

INSPECTION REPORT

ASHTON-ON-MERSEY SCHOOL

Sale, Cheshire

LEA area: Trafford

Unique reference number: 106374

Headteacher: Mr T Kapur

Reporting inspector: Mr David Oakley
3549

Dates of inspection: 13-16 November 2000

Inspection number: 223993

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Modern (non-selective)

School category: Foundation

Age range of pupils: 11-16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Cecil Avenue
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Appropriate authority: Trafford

Name of chair of governors: Councillor Brian D Rigby

Date of previous inspection: November 1995

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is a foundation secondary modern school with 1182 boys and girls of ages 11 to 16 on roll. It is a large school of its type. It serves an area which is relatively advantaged but with pockets of disadvantage. Over 20% of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals, which is above the national average. The intake has lower than average attainment. The 11+ examination selects most of the top 35% of the full ability range locally to attend nearby grammar schools. One third of pupils enter the school with reading ages below their chronological age. Two per cent of pupils are of minority ethnic origin; four pupils have English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is above the national average. The school hosts a designated 12 place unit for pupils with hearing impairment. The number of pupils per teacher is broadly average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Ashton-on-Mersey School is an outstanding school. Though it is designated as a secondary modern school, the standards of attainment of the pupils are high in comparison with comprehensive schools serving pupils from similar backgrounds. The pupils like to come to school. Their very positive attitudes to learning and their very good relationships with one another and their teachers contribute significantly to the very good progress that they make. Excellent leadership by the headteacher, senior managers, middle managers and governors creates a climate that unites staff and pupils in the pursuit of the highest standards. The quality of teaching is very good; some is exceptional. Staff knowledge of the pupils, enthusiasm for the subjects that they teach, commitment, teaching skills and patience, encourage pupils to give of their best. The school continues to provide excellent value for money.

What the school does well

- Excellent leadership unites staff and pupils in the pursuit of high standards of attainment.
- Pupils receive care of outstanding quality. This builds their confidence and self-esteem, helping them to achieve their potential.
- Pupils achieve very high standards of attainment at age 14 and 16 compared with those in similar schools and those schools with a non-selective comprehensive intake.
- Sponsorship and funding brought into the school by entrepreneurial activities benefits all pupils.
- The school's specialist sports college status results in high levels of participation and high standards of attainment in curricular and extra-curricular sport.

What could be improved

- Checking of pupils' work for consistency of constructive marking is insufficiently rigorous.
- The monitoring of pupils' progress and matching of work to pupils' ability are not sufficiently well informed by the use of pupils' results in the national tests at age 11, 14 and 16.
- The procedures for setting and checking of homework are not being applied effectively.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Standards of attainment have improved since the previous inspection in November 1995. Results in the GCSE in 2000 were the best ever. Forty-five per cent of pupils gained five or more GCSE grades A*-C. The quality of teaching has improved.

Since the previous inspection the school has received many accolades including Beacon school status and specialist sports college status. These have improved the provision for all pupils in the school, including enhanced accommodation, and have been used to drive the school forward. The local and national reputation that the school now has, serves to raise aspirations for pupils still higher. The school is heavily oversubscribed. Some parents whose children have passed the 11+ choose to send their children to Ashton-on-Mersey rather than the local grammar schools.

Information and communication technology (ICT) provision has increased considerably and is making an impact on the curriculum as staff training unfolds. All pupils at Key Stage 4 follow an ICT related examination course.

Very good progress has been made on all of the key issues raised by the previous inspection. The provision of support for pupils with special educational needs is now very good. Training of heads of faculty in the principles of management of resources has taken place and has been successful in enhancing their management skills, as has training in the monitoring of the quality of teaching. Organisation of curricular time has been reviewed, improving the allocation for religious education, personal and social education, physical education, literacy and numeracy. Library provision has been enhanced.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 year olds based on GCSE examination results.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE examinations	C	D	C	A

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

The school's results in the national tests at age 14 have improved consistently since the previous inspection, in line with the national trend. Approximately 35% of pupils in the area served by the school are selected for admission to grammar schools. When the school's results are compared with those achieved in non-selective schools with pupils from similar backgrounds they are well above average in English and science and above average in mathematics. Pupils achieve very well when their prior attainment is taken into account. Comparative data for secondary modern schools is not available for 2000, but in 1999 the school's results were above average compared with other secondary modern schools.

