

INSPECTION REPORT

CARLTON-LE-WILLOWS SCHOOL

Nottingham

LEA area: Nottinghamshire

Unique reference number: 122850

Headteacher: Mr M. H. A. Naisbitt

Reporting inspector: Mr I Benson
A002739

Dates of inspection: 9 – 13 October 2000

Inspection number: 224015

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: 11-18 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Wood Lane
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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Dr D. Vowles

Date of previous inspection: October 1995

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Mr I Benson 2739	<i>Registered inspector</i>		The school's results and achievements How well pupils are taught? How well is the school led and managed?
Mrs M J Kerry 9931	<i>Lay inspector</i>		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development; How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with its parents?
Ms B Baughan 19499	<i>Team inspector</i>	English.	
Mr R Portsmouth 19528	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics.	
Dr D Benstock 20243	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science.	
Mrs S Schofield 30901	<i>Team inspector</i>	Art.	
Mr G Preston 1990	<i>Team inspector</i>	Design and Technology; Information Technology.	
Mr R Parry 20247	<i>Team inspector</i>	Geography.	
Mr J Laver 1085	<i>Team inspector</i>	History.	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
Mr J E Ratcliffe 3793	<i>Team inspector</i>	Modern languages.	
Mr R Whiteley 8744	<i>Team inspector</i>	Music.	
Ms J Boulton 18888	<i>Team inspector</i>	Physical education.	
Mr P Quest 10807	<i>Team inspector</i>	Religious education.	
Mrs G Lawson 21899	<i>Team inspector</i>	Special educational needs.	English as an Additional Language; Equal Opportunities.

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This 11-18 mixed, split-site comprehensive school of 1284 pupils is situated to the south east of the city of Nottingham. It draws pupils from the city centre and from districts closer to it, giving the school a below average socio-economic profile and a below average proportion (12.4 per cent) eligible for free school meals. The vast majority of pupils are white: only 4 per cent come from ethnic minority backgrounds. Two point six per cent of the pupils, who are fluent in English, come from homes that have English as an additional language. 176 pupils (13.6 per cent) are on Stages 1-4 of the special needs register: one pupil has a Statement of special educational need. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school varies, but is just below average overall.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school that is increasing in confidence and effectiveness as it continues to implement its programme of improvement. Pupils are well taught, reach good standards in their work and personal development, and benefit from the positive learning ethos. High achievement is promoted and valued, and pupils' success is celebrated. The school is very well led and managed, and provides good value for money.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- Teaching is good. It enables pupils to achieve well in their work and personal development. The school promotes, values and celebrates high achievement.
- Pupils achieve well in relation to their attainment on entry. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are above national averages and at the end of the sixth form are well above course averages.
- The head teacher and senior managers, in partnership with the governing body, provide the school with very good leadership. The educational vision is clearly articulated in the school's aims, policies and planning and these contribute to high standards.
- Pupils have very good attitudes to school and high standards of behaviour. They are interested and involved in the school's life and work, and benefit from the positive learning ethos that supports their success.
- Pupils' achievement is well supported. They benefit from very positive relationships and role models; the personal respect pupils have for each other and the school environment; and the high quality monitoring of their academic achievement and personal development.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- Standards should be raised by improving the level of unauthorised absence.
- Statutory requirements are not met for religious education at Key Stage 4, and for providing a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.
- The sufficiency, adequacy and quality of the accommodation have a negative impact on the quality of teaching in some subjects, and on pupils' attainment and progress.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the last inspection in October 1995, good progress has been made in school improvement: account has been taken of key issues identified then. Standards have risen and are now above average at the end of Key Stage 4 and well above average in GCE Advanced Level. The recording, comparison and analysis of data has been highly influential in raising standards, introducing target setting for the whole school, departments and individual pupils, influencing curriculum planning, the improvement of teaching quality and the introduction of a systematic programme of monitoring and evaluation. Provision for those pupils who have special educational needs has been reviewed and improved. The provision for information technology has also improved. More computers and software are available, and statutory requirements are now met. However, the requirements for religious education at Key Stage 4 and to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils have not yet been fully met.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 14, 16 and 18 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests, GCSE and A-Level/AS-Level examinations.

Performance in:	compared with				<i>Key</i> well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
	all schools			similar schools 1999	
	1997	1998	1999		
End of KS3 tests	B	C	C	C	
GCSE examinations	C	C	B	C	
A-Levels/AS-Levels	D	A	A		

Attainment on entry to the school varies each year. The school adds value to pupils as they move through the key stages. The variation in results at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 is a reflection of the attainment of that cohort of pupils on entry. Results are improving at a similar rate to that nationally. At GCE Advanced Level the results are well above average. Pupils' achievement is above average in English, mathematics, science, art, design and technology, geography, history, modern languages, music and religious education, and average in information technology and physical education.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' concentration and enthusiasm in the classroom is often impressive. Their attitudes to learning, and to the whole school community, are constructive.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils move around a difficult site with good sense and good humour. They are very willing to be involved in the life of the school, and in helping younger pupils.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils are mature, confident and self-disciplined. The quality of relationships across the school community is very good, characterised by warmth, affection and respect.
Attendance	Attendance is in line with national averages, with unauthorised absence a little high. Follow-up of absence is rigorous.

In their lessons, pupils show keen interest in their studies. In three-quarters of all the lessons observed, attitudes and behaviour were judged to be good or better. In one quarter of lessons, attitudes and behaviour were very good or excellent. The willingness of pupils to be involved in school life is outstandingly good. Pupils enthusiastically take up the many opportunities for contributing to the welfare of the school and the wider community, helping younger pupils with their reading, for example, and representing other pupils' views. Pupils make consistent progress in their personal development, and become confident, mature and self-reliant young people.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Overall, the quality of teaching is good. It has improved significantly since the last inspection. Teaching was satisfactory or better in 99 per cent of the 181 lessons observed during the inspection. Teaching quality was excellent in 2 per cent of lessons, very good in 17 per cent, good in 52 per cent and satisfactory in 29 per cent. In two lessons, however, teaching was found to be unsatisfactory. Teaching is good in English and mathematics at Key Stages 3 and 4, and is satisfactory in science. The good quality of the teaching has a positive effect on all pupils' attainment and progress, including those who have special educational needs and English as an additional language. Teaching is usually well planned, teachers have good subject expertise, learning is well sequenced and both teaching methods and tasks are very carefully designed to involve pupils in the learning. In a few classes where pupils are organised in sets, some of the highest and lowest attaining pupils in the group are insufficiently challenged. The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are satisfactorily taught across the curriculum.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The quality and range of the curriculum is satisfactory at Key Stages 3 and 4 and good in the sixth form. Provision for religious education at Key Stage 4 is insufficient to enable statutory requirements to be met.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The provision for pupils who have special educational needs is good. Pupils are well taught and make good progress, especially in basic skills.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	This is good. These pupils make good progress and have levels of attainment that are above the average. They have equal access to the curriculum and their learning needs are monitored.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision is good overall. Support for pupils' moral and social development is very good, and that for their cultural development is good. The provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory: it is well supported in many assemblies and lessons, but overlooked in other assemblies and in tutor time.
How well the school cares for its pupils	This is a strong area of the school's provision, with particular strengths in the practice of monitoring and support for pupils' personal development.

The curriculum, to which all have access, is satisfactory. It provides for all pupils learning needs, including those who have special educational needs and English as an additional language. Provision to support pupils' personal development is good. The monitoring of academic progress, whilst not yet quite as effective as that for personal development, is of good quality. Procedures for assessment have improved since the last inspection. There are some examples of very good practice, but consistency in the use of assessment, and in the quality of target setting, is not fully established. There are good arrangements for induction and transition between the various stages of education. The school has an effective partnership with parents.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The head teacher and his senior colleagues provide the school with determined leadership of very good quality. There is a clear educational vision in which high standards are promoted and valued and pupils' success is celebrated.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body has provided a clear set of aims and policies for the school. However, the requirements for religious education at Key Stage 4 and a daily act of collective worship for all are not fully met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school regularly monitors and evaluates its own performance through the use of quantitative and qualitative measures. This contributes significantly to school improvement.
The strategic use of resources	There is extremely clear targeting of a range of resources, including financial, to educational objectives set within the school development plan. Budgetary and finance processes link well into this planning, so that developments can be effectively carried through.

The leadership of the school is very good: since the last inspection it has increased in effectiveness at middle management level. The governing body contribute very positively to the strategic management of the school. Through the self-review process governors have a clear knowledge and understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Coherence and clarity are the keynotes of planning the use of the school's resources. There is a strong common vision for providing resources for improvement, which is coherent right through the senior management team and the governing body. The school applies the principles of best value well, with particular strength in challenge and consultation.

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 ethos of the school and how this is translated into practice by staff. • High expectations, both behavioural and academic. • Individual support and guidance for pupils that leads to them being more effective learners. • Pupils make progress: they show maturity by taking leadership roles and develop responsible attitudes to work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lunchtime arrangements, especially for the pupils who have packed lunches. • Information on pupils' progress. • How closely the school works with parents.

Inspection evidence confirms the difficulties experienced by the school at lunchtimes, in trying to move a large number of pupils through a restricted dining area in a limited time. The school is actively addressing the problems concerning lunchtime arrangements. Pupils are being consulted and current procedures reviewed so that, within the constraints of the accommodation, procedures will be improved. Inspection evidence did not support the concerns about the information parents receive, and how closely the school works with parents. The school has an effective partnership with parents, who have access to good quality information from a range of sources. There is very good contact from pastoral staff and frequent reporting of progress to parents, well above the required annual report. Inspection evidence supported parents' views on the high quality ethos, expectations, strong individual support and guidance and the good progress pupils make in their personal development.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school has varied from year to year. In the current Year 7, attainment is broadly in line with that expected for pupils of a similar age nationally. The attainment of other year groups on entry has varied from below average to broadly average. This profile has been monitored and tracked as pupils move through the school.

2. Testing and other assessment data shows that a sizeable proportion of pupils enter the school with weaknesses in literacy and numeracy, including writing, that are given significant attention as they move through Key Stage 3. In spite of the good progress pupils make in the improvement of basic skills, with the variation of the attainment of pupils on entry to the school, the results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 have fluctuated over the past four years. In 1999, the results for those gaining Level 5 or above were above the national average in English and in line with the average in both mathematics and science. The results at Level 6 or above were above the national average in English, in line with the average in mathematics and below average in science. In the case of science, results for those gaining Level 5 and above have varied from being well below to being close to the national average. Performance has been improved through a more systematic analysis of assessment data and the revision of schemes of work to inform more focused teaching. Overall results in the end of Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests in 1999 were in line with national averages and those of similar schools. However, while they are above average in English, in line with it in mathematics, the science results are well below average in comparison with similar schools.

3. The latest data available for analysis of the test results for the current year, 2000, shows that in English the results of those pupils gaining Level 5 or above are in line with the national average but below that for similar schools. In mathematics results are above average when compared with national performance and that for similar schools. Results in science are above the national average but in line with the performance for similar schools. The results for those pupils reaching Level 6 or above show that they are above the national averages in English and mathematics and well above those for similar schools, but in science while they are in line with the national average they are below those for similar schools. The overall comparison shows that this school's results are above both national and similar school averages.

4. The results at the end of Key Stage 3 are influenced by pupils' attainment on entry and the progress they make in literacy and numeracy. The rigorous approach adopted initially to literacy, and increasingly in numeracy, has been influential in enabling pupils to use these skills more effectively across the curriculum. Results in the National Curriculum tests show an upward trend, in line with that nationally, and good progress in basic skills in English and mathematics. In science over the past four years the trend is one of improvement against national averages but this is less apparent in comparison with results for similar schools. The attainment of boys and girls is similar in mathematics and science but in English girls out-perform boys.

5. The scrutiny of work and discussions with pupils showed that they achieve well in relation to their attainment on entry. Standards in other subjects were above those for pupils of a similar age nationally in music and design and technology (DT), and in line with expectations in art, information and communication technology (ICT), geography, history, modern languages, music and physical education (PE). The standards in religious education (RE) were above the expectations of the Agreed Syllabus.

6. Generally pupils achieve well as they move through Years 10 and 11. They are well supported by good teaching in many subjects, the keen analysis of assessment data and by target setting and mentoring processes. At the end of Key Stage 4 the attainment of pupils is above average. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades in the A* to C and A* to G ranges was above average. The proportion gaining one or more A* to G grades was in line with the average. When compared with the results for similar schools, these results are overall in line with the average. They are above average for the proportion of pupils gaining five or more A* to C and one or more A* to G grades, but in line with the average for those gaining 5 or more A* to G grades. There is little difference in the overall performance of boys and girls. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more A* to C grades in 1999 represent the highest results gained by this school, although the upward trend is broadly in line with that nationally. Although there was a slight dip in the 2000 GCSE results, they were above the national average, in line with those for similar schools and were good in relation to pupils' attainment on entry.

7. Pupils' performance in GCSE examinations in English, mathematics and science is generally above average. In 1999, the results in English were close to the average, in mathematics they were average and in science were well above average for the proportion of pupils gaining grades in the A* to C range. When these results are analysed in relation to the performance of these pupils in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1997, the results appear lower than might have been expected. The difference in performance of this cohort of pupils can be accounted for by the lack of a significant proportion of the highest-attaining pupils, and the increasing number entered for accreditation that does not contribute to the average points scored at the end of the key stage. However, when the results are compared with similar schools, they are above average in English and science and well above average in mathematics. The performance of boys and girls are similar

8. Over a tenth of pupils at Key Stage 4 follow courses in science, French, German and history leading to a Certificate of Achievement. Their success in such courses is considerable. Just over 90 percent of those entered gained a distinction or merit award in 1999, and 87 per cent in 2000. In both years, well over half gained distinctions.

9. Inspection evidence, including the scrutiny of work and discussions with pupils, shows that at Key Stage 4 pupils' achievement is good in English, mathematics, science, art, design and technology, geography, history, modern languages, music. It is satisfactory in information and communication technology and physical education and below the expectations of the Agreed Syllabus in religious education. In most subjects the standards being achieved are well supported by good quality teaching. In religious education, however, the standards of those following the GCSE course are good, but this represents only about half of the pupils in the key stage. The attainment in religious education of the remainder of pupils is well below average, mainly because of the unsatisfactory provision and lack of specialist teaching of the religious education-related issues within the personal and social education (PSE) programme.

10. The majority of students who enter the sixth form take GCE Advanced Level courses. They make good progress, benefit from a high standard of teaching and learning and from the good quality of marking and assessment of their work. The standards achieved by the students are generally well above average. The GCE Advanced Level results over the past four years show an improving trend, and were well above the national average in 1999.

11. The first hand inspection evidence, including the inspection of work and discussions with students, showed that achievement in the sixth form is very good in English, mathematics, art, geography, religious education, good in science, design and technology, history and modern languages and satisfactory in information and communication technology. Already, students in Year 12 are coming to terms with the demands of their new courses and are making at least satisfactory, and sometimes good, progress.

