

INSPECTION REPORT

HOLTE SCHOOL

Birmingham

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103509

Headteacher: Mr Bob Day

Reporting inspector: Ross Maden
2793

Dates of inspection: February 12 – 16 2001

Inspection number: 223991

Full 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 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Wheeler Street, Lozells, Birmingham
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Cllr E S Carless OBE
Date of previous inspection:	March 17th 1995

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(Ofsted No. 11041)	Marvyn Moore	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development; pupils' welfare, health and safety; partnership with parents and carers
(Ofsted No. 13003)	Mark Gill	Team inspector	Geography	
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(Ofsted No. 10905)	Alan Brewerton	Team inspector	Science	
(Ofsted No. 17404)	Judith Tolley	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
(Ofsted No. 31673)	John Gwyer-Roberts	Team inspector	Music	
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(Ofsted No. 10759)	Lynn Bappa	Team inspector	History, equal opportunities	Quality and range of opportunities for learning
(Ofsted No. 10739)	Peter Hick	Team inspector	Mathematics	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Holte School is a comprehensive school educating boys and girls in the age range 11-16. There are 900 pupils in the school and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is 69 per cent which is well above the national average. There are 761 pupils with English as an additional language and 34 are in the early stages of learning English. The number of pupils has increased since the time of the last inspection with most pupils coming from local primary schools in the Lozells area of Birmingham. There are 354 pupils on the school's special needs register, which is well above the national average and 14 of these have Statements of Special Educational Needs, which is below the national average. A high number of pupils enter and leave the school during the academic year, reflecting the population changes in the local community. The school receives considerable benefit from being involved in the 'Excellence in Cities' initiative.

Pupils' attainment on entry is well below the national average. The proportion of adults with higher education and the proportion of children in high social class households in the local wards is well below the national average. The proportion of minority ethnic children and children living in overcrowded households is well above the national average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Holte School is an effective school whose strengths outweigh its weaknesses. Most pupils enter the school with low levels of attainment and make at least satisfactory, and often good, progress during their time in the school as reflected by the increasing proportion of pupils gaining five GCSE grades A*-G. Progress for some pupils is disrupted by the difficulties the school has experienced in making suitable staffing appointments. Teaching is satisfactory, overall. The school has good leadership but there are weaknesses in the middle management of the school, that have a negative impact on pupils' learning. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- The proportion of pupils gaining five GCSE grades A*-G is a strength of the school.
- The provision for pupils' personal moral, social and cultural developments is very good.
- The quality of relationships within the school is good. Most pupils have very positive attitudes towards the school.
- The quality of relationships with partner institutions and the contribution of the community to support pupils' learning is very good.
- The quality of support for pupils with special educational needs and for those pupils with English as an additional language is good.
- The quality of pastoral care to support pupils' learning and for promoting high standards of behaviour and attendance are good.
- The quality of learning resources to support pupils' learning is very good.

What could be improved

- Standards in French and music.
- The setting of appropriate homework in line with the homework timetable.
- All parents supporting the school's priority in raising the levels of attendance.
- The management of modern languages, music and religious education.
- The quality of marking and the use of assessment to identify specific targets for pupils' improvement.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the school was last inspected in March 1995 satisfactory improvements have been made. In 1994, 12 per cent of pupils gained five GCSE grades A*-C and this has increased to 14.5 per cent in 2000. Over the same period the proportion of pupils gaining five grades A*-G has increased from 63 per cent to 79.4 per cent. Attendance rates have improved since the last inspection. However, the number of fixed-term exclusions has risen from 37 in 1994 to 52 in 2000. In tackling the key issues identified in the previous inspection report the governors have made satisfactory progress. Identifiable progress has been made on many of these issues, particularly in raising standards of literacy within the school and in the levels of support for pupils with special educational needs. The provision of a daily act of collective worship still remains a weakness and as recognised

in the school's own priorities there are still improvements needed in the use of assessment to identify targets for pupils to raise their levels of performance. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection.

STANDARDS

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

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

Pupils' results in national tests at the age of 14 in the year 2000 were well below the national average in English, mathematics and science. Over the last three years girls performed more highly than boys in English but boys outperformed the girls in mathematics and there are similar levels of performance in science. Compared with schools with pupils of a similar background pupils in this school achieve results which are well above average for English, below average for mathematics and well below for science. The trend in the school's results in tests at age fourteen, despite performance being well below the national average in each of the last five years, is upward in line with the national trend.

Pupils' results in the most recent GCSE examinations are well below the national average. The proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades in English, mathematics and science was well below the national average. Boys' results are very low and although girls outperform boys their results are well below the national averages. Pupils' achievements in GCSE are average compared with schools with a similar background. The average GCSE points score, the proportion of pupils gaining one GCSE grade A*-G and the proportion gaining five A*-G grades are all close to the proportions gained in similar schools. Only the proportion of pupils gaining five grades A*-C was well below the proportions gained by pupils in similar schools. In 2000, results in art, food graphics, information studies, media studies, physical education, Bengali, Urdu and drama were comparatively higher than for other subjects in the school. Results for business studies, science, French, history, religious education and electronics were comparatively lower than for other subjects in the school.

The school has set challenging but achievable targets for 2001 and 2002. In 2000 the targets set were not met by the school because a significant number of refugee pupils joined the school after the targets were set.

In the standards of work seen pupils are achieving good standards in English, art and physical education by the age of 14. They are achieving satisfactory standards in all other subjects, except for French and music where standards are below expectations. By the age of 16 they are achieving good standards in art, physical education and community languages. Pupils' achievements are satisfactory in all other subjects except for French, music and religious education, where progress is unsatisfactory because of the lack of teaching time given to the subject. Progress in music and French is unsatisfactory because of unsatisfactory teaching and current staffing difficulties.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Most pupils enjoy coming to school and their attitudes are good.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is satisfactory. On the occasions when pupils present challenging behaviour it is well managed by staff.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils' personal development is good. The quality of relationships are good. Pupils work well together and there are good relationships between pupils and adults within the school.
Attendance	Attendance remains below the national average and is unsatisfactory but has improved since the time of the previous inspection. Not all parents are supporting the school in its efforts to improve attendance.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection. The percentage of lessons judged to be excellent was 6.8 per cent, 26 per cent very good, 26 per cent good, 30.8 per cent satisfactory, 9.6 per cent unsatisfactory and 0.7 per cent very poor. The quality of teaching is very good in mathematics, history and art. Teaching is good in English, physical education and information and communication technology. In all other subjects teaching is satisfactory, except for music and modern foreign languages where staff absences contributed to unsatisfactory teaching, overall.

There are good teaching methods in place to support the teaching of literacy across the curriculum. In many subjects these are used well to support pupils' reading and writing skills. There has been good progress in the teaching of literacy since the previous inspection. Numeracy skills are taught effectively and pupils are competent in applying the skills taught in mathematics in their other subjects.

Most teachers use time in lessons effectively. Staff are well used to support pupils' learning so that pupils with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs make at least satisfactory progress. Less well-developed are the teaching methods to meet the needs of the most able and talented pupils, although there is a good range of extra-curricular activities for enhancing their curriculum opportunities.

Good teaching leads to effective learning for pupils. Pupils work hard when challenged. Learning is not effective when pupils are not given the opportunities to become independent learners and are over-reliant on their teachers.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum, which is enhanced by a good range of extra-curricular activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision for special educational needs is good and there are very good procedures for monitoring and reviewing progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good provision is made for pupils who have English as an additional language. Pupils are well taught and supported, especially those at an early stage of learning English, by a team of exceptionally well-qualified and experienced staff.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The provision for pupils' moral, social and cultural development is very good. Spiritual development is good. Effective opportunities are provided for pupils to take responsibilities within the life of the school, which make a significant contribution to their own personal development.

How well the school cares for its pupils	Procedures for child protection and ensuring pupils' welfare are very good.
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HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership provided by the headteacher is good. Recent changes to the leadership team have strengthened the quality of management within the school. There are weaknesses in the management of music, religious education

	and modern foreign languages.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors fulfil their responsibilities in a satisfactory manner. They are hard-working and supportive of the school and appreciative of the dedication of staff. However, they are failing to ensure that pupils receive sufficient time for religious education in Years 10 and 11. This is an issue the school plans to remedy by September 2001. The school is failing to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Recent changes have improved the quality of the school's evaluation but there are weaknesses in the consistency of pastoral and curriculum leaders in monitoring, evaluating and developing teaching.
The strategic use of resources	The school is good in its strategic use of resources and effective in targeting additional resources from specific grants to meet the needs of pupils in the school. The principles of best value are adopted in targeting its resources. The quality of learning resources is very good; accommodation is good and there is an adequate number of teaching and non-teaching staff. The school has experienced difficulties in recruiting temporary cover for absences in science, music, and French.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school. • The school expects children to work hard. • Pupils make good progress. • Behaviour of pupils in the school. • Parents feel comfortable approaching the school if they have a problem. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More information about their children's progress. • The amount of homework set. • The school working more closely with parents. • The range of extra-curricular activities.

The inspectors agree with the judgements of the parents with regard to the issues which please parents most. Inspectors agree with parents over their concerns about the amount of homework set. Teachers are not consistent in setting homework in line with the homework timetable. The inspectors believe the range of extra-curricular activities is good and that the school provides sufficient opportunities for parents to work closely with the school. The inspectors' judgement is that reports could be more detailed and agree with parents that more information about childrens' progress could be provided.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Pupils' results in national tests at the age of 14 in the year 2000 were well below the national average in English, mathematics and science. Over the last three years girls performed more highly than boys in English but boys outperformed the girls in mathematics and there are similar levels of performance in science. Compared with schools with pupils of a similar background, pupils in this school achieve results that are well above average for English, below average for mathematics and well below for science. The trend in the school's results in tests at age 14, despite performance being well below the national average in each of the last five years, is upward in line with the national trend. Standards are close to the national averages for information and communication technology, physical education and art. They are below in geography, history, design and technology and religious education and well below in modern foreign languages and music.
2. Pupils enter the school with a pattern of attainment that is well below the national pattern. At the age of 14, pupils achieve higher standards than might be expected in relation to their prior attainment in English, history, art, and physical education. They achieve standards which are in line with expectations in mathematics, science, design and technology, geography, information and communication technology and religious education. In French and music, standards are below expectation because of unsatisfactory teaching and current staffing difficulties.
3. In the GCSE examinations in 2000, the average points score which pupils gained was well below the national average but in line in comparison with similar schools. However, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades A*-C was well below the national average and well below when compared with similar schools. However, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades A*-G and one or more grades A*-G was well below the national average but close to the average gained by pupils from similar schools. In 2000, results in community languages, design and technology and communication studies were comparatively higher than for other subjects in the school. Results for business studies, science, English, French, history and mathematics were comparatively lower than for other subjects in the school. The trend in the school's average GCSE points score was below the national trend between 1995 and 2000.
4. It is clear from the proportion of pupils gaining five or more A*-C and A*-G grades that there was satisfactory achievement, in relation to their earlier attainment. Within the overall pattern of achievement by pupils at the ages of 14 and 16 there are some variations between different groups of pupils. Lower-attaining pupils, and those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress as they move through the school and often achieve better GCSE results than might be expected. This is reflected in the increasing proportions of pupils, since the last inspection, who have gained five GCSE grades A*-G. The achievement is the result of teachers' high expectations of these pupils in terms of their attitude, behaviour and achievement, backed by effective support where necessary.
5. The standards of work seen during the inspection are below those expected nationally at the age of 16 and reflect the standards indicated by the 2000 GCSE results. Attainment is in line with national standards for community languages, physical education and information and communication technology. In all other subjects standards are below those expected nationally, except for French, music and religious education where they are well below.
6. Pupils' achievements at 16 in relation to their prior attainment is above expectations for community languages, physical education, art and history. They are in line with expectations for all other subjects, except for French, music and religious education where achievement is below expectations. They are below in religious education because there is insufficient time allocated to the subject to enable pupils to make satisfactory progress. In French and music, achievement is below expectations because of poor teaching and staffing difficulties.
7. Progress made by pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory across the age range. It is good in physical education, art and history. It is satisfactory in English, mathematics, science, design and technology and geography. Their progress is unsatisfactory in modern foreign languages, music and in

religious education in Years 10 and 11 for pupils following the core course. In English, pupils in Year 7 recall and comment on the events in a story and predict a possible ending and in Year 9 they show a developing awareness of how language is used to create an effect. In science, pupils in Year 9 know that forces are a push or a pull, but have difficulty in understanding that stationary objects are subject to balanced forces. In geography, pupils have a basic grasp of compass bearings by the age of 14 and they can recognise trends in simple graphs; their knowledge of places other than the local community is very limited. By the age of 14 pupils can label items in French, identify key words in short texts, say phrases and write sentences following a model. By the age of 16, pupils in geography can read and produce simple maps. In science, pupils in Year 11 know that some metals are more reactive than others but have difficulty in understanding the factors that affect rates of reaction. In English, pupils make individual responses to poetry by the age of 16, and in food technology they are able to use information and communication technology to identify nutrients in different foods. In design and technology, pupils in Year 10 embellish fabric with a variety of stitching using hand and machine techniques.