The school achieves standards in public examinations for 16 year olds that are well above average when compared with those achieved in comprehensive schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. Improvement is in line with the national trend. The school sets challenging targets for GCSE results. The target for 2000 was exceeded.

Overall, pupils of all abilities are achieving well in their work in all subjects as a result of the motivating effect of high quality teaching and the ethos in the school. Standards observed in lessons in Key Stage 4 and in the pupils' work were slightly better than in Key Stage 3. This is linked to the period of consolidation during the first term of Year 7 when pupils' confidence is being built. This revisiting of Key Stage 2 work can involve a lack of challenge for pupils of all abilities.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils like coming to school. They feel safe and very well supported. Their positive attitudes enhance their own and each other's learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The school is an orderly community with high standards of behaviour. The very high standards of behaviour in lessons promote effective learning. The consistent way in which staff deal with pupils reinforces behaviour very effectively.
Personal development and relationships	The personal development of the pupils is exceptionally good, guided by an effective pastoral system. Relationships between teachers and pupils, and between pupils are very good. Teachers provide very positive role models.
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory and rigorous procedures to promote improvement are in place.

Pupils' attitudes and values are very good. These aspects are a strength of the school; they contribute to the strong sense of community and to the high standards of achievement. Pupils are proud to belong to the school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The teaching and learning seen in the school were very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. In half of all lessons teaching was either exceptional or very good.

Exceptionally good teaching was seen in lessons in several subjects. In these lessons teachers' enthusiasm for their subject stimulated pupils' interest and motivated them very well. They used questioning skilfully to build on and challenge pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding and used a variety of techniques to help pupils explore the objectives of the lesson. All lessons were well structured and paced; very good relationships and the teachers' knowledge of the pupils enabled very good progress to be made. Teaching was very good in English and mathematics overall and good in science overall. Exceptional teaching was seen in English. All teaching could be raised to the standard of the best teaching by consistently matching work more closely to pupils' needs, thus providing an element of challenge for pupils of all abilities.

Standards of teaching literacy skills are good across subjects, with teachers implementing the school's policy consistently well. Numeracy skills, very well taught in the context of mathematics lessons, support subjects across the curriculum effectively.

The school meets the needs of pupils with special educational needs very well. Effective intervention

and support enables them to make very good progress during Key Stage 3 so that they are able to take full advantage of opportunities on offer at Key Stage 4. The work of the hearing impaired unit is effectively integrated into the life of the school.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is broad and balanced, effectively meeting the needs of all pupils, providing appropriate opportunities for pupils to develop, both personally and academically. An extensive range of extracurricular activities in sport and other areas of the curriculum enhances provision.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision is very good. A strong, very well managed team provides a range of support that is greatly appreciated by the pupils. The hearing impaired unit continues to contribute significantly to the life of the school.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Social and moral development are particularly well supported. Assemblies are excellent, but opportunities in lessons to explore values and reflect on experience as part of spiritual development are missed. Opportunities for cultural development are also missed.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Care of pupils is a major strength of the school. The strong and effective pastoral system is well led by the deputy headteacher and heads of year. A positive ethos of inclusion permeates school policy and practice. Child protection arrangements and procedures to ensure health and safety are very good.

The school provides well for its pupils in these aspects. The school is committed to development of pupils' self esteem and confidence to enable them to take full advantage of the academic opportunities on offer. Staff give unstintingly of their time in order to support every pupil in and out of lessons.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Leadership by the headteacher is inspirational. The senior and middle managers and the governors have created a climate of very high standards of attainment and conduct.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors are very well informed about the work of the school. They are actively involved in developments and act as critical friends, evaluating proposed initiatives thoroughly.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school is active in evaluating its own performance. The cycle of self-review is effectively assisting in raising standards. The principles of 'best value' and improvement on previous best are embedded in the philosophy of the school.
The strategic use of	The school has excellent facilities and uses its resources very effectively