12. The school has made good progress in raising standards since the last inspection. It has developed an effective range of strategies to evaluate performance and procedures for using this information to inform further teaching and learning. For instance, there is now intensive use of a variety of assessment and performance data. All of it is subject to keen analysis and many beyond the senior management team have also gathered key messages from the data. This has had a significant impact on the quality of teaching and learning, the marking and assessment process and the feedback and discussions the staff now have with their pupils and students. The intensive tracking of each cohort of pupils, especially in relation to literacy and numeracy, has resulted in a more focused approach to how well pupils are achieving in each of their subjects and the extent to which the teaching is providing the stimulus and support for good progress to be made. All of these processes have been highly influential in raising standards and the expectations the school now has of its pupils.

13. The school sets realistic, attainable targets for results at the end of Key Stage 4 for 2001 and 2002. The target-setting process is supported by identifying standards to be achieved by each subject area and each individual pupil. The move towards greater curriculum diversity at Key Stage 4 to cater for the learning needs of the lowest attaining pupils is intended to meet pupils' learning needs and provide them with academic success. The whole target setting process has focused attention on the potential of each pupil and student and, through dialogue, how each can improve the standard and quality of their work.

14. Over the last three years the school has developed a coherent literacy policy and this is now well in place in most departments. Pupils are encouraged to explore ideas through group discussion, and this is particularly effective in science and design and technology. Standards of presentation are good across all subjects. In history, geography and religious education, for example, pupils benefit from the increasing use of structured worksheet support and the use of 'writing frames', although writing at length, spelling and punctuation still present problems for many of the lowest attaining pupils and those that have special educational needs. The school librarian and her assistant play an important role in monitoring the reading patterns of individual pupils and in helping pupils to persevere in their reading and to select books that will help their development. There is a weekly lunchtime reading club, with a published programme of events, for pupils who are particularly interested in reading.

15. Standards of numeracy are good. There is no evidence that a lack of numeracy skills affects access to any part of the curriculum. The mathematics department supports the implementation of the whole school policy on numeracy. This process has only recently been initiated, and the full effect of

this has not yet started to show. Mental arithmetic skills are regularly reinforced in mathematics lessons and there is no over reliance on electronic calculators. In geography, Key Stage 3 pupils measure distances on maps and convert these accurately to actual distances, using scales. At Key Stage 4 pupils interpret statistics confidently using raw data and graphical methods. These techniques are refined in the sixth form to include correlation coefficients. Scale measurements were also evident in art. In science there are routine graph drawing skills but teachers miss opportunities to develop the use and application of number.

16. The school's split-site accommodation has an impact on pupils' attainment. The upgrading of accommodation in, for example, science and music, has enabled teaching and learning to contribute to improved standards of attainment. However, the range of rooms and locations used for teaching in a variety of subjects, including English and mathematics, has, on occasions, limited the range of teaching methods, resources and technology available and this has a negative impact on pupils' attainment.

17. Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) achieve well in lessons. They make good progress towards targets set for them in their individual education plans (IEPs). Pupils meet the great majority of their key and lower priority targets across a range of subjects, through good teaching and well planned and carefully focused in-class support. Targets are challenging and are reviewed each term. One pupil has a formal statement and is also making good progress through the appropriate specialist provision that has been developed within the school. Pupils achieve well in daily literacy sessions. They receive effective help from teachers, learning support assistants and older pupils who help to reinforce basic skills. Pupils with moderate learning difficulties make good gains in literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils achieve good results in examination courses at Key Stage 4.

18. Most pupils achieve well in relation to their attainment on entry to the school. In many subjects they benefit from good quality teaching, high expectations and challenging tasks. Homework is carefully set to provide support for pupils' progress and continuity in their learning. Where teaching is less good, not all of the pupils reach the highest standards expected of them or make sufficient progress because insufficient challenge is provided.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

19. Pupils are mature, confident and self-disciplined. Their concentration and enthusiasm in the classroom is impressive and of a very high standard. Relationships across the school community are characterised by warmth, affection and respect.

20. In their lessons, pupils show keen interest in their studies. They participate eagerly in discussions. In a Year 8 English lesson on setting a scene, for example, pupils were keen to contribute their ideas in lively and thoughtful language. They discuss ideas sensitively, listen to each other and show appreciation of good work done by others. Extended study is often undertaken conscientiously and pupils take evident pride in their work. In a sixth form general studies lesson, for instance, presentations on a twentieth century icon were thoroughly researched and shared with enthusiasm and sincerity.

21. In three-quarters of the lessons observed, pupils' attitudes and behaviour were judged to be good or better. In one quarter of lessons, their attitudes and behaviour were very good or excellent. This is a significant improvement since last inspection, when behaviour was described as 'generally good'. This strong picture exists right through the school, with no significant variations across key stages, and good motivation was seen within the great majority of subject areas.
22. Pupils of all ages respond very positively to the opportunity to evaluate their own work and participate in target setting. For example, in annual reports, many write quite detailed comments on their performance. In subjects where assessment is of good quality pupils know how well they are doing and how to improve the standard and quality of their work. Their attitudes to learning, and to the whole school community, are constructive. Even when things have perhaps not gone well in the past, pupils are motivated by fresh challenges.
23. Most pupils who have special educational needs like school and work hard. They take part in all the school's activities including the homework club and tasks in the learning resource centre. They make significant progress towards becoming independent and taking responsibility for their own learning.
24. The willingness of pupils to be involved in school life is outstandingly good. Pupils enthusiastically take up the many opportunities for contributing to the welfare of the school and the wider community, helping younger pupils with their reading or acting as mentors, for example, and representing other pupils' views. At a lower school council meeting, the eagerness with which pupils volunteered to address the staff on the subject of afternoon break was a striking demonstration of their confidence as members of the community, as well as of their commitment to the topic concerned. These attitudes go beyond the confines of school into the wider community, as is shown by the ambitious charity fundraising projects in the main school and in the sixth form.
25. At lunch and break times and when moving around the difficult and often congested split-site, pupils show self-discipline and restraint. Movement is orderly even where staff supervision is minimal. Pupils retained their good humour when traversing the windswept path between buildings.
26. Incidents of aggressive behaviour or bullying are infrequent and dealt with swiftly. Pupils from ethnic minorities have confidence in the school's arrangements to combat the occasional racist comment. When exclusion is used, the incidents leading to it are well documented and governors and parents are properly involved. Policies that may lead to exclusion are reviewed and modified where this is needed. The level of permanent exclusion is low. The school is careful to balance their wish to include and rehabilitate the miscreant while taking account of the needs of the group to which they belong.
27. The quality of relationships throughout the school is very good. The headteacher and his staff know pupils very well and have genuine regard for them. Pupils and parents value highly the personal interest taken by staff. This sure foundation means that pupils can learn effectively, and consider difficult issues in a safe and respectful climate. This was very evident in a Year 9 sex education lesson, where pupils were able to talk about powerful and emotive issues in a mature way, with sensitive support from staff. Pupils place a high value on their school and the security it provides for them.

28. Attendance is broadly in line with the national average, so there has been a slight improvement since the last inspection. Unauthorised absence is above average, and is worse than at last inspection. However, the authorisation of absence is extremely rigorous, especially since the school introduced electronic registration.

29. Registration practice is very effective. Internal truancy is well monitored and promptly dealt with. Given the difficulties of the accommodation, punctuality to lessons is generally satisfactory. Most pupils arrive promptly at school in the mornings. Overall, pupils' attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

30. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. It was satisfactory or better in 99 per cent of lessons observed during the inspection. Teaching quality was excellent in 2 per cent of lessons, very good in 17 per cent, good in 52 per cent and satisfactory in 29 per cent. Teaching found to be unsatisfactory in only two of the 181 lessons. Teaching quality was slightly better at Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3. It was best in the sixth form. At Key Stage 3, teaching in 66 per cent of lessons was good or very good, in 32 per cent it was satisfactory and in 2 lessons it was unsatisfactory. At Key Stage 4 the teaching was at least good, very good or occasionally excellent in 66 per cent of lessons and in the remainder it was satisfactory. However, teaching in the sixth form was very good and sometimes excellent in 31 per cent of lessons, good in 59 per cent and satisfactory in the remainder. This teaching profile shows a considerable improvement since the last inspection.

31. Teaching is of consistently good quality across the curriculum. In English the quality of teaching was good or better, and occasionally excellent, in over 60 per cent of lessons with none that was unsatisfactory. In mathematics, all the teaching was satisfactory, and in over 60 per cent of lessons it was good or, occasionally, very good. Teaching in science was satisfactory in 57 per cent of lessons and good in the remainder: there was none that was of the highest quality but also there was also none that was unsatisfactory. In music, all the teaching was at least good with 90 per cent of it being very good. In art, design and technology, history, information and communication technology and modern languages, over 60 per cent of the teaching was good or better, and some was excellent in design and technology. In religious education, 50 per cent was good or better, and the remainder was satisfactory. The quality of teaching in both geography and physical education varied. In physical education lessons just over 90 per cent of the teaching was satisfactory or better and in one lesson it was unsatisfactory. In geography over 75 per cent of teaching was at least satisfactory, but mainly good; it was unsatisfactory in one lesson and in another it was excellent.

32. Since the last inspection, the school has worked hard to improve the quality of teaching in a range of subjects. A number of priorities in the current development plan link improving the range of teaching and learning styles with raising standards. The school has improved teaching so that it has had a significant impact on both standards and the quality of learning. In many cases it has also had a positive impact on the level of involvement pupils have in their learning and on the range of tasks they are offered to further develop conceptual understanding.

33. In most lessons, pupils' learning benefits from the teachers' very good subject knowledge, the high quality of the lesson plans and the good relationships teachers enjoy with their pupils. Teachers

readily share their enthusiasm for their subject. In many lessons pupils respond with interest and enthusiasm to the subject matter, answering and posing questions as their interest is aroused and their commitment increases. For example, in a very well taught Year 11 English lesson, pupils gained insights and became enthusiastic about a poem as the teacher shared his experience, knowledge and understanding of primary school classrooms, and they responded with illuminating contributions of their own.

34. Teachers generally use a range of strategies to involve pupils in the lesson. Most use questions skilfully to ascertain the levels of knowledge and understanding that pupils have. Where the use of question and answer was most effective, pupils were active participants and displayed good levels of concentration. The learning tasks pupils undertake are well designed and provide good opportunities for group-work, open-ended questions and investigations. However, in some lessons where teaching is satisfactory, the pace of teaching is too slow and learning does not always enable pupils to be fully involved in the learning. This often limits their understanding of the lesson content.

35. Where lesson plans were most effective, a clear framework was provided within which learning was appropriately sequenced, pupils' needs were met and a range of opportunities was provided for them to make good progress, including in their homework. In many lessons, teachers shared the lesson objectives with pupils and provided an outline of what they should know, understand and be able to do by the end. In such lessons, pupils had a good understanding of the context for both the teaching and learning. They were less easily distracted, became more focused in individual, group and pair work and were ready to offer responses to even the most challenging questions. For example, in a Year 11 mathematics lesson, a group of low attaining pupils asked questions of their teacher and each other in order to clarify their understanding and then confidently volunteered solutions to the algebraic problems they were studying. At the end of most lessons, teachers checked pupils' knowledge and understanding and were usually able to reassure themselves that the learning objectives had been achieved. Homework is well planned and set regularly. Pupils are provided with tasks that consolidate and extend their understanding of what they have studied in the lesson.

36. Within personal and social education there are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning. These arise when, for example, materials provided for lessons are of poor quality; the teachers have insufficient training or expertise in the teaching of sensitive topics, such as health and sex education, or in religious education.

37. In most lessons, including in the sixth form, a good range of teaching and learning styles were used. In these lessons, the teaching was well supported by a range of resources. On some occasions, teachers made good use of a variety of resources and media to stimulate pupils' interest in the topic. They invited the pupils to think creatively, as when they were encouraged to propose hypotheses and find solutions as well as to piece together evidence to complete their view of a historical event. Year 11 pupils in an outstanding lesson in design and technology worked from a designer's point of view to propose, to a client, improvements to existing products. The careful evaluations pupils undertook enabled many of them to offer a range of innovative and exciting solutions to the problem.

38. Where subject areas are able to organise pupils into sets based on their attainment, most teachers plan their lessons carefully to ensure that learning needs are met and appropriate progress is made. Some very good examples were seen where learning tasks, for example, were carefully structured to ensure that all pupils were challenged and their knowledge, understanding and skills were

extended in both sets and mixed groups. This was also the case in many lessons in subjects where pupils are not organised into sets. In English or music for instance, a variety of approaches and interesting tasks are used that support all learners while extending and challenging each at their own level. However, in some other classes where pupils were not taught in sets, common tasks were set and few opportunities were provided for the highest-attaining pupils to extend their knowledge and understanding. This happened in some lessons in science and mathematics. However, other teachers in these subjects used open-ended questions and tasks to challenge and extend the highest-attaining pupils.

39. In most lessons, due regard is given to developing literacy and numeracy skills within the subject. Lesson plans often include a list of the key technical words to be used and learned and of the mathematical processes to be used and practised. However, while the teaching of basic skills is generally of good quality, some planning does not provide this degree of attention to developing basic skills, including those for numeracy and information and communication technology.

40. Pupils are generally well managed in lessons. They enjoy profitable relationships with each other and their teachers and benefit from the school's positive learning ethos. Learning and progress is sometimes hindered where teachers move classrooms frequently, lack appropriate equipment, including access to information and communication technology and overhead projectors and sometimes, because of the limits of what each teacher can carry, a range of other resources to support teaching and learning.

41. Most teachers mark work thoroughly and regularly, providing clear guidance to pupils about how the standard and quality of their work can be improved. End of unit tests and other assessments provide clear guidance about how well pupils are doing. Some subjects, however, have not yet developed sufficiently their understanding of National Curriculum levels, in art, geography and history for instance. This has resulted, on occasions, in a limited understanding of the evidence needed to demonstrate that pupils have achieved the required standard. Most teachers use the outcomes of marking and assessment to plan future teaching and learning. This contributes to good links in the further development of pupils' conceptual understanding.

42. Pupils who have special educational needs, or English as an additional language, are well taught and make good progress. Support teaching is good and successfully promotes the learning of pupils with special educational needs. The close links between the learning support department and subject departments ensure that teaching meets the special needs of pupils most of the time. Learning support staff members have a comprehensive knowledge of the range of special educational needs within their group, and they are experienced and competent. Pupils reflect this expertise in good and often rapid progress.

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

43. The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum at Key Stage 3. In addition to the National Curriculum and religious education, a broad range of other subjects is taught. This includes drama and personal and social education, for example. All pupils receive lessons in information and communication technology, and this provision is an improvement on the situation at the previous inspection, although there is a lack of consistency in the frequency that

some subject areas use computers as a regular part of pupils' learning. Pupils with an aptitude in languages can take a second modern foreign language. However, there is a lack of breadth in the art curriculum at Key Stage 3, especially in the development of three-dimensional work.

