

INSPECTION REPORT

SHENLEY BROOK END SCHOOL

Milton Keynes

LEA area: Milton Keynes

Unique reference number: 131185

Headteacher: Mrs V Ray

Reporting inspector: ID Thompson
12271

Dates of inspection: 12 – 15 February 2001

Inspection number: 230020
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:	12-18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Walbank Grove Shenley Brook End Milton Keynes
Postcode:	MK5 7ZT
Telephone number:	01908 520264
Fax number:	01908 508768
Appropriate authority:	Milton Keynes
Name of chair of governors:	Mr D Lewis
Date of previous inspection:	N/a

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
12271	ID Thompson	Registered inspector		<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>How high are standards?</p> <p>a) The school's results and pupils' achievements.</p> <p>How well are pupils or students taught?</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p>
11077	J Harrison	Lay inspector		<p>How high are standards?</p> <p>b) Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well does the school care for its pupils?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>
20412	D Shepherd	Team inspector	<p>Modern foreign languages;</p> <p>Equal opportunities</p>	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils or students?
20119	T Bell	Team inspector	Mathematics	
30427	F Botham	Team inspector	<p>History;</p> <p>Religious education</p>	
14893	O Denson	Team inspector	<p>Science;</p> <p>Special educational needs</p>	
27368	M Merchant	Team inspector	Geography	
4757	D Morris	Team inspector	Art and design; music	
19229	S Morton	Team inspector	<p>English;</p> <p>drama</p>	
2141	J Oxley	Team inspector	Physical education	
10288	J Richards	Team inspector	<p>Design and technology;</p> <p>Information and communication technology</p>	

The inspection contractor was:

Cambridge Education Associates Limited
Demeter House
Station Road
Cambridge
CB1 2RS

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33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Shenley Brook End is a small comprehensive school for boys and girls between the ages of 12 and 18 situated on the western edge of Milton Keynes. The school opened in 1997 and is planned to grow to provide 1200 places by 2005. There are currently 509 pupils on roll, 269 boys and 240 girls in Years 8-11. Sixth form provision is planned for September 2001.

Pupils come from the full range of social and economic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. A number of ethnic minorities are represented but the majority of pupils are white. Although the proportion of pupils with English as an additional language is higher than in most schools, only one is at an early stage of language learning. A higher than average proportion of pupils is on the school's register of special educational needs. The percentage of pupils with statements of special educational needs is about average.

Pupils' overall standard of attainment on entry to the school is slightly above average. However, the standard of attainment of the current Year 11 was below average when they joined the school and this group of pupils has a higher proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs than any other year in the school. Many of the statements refer to emotional and behavioural difficulties.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school with many strengths. Leadership and management are of high quality. The headteacher has managed the establishment of a very good foundation to support future growth. The quality of teaching is very good. Pupils of all levels of attainment achieve well. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- The school is very well led and managed. The headteacher provides outstandingly good educational direction.
- The majority of pupils make very good progress through the school: standards of achievement are high. Standards in mathematics are very high.
- The school takes very good care of its pupils.
- The school's procedures for eliminating oppressive behaviour are excellent.
- Teaching is very good.

What could be improved

- Standards in French are lower than they should be because not enough time for teaching is allocated to the subject.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has not been inspected before.

STANDARDS

In 2000, results in National Curriculum tests at age 14 were well above the national averages in English, mathematics and science. In comparison with schools in similar social circumstances, standards were above average in English and well above average in science. Results in mathematics placed the school in the top five per cent of schools nationally. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. Since the first group of pupils took the tests in 1999, the school's results have improved at a faster rate than the average for schools nationally. In part, this reflects the difference in the overall levels of attainment of the first and second year groups to enter the school. In work seen during the inspection in Years 8 and 9, standards are well above average in mathematics and English and above average in science. In relation to pupils' attainment on entry to the school, these standards represent good levels of

achievement in English and science and very good achievement in mathematics.