resources	for the benefit of all pupils, local schools, and the local and wider community.
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The leadership provided by the headteacher is exceptional. He is a powerful driving force, inspiring staff and pupils alike to give of their best. The small senior management team's individual strengths and areas of responsibility complement each other very well. The financial and administration manager plays a key role in the team in providing professional advice and guidance on cost effectiveness and resource management.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of activities outside lessons provided by the school. • The school expects their children to work hard and achieve their best. • The staff are approachable. • The school is well led and managed. • Their children like school. • The school is helping their children become mature and responsible. • The teaching is good. • Their children are making good progress. • Behaviour in the school is good. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More homework set. • Better information on how their children are getting on.

Parents are very strongly supportive of the school.

The inspection team agrees with the parents about the very many strengths that the school has.

The setting and checking of homework does lack rigour. Pupils are not always diligent about recording it in their planners. Many pupils do their homework at lunchtime in the library. Form tutors do not always check planners thoroughly. Heads of subject and heads of year do not monitor the quality of homework set. Parents do not always take the opportunity that they have to make comments in the pupils' planners.

Information about pupils' progress in reports could be improved, particularly in terms of what is being studied and targets specific to the knowledge, skills and understanding of each subject. Parents and their children are able to discuss reports with staff, but the report should be a more informative document.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The school's results and achievements

Excellent leadership unites staff and pupils in the pursuit of high standards of attainment.

1. The school's mission statement clearly sums up the aims of the school that, through high standards of care and support, pupils will be able to achieve their potential, both academic and personal.
2. The headteacher is a powerful driving force. His visionary and dynamic leadership inspires governors, staff, parents and pupils alike. Liaison with external partners and agencies is of a very high quality. He is an excellent ambassador for the school, and has raised the profile and reputation of the school locally and nationally. He has effectively managed change in a school that was already doing well. This has been achieved by empowerment of teaching and non-teaching staff at all levels. The award of Investor in People is an acknowledgement of this. The senior management team's individual strengths and responsibilities complement each other and combine to create an excellent team.
3. The school's current improvement plan effectively identifies priorities in the context of national requirements and school needs. It is a good example of strategic thinking and planning. The schedule for production of the plan has involved thorough consultation with staff, with the deputy headteachers and heads of faculty playing a key role. The establishment of an effective performance management cycle is well on course. It builds on past and current training and the Investor in People philosophy.
4. The financial management of the school is excellent. The income of the school is spent on the pupils currently being educated in it. Reserves and contingencies are kept at relatively low levels in line with a 'lean and mean' approach to the amounts of money carried forward each year. Supplemented by entrepreneurial activities, income per pupil is just below the upper quartile for all schools. The school applies the principles of 'Best Value', guided very effectively by the Finance and Administration Manager. Detailed audit trails show how the principles work in practice, for example on how the current catering contract was negotiated to include systems to improve the efficiency of the payment system and provide imaginative approaches to feeding pupils - the 'Diner' outlet for example. The building and refurbishment programmes have been carefully thought through and have resulted in a coherent site with excellent accommodation facilities that have kept pace with the expansion in pupil numbers.
5. The headteacher and senior management team are well aware of the overall strengths and weaknesses of the school. The school has in place a programme of self-review and evaluation established by the school's development planning process. An eighteen-month cycle has been established. Heads of faculty have been trained in the process of classroom observation and are using the information gained to inform future improvements. The senior management team also observe teaching and this effectively acts as a way of assessing, complementing and moderating the work of the middle managers. Heads of faculty contribute to the headteacher's reports to governors identifying development priorities. The recent improvement in standards of attainment in science is an excellent example of the effectiveness of the process. The current focus of reviews is teaching and standards of attainment. It is intended that scrutiny of pupils' work will improve the scope of school self-review.

6. The role of the governing body is well summed up by the chair's view that they have "ownership and trust." They are very actively involved in the work of the school. The wealth of specialist expertise on the governing body is used very effectively. Governors are keen to obtain awards to enhance the reputation of the school but help to regulate the number of initiatives that the school takes on.