44. The curriculum provision at Key Stage 4 is also broad and balanced and enables pupils to gain certification through GCSE and other courses. However, pupils who do not follow a GCSE course in religious education have insufficient teaching of the subject within personal and social education. Work in physical education does not cover some areas in sufficient depth. The generous options structure allows most pupils to select their preferred subject combinations. The information and communication technology provision at Key Stage 4 has improved since the last inspection and now meets requirements. In several subject areas, such as science, French, German and history, pupils may take a Certificate of Achievement course. This helps to motivate the lower-achieving pupils who take up these opportunities. In addition, a work-related curriculum to meet the needs of those pupils less suited to following GCSE courses has recently been introduced. A few Year 10 pupils participate in this initiative and are enjoying and benefiting from the experience. They have improved their attitudes to learning and find the courses motivating and challenging. Their work placements include hairdressing and building firms where they are working towards NVQ qualifications. In school, their work experience records show evidence of information and communication technology, numeracy and literacy skills being taught.

45. The post-16 curriculum offers a good range of learning opportunities, except that there is no provision for physical education. All Year 12 students now follow a course of four GCE Advanced Subsidiary Level subjects as well as a programme of general studies and cross-curricular key skills. The school has implemented a coherent modular curriculum in accordance with the national requirements that have taken effect this school year.

46. The school makes good use of setting. In subjects where setting is used, groupings are appropriate and teaching is well focused on meeting pupils' learning needs. However, all learners have full and equal access to the curriculum. Pupils who have special educational needs have full access to the curriculum. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Some are withdrawn from mainstream classes for specialist help and to use resources specifically tailored to their needs. Support assistants give pupils with special educational needs help within mainstream classes. The needs of the limited numbers of talented and more able pupils are currently met within mainstream classes. However, a working party is currently exploring the matter. Good progress has been made in implementing the policy for improving literacy across the curriculum. The strategy for promoting numeracy across the curriculum is in the early stages of implementation but is already having a positive impact, especially with those who have special educational needs.

47. Pupils greatly appreciate the enrichment and extension to their learning provided by the good range of extra-curricular activities. These include several sports clubs and teams as well as a range of non-sporting activities include a range of music, computer, drama and homework clubs. In addition subject areas offer visits, trips and cultural opportunities, for example to the theatre. These extra-curricular opportunities provide enjoyment and help to raise standards, improve skills and contribute to pupils' personal growth.

48. Good links with other educational establishments and with the community generally strengthen the curriculum. The school has good liaison arrangements with several of its partner primary schools.

For instance, English teachers visited these schools to observe the literacy hour as part of the process of devising and implementing the literacy policy. Curricular links with other providers of post-16 education are good. The local community as a whole also contributes effectively to the curriculum. A notable case is in design and technology, where several links help to raise standards: metal manufacture, graphical design and retail marketing all benefit from industrial links and sponsorship.

49. The planning and coverage of the personal and social education programme is good. It is well supported by a detailed handbook for each year group. Topics covered include citizenship, bullying, use of the library, safety, careers, relationships, crime, drugs and alcohol, as well as sex and health education. Most form tutors are highly committed to the programme. In some cases outside specialists, including the fire service or a theatre company, contribute well to pupils' learning. The teaching overall is satisfactory. It is intended that the Key Stage 4 statutory religious education requirement will be met within the personal and social education programme. There are, however, no explicitly religious topics listed or planned and so statutory requirements are not met.

50. Careers education is well developed and carefully integrated into the personal and social education programme. The school libraries support learning and research with their good careers education sections. Pupils in Year 11 have a special introduction to the sixth form that involves team-building exercises and a university visit. Sixth formers interviewed expressed their pleasure at the amount of careers guidance they had been given on their way through the school.

51. All pupils have equality of access and opportunity. All subjects of the curriculum are available to all pupils. Where subjects are optional, pupil choice is of key importance. Considerable effort is made to ensure that pupils are fully informed about the consequences of the choices available. Decisions about the setting or grouping of pupils are generally good and are made using criteria based on pupils' aptitude and ability but also on the information collected on gender and ethnicity to ensure no group is at a disadvantage. Assessment and other data are carefully monitored for evidence of gender or ethnicity imbalance. Pupils with English as an additional language are carefully monitored for their performance in all subjects. The wide range of extra-curricular activities is open to all pupils.

52. The curricular provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. All pupils have equal access to the curriculum in both key stages. At Key Stage 3 there is a strong emphasis on improving literacy and on relevant, appropriate courses for pupils who have special educational needs in Key Stage 4. Pupils with special educational needs are successfully integrated into school life. Most support is given in lessons, with some provision for withdrawal for specific development of basic skills. Pupils with difficulties with literacy and numeracy receive regular intensive small group and individual work in tutor time. Planning to ensure systematic progression in pupils' learning is well established and there is secure formal involvement of all of the departmental areas through the liaison group. Planning is effective in meeting the individual learning needs of pupils in most subject areas. Good planning is being developed to meet the needs of the lowest attaining in Key Stage 4 and a small group of pupils are disappplied from the National Curriculum to follow work-related courses. The use of specialist support from outside agencies is well managed within the school. The school meets all statutory requirements relating to special educational needs.

53. Overall, the school makes good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. The well-planned, lively and purposeful year and house assemblies make a strong contribution to this aspect of pupils' personal

development. They celebrate the school's values using themes that are broadly Christian, but also draw upon other religious traditions. These assemblies are enriching and meaningful occasion when pupils are encouraged to reflect upon the impact of values, such as tolerance, on life today. Other provision is more variable in quality and includes sharing a 'Thought for the day' during the morning tutor time. Some tutors use it well, encourage pupils to reflect and consider the message it contains. Others deal with it in a perfunctory manner that strongly detracts from its value for the pupils. Subjects such as religious education, English, geography and art extend the provision for spiritual development. In a Year 10 GCSE religious education class, pupils thoughtfully considered questions of value and belief when studying the holocaust. However, although significant progress has been made since the last inspection in the support for pupils' spiritual development, further improvement is planned, including within the personal and social education programme.

54. The provision for moral development is very good. A well understood code of conduct, drawn up by the school council, provides a framework of values that underpin the daily life of the school. Teachers provide good role models and pupils are encouraged to value each other. This is strongly illustrated in many mainstream classes, where group work is used effectively to help pupils support and encourage one another. This ethos of shared responsibility is carefully fostered through links with partner primary schools and as part of the mentoring and 'buddy' programmes. The response of pupils and students to charity appeals and local community needs indicates a strong awareness of human values.

55. Social development of the pupils is very good and a strength of the school. The overall ethos encourages pupils to develop a strong awareness of the needs and feelings of others, and to take initiative and responsibility in the wider life of the school. Teachers of all subjects encourage pupils to work together and support each other. Pupils are sensitive to each other's feelings when evaluating work. The school council is very effective. It produced the school's successful anti-bullying policy. There are numerous opportunities for social development in a range of extra-curricular activities as well as in lessons. Many pupils, mainly boys, develop good leadership qualities in physical education. The mentoring of Year 7 by Year 11 pupils works well, as does the sixth form reading 'buddy' initiative. Strong links with local industries provide sponsorship for events and departments. The sixth form pupils are regularly involved in organising parties for senior citizens in the area.

56. Provision to support the development of pupils' understanding of their own and other cultures is good. Art, modern foreign languages, English, music and religious education make good contributions to this aspect of pupils' personal development through the curriculum as well as by visits to concerts, exhibitions and the theatre. The school also promotes a series of concerts and dramatic productions regularly. Food technology has units linked to foods of the world. Multi-cultural days are organised within school and as an after-school presentation evening for parents. This includes dance, dramatic presentations and display work which reflects the diverse cultural character of the school.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

57. This is a strong area of the school's provision, particularly in the monitoring of and support for pupils' personal development. The monitoring of academic progress, whilst not quite as effective as that for personal development, is still of good quality. Procedures for assessment have improved since the last inspection. There are some examples of very good practice, but consistency in the use of

assessment and in the quality of target setting is not fully established. There are good arrangements for induction, for transfer between lower and upper school and into further or higher education and training.

58. Monitoring and support for pupils' personal development is of good quality. Staff follow up the decisions made at pastoral team meetings effectively. They know the pupils very well. This results in problems that are identified early being acted on in good time. Induction arrangements for Year 7 are good, and members of staff are careful in their observations of how pupils are settling in.

59. The monitoring of academic progress is good. Heads of year take an overview from the collated subject grades, and monitor these for trends relating to particular pupils. However, the academic targets set within subject departments are variable in quality and Year 11 pupils in particular commented on the general nature of some of their targets. Some targets are expressed in precise terms and give the pupils clear guidance on what and how to improve; others are vague.

60. The monitoring of pupils' behaviour is thorough, including that leading to exclusion. The pastoral support plans are very good, and help pupils to achieve their behavioural targets. Instances of bullying or aggressive behaviour are not frequent and they are dealt with swiftly and effectively. Pupils have confidence in the school's response to such incidents.

61. The high level of pupils' involvement in their own development and in the wider life of the school is a key factor in promoting good behaviour. All pupils have individual discussion with form tutors to set targets. These are usually to do with attitudes and effort. Pupils find these discussions helpful, although at present targets are not formally recorded except in end of year reports.

62. Pupils can contribute to the running of the school and make their views known in many ways. This means that they have a real interest and involvement in the school community, as was demonstrated by their ability to take responsibility, make a case and represent their peers at the lower school council meeting.

63. Registration times are used well to foster a sense of belonging to a group and to give a purposeful start to the day. However, the 'Thought for the Day', as currently delivered in many groups, makes insufficient contribution to supporting pupils' personal development through reflection and discussing deeper ideas. It is often given perfunctory treatment and appears, therefore, to lack conviction and value.

64. Good attendance is promoted through reward schemes. Absence is followed up through well-organised administrative routines. The target for reducing unauthorised absence is realistic, given the somewhat intractable nature of some of this absence. The school has good liaison procedures with the education welfare service, and some long-term absentees are working towards re-integration. Attendance in the sixth form is as well recorded and monitored as in the main school. The policy for the use of study time strikes a good balance between independence and an externally imposed structure.

65. There is some variation in the quality and use of assessment, although it is satisfactory overall. Examples of very good practice were found in design and technology and modern languages, where self-evaluation is especially good. The quality of assessment in helping pupils to improve is strong in religious education, geography, modern languages and English where, in marking for example, the 'bubble and block' method is particularly successfully used. However, in other departments, such as

physical education, assessment is not so well established. Pupils have good opportunities for self-assessment in annual reports, and make some perceptive comments on their successes and difficulties. The school uses the outcomes of assessment to identify pupils who may need to have some Key Stage 4 alternative curriculum provision.

66. The monitoring of progress in the sixth form is also good. Induction to the sixth form and careful review in the early stages of the year to ensure problems are highlighted and addressed quickly is very good. Students are provided with good guidance on university entrance, details of other options on leaving school, and a good system of individual reviews involving the headteacher. A strong sense of community in the sixth form is engendered and supported by senior staff.

67. The assessment of pupils who have special educational needs is good. It is thorough and regular. Individual education plans are well written, with specific, measurable targets that are based on regular testing and are reviewed each term. The monitoring and recording of progress made by pupils with a statement of special educational needs are good. The annual review procedures meet the requirements of the Code of Practice. The combination of target setting, targeted support and the consistency in monitoring achievement in subjects by department's liaison teacher and each pupil's key worker, ensure that pupils make good progress.

68. Outside agencies and specialists enjoy good relationships with the school. The expertise of these specialists is used to good effect to support pupils' needs. The outreach teacher works effectively with individual pupils. All specialists share their expertise and offer advice to teachers, learning support assistants and parents.

69. Procedures for health and safety are satisfactory. Departments are responding to the recent health and safety audit. Although risk assessment generally needs to be improved, there were no major concerns. Health and safety policies are appropriately implemented and the designated senior member of staff reports regularly to the governing body on these matters.

70. Procedures for child protection are satisfactory. The rather brief policy and guidelines within the staff handbook do not properly reflect the current arrangements regarding the designated person and procedures to be followed. However, all staff members are aware of the actual arrangements.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

71. The school has a genuine desire to involve and inform its diverse body of parents, most of whom think well of the school. They particularly appreciate the school's ethos and the way staff put into practice the aims and values of the school. Parents also value the school's high expectations, both academic and behavioural, how these are translated into individual guidance for pupils, and the progress their children make as maturing adults and as academic learners. In the eyes of parents, there has been much improvement in the school since the last inspection.

72. Parents raised three areas of concern: lunchtime arrangements, especially for those pupils with packed lunches, the information parents receive, and how closely the school works with parents. The first of these came through both the parents' meeting and written comments on questionnaires. The other two came through the questionnaire but were not supported by the evidence of the parents' meeting.
73. Inspection evidence confirmed the difficulties experienced by the school at lunchtimes, in trying to move a large number of pupils through a restricted dining area in a limited time. This causes problems of queuing and crowding, which are difficult to avoid. Pupils are being consulted about their views on the quality and quantity of food provided, with representation on a food committee that will meet the caterers to follow-up issues raised. The school is actively addressing the problems concerning lunchtime within the accommodation constraints. It is currently analysing and investigating the concern through consultation with pupils.
74. Inspection evidence did not support parents' concerns about the information they receive, nor about how closely the school works with them. The school has, therefore, an effective partnership with parents. They have access to good quality information from a range of sources. Pastoral staff maintains very good contact when concerns need to be discussed, as well as positive news being sent home by letter. Reporting of progress to parents is frequent, well above the required annual report. A high percentage of home-school agreements have been returned, which can form the basis of a discussion of expectations if needed. When required, good procedures are in place to provide parents whose first language is not English with access to translators.
75. The governing body includes a substantial number of parents. Governors receive the results of parental surveys carried out in Year 7 and Year 9. These surveys show a high degree of confidence in the school.
76. Parents of pupils who have special educational needs are fully involved in the formal reviews and are kept well informed about their children's progress. The school makes particular efforts to encourage parents to become involved in their children's learning through regular meetings and consultation. Generally, parents feel their children's needs are well supported.
77. The quality of information for parents is good. It comes through an effective series of formal and informal communications. Parents see the school as a place where they can ask for what they need to know, and appreciate how well informed staff, including administrative staff, are about their children. They value the communication through home-school diaries.
78. Parents are supplied with a good quality, accessible prospectus. They receive a clear governors' annual report with a detailed financial statement, which enables them to ask questions at the annual meeting. The tone of both documents is welcoming. The lively 'Term Times' newspaper keeps parents informed about the life of the school and pupils' achievements that are reported by a wide range of contributors.
79. Annual reports give parents a clear view of pupils' attainment and progress, although some subject departments comment with greater precision than others on how pupils can improve. In some subjects, improvement is phrased in terms of attitude and effort rather than

being subject-specific. Most reports give a good balance of pupil strengths and weaknesses. There has been good progress since the last inspection in rationalising the reporting system and improving the quality of comments. Overall, the school makes strenuous efforts to draw parents into partnership and achieves a good degree of success.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

80. The governing body has provided the school with clear aims and objectives as well as a well-defined framework of policies within which to manage its affairs. The aims and values embodied in these key statements inform the governors' discussions and decisions and those of the senior management team.