8. Pupils who have English as an additional language make good progress in Years 7-9. They are well taught and their progress is monitored effectively. Many pupils have a low standard of English on entry and a significant number of pupils with English as an additional language arrive at the school after Year 7. In spite of very good teaching and support in the early stages, many pupils still find a lack of proficiency in English as a barrier to achieving their full potential in Years 10 and 11. Pupils at an early stage of learning English make rapid progress. This progress continues as long as there is intensive support. Thereafter, progress slows. Many have difficulty reading from the board and in expressing themselves clearly.
9. Pupils who are gifted and talented make satisfactory progress throughout their schooling. They are well supported by a good range of extra-curricular activities but many subjects have not yet developed sufficient teaching methods to fully challenge the gifted and talented pupils. The exception is in art where the most talented artists take GCSE in Year 10 and take A/S level in Year 11.
10. In Years 7 to 9 attainment in speaking and listening is below national expectations. Although pupils are generally willing to contribute to lessons by participating in discussions, the limited vocabulary of many restricts their ability to express their ideas clearly. Many pupils make very brief contributions to discussions, rarely talking in complete sentences. Standards in reading, especially in the ability to respond on a level other than that of plot or fact, are below what is seen nationally. Most pupils' understanding and enjoyment of what they read is limited by having a very restricted vocabulary. Attainment in writing is well below national expectations. By the end of the key stage most pupils write in complete sentences, but lower-attaining pupils do not use capital letters and full stops consistently and some show little understanding of the importance of punctuation.
11. In Years 10 and 11 standards in speaking and listening are below average. Pupils use of discussion is restricted by their generally limited vocabulary and the inability of most to express their ideas fully and clearly. There are occasions when pupils' understanding clearly outstrips their ability to express it and the level of discussion is consequently inadequate. Standards in reading are below the national expectations. By the end of the key stage, attainment in writing is below national expectations. The writing of higher-attaining pupils shows the ability to describe their own experiences and comment on the work of the writers they study, but some are hindered by an insecure grasp of grammatical concepts, for example, the use of tense, and clumsy sentence structure. Lower-attaining pupils are very dependent on the use of 'writing frames' provided by teachers in order to plan what they want to write, having little idea about what needs to be included and finding it difficult to express their ideas in a logical order.
12. Numeracy skills are taught effectively and most pupils have the ability to apply them in more advanced mathematics and in other subjects. However, many lack confidence and underestimate their own ability to tackle numerical problems. In geography, even weak younger pupils can use four-figure grid references. Higher-attaining pupils can use six-figure grid references, can plot and interpret graphs and understand 'scale'. Higher-attaining pupils can construct and interpret more complex graphs such as demographic distributions. In science, higher-attaining pupils construct and interpret graphs, understand latitude and longitude and calculate accurately. In both history and modern foreign languages pupils collect, organise, display and interpret data.
13. There has been an overall slight improvement in standards since the time of the previous inspection. The proportion of pupils gaining five GCSE grades A*-C has gone from 12 per cent to 14.5 per cent. The

proportion of pupils gaining five GCSE grades A*-G has increased significantly from 63 per cent to 79.4 per cent.

14. The school has set appropriate targets for pupils in GCSE examinations in 2001 and 2002. In 2000, the school failed to meet its target for the average points score and for the number of pupils gaining five grades A*-C because of the significant number of refugees who have joined the school since the targets were set. However, it exceeded its target for the proportion of pupils gaining one or more grade A*-G.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

15. Pupils' attitudes and enthusiasm for school are good. Most pupils display satisfactory behaviour both in lessons and at other times in school. Pupils work well together when given the opportunity to work in groups and, in the main, display sensible attitudes to their work. For example, in a Year 10 English lesson pupils were able to perform together in groups to show varying scenes in *'Twelfth Night'*, depending on each other to prompt and analyse the different feelings of the characters in the play.
16. Relations promoted by the school are good and the inspection team agrees with the views expressed by parents in the pre-inspection questionnaire, that their children enjoyed coming to school.
17. Behaviour in the school is satisfactory, and although supervision of pupils at break and lunchtimes is at a low level, there is an absence of bullying and oppressive behaviour and the school reacts promptly to any minor incidents when they occur. The number of fixed-term exclusions has increased from 37 at the time of the last inspection to 52 in the last year. The early indications are that the creation of a 'Learning Support Centre' is contributing to reducing the number of exclusions in the current year.
18. There is very little graffiti and vandalism on the site; and respect is shown by pupils for school property, property of other pupils and staff, and their own belongings.
19. Pupils are given good opportunities to undertake personal responsibility and show initiative in many lessons and in out-of-school activities. Some teachers do not always provide pupils with these opportunities in all of their lessons.
20. The school has a very effective pupil council where elected pupils from each year group are able to meet together regularly and discuss matters of interest and concern to all pupils at the school. For example, at a council meeting observed during the inspection week, the council discussed and debated, in a mature and sensible way, the school meals system, the mentoring scheme and how to spend the budget allocated to them by the senior management team.
21. Pupils exercise responsibility and help the staff in many ways, such as in helping in the library and participation in the Youth Parliament. Year 10 and 11 pupils act as mentors to Year 7 pupils who wish it, and run the effective prefect system.
22. The school's personal, health, social education programme is good. For example, in a Year 10 lesson on citizenship very good use was made of a local bank manager, who was able to interact extremely well with the pupils in a role-play situation. The pupils were able to discuss in an effective and mature way, the attitudes and attributes necessary to obtain employment in later life.
23. Although attendance has improved since the last inspection to just under 90 per cent, it is still unsatisfactory and is below the national average. The main reason for the unsatisfactory attendance is that parents take pupils away for long holidays in term-time.
24. The improvement in pupils' attitudes and behaviour, noted in the last inspection, has been maintained.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

25. Teaching is satisfactory, overall, and has improved since the last inspection. This time, the quality of teaching of 90 per cent of lessons was at least satisfactory. Of the 146 lessons observed 6.8 per cent were judged to be excellent, 26 per cent very good, 26.7 per cent good, 30.8 per cent satisfactory and 10.3 per cent were less than satisfactory. In the previous inspection only 73 per cent of lessons were judged to be satisfactory or better. The overall standard of teaching is higher in Years 7 to 9 than it is in Years 10 and 11.

26. The good teaching is having a clear impact on the quality of learning throughout the school and pupils are making satisfactory progress. Pupils enter the school with a pattern of attainment that is well below the national pattern and as a result of good teaching pupils at the age of 14 achieve higher standards than might be expected in several subjects.
27. There is some variation in the quality of teaching between subjects and year groups. In Years 7 to 9 the quality of teaching is consistently very good in mathematics and art. Teaching is good in all other subjects, except for religious education, geography and design and technology where it is satisfactory, and in French and music where it is unsatisfactory. In Years 10 and 11 teaching is very good in mathematics, good in English, art, information and communication technology, history and physical education. In all other subjects it is satisfactory, except for French and music where teaching is unsatisfactory. Teaching in French is unsatisfactory because teacher-led activities are too lengthy and there too few opportunities for pupils to use the language, which results in a lack of confidence in using the language for themselves. Teaching in music is unsatisfactory because of staff absence and pupils' progress has been restricted by the lack of continuity from the replacement teachers.
28. There has been good development of literacy across all areas of the curriculum since the previous inspection report, in which the development of strategies for the improvement of basic literacy skills was a key issue for improvement. There has been well-planned training of the whole staff in the methods of promoting the skills of literacy in their own subjects and this has been supplemented by the provision of thorough documentation to support this. Teachers are aware of the methods, which can be used to promote the correct use of specialised vocabulary to support pupils' understanding.
29. In most classrooms 'key words' are displayed and most teachers refer to the 'key words' in order to promote the correct use of vocabulary specific to the subject. Some subjects, for example art and history, promote the use of note-making skills and the use of 'writing frames' to support pupils' written work. In art, pupils use 'writing frames' to assist them when writing about the work of well-known artists. In history, pupils are provided with special activities in order to assist their understanding of what they read. However, not all teachers are consistent in the importance they attach to developing literacy skills.
30. Numeracy skills are taught effectively and most pupils have the ability to apply them in more advanced mathematics and in other subjects. There is a draft numeracy policy, which concentrates, mainly, on informing other departments about the levels of mathematical knowledge and skill that can be expected at different stages.
31. Teaching was variable in the use made of information and communication technology. Very good use of information and communication technology to support learning was observed in mathematics and media studies. Teachers with a good knowledge of the subject developed their pupils' information and communication technology capability effectively. Lessons are well-planned, organised and managed. Instructions for pupils are clear and lead pupils to meet the objectives set for the lesson. Teaching is less effective where the task selected does not extend the pupils' capabilities. Learning is generally good in information and communication technology lessons where progression is planned. Learning is affected by pupils' confidence. Many asked for their teacher's help even though they demonstrated their ability to follow the written instructions provided. Learning is assisted by the use of 'word walls' in some computer rooms. Information and communications technology usage is not consistent across all subjects and by all teachers. In art and design and design and technology limited use is made of information and communication technology and there is a lack of data-logging in science.
32. A feature of most lessons is the constructive purposeful relationship between teachers and pupils. This enables pupils to feel secure and confident enough to answer and ask questions. Sometimes there is an over-reliance by pupils on their teachers. This was evident in some mathematics, science, French and religious education lessons.
33. Most teachers manage pupils' behaviour well. Pupils are generally well-behaved but when challenging behaviour does occur teachers manage these situations well. In these tasks they are well supported by the on-call support provided by the senior and middle management teams.
34. Teachers plan very well for the vast majority of lessons and make good use of a range of resources. Lessons in all subjects include a variety of activities, which helps to maintain the momentum and pupils'

interest. Work is usually set at a good pace to which pupils respond well. Occasionally, in some French and religious education lessons the pace slackens when the introduction to the lesson is too long.

35. A feature of many lessons is the strong subject knowledge and expertise displayed by teachers. This is often coupled with a real enthusiasm for the subject, which rubs off on pupils. Teachers make good use of demonstration, for example, in art and design and physical education. Teachers' explanations are mainly clear and accurate and ensure that pupils work purposefully and productively.
36. In all year groups where teachers have high expectations of pupils they set demanding and challenging work. This is evident in most mathematics and physical education lessons and in such cases results in pupils making good progress and great strides in their understanding and skills. In some science, French, geography, design and technology and information and communication technology lessons there is a lack of challenge to meet the needs of all of the pupils.
37. In many subjects teachers mark pupils' work carefully and some teachers provide clear guidance to pupils on what they need to do to improve. In science, whilst books are always marked, incomplete or missing work is not always followed up. Marking in some subjects is sometimes superficial. It does not always indicate the level at which pupils have performed nor are comments made that indicate how pupils can improve. There is lack of consistency, across the school, in the identification of appropriate targets to raise standards.
38. The setting of homework is unsatisfactory. Not all teachers are following the published homework timetable; in particular, some mathematics teachers set homework at times other than indicated in the homework timetable. There is a lack of consistency from teachers in insisting that homework is completed and handed in on time. In science, homework which consolidates or extends the work done in individual lessons is not always followed up.
39. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs, and its impact on learning, is satisfactory across the age range. It is good in English, art, physical education and history, and in information and communication technology in Years 10 and 11. It is satisfactory in mathematics, science, geography, religious education, design technology, and in information and communication technology in Years 7 to 9. It is unsatisfactory in music and modern foreign languages. In English, writing frames are well used to help pupils plan their written work. In music, there is an over-reliance on written work resulting in pupils making unsatisfactory progress. In modern foreign languages, there is too great an emphasis on reading and writing skills in Years 7 to 9, which inhibits progress, with pupils lacking confidence in using the language for themselves. In a Year 8 geography lesson the teacher and support teacher were both very active in assessing the contributions of pupils during group activities; pupils were constantly challenged and made very good progress. In a Year 9 science lesson the work was appropriately structured but pupils were not given sufficient opportunities to work independently. In English, support staff are well used in Years 10 and 11 to support both individuals and small groups; the support enables them to understand and to gain confidence, for example, in the use of emotive and persuasive language. In modern foreign languages, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to work independently in Years 10 and 11 and lessons lack an appropriate structure with work broken down into small steps. In physical education, demonstration techniques are very effectively used throughout the age range and the careful planning of tasks enables all pupils to make good progress. In information and communication technology, support staff are well prepared to enable pupils to make good use of equipment. Staff show a good awareness of pupils' special educational needs although Individual Education Plans are not widely used in teaching. In some lessons the absence of support was a significant factor in pupils' unsatisfactory progress. Support staff are well used in the majority of lessons. In one science and one modern languages lesson observed, support staff were not used effectively.
40. Pupils who have English as an additional language are well taught and their progress is monitored effectively. The teaching team, funded by the ethnic minority achievement grant, is exceptionally well-qualified and experienced. With a minimum of withdrawal from lessons, it manages the early stages of learning English very well indeed. However, with four pupils in five having English as an additional language, the support that the team can give, after the early stages, is clearly limited. Subject teachers have to take increasing responsibility and, in some subjects, the response is limited. They do this very well in history and physical education, but less well in French and design and technology. For example, some teachers corrected pupils' errors in the subject's technical language but ignored their basic errors in English.