The outstanding quality of care of pupils builds their confidence and self-esteem, helping them to achieve their potential.

7. Pupils are very well cared for and supported by staff through the strong pastoral system. The deputy headteacher, heads of year and form tutors manage and deliver the system extremely effectively. Staff give unstintingly of their time outside of lessons to support individual pupils and provide clubs and extra tuition during lunchtime and after school. Much of the very extensive extra-curricular provision is staffed on the goodwill of teachers. The sense of community in the school is very strong and is reflected in lessons and around the school. The strong corporate spirit of the school extends to the non-teaching staff who are very much part of the caring ethos of the school.
8. The school very successfully promotes pupils' personal development. There are many opportunities for pupils to take responsibility. For example, Year 11 pupils act as mentors to Year 7 tutor groups leading whole class activities while form tutors work with individual pupils and check planners. Year 10 and 11 pupils are being recruited as counsellors as part of the school's anti-bullying programme. They will receive residential training for this. Pupils have access to the school building before the start of the day and at lunchtime. They respond to this level of trust by looking after the building and site very well. Many pupils follow sports leadership programmes. Pupils support charities and charitable events. Parents believe that the school promotes good attitudes and values and helps their children to become mature and responsible. The inspection team's observations confirm this view.
9. Behaviour is very good. The consistency with which staff deal with misdemeanours is a strength of the school, as is their vigilance around the school. The level of temporary exclusions is low compared with schools nationally. There have been no permanent exclusions for some years. Bullying incidents are rare, and are quickly and effectively dealt with by the school.

Pupils achieve very high standards of attainment at age 14 and age 16 compared with those in similar schools and those schools with a non-selective, comprehensive intake.

10. Pupils achieve very well when compared with pupils in other secondary modern schools. They also achieve very well in comparison with pupils in non-selective (comprehensive) schools serving pupils from similar backgrounds. (This comparison is with schools having between 21% and 35% of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals). Pupils make very good progress throughout Key Stage 3 and sustain it through Key Stage 4. Standards have been rising steadily since the previous inspection in line with the national trend. On entry to the school at age 11, pupils' standard of attainment in the national tests is around the national average in terms of those reaching Level 4 (the national standard) and above; but below average for those reaching Level 5 and above. The average Key Stage 2 points score for the core subjects of English, mathematics and science is below the national average. One third of pupils have reading ages below their chronological ages. The level of attainment of pupils entering the school has been relatively stable in recent years.
11. At age 14, pupils' average points score in national tests in 2000 was around average for English and science and below average for mathematics. When pupils' attainment is compared with that

of pupils in fully comprehensive schools serving pupils from similar backgrounds, average points scores for English and science are in the top 25% of schools and mathematics scores are in the top 40%. Comparative data for secondary modern schools is not available. This reflects the increasing level of challenge that is provided through the key stage and the motivating effect of the very high standards of care and teaching. Pupils of all abilities achieve well. The ethos of the school encourages pupils to do as well as they can. Individuals who are struggling receive very high quality support from committed teachers which extends beyond the classroom and the school day.

12. At age 16 the average points score in 2000 was close to the national average and when compared with similar schools was in the top 25%. The percentages of pupils obtaining five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C, five or more grades A*-G and one or more grades A*-G are in the top 25% of similar schools. Results at grades A*-C in English and science were in the top 25% of similar schools, mathematics results were in the top 40%. Boys and girls perform equally well at Key Stage 3. This tends to reflect ability rather than gender. Boys do not do as well as boys nationally at GCSE and the school is seeking to improve this situation.

The entrepreneurial activities of the school in bringing sponsorship and funding into the school benefit all pupils.

