

INSPECTION REPORT

FIR VALE SCHOOL

Sheffield

LEA area: Sheffield

Unique reference number: 131546

Headteacher: Hugh Howe

Reporting inspector: David Morton
13154

Dates of inspection: 19 – 23 November 2001

Inspection number: 230016

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 to 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Owler Lane
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 South Yorkshire

Postcode: S4 8GB

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs S Woolliscroft

Date of previous inspection: Not applicable

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11077	Janet Harrison	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
27803	Joseph Clark	Team inspector	Provision for pupils with special educational needs	
11966	John Clay	Team inspector	Design and technology	
11746	Robin Coulthard	Team inspector	Music Religious education	
23926	Douglas Howorth	Team inspector	Equal opportunities Geography Vocational education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
10340	John Lockett	Team inspector	Mathematics	
12003	Andrew Marfleet	Team inspector	English	
17556	Michael Miller	Team inspector	Art and design Information and communication technology [ICT]	
20189	Jagat Nagra	Team inspector	Urdu	
19452	Anthony Pearson	Team inspector	History	
15678	Jennifer Radford	Team inspector	Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	
3793	John Ratcliffe	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Fir Vale School is a co-educational, community comprehensive school for pupils aged 11 to 16 situated in the Fir Vale suburb of Sheffield. This is an area of significant socio-economic deprivation. The school opened as a Fresh Start school in September 1998 and serves the community of which it is a part; most pupils walk to school each day. The school has 645 pupils and is smaller than most other secondary schools. For September 2002 it is attracting pupils to Year 7 in excess of the places available. At present, boys outnumber girls by about five to four. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school in Year 7 is well below average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals [well over half of all pupils] is high compared with the national average. The proportion of pupils for whom English is an additional language [more than three out of four pupils] is high compared with most other schools, of which some 9.6 per cent are at an early stage in learning English, some entering the school unable to speak English at all. Many pupils [one in ten] are refugees or asylum seekers from Yemen, Somalia, Afghanistan, Kosova and Albania; some of these pupils have no previous experience of formal schooling. Often these pupils join the school during the year and others leave; this uneven mobility of pupils, roughly one in twelve, makes effective learning difficult. Nine out of ten pupils are of non-white ethnic background. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs [two out of every five] is well above average. Most of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties or emotional and behavioural difficulties. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs [about one in 33] is below average. The school has recently achieved Investor in People status. The school is part of an educational action zone [EAZ] and the Excellence in Cities Initiative and has benefited from additional funding through the Private Finance Initiative [PFI]. As a result of PFI the school moved into its present new premises in September 2001; the building is an imaginative and effective design and is equipped with some state-of-the-art facilities.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Fir Vale is a good school with many outstanding characteristics. It provides good learning opportunities for pupils of all backgrounds and levels of attainment. The excellent leadership by the senior management leadership team inspires pupils and staff to do well. The achievement of pupils in relation to their starting point on entry to the school at age 11 is good. The outstanding leadership of the headteacher gives the school a clear sense of purpose and direction, not least in ensuring that all pupils are valued and encouraged to meet their aspirations. Teaching is good and often very good. Results in GCSE examinations have improved by over 200 per cent since the school opened even though they remain well below the national average; the school does very well compared with similar schools. The school provides good value for money because pupils improve their standards of work considerably during their time in the school.

What the school does well

- Pupils' attainment in external examinations is improving steadily and standards seen in school represent pupils' good achievement by the age of 16.
- The quality of teaching is good. It has a positive influence on pupils' learning and achievement.
- Learning is good because pupils have good attitudes and most want to do well in a school that provides very well for their all-round care and development.
- The curriculum is effective and relevant. It shows a commitment to include all pupils in the full life of the school and to meet their individual learning needs.
- The excellent leadership and management of the headteacher and senior staff ensure that standards are steadily raised and high expectations for the quality of education provided by the school are maintained.
- Excellent encouragement has led to attendance matching the national average.

What could be improved

- Almost one in ten pupils have insufficient command of English to understand their lessons, especially in Years 7 to 9.
- Levels of literacy of many pupils, especially skills in reading and writing, are low, despite the current good strategies for improvement that are in place.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE IT OPENED IN 1998.

The school has grown and developed since it opened in 1998. It sees itself as being on a journey of continuing improvement on its previous best. It is now beginning to live its motto 'Making Dreams a Reality'. There are now twice as many pupils, for its reputation in the community it serves has been established quickly and continues to prosper. The school is now over-subscribed at the start of Year 7. Results in GCSE examinations have risen year by year; this trend of improvement is more rapid than that found nationally. Teaching is now good overall; this is a significant improvement on that seen during a monitoring visit four months previously. Pupils have become proud of their school. Leadership and management continue to make strong contributions to the school's many successful developments.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved at the end of Year 11 based on average point scores in GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	E	E	E	C

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

Results in the national tests for 14-year-olds were very low in 2001 and amongst the lowest five per cent in the country. Results in English, mathematics and science have been very low since the school opened in 1998. Achievement has been satisfactory in these tests in relation to the results of tests taken three years previously at the age of 11. However, compared with the results of schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, results were, overall, average. This comparison reflects the achievement of pupils more accurately.

GCSE results have been well below average since the school opened in 1998. Compared with all schools, results in 2001 remain well below average. Nonetheless, these results have improved significantly over the four years: in 1998, 10 per cent of pupils obtained five or more of the higher A* to C grades; in 2001, this percentage improved to 23 per cent. Over the same period of time, the percentage gaining five or more grades across the full range A* to G has been sustained at 79 per cent. When compared with schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, the school's performance was average. However, more significantly, when results in 2001 are compared with those schools with similar results in tests two years earlier, Fir Vale's results are seen to be well above average. This is an indication of the improvement that good learning and teaching are bringing to the standards achieved by pupils. Overall girls perform better than boys. Overall, ethnic non-white pupils do not perform as well as indigenous white pupils. This is largely owing to weakness in their skills of literacy or, in some cases, any real understanding of English. However, there are examples where some ethnic groups achieve well and perform better than the indigenous pupils. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress.

Standards of work seen in lessons in Year 9 are better than the results of tests but are well below average. Standards of work observed in lessons in Years 10 and 11 are better than the overall results in the GCSE examination but below average. These differences are partly due to the weak retention of learning of many pupils or the difficulty many find in maintaining effort and focus during examinations. Standards seen in English are below average, but those in mathematics and science in Year 11 are well below average. Standards of literacy are generally well below average, but improving. Standards of numeracy are also well below average. Pupils generally make good use of information and communication technology [ICT] and their work in most subjects is consequently enhanced. The school did well to meet the suitably challenging

targets set for performance in GCSE examinations in 2001. Overall, given the starting point of these pupils on entry to the school and in comparison with pupils in similar schools, their achievement is good.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils have positive attitudes towards school, are usually attentive and concentrate well in class. They are keen to do their best.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils generally behave well in lessons and are friendly and orderly around school. They take their learning seriously.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils mature well as they move through the school. They respond well when given the opportunity to take responsibility, for example as members of the school council.
Attendance	Satisfactory. The school does very well to sustain average levels of attendance.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11
Quality of teaching	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.

The quality of learning is good in Years 7 to 11 because pupils want to achieve as well as they can and teaching, overall is good. In many lessons, pupils' progress is good because teachers and pupils have high expectations, pupils try their best and work enthusiastically and teachers use a good variety of methods to keep pupils' interest throughout the lesson. Teachers make increasingly effective use of assessment of pupils' work and progress to detect underachievement. Not all teaching, however, ensures that learning is systematic and accurate in detail. Simple errors are not corrected or explained. When this shortcoming is present pupils fail to make the progress in their learning that is possible. When marking work, teachers set achievable targets to help pupils improve. Good relationships among pupils and between teachers and pupils create a purposeful atmosphere for working. The result is that work usually proceeds at a brisk pace. Pupils know what they are expected to learn and how they can improve, because teachers plan the lessons well to ensure good progress, share the lesson's aims with the class and frequently review pupils' progress at the end of lessons. The support given by members of the learning support faculty is very good and crucial in this process.

On balance the quality of teaching is good in all years. It is often very good and occasionally excellent. Rarely, lessons are unsatisfactory; this is usually when teaching fails to maintain the interest of demanding pupils and the pace of learning is not quick enough; or pupils find the work difficult and perhaps have to work without the support of members of the learning support faculty. Usually, however, teaching is effective in meeting the needs of pupils. Throughout the school teaching is good in English, mathematics and science. The teaching of literacy is good in most subjects, although some teaching needs to give more attention to the acquisition of better conversational English than to the technical words of the subject. The teaching of numeracy is less well developed across subjects yet is satisfactory. As well as looking at practice in the classroom, judgements about the quality of teaching and learning are based on an analysis of a sample of pupils' work, records of their prior attainment and discussions with pupils and teachers.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of	Very good. The curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant and

the curriculum	provides equality for boys and girls, and the many different ethnic groups in the school. The contribution of the community to pupils' learning and the school's links with outside agencies and partner schools and colleges are outstanding. Pupils enrich their learning experiences through active participation in a very good and wide-ranging programme of extra-curricular activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. These pupils make much better progress than might be expected because of good teaching and support, based on careful planning between subject teachers and members of the learning support faculty.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. These pupils achieve well when they benefit from the expertise they encounter through the work of the learning support faculty. Progress is slower when this is not available although, increasingly, the skills acquired by subject teachers to meet pupils' learning needs of pupils with little English is improving.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. The school values its pupils highly and this is reflected in its very good arrangements for pupils' moral, social and cultural development. The school also provides well for pupils' spiritual development, frequently in lessons; however, the school does not meet the requirement to have a daily act of collective worship for all pupils so that the opportunities for spiritual development are restricted.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. The school takes very good care of its pupils. This is underpinned by thorough and effective assessment of their academic progress. The behaviour systems are very effective and the procedures for improving attendance are excellent.
How well does the school work in partnership with parents	Parents are very pleased with the new school. The school has excellent and innovative links with parents and the community.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. The leadership and management provided by the senior management leadership team are inspirational and effective. The leadership provided by the headteacher is outstanding; he has a clear vision for the future development of the school for further improvement and makes suitably challenging demands of staff and pupils. The work of the senior year tutors in guiding pupils' all-round development is very good. The management of subjects is good.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. The governing body is extremely well informed. Many of its members bring relevant expertise to the support of the school and its strategic planning. Governors make demands of staff by fulfilling with rigour their role as critical friends of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The school makes very effective use of data to assess how well it is doing and to improve further. Very good systems are in place to monitor teaching and learning.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The school makes effective use of its teaching and support staff that are sufficient to meet requirements and the needs of pupils. The school moved into a very good building of innovative design in September 2001 and has good resources for learning, in particular for ICT. Financial management is very good and the school seeks the best possible value for money. It relates its spending decisions appropriately to the educational priorities in the school's improvement plan.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pupils like school, are expected to work hard, make progress and achieve well.• Teaching is good.• The school is approachable.• Pupils' personal development is good.	Some parents want improvements in: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The quality and amount of homework;• Communication about how their child is getting on.

Inspectors strongly support the positive views expressed by parents. They judge that the amount and type of homework is about right, although it is not set to a consistent pattern by some teachers. Inspectors believe that reports to parents are good and that the school does all it can to communicate with parents and the community. It has been successful in each case and these links are a strength of the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

Strengths

- Pupils' achievement is good.
- Standards in GCSE examinations have improved significantly year by year.

Areas for improvement

- The levels of literacy of some pupils are not good enough for them to benefit from the full school curriculum.
- About one in ten pupils have insufficient command of English to understand what is happening in lessons.

1. When they enter the school at the age of 11, pupils' overall attainment is usually well below average. The attainment of pupils at the start of Year 7, as measured by their results in the national tests taken at the age of 11 in English, mathematics and science is very low when compared with the national average.

2. Pupils' results in national tests at the age of 14 are very low and in GCSE examinations at the age of 16 are well below average compared with all schools in the country. When compared with their previous attainment in national tests this, therefore, represents satisfactory achievement by the age of 14 and good achievement by the age of 16. When results in tests and examinations are compared with the same range of prior attainment of pupils in similar schools, however, pupils' overall achievement is seen to be good.

3. In 2001, results in the national tests for 14-year-olds were very low compared with all schools. Results in English, mathematics and science have been very low since the school opened in 1998. Achievement has been satisfactory in these tests in relation to tests taken in the primary school three years previously at the age of 11; moreover, when compared with similar schools, pupils at Fir Vale obtained results at the same levels as pupils in these schools. This is a more accurate reflection of the achievement of pupils during Years 7 to 9. It can be seen that results in these tests have improved significantly since 1999, notably in mathematics and science. Improvement in English has been less owing to the weak literacy skills of many pupils and some have poor command of the English language. The standards of work seen in classes and in the analysis of pupils' work are better than the results of tests but are well below average.

4. Results were below average in English, low in mathematics and well below average in science in the 2001 GCSE examinations. However, compared with schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, results in English were well above average, in mathematics were below average and in science were above average. An even more positive picture is seen when the school's results are compared with schools with similar prior attainment as Fir Vale two years previously. When this comparison is made, results by Fir Vale pupils in English and science were well above average and those in mathematics were average. Overall, therefore, achievement in these three subjects is good.

5. Pupils achieve well because the teaching is good and pupils are keen to do well. The very effective management of the learning support faculty in combination with the heads of faculty in English, mathematics and science ensures that clear procedures track pupils' achievement effectively. As a result pupils learn at an appropriate secure and steady rate. The gradual introduction of the three-part lesson in English and mathematics as the new strategy for literacy and numeracy during Years 7 to 9 gets underway, is beginning to have an impact upon pupils' skills of oracy, literacy and numeracy and is gradually raising standards. This marks an improvement since a previous monitoring process four months prior to the inspection. However, there remains a lot of ground to make up in these basic skills and teaching does not always ensure that the groundwork of attention to detail and accuracy in spoken and written language or mathematical calculation is insisted upon. When this attention is missing, pupils' other successes in their learning are diminished.

However, in mathematics, for example, it is particularly evident in the introduction to many lessons that pupils are quickly engaged in mental activity of suitable difficulty and challenge. At best, pupils are using their developing skills of literacy in most subjects to positive effect. In science, well-planned programmes of work provide pupils with opportunities to investigate through experimentation. The planning ensures that stimulating experiences in relevant scientific contexts motivate pupils and maximise their achievement.

6. In 2001, the school's GCSE results overall were well below average compared with all schools in the proportion of pupils gaining five or more passes at the higher grades A* to C and in five or more across the whole range of grades A* to G. These results, however, have improved steadily over the school's first four years: in 1998, 10 per cent of pupils obtained five or more A* to C grades and 79 per cent five or more A* to G; in 2001 these percentages had improved to 23 per cent and maintained at 79 per cent. The school is justifiably proud of its success in matching its challenging targets in the GCSE examinations of 2001. The performance of the school is put in sharp perspective when compared with the two categories of similar schools. Compared with schools with a similar percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals, the school's overall performance was average. Compared to schools with similar prior attainment in tests two years previously, the school's overall performance was well above average. In consequence, pupils' overall achievement during Years 10 and 11 is good. In GCSE examinations, pupils performed especially well in science, ICT and drama where results matched or almost matched the national average at A* to C. Across the full range of grades A* to G, the school matched or almost matched the national average in English, ICT, art and design, geography, religious education, English literature, drama, German, Spanish, Arabic and Urdu.

7. Within the school, the most successful subjects were Arabic, drama and Urdu. Girls performed well in history but it was one of the weakest subjects for boys. Both girls and boys performed least well in physical education. Overall girls performed better than boys. Girls generally perform better than boys and the difference remains an area for improvement. There are some signs of this, for boys respond well to the technology of the interactive whiteboards. Moreover, the school's policy and work on the development of appropriate teaching and learning has boys' achievement as a central focus. Teachers often choose approaches to learning through small achievable steps more conducive to successful learning by boys.

8. The majority of girls, Pakistani and indigenous white, performed best amongst the different ethnic groups in the school. Pakistani boys did better than white boys, but overall, ethnic non-white pupils performed less well than indigenous white pupils. However, Yemeni pupils did well, especially the boys.

9. In all subjects, however, the performance of some pupils is diminished owing to them either being at a very early stage of acquiring English as an additional language or overall poor literacy skills amongst pupils from all backgrounds. These weaknesses are preventing full access to learning in all subjects where language is a key feature. In fact, in some classes there are one or two pupils who do not understand English at all. When these classes lack support from the learning support faculty, these pupils learn little in lessons. Teaching does not always take sufficient account of the need to develop everyday fluency in English as a pre-requisite for learning. There is a greater need in the school for this basic speaking and listening than there is for an understanding of the technical language of subjects. Relevant strategies similar to those for teaching the literacy skills of reading and writing to very young pupils, for example by copying correct formation of words and letters, are insufficiently developed in the school. There is a similar lack of attention to accuracy and detail in the development of skills of numeracy in some teaching. As a result, there is a ceiling beyond which standards rarely improve for a small but significant proportion of pupils.

10. Pupils with English as an additional language comprise about three-quarters of the school's population and include 74 refugees and asylum seekers, some of whom arrive at the school with a very limited knowledge of English and some with little or no formal schooling. Attainment is well below average, but since the school opened in 1998 standards have improved steadily. Evidence gathered during the inspection shows that pupils with English as an additional language, are achieving better than would be expected, given their low levels of literacy on entry to the school. This is because of the school's commitment to the raising of standards, the good teaching and pupils' positive attitudes towards their learning. As seen in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 and in the GCSE overall grades, improvement is at a faster trend than that found nationally. Performance analysis shows that Pakistani girls out-perform Pakistani boys and the Yemeni boys

do better than the girls. Pupils achieve well in those lessons where the teaching methods are well matched to their needs. In physical education lessons for instance, there are good examples of teachers using physical demonstrations and diagrams successfully and speaking slowly and clearly so that pupils make good progress without extra support. However, pupils' progress is much slower when their knowledge of English is so limited that they have difficulty in following the lesson or their stage of language development does not match the demands of the curriculum.