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

41. The school's curriculum provision is good, with a strategic lead being provided by the deputy head teacher. It is broad, overall, and meets the needs of most pupils. The school has made significant progress in developing its curriculum since the last report. Access to it is good because of well-organised support for pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language.
42. Time allocation for religious education in Years 10 and 11 is below that required to teach the locally Agreed Syllabus in sufficient depth. From September, however, all pupils in Years 10 and 11 will take a short course GCSE in religious education, which will enable the school fully to meet the statutory requirements. Physical education is taught to single-sex groups, which means that girls are unable to take the subject as a GCSE option because numbers choosing to do so are too small to make a viable group.
43. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 study all the National Curriculum subjects as well as religious education. Information and communication technology is taught as a separate subject in Year 7 and within other subjects in Years 8 and 9.
44. In Years 10 and 11, pupils study a common core of subjects, designed to provide a balanced range of experiences. Provision in this key stage has improved since the last inspection when well over half the pupils did not follow a course with an aesthetic or performance component. All pupils learn French from Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11 have the option of continuing with French or taking a community language. Although there are currently staffing problems in music, pupils now receive a broader and more balanced aesthetic curriculum. Talented pupils are able to take their GCSE art a year early and then can begin AS level in Year 11. The arts curriculum is enriched by links with neighbouring schools, including a local grammar school, and an improving provision for higher-attaining pupils via a popular Saturday school, which provides pupils with enrichment opportunities in art, music, drama and sports.
45. The programme for personal and social education is good. It supports pupils' social development. The programme has been restructured since the previous inspection. Elements of citizenship are incorporated ahead of the legal requirements to do so. It includes sex, health and drugs education. Parts of these are also taught in science and religious education.
46. The provision for careers and work related experience is good. The careers service is closely involved with the school in helping pupils to make informed choices about their options and to prepare them for transfer to work and further education.
47. The provision for special educational needs is good across the school's age range, with planned provision supporting pupils with the most significant needs, especially those at stages 3 and 5 of the Code of Practice. Integration assistants give effective support to pupils with statements in a number of curriculum areas to ensure their full access to the curriculum. If individual pupils receiving support are absent there is a back-up programme for deploying each integration assistant to maximise their use. A classroom assistant and two support teachers provide good additional support in classrooms, appropriately targeted at pupils at stage 3 of the Code of Practice. Record-keeping is well used to plan and evaluate strategies used by support staff in classrooms.
48. There are satisfactory links with primary schools and very good links with several local secondary schools, including the 'Titan' scheme for the initial training of teachers. The school works well in partnership with other schools in the 'Excellence in Cities' programme. There are productive links with the local community, including the regular coaching of pupils by professional coaches from Aston Villa Football Club. The range of extra-curricular activities to broaden the range of learning opportunities or to enhance existing opportunities is good and has improved since the last inspection, especially the provision for activities on Saturday mornings. A range of sporting links enriches the curriculum and the extra-curricular programme as well as encouraging sport in life after school.
49. Overall, the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Members of staff work hard to develop pupils' sense of self-esteem and this aspect of spiritual development is good. Opportunities to develop pupils' spiritual development exist in several subjects and other areas of the school's work, although there are missed opportunities in other subjects. Schemes of work, for example, do not consistently identify aspects of the subject that contribute to a raising of pupils' spiritual awareness. There is a need for all subjects to review and monitor their contribution to the spiritual,

moral, social and cultural dimensions in their curriculum planning. Religious education provides a good contribution to pupils' spiritual development. Other examples of good practice include the use of display around the school which celebrates achievement, for example, or assemblies which offer pupils opportunities to reflect on their own and others' experiences.

50. Pupils gain a great deal from the structure and expectations of the school in terms of its moral and social dimensions. There are clear expectations on behaviour and levels of mutual respect and this structure of expectations combined with a strong commitment to equal opportunities enacted in the daily life of the school, provides a strong scaffolding on which some subjects - for example, history and physical education - build effectively. This is evident, for example, in the effective promotion of teamwork and fair play in sports. Notions of right and wrong are challenged and developed in humanities. Adults provide good role models for pupils. Overall, the provision for these two aspects is very good.
51. There is a very good range of opportunities for pupils' cultural development. The Saturday School programme, the Titan Partnership and the extra-curricular programme provide valuable opportunities to broaden pupils' cultural understanding. The school values and celebrates the wide variety of cultural and religious backgrounds from which pupils and teachers are drawn. From September, for example, Muslim pupils will have the opportunity to study their faith in a short-course GCSE. There will also be the opportunity to turn this into a full course through the Saturday school. Display around the school celebrates and affirms the diversity of cultural and faith background found in Birmingham and also tackles moral issues such as racism in sport. Displays in physical education celebrate multicultural diversity in dance and sport. Although there is good provision for developing pupils' broader cultural understanding through art, insufficient use is made of the pupils own multicultural constituency.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

52. The school has very good procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare. The child protection officer is fully aware of procedures and is known to all members of staff and pupils. Child protection procedures are fully complied with and he liaises regularly with mentors, heads of department and the appropriate agencies.
53. Fire drills take place on a regular basis. Electrical equipment is inspected and health and safety audits occur on an annual basis. However, minor matters of health and safety, particularly in the science and art departments, have still to be tackled.
54. There is an appropriate number of first-aiders at the school, all of whom have received an appropriate qualification and are known to all pupils and staff. The school has a consistent and well-documented policy for dealing with first aid and the policy is regularly updated and understood by all staff. The practice of the local health authority nurse calling into school on a regular basis to offer drop-in sessions to pupils has been discontinued.
55. The school has issued good quality handbooks to the staff which give important information on the protection and care of pupils and pupils are well aware of those they can relate to in cases of need. The school has a very efficient system of recording and monitoring accidents and has a very effective strategy for dealing with matters of concern, that is appropriate and is easily understood by staff. Good liaison exists between the governing body and school staff over health and welfare issues.
56. The school has been very proactive in trying to improve attendance. The school has appointed, through grant funding, two home-school liaison officers whose prime function is to monitor attendance, contact parents at home, and liaise with staff at school and the education welfare service. The school's procedures for recording and monitoring attendance are good but the school should be more successful in discouraging parents from taking children on holiday during term-time as this is having a negative impact on their education.
57. The school has a well-organised pastoral system where form tutors and heads of year remain with the same group of pupils throughout their school life. This system works very well and enables the sound relationships that have formed between pupils and tutors in Year 7 to continue until pupils leave school at Year 11. This allows pupils to form firm relationships with staff and staff get to know pupils very well indeed. The progress that pupils make is enhanced as a result.

58. Pupils' personal development is tracked and monitored by form tutors, and full and effective liaison takes place between form tutors, heads of year, subject teachers and school mentors. Staff know individual pupils and support for pupils across both key stages is good.
59. The school has a very effective behaviour management programme. The school has successfully applied for, and received, grant under the 'Excellence in Cities' funding scheme and has used the resources to set up a 'Learning Support Centre' within the school to deal with disruptive pupils who are at risk of being excluded for poor behaviour and attitude. The work of this centre is currently being developed by the staff but communication between the centre staff and middle management at the school needs to be further developed and improved to ensure that the work and aims of the unit are fully appreciated and used by the whole school.
60. Funding has also been provided for a professional mentoring scheme to give support, guidance and advice for pupils with behavioural and emotional difficulties.
61. The school has satisfactory procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress and good procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development. On entering the school, Key Stage 2 results are made known to subject heads by the primary schools and base-line assessment is carried out on all Year 7 entrants. There is a draft whole-school assessment policy, which is beginning to influence practice. Each subject teacher marks and keeps records of pupils' work according to National Curriculum levels. National Curriculum test results at the end of Year 9 are kept and recorded on parent reports.
62. Good use is made of information about pupils' attainment on entry, and from this the school is able to provide a good base for further assessments to measure the progress pupils are making in the school. Teachers record their own results of tests, progress checks and examinations. The quality of assessments made by teachers is variable and there is no quality assurance system in place to ensure a coherent approach to assessment. The use of assessment to guide curricular planning is unsatisfactory.
63. In physical education there are two different systems of monitoring assessment for boys and girls. In the foundation subjects, assessment tasks are analysed and mostly used appropriately to set and review targets for pupils. In mixed-ability groups, however, not enough use is made of assessment findings to decide how to plan work and differentiate work for pupils of different abilities.
64. In most other subjects, procedures for monitoring pupils' progress are satisfactory. The identification and targeting of underachieving pupils in Year 11 enable additional support to be provided to help success in their GCSE examinations.
65. For pupils with special educational needs the identification, monitoring and assessment procedures are very good. The school makes good use of information from feeder schools to assist in accurately identifying pupils with special educational needs. All pupils are tested for reading prior to entry in Year 6 and the same test is used in Years 7, 8 and 9 to measure progress over time. Reviews of progress are very thorough and take place on a regular basis. There are clear criteria for placing pupils on the register of special educational needs with an annual audit, during which use is made of a variety of measures, including attainment in English, to inform accurate placement on the register. This process is also used to inform reviews of Individual Education Plans. At other times in the year a second review of each Individual Education Plan takes place, with good use made of feedback from different curriculum areas, including English, mathematics and science. Individual Education Plan targets are clear and of practical use for planning provision. Targets for numeracy are not fully in place to reflect accurately individual pupil's needs and require further development.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

66. Parents hold generally satisfactory views about the school. Most parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire felt comfortable about approaching the school if they had a problem and that the behaviour of pupils in the school is good. Parents believe that the school expects pupils to work hard and that their children like school. They believe that adults in the school relate to pupils well and that pupils make good progress.
67. A significant minority of parents expressed the view in the questionnaire that they would like more information about their children's progress and that homework was not set consistently. They felt that the

school should work more closely with parents and that the range of extra-curricular activities should be improved.

68. The inspection team agreed with the judgements of the parents regarding the issues that pleased them most. It also agrees with the parents regarding their concerns about the amount of homework set. Homework is not set consistently throughout the school in line with the homework timetable and marking of homework is inconsistent and variable. The inspection team formed the view that the range of extra-curricular activities is good and there were ample opportunities for parents to work closely with the school.
69. The inspection team felt that school reports could be more detailed, giving precise target-setting by staff and information about what children were expected to do – rather than what they had done. There is an opportunity for parents to discuss their children’s progress at a consultation evening after the reports have been issued. However the reports are not given out in advance of the evening so there is little time for parents to reflect on what they would like to ask staff or consider concerns they may have about comments on the report.
70. The school has regular communication with parents via newsletters, which are produced on an “as needed” basis but give precise information to parents. The newsletters are only produced in English and parents who have English as a second language are reliant on pupils to translate for them. The school has produced a very attractive brochure, which gives good information to parents about the curricular and extra-curricular activities that are available for pupils.
71. Few parents help in school, although they are invited to do so, and the school has organised positive parenting training courses for parents to enable them to be involved with their children’s progress and to encourage them to help improve attendance, etc. In addition, a parent group meeting is held each half-term with parent governors and a member of the personnel and resource sub-committee of the governing body attempts to get parents involved.
72. Links with parents are good. The special educational needs co-ordinator attends the induction evening for parents of new pupils so that concerns can be raised and questions answered.
73. Parents of pupils with special educational needs receive good support from the school. Parents are involved appropriately in statutory reviews. Parents’ involvement in the review of Individual Education Plans is encouraged through inviting them to a specific appointment at parents’ meetings. The school has recently developed a summary form of Individual Education Plan targets so that parents and pupils have a useful point of reference.
74. The school has satisfactory arrangements for the transfer of pupils from primary school. Parents of Year 6 pupils are invited to visit the school prior to their making a selection and meet the headteacher, senior management team and heads of year and tutors. Parents feel that the pastoral guidance given to their children, and the mentoring system, is working very effectively and feel that the attitude of the school towards their children enables them to enhance their education.
75. The comments made in the previous report that the school should consider employing a wider range of means for conveying information to parents has not been fully tackled, although the school has made some progress towards improving communication with them.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

76. The headteacher has provided outstanding commitment and dedication to the school in his long service at the school. The headteacher provides the school with a clear sense of direction and one of his strengths is the high quality of planning for the future. Recent changes to the senior management team have strengthened its impact in providing leadership and in introducing systems to evaluate and monitor the work of the school in a more efficient manner. A strength of the leadership is the presence of members of the senior management team around the school. They are well known to pupils and pupils have confidence to approach members of the senior management team if they have any concerns. Collectively they provide very good support for teachers in dealing with pupils who exhibit challenging behaviour. The school has been very effective in attracting funding from a variety of sources to provide additional

support for teaching and learning. It has been less successful in establishing how these various teams relate to each other and providing a coherent level of support for pupils across the school.

77. The quality of most curriculum and pastoral leadership is good. In mathematics, history and art leadership is very good. In English, science and geography it is good. In all other subjects it is satisfactory but there are weaknesses in the management of modern foreign languages, music and religious education.
78. There is a very effective whole-school approach to special educational needs, with a staged approach adopted which takes full account of the Code of Practice. Governors are involved appropriately, involved with a designated governor appointed. The governors' annual report to parents lacks detail on the implementation of the school's policy. There are good informal links between the co-ordinator and senior management. Support staff meet regularly to review progress and plan future provision. Whole-school procedures are very good with a curriculum support group representing all areas of the curriculum meeting half-termly so that relevant information is disseminated. A striking feature of the very effective whole school approach is the very good use made of information and communication technology, so that all staff have access to up to date information on all Individual Education Plans and to a summary of the current register of special educational needs. Staff are well-qualified and experienced. Links with outside agencies are good.
79. Additional funding has been provided for a professional mentoring scheme to give support, guidance and advice for pupils with behavioural and emotional difficulties.
80. Additional funding has resourced a 'Learning Support Centre' within the school to deal with disruptive pupils who are at risk of being excluded for poor behaviour and attitudes.
81. The governing body fulfils its responsibilities satisfactorily. Members of the governing body meet regularly. They are well-informed about the strengths and weaknesses of the school. In setting the budget for the current financial year the governing body has targeted resources to meet the priorities of the School Development Plan effectively. The governing body fulfils all of its statutory duties, with the exception of providing sufficient time for teaching religious education at Key Stage 4, an issue which the school recognises and will have effectively remedied by September 2001, and in providing pupils with a daily act of collective worship.
82. The School Development Plan identifies priorities for raising standards appropriately. The allocation of resources to departments is based in part on departments producing detailed strategies to implement the school's priorities. These are to 'increase differentiation; extend learning opportunities for all; maximising pupil achievement in examinations and to develop a more rigorous assessment system.'
83. The school is well placed to respond to the demands of performance management. There is a genuine commitment and enthusiasm from the headteacher, senior management and middle managers to seek improvements within the school. The management expertise is in place to provide the school with the means to raise standards further.
84. Overall, staffing levels are good. The school has in most areas of the curriculum sufficient staff to teach the National Curriculum, although at the time of the inspection there were significant shortages of teachers for science, music and modern foreign languages. The school has experienced some difficulties in recruiting appropriate staff to fill permanent vacancies and experienced real difficulties in recruiting temporary staff to cover for short-term absence. There is a good balance between experienced and less experienced teachers within the school. The ratio of pupils to teachers is broadly average and the amount of time teachers spend in the classroom is low in comparison with other schools nationally. Overall, staffing costs are above average. The school supports the training of teachers from both local colleges and from an effective partnership with local schools. The number of staff supporting pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory and there is an appropriate number of technicians to provide support for practical subjects. The number of administrative staff, including the librarian and premises staff, is appropriate. The hard work and commitment made by non-teaching staff makes a valuable contribution to the work of the school. Opportunities have been taken by non-teaching staff to work with pupils as mentors and the expertise of non-teaching staff has been utilised effectively to support pupils' learning. In particular, the use of a mentor, with skills in dance, has been used outstandingly to promote dance skills for pupils in the school.