13. The school is involved in a wide range of sponsorship and initiatives that bring extra funding into the school and give it greater prestige. All ventures are thoroughly costed in terms of finance and staff time and then evaluated against 'Best Value' criteria of comparison, challenge, consultation and competition. The Finance and Administration Manager leads this process very effectively in consultation with the headteacher. Issues are presented to the finance committee of the governing body for discussion and recommendations made to the full governing body, where further consideration takes place and decisions are made. The procedures are rigorous. Decisions are taken in the light of how pupils will benefit. Professional financial management has included the setting up of a commercial company, the Ashton-on-Mersey Development Company. This enables the school to take advantage of financial legislation, resulting in, for example, Value Added Tax exemptions and therefore extra financial benefits. Funds are not bid for if it is not cost effective to do so; initiatives are not pursued at the expense of staff time that could be better used.
14. Sponsorship is acknowledged by plaques and notices around the school. The sponsorship of the specialist sports college status by Manchester United Football Club (MUFC) is an exemplar of how such a partnership benefits the school and the sponsor. The school gains extra financial resources and the young players attending the school gain educational benefits. They also contribute to the life of the school, for example, by acting as mentors to younger pupils as part of the paired reading scheme. The MUFC Youth Development officer represents the club on the governing body. He works closely with the school.
15. Those initiatives that do not directly attract funds into the school, for example, the award of Investor in People and Charter Mark, are assessed on the benefits that they bring to the development of the school. They are used to drive the school forward. Awards boost morale of staff and pupils and raise the standing of the school in the community and in the eyes of potential sponsors. The over subscription of the school is an indication of the esteem in which it is held locally. Rigorous evaluation systems are associated with such initiatives which use national standards and criteria. External evaluation enables the school to check the findings of self-review. The school has been successful in reassessment of its Investor in People award and Charter Mark status and is well placed to face any external audit with confidence. The Beacon school designation by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) attracts both funding and

prestige. The majority of funding is spent outside the school to the benefit of others. The school plays a key role in school improvement locally, working in partnership with the Local Education Authority (LEA). It is an acknowledgement of the excellent practice evident in many aspects of the work of the school but also serves as a spur to the school's high aspirations.

The provision and opportunities for sport are excellent.

16. The school is a Specialist Sports College. This has resulted in the enhanced provision of facilities within the school, such as the fitness centre and dance studio, which benefit pupils at the school and locally, and adult users in the local and wider community. In addition to a wide range of opportunities provided by the physical education curriculum, pupils can take advantage of the excellent provision for sports and physical education at lunchtime, before school, after school, at weekends and during holidays.
17. The levels of participation are very high. The award of Sportsmark gold is an acknowledgement of this. Many pupils have attained national and county representative honours. The Nike/Youth Sport Trust for Girls in physical education is the latest of many major initiatives for physical education gained by the school. The scope of this project is to raise the level of girls' participation within the physical education curriculum, the extended curriculum and the local community. The project will provide additional training for staff, provision of kit for pupils, and an increased range of activities in lessons, orienteering, golf and skiing, for example. Establishment of a school sports council, purchase of trophies and certificates and many other benefits will ensue.
18. Physical education results in the GCSE were well above the national average in 2000. All subjects benefit from sports college status. Under this initiative, bids can be made for funds against the criterion that any resources purchased will enhance the contribution of the subject to the physical education/sports area of the curriculum. For example, in order to stimulate boys' interest in reading the English department were able to purchase additional literature set in the context of sport, which is helping to change boys' attitudes to reading.
19. The school plays a significant role in promoting physical education and sport within the LEA and nationally. The expertise of the headteacher and other staff is regularly called upon for advice at a national level. The school is frequently mentioned when the sports college initiative is discussed and written about nationally. A partnership agreement has been established between Ashton-on-Mersey School and Trafford Local Authority (including LEA and Sports Development) under which the school provides aspects of the physical education advisory service for Trafford. This includes in-service teacher training, identification of appropriate specialists to deliver training, advice to primary schools, organising and hosting of meetings and the use of facilities for coaching purposes. This acknowledges the very high standards of teaching taking place in the school, which was confirmed by a small sample of lessons seen during the inspection.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Checking of pupils' work, especially for consistency of constructive marking is insufficiently rigorous.