11. Teachers usually employ effective methods to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills but in ICT opportunities are missed by not using the interactive learning program software to help pupils at an early stage of language acquisition.

12. Pupils with special educational needs generally attain the standards expected and achieve well in relation to their standards on entry to the school. Lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work confirm that pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as other pupils. Pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties make very good progress in lessons; they learn to manage their behaviour more effectively, improve their attendance and raise their self-esteem. Pupils with the weakest literacy skills, especially in reading and writing, make the least progress because they receive insufficient specialist teaching either individually or in small groups.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

Strengths

- Most pupils have good attitudes to their work.
- They behave well around the school.
- Relationships throughout the school are good.

Areas for improvement

- At times, some pupils are disinterested, chatter too much, or are slow to settle to independent work.

13. Pupils have good attitudes toward the school and their work. They are well motivated and generally keen to please their teachers. They are clear about the school's code of conduct, which they consider fair. In only a small number of lessons is there any misbehaviour, although small groups of pupils, often boys, may not be interested and slow to settle to independent work. Behaviour in class is nearly always good except where the teacher has weak skills of classroom management or the work is too easy so that pupils become bored. When this happens, a small minority of pupils take advantage, behave badly and disrupt the rest of the class.

14. Around the school pupils are friendly and helpful. At break and lunch times pupils can choose to stay inside or go out. Pupils demonstrate that they are worthy of this trust. They socialise happily in the wide corridors, take part in the good range of clubs and activities offered at lunch times or read in the library. They are proud of their new school buildings and treat them with respect.

15. Relationships are good throughout the school. Pupils of different religions and ethnicity mix well. As is common with most schools there can be occasional outbreaks of tension, but any bullying is dealt with swiftly and effectively and pupils feel safe. The school makes every effort to keep pupils who display challenging behaviour in the school. Permanent exclusion rates are slightly below average. The numbers of short, fixed-term exclusions are high, but are an appropriate strategy in the school's determination to establish good patterns of behaviour.

16. Pupils show respect and concern for others in the 'thought for the day' at tutor times, assemblies and by the way they look after others with any difficulties and raise money for charities.

17. Pupils' attendance and punctuality is improving. Attendance levels are now average and punctuality good. Pupils are responding well to the close attention that teachers and the office staff pay to their attendance. However, despite the school's best effort, some parents still insist on taking their children out of

school during term for extended holidays in the country of their birth. Such absence not only disrupts the education of the pupils concerned, but also lowers the school's attendance figures by some three per cent.

18. Pupils respond positively to opportunities to take responsibility. They are keen to take part in the range of opportunities offered to them. Pupils take turns as receptionists in the foyer helping visitors. Pupils help in the library, take part in running mini enterprises and help run the school council. Parents are rightly pleased with the gains in personal maturity their children make at the school. Pupils' personal development, therefore, is good.

19. The attitudes of pupils with special educational needs are good. They cooperate with their teachers and get on well together. Even pupils with the most severe emotional and behaviour problems generally show respect and consideration for their teachers.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

Strengths

- Learning and achievement are good as a result of good teaching.
- Teachers have high expectations of themselves and of pupils.
- The learning support faculty makes a very good contribution to the effective learning of many pupils.

Areas for improvement

- Despite the early work begun by members of the learning support faculty, about one in ten pupils do not understand what is happening in lessons. Most class teachers are not yet practising appropriate skills to improve the English of these pupils.

20. Learning is good overall and pupils achieve well because they make good progress in lessons. They consolidate their knowledge and increase their understanding of work in most subjects by concentrating well and trying to do their best. Their good behaviour and very positive attitudes contribute to the progress pupils make in lessons. Pupils respect teachers and enjoy good relationships with them. They want to learn and have a positive and purposeful approach in lessons most of the time. The school is successful in sustaining attendance at average levels as most pupils enjoy being at school. This contributes to the continuity of their learning experiences. The mobility of one in twelve pupils, on the other hand, has a negative impact on such continuity of learning.

21. Pupils respond well to the expectations the school has of them. They have a commitment to work hard and to improve their performance. They respect each other's feelings and are empathetic when sharing work, for example in group activities in drama lessons. They cooperate well with each other and with teachers. They keenly engage in the outstanding and wide range of extra-curricular activities. They appreciate being in this new school and its fine building and show a pride in it.

22. Teachers do not settle for half; they have high expectations of most pupils. Teachers encourage pupils to work hard. Pupils respond to opportunities to learn actively and the best teaching uses a variety of methods to support and encourage learning. Most teachers make increasingly good use of assessment of pupils' work and progress to detect underachievement and plan for success. They set suitable targets for pupils to improve their work. Very good relationships between pupils and between teachers and pupils create a purposeful atmosphere for working. Pupils of all levels of attainment have very positive attitudes and get on with their work steadfastly in the majority of lessons. Pupils know what they are expected to learn and how they can improve because teachers planning is outstanding with progression in mind. At best, teachers share the objectives of the lesson with pupils and review the success in achieving these at the end of the lesson.

23. The school is trying hard to improve continually the quality of learning and teaching. The arrangements for the professional development of staff are taken very seriously and are effective except that more training is needed in giving subject teachers the skills to teach literacy skills and English as an additional language

more effectively. Sometimes, because the school is committed to all teachers playing a key role in teaching and learning in these areas, there is a lack of pragmatic flexibility in using alternative groupings of pupils, in short bursts, to meet immediate needs. The work of the learning support faculty is important in training other colleagues and being willing to show such flexibility when the need is clear. The readiness to share good practice and teach in partnership with colleagues is a strength of the school's improvement planning. It leads to a consistency of good teaching within subjects.

24. Pupils with English as an additional language are generally well taught when members of the learning support faculty with specialist skills in teaching English as an additional language are working alongside the class teacher. When this support is not possible learning is less effective; this was evident in lessons in mathematics, modern languages and geography. However, the recent introduction of partnership teaching between subject teachers and members of the learning support faculty enables most pupils to make good progress in learning about the subject and also in gaining fluency and confidence in expressing themselves in English. Teachers usually have a good knowledge of pupils' needs, as set out in the individual support plans, and most are successful in adapting teaching styles and learning materials to pupils' requirements and in ensuring that pupils know what they have to do to succeed. For example, pupils make excellent progress when the aims for a lesson are clear to them and they benefit from the very effective partnership between a subject teacher and a member of the learning support faculty with expertise in teaching English as an additional language. Such lessons are very carefully planned with challenging questions to make pupils think. Pupils are identified for particular support to meet their learning needs and the support teacher prepares a list of the key words in the mother tongue to aid understanding. For example, good support was given in one lesson to Urdu and Arabic speakers and the lesson included a variety of activities to develop pupils' communication skills. Where learning is satisfactory rather than good it is often because subject teachers have not yet established successful techniques of drawing out less confident speakers and also because pupils have difficulty in carrying out tasks because they do not understand basic words.

25. Teaching is usually good and often very good and occasionally excellent. It is unsatisfactory only on rare occasions. Teaching is generally effective in meeting the needs of most pupils. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is usually satisfactory in most subjects and pupils acquire and improve their basic skills in literacy, ICT and numeracy. Nonetheless, insufficient time is spent in ensuring that all pupils have access to learning by giving constant attention to accuracy and detail for those pupils who have difficulty with English or where general levels of literacy are low. Learning is most effective with these pupils, quite a large minority having deficiencies in literacy skills, when supported by members of the learning support faculty. Achieving improvement is difficult, however, for class teachers alone even though the school is gradually training them in the skills of these areas of learning.

26. Throughout the school teaching is very good in religious education and good in English, mathematics, science, art and design, drama, geography, ICT, all modern languages and physical education. It is good in history in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Teaching is also satisfactory in design and technology and music in Years 7 to 9. Two important features contribute towards pupils' good achievement. Most teachers use their very good knowledge of their specialist subject to enthuse the pupils and encourage them to achieve as well as possible. Secondly, the planning of most lessons is excellent and effective in ensuring pupils' learning proceeds at a demanding pace through the use of a range of interesting and carefully timed activities matched well to that with which pupils can cope. Teachers link the work to past and future learning. Teachers make good use of probing questions and relevant discussion to check pupils' understanding.

27. Many of the features common to the very best teaching observed in several subjects were observed in a particularly successful religious education lesson with Year 10 that examined a Christian community and the nature of Faith. The interaction between the pupils and the teacher, use of probing questions and thoughtful, extended answers of pupils developed into a high level conversation on the nature of faith and belief. The lesson was planned in careful sections, one leading on to another, and pupils followed the logic of the debate in a lesson that moved at a fast pace. The complexities of the strife between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland were discussed in very mature terms. Pupils' listening skills helped the learning to be effective. The teacher made good use of source material and pupils responded with careful and neat written

work and practised research skills effectively. The teacher led pupils into a number of significant challenges, used time effectively through a variety of tasks and within an ambience of good relationships. Learning in the lesson, therefore, was excellent.

28. Similarly in a physical education lesson with Year 7, pupils worked effectively in teams to undertake a range of physical tasks set as challenges and requiring initiative to undertake them successfully – for example picking up an object from a large mat without touching the mat with any part of the body. The teacher evaluated the way groups approached the task and in an evaluative discussion drew out principles that were transferable to other situations. The pupils enjoyed this activity, had a high level of engagement and learned effectively. They worked cooperatively and supported one another.

29. In an excellent science lesson with a lower group in Year 10 about the functions of the digestive system and enzymes the teacher worked well with a member of the learning support faculty in meeting the needs of Somali boys at a very early stage of acquiring English. The teacher's enthusiasm and secure knowledge of her subject, together with imaginative use of the interactive whiteboard, led to pupils contributing with enthusiasm to the naming of parts of the alimentary canal. This lesson, too, was notable for the high expectations of the teacher and the pace at which the lesson proceeded. Pupils completed a sequence of tasks accurately and answered questions to check their learning correctly and eagerly. There was good, active and well-focused discussion within the lesson and the support given to the Somali boy meant that he was able to understand the main features of the work. Excellent joint planning helped this lesson to be successful. It was well structured and taught; a range of languages was used in the lesson [Arabic, Urdu, Somali] to ensure understanding of the scientific learning of demanding processes. The objectives of the lesson were achieved and noted by the teachers and pupils.

30. Teaching that is satisfactory or, sometimes, unsatisfactory, lacks some of these attributes. For example, in a music lesson with Year 8 about composing short pieces to be played with percussion instruments, the teacher did not manage to get the working atmosphere right. Pupils did not have the skills of independent working in pairs to complete the task set and despite several good features the teacher's lesson plan was too rigid and did not take account of the previous learning of pupils. An English lesson with Year 8 was challenging for the teacher's skills of classroom management. In not fully meeting the challenge, the lesson stuttered from difficulty to difficulty, lacked pace and a clear purpose and pupils became restless and uncooperative. The expectations the teacher had of work and behaviour were not high enough. This lesson, too, lacked the flexibility to cope with inappropriate behaviour caused by pupils becoming restless as the same style of teaching went on for too long throughout the lesson. Pupils had no opportunity for active involvement in their learning. At the end of the lesson, as though realising the need for variety, the teacher introduced the convention of 'hot-seating' to explore a character in the novel that had previously been read round the class. The change in the pupils' level of engagement was immediate, but it was too late for there remained little of the lesson left to develop the ideas emerging. By the end of the lesson the pupils had learned little. Overall weaknesses in class management and planning resulted in unsatisfactory learning and attitudes of pupils.

31. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. Lesson plans take into account pupils' needs from reference to their individual education plans and the methods teachers use are appropriate and effective, enabling pupils to make good gains in acquiring new knowledge and learning new skills. Relationships within the classroom are good so that pupils try their best and maximise learning opportunities. Teachers' skills in managing negative behaviour are often excellent. This was particularly evident in one lesson where a Year 11 pupil with severe behavioural and emotional problems tried hard to provoke the teacher into a confrontation situation, refusing to work and making negative comments. Very skilful management by the teacher eventually brought the pupil round to a cooperative attitude and by the end of the lesson some good work had been produced and progress made. In only one lesson was teaching unsatisfactory. In this lesson the temporary teacher was not aware of pupils' individual needs, the work set was too easy for most of the class so that they became bored and fidgety and ineffective management strategies allowed a small minority of pupils to behave badly and disrupt the lesson. Learning support assistants are well used and sometimes consulted by teachers planning lessons as to the most appropriate teaching strategies to adopt with pupils with special educational needs.

32. The quality of teaching has improved year by year since 1998. Monitoring visits have recorded steady improvement. This is a result of a concerted effort led by senior management. There is now a significant Teaching and Learning Policy that is being implemented with some success. The overall quality of teaching is good in all years. In Years 7 to 9 teaching is good or better in 66 per cent of lessons, being very good or excellent in 25 per cent of all lessons. Apart from two per cent of unsatisfactory teaching, the remainder, 31 per cent, is satisfactory. In Years 10 and 11 teaching in 70 per cent of lessons is good or better, 23 per cent being good or excellent. Apart from two per cent of unsatisfactory teaching, the remainder, 28 per cent, is satisfactory.

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

Strengths

- There is a variety of alternative provision in Years 10 and 11 that ensures all pupils are motivated to learn.
- There is equality of access and opportunity for different groups of pupils.
- The community makes an outstanding contribution to pupils' learning and the excellent links with primary schools and colleges enable learning to progress from stage to stage.
- The range of modern languages reflects the cultural diversity of pupils.

Areas for improvement

- The provision for drama in Years 7 to 9 is haphazard and insufficiently systematic.
- Skills of numeracy are not developed in those subjects where there is the opportunity.

33. The curricular provision is very good. It is inclusive and provides a framework within which the vision and ethos of the school are successfully incorporated into its practice. The curriculum has continually developed since the school opened in 1998 in response to the increasing numbers and specific needs of its pupils. It is broad, balanced and relevant and provides equally for boys and girls and the different ethnic groups in the school.

34. The quality and range of learning opportunities are very good in religious education. They are good in English, science, modern languages, art and design, ICT and physical education and satisfactory in other subjects. In English in Years 7 to 9 the curriculum plan does not involve drama as required by the National Curriculum. Drama, therefore is not a systematic part of the programme of study of all teachers of English. The shortage of time for art and design in Years 7 and 8 restrains the development of skills and single periods restrict the teaching of physical education. Strategies for teaching numeracy across the curriculum are not fully in place.

35. In Years 7 to 11 the curriculum includes all the National Curriculum subjects as well as religious education and personal, social and health education (PSHE). Statutory requirements are met. In Year 7 all pupils take one modern language from Arabic, French, German or Urdu. In Years 8 and 9 they all select a second language from this list and the option to learn Spanish is an added alternative in Year 9. This wide provision of languages is an innovation that reflects the cultural diversity and backgrounds of the pupils.

36. The school makes good provision for pupils with English as an additional language, and in areas such as the range of courses in Years 10 and 11 and the opportunities for extra curricular activities, the provision is very good. The school is wholeheartedly committed to the principles of inclusion and the curriculum is accessible to all pupils. All pupils are taught in mainstream classes. The newly introduced system of partnership teaching provides well targeted language support in the classroom across all years and at its best is very effective. However, mainstream teaching is less successful for new arrivals who have very limited knowledge of English, especially in large classes where pupils require individual help and there is no support available. Pupils' target group records contain clear goals for improvement and are effective in ensuring that particular needs in language development are identified. Where pupils are grouped by attainment there are good opportunities for them to move up from lower groups as they make progress in the subject and in their knowledge of English. However there is not enough flexibility in the present provision to meet the specific

needs of pupils at an early stage of English language acquisition. In order to improve the provision for pupils with English as an additional language the department needs to develop greater flexibility in the curricular organisation and the grouping of pupils so that the specific requirements of pupils at an early stage of language acquisition are fully met.

37. The options in Years 10 and 11 include GNVQ health and social care and an accredited communications and study skill course. The school aims to provide an appropriate, relevant and challenging course for each individual pupil. Significant numbers have a work-related education. Academic GCSE courses are balanced with alternative courses wherever this is appropriate. The variety and flexibility of this structure are a strength of the curriculum. All pupils collect evidence in the "Sheffield Passport" which counts towards the national key skills qualifications at levels 1 and 2.

38. The school is implementing the new strategies for improving literacy and numeracy skills. At present provision for the development of skills of literacy are in place and beginning to have a positive impact, although it is a major challenge still to raise the levels of literacy of many pupils. The provision for the development of skills of numeracy is less advanced although there is a policy in place. Its implementation requires a greater awareness in teachers of the opportunities that exist within subjects to apply skills of numeracy.

39. The provision for extra-curricular activities that enrich the curriculum is very good. The school provides a wide range of these activities at lunchtime and before and after school. Many staff make a very good contribution to these activities and this work does much to extend the learning experiences of many pupils.

40. There is a good range of sporting activities, for example, basketball, boys' and girls' football, cricket, badminton and athletics. They involve about a third of pupils with significantly more boys than girls taking part. Many subjects and the learning support faculty provide extra help for coursework and the learning resource centre is busy each lunchtime. There are fourteen clubs, trips to the theatre and art galleries and activities relating to the cultural and religious needs and interests of the pupils. Carefully prepared exchange programmes with schools in Ireland and France enable Muslim girls to take part. Musical activities, including instrumental lessons, are developing and the school is preparing for its first major production of music and drama.