In work seen during the inspection in other subjects in Years 8 and 9, standards are above the levels expected nationally for 14 year olds in all except art, physical education and religious education, in which they match the levels expected, and French, in which they are below. Pupils achieve very well in music, compared with their attainment on entry to the school. Achievement is good in art and design, design and technology, geography, history and information and communication technology (ICT). Achievement is satisfactory in physical education and religious education. French is the only subject in which achievement is not satisfactory. This is because pupils enter the school with little knowledge of the subject and do not have sufficient teaching time in Years 8 and 9 to reach appropriate standards.

No full year group has yet taken GCSE examinations. In work seen during the inspection, standards close to the end of Year 11 are well above average in mathematics. They are above average in English, science, art and design, design and technology, history, information and communication technology, music and physical education. Standards are broadly average in geography and religious education. In French, standards are below those expected.

Pupils achieve much better standards than would usually be expected in Years 10 and 11, given their levels of attainment at the start of the course, in English, mathematics and music. In art and design, design and technology, geography, history, information and communication technology and physical education, standards achieved are better than might be expected. Achievement is satisfactory in science and religious education. Most pupils do not achieve high enough standards in French because their work in Years 8 and 9 does not provide them with a good enough foundation for their work in Years 10 and 11. The exceptions are many pupils with English as an additional language who make better progress than most others because their language learning skills are better developed.

The progress made by pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language is very good overall because of the school's success in integrating pupils into mainstream classes and providing them with effective additional support where they need it. This is not consistently the case for gifted and talented pupils whose achievement in most subjects is not always as high in relation to their prior attainment as that of their classmates, although they make generally good progress. They could do better in most subjects. English and mathematics are notable exceptions to this – gifted and talented pupils' achievement is very high in both subjects.

Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress in all years because lessons are adapted to individual needs.

The school has set appropriately high targets for examination performance.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are keen to learn and this helps them make progress.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils are considerate. Permanent exclusion is rare although the rate of other exclusions is high.
Personal development and relationships	Very good relationships throughout the school. Pupils support each other and respect values that differ from their own. Pupils develop confidence and respond well to the opportunities the school offers.
Attendance	Very good attendance contributes to achievement.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The overall quality of teaching, and of the learning that such teaching promotes, is very good in all years. Teaching is at least satisfactory in all lessons and is good or better in almost 70 per cent. In 39 per cent of lessons teaching is very good or better. Teaching is outstandingly good in 10 per cent. The proportions of lessons taught to these standards are similar in all years except that there is a higher proportion of excellent teaching in Years 10 and 11. Very good teaching is spread around the school in virtually all subjects. During the inspection, more than half of the staff, and the majority of those with posts of responsibility, taught lessons that were of a very good or excellent standard.

Teaching is very good in English, design and technology, geography, information and communication technology, mathematics and music. It is good in art and design, history, physical education and science. Teaching is satisfactory in French and religious education. The skills of literacy and numeracy are taught well.

The strengths of teaching are in: teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subjects; the high expectations they have of their pupils; and the very effective way they plan lessons and make use of time and resources for learning. Such teaching leads to pupils being interested in their work and concentrating well.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The low allocation of time to French in Years 8 and 9 affects standards.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Pupils are well integrated into the life of the school and well supported to make good progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Pupils are well supported and make good, sometimes very good, progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Satisfactory for spiritual development; very good for moral and social development and good for cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Standards of care are high. The school's procedures for eliminating oppressive behaviour are excellent.

The school works very well in partnership with parents.

The school offers the broadest curriculum possible within the limits of the number of staff available in a growing school.

A strength of the school is the way in which staff manage behaviour. Expectations are clear and high standards are set.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher provides outstanding educational direction. There is a very clear focus on school improvement. The headteacher and senior staff lead by example.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very well. The governing body plays a full part in shaping the direction of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The school monitors all aspects of its performance and takes effective action to secure improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Excellent. The school targets its spending highly effectively and is adept at securing alternative funding to support initiatives.