85. Staff development is well organised. There is a valuable induction programme, which is appreciated by teachers new to the school. Full records of in-service courses attended by staff are maintained and judgements about the quality of training are kept. Teachers attending courses are required to evaluate the impact of the training on changes within their teaching. In-service training is matched to meet the needs of the school, departments and individuals. Many staff, but not all, have received training in the use of information and communication technology to support learning in their subjects. Those that have received training are confident in the use of computers.
86. The expenditure per pupil is well above the national average. Finances are managed effectively. The most recent auditor's report identified no significant issues. The school has an appropriate fund to meet contingencies and unexpected expenditure. Specific grants, of which there are many, including those for special educational needs and the standards fund, are spent effectively on the purposes for which they were intended and in line with the priorities for the school's development. The school is very effective in applying the principles of best value in allocating resources to the school's priorities.
87. The adequacy of accommodation is good. There are some weaknesses in the lack of storage facilities for art and design and in the number of fully-equipped laboratories for science. The accommodation is well kept and there is no evidence of graffiti. The standard of display in corridors around the school is good, with prominent displays of pupils' achievements.
88. The adequacy of learning resources is very good. The amount of money per pupil spent on learning resources is over double the national average. This has resulted in a ratio of pupils to computers of 4.5:1, which is much better than the national average. Most departments are well resourced to teach pupils with modern and up-to-date textbooks.
89. The school has a well-managed learning resource centre, which offers a good range of services to pupils and staff. The centre is housed in an attractive room. The services include an appropriate range of fiction and non-fiction books, periodicals, newspapers, CD-ROMs and computers.
90. Since the last inspection, the school has made good progress in improving resources. Overall, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

91. In order to raise standards and improve the quality of education the headteacher, staff and governors should:
- Improve the standards in French and music by:
 - Improving the pace of learning in French lessons;
 - Improving the level of challenge for pupils in French lessons;
 - Increasing the emphasis on developing speaking and listening skills in French;
 - Improving the levels of pupils' confidence and skill in performing, composing and listening by active involvement in the elements of music;
 - Improving the levels of pupils' confidence and skill in singing in music.
(Paragraphs 159 -165; 170 -179)
 - Improve the quality of homework by:
 - Ensuring that all teachers set homework in line with the published timetable;
 - Ensuring that all pupils complete homework.
(Paragraph 38)
 - Raising levels of attendance by:
 - Encouraging all parents to support the school in its efforts to improve attendance;
 - Encouraging parents not to remove pupils during term-times for family holidays.
(Paragraph 23)
 - Improve the management of modern languages, music and religious education by:

- Ensuring the newly appointed head of the modern foreign languages department tackles the issues identified in the report;
 - Resolving the position of the current head of department for music at the earliest opportunity;
 - Ensuring that the School Development Plan priority to increase the amount of time in Years 10 and 11 for religious education is implemented;
 - Developing detailed schemes of work linked to assessment opportunities for religious education. (*Paragraphs 159-165; 170-179*)
- Improve the quality of marking and the use of assessment to identify specific targets for pupils' improvement by:
 - Ensuring that all marking indicates clearly to pupils the level at which they have performed;
 - Ensuring that all marking indicates clearly how pupils can improve their work;
 - Ensuring clear targets are identified for pupils to raise standards. (*Paragraphs 37; 62*)
- In addition, the governing body may wish to include the following less important issues for consideration within the action plan:
 - provision of a daily act of collective worship for all pupils (*Paragraph 81*)
 - improve accommodation for the number of equipped laboratories for science (*Paragraph 87*)
 - improve the storage facilities for art (*Paragraph 87*);
 - improve the level of challenge for all pupils in geography, science, design and technology and information and communication technology (*Paragraph 36*);
 - reduce the over-reliance on teachers in mathematics, science, French and religious education (*Paragraph 32*)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

146

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

52

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
6.8	26.0	26.7	30.8	9.6	0	0.7

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	900
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	620

Special educational needs

Y7 – Y11

Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	14
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	354

English as an additional language

No of pupils

Number of pupils with English as an additional language	761
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Pupil mobility in the last school year

No of pupils

Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	44
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	83

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.1
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.9
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	95	70	165

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	45	36	20
	Girls	41	20	11
	Total	86	56	31
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	53 (47)	34 (27)	19 (20)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	17 (18)	12 (9)	6 (5)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	33	39	24
	Girls	32	25	16
	Total	65	64	40
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	40 (47)	39 (36)	25 (28)
	National	64 (61)	64 (64)	60 (61)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	13 (17)	12 (9)	7 (9)
	National	31 (30)	37 (37)	28 (30)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	91	76	167

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	9	68	88
	Girls	15	65	72
	Total	24	133	160
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	15 (19)	79.4 (85)	91 (94)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	24.4
	National	38

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	108
Black – African heritage	11
Black – other	8
Indian	51
Pakistani	261
Bangladeshi	316
Chinese	2
White	71
Any other minority ethnic group	72

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	34	1
Black – African heritage	1	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	1	0
Pakistani	12	0
Bangladeshi	12	0
Chinese	0	0
White	4	0
Other minority ethnic groups	5	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)	53.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	26
Total aggregate hours worked per week	582

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	73.5
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	26.6
Key Stage 4	21.6

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	2,946,933
Total expenditure	2,928,995
Expenditure per pupil	3133
Balance brought forward from previous year	31,963
Balance carried forward to next year	49,901

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	900
Number of questionnaires returned	172

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	46	44	5	2	3
My child is making good progress in school.	38	48	9	1	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	38	41	7	6	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	41	34	12	8	5
The teaching is good.	43	38	8	4	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	24	47	17	8	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	38	41	9	5	7
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	70	20	3	3	4
The school works closely with parents.	25	47	12	10	6
The school is well led and managed.	33	41	10	8	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	45	33	12	6	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	35	33	12	9	11

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

ENGLISH

92. Standards in English on entry to the school are well below the national average. Although the average reading age of pupils when they enter the school has improved over the last few years, it remains, on average, lower than pupils' actual ages. For those pupils who took their national curriculum tests and GCSEs in 2000, the average reading age when they entered the school was significantly lower than their actual age.
93. Attainment of pupils at the age of 14 in the National Curriculum tests in 2000 was below the national average, although it was well above average when compared with similar schools. The percentage of pupils attaining at the higher levels is also below what is found nationally. Pupils' average score in National Curriculum testing has risen steadily since the previous inspection and is now much closer to the national figure. The results for English were above those for mathematics and science. Based on evidence seen during the course of the inspection attainment is below the national expectations for pupils of this age.
94. Attainment in speaking and listening is below national expectations. Although pupils are generally willing to contribute to lessons by participating in discussions, the limited vocabulary of many restricts their ability to express their ideas clearly. When pupils were discussing the way in which language is used in order to convince and persuade, the majority were unable to comment on the effectiveness of the writer's choice of language because of their inability to understand such fairly basic words as "temporary" and "persuasion". Many pupils make very brief contributions to discussions, rarely talking in complete sentences. While most pupils benefit from the opportunity to compare their ideas with those of others, the effectiveness of this is limited.
95. Standards in reading, especially in the ability to respond on a level other than that of plot or fact, are below what is seen nationally. Pupils understand, recall and comment on the sequence of events or facts in what they have read and pupils studying Shakespeare show understanding of the plot. Younger pupils make predictions about how a story will end, usually basing this on what has happened already. Pupils at all levels of attainment experience some difficulty in going beyond appreciation of plot or facts to comment on the author's style or use of language, but most develop understanding of how the author presents a character effectively. Most pupils' understanding and enjoyment of what they read is limited by having a very restricted vocabulary.
96. Attainment in writing is well below national expectations. By the end of Year 9 most pupils write in complete sentences, but lower-attaining pupils do not use capital letters and full stops consistently and some show little understanding of the importance of punctuation. There is a strength in pupils' use of planning, including note-making, in order to enhance their extended writing. For example, pupils, writing about the personalities of characters in the book they are reading, were able to make notes from the text in order to prepare for this, although some pupils remained very reliant on clear frameworks provided by their teachers.
97. Attainment by pupils at the age of 16 in GCSE in 2000 was well below the national average for pupils attaining grades A*-C. The percentage has fluctuated from year to year, but, overall, there has been some improvement in this figure since the last inspection. All pupils entered for English are also entered for English Literature and the percentage attaining grades A*-C is also well below the national average. Overall, attainment based on inspection evidence is below what is found nationally.
98. Standards in speaking and listening are below average. Pupils use discussion as a valuable learning tool but the effect of this on pupils' learning is limited by their generally limited vocabulary and the inability of most to express their ideas fully and clearly. There are occasions when pupils' understanding clearly outstrips their ability to express it and the level of discussion is consequently inadequate. For example, pupils discussing the West Indian poem "Five Nights of Bleeding" showed clearly their frustration at being able to respond to the poem but not being able to explain their ideas to the rest of the class.
99. Standards in reading are below the national expectations. Pupils understand the level of plot and theme in the fiction, poetry and plays they study, including those written before the twentieth century, and they

show satisfactory understanding of character. Most find it very difficult to comment on the ways in which writers use language and literary devices to achieve an effect, partly because they do not understand all the vocabulary which is used. By the end of Year 9, many pupils are able to identify and use the correct term for some of the imagery used by writers, such as personification and alliteration, but are unable to comment on its effect on the reader. Lower-attaining pupils do not always recognise when a writer is using figurative language and interpret it on a literal level only, leading to confusion and misunderstanding. Pupils reading 'Dulce et Decorum Est' by Wilfred Owen found it difficult to comment on the physical and emotional state of the soldiers because of uncertainty over the poet's use of imagery.

100. Attainment in writing is below national expectations. The writing of higher-attaining pupils shows the ability to describe their own experiences and comment on the work of the writers they study, but some are hindered by an insecure grasp of grammatical concepts, for example, the use of tense, and clumsy sentence structure. Lower-attaining pupils are very dependent on the use of 'writing frames' provided by teachers in order to plan what they want to write, having little idea about what needs to be included and finding it difficult to express their ideas in a logical order. Pupils writing about their response to '*The Withered Arm*' by Thomas Hardy enjoyed and understood the story on the level of the plot and character but found it difficult to write about the way in which contemporary attitudes affected the outcome of the story.
101. Pupils' attitudes to work and their behaviour are always at least satisfactory and in about half of the lessons these were good. Pupils work hard, generally settle willingly to their task and sustain good levels of concentration. They use effectively the many opportunities, which they are given to work together in pairs or groups.
102. Overall, teaching is good and all lessons seen were at least satisfactory. In Years 7 to 9, three-quarters was at least good and, in Years 10 and 11, half was good. The higher standards of teaching in Years 7 to 9 make a substantial contribution to the good learning of pupils who come into the school with prior attainment well below that found nationally. Teachers have clear plans for what they expect pupils to learn and explain this to pupils at the beginning of the lesson, frequently returning at the end of the lesson in order to consolidate and check learning. Teachers have high expectations and set a high level of challenge, especially in their use of questioning, which they use to encourage pupils to think hard and extend their understanding. Pupils respond positively to this and make progress when they are challenged. A good example of this was seen in a Year 8 lesson when a teacher explicitly challenged pupils to undertake a difficult task and many at all levels of attainment made good progress in understanding how to write a character profile. In general, teachers make good use of a range of strategies to provide tasks and support to meet the needs of pupils at all levels of attainment, and particularly effective use is made of 'writing frames' to promote the learning of pupils who find extended writing difficult. On the few occasions when 'writing frames' are not used there is a negative effect on the progress of lower-attaining pupils who find their tasks too difficult without additional support. Teachers have thorough knowledge of the needs of their pupils and teachers and learning assistants offer particularly good support during lessons to those pupils who need it most. Homework is set regularly, especially in Years 10 and 11, and teachers' marking of work is regular, although there are variations in how useful this is to pupils. Some teachers offer in their marking useful advice to pupils on what they need to do to improve their work, although there is no evidence of the setting of specific targets. This represents an improvement in the standards of teaching since the previous inspection.
103. The department is well led and managed. Since the previous inspection new schemes of work have been developed which offer a clear content and structure for each topic. A broad and adventurous range of literature is studied. The arrangements for grouping have been sensibly reorganised to offer additional support for the lower-attaining pupils, within an overall pattern of mixed-ability teaching. The introduction of an additional examination at the end of Year 11 for lower-attaining pupils means that they have the opportunity to acquire a recognised qualification while at the same time experiencing success. The assessment of attainment through a task common to all pupils at the end of each unit of work has recently been introduced and work has started on setting up a system of target-setting and the tracking of pupil progress over time. Good use is made of assessment information, starting before pupils enter the school, in order to place pupils in the most appropriate teaching group. In Years 10 and 11, the prediction of pupils' grades and the identification of potential and also of possible underachievement starts at an early stage. Good support is offered by individual teachers in response to these predictions, but no additional support is currently offered in lunchtimes, after school or in the Saturday morning school.