41. The taught programme of personal, social and health education is good. The planning for continuity and progression is very good. The lessons are well planned and backed up by comprehensive material. Form tutors teach the programme in the last period of the day. There is a wide variation in the quality and skills of the teaching in this subject. Whilst in the lessons seen the teaching was never less than satisfactory, it was best when the teacher had very good subject knowledge and was able to expand upon the provided materials and use different styles of teaching, as, for example role-play, to engage pupils.

42. In consultation with parents the school has drawn up a draft policy for sex education, which sensitively takes account of the parents' differing cultural beliefs. Boys and girls are taught separately for sex education and the school health adviser helps with the lessons.

43. Careers education is also taught as part of the programme of personal, social and health education and provides pupils with satisfactory guidance. Currently pupils do not have easy access to the careers library materials to enable independent research. All pupils in Year 10 have the opportunity of two weeks' work experience. This is part of a well-planned programme validated through the South Yorkshire Key Skills Passport. Some pupils are also able to take work experience placements abroad, which provides them with valuable experience.

44. A particularly good feature of personal and social education is the way citizenship is taught. The school allocates five full 'conference' days to this important aspect. These cover politics and democracy, the local community, law and human rights. Recently pupils enjoyed the activities and visits in the politics and democracy day, which culminated in the election of the school council.

45. All pupils, including those for whom English as an additional language, benefit greatly from the school's very strong links with the community and other educational institutions. For example, connections with a local firm have led to work experience opportunities in France for Year 10 pupils, and the Sheffield University outreach programme has been successful in increasing the numbers of university students from the area over recent years. When the school opened there was a clear realisation that its success depended to a large extent on the support of the community. There have been many developments. As a result the contribution of the community to pupils' learning is outstanding and the school has excellent links with partner institutions. Despite the progress, the school is not complacent and these areas still constitute part of the improvement plan.

46. This contribution ranges from parents who come into the school to listen to pupils read to the provision of work placements for every Year 10 pupil in local firms and businesses. The school provides courses for parents in literacy and numeracy in order that they can support their children's learning at home. Visiting speakers, for example the police, are involved in the PSHE programme and contribute to the citizenship days. A local bank provides the expertise for the mini-enterprise scheme. A local college of further education and seven outside agencies provide different types of work-related experiences, self-esteem and behaviour management courses for a significant number of pupils who otherwise may not attend school. For example, the Rashni Citywide Youth Project works with young girls whose attendance is weak and are at risk of underachieving. The Riverside Project develops vocational and administrative skills and a local youth club provides courses on personal development. "Spread Your Wings" has supplied the staff for the learning resource centre, a business mentor and a community development worker. All these initiatives are beginning to have a positive impact on standards as results rise year by year.

47. Relationships with partner primary schools and colleges are excellent and the programme of transition is very good. Both Year 5 and 6 pupils visit the school for lessons. There is an open evening for families in the autumn term and in the late summer term induction days are held for Year 6 pupils. These days are followed by parents' evenings. A very good innovation is the exchange of Christmas cards, letters resulting in buddying, the pairing of Year 7 with Year 6 pupils. There are jointly planned transition projects in English, mathematics and science. In addition geography, history and physical education have curriculum links with the three main primary feeder schools. A number of joint trips have taken place and with one primary school a video conferencing link on drugs awareness was very successful. The transfer of records is very effective and enables the school to place the pupils into groups accurately. There are links with higher education institutions and the university outreach programme seeks to raise the awareness of young people and their parents in the opportunities for higher education. The school provides a number of places for students on initial teacher-training.

48. Pupils with special educational needs have full access to the National Curriculum and all statutory requirements are met. Curricular provision is very good in Years 10 and 11. In Year 10 the Youth Award Challenge from the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) affords pupils the opportunity, through various challenges, to develop key skills in areas such as ICT. In Years 10 and 11 initiatives such as 'Wheelzone', 'Cellarspace', and 'Workstart' provide pupils with a valuable enhancement to their GCSE and vocational courses. In all years, pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties benefit from opportunities to work in small groups, learning how to manage the negative aspects of their behaviour more successfully and to raise their self-esteem. However, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils with very weak basic literacy skills to have specialist teaching in reading, writing and spelling, either in small groups or individually. There are no paired reading or spelling workshop opportunities and although a computerised independent learning system is installed on the schools' network of computers, it is not sufficiently used.

The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Strengths

- The planning for assemblies and collective worship is good.
- Teachers are good role models.
- Expectations of pupils' moral behaviour are clear.
- Pupils' own religious and cultural backgrounds are used well as a feature of their learning.

- Residential opportunities contribute to social and cultural development.

Areas for development

- Although individual assemblies are well planned, the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship for all pupils is not met.
- There are inconsistencies between subjects in the level of spiritual development they provide.

49. The school values its pupils highly and this is reflected in the quality of its overall provision for their personal development, which is very good. It succeeds in its aim to integrate this provision as far as possible throughout the life of the school. This is well exemplified in its innovative procedures for collective worship. This is centred on a weekly theme from which a daily focus for reflection is drawn. The planning for this is good and the school takes account of the backgrounds of pupils so that they feel comfortable and can participate without compromising their own beliefs and practices. As the school does not have a space large enough to accommodate all its pupils at the same time, two assemblies each week are provided for year groups and the responsibility lies with the form tutors on the other days. Readings and ideas for reflection and prayer, suitably adapted for each age group, are provided for tutors in a way that allows them to make good use of the interactive boards in each classroom. However, although the theme, ideas for reflection and prayer, are usually displayed in the form room, teachers do not always respond effectively and the legal requirement for collective worship is not always met. During the week of inspection, the theme was 'self discipline'. This was made relevant to pupils' lives by using it as a focus for them to contribute to the shoe-box appeal for disadvantaged children in eastern Europe. The principle of self-discipline is also highlighted in fasting and prayer during Ramadan, which is seriously observed by many pupils. Pupils are attentive and respectful in their response to the experiences provided in assemblies. The themes are also taken up and reinforced in some lessons during the week. A quiet room for prayer and reflection is available to all faith communities represented in the school. However, provision in subjects tends to be inconsistent. In physical education it is very good, particularly because of the way that pupils' contributions are highly valued in lessons and because of the way in which the teaching reinforces and develops their self-esteem. In history, pupils have opportunities to reflect upon the human condition and are interested in learning about people of different life experiences and beliefs from their own. Overall, the provision for pupils' spiritual development is good.

50. The school makes its expectations about moral behaviour very clear to pupils and these are reinforced in well-designed posters displayed throughout the school, which set out its expectations of behaviour and attitudes in the classroom and elsewhere. The provision for pupils' moral development is very good. Teachers are good role models for pupils and treat them with respect and courtesy. Provision for pupils' moral development is made through most subjects, notably personal, social and health education which deals with issues such as smoking and substance abuse and has good arrangements for dealing with sex education. These take account of the beliefs and traditions of the Faith communities represented in the school. The compulsory course in religious education which all pupils follow in Years 10 and 11, also deals with a range of moral issues that it explores within the context of the value systems of different Faith communities. Pupils with special educational needs relating to behaviour, benefit from experiences that enable them to understand what actually constitutes selfish behaviour. Teachers help them to develop the concept of trust. The history curriculum is rich in opportunities to explore moral issues such as slavery, warfare or the development of equality between the sexes or different groups within society. Environmental issues are dealt with in geography and moral issues feature in texts studied in English.

51. Provision for pupils' social development is very good. The design of the new buildings, into which the school has recently moved, has taken into account the need for suitable spaces where pupils can meet and talk informally without congesting corridors and the other public areas. Pupils are encouraged to consider the feelings and physical needs of people who are less fortunate themselves through involvement in charitable activities. Their initiative and sense of responsibility are both used and encouraged through representation on the school council. Members are given real responsibility. All pupils, through their representatives, have a say in the life of the school.

52. Most subjects also provide well for pupils' social development through the positive interest taken by teachers in their pupils as well as the range of opportunities they offer in lessons, for pupils to work with each

other in pairs and groups. Initiatives such as the breakfast club also make a positive contribution. The developing range of opportunities which pupils have for cultural visits and exchanges as well as field trips also contribute to their social development. The work experience programme includes opportunities for a small number of pupils to undertake this in France. The school provides very good opportunities for the social development of pupils with English as an additional language, for example in team working for local competitions and business enterprise projects, and in the skiing and go-carting trips organised for Muslim girls.

53. The school makes good use of the strength implicit in the cultural diversity represented in its pupils, teaching and support staff to ensure that pupils' cultural development is very well supported. Pupils are provided with opportunities to appreciate their own cultural traditions and those of other cultures within the school community. This occurs, for example, in the way in which Muslim pupils participate in fasting and prayer during Ramadan, or through subjects such as design and technology and art and design, where different cultural traditions serve as an inspiration for work in graphics, textiles and painting. The exchange visits with schools in France and Ireland offer very good opportunities for the development of cultural awareness of pupils with English as an additional language as they experience family life in different countries and give hospitality to pupils of different cultural backgrounds. Pupils are also able to take part in and experience cultural activity through drama, physical education and music.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

Strengths

- There is very good all-round care for pupils' welfare in a culture that promotes academic success.
- The management of behaviour is effective.
- Procedures for encouraging attendance are excellent.
- Relationships in the school are good and contribute to pupils' personal development.

54. This is a school which takes very good all round care of pupils with rigorous pastoral care linked to academic success. Pupils' personal development is monitored and fostered very effectively. The teams of senior, associate and form tutors have regular meetings, which include external support agencies to oversee pupils' progress. There is a comprehensive programme of personal, social and health education, which is complemented by projects to raise the self-esteem of targeted groups of pupils.

55. The school monitors the performance of pupils with English as an additional language in a very effective way. The new systems introduced by the learning support faculty for identifying, assessing and monitoring pupils in need of extra help are very good because they are comprehensive and rigorous and are increasingly used effectively by teachers, support staff and pastoral staff. Individual support plans give clear guidance on the kind of help which the pupil requires, and staff now use this information as a focus in their lesson planning. Structured learning materials in the different subjects, such as writing frames in English and history and flow charts in design and technology, are generally effective in helping pupils to organise their responses coherently. However, on occasion they lack a clear example of what is required. Arrangements for recording academic and personal achievement are very good. Learning support staff know their pupils well and their monitoring records are now effective in tracking the progress made by pupils towards the targets identified on the target group records. Pupils from different ethnic backgrounds receive very good help from staff who speak their mother tongues in all the main languages spoken in the school. There are very effective arrangements for assessing the needs of asylum seekers and refugees and enabling them to settle in quickly. The learning support faculty has made a good start in using the accumulated data effectively to guide curriculum planning and pastoral support.

56. Health and safety procedures are very good. The building is considerably designed to cater for the needs of the physically impaired. Child protection procedures which comply with legislation are in place and coordinated by a strong and experienced team. Several staff are also trained counsellors who support pupils as does the full time health adviser. The school opens early and pupils can come into the buildings and have breakfast in the dining room. The inspection took place during Ramadan and the school gave appropriate care and consideration to the needs of pupils who were fasting.

57. Pupils meet with their form tutors for a registration meeting in the morning and for a longer form period in the afternoon. These times are used constructively and help establish good relationships. The school copes well with the demands of integrating and settling the relatively high number of pupils who arrive part way through the academic year, some with no English or little previous schooling.

58. The systems to promote and encourage good behaviour are very effective. Supervision levels are good. A sociable, yet orderly atmosphere is evident around the school. Letters of praise are sent home when pupils perform well; this is popular with parents and pupils alike. Behaviour and exclusions are closely monitored in respect of gender, ethnicity and incidents to identify and respond effectively to any trends.

59. The procedures to deter any oppressive behaviour are effective. The Fir Vale Week includes many activities and workshops to promote an anti-bullying culture. Pupils complete a confidential questionnaire, which enables the school to monitor incidences and introduce support accordingly. Parents and pupils express confidence in the system.

60. There are excellent procedures to encourage good attendance. A bilingual clerk contacts home on the first day any pupil is away and encourages pupils to be on time. Pupils who have good combined attendance and punctuality records are eligible for a prize draw with even further incentives for those with 100 per cent attendance. There are prominent displays about attendance rates in the foyer. Attendance is checked at all lessons. The suitably high profile given to attendance has secured a creditable year-by-year rise in attendance and punctuality levels.

61. The procedures to assess pupils' attainment and monitor their progress are very good. There is comprehensive baseline data together with regularly assessed modules of work. National tests together with predicted grades for pupils are analysed thoroughly. The assessment data is used to very good effect to modify the curriculum or revise the grouping arrangements. Pupils are well informed about their progress and standards of work. Pupils who are at risk of underachieving are identified. Selected pupils are mentored to help improve their motivation and achievement.

62. Procedures for identifying pupils with special educational needs are good. Methods for bringing concerns to the attention of the learning support faculty are excellent. Pupils are well supported. Individual education plans are very good with relevant, attainable targets set in a suitable time frame. Pastoral support plans are excellent. Learning mentors provide very good support particularly in raising pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem. Annual review documentation is an excellent tool for providing further on-going support. Learning support assistants provide very good feedback to the head of learning support through record sheets that evaluate, for each lesson, how well learning targets have been achieved. They work closely and productively with classroom teachers, though occasionally a lack of training restricts their effectiveness. Only pupils with the weakest basic skills receive insufficient support from specialist teachers to help improve their reading and writing. These pupils are mostly taught in largish classes in bottom groups alongside pupils who sometimes have been placed there for poor behaviour and not because of their prior attainment.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

Strengths

- The school has established excellent links with parents.
- Parents are very pleased with the school.

63. Parents have very positive views about the school. They demonstrate increasing confidence in the school and the school is becoming an increasingly popular choice with local parents. Nearly all parents say that their children like school, make good progress and that teaching and school management are good. Parents are pleased with the new buildings and the quality of care their children receive. There was a high response rate to the questionnaire and an impressive number of parents indicated total satisfaction with the school.

64. The inspectors agree with parent's positive views. Whilst parents have a high degree of satisfaction with the school, some would like more frequent information on their children's progress and find the written

comment in the end-of-year reports is too brief. The inspectors thought that the end of year reports were good as they gave a clear picture of children's attainment.

65. There are excellent links between school and home. Parents find the school welcoming and meet with a professional response to their queries. The school meets the needs of its multicultural community very well. Translated material is prepared and interpreters are available as required. As part of the 'Spread Our Wings project' the school has appointed members of staff to coordinate many innovative projects to involve parents in education and to focus on relevant local issues. A modern foreign languages exchange programme has been started and parents were invited to visit the families in France and Ireland prior to their child's visit. The recent girls' fashion show was a social success, attended by 300 women and raising money for 'Children in Need'. Recent focus groups and workshops on issues concerning drugs and ways to counteract bullying were well attended. Parents enjoy the computing, Internet-taster sessions, literacy and numeracy evenings provided by the school.

66. The school has a very effective partnership with the parents of pupils with English as an additional language. It provides very good opportunities for all parents to become actively involved in their children's education and develop their own skills and expertise. For example, there are very efficient systems in place to ensure that parents are well informed about school events and parents' evenings. Work with the community in the "Spread Your Wings" initiative has provided a wide range of programmes such as the numeracy awareness course and the 'on-line' day, which have given parents an informed understanding of how they can help their children at home. Members of staff are on hand to translate at parents' evenings and to make home visits when necessary. Parents in their turn respond in a variety of ways, such as listening to pupils' reading, organising out of school activities such as skiing and go-carting and taking part in the school exchange visits to France and Ireland.

67. Parents give good support to the school and their children's education. Their good levels of attendance at the annual consultation meetings show this, as does their increasing interest and participation in events run at the school. The lunch-time robotics club is run by a parent and several parents help with sporting events. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept well informed about their children's progress and are fully consulted and involved in annual reviews.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Strengths

- The headteacher and senior management leadership team provide excellent leadership and vision.
- The governing body is well informed and serves the school rigorously as its critical friend.
- The contribution of senior year tutors and heads of faculty are significant to the success of the school.
- Staffing and the provision of resources for learning are good.
- Accommodation is excellent.

Area for improvement

- Pupils have insufficient familiarity with the use of books. Management does not sufficiently encourage teachers to help pupils value the use of books for pleasure or gathering information.

Senior management

68. The excellent leadership of the headteacher is an important factor in the school's success in its Fresh Start status; his work and influence are key factors that have contributed to the judgement that this is a good school. It may be a 'young' school but inspectors are clear that qualities have been established that allow the description 'good' to apply to Fir Vale as much as any other school deemed to be good. The headteacher has a presence around the school that is valued by pupils and staff; he is approachable and influential in establishing the desire in staff and pupils to strive for the very best and for individual aspirations to be realised. The school motto 'Making Dreams a Reality' is less and less of a dream and increasingly a reality for pupils, staff, parents and, importantly, the community of which the school is a part. The headteacher has a good

knowledge of the pupils. He leads by persuasion and personal example although his leadership is often the result of listening to pupils and staff. He has a senior management leadership team that is a significant asset to the school and a driving force with the headteacher in building a self-reviewing school that is always trying to improve on its previous best. The school has a determination to succeed. It has a commitment to assist pupils of all backgrounds and levels of attainment to achieve the personal best and highest possible standards in their school-work and in their all-round personal development. The headteacher and his senior colleagues are successful and energetic; they have gained the respect of staff and parents.

69. Procedures for evaluating the school's performance are very effective and embedded in the school's structure. Systems are firmly in place for supporting and monitoring all aspects of the school's work, most significantly the learning and teaching on a day-to-day basis. This drive for ongoing improvement is led by a deputy headteacher who, with colleagues, has evolved a policy, the practice of which involves teachers teaching together in partnership and class observation using clear criteria to determine successes and areas for improvement. There is carefully planned cooperation between the learning support faculty and subject teachers to ensure that the demanding needs of pupils are as well met as possible. Teachers have a shared commitment to improve further the quality of teaching and learning. It is a major achievement of the headteacher and his colleagues that teachers demand challenge and do not want to settle for second best in their own performance.