Staffing is good in relation to the school's present stage of development. The school has adequate resources for learning but the library is too small to support learning as the school grows. Accommodation is satisfactory overall but there are too few hard-surfaced play areas to provide adequately for outdoor activities in physical education.

There is a shared vision among staff and a very good capacity to improve. The school is self-critical and has very good systems for evaluating its performance and taking appropriate action. The principles of best value are applied fully so that all the school's resources are used effectively.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of teaching. • Pupils make good progress. • The school is well led and managed. • High standards of work and behaviour are expected. • The school provides an excellent range of extra-curricular activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistency of homework. • Information about their children's progress.

Inspectors agree with parents' positive views. They find that the school is currently setting appropriate amounts of relevant homework but there is evidence that this has not always been so. Inspectors feel that the information provided for parents is generally good, with very good information about attainment, but that the statements used would benefit from some revision to provide a more individual picture of pupils' progress.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Pupils of all ages and abilities achieve well at this school. No full year group has yet taken GCSE examinations. The school has set targets for pupils, who entered the school with overall below average levels of attainment when it opened, to achieve close to national average standards in the 2001 GCSE examinations. Assessment data indicates that they are on course to do so.
2. In 2000, results in National Curriculum tests at age 14 were well above the national averages in English, mathematics and science. In comparison with schools in similar social circumstances, standards were above average in English and well above average in science. Results in mathematics placed the school in the top five per cent of schools nationally. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. Since the first group of pupils took the tests in 1999, the school's results have improved at a faster rate than the average for schools nationally. In part, this reflects the difference in the overall levels of attainment of the first and second year groups to enter the school. In work seen during the inspection in Years 8 and 9, standards are well above average in mathematics and English and above average in science. In relation to pupils' attainment on entry to the school, these standards represent good levels of achievement in English and science and very good achievement in mathematics.
3. In work seen during the inspection, standards are above the levels expected nationally for 14 year olds in all other subjects except art, physical education and religious education, in which they match the levels expected, and French, in which they are below. Pupils achieve very well in music, compared with their attainment on entry to the school. Achievement is good in art and design, design and technology, geography, history and information and communication technology (ICT). Achievement is satisfactory in physical education and religious education. French is the only subject in which achievement is not satisfactory. This is because pupils enter the school with little knowledge of the subject and do not have sufficient teaching time in Years 8 and 9 to reach an appropriate level of attainment.
4. No pupils have yet taken GCSE examinations. In work seen during the inspection, standards close to the end of Year 11 are well above average in mathematics. They are above average in English, science, art and design, design and technology, history, information and communication technology, music and physical education. Standards are broadly average in all other subjects except French, in which standards are below those expected.
5. Pupils achieve much better standards than would usually be expected in Years 10 and 11, given their levels of attainment at the start of the course, in English, mathematics and music. In art and design, design and technology, geography, history, information and communication technology and physical education, standards achieved are better than might be expected. Achievement is satisfactory in science and religious education. Most pupils do not achieve high enough standards in French because their work in Years 8 and 9 does not provide them with a good enough foundation for their work in Years 10 and 11. The exceptions are many pupils with English as an additional language who make better progress than most others because their language learning skills are better developed.
6. The progress made by pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language is very good overall because of the school's success in integrating pupils into mainstream classes and providing them with effective additional support where they need it. Teachers target work to their specific needs. This is not consistently the case for gifted and talented pupils, whose achievement in most subjects is not always as high in relation to their prior attainment as that of their classmates, although they make generally good progress. They could do better in most subjects and the school is aware of the need to increase the levels of challenge provided. English and mathematics are notable exceptions to this: gifted and talented pupils' achievement is very high in both subjects.

7. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress in all years because all lessons are adapted to individual needs and support is targeted at the specific needs noted in pupils' individual education plans. Pupils at stages 2-5 of the code of practice have learning support targets that focus on literacy and numeracy and they have targets set by subject teachers that relate to the topics they are studying. Pupils make good progress towards their targets because teachers have clear learning aims and use materials and resources that are appropriate to the tasks that pupils have to do.
8. Standards of literacy are good. All departments have a teacher with responsibility for literacy to support the whole school policy. Effective use is made of key words and subject vocabulary in most departments. Pupils are provided with a wide range of types and styles of writing opportunities in departments throughout the school. For example, in design and technology pupils make notes when preparing tasks and there are many opportunities to undertake extended writing in history. Good use is made of the library to improve pupils' reading through research tasks.
9. Standards of numeracy are good. Pupils can perform mental calculations quickly and accurately. They have a mental calculation session at the beginning of their mathematics lessons. Pupils successfully apply their skills in subjects such as science, design technology, information and communication technology, history and geography. In business studies, older pupils work out value added tax when dealing with accounting. In information and communication technology lessons, pupils use databases and spreadsheets, and draw graphs of information. In food technology, Year 8 pupils weigh ingredients and measure quantities of liquids when making meals. By the age of 14, pupils can multiply and divide by ten, a hundred and a thousand in their heads, and can use fractions, decimals and percentages confidently. Higher attaining Year 9 pupils are able to work out the square and square root of numbers. Older pupils are very confident in the use of number and can use complex algebra when solving problems. They use calculators efficiently when carrying out more difficult problems and are aware if an answer is not sensible. In science, mathematics is often linked to pupils' work, for example they use algebra when solving electricity problems.
10. The very good rate at which pupils make progress is the result of the high quality teaching they receive and of the climate of achievement that has been established in the school. The school has set appropriately high targets for its performance, based on pupils' attainment when they entered the school and adjusted to take account of the progress that has been made as pupils move through the school. This is clearly seen in the examination targets set for the first group of pupils to enter the school, who will take GCSE examinations in 2001. This group entered the school with an overall lower level of attainment than that of pupils in subsequent years. Based on this, about one-third might be expected to attain five or more GCSE grades A*-C. The school has set a much higher target, close to last year's national average, and is reasonably confident of meeting it.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11. Pupils' attitudes towards school and their work are very good. They are keen to come to school and this is reflected in the very good attendance rates achieved, which, at nearly 95 per cent, are well above national averages.
12. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. In lessons they are nearly always attentive; they concentrate well and show an interest in learning. On rare occasions, pupils chat too much or are inattentive and restless. A small minority of pupils, often boys in Years 10 and 11, are sometimes a little immature and do not pay enough attention to their work. However, on the whole, pupils' attitudes and willingness to try have a very positive impact on the standards of their work.
13. Pupils are very clear about school rules and expectations and usually meet the latter. The school sets appropriately firm standards. Any exclusions are carefully considered and well justified. In the last year, the school had occasion to exclude one pupil permanently and 26 pupils for short periods. This is a slightly higher number than might be expected for a school of this size. On opening, the new school received a number of pupils who transferred from other schools, including

some who had had difficulties in these schools. The majority of these pupils, now in Year 11, have settled well, but this initial year group does account for a disproportionately high number of the fixed period exclusions.