DRAMA

104. Pupils' attainment in drama at the end of Year 9 is in line with what is expected of pupils of this age. They plan, rehearse and present a performance in pairs or small groups in response to a given theme. For example, pupils exploring the theme of parent/child relationships were able to present situations ranging from getting into trouble at school to arguments over watching the television. In doing this most pupils use both oral and non-oral communication, such as mime, satisfactorily in order to convey both narrative and mood, although some pupils are rather inhibited in their performances and fail to convey their intentions clearly. They evaluate the performances of others diplomatically and thoughtfully, although these evaluations usually concern the social and moral implications of the scenes depicted, with much less emphasis placed on the evaluation of dramatic skills and staging techniques. Many pupils, when evaluating their own performance or those of others, are hampered in their ability to explain their ideas fully and clearly by a limited vocabulary. Most pupils, when performing, show an undeveloped sense of audience and do not make sufficient effort to ensure that their actions are clear and visible to the whole audience.
105. The percentage of pupils attaining A*-C in drama in GCSE in 2000 was below the national average, although the number taking the subject was too small to make clear comparisons with the national picture. The number taking drama fluctuates considerably from year to year, as does the percentage obtaining A*-C. A few years ago this figure compared favourably with the national picture, but in the last three years it has been below the national average. Pupils put considerable thought and planning into their small group performances and convey satisfactorily their planned narrative sequence and the mood of their presentation. They show a satisfactory awareness of their audience and some pupils make sensible suggestions for resolving problems involving moves and grouping. Simple stage 'props' are used appropriately. Pupils' delivery of their lines is generally satisfactory and some are able to do this in a lively manner, with appropriate attempts at comedy. The indistinct speech of some pupils, and the tendency to dissolve into laughter at inopportune moments means that delivery sometimes lacks clarity. The mime of most pupils is too small in scale and fails to convey a clear effect. In their examinations, the component which receives the lowest marks is pupils' written work, which is rather superficial and lacks detail.
106. Attitudes and behaviour in all lessons was satisfactory, overall. Pupils put thought into their work and try to do their best at a variety of tasks. The noise level in one Year 7 class while pupils were preparing group work was too high and inhibited discussion and concentration. In general, pupils are considerate of one another's efforts and ideas and make clear attempts to voice their suggestions for improvement diplomatically. Despite this, in the Year 11 class, some pupils responded very negatively to such suggestions and failed to benefit from the opportunity to discuss and compare ideas.
107. All teaching seen was satisfactory. Lesson planning is appropriate and offers pupils the opportunity to work in a variety of groupings. Effective use of questioning and sensitive encouragement gives pupils the confidence to participate in lessons by offering opinions and evaluations. However, there is too much emphasis in the questioning on the consideration of moral, social and ethical issues at the expense of evaluation of dramatic skills and understanding and pupils make insufficient progress in this aspect of their work. There is insufficient encouragement of pupils' awareness of audience and pupils in Years 7 to 9 make little progress in planning moves and grouping with an audience in mind.
108. Management of the subject is satisfactory. There is a recently developed scheme of work, which has formalised the topics and themes covered into a series of half-termly units of work for each year group. A start has been made on linking this scheme with opportunities for assessment, linking each topic with five areas for assessment and five levels of attainment. Since there are no descriptors for each of these levels of attainment, the significance of each level in terms of what each pupil knows, understands and can do remains unclear. Although there is an Asian drama activity run by an arts group on Saturday mornings, there is no out-of-school drama activity run by the drama department and there has been no school drama production for some years. The facilities for teaching drama are poor. There is a dedicated drama room, but this has little in the way of specialised facilities and, since there is no blackout, lighting or sound system, pupils have no opportunity to experience these aspects of drama.

MATHEMATICS

109. In recent years, pupils at the age of 14 have reached levels which are well below national averages in National Curriculum tests. Levels of attainment on entry have also been very low. The results in

mathematics were below those for English and above those for science. The standard of work observed in lessons was much better than that achieved in tests. For example, middle ability Year 7 pupils were very competent at calculating multiples and factors with the better ones able to calculate lowest common multiple and highest common factor. Higher ability pupils from the same year group could collect and record data, use frequency tables and interpret graphs and diagrams. They understood the terms 'mode', 'median', 'mean' and 'range'. The most able could construct pie charts accurately using protractors to measure the angles. In Year 9, higher ability pupils understood the concept of enlargement by a fractional scale factor. They could draw enlargements accurately and could find the centres of enlargement. Middle ability pupils in Year 8 could measure accurately with rulers and protractors and construct triangles with angles of given size.

110. In recent GCSE examinations results have been well below the national average. Again, work observed in lessons was of a higher standard. Members of the top set in Year 10 could calculate the areas of sectors and segments within a circle. The higher-attaining pupils in Year 11 could solve inequalities with two variables. They could plot and identify co-ordinates, draw graphs of linear equations and recognise required regions. A lower-attaining group of pupils in Year 11 matched equivalent ratios with enthusiasm. There is an intention to raise standards as quickly as possible, by setting ambitious targets and emphasising the approach, which is necessary, if these are to be achieved. The GCSE targets for the current Year 10 are ambitious.
111. Scrutiny of exercise books revealed some well-presented work that had been marked consistently, sometimes with appropriate comments. There is some scope for more challenging work. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory and they make satisfactory progress. In several instances, pupils with special educational needs are a substantial majority in a class. In one such Year 7 lesson pupils completed a task involving practical measurement using imperial and metric units, but it required considerable patience and energy on the part of teacher and teaching assistant to enable the lesson to be successful.
112. The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 was usually very good, occasionally excellent, and always at least satisfactory. The quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11 ranged from good to excellent. All lessons were prepared thoroughly. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and have particularly good relationships with the pupils. They command respect and follow very good class management principles. Most lessons were taught at an appropriately quick pace and there were some examples of challenging work. Timed tasks were often used effectively. Teachers appear to recognise the need to raise pupils expectations of themselves and to improve their ability to retain and recall information over a period of time. Many pupils lack confidence and rely too heavily on assistance from teachers.
113. There is a comprehensive scheme of work, recently compiled, which caters for different levels of ability. All pupils are setted according to their ability but there is some further differentiated work within the group. Major homework assignments are set as part of a whole-school cycle. Additional, minor pieces of work are set at teachers discretion. There is some inconsistency in the setting and checking of homework.
114. There is a draft numeracy policy, which concentrates, mainly, on informing other departments about the levels of mathematical knowledge and skill, that can be expected at different stages.
115. The department is very well staffed with well-qualified teachers. Lessons are taught in a suite of rooms, that provide a pleasant learning environment. There is a good supply of books and equipment. Pupils are friendly and polite. Some are quite boisterous but there is no malicious behaviour. There is a happy atmosphere about the department. Most pupils are keen to do well in lessons. There is scope to foster more ambitious academic ambitions.
116. Several pupils attend the extra-curricular mathematics club, which caters for gifted and talented pupils and others. Voluntary revision classes are well attended. There are complete records of each pupil's progress, including test results, predictions and targets. There is some variation in the way in which work is marked. One method, which worked well in a Year 9 lesson, allowed the pupils to mark their own arithmetic, gaining quick knowledge of results, whilst the teacher collected the books to check accuracy of the drawing elements.
117. The department is well managed. The head of department, recently confirmed in the post, has a clear vision for the future and is already making some impact on standards. Since the last inspection the pace of lessons has improved considerably and some progress has been made towards providing appropriate challenges. Twenty-four computers have been installed in one of the

rooms. Two software packages are in regular use and other use of information and communication is being extended.

SCIENCE

118. In 2000, test results for 14-year-old pupils were very low compared with the national average. By comparison with similar schools, results were well below the national average. The attainment of boys was better than that of girls. The results in science were well below those for English and below those for mathematics. Since the last inspection, the trend has been below the national trend. Teacher assessment indicated that teachers overestimated the performances of pupils at Level 5. Based upon the attainment of pupils on entry to the school in 1997, which was considered as being low, this represents satisfactory added value.
119. Inspection evidence shows that, by the age of 14, most pupils have learned new skills, increased their knowledge of scientific facts and their understanding of scientific concepts and have made progress in science. Even though attainment, overall, is still below national averages there is evidence of some improvement in the attainment of pupils, and of Higher-attaining pupils in particular, since the reorganisation from mixed ability teaching groups to groups in which pupils are placed according to individual abilities. Higher-attaining pupils understand the relationship between gravity and the motion of planets and satellites, can summarise chemical reactions by means of word equations, present experimental results in graphical form and interpret information presented graphically. Lower-attaining pupils are significantly less secure in their understanding of scientific concepts but can, for example, indicate that some metals are more reactive than others.
120. In 2000, the results of examinations for the double award GCSE were very low compared with national averages. The number of grades achieved at the highest levels was also very low compared with the national average. The performance of girls was better than that of boys. Ninety-five per cent of pupils were entered for the double award examination. This was above the national average. The trend since the previous inspection is below the national trend and results have fallen significantly since 1997. Science results at GCSE are well below those for English and mathematics. By comparison with the results which pupils obtained at the age of 14, these results represent satisfactory added value.
121. Evidence obtained during the inspection shows that standards, overall, are still well below national averages although there is evidence of improvement amongst Higher-attaining pupils in Year 10. Higher-attaining pupils, at the start of Year 11, are fairly confident in recalling the factors which effect population size and the effects of changing carbon dioxide concentration. Pupils use simple balanced chemical equations and can link the frequency of sound to wavelength and velocity. Lower-attaining pupils are very insecure in their understanding of science. For example, they have little idea of the concepts of ionic or covalent bonding.
122. Overall, pupils throughout the school, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, make satisfactory progress.
123. From work seen during the inspection, it is clear that all attainment targets are well covered and that investigative science is well integrated into the teaching programme. However, there is less evidence of making hypotheses; of planning experiments or of evaluation in investigative science, particularly in Years 7, 8 and 9. Where the making of hypotheses, planning and evaluation are evident, as in an investigation into food as a fuel by some Year 9 pupils, and an investigation into the factors which effect the rate of photosynthesis by some Year 11 pupils, they are well-developed. Experimental results are well represented in tabular and graphical forms and pupils are encouraged to explain experimental results in scientific terms. The standard of literacy is, overall, satisfactory. Higher-attaining pupils cope well with extended writing. They use scientific terms with confidence and spelling is often good. Lower-attaining pupils are less confident and tend to be more restricted in the range and extent of their written work, often limiting their writing to short sentences in which spelling and the use of scientific terms are less secure. Higher-attaining pupils, throughout the school, speak with confidence and understanding and are able accurately to describe and discuss experimental work. Lower-attaining pupils, however, often have difficulty in speaking and tend to give one-word answers to questions. While numerical competency is less well-developed in lower-attaining pupils, overall numeracy is satisfactory. The use of information and computer technology to support learning is still unsatisfactory. Although there were some very good examples of pupils using the Internet and CD-ROMs to retrieve information in a few lessons, the use of

data-logging to follow experiments has yet to be introduced. Reports issued to parents provide useful information on attainment, attitudes and progress, but do not provide focused, subject-specific, strengths and weaknesses in each attainment target nor targets for improvement.

124. Throughout the school, the quality of teaching is satisfactory. In Years 7, 8 and 9, teaching was at least satisfactory in all but one lesson observed. In most lessons, teaching was good or very good and, in one lesson observed, teaching was outstanding. In Years 10 and 11 the teaching observed was again satisfactory in the majority of lessons. However, teaching was unsatisfactory in a significant minority of lessons, particularly in those taught by temporary teachers. In most lessons, teachers make use of their good subject knowledge in providing very effective explanations and in asking questions, that challenge or assess pupils knowledge and understanding. They provide clear objectives that pupils understand; classroom management and organisation are effective and the pace of lessons matches the needs and tasks of pupils. Lessons are, on the whole, well planned. There are a very few lessons, however, in which planning needs to be more focused so that the pace of the lesson is maintained. Work is usually set that matches the ability of pupils and which demonstrates the relevance of science teaching to the real world. However, there are indications that, in a few lessons, pupils may be further extended by the provision of more challenging work and in others the level of work is inappropriately high. Teachers have high expectations and pupil management is good. In some lessons, however, work is over-directed by the teacher and in others there is a lack of challenge. In these, pupils are not provided with sufficient opportunity to develop the skills of independent learning and there is evidence of underachievement. Even though there is a programme of longer-term homework projects, homework which consolidates or extends the work done in individual lessons is not always set. The learning environment in most science classrooms is enhanced by excellent displays of pupils' work. In addition, literacy is supported by good displays of scientific words. However, words are often placed at random and do not always relate to the particular area of study. Whilst books are always marked, incomplete or missing work is not always followed up. Marking is sometimes superficial. It does not always indicate the level at which pupils have performed nor are comments made which indicate how pupils can improve.
125. The identification of appropriate and challenging learning objectives, coupled with good support for pupils' learning, enables most pupils throughout the school to make satisfactory progress in improving their knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts and information. In the majority of lessons, pupils work well and at a satisfactory pace. When given the opportunity to do so, pupils work well independently and in groups, think out problems for themselves and concentrate hard. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, overall. However, in some classes, particularly those in which there is a significant number of pupils who have learning or behavioural problems, the provision of, and the support given by, classroom assistants is not always satisfactory. This has a negative impact upon the progress of pupils in these classes. Pupils for whom English is an additional language make satisfactory progress.
126. Apart from a very few pupils whose behaviour is unsatisfactory, the behaviour of pupils and their attitude to science are both good. Pupils listen well to their teachers, respond positively to the various activities and show interest and enjoyment. Higher-attaining pupils in particular answer, and ask, questions well and have the confidence to discuss scientific ideas and experimental results with their teachers and with other pupils.
127. The science curriculum is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements. However, the organisation of the scheme of work has a negative impact upon continuity. The allocation of curriculum time in Year 10 is well below the national average allocation of time for pupils following the dual award science GCSE.
128. The science department is well led by an able and dedicated head of department. He provides clear educational direction, is hard-working and committed. Whilst curriculum planning is good, and includes some planning for the inclusion and use of information and communication technology as a support and investigative tool, in practice the use of information and communication technology is unsatisfactory. Development planning is in line with school development planning and is both effective and manageable. However, a three-year development plan, which indicates annual targets and short-, medium- and long-term planning, is lacking. Procedures for assessment are well established for all year groups and are used effectively to monitor progress, identify and support underachievement, and improve attainment. However, the use of assessment to inform teaching and the curriculum is a weakness. The monitoring of the quality of teaching by the head of department is well-developed and is used effectively to identify development needs and to spread good practice. Whilst the qualifications and experience of the

permanent teaching establishment are satisfactory, the number of teachers is unsatisfactory. Despite considerable effort on behalf of the school to recruit suitably well-qualified and experienced teachers, the department remains short of 1.5 full-time equivalent teachers with which to deliver the curriculum. The use of short-term, non-specialist teachers, is having a significant negative impact upon standards in science throughout the school. The number and quality of laboratories is barely adequate. When the refurbishment programme is completed there will be six fully equipped laboratories. Technical support for the department is good. Resources, in terms of books and scientific equipment are generally good, although the allocation of funding is below average. The provision of up-to-date data-logging devices, and appropriate software, is unsatisfactory.