81. The governors make a significant contribution to the leadership of the school. Their work is focused on providing a high quality education within which standards are high and all pupils are enabled to develop, as learners and individuals. In partnership with the senior management team, they work hard to create an ethos within which these values and aspirations can be realised in practice.

82. The work of the governing body and its committees is well led by the chairman and the chairs of the governors' three committees. The governing body is well informed. It is fully aware of the wealth of good practice that already exists but is also aware of areas that need further development. The governors receive many oral and written reports from the head teacher and his senior colleagues as well as annual reports from middle managers. All information is subject to analysis and detailed questions to the author. In some instances discussions with governors are supplemented by school visits focused on an aspect of its work. This forms a significant part of governors' monitoring role as well as reassuring the governing body that legal requirements are met.

83. The school has made good progress in implementing the action plan arising from the key issues identified in the last inspection report. However, insufficient work has been done to ensure that the provision for religious education at Key Stage 4 meets the objectives of the Local Agreed Syllabus and that all pupils have the opportunity to experience a daily act of collective worship.

84. The highly constructive partnership between the governing body and the school's leadership team, focused around the common agenda of school improvement, has ensured that aims, objectives and policies are implemented and good working procedures and practices are established and regularly reviewed.

85. The head teacher, with the support and committed work of his senior management team, provides determined leadership that is pupil-focused. His outstanding educational vision for the school is shared, understood and implemented by staff. It provides a coherent and positive framework within which high achievement is promoted and success is both recognised and valued.

86. The overall leadership of the head teacher and his senior management team is very good. The management team meet frequently, plan carefully and regularly review the operational and strategic priorities for moving the school forward. The definition of their responsibilities ensures

that they work closely together and develop consistent and well thought out procedures. They provide clear but critical leadership to their teams of staff that has an impact on improving teaching and learning and the effectiveness of monitoring standards and quality.

87. The school has high expectations of both its senior and middle managers. Their work is regularly reviewed by the head teacher through individual interviews, annual subject reports, in professional development discussions and within the heads of subject and year group meetings. The coherent departmental and year teams are generally well-managed and supported in undertaking change and implementing the well-conceived priorities of their team and the whole school development plans. Some teams have more innovative approaches to their work than others do. Most regularly share good practice, plan together and review standards and quality in their area. All are, however, committed to the implementation of the school's commonly agreed priorities.

88. Since the last inspection, a coherent and systematic programme for monitoring and evaluating the school's work has been developed and implemented successfully. This is complemented by target setting at a variety of levels, including discussions with individual pupils to improve their standards. Senior and middle managers regularly observe teaching and learning, and give teachers feedback. The agreed action plans and improvements are noted in the departmental annual report and are monitored by governors. Scrutiny of pupils' work, the monitoring of assessment, attendance, homework and implementation of schemes of work are some of the other features. Performance data, including examination results, is systematically analysed against national and local data, both in school and by external agencies. The outcomes of this process are shared across the school and enable realistic targets to be agreed and set for departments and individual pupils as part of the successful drive to raise standards. New priorities for the strategic plan take account matters arising from the annual cycle of monitoring and evaluation of school effectiveness. This highly effective process ensures that short, medium and long-term targets are regularly reviewed and prioritised in order to support the raising of standards and improvement of quality.

89. Most areas of school life are well documented. These policies provide good reference points against which practice is evaluated. The subject areas and year teams have well developed documentation to inform daily management and the planning of effective teaching and learning.

90. A well thought-out programme of professional development effectively supports all members of the staff. Newly qualified and recently appointed teachers and support staff have a good quality induction programme. Students in initial teacher training are well supported. Within the 'Investors In People' ethos, all members of the staff have the opportunity to identify their professional development needs. These are met, having been matched against the priorities in the strategic plan.

91. Coherence and clarity are the keynotes of planning the use of the school's resources. There is extremely clear targeting of a range of resources, including financial, to educational objectives set within the school development plan. Budgetary and finance processes link well to this planning, so that developments including to the learning support centre, upgrading information technology and re-furbishing science laboratories can be effectively carried through.

92. The senior management team and the governing body share a vision for providing resources for improvement. Governors' committees are well involved in budgetary and resources decisions. The good links between the finance and curriculum committees are a particular strength. The finance committee takes a proper role in setting the budget and monitoring expenditure. Detailed financial plans cover the current year, and forward planning is dealt with through careful management of the accumulated surplus. This figure has been reduced in a planned way this year. It has been used to help fund projects too large to manage in one year, such as the upgrading of information and communication technology provision.

93. The school makes a significant contribution to funding for those who have special educational needs from its own budget. These funds are effectively used to support the good progress made by pupils who have such needs. Specific grants are also well used.

94. The schools' financial systems are well run, and the recommendations of the latest audit report have been implemented. Governors receive good quality information from the systems to enable them to fulfil their monitoring role, including regular spreadsheets that predict outturn. Good use is made of information and communication technology for administrative purposes and especially for monitoring pupil progress.

95. Overall, the staffing, learning resources and accommodation are generally satisfactory, although the latter has some significant weaknesses and is unsatisfactory. There is generally a good match between teaching and support staff and their deployment in relation to the current curriculum. However, the use of non-specialist teachers in physical education hinders the attainment and progress of some pupils. In some subjects pupils are taught in a different room each time they have, for example, English or mathematics. This occasionally restricts the range of teaching strategies and the use of technology and display to support pupils' learning in lessons and, as a result, the standards pupils reach.

96. The provision of learning resources is generally good. Resources are at least satisfactory in each subject area and good in the majority, for instance English, design and technology, history, modern languages, music and physical education. Provision in information and communication technology is broadly satisfactory with a considerable increase in the provision of hardware since the last inspection. However, demand for information and communication technology facilities in subject areas is growing as staff training and confidence increases. The provision of workstations in the well-appointed and increasingly popular libraries complements the available learning resources across the curriculum.

97. Since the last inspection the school has refurbished four of the science laboratories, established four information and communication technology suites and a special educational needs centre, and upgraded the music facilities at upper school. Despite these improvements, the school's accommodation remains unsatisfactory. In recent years the school has increased in size. Nearly 90 appeals for pupil admissions have been successful. As a result, the school now suffers from over-crowding.

98. All rooms, including those with specialist facilities, are heavily used. The accommodation at lower school does not always support specialist teaching in, for example, English, mathematics, drama and special educational needs and a number of rooms have little or no display, are untidy and lack ownership by teachers or pupils. Such rooms have a detrimental effect on both teaching and learning and limit the range of resources and technology that can be used. However, rooms for religious education are good and those for information and communication technology, music and special educational needs at upper

school are attractive and well organised. Entrance to several rooms on both school sites is gained by moving through others, thus causing disruption on occasions. Many classrooms are too small for the size of the teaching groups. Both sites are inaccessible to wheelchair-bound pupils, staff and parents. The heating of buildings is inconsistent and direct sunlight gives problems to pupils in several rooms on both sites.

99. Displays in public areas of the school enable the life, work and achievement of pupils to be marked and celebrated. The display of artwork in the lower school hall is vibrant. Display of work in subject areas, such as design and technology, music, physical education and special educational needs is very good.

100. The principles of best value are applied very well, with especial strength in the areas of challenge and consultation with pupils. The rationale for expenditure is very clear. The school takes account of other provision in the area when making curriculum decisions, with a clear focus on high quality and cost effective provision for pupils. It has a healthy sixth form that contributes significantly to the school, financed through a balanced and responsible use of resources. In the case of funding for special needs, objectives for spending have been set within the curriculum committee, and some evaluation of the impact of this spending on pupil progress is being made. This includes consideration of the effect of various forms of support.

101. The school has applied the principle of competition for some time. For example, governors have had presentations from different suppliers of information and communication technology systems. Major work routinely goes out to tender, including the catering. Value for money is sought from contracts, such as that for cleaning, and through bulk purchase and market testing.

102. The school regularly compares itself with others, using, for example, national benchmarks and the local authority's useful benchmarking information, similar schools nationally and the top 100 comprehensives for GCE Advanced Level. These comparisons are used to good effect in analysing the school's performance. The involvement of pupils in consultation is another strength. Pupils can express their views in many ways. Parents are surveyed through questionnaires in Years 7 and 9, about their level of satisfaction with the school's provision. Year 11 pupils are consulted over possible sixth form options that might be provided.

103. Overall, this is an effective school that provides a good quality of education, achieves good standards and enables pupils to make good progress. Taking into account the school's costs, the very good quality strategic planning and its social context, the school gives good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

104. In order to continue the programme of school improvement, the head teacher and senior management team, in partnership with the governing body, should:

- Continue to work with pupils and parents so that:
 - * the rate of unauthorised absence is brought closer to national averages.
(*Paragraph: 28*)
- Meet statutory requirements by:
 - * ensuring that appropriate provision is made for religious education for all pupils at Key Stage 4;
(*Paragraph: 44, 49, 53, 83, 221*)
 - * moving further towards meeting the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils to enable spiritual development to be more coherently supported.
(*Paragraph: 53, 63, 83, 221*)
- In partnership with the local education authority, take steps to improve the accommodation by:
 - * reviewing its sufficiency in relation to the curriculum provided and the number of pupils on the roll.
(*Paragraph 29, 97, 98, 99, 114, 115, 122, 125, 137, 206*)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	181
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	90

No number of discussions given

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	17	52	29	1	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	1156	128
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	143	1

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	176	1

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	33

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	19
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	33

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.6
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.6
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	128	101	229

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	81	90	64
	Girls	81	71	57
	Total	162	161	121
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	71	71	53
	National	63	62	55
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	34	40	19
	National	28	38	23

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	71	77	64
	Girls	80	68	63
	Total	151	145	127
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	67	64	56
	National	64	64	60
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	30	32	24
	National	31	37	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
	1999	114	101	215

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A* to G	1 or more grades A* to G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	60	107	111
	Girls	62	96	99
	Total	122	203	210
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	56.7	94.4	97.7
	National	46.6	90.9	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	40.1
	National	38.0

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

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

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-Level or AS-Level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	47	38	85

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-Levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-Levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	19.9	21.3	20.6	2.9	3.0	2.9
National	17.7	18.1	17.9	2.7	2.8	2.8

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	7
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	1
Indian	13
Pakistani	25
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	5
White	1232
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	4	1
Indian	1	0
Pakistani	1	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	71	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes**Qualified teachers and classes:****Y7 – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	72.35
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.3

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff:**Y7 – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	113

Deployment of teachers:**Y7 – Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78.4
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Average teaching group size:**Y7 – Y11*****Financial information***

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	2,902,790.00
Total expenditure	2,896,501.00
Expenditure per pupil	2,252.33
Balance brought forward from previous year	215,562.00
Balance carried forward to next year	221,851.00

Key Stage 4	21
Key Stage 4	21

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1284
Number of questionnaires returned	216

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	38	53	7	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	40	52	4	1	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	27	62	4	0	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	27	57	11	5	1
The teaching is good.	31	57	6	1	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	24	48	18	4	5
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	44	46	4	1	4
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	58	38	3	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	23	48	17	5	7
The school is well led and managed.	39	44	4	1	13
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	31	59	5	0	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	26	44	13	1	16

[The percentages of responses are rounded to the nearest interger and thus the sum may not = 100]

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

ENGLISH

105. When pupils in the current Year 7 entered the school, statistics show that standards in English were in line with national averages. While a small proportion of pupils have above average levels of attainment many have some problems with reading and writing. Most pupils are confident speakers and use an appropriate range of vocabulary and styles. In all but a very few cases, their handwriting is well formed and they present written work clearly. However, accuracy in spelling and punctuation are weaker at all levels in the current Year 7.

106. As pupils move through Years 7, 8 and 9, they achieve good standards: the reading levels of pupils who have special educational needs improve considerably. This is partly because of intensive support by the special educational needs department, partly through library lessons, with their focus on developing both reading and library skills, and also because pupils have many opportunities for reading in English and other lessons. Writing develops well, as pupils extend their range of forms and styles. By the beginning of Year 9 pupils are writing analytical essays about the texts they study in literature, and these are of a good length, and often of a high standard. For instance, pupils in Year 9 studying a poem by Seamus Heaney, were producing, with the help of a well-targeted worksheet, analytical commentary of a high standard.

107. Results in the National Curriculum tests for pupils in Year 9 are above the national average in 1999, and above average for pupils in similar schools; they have been so for several years. Girls' results are better than boys', by the same degree as for results nationally.

108. During Years 10 and 11, in the GCSE courses, pupils build on the skills acquired earlier to produce work of a good standard. Examination results in English are at least in line with national averages, and in 1999 and 2000 results for those entered for English literature have been well above average. By the end of this key stage pupils are writing with confidence and assurance, expressing their personal response to literature and producing well-structured imaginative pieces. The coursework seen during the inspection was of a very high standard and had clearly benefited from redrafting that is a strong policy in the English department. The department is currently offering a Certificate of Achievement course for pupils for whom GCSE is considered inappropriate; the pupils are working well, and show good standards of care and presentation.

109. The standard of work on the GCE Advanced Level courses is well above average. Results in the GCE Advanced Level examination have been above average for some years, with an unbroken 100 per cent pass rate. The work seen during the inspection showed why this is so. Students are energetic in discussion and show not only sound knowledge of their texts but also independent response and enthusiasm for the subject. These qualities are evident in their writing too: their essays are clear, well structured and persuasive, and they communicate the enjoyment that is so evident in their attitude in lessons.

110. Pupils who have special educational needs improve their standards of literacy as they move through Key Stages 3 and 4. At Key Stage 3 their reading improves although they continue to need support with their writing and with the organisation of their work. Their range

of writing and vocabulary improves during Key Stage 4 and they take great pride in the presentation of each piece of work. They reach good standards in speaking and listening. Their progress in learning is good at both Key Stages 3 and 4 but their attainment is still below average.

111. The quality of teaching in English is good. The teaching seen during the inspection was very good or sometimes excellent in 30 per cent of lessons, good in 39 per cent and satisfactory in the remainder. Teachers relate well to their pupils and have high expectations of what they can achieve. The department sets realistic targets for each key stage and in teachers' day-to-day assessment and marking comments are well focused for individuals, with details of strengths and weaknesses clearly stated. Pupils experience a range of approach and stimulus. For instance, a class in Year 11 considered treatment of theme in their Shakespeare play by watching short extracts from contrasting performances on film. In Year 8, pupils used information and communication technology to annotate the text of the poem they were studying and, through doing so, made important individual discoveries. All classes work in groups at times and so learn to develop and explore their ideas through discussion and negotiation. Pupils in Year 9, preparing to reply to a letter to an imaginary magazine's advice editor, used a range of published leaflets in order to sift information and develop their note-making skills. Library lessons in Year 7 are well organised, with good collaboration between the English staff and the librarian.

112. The courses in Key Stages 3 and 4 meet all the requirements of the National Curriculum. The English teachers meet regularly to review the work and are in close contact with each other, in spite of the considerable difficulties caused by the split-site accommodation. One of their priorities is to improve formal documentation through a more structured written scheme of work. Their aims are to ensure equal access for all pupils to information and communication technology and, at Key Stage 3, to drama.

