are poor.

167. Teaching in PE is good in both key stages. Two thirds of lessons are good or very good with no unsatisfactory lessons observed during the period of the inspection. Teachers plan lessons with clear objectives and details of class organisation and lesson development. They usually manage behaviour very well and give clear instructions for tasks so that pupils are very clear about the expectations. All pupils are encouraged to participate fully and they make satisfactory progress in learning basic skills. In both key stages there is, generally, insufficient opportunity for them to gain understanding of principles, tactics and strategies, conventions or positional play. When they are given responsibility to devise sequences in Year 9 gymnastics, they do so sensibly and display good collaboration.

168. In Key Stage 4, there are good opportunities in Year 10 GCSE badminton and Year 11 GCSE volleyball for pupils to improve their skills through self-evaluation leading to the development of self-organised practices. Occasionally, in both key stages, pupils are given responsibility to lead some warm up and stretching activities but, in the main, they are teacher-directed and limited to jogging with little use of equipment and little relation to the activity. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good ensuring that pupils are kept on task, work at a good pace, behave and listen well and follow instructions. In Year 10 GCSE theory and Year 9 basketball, a small number of lively pupils misbehave, shout out answers or interrupt; but teachers use satisfactory strategies to manage them. In nearly all lessons, pupils observe the rules of the activity when working with others. Standards of kit are very good in Key Stage 3.

169. The department is being well led by a relatively recently appointed head of department. New schemes of work have been developed in the past six months and systems for end of unit assessment are in place. The department has clear aims and has devised an action plan for future development. There is no consistent formal on-going assessment to inform planning or to record significant achievement, but it is being developed in line with the revised national curriculum. There is some monitoring within the Expressive Arts Faculty, but the department has no formal system for monitoring teaching and learning. Accommodation is very good with two gymnasiums and a sports hall, both in good condition. Outdoor facilities are extensive with substantial playing fields and redgra areas. Half of the redgra is in poor condition, but there is sufficient usable space to accommodate the number of pupils and activities.

*Improvement since the previous inspection/Further points for action:*

170. Key Stage 3 attainment has improved and basic skills are now being taught. Teaching is more consistently good: teacher's knowledge is secure; planning shows clear objectives and pupils work at a better pace.

- Attainment at Key Stage 4 should be raised by teaching higher order skills more thoroughly and reviewing the time allocation to allow greater depth of learning.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

171. All pupils in the school receive one lesson of religious education (RE) in their weekly timetable. In Year 7, a number of humanities staff teach the subject. Thereafter, RE is taught by two teachers, one of whom is a specialist in the subject. Though the school now meets the statutory requirement to include RE at Key Stage 4, no pupils are taking the subject at GCSE level at present.

172. Pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is well below national expectations for their age. Pupils in Year 9 do not have a secure knowledge and understanding of the major religious traditions that they have studied. Neither have they developed the analytical skills which are necessary to explore practices, ideas and beliefs in depth. This is not to say that some pupils are not producing creditable work. The quality of the scheme of work in Year 9 is much better than in the preceding two years and, because of this, some pupils have produced imaginative pieces of writing – on their own fears and beliefs, for instance. At times, even parents have been drawn into the work, as when a number of them wrote about punishment in their own school days.

173. Progress over Key Stage 3 is generally unsatisfactory. A major reason for this is the very imprecise nature of the scheme of work which is available to teachers. This scheme itself is not progressive and does not identify what knowledge, understanding and skills pupils should be acquiring as they move through each of their first three years at the school. This, in turn, has a negative effect on the quality of teachers' lesson planning.

174. By the end of Key Stage 4, the standards being achieved by pupils overall are well below those which would be expected nationally. Though some pupils, particularly girls, are responding well to the demands of exploring a range of contemporary ethical issues, two major skills are underdeveloped by the time pupils reach Year 11. Firstly, skills relating to analysis, discussion, listening and speaking are poorly developed. Secondly, pupils are not skilful enough in using religious data in order to clarify and extend their own thinking. In that these skills are not progressively developed during Years 10 and 11, progress in general is also unsatisfactory. Again, this has major implications for the quality and detail of planning at departmental and teacher level.

175. RE does contribute to pupils' personal development, but not to the extent that it should. In the better lessons, where there is a strong sense of order and an enquiring atmosphere, pupils of all ages are willing to talk about their experiences and to make suggestions. Some of the written tasks, particularly in Year 9, give some of the pupils the opportunity to explore and express their ideas and insights. Overall, however, the work does not give sufficient opportunity for these kinds of response. Prolonged periods of whole class question-and-answer work, particularly when the questions are not particularly probing, only involve a minority of pupils actively. During such periods, a number of pupils, particularly older boys, become inattentive, talkative and sometimes disruptive in their calling out of questions and answers that are seeking effect rather than enlightenment.

176. Taking into account all the available evidence, the quality of teaching at both Key Stages 3 and 4 is unsatisfactory. The examples of good or satisfactory teaching that were observed during the inspection were usually related to careful lesson planning and choice of a range of good learning and teaching activities. In one Year 7 class, for example, what pupils had learnt about Christian infant baptism in the lesson was usefully extended in a piece of imaginative homework: designing a baby-welcoming celebration for people who professed no religious belief. In a Year 10 class, the teacher successfully created a thoughtful and sympathetic atmosphere through showing pupils an extract from a film dealing with the sensitive subject of voluntary euthanasia. Overall, however, lessons were not based on

sufficiently sharply defined learning objectives, focusing too much on content and not enough on either skills to be developed or underlying ideas and concepts. The quality of tasks set is a major weakness. Most are insufficiently challenging and some tasks – as in the 1996 inspection – would have been much better suited to younger pupils. Marking tends to focus on quality of presentation rather than on content, though teachers are keen to praise effort when they think it is deserved. Little clues are provided for pupils about how they might improve their attainment in RE.

177. The poor leadership and management of RE within the school are a major weakness. Opportunities have not been found to bring teachers of RE together in order to clarify what the subject is trying to achieve, to expand knowledge and to share good practice and ideas. Developments at national level – such as the introduction of levels of attainment as a guide to what pupils should be achieving – are not being kept pace with. There is no planned contact with either religious believers or communities. Ideas about how RE might contribute to literacy, numeracy and ICT are not being identified. It is no wonder, then, that the subject is making a poor contribution to these aspects of learning. The present development plan for RE does not provide a vehicle through which standards can be raised.

*Improvement since the previous inspection/Further points for action:*

178. There have been a number of structural changes since the 1996 inspection. RE is now included in the Key Stage 4 curriculum, thus meeting statutory requirements. The place of RE in Year 9 has been consolidated so that the weekly period is now devoted solely to RE. The Key Stage 3 course has now been adjusted so that it includes study of the four religions required in the local agreed syllabus. In that the overall quality of teaching and learning remain unsatisfactory, however, insufficient improvements have been made over the last four years.