14. Around the school, pupils are friendly and helpful to each other and to visitors. Pupils have very good relationships, both with each other and with their teachers. There are a few minor tensions, for example, during wet lunch times, or very occasional jostling in the busy 'street' area (a covered thoroughfare running through the middle of the school), but as a rule pupils are very sensible and show sensitivity to others' rights and needs. Lunch times and after-school times are vibrant, with the excellent range of activities and sports coaching. Pupils take part in these enthusiastically and like the fact that one of their homework tasks is the pleasurable one of enrolling in at least one extra-curricular club.
15. Pupils show tolerance and respect for others' beliefs. Pupils with special educational needs, those with English as an additional language and pupils of different ethnic groups mix well together. Pupils enjoy the special team-building and problem-solving exercises in some of their physical education lessons and co-operate with each other very well. They take a pride in their school, treating the new buildings with respect. Pupils show good levels of personal responsibility, responding well to the opportunities that they are given. They are invited to apply in writing, and be interviewed, for the posts of librarians. In the school council they have some influence on school decision making, recently helping to improve their school with the provision of a public telephone in the 'street' and lockers.
16. Overall, the attitudes of pupils with special educational needs are very good. They attend school regularly and are very well motivated. They benefit from the support they receive from the learning support department and the continued monitoring of their progress through regular reviews. In most lessons, pupils are well behaved and attentive because they have work that is suitably challenging and clearly explained. They know what they are expected to do and that they can ask for help if they need it. Teachers offer support and opportunities for further work at break and lunch times. The learning support department is also open at these times. Pupils are integrated well into groups in classes and are well supported by their peers. Pupils are positive about the support they receive. They take part in the full range of curriculum and extra-curricular activities. The learning support assistants have specific areas of expertise and can respond appropriately to individual pupils' needs. For example, there is specialist support for those with physical difficulties, for pupils with English as an additional language and for the preparation of specific learning resources. The attitudes of boys and girls are similar and the numbers of each on the register reflect the proportion of boys and girls in the whole school.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

17. The overall quality of teaching, and of the learning that such teaching promotes, is very good in all years. Teaching is at least satisfactory in all lessons and is good or better in almost 70 per cent. In 39 per cent of lessons, teaching is very good or better: it is outstandingly good in 10 per cent. The proportions of lessons taught to these standards are similar in all years, with the exception that there is a higher proportion of excellent teaching in Years 10 and 11. Very good teaching is spread around the school in virtually all subjects. During the inspection, more than half of the staff, and the majority of those with posts of responsibility, taught lessons that were of a very good or excellent standard.
18. In Years 8 and 9, teaching is very good in design and technology, geography, information and communication technology and mathematics and music. It is good in art and design, English, history and science and satisfactory in French, physical education and religious education. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is very good in English, design and technology, geography, history, mathematics and music. It is good in art and design, information and communication technology and physical education; it is satisfactory in French, religious education and science.
19. The spirit that has been created in the school means that the great majority of pupils are keen to

learn and do their best. This makes a positive contribution to learning and progress. It is largely the result of the way in which teachers set high standards, show that they expect pupils to reach them and give them the confidence to try. For example, in a very good Year 11 art lesson, pupils working on individual studies were highly focused on their work by the way the teacher emphasised critical factors in the success of their work. He then spent time supporting individuals, by demonstration and discussion, in the development of their creative concepts. The result was the expression of some profound ideas and the achievement of good gains in independent learning once pupils were given confidence in themselves. Similarly, in a very good Year 10 English lesson, the teacher insisted that pupils maintained close attention to the poetry they were studying. While being supportive and giving confidence, the teacher used skilful questioning to push pupils not only to find answers but also to justify them through reference to texts. Pupils gained confidence in their knowledge and use of texts and extended their understanding of the structure of the poems. An additional strong feature of this lesson, noted in many lessons during the inspection, was the way in which pupils supported each other in their learning, readily sharing skills and knowledge. High expectations are also evident in the way in which teachers use homework to develop good independent learning skills. Some parents were concerned about inconsistencies in the amount, timing and usefulness of homework. The inspection team found that these matters had been dealt with, that the amount of homework set is usually reasonable and that the content is relevant.