129. Even though test and examination results have not improved since the last inspection there are indications that the reorganisation of pupils into teaching groups, according to individual ability and aptitude, is having a positive effect upon standards of attainment. There have been improvements in reading and writing skills. Information seeking and problem-solving skills, described as 'less well-developed' in the last report, have improved, particularly amongst Higher-attaining pupils. For example, pupils retrieve information confidently from the Internet. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 9 can determine the average speed of a rocket launched from the playground. Although some underachievement is still apparent, in mixed-ability teaching groups in particular, this is not as significant as it was at the time of the previous report.

ART AND DESIGN

130. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C in the GCSE examination in 2000 was well below national averages, but amongst the highest in the school. Results have fluctuated over the past three years, having risen from the very low point reached in 1998. The difference between the results of boys and girls is similar to the national picture. The department is the first to enter pupils for the AS level examination in Year 11 for the current year. It is anticipated that numbers taking the AS level will rise in future years, as more pupils gain a high grade GCSE pass in Year 10.
131. Pupils arrive at the school with varied and often little experience of art. By the age of 14 they have learned the basic drawing, painting and modelling skills and their attainment is close to standards expected at that age. They make good and often very good progress as they develop their topic work. Higher-attaining pupils quickly learn techniques for handling clay. They are able to join pots effectively to form a sphere that is the base form for their gargoyle maquettes. They make rapid progress in hand and tool modelling, producing interesting individual gargoyle forms. From mono-printing techniques learned in Year 7, pupils progress to multi-colour collographs based on Japanese prints. The influence of several well-known artists can be seen in their work, including that of Monet, Picasso, Dali and Rousseau. Those benefiting from an extension course in batik and tie-dye textile colouring work to a high standard. By the age of 16, Higher-attaining pupils working for the AS level examination demonstrate very good drawing and painting skills in their course work. Their work tends to be repetitive, lacking research and development, although they study the work of artists such as Duchamps, Dali, Lichtenstein, Hockney and Van Gogh. Pupils work effectively with pencil and oil pastels, learning to scratch detail into their foliage motifs. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have not benefited from the sound basic skills course that the new head of department has introduced in Years 7 to 9. Their contextual work is not well-developed and their annotation in sketchbooks and coursework lacks detail and depth. In work seen during the inspection, the overall standard is lower than that of pupils at Year 7 to 9. Pupils with special educational needs make similar good progress as others in the lessons.
132. The quality of teaching is good, overall. It is most often very good in Years 7 to 9. Teachers have a sound knowledge of their areas of art and design and teach them well. Lesson planning and preparation are often very good, showing clear objectives for the lessons and accounting for the special educational need of pupils on the Code of Practice register. Through very good class management, teachers develop a calm, working environment in which pupils are able to work through the lesson without distraction. They frequently demonstrate techniques and processes to pupils, using their skills to set an appropriately high standard for finished work. Good use is made of the specialist language of art, using terms from displayed word banks. A very good clay-modelling theme has been developed in Year 9, in which sketchbooks show clear evidence of a very good learning experience and high standards of attainment. There is a need to develop the good practice seen in some lessons, where 'gallery sessions' give pupils the opportunity to evaluate critically their own and others' work.

133. Pupils enjoy their lessons and generally make good progress with their work. They are polite to visitors and are pleased to show and talk about their work. Younger pupils in large classes are sometimes less attentive, but once they get down to work they behave well and enjoy the lesson. Older pupils are courteous to adults, listen carefully to the teacher and are polite in response.
134. The department benefits from strong, well-informed and enthusiastic leadership, with a clear sense of direction. The head of department has been in post for only two years. In that time she and her colleague have written a very good department handbook, including schemes of work that are linked to the new National Curriculum. A very good progress tracking system has been introduced that will enable progress to be measured through the key stages. The head of department has made an effective start in monitoring and evaluating the work of the department, including the standard of teaching and learning. The analysis of examination results does not yield sufficient information to inform curriculum development effectively. Accommodation is good, but there is a lack of dedicated space for storage of pupils' work. The subject does not yet make effective use of computers to support art, although there are plans to buy computers, scanners and colour printers for the department in the next year. A visit to the Paris art galleries was organised last year and the department is planning a visit to Barcelona this summer. Pupils' work has been exhibited at local festivals and community centres.
135. The department has made a good response to the last inspection report. Teaching and learning have improved significantly and there are now extra-curricular visits and classes. The use of computer-aided art has improved, although further development is needed. Homework is linked to work in lessons, but teachers find it difficult to ensure that work is returned from home on time.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

136. Attainment by pupils aged 14 is in line with the national average as judged by teacher assessment. Standards of work seen during the inspection indicate that standards are below the national average. Pupils results in the 2000 GCSE examination at the end of Year 11 were close to the national average A* - C for food technology and graphics. Results in textiles were close to the national average but well below for electronics and resistant materials. In GCSE electronics and resistant materials about one fifth of pupils did not achieve a grade. The attainment of current pupils in Year 11 shows a similar variation in standards and is, overall, below national averages.
137. The attainment of the current Year 9 and 11 pupils is below national standards. Their attainment is lower because of a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or behavioural and language difficulties. Pupils come into the school with technology skills well below what could be expected nationally. A scrutiny of early Year 7 work showed that pupils had few hand skills with tools, sewing implements or drawing instruments. Hence the progress made in graphics is very good and in food and textiles it is good. In resistive materials and electronics the progress is at best satisfactory and sometimes poor. Pupils' strengths are in the care, precision and creativity in drawing. They produce good folder work in food technology and good design and make skills in textiles. The main weaknesses are in the quality of the finished product in craft studies. There was a lack of design input by pupils into a cam-operated toy and the folders did not contain nearly enough information on the action of cams to enable pupils to design an action in keeping with their model. In Year 9, pupils made a box to hold CDs yet the only joint used was a butt joint. Pupils in Year 9 are capable of much more complex tasks and this showed a lack of teacher expectation. In electronics there was a lack of theory in the folders and little to show continuity over the module in Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11 some pupils lacked commitment and lacked the basic knowledge of Ohms Law and the mathematical ability to calculate correctly the result of resistors in parallel. Overall, the lack of vocabulary and confidence in writing inhibits the work in folders and the responses to the worksheet questions are often short phrases rather than reasoned sentences.
138. There is a new homework system and an assessment system linked to the National Curriculum. Questions are linked to numeracy and literacy in many of the homework sheets seen by asking questions on size and measurement or demanding key word responses. However the 'word walls' in the classrooms were not seen used and some did not contain the important words used in the lesson. Pupils learning varies considerably in both key stages. In the best lessons they acquire skills and knowledge in set exercises and are keen to apply these in their folder and practical work. Knowledge retention is not good for a

considerable number of pupils, although some pupils can talk about their work and explain the process they have followed. Structured learning activities enable most pupils to address the tasks set and some are able to develop creative and original ideas, especially in graphics and textiles. The majority of pupils work at a good pace and show interest and independence when engaged in the tasks set, but there are a number who lack confidence and require constant reinforcement in order to maintain their interest and effort. Pupils with special educational needs make progress in line with their peers and, especially in classes with extra help from the specialist special needs staff, often perform above expectation. However, a lesson was seen with a class where all pupils had special educational needs, including serious language problems, where there was no support and learning was severely inhibited. Most pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to their work and this results in good behaviour and motivation. However, the work of some pupils could be improved by including shorter and more focused learning activities, especially in electronics, setting time limits for completion and making it clear in the marking what was good and not good and what pupils could do to improve.

139. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory. It varied between very good and unsatisfactory, with over four out of every five lessons considered satisfactory or better, with one third good or very good. Good teaching has a very positive impact on pupils' learning. In the best lessons, teachers use their good technical knowledge well, planning is good and teachers have suitable expectations of all pupils. They use effective teaching methods, manage pupils well and use time and resources well, especially the exemplar material in the graphics classes. Marking and assessment procedures are good. Homework is given out regularly but not all pupils complete their homework by the set time. In the better lessons planning is more detailed, good use is made of short-term targets to focus activity and clear criteria are set for the assessment of work in order to raise expectation.
140. The design and technology curriculum provision provides good access to the National Curriculum but the termly modules in Years 7 to 9 only allow four of the five disciplines to be visited twice and there is a long gap between these visits. Evidence of this was seen in a Year 10 textiles lesson where a pupil had forgotten completely how to thread a sewing machine. There is a lack of metalworking skills taught in resistive materials modules in Years 7 to 9 and this inhibits pupils in their design and make projects in Years 10 and 11. All statutory requirements are met. Schemes of work are well planned but there is a lack of detail and control technology within electronics. They could be improved further by considering progressive development of knowledge, skills, language and information and communication technology across the key stages. There is some use of information and communication technology; for example, investigating the manufacture of soups in Year 10. Access to computers is becoming limited due to their use throughout the school and lessons have to be planned well in advance if access to the machines is to be guaranteed.
141. Leadership and management are good. The head of department leads by example and is helped by the second in the department and by good quality technical support. Both documentation and the co-operative approach being adopted across the subject areas provide a positive approach to the improvement of teaching and learning. Effective use is made of staffing, resources and accommodation and there is a good safety risk assessment in the department handbook. Financial planning is good, as is the level of funding. The departments development plan is a very thorough document and the recent purchase of CAD/CAM machines should help develop the subject, especially for the more able pupils. There have been considerable improvements since the last inspection, especially to the accommodation and the resources within. The department is equipped with a very good selection of text books and resource material. There is a good uptake of in-service courses by teachers. There are attempts being made to overcome pupils problems with literacy and to differentiate lessons to help pupils with special needs or special gifts and talents. However, there is still an absence of enquiry and research skills and the expectation of some teachers is still too low. The health and safety issues identified in the last inspection have been tackled effectively. There has been satisfactory progress since the last inspection.

GEOGRAPHY

142. In 2000, teacher assessment of the proportion of pupils working at or beyond the national average by the age of 14 was well below average and the assessment indicated that the attainment of girls was higher than that of boys. Results were similar to those in 1998 and 1999. Attainment in the GCSE in 2000 was well below average for the higher grades A* - C and below average for grades A* - G. These results were close to the average of other subjects in the school. There has been an improving trend over the last three years and the numbers of pupils failing to gain a grade in the GCSE have been reduced significantly.

143. Attainment at the end of Year 9 is below average. However, lesson observations and pupils work indicate that attainment in Year 7 and Year 8 is higher. Much effort is now being invested in improving the low standards of literacy of a very significant number of pupils whose learning and communication of their learning are handicapped by weaknesses in writing and speaking. The writing of pupils of all ages mostly makes limited use of geographical terminology and many pupils have considerable difficulty in articulating clearly their understanding. Spoken answers to questions posed lack fluency and are rarely extended. Pupils' attainment and levels of skill are higher in aspects of geography that are less reliant in language. Much learning aided by information and communication technology is achieving standards close to the national average; for example, in the work of Year 9 pupils using spreadsheets to present graphic images. Most Year 7 pupils can use four-figure grid references and Higher-attaining pupils are secure in the use of six-figure references. A class of Year 7 pupils displayed good skills in the construction of maps to illustrate the relative popularity of different areas of the United Kingdom as tourist destinations. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 9 display satisfactory skills in the gathering and graphing of weather data within their individual study units. Attainment at the end of Year 11 is below average. As in earlier years, the majority of pupils have limited place knowledge other than of their local area. Graphic work, though limited in range, is produced accurately and mostly interpreted correctly; for example, Year 10 pupils, in a study of a demographic model, can relate changes in population to changes in birth and death rates. The spoken and written responses of Year 11 pupils to questions on tourism issues on the Lake District indicate a sound grasp of a range of conflicts of interest. The coursework of many Higher-attaining and some pupils of average ability in Year 11 is very well presented and employs a good range of methods of presentation.
144. The standard of teaching is satisfactory, overall, with a substantial amount of good and very good teaching. The quality of teaching contributes to effective learning by pupils. Lesson planning is consistently good and teachers have secure subject knowledge and understanding. Learning objectives are mostly clear and a good range of mostly well-matched teaching and learning styles are employed. Where the teaching was very good, as in a Year 8 lesson on migration, pupils were highly motivated by the teacher's enthusiasm and clear communication of tasks. Pupils concentrated and co-operated very well and, in the end of lesson review, displayed very good recall and understanding of a detailed story illustrating a migrants experiences. Where teaching is satisfactory there are many good features but often the tasks provided are not well matched to the full range of abilities. Overall, the achievement of pupils with special educational needs and for whom English is a second language is satisfactory, although it varies from lesson to lesson and these pupils clearly benefit from additional support. The attitudes of pupils to their learning are satisfactory, overall, but there are a significant number of pupils, mostly boys and particularly from Year 9 onwards, who are slow to settle to work and drift off task if not closely supervised. Sometimes pupils' inattention to the work set is not acted upon effectively. Collaboration in pair and group work is satisfactory, overall, and is generally better among girls. Pupil behaviour is mostly good, other than that of a small number of older boys who can be very challenging and sometimes disruptive.
145. The curriculum is broad and balanced and focuses well on the development of literacy, numeracy and the application of information and communication technology in support of learning. Good account is taken of pupils' experiences and cultural backgrounds. Extra-curricular provision is good, with opportunities for pupils in all years. Assessment is good, with emerging strengths and a profile of pupils progress over time is being built up. Teacher judgements on the levels at which pupils are working are secure and pupils' knowledge of the levels at which they are working is improving. Assessment data is being used with increasing effect to aid curriculum development. Management is very good. Staff are well supported, and care is taken in identifying and meeting staff training needs. Professional relationships are strong and staff work very well as a team seeking to raise achievement. This is reflected in development planning being well-focused on areas of relative weakness.
146. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. There have been improvements in attainment in the GCSE aided by a greater range of teaching and learning styles being employed. There is significantly more enquiry-based learning and more challenging work for Higher-attaining pupils. There is a sharper focus on improving basic skills, including significant improvements in the use of information technology. A wider range of extra-curricular opportunities is provided for younger pupils.