70. The headteacher and senior managers frequently and rigorously monitor data relating to the school's performance. The deputy headteacher who leads on interpreting data to monitor pupils' performance showed himself to be quickly effective when new data for the new school year was taken into account by inspectors. Senior management is aware of the strengths and areas for improvement. It concentrates suitably on raising attainment, increasing rates of achievement and seeking improvements in the quality of learning and teaching. With the governing body, senior management sets suitably challenging targets for pupils' and faculties' performances in external examinations, after a careful study of individual pupils' past attainment and other relevant data. Pupils know they are expected to do their best and work hard. They respond to such demands very positively.

71. The leadership provided by the recently appointed head of learning support is excellent. He has established a strong team ethos among teaching staff, learning mentors and learning support assistants. He provides a clear direction and focus for the work of the faculty. Excellent documentation and procedures, within a sound theoretical framework, underpin both policy and practice. The faculty development plan, though not costed, is of very good quality. It is a working document through which the progress and development of the faculty's aims is charted and evaluated. A tremendous amount has been achieved in a very short time. Some improvements have still to be realised. These include the tracking of pupils' progress as they move through the school, with more regular testing of pupils' reading and spelling, and better support for pupils with the weakest basic literacy skills through the use of ICT, paired reading sessions and spelling workshops.

Governors

72. The governing body is also a strength of the school. It provides very good and effective leadership with the senior management leadership team in determining the direction and purposes of the school. It questions and delves to ensure that the highest standards are being applied by management in their roles as leaders. It works in critical cooperation to help to ensure that the school provides the best and most relevant education for pupils. It does this effectively since it knows the school well; its strategic planning committee bases its work on a clear knowledge of the strengths of the school and those areas that remain for further or more acute development. However, the governing body does not ensure that a collective act of worship is provided for all pupils each day; this is a statutory requirement.

Middle management

73. Management at this level is good overall. The senior year tutors provide very good, effective leadership and management to the teams of form tutors; together there is a coherent approach to the academic and

personal development of pupils. They help to provide the school with a sense of purpose, order and belonging. The management by heads of faculty is good. They have a good overall view of the work of their departments and the performance of its teachers and pupils. Most are taking the school's principles of self-review and applying them at subject level. With senior management, they agree sensible yet challenging targets for pupils and the department.

74. Management of the provision for pupils with English as an additional language is very good. The coordinator, who took up his post in September, has worked very hard to set up new systems to promote more effective teaching and learning, and has accomplished a great deal in a short time. Very good progress has been made in ensuring that all pupils with English as an additional language are well integrated into mainstream classes. Well focused in-service training has given teachers the confidence to take on the challenge of partnership and inclusive teaching in order to overcome the learning difficulties of pupils with weak literacy skills or who are at a very early stage of acquiring English. This teaching is beginning to have a positive impact on learning strategies and is supporting a wider number of bilingual pupils. The location of the learning support faculty at the heart of the new school building symbolises the way in which the department is no longer on the margins of school life but is a central force for the raising of standards. The staff responsible for pupils with English as an additional language, carry out their various responsibilities very well. They have a strong commitment to improvement and a very good capacity to succeed. However, although there is a good match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum, the present time-tabling arrangements do not allow maximum use to be made of the support available through the ethnic minority achievement grant.

Efficiency

75. Financial planning is very good. The school improvement plan is clearly prioritised. The plan is prudently funded and decisions have been made by governors that ensure that available funds go where they are most needed. For example, a higher than usual proportion of the budget goes to learning support; this is a crucial areas if the standards of all pupils are to improve. The private finance initiative, other grants and the standards fund have been used for their designated purposes. Financial controls are very good and the school always applies the principles of best value. It gives good value for money.

76. The school office staff and reception are welcoming and helpful. They have well-defined roles and provide good administrative and financial support to the school. The school's premises and ground staff are proud of the new school and take care to ensure it maintains its impressive quality. Members of the security staff, for example at the main gate, are cheerful, courteous and helpful.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

77. The school has sufficient teaching staff to fulfil the requirements of the National Curriculum and to meet the needs of all its pupils. However, there is greater need for learning support than is at present met. Some pupils have so little English and such poor literacy skills that they need more help than is currently available. The school is housed in an excellent new building. It has good resources for learning, especially in new technology.

78. Staffing decisions are based firmly on the needs of the curriculum, which is reviewed annually by a core group including heads of faculty. The school has been innovative in its approach to recruitment, training and retention of both teaching and non-teaching staff, some of whom have key roles, for example that of business manager. In-service training of all staff, teaching and non-teaching, has established an all-pervading ethos of inclusion. The school cares well for the professional development of all its staff in return for a high level of commitment and performance, and Investor-in-People Status has recently been achieved. Performance management is in place.

79. The new building represents the fulfilment of a dream, having been planned with a high degree of involvement of key school staff, whose experience has led for example to wide corridors, a natural pattern of circulation, and the strategic location of the offices of senior staff. The building itself is already having an

impact on behaviour, on learning and indirectly on the local community, who supported its first open day with keen interest. In relation to subject teaching, accommodation is very good and in some areas excellent, for example the learning support centre, ICT, music, drama and physical education. Access is possible for all.

80. Resources for learning are as planned, with a strong focus on new technology apparent in every classroom in the form of an interactive white board. These have already made a strong impact on teaching and learning. Four rooms are dedicated computer rooms, and laptop computers bookable by subject teachers can be connected to the school network in any room. Further development is being managed by a project leader with appropriate technical experience and could soon include a language laboratory planned in partnership with other schools. Use of books and other published materials is however less well established. Management is not encouraging teachers sufficiently to help pupils value reading for pleasure or using books for finding out about things.

Conclusion

81. The school has a friendly and positive ethos. It is made up of many cultures, faiths and customs; a strength is the respect in which each is held. This is significant at such a difficult time in world relations. Parents remarked on how important to them it was that mutual respect should be a feature of the school. Pupils are mostly happy at school and proud to be part of a school that senses it is 'going places' and making dreams of individuals their reality. The morale of teachers and pupils is high. The good relationships between teacher and pupils create a good team spirit within the school.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

82. The school has a very good awareness of its strengths and the areas for development are found in the school improvement plan. In order to improve standards further the school should intensify its work on the following issues:

- (1) improve the command of English of those pupils, about one in ten, who are at a very early stage of acquiring the language so that they understand their lessons, especially in Years 7 to 9, by:
 - concentrating more on the development of the common use of conversational language,
 - having flexible approaches to the grouping of pupils who need extra help in acquiring English,
 - whilst being aware of the time it takes for a language to be acquired through exposure to it, increase that exposure through means that attract pupils' interests, such as popular music and sport;

- (2) notwithstanding the good strategies that are in place, improve further the levels of literacy of many pupils, especially their skills in reading and writing, by:
 - paying more attention to accuracy and detail in pupils' writing,
 - agreeing short, intensive periods of time where selected common errors are corrected whenever they occur, sometimes working with small groups with similar particular learning needs,
 - making more use of available ICT software,
 - considering how very young children in Reception and Year 1 classes learn to read and write and whether applying similar methods would help improve skills of literacy in the school.

Whilst not key issues, there are other areas for improvement:

- pupils' skills of numeracy are weak;
- pupils' access to ICT is limited in a number of subjects;
- the school does not provide a daily act of collective worship.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	144
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	38

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	3	32	63	43	3	0	0
Percentage	2.0	22.3	43.8	29.9	2.0	0.0	0.0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	645
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	376

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	20
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	261

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	519

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	94
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	75

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.53
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	2.22
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 (Year 9)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	74	50	124

<i>National Curriculum Test/Task Results</i>		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	13	25	10
	Girls	16	15	17
	Total	29	40	27
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	23 (31)	33 (25)	23 (13)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	7 (3)	6 (7)	10 (1)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	16	25	14
	Girls	17	13	19
	Total	33	38	33
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	27 (28)	30 (31)	27 (19)
	National	65 (64)	69 (66)	64 (61)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	9 (8)	11 (7)	2 (1)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 (Year 11)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	2001	49	43	92

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	7	36	41
	Girls	14	3	39
	Total	21	73	80
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	23 (15)	79 (79)	87 (88)
	National	49.8 (47.4)	86.6 (90.6)	95.9 (95.6)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	26.4 (26)
	National	38.2 (38.4)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	13
Black – African heritage	72
Black – other	0
Indian	1
Pakistani	301
Bangladeshi	4
Chinese	0
White	61
Any other minority ethnic group	193

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black–Caribbean heritage	7	0
Black–African heritage	13	1
Black – other	3	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	49	1
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	26	0
Other minority ethnic groups	33	1

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	46.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	13.8

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	19
Total aggregate hours worked per week	643

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	67.9
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	17.1
Key Stage 4	21.0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000-2001
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	£
Total income	2570072
Total expenditure	2441086
Expenditure per pupil	3983
Balance brought forward from previous year	117897
Balance carried forward to next year	246883

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	14.5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	35.5

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE) <i>FTE means full-time equivalent.</i>	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	1

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out

645

Number of questionnaires returned

390

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	57	37	3	1	2
My child is making good progress in school.	50	43	2	1	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	50	39	6	2	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	47	37	8	5	3
The teaching is good.	52	42	2	1	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	48	40	7	2	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	50	40	3	3	4
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	57	38	1	2	2
The school works closely with parents.	49	39	6	2	8
The school is well led and managed.	49	39	2	2	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	53	41	2	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	45	39	7	1	8

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

ENGLISH

83. Overall, the quality of provision in English is **good**.

Strengths

- Pupils achieve well, and sometimes very well, by the end of Year 11.
- GCSE results have been improving, year on year.
- Good teaching and pupils' positive attitudes contribute to good learning.
- The monitoring and support of pupils are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Standards could rise even further, particularly amongst boys.
- Pupils in the early stages of language acquisition need more support, for many do not understand what is going on in lessons.

84. Standards of work seen during the inspection are well below average in Years 7 to 9 and below average in Years 10 and 11. Pupils' achievement by the end of Year 9, however, in relation to their standards on entry to the school at the start of Year 7, is good. Their achievement by the end of Year 11, in relation to the standards attained at the end of Year 9, is very good. This good progress as they move through the school is the result of good teaching, the positive attitudes of pupils, and the good use of resources to provide a well-planned curriculum. However, pupils are not used to reading books that are of a good quality.

85. Test results in 2001 of pupils at the end of Year 9 were very low in relation to national averages, although not in relation to their prior attainment; in comparison with pupils in similar schools, the results were well above average. Pupils do, in fact, make good progress in Years 7 to 9, particularly girls. Pupils who arrive after the beginning of Year 7 find it difficult to make progress, often as a result of unfamiliarity with the English language. The policy of including them in classes along with other pupils is socially valuable, but there is sometimes insufficient flexibility so that when needed, pupils can be taught in small groups to tackle particular learning needs. Some work of a very low standard was seen during the inspection, particularly from those whose English is still very limited. These pupils struggle in English lessons throughout the school unless they have the support of members of the learning support faculty. This is also true of those pupils with weak skills of literacy. The majority, however, make good progress in lessons and although their work is still below the average national standard, they can be seen developing skills in speaking and listening, reading and writing. Year 8 pupils, for instance, discussed a text in groups, made notes, and presented their work to the rest of the class with some confidence. Year 9 pupils in a higher-attaining group worked well in groups and wrote with understanding about *Macbeth*. Pupils such as these are reaching National Curriculum Level 5, but the test results are not at this level since many pupils without the necessary literacy skills still figure in the final tally. These lower-attaining pupils do not retain learning so readily or sustain concentration for the period of the tests.

86. Very good progress, however, is made in Years 10 and 11, as language acquisition accelerates amongst more of the pupils. An increasing number are obtaining grades A*-C in GCSE examinations, particularly girls. Boys' results are still very low, even further below their national average than girls' are below theirs. But standards overall are improving, as the trend over the past four years shows. In 1998, only 10 per cent of Year 11 pupils reached grade C or above in English. In 2001, nearly a third of pupils obtained at least a C in English and well over a third gained at least a C grade in English literature. However, overall results were well below the national average compared with all schools. What is particularly significant is that many of these good grades came from pupils who had not done so well in their tests at the end of Year 9. A comparison of their results indicates good achievement by the vast majority in relation to their starting point, and very good achievement by those who had done less well in Year 9. Work seen during the inspection confirms this positive trend. A significant number of pupils can produce pieces of extended writing, often

redrafted using ICT for coursework folders, that is worthy of the higher GCSE grades. Most can write competently about literary or non-literary texts, and can discuss their ideas with some clarity in lessons. Their reading, too, improves and higher attainers cope well with set texts. A significant number of pupils each year, however, do not reach a standard sufficiently high for them to be entered for GCSE examinations. This applies to up to 30 per cent in English and up to 20 per cent in English literature, although 13 per cent of these pupils are disapplied from taking the examination in English because of the short time they have been in the country.

87. Teaching and learning throughout the school are good and ensure good progress in lessons. The rare unsatisfactory teaching, clearly the exception, is characterised by unsatisfactory management of pupils and low expectations of them. The usual picture was of good teaching – well-planned lessons with pace and a sense of direction. Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of their subject and high expectations of their pupils. They exercise a strong control over their classes and employ a good range of methods. The interactive whiteboards in every classroom are an excellent resource, and teachers are already showing versatility in the way they use them – in setting out learning objectives, recording pupil responses and listing tasks. They supplement this with well-prepared worksheets and other resources. Lessons are well structured, often beginning with a ‘starter’ activity to develop a particular language skill. They involve group work and plenary sessions: pupils become increasingly confident in presenting what they have learned to the whole class. They learn the value of discussion as a means of sorting out and testing their ideas. They learn to trust each other, and can be seen taking notes based on findings presented by others, perhaps on a set text. Most still need to develop their independent learning skills, and not rely on being fed subject knowledge by the teacher. Staff are aware of this, and are finding ways of tackling this deficiency. A Year 8 class, for example, spent a lesson in the learning centre researching the background to Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* by consulting reference books and the Internet. Very good learning took place because the teacher had prepared worksheets of varying difficulty and issued them as appropriate. The pupils learned about research skills as well as acquiring some interesting information about the text and its author. In another lesson, a lower Year 11 group learned more about Steinbeck’s *Of Mice and Men* through well-planned group work involving worksheets at just the right level and good use of the whiteboard. Support from a learning assistant also helped this particular group, most of whom will be able to tackle the GCSE examinations at the end of the year because they have been well taught.

88. The positive attitude of most pupils also contributes to their progress. Their behaviour is not perfect – there is some inattentiveness, and boys in particular are inclined to speak out of turn – but teachers are usually able to keep the lid on this, allowing the majority who are keen to learn to do just that. Teachers are able to appeal to pupils to show respect for each other, and to listen to their contributions. Pupils work well in pairs or groups, and support each other’s learning. They are keen to volunteer ideas. Their learning of texts is enhanced through participation in ‘hot-seating’ exercises, as they plan questions in groups to ask of others in role. In over half the lessons seen, the attitudes and behaviour of pupils were judged to be either good or very good.

89. English is organised within a faculty of English and performing arts, well led by an English specialist. The curriculum lays a strong emphasis on literacy work, but allows for engagement with many literary as well as non-literary texts. Any pupil, if capable, can take GCSE English literature as well as English; others are entered for certificates of achievement. Pupils have access to ICT in some lessons, apart from the whiteboards, but more use of the specialist ICT rooms and the learning centre is desirable; research on the Internet is encouraged, and word-processed coursework in Years 10 and 11 is the norm. Drama is not taught as a separate subject below Year 10; in theory, it is part of the English curriculum – in practice, an opportunity is missed to develop pupils’ artistic expression through drama.

90. Where the management is at its best is in the way the progress of pupils is monitored and supported. Work is marked regularly and thoroughly and pupils are given a very clear indication of the standards they are reaching – as they themselves acknowledge. Teachers keep thorough data on all their pupils, not just those with special needs, and are able to set realistic targets for them.

91. Partnership teaching, as well as being a valuable provision for pupils in the early stages of learning English, enables teachers to share good practice, as does the observation of each other's lessons and department meetings that focus on particular issues.

92. There has been significant improvement in the provision for English in the few years since the school opened. The bright new accommodation and the high-tech resources simply enhance this. The improved GCSE results over the past four years are the strongest evidence of success, particularly when seen alongside the previous attainment of the pupils concerned.

Basic skills: the use of literacy to support learning across the curriculum

93. There is a low standard of basic literacy amongst a significant proportion of pupils. About one in ten of them join the school with very little English at all, and struggle in their lessons – it is not current policy to withdraw them for specialist teaching. Although learning support is given, including specialist help for many of the 75 per cent of pupils recognised as learners of English as an additional language, they have considerable difficulty with language acquisition and do not have the literacy skills to support their learning across the curriculum: written work is often poorly structured, ungrammatical and poorly spelt. Handwriting and presentation are poor in a much greater proportion to that found in most schools. Pupils struggle in oral tasks, and have limited research skills wherever these depend on their use of English. For some, poor skills of reading hold back their learning.

94. The school is acutely aware of these needs, and is tackling them in various ways. Their policy of inclusion has much to commend it: an increasing number of pupils are attaining higher grades at GCSE, and in most subjects, including all the core subjects, pupils achieve well at the end of Year 11 in relation to their performance at the end of Year 9. But a significant minority each year are not ready to be entered for GCSE examinations, being disappointed from taking the examination as they have been in the country for less than eighteen months.