20. Teachers have very good command of their subjects. This enables them to broaden pupils' horizons, supports their authority in the classroom and helps to enthuse pupils and involve them in their learning. For example, in a very good Year 8 geography lesson, the teacher's high level of subject knowledge supported a lively introduction to a lesson on climate. Tasks were carefully planned to challenge all pupils appropriately and to make them think. As a result, pupils were able to frame simple hypotheses and then collect data to prove or disprove them. They had a confident grasp of terminology that they were able to apply to new situations. In a very good Year 8 music lesson, the teacher's confident skills in the use of technology as a teaching aid helped pupils to listen analytically; this made a considerable contribution to pupils' progress in understanding the features of blues music. In an excellent Year 9 information and communication technology lesson, the teacher's expert demonstration of how to search a database ensured that pupils were clear as to what they had to do and confident that they could do it.
21. A strong feature of teaching throughout the school is that pupils of all abilities are enabled to make the best progress of which they are capable. This applies to all but is illustrated particularly well by the attention given to pupils with special educational needs. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs and the learning it promotes are very good. Teaching resources in all subjects are adapted to pupils' needs and teachers are aware of pupils' specific targets in their education plans. Teachers use appropriate teaching methods and plan lessons with learning support assistants so that they can guide pupils towards the same aims. Teachers monitor pupils' progress and targets are amended accordingly. Learning support assistants are sensitive to the needs of pupils and are skilled at standing back from pupils who are coping.
22. Gifted and talented pupils are not always stretched fully because some teachers do not consistently provide extension tasks that are demanding enough. However, they are generally enabled to make good progress. Teachers in English and mathematics consistently set challenging extension work, when appropriate, that leads to very good progress. Gifted and talented pupils have the opportunity to meet with the special educational needs co-ordinator and other teachers at a "more able club" which is intended to provide social contact and support. The group meets monthly and includes those higher attaining pupils for whom English is an additional language.
23. Teachers apply their knowledge of their subjects and of their pupils to plan lessons very effectively. This is a key factor in the success of the great majority of lessons, ensuring high quality learning. For example, an excellent Year 11 mathematics lesson was planned to have a prompt, brisk start, which focused pupils' attention. The teacher's planning identified different groups of pupils in the class and provided appropriately demanding work for them so that they made rapid progress in consolidating their understanding. Effective planned use was made of a variety of resources to support learning. Similarly, a Year 9 English lesson on *Macbeth* was

planned to capture pupils' interest and to make learning fun while being challenging and demanding. The result was outstandingly good learning; pupils spoke with enthusiasm about the play and extended their knowledge and understanding of a difficult passage. Occasionally, planning of otherwise good lessons does not provide enough variety of activities or take sufficient account of pupils' varied needs. The result is a slowing of pace with a few pupils losing concentration and only a satisfactory level of progress. This is also occasionally a reflection of non-specialist teachers' lack of expert knowledge. On occasions during the inspection when this was pointed out, steps were quickly taken to improve matters in subsequent lessons.

24. Good attention is paid to developing literacy and numeracy. Teachers throughout the school stress the use of correct terminology in subjects; many rooms have displays of key words which help pupils. Appropriate opportunities to improve numeracy are planned into lessons.

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

25. Overall, the quality and range of learning opportunities offered throughout the school are satisfactory and statutory requirements are met. In Years 8 and 9, pupils study all the subjects of the National Curriculum together with personal, social and health education (PSHE) and religious education. Pupils are grouped into three bands based on levels of attainment on entry to the school. All Year 8 pupils and all Year 9, except those in the higher band, have one lesson every week on study skills. The time allocation to subjects is generous in history and geography; it is, however, low in French and this results in standards being lower than they should be. In Year 9, pupils in middle and lower bands have less time for French than the higher band and this makes it very difficult for their work to reach an acceptable level.
26. In Years 10 and 11 pupils continue to be taught in bands. This banding arrangement does restrict a few pupils' access to higher groups in some subjects. However, as the school grows, this problem will be reduced because more flexibility will be possible with increased staffing.
27. The school's policy is to allow all pupils access to the broadest possible curriculum. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported across all subjects. They have access to the full National Curriculum, although one pupil is currently disapplied and a small group of pupils in Year 10 are disapplied from French so that they can be withdrawn for specific learning support. This is an appropriate response to pupils' needs.
28. The full range of learning opportunities that the school offers is available to all pupils. The learning support policy includes provision for gifted and talented pupils and for pupils for whom English is an additional language. Pupils with English as an additional language are, with one exception, at the later stages of language acquisition. The needs of these pupils are identified early on and appropriate support is arranged by the special needs co-ordinator in consultation with subject teachers. Pupils with English as an additional language are encouraged to use and to continue to study their first language and some are offered the opportunity to sit the Cambridge Preliminary English Test. Gifted and talented pupils are identified but not all subjects consistently make detailed provision for them in lessons. However, in mathematics, gifted pupils with English as an additional language have successfully entered for GCSE one year earlier than usual.
29. The provision for PSHE is good. In Year 8, pupils are given an effective introduction to secondary school life and guidance as to how to acquire the appropriate skills. Pupils are encouraged to assess their own qualities and to respect the views of others. In Years 10 and 11, pupils are taught life skills in order to prepare themselves for later life. These skills range from expressing their feelings to guidance on completing their record of achievement. All pupils receive sex education as part of a programme that supports health education. The question of drug misuse is also addressed. Linking each tutor group with a business link tutor who makes regular visits to lessons enhances the PSHE curriculum. Each form has a link tutor from a local company, who works with the teacher and the class in personal and social education and careers preparation and mentors selected individual pupils. The business link tutors make an excellent contribution. Their shared first-hand experiences help pupils to realise the importance of good attendance and