113. The management and leadership of the department are highly effective and efficient. The head of department works hard and very successfully to provide support for her large team and to set an ethos of productive collaboration across the staff and between teachers and pupils. Post holders in the department seek to raise standards through regular reviews of pupils' work. The head of department observes the teaching of all members of the team, reporting back formally to each. Both these activities provide training and development for teachers, whatever their level of experience. Since the last inspection, the department has made good progress. A coherent system to monitor and evaluate the department's work has been highly effective. Teaching is regularly monitored and the work of year groups scrutinised are effective components in the self-review process. The implementation of a whole school literacy policy has contributed to higher standards. The department's regular review of its work demonstrates the good capacity this team has for further improvement.

114. Great care is taken with budget planning and the department is very well equipped with books, audio-visual material and other learning resources. However, the accommodation in which the department works is of poor quality. Classrooms are barely large enough for the size of the groups, and there is no consistency in the provision of rooms – some classes have their three lessons each week in two or three different rooms. Teachers do their best to provide a stimulating environment, but they do not have sole use of their teaching rooms and it is not easy to maintain good quality displays of work. Class sizes are large and do affect pupils' achievement in English. For example, in Year 12 groups of 22 and 27 are too large and students are not at present able fully to derive the benefit they should from the discussion work that is so important in this department.

Drama

115. In Key Stage 3, drama is taught as part of the English provision. Teachers are conscientious in allocating time, but their efforts are severely hampered by the lack of an appropriate teaching area for the subject, apart from the school hall. The teacher in charge provides a coherent scheme of work to support lesson planning. No drama lessons were seen in this part of the school during the inspection.

116. In Key Stage 4 pupils can take drama as one of their GCSE options. There is currently one group in each of Years 10 and 11. The standard of work is good. A Year 11 class, seen working on the notion of dramatic tension, presented illustrative scenes of their own after critical work on a section of *'The Caretaker'* by Harold Pinter. The collaborative group work was very productive and good progress was made during the lesson. Pupils' commentaries on their work were thorough and well written, showing a high level of critical analysis of their own development in the subject and reflections on their work.

117. The theatre studies course in Years 12 and 13 is well organised, and examination results at GCE Advanced Level are above average. Students are highly committed and are very enthusiastic about their work – as is evident in the personal writing they produce for course work. The standard of work seen during the inspection was good.

118. Teaching in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form is consistently good, some it very good. Aims and objectives are clear and are shared with pupils and students, so that they know the purpose and focus of the learning activities. There is a strong emphasis on the need for good working relationships and on the value of critical and supportive response to work by other groups. All written work is carefully marked, with well-focused comment and individual encouragement. The department contributes very well to the cultural and extra-curricular life of the school. There is a major school production every year, with smaller events at other times and regular theatre visits. Standards and quality have improved since the last inspection, as has the range of learning pupils are now offered across the key stages and in the sixth form. All of the drama work is now systematically monitored and pupils are involved in self-review. These developments all contribute to the evaluation of work in the subject and constitute good progress by the department.

MATHEMATICS

119. Standards in mathematics are above the national average. The level of attainment on entry to the school is close to, but just below, that for pupils of a similar age nationally. The results of the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 and 2000 are slightly above the national average for those gaining Level 5 and above, and for Level 6 and above. The rise over recent years is similar to that of all schools. However when compared with those of similar schools the results for 1999 were slightly below average but were above average in 2000. The GCSE results for 1999 are above the national average for all schools and well above those for similar schools. The difference in 1999 between the performance of girls and boys is broadly similar to that nationally with girls achieving slightly better than boys. The results for 2000 show a slight drop, but they are still above the national average. The 1999 results for GCE Advanced Level were above average for the percentage for pupils gaining grades A and B. The results have been above the average for several years. Results for 2000 show a significant improvement, especially with most pupils gaining A grades.

120. From work seen during the inspection, pupils achieve well and their attainment is close to national averages. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 9 were successfully working on algebra topics that included quadratic expressions and achieving standards that were well above the national average. The average-attaining pupils were achieving well when work on the construction of simple formulae while lower-attaining pupils worked confidently converting fractions to decimals. All aspects of the National Curriculum Programmes of Study are well covered and practical and investigative work is well integrated into pupils' learning. Work covered by pupils with special educational needs has a strong emphasis on numeracy to improve and develop these skills alongside coverage of other work. At the end of Key Stage 4 higher attaining pupils were working on topics for the higher tier GCSE papers and were achieving well in designing flow charts to analyse algebraic formulae. Pupils who were following other courses were seen to be working with great success on topics appropriate for their level of entry. By the end of KS 4 standards were close to national averages. Achievement during lessons was at least satisfactory with pupils at all levels making important gains in their understanding. There were only a few students studying mathematics at GCE Advanced Level. They were working at an appropriate level and achieving appropriately in relation to the demands of the course. All mathematics students in Year 12 were responding well to the demands of the course. The positive attitudes of the students and the good teaching they receive contribute to their relative success at this stage of the course.

121. Pupils showed positive attitudes to mathematics: this has had a positive impact on standards. Pupils arrive at lessons ready to work and settle quickly. Their behaviour is good and they are attentive to their teachers. The relationship of mutual respect between teachers and pupils enables lessons to proceed at a good pace and as a result pupils work hard and progress well during lessons. In many lessons pupils have reference to the answers whilst working. There was no evidence of pupils referring to answers before attempting the questions. This attitude also contributes to their learning and progress.

122. Overall teaching is good. In 65 per cent of the lessons observed, the quality of teaching was at least good and occasionally very good. In the remainder of lessons, teaching was satisfactory. No teaching was unsatisfactory. The best lessons stimulated pupils by containing material that was relevant to their experience, was challenging and engaged them in the learning experience. Teachers use a range of teaching methods: whole class teaching is supplemented by paired and group work when the need arises and pupils respond to this by making good contributions to any ensuing discussion. Some teachers have developed the use of more open questions to encourage thinking and reasoning. This practice could be profitably shared throughout the department. As some pupils are organised into teaching groups based on their attainment there is some use of tasks or materials that challenge and extend the higher attaining pupils. Where such strategies were evident they were effective in achieving their objectives and pupils responded well. There were, however, some instances where in other sets the needs of all pupils were met through the tasks and materials that supported the learning. However, not all teachers make good use of open-ended questions and extension material to broaden learning experiences especially for highest-attaining pupils. The range of teaching strategies and resources to support learning are limited on occasions, especially for those teachers that move classrooms and between sites frequently. This can have an impact on pupils' learning and achievement.

123. Teachers generally mark pupils' work with encouraging comments, but give too little advice on how they can improve their work. Formal assessments are analysed in great detail, including Key Stage 2 test results. Pupils are set targets in the subject for their end of Key Stage 3 and GCSE results. The results of internal examinations are also analysed to consider improvements to teaching. Pupils with special educational needs are well catered for in small sets. They make good progress, and some parts of their Individual Education Plans are specific to mathematics.

124. The department is well managed: there is an effective scheme of work in place, which is cross-referenced to the National Curriculum and meets statutory requirements. The scheme of work is detailed. It includes opportunities for investigational work and the use of information and communication technology to extend the range of learning opportunities for pupils. This enables good planning of lessons, and pupils' progress through both key stages to be monitored. The head of department leads a team of mutually supportive teachers and has delegated some responsibilities to other members of the team. This has enabled close monitoring of teaching and learning to take place and has been effective in raising standards through the sharing of good practice.

125. The teaching rooms on both sites are of adequate size, but no area of the school has a mathematical identity. The rooms lack good quality displays to support mathematics teaching and learning. In many of these rooms, the chalkboards are of poor quality and cannot be easily read from the back of the room. Several rooms have no curtains or blinds, and on sunny days pupils become uncomfortable, which affects their concentration. One room has no windows or natural light and is oppressive. The positive attitudes of both teachers and pupils overcome some of these drawbacks, but the environmental factors do have a detrimental effect on the quality and accuracy of pupils' work and on the ethos within which the subject is taught.

126. There have been many improvements since the last inspection. A curriculum review has taken place, and new resources are now in use. Pupils are being encouraged to think and reason more by the use of more open questions in lessons and a greater involvement in discussion. The use of information and communication technology has only started to develop recently as the school equipment has become more available. There has been a rise in standards and the indications are that this rise will continue in the future.

SCIENCE

127. Pupils' overall attainment on entry to the school has been slightly below the national average in most years. However, the attainment of the current Year 7 is average: the proportion gaining Level 4 or above in Key Stage 2 is in line with national average. Pupils have a secure appreciation of the principles of scientific enquiry, know the requirements for a fair test, and begin to record observations systematically. They also have a sound basic knowledge of concepts in science.

128. At the end of Key Stage 3, results in the National Curriculum tests have been close to average. In 1999, the percentage of pupils with Level 5 or above was close to the national average but well below that for similar schools. The percentage of pupils gaining Level 6 or above was slightly under the national average. No difference was found between boys' and girls'

performances in relation to the national pattern. In 2000, the percentage of pupils gaining Level 5 or above has risen: the proportion gaining the higher levels has significantly improved and is now in line with the national average but still below that for similar schools. Over the past two years standards have improved overall.

129. At the end of Key Stage 4, in 1999, the percentage of pupils gaining grades A* to C in GCSE double award combined science, was above the national average and that for similar schools. The percentage of grades A* and A was nearly twice the national average. Overall, boys and girls attained similarly. In the current year, 2000, the proportion of pupils gaining A*-C was below that for 1999 but is still above the national average. Overall, boys achieved slightly higher than girls. Over the past four years, the attainment at Key Stage 4, has significantly improved at a better rate than that nationally.

130. In the sixth form, many students choose science at GCE Advanced Level. In 1999, the percentage gaining pass grades in the A to E range was close to the average in biology, chemistry and physics. The proportion gaining the highest grades, A or B, was well above average in biology, and close to average in chemistry and physics. In 2000, the results are been similar.

131. In the work observed in lessons, and from analysis of pupils' records, the standards reflect closely the examination and test results. For example, in Year 9, towards the end of Key Stage 3, the majority of pupils studying scientific enquiry investigated chemical reactions involving acids. They handled the apparatus with care, and made reliable observations and reached conclusions based on the evidence. A significant number of pupils, who were working at a higher level, used their knowledge well, to predict outcomes and develop understanding of the chemical equations involved. In Year 11, at the end of Key Stage 4, many pupils have a secure knowledge of the concepts in all three disciplines, such as the action of the digestive system and sound wave propagation. Higher-attaining pupils have a good knowledge of aspects such as aerobic and anaerobic respiration of cells. In the sixth form the standard of knowledge and understanding of the detail, needed for biology, chemistry and physics GCE Advanced Level, reflects the range of grades gained in previous years and includes several pupils working at the highest grade.

132. Standards of literacy in science are good. Most pupils, in both Key Stages 3 and 4, make a mature, neat and careful record of their work. Experiment descriptions are typically grammatically correct and accurate. Standards of numeracy are developed to a lesser extent, although most pupils make reliable measurement, handle simple calculations and graphs to an extent appropriate to their stage. Pupils who have special educational needs attain levels in line with other pupils when appropriate support is provided.

133. Attitudes to science are good. Pupils are diligent, and complete their work with care. They show good motivation in class, and the majority sustain their interest throughout the lesson. Response to questions can be variable, with some pupils lacking the confidence to participate or offer answers to questions. Behaviour is good. Pupils are aware of the need for safety, and show respect for teachers and their peers. Good relationships are established in groups as they collaborate on experimental investigations.

134. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory. Teaching was good in 43 per cent of the lessons observed, and in the remainder it was satisfactory. All teachers have a strong subject knowledge, which is used effectively to convey high expectations and promote high standards. As a result, pupils

learn well and acquire a wealth of knowledge and the depth of understanding required for the highest grades. A variety of teaching methods is used, including considerable experimental work. The subject content of lessons is factual, detailed and well explained. Resources are adequate and used effectively, although information and communication technology is not used sufficiently to enhance the learning.

135. Lesson planning is satisfactory, and based on good schemes of work. In many classrooms work is carefully prepared to challenge the highest and support the lowest attaining pupils. However, on occasions, learning tasks and resources are not always sufficiently well designed to meet the learning needs of the whole class, as well as to extend the highest and support the lowest attaining pupils especially in the development of their understanding of concepts. Teachers carefully monitor individual pupils' work, although this was difficult in large classes. Pupils who have special educational needs make progress in line with other pupils, especially if support material or learning support assistance is provided. Generally good use is made in most classrooms of question and answer, to involve pupils in learning and to check their level of knowledge and understanding.

136. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly, but do not provide enough information so that they know how well they are doing or what targets they should set for improvement. Overall, learning by pupils is satisfactory, and there is no apparent difference in the progress of boys and girls.

137. The department has clear leadership from its head and key stage co-ordinators, supported by experienced and committed staff. The schemes of work are good. Teachers' expertise matches the specialist needs of the curriculum. The head of department monitors and evaluates work regularly. Homework is promoted effectively through department policies. Assessment data is recorded by individual teachers, but is not used effectively enough to monitor pupils' attainment and progress. The department is beginning to set targets for each pupil as part of the drive to raise standards. The use of information and communication technology is not sufficiently well planned or implemented. The suites of laboratories are well used but, occasionally, are not available for all lessons. Display in rooms is poor, with little use of pupils' work. As there are laboratories on both sites, this places some restraints on the strategic deployment of learning resources and equipment across the school. This often results in re-scheduling activities until equipment is available so that pupils' attainment is not affected.

138. Since the last inspection, standards in science have risen at both key stages and in the sixth form. Pupils achieve well in each stage, and attitudes to learning continue to be good. Teaching remains satisfactory, but teachers' planning and use of assessment could be improved. However, a more effective and coherent scheme of work has greatly contributed to a significant rise in standards, especially at Key Stage 3. The management of the department continues to develop a strong team, committed to improving further pupils' standards of attainment.

ART

139. Pupils enter the school with a wide range of attainments in art and are taught in classes with the full range of attainment. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils generally achieve the national expectation. They show an understanding of different forms of visual expression and use a range of materials and processes to express creative ideas. They are familiar with art vocabulary, and most pupils use it appropriately. Pupils in Year 9 showed an understanding of perspective and applied it well when creating complex compositions of labyrinths, based on the work of Escher. Higher-attaining pupils

explore the ideas and feelings that are expressed in the work of other artists, but many pupils are merely descriptive. Throughout the key stage, pupils gain experience of formal elements such as pattern, texture and tone, and have developed skills in a wide range of two-dimensional media. Opportunities for work in three-dimensional media are limited, and pupils' skill in this area is therefore less well developed.