95. The development of literacy is coordinated by one of the English department, and, although well-embedded in English teaching, it is now seen as a whole school issue. Recent staff training has been with this in mind. Some of the professional development has been led by English teachers, but there has been input from the local education authority and the education action zone. The school has also bought in expertise: a specialist consultant has been working with key staff. The focus was initially on reading; a year ago it was on writing frames. The current emphasis is on speaking and listening.

96. The strategy was seen operating during the inspection, although it has not had time yet to become fully effective. Group work is widely used, and pupils are reminded that they learn more by using language actively than by simply listening. Pupils are expected to present the findings of their discussions in plenary, speaking to the whole class, or to read out loud. Writing frames have been well used in many subject areas, and are adapted to set tasks at differing levels as is deemed appropriate. Different subjects deploy key words on classroom walls, but the level of basic literacy sometimes means that some pupils learn the technical vocabulary but fall down on simpler words. In a science lesson, for instance, pupils were given a definition of a term that involved the word 'reduced': some pupils were seen looking this up in a dictionary.

97. A good start has been made to implementing, indeed to accelerating the National Literacy Strategy in the school. It is inevitably going to present a formidable challenge, with such a high proportion of the pupils being more familiar with other languages and often other scripts. Reading support is less easy to provide than it is in schools where paired reading with older pupils can be arranged or where parents and the wider community can give assistance. How well the school meets the challenge will affect the standards of the majority of its pupils in the next few years.

DRAMA

98. Overall, the quality of provision for drama in Years 10 and 11 is **good**.

Strengths

- Teaching is usually good and sometimes very good. As a result pupils' achievement is good.
- Results in GCSE match the national average and are amongst the best in the school.

Area for improvement

- Lack of English inhibits the learning of about ten per cent of pupils.

99. Standards of work seen during the inspection are average. In Year 10 standards are better established than in Year 11 as pupils learned some basic drama conventions when they were in Year 7. Teaching is good and occasionally very good and, with the very positive attitudes of the pupils, ensures that the achievement of pupils is good, given pupils' limited experience of drama in Years 7 to 9.

100. Results in the 2001 GCSE examination were average and amongst the best in the school. This is the result of good teaching that is well aware of the requirements of the examination. The choice of examination board is wise for its syllabus concentrates on practical drama, with a minimum of writing. This helps pupils with English as an additional language be assessed on their standards in the drama itself.

101. The work seen during the inspection was all of one type; pupils were exploring narrative drama based around established ghost and horror stories and those devised by themselves. This decision was a positive one made by the teacher to acknowledge that pupils of this age have an interest in such stories and films as part of their own everyday culture. The teacher recognises the need to value pupils' own day-to-day culture and interests. However, it was of a type usually seen with younger pupils, but as the work progressed higher-attaining pupils led group work and extended the subject matter into areas of more consequence than simple story. Pupils in some groups began to grapple with the notion that human beings often fear the unknown. The teacher quickly recognised the potential of this for further development of this unit of work.

102. Year 10 and 11 were both engaged on work from the same starting point. This was specifically designed so that the teacher could assess pupils' awareness of drama conventions and the pace at which pupils can work if they have some background in drama prior to Year 10. It was clear that the current Year 10's previous experience allowed lessons to proceed at a faster pace than those of Year 11 for they had a greater knowledge of the drama process. However, in both groups, there were pupils who made little progress as they did not understand English, because they had only recently arrived in the country as refugees or asylum seekers. Without support from the learning support faculty it is difficult for the drama teacher to give more than slight lip-service to the learning of such pupils. On two occasions lessons were seen where teachers were working in partnership. This valuable process enhanced the efficacy of the lessons as, in both cases, the teachers complemented each other's skills even though the specialist teacher of drama gave the lead for the lesson. However, the pupils to benefit from this dual teaching were those with special educational needs who thrived on the additional attention and support; this partnership teaching could not significantly help those pupils who could not understand English.

103. Pupils, especially in the second of each lesson with each group, were prepared to take responsibility for their own learning and seek to take it beyond the stereotype horror caricature often seen on film. They examined cause and effect through re-running sequences, for example of still images, in different ways.

104. Pupils attitudes to their work are very good. They achieve success owing to their own efforts and personable teaching. The teaching has an understanding that the story-line in drama is often a useful peg for teaching dramatic techniques or taking the content of the work into more significant areas. She spent sufficient time with small groups over the two lessons to help deepen and extend the substance and execution of their drama. Through skilful questioning and timely interventions, this teaching helped pupils extend their imaginative response to a fairly mundane stimulus. Girls and boys began to work well together by the second lesson and achieved similar standards in their work. Apart from those who do not understand English, there is no significant differences in the standards achieved by pupils from different ethnic groups. However, there is a small number of higher attainers whose work is above average and clearly better than the majority in the classes. It is significant that these pupils have a very good command of English.

105. Learning in the theatre is lively, effective and stretching young performers technically and emotionally. This quality is the result of good and occasionally very good teaching. To maximise the potential of the subject as a central feature of the culture of the school, as well as a means to academic success in the subject, a surer foundation must be provided in Years 7 to 9. This will involve either a full programme of staff development to enable current staff to offer drama, or some additional help through the appointment of a specialist teacher to work part-time in drama. This would ensure the proper provision of drama in the spirit of the requirements of the National Curriculum in Years 7 to 9.

MATHEMATICS

106. Overall the quality of provision in mathematics is **good**.

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good overall.
- Relationships with pupils are good.
- The management of the faculty is effective.

Areas for Improvement

- Standards throughout the school are not good enough.
- Skills of numeracy are weak.
- Pupils are not sufficiently helped to retain what they learn in lessons.
- Pupils rarely experience investigative work.

107. The standards of work seen during the inspection are well below average. Pupils' attainment in relation to national standards is very low on entry to the school at the start of Year 7 but is average by the start of Year 10. This is the result of good teaching and shows that pupils achieve well and make good progress over time. Pupils' attitudes and the new building and resources available also cause the quality of learning in mathematics to be good. Pupils achieve well during Years 7 to 9 and satisfactorily during Years 10 and 11.

108. Attainment of pupils on entry to the school is very low. Many have particular problems with basic numeracy, do not know their tables and are unable, with confidence, to do sums mentally using the four rules of number. Their overall mathematics vocabulary is poor and this inhibits many pupils' learning throughout their school life. A considerable number of pupils have difficulty speaking English and some with an understanding of the alphabet. A scrutiny of the work of pupils early on in Year 7 shows that their understanding of number is weak and they are not good at estimating size or understanding the meaning of some units of measure. Some pupils do not know that one hundred centimetres make one metre. Their work in class shows interest and enthusiasm and the volume of work done is at least satisfactory and often good. Girls' work is neater and more careful than boys' and this is a feature throughout the school. Boys' handwriting and drawing skills are particularly weak. Some graph-work shows a lack of accuracy, with straight lines joining points on a quadratic curve or a very wobbly line only going somewhere near the appropriate points. Pupils lack a pride in their standard of written work and are much more concerned with getting a sum right.

109. The results of pupils at the end of Year 9 as measured by the 2001 national tests show skills in mathematics to be very low in comparison with the national average of all schools. The percentage of pupils reaching level 5 and above was about half the national average. Few pupils reached level 6. There was little difference in the attainment of boys and girls. The teachers' assessments were close to the actual test scores. The trend over the past three years is upwards and more positive than the national trend. A scrutiny of the work seen in the present Year 9 shows that this trend is continuing. There is considerable difference in the attainment in the different aspects of mathematics in the National Curriculum. Attainment in algebra, geometry and statistics is higher than in the arithmetic and investigative skills. Evidence was seen of the statistical concept of 'mean' being taught using very simple numbers, which would have been more

appropriate in early primary school. There is little evidence of extended pieces of writing. Pupils do not often explain their answers or define the meaning of words. Investigative skills are not much in evidence and opportunities are lost in not integrating these techniques more into the mathematics scheme of work or encouraging the wider use of a mathematical vocabulary, practice in numeracy and the ability to predict outcomes and rules. Basic numeracy standards remain low throughout the school and a calculator is often used for some very simple calculations. In a Year 8 class of higher-attaining pupils, pupils showed good mental abilities in being able to multiply 15 by 17, for example, but other types of evidence of ability and confidence with number is hard to find. This weakness inhibits progress in all areas of mathematics and often limits the problems that teachers can set on a topic, as the difficulty encountered with basic number overshadows the mathematical concepts the teachers are trying to get across.

110. The results attained by pupils at the end of Year 11 as measured by the 2001 GCSE examination were well below the national average. At present the school does not enter pupils for the high-tier GCSE examination so it is not possible for a pupil to get an A or A* grade. This could hinder the prospects of pupils who wished to study mathematics after the age of 16. The A* to C pass rate in 2001 was below the average pass rate for other subjects. There was little difference in the A* to C pass rate of boys and girls. Only about 87 per cent of the year group take a GCSE examination in mathematics and this is well below the national average.

111. In the lessons seen and in the scrutiny of work pupils in the present Years 10 and 11 are working at levels above those attained in 2001. There is some good work in Year 10 on rational and irrational numbers, which is a higher-tier GCSE topic. The GCSE examination now requires all pupils to do a coursework element in mathematics. The coursework seen is adequate for foundation level but little was seen which would enhance the grade of an A or B level pupil. Few examples are seen of pupils extending a task to investigate the rules and formulas when one or more variables are changed. The English language is a problem for a number of pupils and as a consequence much of what is taught tended not to involve real-life situations. Good attempts are made in Year 11 to target pupils towards the mathematics embedded within a GCSE question and to concentrate on producing logical working out, which would attract a large proportion of the marks. However the lack of English does act as a brake on attainment measured by tests and GCSE examinations in mathematics.

112. Pupils' achievement during Years 7 to 9 is good with significant gains in the understanding of mathematical concepts. ICT is integrated well into the scheme of work and some simple work using LOGO was seen in a lower-attaining group in Year 9. The pupils are enthusiastic and interested learners but their retention of knowledge is poor. In one lesson the teacher asked for details of the work done in the previous lesson and the key words used. The response to such recapitulation, especially in the lower-attaining groups, is poor and there is a need for strategies to reinforce learning so that teachers do not have to use valuable time going over work that should have been remembered. Evidence was seen of the work of an above average pupil in Year 9, whose folder and exercise book was at about level 5 of the National Curriculum but the pupil was only getting 2/20 for the subsequent mental test. Pupils' achievement in Years 10 and 11 is less good than in Years 7 to 9 but overall is satisfactory.

113. Higher-attaining pupils do continue the achievement made in Years 7 to 9 but there is evidence in Years 10 and 11 of teachers having to re-visit topics that had been taught in earlier years and probably in the primary school. This revision is needed for pupils who had not been in the school during Years 7 to 9, some of whom had poor English and limited experience of schooling. However it did mean that a substantial proportion of the class had made little or no progress in the subject area concerned. There is concern at the proportion of pupils who do not take GCSE because of poor attendance and problems in understanding and using English. Whilst the department makes strenuous efforts to involve some of these pupils, a school policy is needed to target this underachievement and probable sense of failure. The department investigates the strengths and weaknesses of different ethnic groups. No strategy has yet been devised to cope with this difference. The pupils who come into the school with poor English skills are put in mainstream classes immediately, often in the lower groups with pupils with special educational needs. The standards achieved by these pupils are lower than their peers. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, especially when they are in a class with a support teacher. A very good partnership-teaching lesson was

seen on area and perimeter in a Year 8 lower-set class. Such approaches also enhance the learning of pupils for whom English is difficult; when such support is present these pupils, too, make good progress.

114. Teaching and learning are good overall, but in lessons where they are no more than satisfactory, teachers do not ensure that basic approaches to learning allow pupils to develop skills of retention of what they are taught. Insufficient strategies are used lesson by lesson in teaching that is no better than satisfactory to consolidate learning. Pupils are not helped to understand what they know, understand and can do. Books are marked well and pupils welcome the `excellent` stamps. Little evidence is seen of National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades attached to the marking.

115. However, there is no unsatisfactory teaching and teaching in almost three-quarters of lessons is good or very good. The strengths are in the very effective planning and in the methods used to challenge and inspire the pupils. The management of pupils is good as is the targeted and effective use of time. Assessment is thorough and all teachers show a good knowledge of the subject and understanding of the pupils' learning needs. Where teaching is no better than satisfactory, teaching pays insufficient attention to basic skills and the insistence on a firm grasp of number. There is a school numeracy policy and all lessons in Years 7 to 9 should have a numeracy element. In the lessons seen this was not always the case and an inspection of the resources in the department failed to find many resource books which would enable teachers to test mental calculations and mathematical facts. Homework is set regularly and there is a very good booklet for use by Year 9 pupils in registration time to practise number work, but other similar opportunities are missed.

116. The department is well managed by an experienced teacher who leads a dedicated and resourceful team. The accommodation is very good and the resources satisfactory. This encourages learning, good behaviour and fosters good relations between staff and pupils. A look round the classrooms and corridors does not reveal much evidence of pupils' work on display. Opportunities have been missed to show all pupils what standards can be attained and what constitutes different National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades. There is a very thorough scheme of work and a balanced and relevant curriculum. There are extra-curricular activities with a mathematics club; teachers offer a lot of individual help and encouragement. There is a clear direction and explicit aims for the future. There is rigorous monitoring and evaluation of performance. Since the school opened the department has developed its practices considerably.

Basic Skills: the use of numeracy to enhance learning across the curriculum

117. There is a school numeracy policy. Meetings are held regularly with representatives from all departments. In the past year strategies have been devised so that there is a common method of teaching mathematical concepts. The school operates the numeracy scheme developed by the local education authority. However the effect of this policy seems limited, as instances where basic numeracy is used are few. There are some graphs in science and history and an understanding proportion is acquired by pupils in food technology. Scales are read in science and heart rates measured in physical education. ICT uses spreadsheets and some numeracy occurs in business studies. Despite these examples, numeracy skills are weak. There is a lack of knowledge of tables and in the mental agility to calculate and estimate. Many pupils have a poor mathematics vocabulary although there are literacy strategies in place to overcome this. The numeracy strategy is not so far advanced as the literacy policy and more needs to be done to increase confidence in number and reduce the problem of poor retention skills.

SCIENCE

118. Overall the quality of provision in science is **good**.

Strengths

- Teaching is good and leads to improving standards and results in examinations.
- The department is well managed.
- The quality and range of the curriculum are good.

Areas for improvement

- Standards are well below average.
- Provision of ICT to support learning is inadequate.
- Pupils' weak skills of literacy and numeracy inhibit learning.

119. Standards of work seen during the inspection are well below average but steadily improving. These improving standards are achieved because teaching overall is good. Pupils' achievement in relation to standards on entry to the school at the start of Year 7 and at the start of Year 10 is good. Pupils' good attitudes coupled with good resources and accommodation also cause the quality of learning in science to be good. Pupils' make good progress as they move through the school.

120. Pupils enter the school with attainment that is well below average for their age. In particular literacy skills are weak and this makes it difficult for a large proportion of pupils initially to understand parts of the science curriculum effectively. However teaching focuses on improving individual pupils' reading and writing and this is an important factor in the good progress that the pupils as a whole make in their lessons.

121. Results in tests for pupils at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were low compared with the national average for all schools. However they were above average compared with schools taking pupils from similar backgrounds. Girls performed relatively better in these tests than boys. Pupils' performance in the science tests was better than in similar mathematics tests but not as good as in English. Results over the past three years have shown an encouragingly steady improvement in pupils' performance. Results in 2001 were a considerable improvement on those in 2000. All pupils in Year 11 have the opportunity of being entered for Double Award modular GCSE science. Results in 2001 were well below the national average. Again girls performed relatively better than boys. Over the past three years pupils' performance in these examinations has steadily improved. In particular boys have improved dramatically although they are still outperformed by the girls. Importantly an analysis of the 2001 results in terms of value-added scores indicates good achievement on the part of these pupils in relation to their prior attainment.

122. Standards of work for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 in lessons and in work scrutinised are well below average for their age. They have limited practical skills and their knowledge and understanding of biology, physics and chemistry are restricted. However, standards improve steadily across the age range as the result of good teaching. Practical and investigative skills improve but pupils still lack some basic skills. For example, some pupils in a middle-attaining Year 9 chemistry class came to invalid conclusions about the reactivity of metals due to their observational and analytical skills in practical science being under-developed. Some groups, however, achieve higher standards. A Year 8 upper-attaining group made very good progress in their knowledge and understanding of how animals adapt to the environment. Here, very good teaching focused on the essential concepts which pupils were able to explore experimentally. As a consequence their scientific enquiry skills in this area were improving rapidly. Taking into account pupils' prior attainment combined with their deficit in basic skills, pupils' achievement over time is good. They acquire knowledge and understanding of science at a good rate compared with their starting point as a result of effective teaching that supports their weakness in the English language. Standards of work for pupils in Years 10 and 11 are also well below average for their age. Their knowledge and understanding of science is less than expected. For example, in enquiry science a Year 10 upper-attaining group had poor practical skills. When measuring the speed of a chemical reaction they used an incorrect technique for measuring out the reactants and their regulation of the temperature of the reaction was unsatisfactory. As a result, their measurement of the rate of reaction was inaccurate and their results inconsistent. However standards in this aspect of science improve as the result of well-directed teaching. In a Year 11 upper-attaining physics class pupils were given the criteria required for success. They made good progress investigating the effect of increasing mass on the period of a pendulum. They were familiar with the concept of a fair test and dependent variables and were able to obtain accurate results by repeating their experiments. As a result, they were able to analyse their data well, in terms that reflected their developing mathematical understanding. Pupils in this age range make good progress in their lessons as a result of positive attitudes combined with good teaching. Taking into account their standards at the end of Year 9, pupils' achievement in Years 10 and 11 is good.

123. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards the targets set for them. Teachers use the pupils' individual education plans effectively to ensure good progress. Work is well planned and effectively differentiated so that the science curriculum is appropriate to these pupils' needs. There is good liaison between teachers and support assistants and this improves learning in science.

124. Considering their starting point with English as an additional language, pupils make good progress in their studies. Where support is available it is well planned and helps to integrate these pupils into mainstream education. Teachers are aware of the educational difficulties that these pupils have to overcome and try to facilitate effective learning through their planning of the science curriculum. For example, the department has analysed past pupils' National Curriculum test papers to see which areas and types of questions pupils for whom English is an additional language find difficult. As a result science teaching focuses on key words such as 'explain', 'suggest' and 'compare' so that their pupils can achieve well.

125. Teaching observed during the inspection was good overall. Teaching is good and better in about six out of ten lessons; occasionally it is very good or excellent. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection. There is a good focus by the whole department on teaching and learning which is helping to raise the quality of teaching and so improve that of learning. This is an important factor in the improving standards seen during recent years. Teachers have a good understanding of their subjects and concepts are clearly explained. For example, in one lesson, the digestive system was explained in a clear and interesting way that enabled all pupils to make very rapid progress in their understanding of this topic. There is a high expectation that pupils will succeed and behave well. Crucial to this is the very good relationships that have been built up between pupils and teachers that support learning. In the relatively less successful lessons there is a lack of pace so that objectives are not always met. A group studying adaptation spent too long revising work covered in previous years and as a result did not cover the more interesting aspects of how stick insects adapt to their environment. However there is a good focus on sharing good practice through the monitoring of teaching and learning, but there is some way to go before this is completely effective. Day-to-day assessment is thorough and pupils' work on display marked in terms of National Curriculum levels helps to promote interest and higher standards in science. The use of interactive white boards also promotes good planning and preparation of lessons, improving the teaching and enhancing learning.

126. All pupils learn well in their lessons. Most have positive attitudes towards science and are interested in what they are doing. For example Year 7 pupils enjoyed learning about separation of mixtures. Very good teaching ensured that their practical skills improved well and they were able to extract salt from rock salt successfully. Pupils collaborate well in their group work when doing practical activities. Their levels of concentration are usually good. However in a small proportion of lessons boys' concentration and attention waned towards the end of the lesson resulting in slower progress and less effective learning. Many pupils lack confidence in their own strengths in science and tend to be passive learners. They need encouragement to develop independent learning skills so that their confidence increases.

127. The department makes a good contribution to the teaching of basic skills. Key words are used extensively so that individual lessons are more accessible to pupils. Writing skills are improved by the use of writing frames particularly in course work. Listening and speaking skills are constantly developed in science lessons. Pupils are encouraged to read aloud from texts to improve their fluency and comprehension in English. Numeracy skills are well below average. For example, pupils have difficulty with scales and fractions. Where numeracy occurs in science lessons it is well taught so that pupils show some improvement. However the low standards in these two basic skills needs improving if standards are to continue to improve. Where ICT is taught in science it is effective in raising pupils' motivation and achievement. For example, Year 9 pupils used an ICT package to plot graphs of a photosynthesis experiment improving both their scientific and numeracy skills. However provision of ICT in science is patchy and needs some improvement. Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good. For example, pupils are enthusiastic about their role in the zoology club where they handle and care for a wide range of animals.

128. The department is well led and managed. It is improving at a good rate. The science curriculum is effective at delivering an appropriate range of learning opportunities to match pupils' learning needs. There is very good teamwork in the department and all are committed to raising standards. Assessment of pupils'

work is very good and data is used effectively to track pupils' performance so that underachieving pupils can be identified. The technicians work hard and very effectively to ensure that the department functions smoothly on a day-to-day basis. Health and safety requirements are well met and teachers ensure in their planning that pupils are able to work in a safe and secure environment.

ART AND DESIGN

129. Overall the quality of provision in art is **good**.

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good.
- The pupils have good attitudes towards art and design.
- The department's work reflects the diverse cultural strengths and backgrounds of its pupils.
- The department is well led and managed and is committed to improvement.

Areas for improvement

- Standards in the key skills of drawing and painting are not good enough.
- Schemes of assessing and recording pupils' achievement are under-developed.
- Aspects of timetable arrangements for art are unsatisfactory. As a result, areas such as the use of ICT and the practice of three-dimensional work are limited.

130. Standards of work seen during the inspection are below average overall. Standards by Year 9 are below average whilst those in Years 10 and 11 are average. Pupils' achievement by Year 9, in relation to standards on entry to the school at the start of Year 7, is therefore, good. The achievement of pupils in Year 11, in relation to standards at the start of Year 10, is good. This achievement is the result of teaching that, overall, is good. Pupils' attitudes to art and design are good throughout the school. These factors contribute to the good quality of pupils' learning. The quality of learning is good overall. Consequently, pupils make good progress as they move through the school.

131. GCSE results at A* to C in 2001 were well below average. This compared unfavourably with results for the previous two years when they were within five per cent of the national average. In 2000, pupils taking art achieved some two-thirds of a grade better than in other subjects. However, staffing problems in art, and the continuity of pupils' education in the subject, contributed to these lower results. This particularly affected the performance of boys, who gained significantly higher grades in 2000 than 2001. In spite of this, the school's analysis of GCSE performance in 2001 shows that the majority of pupils achieved satisfactorily when compared with their individual standards as assessed at the end of Year 9.

132. Teachers' assessment for pupils at the end of Year 9, in summer 2001, confirm below average standards for the numbers reaching level 4 and the expected level 5. However, standards for pupils on entry to the school at the start of Year 7 are well below average. Discussion with pupils suggests that their art and design experiences prior to arriving at Fir Vale are generally limited. Consequently, their drawing and painting skills are often under-developed. This has quickly been recognised by the newly-appointed teacher in charge of the subject. Procedures for quickly assessing pupils' standards when they arrive at the school, and for tracking their progress, are in the process of development. The curriculum is being adapted to meet the needs of pupils, and there is a strong emphasis on raising standards. Sketchbooks have been introduced and are being used purposefully. There is a particular emphasis on observational work. Pupils are stronger in their work on pattern, and there is a strong two-dimensional character to their work. The skills and techniques necessary to capture 3-dimensional form in the objects they draw or paint require development. Planning is in place for additional 3-dimensional modelling work, for example using clay, but the new kiln is not yet in full working order.

133. Language and literacy difficulties, particularly for those pupils with special educational needs or for whom English is an additional language, have resulted in under-developed critical and analytical skills. However, the teaching focuses well on support for such pupils, particularly on a one-to-one basis and these pupils make satisfactory progress in lessons. Teachers use such individual support well to raise pupils' self-

esteem as artists in all year groups. This plays a good part in the department's provision for the pupils' spiritual development in terms of understanding and appreciating the role of art in the development of human achievement. There is also a good awareness, on the part of all art teachers, of the ethnic, religious and cultural diversity of the pupils in their charge. This was particularly evident in a very good Year 11 lesson involving partnership teaching with two art teachers, one of whom was a home languages specialist. Pupils new to the country, including refugees, were encouraged to use their personal artistic heritage to good effect when preparing studies for their trial GCSE examination.

134. Nevertheless, because of the insecure art skills of many of the pupils, there is a reluctance to take the artistic risks necessary to gain higher levels or grades in tests and examinations. There can also be hesitancy when approaching the work of major artists from less familiar cultures. Art and design teachers work hard to help pupils understand and appraise art and artists they may find strange or initially inaccessible. Learning in consequence is good overall. The school has also used funding well to commission original works of art that significantly enhance the environment of the school. There is a good recognition of the need to broaden all pupils' experience of work from across a wider range of cultures. For example, in a Year 10 lesson, the work of cubists, such as Picasso and Braque, were used well as a bridge between Islamic traditions involving pattern and Western European art. One girl made a very astute observation when she commented that cubists "... *wanted to be true to an object ...*" by including all aspects in a single view.

135. Leadership and management of the department are good. There is now very good educational direction and the shared determination to succeed. Nevertheless, there are a number of key factors that require additional support or funding to enable the department's development planning to succeed. The quality and range of learning opportunities in art are good. However, although the average curricular time for Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory, greater balance is required in Year 7 in order to provide the firm foundation of key skills on which pupils can subsequently build. In Years 10 and 11, art is taught in single periods. Often pupils are just starting to get to grips with their work when they have to pack up. Many pupils are reluctant to leave at the end of lessons. An increased length of time is necessary to enable greater depth of study and to improve the quality of learning. Art is part of a larger faculty structure and does not have any meeting time of its own. Specific time is required for all art teachers to meet formally on a regular basis for planning and development purposes. Non-teaching time is lacking for the new teacher-in-charge to observe other art teachers and to share good practice through practical teaching example. Initiatives are just starting, in cooperation with the learning resource centre, to develop the full range of reference books and material to fully support independent learning and research work for art. However, overall, this is a good and improving department with realistic and practical targets well focused on raising standards and enabling pupils to achieve.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

136. Overall, the quality of provision in design and technology is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are thoroughly supported and monitored.
- Pupils are well supported by thorough individual teaching.
- Pupils make sound progress in textiles.

Areas for improvement

- Designing, drawing and modelling skills are not sufficiently developed.
- There is insufficient use of ICT and CAD/CAM and pupils' knowledge of systems and control is not as good as it should be.
- Class sizes are too large for this subject.

137. Standards of work seen during the inspection were well below average. Pupils' achievements in relation to standards on entry to the school are unsatisfactory because, until this year, the teaching has not been consistent. Also class sizes are large and curricular time is low. However, teaching is now satisfactory

and as a result pupils' learning of design and technology is satisfactory. Pupils are now making satisfactory progress as they move through the school.

138. Standards of work by Year 9 are well below average. Pupils' drawing skills are poor and they have little experience of modelling, consequently their designing is limited. Because staffing in most areas of the subject has lacked continuity, pupils have not acquired a coherent understanding of design and technology. However, since the beginning of this school year teaching has been more consistent. Consequently, pupils are making better progress, particularly with making, in food, textiles and resistant materials. Pupils have very little knowledge of systems and control. They use computers rarely for presentation, drawing or making. Pupils are acquiring positive attitudes to the subject because teachers are involving them in more practical activities and this is raising standards. Many groups are too large for teachers to provide the individual help required by many pupils whilst at the same time ensuring that all pupils adopt safe practices. These large group sizes, combined with lower than average curricular time, adversely affect standards. Hence achievement, relative to standards on entry to the school, is unsatisfactory except in Year 7 where pupils have not been subject to the staffing changes of previous years.

139. Overall standards of work by Year 11 are well below average. Standards in textiles, whilst below average, are better than the other areas. In textiles pupils learn to use visual research and experiments to develop some imaginative ideas. In resistant materials and food technology, inconsistent previous experience has resulted in disaffection of some Year 11 pupils and a poor standard of work, but Year 10 pupils are making satisfactory progress and their work shows care in presentation. In food technology pupils are beginning to test, evaluate and modify recipes well. The standards of work in graphics products are low because pupils do not acquire sufficient drawing skills in Years 7 to 9 and hence have to acquire basic skills during Years 10 and 11. Some projects make use of the diverse cultures within the school, for example a greetings card project where pupils design a card for a specific cultural occasion in their graphics products course.

140. GCSE results in both 2000 and 2001 were well below the national average. Standards have been affected by the staffing problems the school has had in design and technology. In food technology no pupils achieved grade C or above whereas in textiles, which is the only area that has had consistent staffing, one third of the pupils entered achieved grade C or better. Graphics products and resistant materials achieved results between these figures. Those pupils who were entered for GCSE in design and technology achieved well in relation to their average standards in Year 9 but substantial numbers of pupils were not entered. Overall, therefore, pupils' achievement by Year 11 is unsatisfactory. Girls' results are better than those of boys. GCSE results have improved in line with the national trend over the past three years.

141. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teaching in approximately half of the lessons observed was good and none was unsatisfactory. Lessons are well planned and pupils are given clear objectives that help them to learn. Teachers make good use of questioning to consolidate pupils' learning. Marking is very thorough and gives pupils clear targets for improvement. Individual help is detailed, teachers giving help with both subject matter and the use of language. As a consequence, pupils with special educational needs or for whom English is an additional language mostly make satisfactory progress. However, in some large classes this individual support is limited because the teacher needs to supervise the safe use of equipment and this restricts the progress of those with special educational needs or where understanding of English is limited. Teachers need to consider ways of organising these large groups to ensure safe working and to avoid the limitations of insufficient equipment.

142. Mostly, teachers make good use of opportunities to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy, for instance through working out proportions in recipes. Teachers have sufficient knowledge of design and technology, except for systems and control and computer aided design and manufacture. Training is planned in each of these areas. Teachers are particularly effective at quietly defusing the attention-seeking behaviour of a minority of pupils. The technicians play a positive role in supporting pupils' learning, particularly in large classes. A lunch-time class in robotics is provided by a parent.

143. Overall the subject is well managed. Teaching and the performance of pupils are supported and monitored, one result of which has been the emphasis on engaging pupils' interest through practical designing and making which is contributing to improved learning. There is a clear common assessment system, but the scheme of work for Years 7 to 9 is not sufficiently coordinated to ensure that pupils' design skills progress as they move between areas of the subject. The leadership of the subject is adversely affected because the many roles undertaken by the head of faculty mean that she teaches the subject for insufficient time to become fully involved with enough aspects of design and technology.

GEOGRAPHY

144. Overall, the quality of provision in geography is **good**.

Strengths

- Results have improved every year since the school opened.
- Good, occasionally very good, teaching enables most pupils to achieve well.
- Teaching and learning are continually reviewed and the teachers are dedicated to improving standards.

Areas for improvement

- Standards and results in examinations are below average when pupils leave school.
- There is inadequate use of ICT and fieldwork to support and improve learning.
- The teaching and learning in geography of pupils at an early stage of learning English is weak are not good enough and geography teachers get infrequent support to help with this difficult challenge.

145. Standards are well below average in Year 9 and below average in Year 11. Pupils' achievement in relation to their attainment at the start of Year 7 is good. They make good progress as they move through the school because teaching and learning are good overall. However, for a small minority of pupils in each class, whose command of English is weak, teaching does not always meet their learning needs except when help from members of the learning support faculty is possible so that these pupils are better able to concentrate and become more active learners.

146. Pupils' standards in geography at the start of Year 7 are very low. In Year 9 they are well below average and this improvement is due to good teaching. The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 is very good in half of all lessons and never less than satisfactory in the remainder. Courses and lessons are planned in detail. In Year 7, teachers use atlases in an imaginative way to develop pupils' skills in their use and to increase their knowledge of continents. Only the higher-attaining pupils demonstrate a competence of this basic skill. Good homework booklets reinforce basic skills and most draw accurate bar graphs though few can read them. However, a small proportion of lower-attaining pupils do not always finish the work set.

147. In a lesson on population, the teacher used the board effectively to consolidate pupils' learning on migration. The good input of a partnership teacher, working well with the class teacher, enabled most pupils to make satisfactory progress. For example, a recent arrival to the country explained why people were attracted to Los Angeles and this helped pupils understand the notion of migration. A very good homework extended the pupils' social, cultural and emotional understanding of immigration and developed their writing skills in the form of a diary. In Year 9 pupils increase their sense of fairness on a global scale when they learn the pattern of economic development and the benefits and disadvantages of different types of aid. One pupil used PowerPoint to produce a very good presentation on how to raise money for developing countries. However, the use of ICT and fieldwork to enrich and support pupils' learning is not well developed.

148. In a very good lesson on aid, lower-attaining pupils were challenged to produce a newspaper draft. They were inspired by the teacher's enthusiasm and knowledge of the topic and the lesson moved at a rapid pace until they began their draft. At this point the pace of learning slackened because many struggled with the language and some quickly lost interest despite the constant attention of the teacher. Some learning resources that were used in the lesson require further refinement so that teachers can use them effectively to

help all pupils. Overall, pupils' attitudes to learning are satisfactory. Over time all groups of pupils achieve well and make good progress in lessons. Progress is especially good when members of the learning support department work in partnership with geography teachers to seek to overcome the learning difficulties of some pupils.

149. Pupils begin the GCSE course in Year 10 with well below average standards in geography. At the end of Year 11 standards overall improve to below average. The achievement of most pupils is, therefore, good as a result of the successful application of good teaching and learning methods. GCSE results have improved year by year since the school opened. In 2001 they were below the national average in terms of A* to C grades. None of the 14 pupils who was entered failed to obtain a grade and most gained a higher result than expected in relation to their attainment at the start of the course. There was no significant difference between the results of boys and girls. The numbers were too small to draw conclusions about the difference of achievement between different ethnic groups.

150. By the age of 16 pupils develop basic fieldwork skills and collect, collate and present data to compare land use and pedestrian density. Higher-attaining pupils analyse their findings and relate them to hypotheses in simple conclusions. Lower-attaining pupils draw graphs to illustrate their data but do not analyse these and make conclusions. Pupils continue to explore the relationship between physical and human geography. In a lesson on weather and climate the teacher used good methods and resources to enable the pupils to learn about the cause and effects of hurricanes. Most understand the weather symbols on a synoptic chart but few describe the pattern of weather and relate it to frontal systems. Higher-attaining pupils use data to describe the use of the rainforest in Brazil and are beginning to understand the economic, social and environmental issues of its exploitation. Lower-attaining pupils have difficulty using data to describe the distribution of tropical rainforests.

151. The leadership and management of the subject are good. Standards have improved since the school opened. Teaching, learning and courses are constantly monitored, evaluated and changed where necessary in an attempt to improve further. The teachers are enthusiastic and dedicated to doing their best for the pupils.