20. Monitoring of the effectiveness of the work of the school by middle and senior managers currently focuses on teaching, with a view to identifying and disseminating good practice. This has been effective in sharing successful strategies more widely and identifying development targets within departments. Experienced heads of faculty affirm that their own practice has been improved by observation of their colleagues using shared criteria. There is currently no systematic scrutiny of

pupils' work in order to check on the way that school and departmental policies are being implemented, particularly for marking and homework, and to check on the implementation of the scheme of work, for example the variety of teaching and learning strategies employed. Most work is conscientiously marked, often with comments. A scrutiny by inspectors of work from a sample of students showed inconsistencies and weaknesses in teachers' practice, particularly in how they mark pupils' work. Marking varies in quality within and between departments. Comments are often about presentation and for encouragement rather than about the skills, knowledge and understanding required by the subject. Few comments are about how pupils can improve their work. There is good practice, for example, in English, and much marking is augmented by conversations with pupils, for example, in mathematics, but these are not reinforced by written references or comments (such as 'we discussed this point'). The inconsistency seen during the inspection indicates the need for more rigorous monitoring in order to raise the standard of all marking to that of the best. The setting of homework is also inconsistent.

Monitoring of pupils' progress and matching of work to pupils' ability is not sufficiently well informed by the use of information about pupils' results in the national tests at 11, 14 and 16.

21. Currently pupils' results in the Key Stage 2 tests when they were age 11, and their reading ages, are used by senior staff to place pupils in ability bands in half-year groups in Year 7. This data is not collected sufficiently early enough or rigorously enough to inform banding arrangements or teachers' knowledge of the pupils. From the start of Year 7, only 75% of the information was available in mid October. The wide range of abilities in classes, and the policy of consolidation to give pupils confidence, leads to pupils repeating work that they have covered in primary school, particularly in science and mathematics. There is, consequently, lack of challenge for some pupils. Teachers' conversations with pupils about their work, setting of appropriate level of work and marking of work are not sufficiently well informed by information about the pupils' prior attainment. Sharing of criteria on how pupils may raise their performance from one level of attainment to the next, is not sufficiently part of the daily classroom routine. This is particularly an issue in Year 7. Greater challenge is evident as pupils move through the key stage. By age 14 pupils' attainment in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science has improved from below, to in line with, the national average and well above that in similar schools. Year 9 pupils are becoming aware of what is expected of them in the Key Stage 3 tests. For example, in a Year 9 English lesson on Macbeth, pupils in the top set knew about the criteria for Level 6 and Level 7 responses in literary criticism. Pupils' attainment and potential is not identified sufficiently early enough in the key stage to enable more pupils to achieve the higher levels.
22. Information about pupils' level of attainment is not sufficiently used to track their progress across the key stage. Comparison of Key Stage 2 levels with Key Stage 3 performance to check whether pupils of high, average and low attainment are making appropriate progress across the key stage, does not take place. The school does not, therefore, have sufficient information on the success of its strategies for matching work to pupils' ability.
23. At Key Stage 4 teachers make pupils in each set within an ability band aware of the grades expected of that group, and pitch the work appropriately. For example, in a Year 10 mathematics lesson, pupils knew what their Key Stage 3 test results were, which tier GCSE paper pupils in the set were likely to be entered for and which grades that gave them access to. They knew that pupils who had obtained Level 7 in the tests were likely to be able to tackle the higher tier paper. The teacher had identified from his assessment of pupils' test results and survey of their confidence that the topic of bearings was a weak area of their understanding. Inventively using mistakes he had made himself to stimulate discussion of strategies, he reviewed the topic, shared

the criteria used for assessment of grade B performance effectively and set challenging questions for pupils to work through. Such good practice in basing work on an accurate knowledge of pupils' strengths and weaknesses was not so evident in some other lessons seen.

24. The school does not yet use the information now available nationally on pupils' performance in the different subjects they take at GCSE relative to their performance at age 14. This limits the opportunities for managers and subject leaders to identify relative strengths in teaching and learning, and so to fine-tune the school's endeavours in raising standards still further.

The procedures for setting and checking of homework, which are not being applied effectively.