140. At the end of Key Stage 4, overall attainment is slightly above the national average. In Year 11 pupils interpret whole class themes and select and use material confidently. Many develop a more individual style, and higher-attaining pupils become skilled in research and experimentation. For example, a higher-attaining pupil working on a project based on Cubism has looked at the work of Picasso and researched links with African art using photographs from South Africa, and has produced an acrylic painting of high quality. Since the last inspection, standards have been maintained and built upon. The proportion of pupils gaining GCSE grades in the A* to C range was above the national average in 1996 and 1997. Results fell in 1998 to 51 per cent, but increased in 1999 to 80 per cent. This was well above the national average. In 2000, 68 per cent of pupils gained these grades. In the same period, the proportion gaining grades A* to G has been in line with national results. All pupils are achieving well but boys are reaching levels well above the national average.

141. In the sixth form, students are working at well above the national average. Their work shows a high degree of individuality and in-depth analysis and exploration of ideas and styles. For example, in a project on urban decay, one student who had produced very good quality research from a scrap yard was planning a complex, three-dimensional structure built around an oil drum. Work is frequently large scale and most students' painting is of a very high standard. Studies of structures in acrylics show a high level of conceptual and personal response. Results at grades A or B in GCE Advanced Level have been mainly above average since the last inspection. In 1999, results rose to well above the average, with 58 per cent gaining A or B grades. In 2000, 44 per cent of pupils gained A or B grades. The number of pupils gaining grades A to E has been consistently above the average.

142. Most pupils, including those who have special educational needs, are achieving well. A growing awareness of the understanding of the formal elements of art is evident in the work of all pupils. It is particularly evident in the work of lower-attaining pupils, who in their first year build on drawing techniques using texture and tone in a graphics project. In Year 8, pupils' increasing knowledge of artists and a developing ability to link styles with a particular artist raises standards. For example, higher-attaining pupils made good progress when using the work of Leger to influence their use of colour and shape in a composition based on figures.

143. At Key Stage 4, pupils take more responsibility for their own work. They carry out a range of research before selecting their final ideas, and study past and contemporary art. Pupils make greater progress where they can use independent learning skills to extend their own work. For example, higher-attaining pupils in Year 11 researched doorways and gateways by photographing them in their own time and researched the work of Malevich to produce high quality paintings. Most pupils gain the confidence to channel their strengths into successful practical outcomes. Achievement in their understanding and use of critical studies is less evident for middle- and lower-attaining pupils.

144. In the sixth form, achievement is very good. Students show a growing understanding and sophistication in concepts and handling of a wide range of media during the two-year course. They quickly take on the increased demand for individuality and are prepared to put in a considerable amount of time to ensure success. An overseas exchange student, who had not previously studied art, has made rapid gains in knowledge and understanding since the beginning of term.

145. Attitudes and behaviour are good at both Key Stages 3 and 4 and very good in the sixth form. Pupils and students respond well to their teachers. They enjoy art and most are keen to learn. They arrive promptly at lessons, settle to work quickly, listen attentively to instructions and participate in discussion when encouraged to do so. For example, pupils in Year 7 listened to each other's contributions when discussing what the word 'texture' meant, and were keen to describe how they would use jagged and spiky lines to draw it. At Key Stage 4, pupils organise themselves efficiently, share equipment co-operatively and show a good level of engagement. In the sixth form, students are highly motivated and respond very well to the challenges of the work presented. A high degree of pride is shown, with folders and work reflecting a wide range of stimulus that has been researched and recorded in their own time. The quality of work completed reflects a high level of commitment.

146. The overall quality of the teaching is good. In 89 per cent of the lessons observed, teaching was good or, occasionally, very good: in the remainder it was satisfactory. Teaching at Key Stages 3 and 4 is good and in the sixth form it is very good. Teacher's relationships with pupils are good and the high expectations demanded across the age and ability range creates a positive learning ethos. For example, all pupils are encouraged, by the use of searching and leading questions, to think carefully about pertinent points within projects. Lower-attaining pupils are given the support and encouragement to respond confidently in discussion. Specialised vocabulary is built into projects and pupils are positively encouraged to use it. Teachers give very clear explanations, demonstrate techniques and build in an element of humour to maintain pupils interest. Homework, arising from projects, is set at the start of term and is effectively used to consolidate analytical skills but could also, beneficially, extend pupils understanding and research of artists.

147. The quality of informal assessment is good and staff put a lot of emphasis into providing personal encouragement. There is plenty of dialogue on the evaluation of work during lessons, and work is marked regularly although no grade is given for effort. Pupils do not always have a clear understanding of the level they are working at. Assessment mapping is needed through and across the key stages. A major strength in the sixth form is the emphasis given to independent learning and thought. Teachers have a very good command of their subject and this is reflected in the high quality of individual attention and knowledgeable advice, which plays an important role in raising standards. Pupils are treated as individual artists and are very well supported.

148. The schemes of work ensure clear progression through the key stages. The scheme of work for Key Stage 3 is now planned against the National Curriculum requirements. However, it is not balanced as it over-emphasises painting and drawing, and gives too few opportunities for three-dimensional work. The lack of a subject technician, identified by the last inspection, makes it more difficult for teachers to offer a wide range of printing, textiles and ceramics work. There is no provision for information and communication technology in art, and pupils' ability to use it for creative or research work limited.

149. This department is well placed to improve further the standards and quality of work in art. It has a good team of teachers who are dedicated to raising standards. This team receives support from the head of department who is a competent manager and an experienced teacher. The curriculum is enriched by visits to art galleries, including weekend visits to London. Exhibitions are held of pupils' examination work each year. Life drawing classes are organised for GCE Advanced Level students. These classes contribute to the high standard of students' analytical and observational skills. The ethos of the subject is promoted by the high profile of the department in the displays of pupils' work in public areas, particularly in the lower school.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

150. Pupils enter the school with levels of attainment that are just below average. As they move through Key Stage 3, pupils achieve well. The teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 and the current year indicate that standards were above average. The work seen during the inspection also showed that standards at the end of Year 9 are above the national average. Most pupils have a secure understanding of the design and make process, and use it in their work with food, wood, plastic, metal and textiles. Higher-attaining pupils demonstrate a better than average understanding in their design ideas, and all pupils can produce at least a simple design specification. Practical, making skills are firmly established in most areas. For example, in a food technology lesson lower-attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, produced a variety of pasta dishes. In other areas too, Key Stage 3 pupils showed greater confidence and competence than is often the case in producing varied and ambitious manufactured products.

151. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are above national average. In 1999, most pupils were successful in a design and technology course and 63 per cent gained grades in the A* to C range. These standards were sustained in 2000. Pupils tended to do relatively well in design and technology, compared to their other subjects. Most pupils use their sound understanding of designing and making to produce good quality project work that makes more explicit use of an industrial and commercial context. Standards of presentation are often high, and pupils make effective use of information and communication technology. Higher-attaining pupils demonstrate stronger skills in research, product testing and evaluation, and these are reflected in their project folders. Pupils vary considerably in the standard of their practical, making work. Those in the lower set groups require more teacher support. Most pupils have a wider than average range of skills in the food, graphics, textiles and resistant materials courses.

152. Standards in the sixth form are in line with those nationally. Recent GCE Advanced Level results were in line with those nationally. They were better than the national results in GCE Advanced Supplementary Level, where half of pupils gained grades A or B. A significant number of Year 13 students produce high quality research and development work for their GCE Advanced Supplementary Level coursework. They show good skills in graphical presentation, information and communication technology and, in manufacture, using different materials.

153. Pupils achieve well in both key stages and the sixth form. In Key Stage 3, they make good progress because the good range of learning activities enables them to design their own products and acquire secure knowledge and skills. Pupils continue to achieve well in their GCSE courses as they benefit from the well-structured learning and assessment activities. In the sixth form, students

considerably broaden their understanding and skills in graphics, electronics, and wood and metal manufacture. Pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 enjoy the range of designing and making activities and are conscientious in the way they endeavour to meet the expected standards of homework and coursework. Their attitudes and behaviour are rarely less than good, and are frequently very good. Many pupils value the clear support and guidance they receive, and larger than average numbers continue their studies to GCE Advanced Level.

154. The quality of teaching is good overall. In just over 30 per cent of the lessons observed, the teaching was very good or, occasionally, excellent, in 54 per cent it was good and in the remainder it was satisfactory. The main strengths are the enthusiasm teachers have for the subject and the high expectations they have about standards of work, including homework, that together result in pupils wishing to be successful in the subject, showing considerable care and application. Teachers' specialist knowledge is strong and this helps pupils develop a higher than average technical understanding that informs their design work.

155. Lessons are generally well planned. They are based on well-conceived schemes of work, which have clear assessment targets and exciting opportunities for 'design and make' activities. This was evident in the pupils' different design ideas and their increasing appreciation of the industrial context. For example, in a Year 11 class the pupils' learning was enhanced by the visit of a professional designer. They were encouraged to adopt a designer's perspective in evaluating existing commercial logos in order to develop their own design ideas. The best teaching used question and answer very effectively to get pupils to think through their own solutions or suggest improvements. On the few occasions when teaching was satisfactory, the teacher's class management was less decisive, both in starting the lesson with all pupils being attentive and in sustaining the pace throughout of pupils' learning by careful monitoring of their work and target setting.

156. Assessment practice is excellent. Pupils know how well they are doing, the progress they are making, and the quality of their work. This was exemplified in their well-produced designing and planning sheets. For example, in a GCSE food technology lesson the teacher provided clear indicative GCSE grades for project work and identified areas for improvement constructively.

157. The head of department provides excellent subject leadership and is well supported by an experienced team. Since the last inspection, the design and technology team have worked hard to improve teaching, the curriculum and assessment and so contribute to raising pupil attainment in both key stages and in the sixth form. The curriculum meets National Curriculum requirements and has been enriched by the long-standing links with local industry. A number of local companies sponsor the various GCSE courses, and other initiatives such as a Year 7 can holder design project have an impact on pupils' learning. Assessment practice is exemplary, and directly contributes to the raised standards. The subject uses information and communication technology well, although limited resources have slowed the development of computer aided design and manufacture. Learning resources are otherwise satisfactory, and the department benefits from the work and support of an experienced technician. Food technology accommodation has improved considerably since the last inspection. The other practical work areas are in constant use, occasionally by some large classes. This has little impact on the standards pupils achieve.

GEOGRAPHY

158. There have been good improvements in geography since the last inspection report. This is the result of review, reflection and sustained effort by both teachers and pupils.

159. Pupils enter the school with a range geography experiences and standards that are broadly in line with those of similar aged pupils nationally. By the end of Year 9 their achievements overall are in line with the national average. Higher-attaining pupils have good research skills. They make relevant use of information and communication technology to obtain a variety of data through the Internet, for instance by downloading local reports on the 1989 Californian earthquake. Girls, especially, write extensively and fluently. Lower-attaining pupils and those who have special educational needs show understanding of subject words, such as *epicentre*, when giving oral answers. Their literacy is weak, but when they have appropriate reading materials and tasks they achieve well and make good progress.

160. By the end of Key Stage 4 attainment is above average and has improved since the previous inspection. In the 1999 GCSE examinations results for pupils gaining A* to C grades in the subject was above the national average. The results in the most recent examinations were higher. The trend in recent years shows results above the national average. Girls outperformed boys in 1996-1999, but their performance was below average compared to girls nationally in 1998 and 1999. Boys performed consistently above the national average for their gender. All pupils obtained a grade in the range A* to G in 1996-1999 and this is above the national average.

161. At Key Stage 4 higher-attaining pupils show good understanding of problems relating to the use of land for farming. For example they know that excessive use of chemical fertilisers affects water quality in streams and rivers. They find solutions to such problems through discussion in small groups. Lower-attaining pupils and those who have special educational needs understand the factors that influence the size of populations. They construct graphs using birth and death rate statistics. They use such information on China, for example, to decide whether its 'one child per family' policy affects population growth. Some weaknesses in literacy contribute to lowering their level of achievement. For instance some pupils do not always read with understanding and use given information to answer questions fully.

162. By the end of the sixth form pupils achieve very well and maintain the standards reported at the last inspection. In the 1999 GCE Advanced Level examinations over half of those entered gained the highest A and B grades, which was well above the national average. All students gained pass grades in the A to E range in 1999, which was also above the national average. Some students take geology at GCE Advanced Level. They attain well in this subject overall, with one student gaining the highest A grade nationally in 1999. In both geography and geology, students assimilate complex ideas and analyse data very competently. They use subject terminology appropriately and precisely in written and oral answers.

163. The quality of teaching is good overall. It shows an improvement since the last inspection. In 21 per cent of lessons the quality of teaching was very good or, occasionally, excellent, in 64 per cent it was good and in 7 per cent it was satisfactory. Teaching was unsatisfactory in one lesson because resources were too demanding for the low-attaining pupils and their behaviour was not managed skilfully.

164. Teachers have good subject knowledge and used it effectively in the best teaching. Teachers know what pupils should know and understand as well as the skills they need for progression. Consequently lessons were planned to accomplish these ends and provide appropriate tasks for pupils of differing attainment levels. In Year 7 lessons, teachers made very effective use of a mapping skills booklet produced within the department. This had graded tasks to revise Key Stage 2 learning about map co-ordinates. Pupils who had special educational needs, for instance, used a colour-coded key to locate squares in a grid using letters and numerals. Higher-attaining pupils completed exercises that required six figure grid references and knowledge of map symbols.

165. Teachers give pupils appropriate expectations by setting challenges through sharp questioning, limiting the time for completion of tasks, and providing extension work for higher-attaining pupils. They give pupils opportunities to reflect upon the magnitude of the Earth's forces. For example, video scenes of the devastation caused in 15 seconds by the 1989 Californian earthquake amazed Year 9 pupils.

166. Sixth form teaching is very good overall. In one geology lesson it was outstanding. The teachers' excellent subject knowledge was used to open students' minds to new ideas of how their learning may be used to explain the relationships between rocks and landscapes.

167. All pupils have good attitudes to learning. They enjoy being challenged, concentrate hard and are well motivated. Teachers manage pupils well through good humour and appropriate expectations of high standards. Relationships and the personal development of pupils are very good as a result.

168. The head of geography gives a good, clear lead to the team of teachers and is a competent manager of resources. There are good procedures in place for monitoring both standards and teaching. The geography and geology teachers are well qualified, resources provide good support for pupils' learning and accommodation is satisfactory. Newly qualified and those recently appointed members of staff are well supported through the induction and professional development arrangements.

HISTORY

169. Pupils enter the school with variable standards in history, but overall slightly below expectations in knowledge, understanding and command of basic skills. Pupils' standards of attainment in history at the end of Year 9, are in line with the average for similarly aged pupils nationally in the key areas of knowledge and understanding of events and people in a range of historical periods, in the ability to research information and to examine and interpret sources of evidence. A substantial minority of pupils attain below average standards. Relatively few attain above average standards. Whilst most pupils present their work well, lower-attaining pupils often have poor literacy skills, make frequent errors in basic spelling and punctuation and are less able to present their work effectively through extended writing. Teacher assessments in 1999 for pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 showed standards close to the national average for pupils at Level 5 or above, with no significant differences in the standards of boys and girls. This pattern was repeated in the current year. However, although the assessments showed an above average proportion of pupils achieving Level 6 or above, some were over-generous.