HISTORY

152. Overall' provision for history is **good**.

Strengths

- The overall quality of teaching and learning are good.
- Higher attainers in Years 7 and 8 reach average standards.
- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 achieve well.
- Most pupils are well behaved and have positive attitudes to learning.

Areas for improvement

- Specialist management of the subject is not effective within the faculty system.
- Planning documents are not revised sufficiently regularly.
- There is a lack of additional support in some classes which contain a high proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or are at an early stage of language development.

153. Standards of work seen during the inspection are well below average. Pupils' achievement in relation to standards on entry to the school is good in Years 7 to 9 because the teaching is good. The positive attitudes of the majority of pupils also cause the overall quality of learning in history to be good. In Years 10 and 11 pupils' achievement in relation to their attainment at the start of Year 10 is satisfactory in response to satisfactory teaching.

154. The teachers' assessments of pupils work at the end of Year 9 in 2001 showed few pupils reaching expected standards. Standards in Year 9 are well below average. Most pupils understand cause and effect.

Higher attainers have a sound, and sometimes detailed knowledge and understanding of the key features of the periods and events which they study, but do not compare events and processes within, and across the periods. Most pupils can use information from a number of sources in their investigations but seldom analyse it critically. The work of average and below average pupils tends to be limited to description. There is little evidence of pupils comparing interpretations of events, and they use a relatively limited range of means of expressing their ideas and presenting the results of their investigations. However, the impact of good teaching and improved planning documents is making itself felt. Higher attainers in Years 7 and 8 are reaching average standards. These pupils respond very well to very good, well-planned teaching and are enthusiastic learners. They are developing detailed knowledge and understanding of events such as the defeat of the Spanish Armada and features of life in the Roman Empire. Careful attention to the drafting of the results of their investigations which they write at length, and the accuracy and precision of their general and technical vocabulary is indicative of the success of the emphasis on the development of pupils' literacy skills in these and most other history lessons. Consequently they make good progress and achieve well.

155. Many of these classes contain a high proportion of pupils for whom English is not their mother tongue. In classes where there are pupils who are at an early stage of English language development or have other special educational needs, progress varies. It is better where teachers work in pairs or where they have the support of members of the learning support faculty. Progress, although satisfactory, is less rapid for these pupils when teachers lack such support. Teachers are well-briefed about individual pupils' needs and prepare their lessons carefully, but the numbers involved often make it difficult to provide the amount of individual attention that is needed.

156. In Year 10 most pupils have made rapid progress since the start of their GCSE course and are achieving well because of very good teaching. This improvement is not yet evident in Year 11 where standards are well below average and the teaching and pupils' achievement are satisfactory. Pupils' knowledge and understanding are generally sound but there are weaknesses in the way in which they use historical sources. Much of the work in this area, particularly from pupils of average and below average attainment, is limited to description and inference. Higher attainers can make some comparisons between sources but seldom analyse their usefulness or reliability. However, the weak skills of reading and writing of many pupils hamper deeper study. Pupils seldom write at length. Recent GCSE examination results have been very low. In 2000, only one candidate gained the higher A*-C grades and pupils' results in history were significantly worse than in their other subjects. In 2001, again only one pupil gained a higher grade. Nevertheless pupils' overall achievement was satisfactory in comparison with their starting points. Numbers who choose history in Years 10 and 11 are small, which does not allow for reliable comparisons to be made between the achievements of boys and girls or from year to year.

157. Good features of teaching include the way in which teachers use pupils' own experiences to stimulate interest. They also consolidate previous learning well through recapitulation at the beginning of lessons so that pupils have a firm foundation on which to build new learning. The best teaching also makes particularly good use of the interactive whiteboards in the very good new classrooms, in order to provide information about learning activities, and display well-chosen historical sources. This helps to ensure that most lessons move at a fast pace and fully occupy pupils, most of whom are interested in their work and are keen to participate through sharing information and ideas with each other. Teachers are adept at finding and making good use of resources available from educational web-sites. However there are insufficient numbers of good textbooks and teachers rely too often on photocopied materials. Homework is given regularly and is well marked.

158. The quality of teaching is good or better in over three-quarters of lessons. Examples of very good teaching occur in most years but an analysis of pupils' work reveals some weaknesses. In particular, for pupils in Year 11, teaching does not ensure that they are sufficiently stretched to analyse and evaluate their sources of information; this slows down the achievement of some of them. In general, pupils are not given sufficient opportunity to use computers to support their learning in history.

159. Humanities subjects, which include history, are grouped together in a faculty arrangement. The faculty head, who provides good leadership and monitors the general quality of teaching and learning well, is not a historian. Nevertheless he has a good understanding of most of the strengths and weaknesses in the

subject and recognises correctly, that the key to further improvement lies in the quality of subject leadership. However, the faculty structure does not include provision for a teacher with specific responsibility for history. Teachers of history are well equipped with subject knowledge and most have an enthusiasm for the subject that they communicate well to their pupils. However, other than the most experienced teachers, who also have substantial responsibility elsewhere in school they lack expertise and experience of subject administration and management. The original planning documents written at the time of the start of Fir Vale school have not been providing sufficient guidance to teachers to enable them to ensure that pupils experience all the key historical skills in sufficient depth to challenge pupils; higher attainers in particular are not helped to reach the higher levels of the National Curriculum for history in Years 7 to 9 and so prepare them for more advanced study in examination classes. A programme of re-writing schemes of work has started and, with changes to the choice of GCSE syllabus and recent strong additions to the teaching force within the humanities faculty, is beginning to have a positive impact on standards.

160. In order to improve standards further history requires specialist management. Initial progress made in improving planning documents needs to be continued with more attention paid to matching the content of the schemes of work to the key historical skills required by the National Curriculum for history. Pupils who have special educational needs and those at an early stage of language development need greater support in classes, which often contain large numbers of such pupils.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY [ICT]

161. Overall the quality of provision in information and communication technology is **good**.

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good and well supported by technicians.
- Pupils achieve well.
- The curriculum planning for the subject is good.
- The leadership and management of the department are very good and there is an excellent commitment to continuous improvement.

Areas for improvement

- There are insufficient opportunities in ICT lessons for reviews of pupils' learning.
- Library book resources for ICT to support independent learning are inadequate.
- There is not enough in-class support for pupils with English as an additional language.
- The provision for gifted and talented pupils in ICT is insufficient.

162. Standards of work seen during the inspection are below average overall for pupils in all year groups. However, by Years 9 and 11, pupils' achievement, in relation to standards on entry to the school at the start of Year 7 which were well below average, is good. This is the result of good teaching. Pupils' attitudes to the subject in all year groups are good. Together with the very good provision of resources for the subject these factors contribute significantly to the overall good quality of learning for pupils in ICT. They consequently make good progress as they move through the school.

163. Pupils were entered for the full course GCSE examination for the first time in 2001. Although the results were below average, the school successfully met its target of 48 per cent of pupils gaining an A* to C grade. This was within 10 per cent of the national average. However, school analysis shows that just over half the pupils entered gained higher grades than expected when compared with the standards they achieved by the end of Year 9. This represents good achievement.

164. In Year 10 and 11 lessons, pupils show a sound knowledge of the range and function of a variety of internal and external storage devices associated with computers. They show a satisfactory familiarity with, for example, desktop publishing programs. They use word processing successfully to design questionnaires, with due attention to the quality of layout and explore ways to make them user-friendly. However, skills are not yet developed sufficiently to enable the majority of pupils to use the more advanced facilities of programs to the levels expected of these year groups.

165. Teacher assessments of Year 9 pupils in the summer term 2001 show only 27 per cent gaining the expected Level 5 or higher. Whilst this is only half the national average, it represents significant improvement on the previous two years when only some 5 per cent achieved these levels. Lessons and work samples seen for Year 7 confirm well below average attainment when pupils start at the school. Most are unused to the range of software available. However, demonstrations by teachers and clear step-by-step explanations, enable pupils to grasp skills fairly quickly and make good progress in lessons. By Year 9, there is a good emphasis on planning, thinking and written preparation before undertaking work on screen. Realistic targets are set by teachers and shared with pupils at the start of lessons, consequently pupils are clear about tasks and able to achieve well. However, reviews of learning at the end of lessons can be rushed or opportunities missed to involve the pupils in evaluating what they have learnt.

166. There are a number of significant factors that contribute to the raising of standards and provision in ICT, for example, the high quality of the resources now available within the new school building. There are three specialist ICT rooms, with sufficient computers to enable each pupil in a class to work independently. There is a whole class set of laptop computers, using the latest wireless technology, which can be used in any classroom. These facilities are well supported through a very good range of software programs, which enables all required aspects of the ICT National Curriculum to be taught. There are computers linked to

interactive whiteboards in every classroom throughout the school. These are being particularly effectively used in ICT itself, especially for the support of pupils for whom English is an additional language. The visual impact of teachers and pupils being able to operate a program on a large screen significantly enhances the speed of learning when pupils come to work independently at conventional workstations. Teachers are increasingly familiar with the potential of this equipment and use it well to enhance teaching and learning. Pupils learn the mechanics of a program quickly, even though information entry is less secure for those with less well-developed literacy or language skills. Pupils consequently enjoy ICT, and value the facilities available to them.

167. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make satisfactory progress. However, without additional classroom support staff to assist them, teachers find themselves hard pressed at times to meet the needs and increasing demands of all pupils. This is particularly the case when classes include high numbers of pupils with little command of English. Some higher-attaining pupils are becoming more competent and confident in the use of ICT. The department now needs to develop strategies to identify and support further those who may be particularly gifted or talented in the subject. ICT also makes a good contribution to developing pupils' literacy skills. This is not only through the current school focus on speaking and listening, but also through its emphasis on the correct use of technical language. However, although work is planned to satisfactorily support numeracy through, for example, the use of spreadsheets, graphs and computer languages, this requires further development as part of the school's overall numeracy strategy.

168. The balance and relevance of the curriculum for ICT are very good. In Years 10 and 11, for example, pupils now take a half-course GCSE in ICT linked with a half-course in business studies to give the equivalent of a full course GCSE accreditation. This is good curricular provision and well matched to the skills levels, needs and interests of the pupils. Such provision also reflects the good contribution ICT makes to pupils' personal development. Within the subject there are high expectations of self-control, respect of individuals and their contributions are encouraged. There are good opportunities for group work. The pupils' spiritual development is well supported through the opportunities for discovery when exploring new programs.

169. The range and quality of learning opportunities for pupils in the subject are good and improving. They are developing well as teachers become increasingly familiar with the possibilities the new equipment has to offer. The effectiveness of the subject's use of new technology is excellent. The school has invested significant funding for ICT. However, the provision of book resources to support independent learning through the learning resource centre is only just starting to be developed.

170. The department is very well managed by the teacher in-charge of the subject. There is very effective monitoring and planning. Systems for tracking pupil attainment and progress are very good and easily accessible. There is very good co-operation between teachers and technician staff. Indeed, the ICT technicians play a significant role in practical support for pupils in lessons. The school's network systems are very well managed. The level of shared commitment to improvement and raising standards is excellent.

Basic skills: the use of ICT to support learning across the curriculum

171. Overall ICT is being used satisfactorily to support learning across the curriculum. There is very good provision within the subject itself, which is gradually being enhanced through use and application in other curriculum areas. The first stage of development is progressing well, as teachers become increasingly competent in their professional use of ICT. The successful use of computer-linked interactive whiteboards, in particular, is raising teachers' as well as pupils' confidence. The teacher in charge of ICT has undertaken a survey of its use across the curriculum. As a result, planning for its application in day-to-day lessons is becoming increasingly effective. This is the subject of continued monitoring. There is some excellent practice in modern foreign languages where pupils are using presentation programs, for example to illustrate work on tenses. Work by pupils in art, on cubist painters, was being well supported through Internet research, as was work in music to find out about the balalaika. Teachers are using the interactive whiteboards constructively in mathematics, for example with software to illustrate graphs. However, design and technology teachers have yet to develop the expertise to make full use of computer-aided design and

manufacturing processes. Greater use could be made of specialist programs to support learning within the special needs department. ICT is underused in English, science, geography, history and religious education. There is, as yet, limited evidence from display work throughout the school of extensive pupils' use of ICT. Whilst good progress in the development of ICT has been made in less than a term, since the school moved into its new accommodation, the second stage of development, involving increased pupil use, has yet to be fully implemented.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

172. Overall, the quality of provision in modern languages is **good**

Strengths

- Two languages in addition to English are offered to all pupils.
- There is outstanding use of new technology to support learning.
- Teaching and learning are good overall.
- Girls' attainment in Urdu is well above the national average.

Areas for improvement

- There is not enough of a balance in work between speaking, listening, reading and writing.
- Pupils are not encouraged enough to learn on their own by handling books and papers independently.

173. The modern languages faculty offers pupils as they join the school the option of affirming their own culture through study of one of two community languages, Arabic or Urdu; or alternatively beginning a new European language, French or German. In addition each pupil begins a new language in Year 8. This is good curricular provision, which is central to the ethos of the school and substantial contribution to cultural development. Over and above this there is a spiritual quality about a shared vision of an open world.

174. Overall, standards are below average. Teaching is good, and consequently pupils achieve well. Learning is good overall, but no better than satisfactory in French as there is insufficient progression and consolidation in the early stages of pupils' learning of the language. For some pupils the experience of learning a language has not been a continuous process. As pupils learn two languages, less time is available for a given language than in many other schools. However from a position of being well below average at their point of entry pupils make good progress as they move through the school.

Arabic

175. Arabic is taught to one class in each year group (two in Year 9). About half the pupils already have oral skills on entry to the school though the rest have little or no Arabic. However they are supported by the Yemeni and to a lesser extent Somali communities in school and outside, and in the Year 7 lesson seen they had made such progress that all teaching and learning were in Arabic. Pupils learn to read and write in Arabic script, but also to interpret; this is an advanced language skill. Reading includes reference to the heritage of ancient Rome, shared by the Arab world and by Europe. Their work is rigorously assessed, and individual work plans drawn up for new arrivals. Some pupils with special needs are withdrawn for confidence-building work.

176. By Year 11 pupils have acquired sufficient language to gain access to the literary culture of the Arab world. This is literacy for them. For example in the lesson seen, the life and work of the Lebanese-American poet Khalil Gibran were being studied. Illustrated by a recording of a female vocalist, this made a powerful impact, particularly on the girls present and resulted in very good learning. Teaching, without benefit of any commercially produced resources, is cumulatively very good because it contributes strongly to pupils' spiritual and cultural development as well as preparing them for GCSE. Standards range from potential A* to G, with about half heading for a higher grade. The results of the fourteen candidates in 2001 were of a similar standard. Pupils' achievement is good.

French

177. As Year 8 classes are a mix of pupils who have studied French the previous year and of those who have not, the course effectively begins from Year 8, and standards seen on inspection were well below the average encountered in most schools, where French is a first foreign language and begins in earnest in Year 7. Pupils are good at listening, which is a strong focus of the teaching, and they read adequately from the interactive whiteboards. However they lack confidence in speaking what may be their fourth language, and their writing is weak. Standards at the end of Year 9 are well below average and are known to have been so in 2001, though formal teacher assessments across the range of languages were not available. These standards were an improvement compared with those of the year the school opened.

178. Teaching is good overall. Partnership teaching provides well for the wide range of special needs present, but where the teacher is unsupported the impact of teaching on learning is noticeably less good. Pupils also acquire general principles about literacy from their modern languages study, through for example their noting of key words. Teachers plan their work very well on the basis of careful assessment of their pupils' needs and progress, and the whole school policy on behaviour management is highly effective. Learning is however not consolidated well enough because pupils cannot reliably manage books or exercise books at home. Some pupils cannot record vocabulary in English or any other language, or use French-English dictionaries, because they are at an early stage of English language acquisition.

179. Teachers speak good French and have very good skills in using the interactive whiteboards to stimulate exchanges of conversational phrases, for example in making hotel bookings, in which pupils used numeracy skills to compute prices. The oldest pupils are capable of interacting with each other in French, in response to graphics on the whiteboard, which itself is a measure of progress in their personal development. Behaviour is good, reflecting the atmosphere of mutual respect that has been successfully created in classrooms. Teaching is good, but learning in French no more than satisfactory; amongst older pupils from all ethnic backgrounds, including white British, there is more likelihood of discontinuity of educational experience.

180. GCSE results in both 2000 and 2001 were well below the national average, but in line with school averages. However measures of pupils' progress show that, in the most recent year, pupils achieved well from a very low base-line at the end of their Year 9. Unusually, boys' results were as good as those of girls; this is a result of the school's efforts to raise the performance of boys. Pupils now have more systematic experience of examinations than was the case previously.

181. An important feature of the school's provision in French is the exchange link with Chagny in Burgundy, which involves some twenty pupils a year, in addition to whom four have recently been on work experience. The school is supported in this venture by agencies in the community, for example the local police, as well as by a former member of staff who now lives in France.

German

182. German has been re-introduced as part of the school's Fresh Start, and there are classes in every year except Year 11. Standards seen were well below average in Year 9 and below average in Year 10. This good progress is due to teaching that is good overall, and very good where outstanding expertise in the design of teaching materials for use on the whiteboards has been brought to bear on learning.

183. Computer files are extensive and easily accessible to other teachers and to pupils, who are encouraged to work on them in their free time. Younger pupils respond very well to the graphics, and all are eager to do look listen and say work from whiteboard text. Many have experience of learning English by similar methods and they are uninhibited in a way that contributes strongly to confidence in speaking. Writing remains a weakness. Teaching is inclusive and includes those with special educational needs, including behavioural needs, which are well managed. Because pupils are encouraged to be more independent, for example in taking books home in Year 10, learning of most older pupils is good, though for individuals without a language background in common or with considerable discontinuity in their education, learning is at best satisfactory.