HISTORY

147. By the end of Year 9, in assessments carried out by teachers, pupils aged 14 achieved below national standards in history. Inspection of pupils' work in their classes, discussions with pupils and the standard of their written work seen during the inspection all confirm that standards in the present Year 9 remain below average. However, the new head of department is ensuring that that teaching focuses more systematically on enabling pupils to improve their confidence in writing and to develop their history skills. There is evidence that these new strategies are beginning to have an impact on standards in the subject, which are beginning to rise. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of historical events, people and concepts are below average when compared with all schools but pupils are making clear gains in their knowledge and understanding of topics studied and they make good progress from Year 7 to 9. This progress is largely due to focused teaching of key historical knowledge and skills. Average and lower-attaining pupils are able to provide much more detail in their verbal responses than in answers which require them to respond at length in writing. The department is rightly targeting extended writing skills by the use of strategies such as writing frames. Higher-attaining pupils increasingly show independence in using their knowledge to explain events and changes, such as why Charles I became unpopular.
148. Last year, GCSE results in history were well below average compared with pupils' results in all schools nationally. Evidence from scrutiny of work and observations of lessons indicates that current overall attainment is still below average. However, the department is working hard to improve pupils' skills in making use of sources of historical evidence and then communicating conclusions in a structured way. There is evidence that strategies recently introduced by the new head of department are having a positive impact on standards in Years 10 and 11. Pupils of all abilities are making good progress and are gaining a good understanding of the requirements of the examining body. The progress of a small number of pupils is hindered by erratic attendance patterns.
149. Pupils with special educational needs, and those for whom English is an additional language, make similar rates of progress to those of their peers.
150. Most pupils enjoy their history lessons. They settle quickly to their task, present their work with care and are prepared to work hard. Teachers work hard to help pupils become more confident in their work and most pupils try hard to live up to the high expectations of their teachers. Behaviour in lessons is good.
151. The quality of teaching is good, overall, with many very good features. Occasionally, it is excellent. For example, in an excellent Year 10 lesson on the contributions of Pasteur and Koch to medicine, the teacher's high expectations and clear understanding of examiners' requirements allowed the pupils to make clear gains in their knowledge and understanding. In all years, there are examples of good or better teaching. Teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection and pupils are being provided with a rich diet of historical experience. Teachers are well-qualified and have a good knowledge of their subject. Teaching is well planned and successfully managed. There is now an effective balance between imparting historical knowledge to pupils and enabling them to develop their own skills in making use of historical information and then communicating it in a structured way. This is beginning to have an impact on pupils' language skills as well as their history skills. Exposition is clear and enthusiastic and teachers enjoy telling a good historical story. Teachers use a wide range of strategies to engage and motivate pupils. For example, in a very good lesson on the Black Death, pupils learned how to select and evaluate historical information when their teacher acted the roles of various village leaders who claimed to be able to cure the disease. The head of department has begun to produce resources which are matched effectively to pupils' abilities; for example, work booklets on the Gunpowder Plot for Year 8 pupils. Assessment procedures have improved since the last inspection. Marking of pupils' work is thorough and often contains comments which help pupils to understand what they have done well and where they need to direct further effort.
152. This is a very well managed department with a clear sense of purpose and direction. The head of department has a clear vision for the future and is putting into place effective strategies to raise standards in the subject. Teachers work well as a team and have a clear commitment to the subject. Specialist history rooms have been developed as effective learning environments, with very good displays of key words, posters and pupils' work. The department has made significant progress in all the issues identified in the last inspection report. Policies and procedures have been reviewed and schemes of work brought

up-to-date. Systems for monitoring classroom practice, together with more targeted priorities, are improving the quality of teaching and standards in the subject.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

153. Standards in information and communication technology are satisfactory in both key stages. The majority of pupils aged 14 achieve in line with national expectations. Pupils display competence in the use of software. Most pupils make good progress in relation to their prior attainment. In the GCSE information studies course a majority of pupils pass at the higher grades.
154. Teaching is good, overall. It is generally better in timetabled information and communication technology lessons, where pupils are challenged with suitable tasks. Teaching was variable in the cross-curricular use of information and communication technology. Very good teaching of information and communication technology capability was observed in mathematics and media studies. Teachers with a good knowledge of the subject developed their pupils' information and communication technology capability effectively. Lessons are well planned, organised and managed. Instructions for pupils are clear and lead pupils to meet the objectives set for the lesson. Teaching is less effective where the task selected does not extend the pupils' capabilities.
155. Learning is generally good in information and communication technology lessons where progression is planned. Learning is also good where information and communication technology is used across the curriculum so that pupils are suitably challenged. Learning is affected by pupils' confidence. Many asked for their teacher's help even though they demonstrated their ability to follow the written instructions provided. Learning is assisted by the use of 'word walls' in some computer rooms.
156. The school is very well provided for with computers. These are available in six computer rooms, with smaller numbers available in some departments. Information and communication technology is taught as a discreet subject in Year 7 and as a GCSE option. It is also taught through cross-curricular use in Years 8 and 9, as well as being a component of some Year 10 and 11 courses. An experienced senior member of staff manages the network. Curriculum use is managed by the information and communication technology co-ordinator. Two technicians, on work experience placements from higher education, provide additional technical support.
157. Management of the subject is satisfactory. The co-ordinator has set in place programmes for improvement, with dates set for review. The department handbook indicates the expectations teachers should have of pupils working at different levels, but not all teachers have used this information in planning the use of information and communication in their lessons, nor is information on what pupils have achieved always reported back to the co-ordinator.
158. Information on the levels at which pupils are working is not kept up to date and this information needs to be disseminated to help planning and raise teachers' expectations of what pupils can do. Information and communications technology usage is not consistent across all subjects and by all teachers.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French

159. Standards achieved in French are well below national averages. By the end of Year 9, pupils aged 14 achieve standards well below national averages in teacher assessments. In GCSE examinations the percentage of candidates achieving A*-C grades is well below national averages. The percentage of candidates achieving A*-G grades is broadly in line with national figures but half of pupils entered achieve only F and G grades. Girls achieve better than boys but all pupils perform better in other subjects than they do in French.

160. By the end of Year 9, pupils recall previously learned language, but often this is limited to single words or parts of set phrases. They lack confidence in speaking and are hesitant and often reluctant to respond to questions in French except in highly structured or guided situations; for example, with the help of prompting from the teacher, by reference to word lists or participating in dialogues substituting words in prepared scripts to change meaning. Writing is generally accurate and by the end of Year 9 pupils write in some detail and at length to describe events in the present and past about their home, family and leisure activities. However, pupils generally write to a model filling in gaps and adapting set phrases to suit their purposes. Although average and Higher-attaining pupils display a good understanding the rules of grammar there is little evidence of pupils manipulating the language for themselves or using it creatively either in speech or in writing.
161. Pupils identify key words and phrases from short texts, but in all years the majority is dependent upon word lists to skim and scan texts efficiently or effectively. Lower-attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs are unsure of basic vocabulary and phrases and lack confidence in their ability as linguists because tasks and resources are not sufficiently adapted to ensure that they experience success. Higher-attaining pupils achieve below their potential because they are not adequately challenged nor given appropriate opportunities to develop their skills independently of the teacher.
162. By the end of Year 11, pupils do not build sufficiently on previous learning or develop skills to be independent and effective linguists. The majority of pupils have difficulty understanding the detail and main points from short texts and extracts of speech because they have not had sufficient experience of using the language for themselves.
163. Pupils attitudes towards their learning are satisfactory, overall. When expectations are high and they are given an appropriate challenge they are keen to contribute, and display enjoyment and pride in their achievements. For example, in a Year 11 lesson pupils made excellent progress in recounting a fable by Jean de la Fontaine in their own words because of the very high expectations of the teacher and the appropriate support they were given which convinced them of their ability to achieve the task. However, when they are asked to listen to the teacher for lengthy periods and tasks fail to interest and motivate them, pupils particularly in Years 8 and 9 are disruptive, show little respect for the teacher and are very poorly behaved. When control and management are good and pupils are given the opportunity to try out the language for themselves in pairs and small groups they usually behave well, and when pace is brisk and presentations clear they listen attentively and are willing to contribute to oral work.
164. The quality of teaching, overall, is unsatisfactory. Six out of every 10 lessons were satisfactory or better and examples of very good or excellent teaching were observed, but a significant number of lessons were unsatisfactory or very poor and led to unsatisfactory or very poor progress in both key stages. There are significant strengths but overall inconsistency in the quality of teaching has a negative impact on learning over time. Teachers have a good command of French and use their knowledge to conduct activities in the language. In the more effective lessons language used is well matched to pupils previous experience and capabilities. Effective checking mechanisms are used to ensure that all pupils understand. However, opportunities are sometimes missed to develop pupils listening skills and challenge higher attainers by asking them to interpret more complex instructions for others. Presentations are usually clear and teachers make good use of 'flashcards' and the overhead projector to clarify meaning and encourage pupils to make oral contributions. Objectives are shared with the class and this has a positive effect on pupils motivation and interest. Teacher-led activities, however, are often lengthy and this slows the pace and decreases opportunities for pupils to try out the language for themselves. Pupils are given the opportunity to work in small groups and pairs to practise and pupils in all years have access to the French assistant for speaking practice but tasks are undemanding and are usually limited to rehearsal of prepared scripts. There are too few opportunities for pupils to use the language to gather or give information and as a result they do not increase in confidence or independence in using the language for themselves. Teachers expectations are often too low and as a result the pace of learning is too slow and tasks are too easy. Undue emphasis is put on the skills of reading and writing to the detriment of speaking and listening. Pupils first encounter with new language elements is often through the written form and pupils are given too little opportunity to hear and say new vocabulary and phrases before they move on. This adversely affects pronunciation and inhibits progress and as a result pupils rely too heavily on written notes to be able to communicate effectively. Teachers do not take sufficient account of the needs of pupils of differing ability within teaching groups, so that frequently lower-attaining pupils find tasks too difficult. The progress of Higher-attaining pupils is too slow because their progress through the levels of attainment is not anticipated in lesson planning.

165. Procedures for assessing pupils attainment and progress are unsatisfactory; pupils do not have an accurate idea of their attainment and marking leaves many errors unchecked, both in French and in English, and does not indicate how they can improve. Assessment is not used effectively to track or plan for pupils' progress in lessons or set realistic targets. Management of the subject is very poor. Statutory requirements are met but the range and variety of learning experiences provided is severely limited and there are few opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology to support their learning. Since the previous report, standards have declined and there has been no effective action taken to raise the standards of speaking and writing or to increase the range of teaching and learning styles. The scheme of work for Years 7 to 9 has been rewritten but gives no indication of how Higher-attaining pupils are to be challenged or the pace of learning increased. Development planning is unsatisfactory since it fails to tackle the issues raised in the previous report or the declining standards at the end of Year 11.

Urdu and Bengali

166. In response to the needs of the local community, Bengali and Urdu are offered as a two-year course in Years 10 and 11. There are no national figures for GCSE in these languages but pupils reach standards well above those expected in their other subjects, particularly in Bengali. Many pupils have little experience of reading and writing when they start the course and they make rapid progress. Choosing a community language does, however, bar them from continuing French.
167. Teaching and learning were disrupted at the time of the inspection by the absence of both teachers, although there is evidence of good teaching in exercise books and folders. The supply teachers were not familiar with the school and some lessons were spoilt by poor lesson planning and insufficient knowledge of the course objectives. However, in the best lesson seen, there was a good balance of skills and the lesson was almost entirely in Urdu. Pupils responded well to a variety of activities, both written and oral.
168. Good pupil attitudes are seen in all lessons and time is well used. The only real weakness is that many pupils see Urdu and Bengali as the language for matters directly related to the lesson, but use English for more incidental communication.
169. Some progress has been made since the last inspection, particularly in the maintaining of good GCSE results and relationships. However, documentation is poor and pupils have no regular access to computer word-processing packages in the two languages. Pupils are not aware of the potential value of their languages in future employment.

MUSIC

170. Pupils' standards in music are well below national averages by the end of Year 9. Teacher assessments for the last two years were not available from the school.
171. Results for GCSE in music are well below the national average for grades A*-C but show improvement at A*-G compared with entries in 1997. The school entered small numbers of pupils for GCSE in 1999 and no entries were made the previous year.
172. Pupils enter the school with limited and usually low levels of musical skills. Year 7 pupils are able to compose a simple piece of music and notate it using signs and symbols. Pupils find it difficult to listen to and describe music. In Year 9, pupils do not easily recognise notes on the keyboard, therefore, standards are well below expectation in this skill. There has been no regular development of singing in earlier years, so that when singing techniques are taught, pupils lack confidence to sing in tune. When rehearsing for a class performance of 'I feel it in my fingers', pupils cannot maintain their own part successfully whilst other parts are being played. Pupils' listening skills are not sufficiently developed to allow them to recognise chords and they have few ideas on how their performances might be improved. Although 'key words' are displayed in the classroom they are not always linked to the work pupils are doing.
173. Standards of performing, composing and listening in Years 10 and 11 are low, as skills in these areas are limited due to poor progress made in Years 7 to 9. Year 10 pupils find echo clapping and keeping a steady beat difficult. They cannot play a simple melody successfully on the keyboard, and, in composing, their ability to make up their own simple pieces is underdeveloped. Pupils in Year 11 have not built up folios in performances and compositions as required by the GCSE syllabus. They have little knowledge

of the different eras and styles of music, which limit, their ability to answer questions about the music they are listening to.