reliability in the workplace and to appreciate the scope of career opportunities.

30. The provision for careers education is good, with effective support from the local careers service. The careers co-ordinator finds it difficult to liaise with staff because of other duties, but the programme is taught well. Every pupil in Year 11 has a careers interview, either with the external careers adviser or the headteacher. All Year 10 pupils have a work experience placement that is well prepared and gives a valuable insight into the world of work. The school makes good use of local contacts to place pupils. Business link tutors provide expertise for mock interviews for pupils in Year 11.
31. There are excellent relationships with the local community, which contribute to learning and broaden pupils' horizons and interests. There is a drop-in clinic held in school by the local police officer. Professional sports coaches from the community regularly visit the school to coach a wide range of sports including football, rugby, cricket, badminton, table tennis and tennis. This helps pupils develop skills and widens their interests. Many go on to join local sports clubs and teams. The local Christian Fellowship uses the school for worship and the University of the Third Age provides a computer course using school facilities. The school's network of business link tutors brings contact with a wide range of companies and non-commercial organisations in Milton Keynes. Local businesses sponsor attendance awards, which provide good incentives for regular attendance and punctuality. Community use of the school has dual benefits, for example, in working with the religious education teachers and in helping with examination invigilation. The school also hosts community education.
32. An unusually broad range of opportunities for extra-curricular activities is available to pupils. Ninety per cent of pupils take part in extra-curricular sport. This is a particular strength of the school. In addition to this, many departments have clubs at lunchtime and before and after school. Music, art and drama involve many pupils in a wide range of activities. There are educational visits to museums, art galleries and historical and geographical places of interest as well as a visit to France and a German exchange.
33. The school maintains good links with its partner middle schools. In addition to induction days, middle school pupils have other opportunities to visit the school. The headteacher liaises closely with middle school headteachers. Curriculum links are developing well, alongside good pastoral links, which help the transition of pupils from one school to another. Staff meet regularly to discuss curriculum continuity. Gifted and talented pupils from the partner schools benefit from opportunities for tuition in English, mathematics and science at the school. This, in turn, promises to raise eventual levels of attainment at the school.
34. Provision for the spiritual development of pupils is satisfactory. Assemblies encourage pupils to reflect, and contain an element of spirituality. However, they are not held daily and the implementation of "thought for the week" in form time is patchy. Within the curriculum, history and information and communication technology make important contributions to the spiritual dimension of the school and further opportunities are provided in geography and English.
35. The provision for moral development is very good. The school imparts a full sense of moral values and shared purpose through a clear code of conduct and the concept of the school as a caring community. Pupils are helped to distinguish right from wrong and teachers provide very good role models. The PSHE programme deals effectively with moral issues arising in topics such as health education, bullying and drug abuse. Within subjects, moral issues are debated and discussed fully, for example, in English, geography, history and religious education. Pupils in all subjects are encouraged to respect the opinions of others and to show respect for their teachers. Pupils develop a strong sense of morality; on a few occasions some were seen to stop others cheating because it was unfair.
36. The provision for social development is very good. Personal development is fostered through the school council, which provides a useful channel of communication between pupils and staff. Relationships are very positive and both staff and pupils share a vision of the school as a harmonious and well-ordered community. There are numerous clubs and extra-curricular activities to enhance the taught curriculum. Opportunities for social development are provided within the

curriculum in group and pair work. Pupils are co-operative with and sensitive to others. There are positive relationships between ethnic groups. Pupils like to celebrate the success of others.