Spanish

184. Spanish is at present taught only to twenty pupils in Year 11 and to a class of Year 9 pupils who did not study French in Year 8. For them this new start is good provision, especially because it reaches a large number with special educational needs. It is a beginners' course: compared with beginners' courses in other languages standards are well below average. However in this limited context, teaching, learning and achievement are all good. Results achieved by the GCSE class are in line with the national average for grades A*-C.

Urdu

185. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average at the end of Year 9 and average at the end of Year 11. This is because teaching is good in Years 7 to 9, and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Pupils' achievements in relation to their prior attainment are good overall and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Good behaviour and attitudes of the majority of pupils also contribute to good overall learning.

186. By the end of Year 9 pupils achieve above average standards. Their listening and speaking skills are more developed than their reading and writing skills. They respond to teachers' questions with confidence and can take part in role-plays and simple conversations. Pupils can identify main points after listening to a text, and can answer questions. Their pronunciation is good.

187. On entry to the school most pupils have oral skills in Urdu but cannot yet read or write in the script, which is unfamiliar to most of them. Pupils make satisfactory progress in reading and writing. In Year 7 they learn to recognise letters of the alphabet, so as to read and write simple words and phrases. By the end of Year 9 the majority of pupils read and write short paragraphs using present, past and future tenses. Higher-attaining pupils were, for example, able to write six sentences on school uniform.

188. GCSE results in 2001 were broadly in line with the national average for all pupils in Urdu; they were well below national averages for boys but well above the national average for girls. Urdu was one of the better performing subjects in the school.

189. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are average overall but below average for pupils who began Urdu in Year 10. Achievement overall is satisfactory, though there is some underachievement by higher-attaining pupils who are not always sufficiently challenged. Pupils are generally more competent in listening and speaking than in reading and writing. Those with special educational needs also make satisfactory progress.

190. In Years 7 to 9 teaching and learning are good, and in consequence the vast majority of pupils show much interest in their learning and behave well. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 10 and 11, where in some classes, particularly those for boys only, the work provided is not always well matched to pupils' learning needs. Sometimes marking does not show pupils what they should do to improve. Strengths of the teaching include the fact that teachers are native speakers of the language and Urdu is spoken in lessons. This helps pupils to develop their listening and speaking skills more quickly. Most lessons are well planned, and expectations are generally high, though not always high enough for higher-attaining pupils. Teachers of Urdu are fully integrated and supported within the modern languages faculty. Teaching materials are adequate, and methods used in class help pupils to learn effectively. There are however insufficient opportunities for pupils to learn on their own.

Overall leadership and management

191. The leadership and day-to-day management of the faculty are good. The recently-appointed head of faculty is already making an impact on teaching and learning, in a fresh attempt to raise standards at the same time as aligning modern languages teaching even more positively with the school's commitment to inclusion. Here there is a tension which the faculty cannot itself resolve. In particular, pupils who have no language in common with the teacher cannot be taught yet another language effectively in the whole class situation.

Also, at this stage of development, social as well as academic criteria inform decisions about the grouping of pupils, which may for some pupils adversely affects learning.

MUSIC

192. Overall the quality of provision in music is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teachers have made an enthusiastic and determined start on re-establishing music in the school.
- Pupils respond well to the music they experience.
- The curriculum is interesting and provides a good range of practical musical experiences.
- Pupils' literacy skills are developed well through learning about music.

Areas for improvement

- At the start of some lessons, pupils need a musical experience to capture their interest, rather than information about music.
- There is no provision at present for music in Years 10 and 11.

193. Music is being re-established in the school this term by permanent staff after an extended period of difficulty over provision. Last year, the school could secure only part time staff; in the previous year, there was no music teacher available. At present, music is taught only in Years 7 to 9.

194. Standards of work seen in Year 9 are well below national expectations. In Years 7 and 8, attainment is closer to what is expected for their age but still below average. However, pupils' achievement in relation to their starting point this term is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and sometimes good. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. Teachers are making good use of the varied range of resources, which are being considerably expanded this term. At present, pupils are making satisfactory progress.

195. In one lesson, Year 7 pupils used percussion instruments for composing. They represented the idea of getting louder and softer and learned the musical terms that are used to indicate this. Concentration was good and pupils worked together well and used the time efficiently. Learning was good too when they were taught a folk song. Teachers use their musical skills well for demonstration and accompaniment. Another good feature of the lesson was the use of a CDROM by a pupil to find out about the balalaika. The good range of world music that pupils hear includes Gamelan music from Indonesia.

196. In Year 8, pupils have learned the basic characteristics of this type of composition. A class of lower-attaining pupils used glockenspiels sensibly; they developed their understanding of musical pulse well and showed good learning skills. In the parallel class, the pupils used newly acquired keyboards. Their learning was inefficient because they were preoccupied with the possibilities offered by the keyboards, rather than being focused on the task. Several pupils misbehaved, which was in strong contrast with the high standards of behaviour of the remainder of that class and all of the others classes inspected.

197. In Year 9, pupils learned about *West Side Story*. The teacher gave them much relevant information about the video excerpt they were to watch. Key words were again emphasised orally and written on the screen, which helped pupils to gain knowledge securely. Pupils in Year 9 have very limited listening skills because of their lack of music in previous years. However, they participate well in reproducing the characteristic rhythms of the song *America*, using castanets. Learning in this lesson was satisfactory in response to forceful teaching.

198. The teacher in charge of music organises the subject well on a day-to-day basis. She is compiling an appropriate curriculum, which reflects National Curriculum requirements and is interesting for the pupils. The two most significant aspects are the variety of musical experiences that the pupils are encountering and the effective teaching of literacy through music: each lesson begins with an explanation of the key words that are to be encountered. These are reinforced repeatedly, enabling music to make a significant contribution to the development of pupils' knowledge and vocabulary. Music is already making a good contribution to pupils' opportunities for social and cultural development. Partnership teaching is a good feature of music provision in

the school. The teachers collaborate well to stimulate a lively enthusiasm in the pupil. Pupils of all levels of attainment, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, are purposefully involved in all activities and achieve satisfactorily. Occasionally, however, the technical explanations which precede an actual musical experience are too drawn out, which reduces the impact of the piece played or heard.

199. The department has done well in raising the profile of music significantly in less than a term. Opportunities for pupils to learn a variety of instruments have been provided. A recorder ensemble and a choir are already rehearsing regularly and there are worthwhile plans for further extending pupils' opportunities to take part in extra-curricular music. A pleasing feature is the occasional piano playing in the foyer by a teacher, which is effectively bringing live music to the attention of pupils as they arrive for school. While provision is satisfactory at present, the department has the capacity and enthusiasm to extend significantly its effectiveness, and is already showing its determination to do so.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

200. Overall, the quality of the provision in physical education is **good**.

Strengths

- Pupils' achievement is good.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Pupils have positive attitudes and their behaviour is good.
- The use of very good accommodation helps to improve standards.

Areas for improvement

- Standards are well below national averages in Years 7 to 9 and below in Years 10 and 11.
- The standards of girls are lower than those of boys.
- Learning resources are not well adapted for use with pupils who are at a very early stage in acquiring competency in English.

201. Overall standards of work seen during the inspection are below average and standards in Year 9 are well below average. However, pupils' achievement in relation to their attainment identified on entry to the school is good. This is due to good teaching that promotes positive attitudes, good behaviour and good learning. Pupils make good progress as they move through the school.

202. Around 40 per cent of boys take part in a wide range of extra-curricular activities and this helps them to reach higher standards than girls overall. Although the numbers are increasing, only a small proportion of girls take part in extra-curricular activities. Teams and individuals have been successful in city-wide competitions in football, cricket, and athletics.

203. Standards of work seen at the end of Year 9 are well below average. Boys' performance in basketball is broadly average. Higher and average-attaining pupils know the rules, the positions and they play a full game using effective attack and defence strategies. Girls' skills in basketball and boys' performance in hockey are weak. Pupils' skills are inconsistent and they have a limited understanding of the basic strategies. Pupils use the technical language of the subject correctly when they evaluate performance because they are given many opportunities to do so by their teachers. Pupils know how to warm up and in Year 9 many do so independently of the teacher. When taking into account the well below average standards of pupils when they enter the school compounded by the language, literacy and special educational needs of many of these pupils, these standards in Year 9 represent good achievement.

204. In Year 11 there is wide variation in standards. Those pupils who have taken the junior sport leader award have good leadership skills based on a secure knowledge and understanding of safety and the principles underlying planning. Pupils reach these standards because teachers make stringent demands of them. Pupils take responsibility for planning and carrying out activities and they evaluate each other

rigorously. Boys' performance in GCSE badminton is a strength for many pupils. Higher-attaining pupils play doubles games competently using a good range of strokes strategically. Most pupils evaluate performance accurately and higher and average-attaining pupils do so in depth. However, girls' performance in badminton and boys' performance in soccer are well below average, despite the good standard at which the school football team plays. In lessons, pupils' skills are weak and they use few organised strategies within a game. However, the recent use of the new artificial surface is helping pupils to develop skills in football and hockey; pupils are beginning to make rapid progress. Girls in Year 10 have a good understanding of warm-up activities. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of GCSE theory in Year 11 is weak. They have difficulty in retaining knowledge over a period of time. Some pupils who are learning English as an additional language have difficulty in understanding concepts, such as the sequence of events that take place when breathing, because they do not understand everyday language such as "dome-shaped" and "reduction". Standards in Year 10 are generally higher than in Year 11 and there are more pupils taking the GCSE course in Year 10.

205. Performance in GCSE is improving rapidly and although results in 2001 were very low, they are on course to improve significantly over the next two years. This is a reflection of the recently improved provision.

206. The standards pupils reach in Year 11 are below average overall and compared to a well below average starting point this represents good achievement. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, especially those who have physical difficulties. Teachers and support assistants know what pupils' needs are. They adapt equipment and tasks appropriately, providing support and nurturing independence.

207. The quality of teaching and learning are good overall. In two-thirds of lessons teaching is good or better and in a quarter of lessons teaching is very good. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Pupils are well behaved in most lessons, enjoy lessons and they expect to learn. This is because teachers manage the behaviour of lively pupils in a firm yet friendly manner that is based on mutual respect. Teachers value all pupils' contributions and give deserved praise and encouragement such that pupils develop self-esteem and positive attitudes. Pupils learn at a good rate in response to well-planned lessons that set out the targets clearly and take pupils through a variety of increasingly demanding tasks and small steps in learning. Pupils learn to work independently, plan activities and make presentations to each other using well-structured guidance provided by teachers that sets out technical language clearly. For example, Year 10 girls worked on warm-up activities and presented what they had planned to the class using technical terms correctly. Pupils analyse performance in some depth because teachers demand a high level of thought and analysis from them. For example, in a Year 9 basketball lesson, higher-attaining boys worked on a specific strategy and then shared with the group what worked and what did not work. Pupils who are learning English benefit from teachers' clear practical demonstrations and frequent reference to technical terms. However, written materials and resources often contain everyday language that is not understood by pupils and this slows down their learning. Not all teaching is consistently good and there are features that can be improved. There is insufficient attention paid to teaching pupils how to improve the quality of movement in gymnastics and dance. In some lessons pupils work on their own without guidance from the teacher for too long.

208. The management of physical education is good. Very good leadership clearly focuses on raising standards and improving the quality of teaching and learning. Energy, enthusiasm and commitment across the department are helping to inspire pupils and involve them in increasingly demanding activities. A good range of accredited courses in Years 10 and 11 enhances a well-planned curriculum and helps to motivate pupils, although opportunities in dance do not extend beyond Year 9. Risk assessment of activities in working areas, although planned, has not been carried out.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

209. Overall provision in religious education is **very good**.

Strengths

- Teaching is very good.

- Religious education provides excellent opportunities for pupils to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.
- Lessons are challenging and develop pupils' literacy very effectively.

Areas for development

- There is too little use of computers to enhance learning.

210. Standards of work seen during the inspection were below the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus in Years 7 to 9 and below average in Years 10 and 11. These standards represent very good achievement when compared with the standards of pupils' attainment on entry to the school and they result from very good teaching. Pupils have good attitudes towards religious education. The good range of resources and the interesting range of topics studied also cause the pupils' learning in religious education to be very good. Pupils make very good progress as they move through the school.

211. In Year 7, standards are well below average at the start of the year, but pupils acquire a good range of knowledge about Christianity and Islam. They acquire good learning skills by looking for similarities and differences between these two religions. They gradually develop their skills in note taking and in expressing their own views, for example about, 'Who created the world if there is no God?' Pupils also learn to express their own views orally. In lessons, boys are more willing than girls to say what they think, for example about the difference between God and a ghost. In a class of very low-attaining pupils, the teacher elicited interesting and candid views by supporting and encouraging individual pupils, regularly targeting reluctant speakers. Pupils' skills of reading and writing in religious education do not match their ability to talk and listen positively.

212. An excellent feature of all lessons is the very high expectations the teacher has of all pupils. Lessons always begin very formally, with the pupils writing in their books the objectives for that lesson. This focuses their attention very well and invariably establishes a very good atmosphere for learning. In a Year 9 lesson, for example, the very good start to the lesson led to a purposeful discussion on the death penalty. The pace of the lesson was enhanced by the purposeful use of an excerpt from a video. The teacher very carefully prepared the pupils for this so that they were able to derive valuable information from its contents. More than half of the class made thoughtful comments and showed that they had absorbed well the information. An important part of the course in Year 9 is concerned with learning about moral and social issues. Pupils are respectful of others' views and listen well at all times. The teacher's very challenging questioning encourages pupils to think more deeply. This was indicated by the extended replies that some of the pupils gave. By Year 9, pupils are able to understand moral issues, for example about human rights. They learn to evaluate ideas and evidence. Higher-attaining pupils write well about which professions would be most valuable amongst people stranded on a desert island, comparing them thoughtfully. However, the majority of pupils have difficulty in writing well and this pegs the overall standards they achieve to below average overall.

213. In recent years, most pupils have secured a Certificate of Achievement at the end of Year 11. Each year, groups have taken either the GCSE full course or a GCSE short course. Numbers of candidates have fluctuated but results have risen significantly over the past two years. Pupils who take GCSE achieve very good results in comparison with the other subjects they take. Results are below the national averages, but represent very good achievement by the pupils. All pupils in Years 10 and 11 are currently being prepared for one or other of the GCSE course. The teaching at this level takes very good account of the varied needs of different groups of pupils. Appropriate written tasks and very carefully targeted support ensure very good progress by all pupils, although writing well remains difficult for many pupils. Lessons are carefully focused on both the needs of the pupils and the requirements of the examination boards. In an excellent lesson in Year 10, pupils' spiritual and cultural understanding was significantly deepened by a study of the work of the Corrymeela Christian Community in Ireland. Many pupils, girls and boys alike, were able to give extended views that revealed good factual knowledge. Pupils' relationships with the teacher and each other were very good and the pace of learning was very brisk because the teacher was both demanding and very supportive.

214. The teaching is very good and exhibits many strengths. Lessons have challenging subject matter. Pupils' learning is made more effective by carefully prepared worksheets that are at a good level to develop

their understanding. Lessons are divided into short sections to assist pupils' concentration. A good range of teaching methods and artefacts helps maintain their interest. Factual knowledge is carefully explained and reinforced several times during a lesson, often with effective use of the computer-operated white board. Lessons invariably end with a review of what has been learned. Homework is set carefully; it is relevant to the topic being studied, and as a matter of routine is recorded in all pupils' planners. A strong emphasis on writing and speaking has a very good impact on pupils' literacy. Members of the learning support faculty, who support pupils in class, work very effectively with individuals and groups of pupils to ensure that pupils of all levels make very good progress. Time is carefully allocated to tasks and deadlines are rigidly adhered to. This helps to achieve a very good pace of learning. Pupils' work is regularly and constructively assessed, and, as a result, pupils are given suitable individual targets.

215. Religious education is very well managed as part of the humanities faculty. There is effective liaison between the teachers over planning and teaching methods so that standards of teaching and learning are consistent. Day-to-day organisation is very thorough and plans for the further development of religious education are appropriate. The scheme of work complies with local requirements and takes good account of the backgrounds of pupils in the wide range of topics studied. At present, pupils do not have opportunities to use computers to further their learning. Religious education makes an excellent contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There is a very good capacity for the further development of the subject.

VOCATIONAL COURSES

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

216. This General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) part 1 course is a popular choice. It operates across both options and there is one large class in each of Years 10 and 11 and each includes boys as well as girls. The course is taught to both foundation and intermediate levels.

217. In 2001 ten out of fourteen pupils passed the course at intermediate level and gained the equivalent of 2 GCSE grade Cs. Only three out of thirteen pupils passed the foundation course to gain the equivalent of 2 GCSE grade Gs. Overall, the results are below average but show good achievement and the pupils improved on their previous best. Most of those who did not complete this course at school are now attempting to do so at college. Some of the successful pupils have progressed onto the higher advanced vocational course at the same college.

218. In a Year 10 lesson, pupils explored the relationship between levels of fitness, weight and height. All successfully plotted their results on a graph and most began to work out their body mass index and interpret this against a scale. Standards are average at this early stage of the course. Pupils achieve well because the teaching is good. The teacher knows the subject well, plans lessons thoroughly, uses a variety of learning methods and her very good management enables all pupils to make good progress. Pupils respond well and in independent learning have produced graphs linking health to social class in different countries. There are good displays of health and care in different parts of the world that reflect the cultural diversity of the pupils' backgrounds. The attention to detail in the planning and the world-wide context from which examples are drawn are indicative of good management.