170. The standards reached by pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 in the 1999 GCSE examination was close to the national average for those gaining grades in the A*-C and A*-G ranges. The proportion achieving the higher grades showed a steady increase between 1996 and 1999, although the results for 2000 showed a slight decline. Boys' achievements were slightly better than girls, contrary to the national picture. Inspection evidence confirmed that standards are in line with the national average, in pupils' knowledge and understanding of, for example, developments in medicine, Ireland and the American West; and also in their ability to analyse and evaluate sources of evidence.

171. The proportion of students achieving grades A or B in the 1999 GCE Advanced Level examination was just below average. There was a similar pattern this year. Inspection evidence showed that fewer higher-attaining students than average take history. However, by the end of the sixth form the majority of students have a sound level of knowledge and understanding of early modern English and European history. Students in Year 12 following the new modular GCE Advanced Subsidiary course study a similar period of history and pupils' achievement is satisfactory.

172. By the end of Key Stage 3 the achievement of average- and lower-attaining pupils was good. Pupils reinforce their understanding of chronology first gained in their primary schools, for example learning to sequence events with increasing accuracy. They make good progress in learning about the historian as a detective, for example examining the value of different types of evidence from various periods of history, and developing their investigative skills. Pupils develop the ability to relate cause to consequence, as when examining the events of 1066. Their research skills are well developed in projects on topics such as the Battle of East Stoke. They begin to appreciate some of the complexities of events like the Reformation. Pupils learn to develop an empathetic understanding of everyday life when studying agricultural and industrial change in the 18th and 19th centuries. They show increasing confidence in their skill to analyse and evaluate sources of evidence, for example about changes in the role of women. Throughout Key Stage 3, pupils learn an increasing range of historical terms. Pupils at Key Stage 3 who have special educational needs make good progress in developing their understanding and basic skill levels. However, a minority of higher-achieving pupils do not make sufficient progress in their learning, because they are not set consistently appropriate and challenging tasks in lessons.

173. The majority of pupils at Key Stage 4, including those of all levels of ability and pupils who have special educational needs, achieve well. They produced detailed, structured coursework, for example on the economic importance of the Nottinghamshire lace industry. Pupils develop their skills to interpret complex sources, for example on the Irish problem. The achievement of lower-attaining pupils is satisfactory, principally because they are less competent in extended writing.

174. The achievement of students on post-16 courses is good. They show evidence of extending their knowledge and understanding of complex events in the early modern period, particularly when examining issues of political stability and religious change in Britain and continental Europe. They show the ability to distinguish between the relative importance of different factors when studying topics like the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella, the Italian Wars, the Reformation and the Renaissance. Most importantly, pupils learn to distinguish between narrative and good analysis when doing extended written work.

175. Overall, the quality of teaching in history is good. Teaching in 15 per cent of lessons was very good, in 69 per cent it was good and in the remainder it was satisfactory. At Key Stage 3, teaching was generally good and at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form it is good. All the teaching observed at Key Stage 4 was good, and in the sixth form it was always good and sometimes very good.

176. The good teaching was characterised by several features. One of the strongest of these was the range of activities and resources that teachers used to keep lessons varied and to maintain pupils' interest and concentration. For example, a range of artefacts from ancient Roman times and from the First World War was used successfully in a Year 7 lesson to give pupils a highly motivating, first-hand experience of history. Video recordings were used skilfully to increase pupil understanding in, for example, a Year 8 lesson on Elizabethan England and a Year 11 lesson on the Irish Troubles. Teachers put considerable emphasis upon extending and reinforcing literacy skills. They emphasise key words and technical vocabulary, and provide study and writing guides for pupils in all year groups. Information and communication technology is used to promote independent learning skills, as when Year 9 pupils use a computer room to research European explorers in 19th century Africa. Teachers encourage pupils to research information for themselves: this was effective in a Year 13 lesson when pupils made presentations on their research into the counter reformation, an exercise that increased both their confidence and their understanding.

177. Teachers plan homework with care and ensure that it contributes to pupils' learning. They make their expectations clear to pupils and assess work thoroughly so that pupils have a clear indication of what they need to do to improve. This was seen for example in a Year 9 lesson on the British Empire, when pupils were reminded of their individual targets. Pupils' attitudes in lessons are never less than satisfactory, and are usually good: this reflects the good relationships which are evident in most classes, and which make pupils want to do well.

178. On a few occasions, aspects of the teaching were less than satisfactory. In some lessons at Key Stage 3, teachers did not always have sufficiently high expectations of the minority of higher-attaining pupils. For example, higher-attaining pupils were sometimes given structured comprehension tasks that took up too much time but did not challenge or extend their understanding of the topic. Where extension tasks were used, they were not consistently challenging or were not introduced early enough into lessons, and higher-attaining pupils sometimes remained too dependent on the teacher.

179. The history department is well managed and has made good progress since the last inspection. The head of department has worked effectively to improve, for example, schemes of work and the range of teaching and learning strategies. More opportunities have been taken to promote independent learning, for example through the effective use of information and communication technology. Assessment practices have also been further developed. Whilst the marking of work is usually thorough and constructive in terms of the messages it gives to pupils, teachers' planning is not sufficiently closely related to National Curriculum levels.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

180. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school in Year 7 is close to that expected for pupils of a similar age. The achievement of most pupils is satisfactory as they move through Key Stage 3. In the work seen, standards at the end of Year 9 were in line with those expected nationally. Pupils have greater strengths in their skills in accessing and using information from the Internet as well as in word processing and desktop publishing applications where they can combine text, pictures and graphics for a variety of purposes. For example, in Year 8, pupils can draw data from different sources, such as the internet, digital photography and clipart, and combine these different images with text to create an identity card. They also use more basic skills in storing and retrieving information using databases. In contrast with the high level of skill they have in researching and presenting information, pupils have below average capability in the use of computers for measuring, controlling and modelling events, largely because of the limited practical opportunities provided in some subjects.

181. All pupils take GCSE information technology. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are in line with the national average. In GCSE information technology, standards were in line with national averages in the 1999 examinations with over half of the pupils gaining grades in the A* to C range. These standards were broadly sustained in 2000, when all pupils in Year 11 were entered for the GCSE full or short course. The majority of pupils in the GCSE courses use the main information and communication technology applications to complete their coursework. Higher-attaining pupils work with greater independence in combining different applications. For example, in a Year 11 lesson they derived information from a database and incorporated it into business correspondence. However, in comparison with their secure practical skills, most pupils have more limited knowledge that prevents them reaching the highest standards in designing information and communication technology systems and evaluating the effectiveness of their uses. With guidance, lower-attaining pupils use information and communication technology effectively, while pupils who have special educational needs work with growing confidence and skill. This was evident in a lesson where they used word processing accurately to complete job application forms.

182. Most students come into the sixth form with high GCSE grades in information technology, and make growing use of information and communication technology in their different GCE Advanced Level courses. For instance, GNVQ Advanced business students access the Internet for research, while GCE Advanced Level design and technology students have produced good quality project folders utilising desktop publishing and graphics software. Overall standards are therefore a little above those nationally. For most students, almost all of who gained the higher grades in GCSE information technology, the completion of information and communication technology key skills course demonstrates, rather than extends, their knowledge and skills.

183. Pupils achieve satisfactorily in Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form. In Years 7, 8 and 9, they acquire a range of skills in the taught information and communication technology programme, although some of the learning tasks do not recognise the growing level of capability that higher-attaining pupils bring to the school. This does not always allow some of those pupils to reach the higher National Curriculum levels. Furthermore, opportunities to use information and communication technology in particular subjects have not been sufficiently developed and this also slows pupils' progress in developing some information and communication technology skills. In spite of the limited time in Years 10 and 11, most pupils make satisfactory progress in GCSE information technology, largely because of the efforts of teachers to ensure coverage of the scheme of work. Students use information and

communication technology effectively in a number of courses. Pupils are enthusiastic and take full advantage of the opportunities to use computers in the library and in the computer club. In spite of the large classes, most pupils are attentive and help each other.

184. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Teaching was good in just over 60 per cent of the lessons observed, and satisfactory in the remainder. A particular strength of the teaching is the informed support the specialist teachers are able to give, enabling GCSE pupils to make good progress in the limited curricular time. When teaching was good, the lessons were well planned, and teachers made effective use of exemplar material to help pupils know what they had to do. For example, in a GCSE class where many of pupils had special educational needs, the teacher helped pupils evaluate different poster designs before they set about creating their own. When the teaching was good, open-ended learning tasks enabled pupils to use a wide range of computer applications. When the teaching was just satisfactory, teachers made less demands on pupils. On such occasions learning objectives were too limited. This was seen in the GCSE course where, as a result, pupils' skills in understanding and evaluating the design of systems is less well developed and has limited their levels of attainment.

185. The development of taught information and communication technology programmes throughout Years 7 to 11 has ensured that the school now meets the National Curriculum requirement for both key stages and so has successfully addressed one of the issues raised at the last inspection. Teachers monitor the progress of pupils in Years 7 to 9. They have, however, yet to develop agreed systems, using National Curriculum criteria, for assessing standards and sharing with pupils' what they need to do to improve. The use of information and communication technology in other subjects is developing but still patchy. There are some areas of greater strength where information and communication technology has become a scheduled part of a scheme of work. This is seen particularly in design and technology where information and communication technology is used well in, for instance, computer aided manufacture in textiles. Most subjects are actively planning for greater use of information and communication technology following completion of the planned training programme. Currently, the use of information and communication technology by other subjects is mainly through word processing and research using CD-ROM and the internet. Music has promising developments under way for composition and modern languages, mathematics and history also make positive contributions. There is less activity, however, in English and science, for example. Areas of the National Curriculum requirements that are less well developed, include the use of spreadsheets for modelling patterns and testing predictions, and data logging for measurement.

186. The information and communication technology co-ordinator has demonstrated satisfactory leadership. There has been effective development of the computer facilities and in the implementation of the teaching programmes at both key stages and in the sixth form. The co-ordinator has also provided successful in-house training to many staff. However, the increasing focus on teaching the information and communication technology courses has detracted from the development of cross-curricular use. The application of information and communication technology across the curriculum is currently not mapped and tracked effectively. This makes it harder to evaluate the quality of provision and to identify and respond to resource needs. However, there is increasing staff enthusiasm for the use of information and communication technology, and the school has made substantial progress in the improvement of resources. It now has four networked suites of computers, and further facilities in the two libraries, the music suite, the sixth form centre and the special educational needs base. A network manager and technician provide valuable support for all aspects of information and communication technology provision. Even so, in such a large, split site school, the resources for information and communication

technology are below the average found nationally and are coming under increasing pressure as staff make more use of information and communication technology.

187. However, while there are some areas in need of further development, the school has made good progress since the last inspection by improving the curriculum, teaching and resources and in so doing has considerably raised standards of attainment in the subject throughout the school.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

188. Overall attainment in Key Stage 3 is broadly average, although standards recorded in the end of Key Stage 3 National Curriculum teacher assessments in 2000 were just below average. Neither at this stage nor later was any significant difference noted between performance in French and German. Equal attention is given in planning and teaching to listening, speaking, reading and writing. On entry to Year 7 half the pupils take French, the other half German. In Year 8 highest-attaining pupils are given the opportunity to start the other language in addition to continuing with French or German. Second language standards reflect the fact that the work is done in only half the time available to the first language, but they are satisfactory in relation to those of similar classes in other schools. Relatively good progress is made in these groups, and in most years a number of these pupils continue to GCSE with two languages.

189. At the end of Key Stage 3, both high- and average-attaining pupils write short letters, or descriptive passages, using a good range of vocabulary and structures, which include the use of verbs in the past tense. These pupils were at national average levels at the time of the inspection and are expected to reach above and well above average levels by the end of Year 9. There is also some good achievement by low-attaining pupils, including some with special educational needs, but some of these pupils do not make the progress that they should and are still working at levels well below those of other pupils. This is because they cannot sustain concentration for the full sixty minute lessons, as was noted at the time of the previous inspection.

190. At the end of Key Stage 4, standards are above average overall. French GCSE results have been above the national average in the last two years. German has remained below average, although four pupils gained A* grades in 2000. Girls perform better than boys, as they do nationally. However, the standard reached by boys is better than that for boys nationally.

191. Learning benefits from the fact that pupils have their own textbooks and are encouraged to work independently. In both languages they acquire a wide vocabulary, which they use actively within the topics required for GCSE, for example friendship and relations with others. High- and average-attaining pupils use vocabulary and structures appropriate to the tier of GCSE examination for which they have been entered. Some very good spoken German was observed in Year 10, although a parallel French class had considerably less confidence. Most low-attaining pupils, including some who have special educational needs, are capable of gaining a GCSE grade and deal well, for example, with job-related terminology. A small group in each language takes the Certificate of Achievement course. Each year the majority gain merits or distinctions.

192. In the sixth form, standards in external examinations are high in both languages. Students' achievement in their work and in lessons is good. Serious issues concerning, for example, the

environment or personal relationships are studied. Boys are outnumbered but cope well in lessons and contribute confidently. In 1999 results at GCE Advanced Level were above the course averages both for grades A-B and A-E. In both 1999 and 2000 A grades were achieved in German and B grades in French. Results in German have improved, quantitatively and qualitatively, from the low point in 1996.

193. Since the previous inspection in 1995 average standards at Key Stage 3 and above average standards in the sixth form have been maintained, whilst standards in Key Stage 4 have improved.

194. In almost all lessons pupils' attitudes to the subject and to the teachers are good, and often very good. They apply themselves conscientiously to their work and organise their materials well. They co-operate well with the teacher's stated objectives and at the end of the lesson usually can be relied upon to feed back what they have learned. Over longer periods, they respond positively to the targets they are set. Quite often they are helpful to each other. During Key Stage 3, they learn how to look things up in dictionaries, making progress towards the greater maturity and self-reliance that characterises work in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. In both Key Stages 3 and 4, a small minority is indifferent to the teacher's expectations. Whilst pupils' behaviour is normally good, that of the few who cannot sustain concentration occasionally disturbs the learning of others.

195. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. All the teaching seen was satisfactory or better. Teaching was very good in 11 per cent of the lessons, good in 67 per cent and satisfactory in the remainder. Very good teaching was seen in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. All modern linguists teach both French and German, which leads to a high level of consistency in teaching quality. Good practice is regularly shared. The very good co-ordination by the head of department ensures that successful lesson plans and supporting resources are shared with other colleagues. Teachers speak their languages well and use them effectively in the conduct of lessons. They manage their pupils well, for example involving them in discussions about their future learning. Homework is integrated with lesson planning over a series of related lessons. Assessment is very good, involving pupils from Year 7 to Year 12 in self-review. Teachers make clear each pupil's strengths and what must be done to improve. The information obtained informs decisions about setting and targets for pupils. Encouragement is given by means of the award of merits, credits and commendations. Pupils' confidence develops in response to the good teaching as they move through the school, leading to improving outcomes from Years 11 and 13.