174. Pupils in all years who have special educational needs, and those who speak English as an additional language, make similar progress as others in their class.
175. Pupils have good attitudes and enthusiasm for music, especially in Years 10 and 11. They behave well when lessons are well organised. They work enthusiastically in groups and in pairs, sharing equipment and helping each other.
176. Teaching is unsatisfactory and inconsistent, overall, because of staff absence. During the inspection, a number of different visiting teachers were observed. Some very good teaching was seen which allowed pupils to experience music through practical approaches. In these lessons the pace was brisk, the focus clear, and the work was challenging and engaged all the pupils in the activity. Key words and musical terms were linked to lesson objectives and pupils gained in knowledge and understanding through their own explorations of sounds. In weaker lessons, teaching lacked focus, pace and challenge. Poor pupil responses were accepted instead of striving for the highest standards. The focus of lessons was not sufficiently clear to enable pupils to make progress, an issue identified in the previous report. Planning for music lessons is unsatisfactory. This is indicated by looking at pupils' previous work, where practical tasks have not taken place and there is evidence of too much written work most of which is inappropriate. This was also highlighted in the previous report. Standards and progress in performing and composing skills for all pupils have suffered accordingly. There has been little targeted assessment in order to measure pupils' progress, as required by the National Curriculum and examination syllabuses.
177. Extra-curricular activities in music are very limited. The school subsidises instrumental tuition on woodwind, steel pans, tabla/dhal and voice effectively. The school has increased the number of visiting instrumental teachers since the last inspection. However, there is little monitoring of attendance or learning in these lessons. There are few opportunities for pupils to perform, for instance, in assemblies or in concerts. However, during the inspection two groups of Year 9 girls performed promisingly on steel pans.
178. Leadership of the subject is poor, due in part to staffing difficulties. Documentation is limited. There are no departmental procedures or planning for pupils with special educational needs, or with English as an additional language and for gifted and talented pupils. Accommodation for music is satisfactory. Resources are excellent, including a good range of published materials and computers, keyboards, tuned and untuned classroom instruments. Nevertheless, these resources have, as yet, had little impact on classroom music.
179. Since the previous inspection report progress has been poor. Standards in the subject have not improved. Pupils at all stages are not given opportunities to experience practical musical experiences. The focus of lessons is not clear. The use of local cultures is not developed in music. Music technology provision and the department's accommodation have been improved and music is now available as a GCSE option both in Years 10 and 11. The school is aware of these shortcomings and is committed to effective action.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

180. Standards reached by the majority of pupils by the age of 14 are in line with the national expectation. When pupils arrive in Year 7 they have had very little experience of swimming, gymnastics and dance, and their ball skills are below average. Their achievement in Years 7 to 9 is therefore good. Boys' football and table tennis skills are a strength. In football they have good control of the ball and understand and use tactics in a competitive game. In table tennis, many have above average skills, using spin and change of pace to outwit an opponent. In Year 9, girls compose and perform dances using ideas from their own and other cultures. Their movements are refined and they understand the principles of choreography. The pupils' standards in swimming are below average in Year 7, but their rate of learning is good. The pupils' evaluative skills are satisfactory, but they are generally not confident in using technical vocabulary.

181. Standards reached by the majority of pupils at the end of Year 11 (those not taking physical education at GCSE) are in line with the national expectation. A significant minority is working above these expectations. Boys' football is, again, a strength. Their performance is more consistent and effective and they are able to apply tactics effectively in games. They are able to adapt their performance to the limitations of others and their team skills enhance their performance. The girls are able to plan their own fitness programme and understand the importance of a good diet for a healthy life style.
182. Only boys take physical education at GCSE. Their results are consistently in line with the national average. Many of the pupils achieve higher grades than in their other subjects. Standards reached by the majority currently in Year 11 are average. This represents good achievement over time. The majority of the pupils have a satisfactory depth of knowledge in theoretical aspects and they are able to link this to practical activities. They are well-practised in examination technique. Those pupils who are working below average have limited knowledge in theoretical modules and their notes are sometimes incomplete. Pupils' skills in information and communication technology and their extended writing skills are below average because there are too few opportunities to develop them in the work set. The majority of pupils' practical work is well above average. Their badminton skills are particularly advanced. They have a thorough understanding of how to play a wide variety of shots using power, touch and disguise to outwit their opponent. They are able to analyse each other's shots and use basic coaching points that improve performance. A few pupils are less confident in the role of coach.
183. The overall quality of teaching and its impact on the pupils' learning is good. There are some elements of excellent teaching in Years 7 to 9. Teachers always let the pupils know what they will be expected to do by the end of the lesson. Teachers' expectations of high standards of work are nearly always consistent and they continually encourage them to strive for better performance related appropriately to their ability. Pupils with special educational needs are well-integrated into lessons and make good progress. Teachers use demonstration effectively to ensure that pupils who speak English as a second language have a good understanding of the tasks. The teachers use a variety of methods that are successful in developing practical, evaluative and planning skills. In most lessons techniques are developed logically with enough time to practise and refine skills before using them in a game. A good example of this was seen in a Year 9 table tennis lesson where the pupils learnt a topspin drive with a gradual build up of practices leading to the final shot which was then played successfully within a game. In a few lessons the task is not clearly explained or is too advanced for the pupils' skill level. Question and answer sessions are used effectively to assess the pupils' knowledge and to provoke thought. The style of questioning is not yet developed to encourage the pupils to use technical vocabulary in sentence form. The GCSE course is well planned and teachers make good links between theoretical and practical aspects. Homework assignments are satisfactory for course requirements but do not give the pupils enough opportunities for extended research. Marking is constructive, resulting in improved work, but it is not linked to examination grades. Notes are checked but spelling is not corrected. Assessment of the pupils' work in lessons is good and is used to adjust the tasks to meet their needs. The assessment policies between the girls and boys departments differ and neither is linked effectively to National Curriculum requirements. Data is not used to track how well pupils achieve relative to their ability, gender or ethnicity from Years 7 to 11. In many lessons, teachers extend a level of independence to the pupils that is respected and there is a well-established code of conduct. There is a mutual respect and shared enthusiasm between the teachers and the pupils that makes a considerable impact on the quality of work. This is especially evident in the popular extra-curricular programme where pupils enjoy team and individual success in inter-form matches, local, county and national competitions in sports such as football, badminton and cross-country. The links with local clubs such as Aston Villa Football Club and the employment of other specialists adds valuable depth to the curriculum and extra-curricular programme. The enthusiasm for dance activities is thriving and explores the rich cultural differences that exist within the school and the local community. Visits to and by professional groups have been beneficial in influencing the quality of the pupils' performance.
184. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. GCSE has been introduced for the boys. However it is not available for the girls. The amount of time for physical education in Years 10 and 11 has been extended to allow good coverage of the curriculum. The teachers use a wider variety of methods that in turn have developed pupils' evaluative skills and encouraged a greater independence in their learning. Boys do not have the opportunity to study dance. The quality of display in the department is excellent. It is informative, celebrates the pupils' success and continues to give positive role models for different cultures and gender. The teachers are enthusiastic and are committed to creating an effective and challenging learning environment for their pupils. Historically, leadership between the girls and boys departments has always been separate. The current leaders are developing closer links but there are still

areas of inefficiency where there are separate policies in existence. For example, there are individual development plans, which are not linked effectively to financial control. The boys' toilet in the main school changing room is in a poor state of repair. The lack of a permanent base for theoretical lessons creates difficulties in establishing a stimulating environment and also for the movement of resources.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

185. Standards are below the expectations of the locally Agreed Syllabus for pupils at the age of 14. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of different faiths is a strong feature of their attainment. They show a good understanding of events in the life of Muhammad and describe the principal beliefs of Islam. They describe the sequence of events at the Hajj but are less confident in writing about the experience from the point of view of a pilgrim. They study a dramatic dialogue and identify how Muslims and Christians differ in their beliefs about Jesus; they answer questions about the dialogue but are not confident in giving reasons for their answers. Pupils for whom English is an additional language are confident in using and defining technical terms relating to Islamic belief. In their study of Christianity, pupils with special educational needs display a good factual knowledge of the life of Jesus. Higher-attaining pupils write imaginative accounts of events from the Bible, including the raising of Lazarus. Skills in reflection and response are a weaker area due to insufficient opportunities to develop these skills in both oral and written work.
186. GCSE results at grades A*-C are very low in comparison with the national average and below the national average for grades A*-G. Standards are well below the expectations of the locally Agreed Syllabus for pupils aged 16 in the work seen of pupils following the core course. They apply their knowledge and understanding of Islam to social and moral issues, including giving personal responses. They give their own opinions on how divorce affects children. Pupils for whom English is an additional language show how religious belief requires people in today's world to care for the environment. Higher-attaining pupils explain the link between religious belief and cruelty to animals. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, use information and communication technology to discover how Muslims apply their religious beliefs to moral issues, including genetic engineering and euthanasia. Pupils' attainment is restricted to a very narrow range of topics from the 'agreed syllabus' due to the insufficient time allocation to the subject within the core course.
187. The work of pupils following the GCSE course is well below the national average. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, use their information and communication technology skills to search the Internet and retrieve information on Lourdes as part of their study of pilgrimage; Higher-attaining pupils use the information to produce accounts in their own words. Pupils display a sound factual knowledge, for example, of Christian and Hindu wedding ceremonies, but their skills in selecting information from sources and organising and presenting ideas in the form of an extended piece of writing are not well-developed. Pupils for whom English is an additional language give personal accounts of the difficulties and benefits of observing Ramadan in the modern world. Skills in reflecting and responding are again a weak area with pupils having insufficient opportunities in lessons to develop them.
188. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and for the small minority of pupils following the GCSE course in Years 10 and 11. It is poor in Years 10 and 11 for the great majority of pupils who follow a core course. The time allocated to the subject within the core course is not sufficient to enable pupils to develop their knowledge of different faiths. Skill development is also weak, with insufficient opportunities for pupils to apply their knowledge through, for example, questioning and giving reasoned opinions.
189. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory. Pupils throughout the age range are keen to share information about their own faith and are respectful when listening to each other. They work well independently and show good concentration during individual lesson tasks. Pupils' participation in discussion is variable and dependent upon the effectiveness of teaching strategies. They display initiative in using information technology to find out about different faiths.
190. Overall, the teaching of pupils in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. However, there is some teaching that is unsatisfactory. Secure knowledge is a characteristic and necessary feature of the teaching, with many pupils having a sound knowledge of their own faith. Lesson introductions are used well to recap work from previous lessons and so enable pupils to consolidate their understanding. Resources are sometimes well used; for example, a printed sheet to use as a guide when looking at a video of the Hajj that helped

pupils identify relevant and important features. In some lessons, pupil management is effective in encouraging pupils to participate in discussion; for example, to enable them to learn through question and answer about some of the similarities and differences between Christianity and Islam. The use of time is a weakness in the teaching and in some lessons too much time is spent on lesson introductions that do not engage the majority of pupils in discussion or other activities. Such lessons lack a sufficient variety of activities that are planned to consolidate learning. The absence of resources in some lessons to support class discussion places an over-reliance on pupils listening to the teacher, with pupils having no information in front of them to provide an additional focus for their attention. Resources are not well used to support pupils with special educational needs.

191. Overall, the teaching of pupils following the GCSE course in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. However in some lessons teaching was unsatisfactory. Secure knowledge is again a positive characteristic and is effective in consolidating pupils' understanding. In one example, secure knowledge enhanced a class discussion on a pilgrimage to Lourdes so that pupils gained an understanding of both the events that took place and of the motives of the pilgrims. The discussion was clearly focused, with pupils given different headings in advance so that they could sort and classify points raised and take notes on them as the discussion progressed. The weaknesses in the teaching are the same as in Years 7 to 9. Time is not well used in some lessons, with lesson introductions that are too teacher-led and do not engage the majority of pupils. There is an over-reliance during discussion on pupil volunteers who are sometimes a small minority so that the majority of pupils are not involved. Resources available do not sufficiently support pupils with special educational needs. No direct teaching of those parts of the core course containing religious education units of study was seen during the inspection. However, from work seen, the standard of teaching is satisfactory. Lesson planning enables pupils to use knowledge of their own faith in work on social and moral issues. The work produced shows a high level of motivation with pupils using the Internet sources well to extend their knowledge.
192. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory, with insufficient progress made since the last inspection. Issues that have yet to be tackled include whole-school issues as well as departmental issues. In particular, the lack of progress in making adequate curriculum time available for the subject in Years 10 and 11 has resulted in pupils' underachievement. Plans are now established to address the current unsatisfactory situation by introducing a GCSE short course for all pupils from September 2001, with the possibility of pupils taking additional full course options. Other points from the last inspection still to be tackled include developing detailed schemes of work linked to assessment opportunities so that the curriculum can be planned to place equal emphasis on the attainment targets contained in the agreed syllabus. At present there is an over-emphasis on knowledge acquisition, with less emphasis on the acquisition of skills, an issue at the last inspection. Resources are not well-developed to meet pupils' needs, which again was reported at the previous inspection. The two main teaching rooms are in direct sunlight during the school day with no blind provision, and in lessons observed this caused difficulties of concentration for individual pupils. The organisation of pupils' work, which is all on file paper, makes it difficult to monitor the progress of individuals.

ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE (EAL)

193. Pupils who have English as an additional language make very good progress. They are well taught and their progress is monitored effectively. The teaching team, funded by the ethnic minority achievement grant, are exceptionally well-qualified and experienced. With a minimum of withdrawal from lessons, they manage the early stages of learning English very well indeed. However, with four pupils in five having English as an additional language, the support that the team can give, after the early stages, is clearly limited. Subject teachers have to take increasing responsibility and, in some subjects, the response is limited.
194. Many pupils have a low standard of English on entry and a significant number of pupils with English as an additional language arrive at the school after Year 7. In spite of very good teaching and support in the early stages, many pupils still find a lack of proficiency in English as a barrier to achieving their full potential in Years 10 and 11.
195. Subject teachers have to take increasing responsibility for literacy across the curriculum. They do this very well in history, geography and physical education, but less well in French and design and technology. Examples were seen of subject-specific language mistakes being corrected but basic errors in English being ignored.

196. Pupils at an early stage of learning English make rapid progress. This progress continues as long as there is intensive support. Thereafter, progress slows. Many have difficulty reading from the board and in expressing themselves clearly.
197. The documentation for English as an additional language is very good and the school has well-developed literacy strategies. These are required in the documentation of other subjects and are demonstrated through 'word walls', the use of book boxes and the explanation of relevant terminology in most classrooms. However, more monitoring is needed to ensure that all staff are taking a broad view of literacy across the curriculum.