25. There are procedures in place for setting and checking homework, but the implementation of procedures lacks rigour. Homework timetables are in place for all pupils and the number of homeworks allocated to each subject has been increased recently. Pupils have attractive, well thought out planners that have been introduced since the previous inspection in order to help them to organise their studies. They are required to write down homework on a daily basis in these planners. There is space for form tutor's and parents' comments and signatures. School policy requires form tutors to check planners regularly and the senior management team also makes spot checks. As part of the Charter Mark initiative the school has systems in place for following up parental complaints about homework and making a detailed response.
26. Many pupils do homework during lunchtime in the library, which has a very conducive working atmosphere. There are also opportunities for help with homework after school from staff. Pupils sometimes omit to mention this to their parents, giving the impression that there is no work set to be done at home. Several examples were seen during the inspection where procedures for homework had not been followed. Pupils who had failed to write down homework still had form tutor's signatures without comment. One pupil asked about her failure to record homework replied, "Oh, I phone my friend up to find out what it is." Exhortations to pupils to get parental signatures go unheeded. There are gaps in the setting of homework by some staff and some subjects. Schemes of work are not always complete in the guidance that they offer on appropriate homework. Some subjects, such as mathematics have homework books, some of which are photocopied exercises to work through. Homework is rarely coded in exercise books by a symbol or 'H/W', which would enable checking of regularity of setting of homework. Monitoring of the quality of homework set is not yet part of the systems in place. The lack of consistency of approach to homework results in pupils not valuing it sufficiently and opportunities to consolidate and extend classwork being missed.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

27. The school has very effective systems and strategies in place to promote improvement. In order to build on the school's achievements to date and to raise standards further, the headteacher, senior managers and governors should:
- Improve the checking of pupils' work to ensure that:
 - the effectiveness of teaching strategies is monitored;
 - consistent guidance about how to improve is given through constructive marking. (paragraph 20)
 - Extend the current use of pupils' results in the national tests at 11, 14 and 16 by:
 - earlier collecting and use of Key Stage 2 test results to enable identification of pupils' attainment and potential on entry to the school; (paragraph 21)
 - using information on the level of attainment of pupils at Key Stage 3 to track and evaluate the amount of progress made in order to inform the matching of work to pupils' needs more effectively; (paragraph 22)

- using national data to calculate how well pupils perform against predictions at Key Stage 4 (value added) in order to identify and disseminate strategies which have been successful in raising individuals' achievement. (paragraphs 23, 24)
- Ensure that the procedures in place for setting and checking homework are strengthened and implemented. (paragraphs 25, 26)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

39

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

29

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
21	31	28	21	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1182	
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	258	

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	24	
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	181	

English as an additional language

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	10
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	17

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.72
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.06
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2000	127	113	240

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	79	72	84
	Girls	86	66	57
	Total	165	138	141
Percentage of pupils At NC level 5 or above	School	68.8 (63)	57.5 (62)	58.8 (60)
	National	63 (64)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	18.8 (21)	32.5 (32)	22.5(18)
	National	28 (28)	42 (42)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	89	76	77
	Girls	96	68	69
	Total	185	144	146
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	77 (72)	60 (68)	60.8 (66)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	24 (24)	30 (35)	32 (32)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	114	106	220

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	42	106	111
	Girls	57	96	104
	Total	99	202	215
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	45 (34)	92 (88)	98 (97)
	National	49 (47.9)	88.8 (88.5)	95.5 (95.0)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	37 (33)
	National	39 (38)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	6
Indian	2
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	1168
Any other minority ethnic group	2

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	1	-
Black – African heritage	-	-
Black – other	-	-
Indian	-	-
Pakistani	-	-
Bangladeshi	-	-
Chinese	-	-
White	21	-
Other minority ethnic groups	2	-

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)	70
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.9:1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	376

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75.2
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	23.6
Key Stage 4	22.2

Financial information

Financial year	1999-00
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	£
Total income	3207852
Total expenditure	3247618
Expenditure per pupil	2739
Balance brought forward from previous year	125402
Balance carried forward to next year	85636

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1182
Number of questionnaires returned	331

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	51	43	5	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	43	47	5	0	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	43	46	4	2	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	32	47	16	3	2
The teaching is good.	47	46	2	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	38	41	10	2	9
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	64	32	2	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	68	30	2	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	42	42	6	2	9
The school is well led and managed.	63	32	2	1	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	54	39	4	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	70	27	1	1	1