196. The head of department has a clear vision of a French-and-German department, which is now very largely realised in the diversified curriculum structure and the current staffing establishment. Day-to-day and year-on-year decisions are informed by very careful analysis of data. The monitoring of performance has now been developed to a point where a major function is the dissemination of best practice, thus contributing directly to pupils' learning. An annual school trip for Year 8 and Year 9 pupils in alternate years to France or Germany gives some pupils a direct contact with a country where their foreign language is spoken. Sixth form students have the opportunity to undertake work experience in one of these countries.

MUSIC

197. Pupils enter the school with standards that are, in the current Year 7, just below those for pupils of a similar age nationally. Pupils make good progress as they move through the key stage and, at the end of Year 9 reach standards that are generally in line with the national expectation and with a significant minority achieving above it. First hand evidence, including the scrutiny of work, discussions with pupils and observations in lessons, showed that at Key Stage 3 standards of work are good in relation to national expectations for pupils of all levels of attainment. The majority of pupils are achieving the national standard and a significant minority is achieving above it.

198. At Key Stage 3, pupils sing with gusto, good control and accuracy. Boys were seen happily leading class singing with enthusiasm. Pupils write fluently about different styles of music and can analyse the structure of musical compositions. Their own composition work is sound, often developed from improvisation, and they are able to resolve melodies successfully. Pupils are able to use the language of music to evaluate the effectiveness of their work, are confident in performance and happy to share their work with others.

199. GCSE results in the 1999 examinations were above the national average. Out of an entry of eight pupils, 75 per cent gained grades in the A* to C range and all gained grades in the A* to G range. Both of these results are above national averages. The performance of girls was below the national average but that of the boys was well above. The numbers taking GCSE have increased over the years: there are now 20 pupils in the Year 10 group. From scrutiny of work and lessons observed at Key Stage 4, the Year 10 group is already achieving standards at least in line with the national average and a third of the group is achieving above it. For example, two particularly talented Year 10 boys, on piano and percussion, were observed working on a very demanding composition task in a lesson and were later seen playing, with great skill, complex parts during a jazz band rehearsal. They rose to the challenges with alacrity. The Year 11 group achieves standards that are close to the national average.

200. At Key stage 4, pupils achieve well and are successful in the application of notation, chord progressions, score reading and musical terminology. Their composition work underlines an understanding of musical concepts, such as shape, pitch, tempo, dynamics, modulation and harmony, that reflects their research into music from different periods and cultures. They refine and develop both performance techniques and compositions confidently. Their ensemble work is good, and they demonstrate skilful, enthusiastic work on keyboards, cornet, guitar, woodwind and percussion.

201. The overall quality of teaching is very good. Teaching was very good in 90 per cent of lessons and good in the remainder. This quality of teaching has a beneficial effect on pupils' learning at both key stages. It encourages the positive and enthusiastic response pupils showed in the lessons observed. Lessons are well paced, lively and interlaced with good humour. Good quality questioning of pupils and clear, well-structured work sheets help to involve and reassure pupils of all levels of attainment. Teachers are very aware of pupils who have special educational needs, and set appropriate challenges that ensure equality of opportunity for all.

202. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and are always positive in their evaluation of pupils' work. This sets a good example to classes and is reflected in the pupils' constructive criticism of their own and others' compositions and performances. Teachers' musical expertise and demonstrations are skilful and designed to motivate the pupils. In this area, one teacher's lively, exciting and foot-tapping

introduction to a singing and composition lesson based on '*Let's Dance*' almost had the pupils dancing in the aisles. This ensured an excitement and commitment that remained throughout the lesson. All teaching helps to build pupils' confidence, extend their skills and develop creative responses to the projects being undertaken. The instrumental work is well supported by peripatetic staff, and homework is used well.

203. The curriculum and schemes of work are well planned and designed to meet the requirements of National Curriculum and the demands of the GCSE course. A carefully planned balance between performing, listening and composing ensures that each of these elements informs the others. The schemes of work are revised and refined to improve standards and the commitment of pupils, in the light of their response and learning.

204. At both Key Stages 3 and 4, assessment is undertaken in line with the school policy. The results of end of unit and half term tests are well used to provide detailed feedback for pupils and to monitor standards. Pupils are informed of their present position, the level reached or grades awarded and future targets are agreed. Assessments are systematically recorded and analysed in detail. Teachers meet regularly to standardise their assessments and so ensure consistency in marking. Pupils have copies of the marking criteria in their notebooks and understand the relationships of the marks to levels and grades.

205. The subject is well led and managed by a recently appointed head of department. Good systems are now in place to ensure that teaching and learning in music is effective. For example, the weekly team meetings regularly review standards, schemes of work, teaching methodology and classroom organisation. In addition the head of department observes and evaluates lessons taught by the other member of staff and is, in turn, monitored by a member of the senior management team.

206. The provision of learning resources is good. The classrooms, although somewhat cramped for groups of over 30 pupils, are light, airy and contain some stimulating displays. The practice rooms are adequate, and the newly constructed music technology room is very well appointed. The available information and communication technology software is used effectively to support pupils' learning. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. It has addressed all matters raised in the inspection report. Standards are now more consistent, composition work much improved, cross referencing of syllabus to the two key stages is well documented and both attainment and progress of pupils is carefully recorded and systematically analysed.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

207. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school in the subject is below the national expectation. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory as they move through Years 7, 8 and 9. By the end of Key Stage 3 the attainment of pupils is in line with national expectations. In Year 9 boys play rugby with good basic skills and an understanding of supportive play. When participating in gymnastics boys are adventurous in their movements and work co-operatively and creatively in small groups. The majority of Year 9 girls, when playing netball, have inconsistent footwork, their catching and throwing is good but a few passes fail to reach the targeted player because of

their inability to find space. Girls in Year 7 do not have high skill levels in gymnastics but their body tension and control is good. Boys and girls, in Year 7, have sound co-ordination in short tennis. The majority of boys and girls are able to warm up and stretch independently and a small number of pupils, more boys than girls, are able to plan and lead activities.

208. Pupils' achievement continues to be satisfactory as they move through Key Stage 4. In the 2000 GCSE examination the six pupils entered for the full course all achieved grades in the A* to C range, while 80 per cent of the pupils following the GCSE short course achieved A* to C grades. The majority of pupils in Years 10 and 11 reach standards in line with those expected nationally. Boys have sound skills and an understanding of the rules of badminton. In gymnastics, Year 10 girls are able to perform a few advanced vaulting movements with support, and give critical feedback to a partner. Boys and girls attain above the national expectation on the trampoline, where a few pupils are able to perform advanced rotations. In Year 10, a few pupils studying GCSE are attaining above the national average. Their written work is well organised and the presentation of the girls' files is of a high standard. A few boys in Year 11 will be unable to use their file as a learning resource as insufficient work has been completed.

209. The attainment of some individual pupils and teams is very good. They compete in football, netball, athletics, rugby, cricket, basketball and on the trampoline at district and county level.

210. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Teaching was good in just under 60 per cent of lessons and satisfactory in a further 30 per cent. The teaching seen in one lesson during the inspection was unsatisfactory. All specialist teachers have good subject expertise. They share the lesson objectives with the pupils at the start of the lesson and finish with a short summation. This assists in the review and reinforcement of learning and helps all pupils to make sound progress. When the range of attainment in whole class groups demands, some teachers do not always sub-divide pupils into groups with similar levels of skill in order to develop further a specific competency. The division into groups occurs frequently in gymnastics and rugby but not in netball and girls' football. The lack of a differentiated approach to learning in some lessons does not enable all pupils to reach the highest standards and make significant improvement in their skills. Although teaching is generally satisfactory, the work of non-specialist teachers does, on occasions, inhibit the learning and achievement of pupils.

211. The department does not set individual targets for pupils on the trampoline or for those who have special educational needs. This results in a few pupils making satisfactory, rather than good or very good, progress. The liaison with and support from the special educational needs department is insufficiently developed.

212. The involvement of pupils in independent learning activities was a feature of the good teaching. For example, in a rugby lesson and a netball lesson, pupils worked in groups each with one pupil responsible for planning and organising a variety of skill practices. This aspect of teaching was very successful but is not widely used throughout the department. GCSE theory tests and homework are constructively marked. However, because class work is insufficiently monitored, pupils' files are poorly organised and some topics are incomplete. As a result some pupils have incomplete record of work as a basis for future revision.

213. The majority of pupils are interested and enthusiastic in their lessons. They behave well, work co-operatively in small groups and pairs and have good relationships with their teachers. A small

number of boys and girls do not listen and concentrate fully. The boys work with energy and enthusiasm, but some lack discipline in their activities. The majority of pupils take part regularly in lessons. The few pupils who are unable to participate are fully involved by their teachers. This aspect of the department's work has improved since the last inspection. A limited range of extra-curricular activities is provided. These are mostly games and team opportunities, work on the trampoline and badminton clubs. The high rates of participation of boys and girls in these activities illustrate the positive attitude most pupils have for the subject.

214. A new head of department has established clear educational aims and made significant improvements in the work and ethos of this committed curriculum area. However, effective pupil groupings and a balanced curriculum throughout Key Stage 3 have yet to be established. The Year 7 groupings and scheme of work, as well as the plans for Years 8 and 9, now meet National Curriculum requirements. Trampoline skills, currently a separate activity will, in future become an aspect of gymnastics, thus providing better balance within the Key Stage 3 curriculum. At Key Stage 4 some activities are not covered in sufficient depth – an issue that was reported in the previous inspection. The Key Stage 4 curriculum has been enhanced since the last inspection with the provision of a GCSE course as an option choice. There is no timetabled physical education in the sixth form. As a result, there is no continuity of provision or in the promotion of the health and fitness of pupils.

215. Processes to assess work are not yet fully established in relation to the new National Curriculum requirements but most teachers use their registers well to monitor pupils' attendance, participation and attainment. There has been no formal monitoring of teaching by the head of department and very little further training undertaken by department members for a considerable time. This matter was raised in the previous report and now needs urgent attention especially in relation to non-specialist teachers. The department is in transition and currently not all teachers have adopted the aims, values and strategies for improving the quality of education provided for pupils that have been devised by the new head of department. Greater care needs to be taken regarding the safety of trampolines during times when they are not used for teaching. Current practice of leaving them in place and unattended is unsafe.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

216. Pupils enter the school with levels of attainment in the subject that are just below the expectations of the Agreed Syllabus. By the end of Key Stage 3, their level of attainment is above the expectations of the Agreed Syllabus. The achievement of most pupils is good and the standards they reach are in keeping with those set out in the local Agreed Syllabus. They can identify the major beliefs and practices of the religions that are found in our society, and use religious language correctly. For example, a group of Year 8 pupils understood the importance of the bible for Christians and were able to relate it to the Muslim attitude to the Qur'an. They have a good awareness of the way in which religious faith provides a framework for life. A group of Year 7 pupils were using religious language and concepts well when considering the variety of beliefs about God that are found in many living faiths. They have a good understanding of the role that religious ceremonies and traditions play in uniting faith communities. Particularly noteworthy is the standard of literacy. Written work is characterised by a high standard of presentation, although not all spelling and grammar are accurate. Orally pupils respond well in the classroom and are confident in their reading.

217. At Key Stage 4, about half of the pupils choose to follow the GCSE course. They are keen and active participants in the learning and respond well to the challenges provided. For the rest of the pupils religious education should be provided within the personal and social education programme. The achievement of those pupils who take the GCSE course is good and the GCSE examination results are above the national average. Pupils of all levels of attainment gain results that are in line with or above their results in other subjects. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. Pupils have a good knowledge of the two religions they study. A Year 10 group demonstrated a good knowledge of Jewish customs and practices when discussing the holocaust. A Year 11 group had a good understanding of the importance of the Apostles' Creed in shaping current Christian teaching. The attainment of those who do not take the examination course is much weaker. The good foundation that is laid at Key stage 3 is not built upon, their knowledge is not reinforced and much that they have learned is forgotten. They have a satisfactory understanding of the role that religion plays in providing people with guidance and support when facing moral issues. They do not have the background knowledge and understanding of religious concepts, language and beliefs that are set out in the Agreed Syllabus. Standards are well below those required.

218. In the sixth form there are strong GCE Advanced Level groups. Inspection evidence, including lesson observations and the scrutiny of their work, showed that students reach well above average standards. In Year 13, they were producing short seminars on very complex aspects of the Judaism. Overall, examination results are in line with the national average, although recent results were lower and did cause some concern. The department has carefully analysed these and responded positively, planning for future improvement. In addition to the GCE Advanced Level provision, all sixth form students have good opportunities to consider religious issues in the personal and social education programme and the general studies course. Their practical involvement in the local community projects is particularly noteworthy.

219. The quality of learning in religious education lessons is good. In most lessons pupils are motivated, attentive and apply themselves well to their studies. They are particularly open and sensitive to other points of view, willing to listen and respond to the issues they are considering. A good example was seen in a Year 9 lesson, when pupils responded thoughtfully in a discussion on Jewish circumcision. They frequently co-operate well in groups, listening and taking part in a responsible way. In a Year 10 GCSE lesson, for example, pupils considered the holocaust with great sensitivity. Pupils' written work and wall displays showed good examples of creative work and a strong awareness of social issues. At all times in religious education lessons, pupils were well behaved, courteous and polite.

220. The quality of teaching in religious education is generally good. In 20 per cent of lessons, teaching was very good, in 30 per cent it was good and in the remainder it was satisfactory. The teachers are committed, have a good knowledge of the subject, and use a variety of teaching methods to motivate pupils. Games, discussions, drama, television and artefacts are all effectively used. External resources and visiting speakers extend pupils' knowledge and understanding. For example, a Muslim support group recently visited pupils in Year 7. This visit challenged the perceptions of many regarding what it means to live as a believer within Islam. Pupils' work is assessed well, with marking being particularly good. Books are full of good feedback, and pupils are encouraged to produce work of a high standard. Relevant homework is set regularly. In a small proportion of lessons, lengthy introductions and

somewhat pedantic copying from the board meant that the pace of the lesson was slow. Whilst the needs of pupils who have special educational needs are generally met some of the information sheets used contained language and concepts that were not accessible to those with reading difficulties.

221. The religious education department is well led and managed. There is a strong team spirit, with teachers keeping abreast of latest developments. The development plan is good. It ensures that in-service training is well targeted. Monitoring takes place, and staff are encouraged to use information and communication technology skills whenever possible. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Since the last inspection standards have been maintained with the exception of those pupils who do not follow the GCSE route at Key Stage 4. Pupils' spiritual development is better supported. However, a shortage of time and insufficient content, coupled with teaching by non-specialist teachers, means that explicitly religious topics are not covered within the PSE programme. For example, the reference to the religious dimension of a topic in a Year 10 personal and social education worksheet – 'If time permits discuss the religious perceptions of eating meat' – is too casual for it to contribute anything meaningful to pupils' learning in religious education. The school is aware that the current situation, regarding subject provision is, as a result, much as it was at the last inspection. The statutory requirements of the local Agreed Syllabus are still not met. Overall progress since the last inspection is, therefore, unsatisfactory.