37. The cultural development of pupils is good. For example, in art pupils study the art of other cultures and have the opportunity to work with visiting artists. In geography, the study of less economically developed countries gives pupils an insight into the way of life of other peoples; access to the Internet provides good opportunities for pupils to discover and research world cultures. Pupils of all backgrounds and cultures mix well together in a friendly way. They learn to be sensitive to those with special educational needs or with English as an additional language. The school provides opportunities for pupils to develop their cultural understanding through the Comenius project, which makes links with schools in five other European countries. There are many visits to places of interest, such as art galleries, the Imperial War Museum and Bradwell Abbey. These develop pupils' cultural awareness. However, some opportunities are missed to celebrate the diversity of pupils' own cultural backgrounds.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

38. The school takes very good care of pupils. Pupils say that teachers and other pupils are helpful and friendly and that they feel confident in the school. They settle quickly into the school after an effective induction programme.
39. Effective child protection procedures have been established, which comply with legislation. Teachers have clear guidelines and are well supported by the co-ordinator. The school takes good care of pupils' health and safety. The governors carry out a regular inspection of the buildings, and risk assessments are in place for all departments and the site as required. Levels of supervision are good. All the teachers and the mid-day staff have been trained in 'protective behaviours', which enables them to defuse any potential trouble quickly. Pupils are told that "There is nothing so awful we can't talk about it with someone we trust" and are given a network of people to whom they can turn for support. This works very effectively.
40. Procedures to monitor and promote attendance are very good. Registers are kept to statutory requirements. There are popular and motivating awards to recognise good attendance. Form tutors, heads of year and office personnel thoroughly follow up all unexplained absence. The school governors convene attendance panels to meet the pupils and their parents in any cases of concern; this is successful in improving individual cases of poor attendance. The school successfully promotes very good levels of attendance. Parents say that their children enjoy coming to school. Levels of unauthorised absence are very low.
41. There are very good procedures to monitor and promote good behaviour. In nearly all lessons seen during the week of inspection, teachers had established a successful climate for learning. The school sets strict but suitably high standards for behaviour. A factor in the school's success is that it has clearly set out the standards that are expected and maintains them. Pupils know the boundaries and respond positively. Pupils like the merit and credit card systems to reward their good work. They perceive the rewards and sanction systems as fair. The school monitors attendance and behaviour by ethnicity to identify any patterns and rectify any discrepancies. This is good practice.
42. Procedures to monitor and eliminate oppressive behaviour are excellent. Pupils feel very safe. They are very confident in the abilities of their teachers to intervene and resolve any cases of bullying, which are rare in the school and simply not tolerated.
43. Procedures to support personal development are good. Each class is assigned to a form tutor who stays with them as they move up through the school. In Year 8, pupils enjoy a residential outward-bound type of trip which helps to establish effective working relationships with their classmates and their tutor. The programme of personal, social and health education is good. Pupils are prepared well to make their post-16 choices.

44. Pupils are given some good opportunities to develop initiative and responsibility but there is scope to develop these qualities further. Form tutors meet with their class for morning and afternoon registrations. Some of the morning registration times are not used well enough as pupils mainly sit and chat; others make for a calm and purposeful start to the school day. Form tutors, governors or a business link tutor meet with individual Year 11 pupils to discuss their progress and this has a positive impact on pupils' motivation and attainment.
45. Pupils with special educational needs attend the school in the July preceding their entry with their learning support assistants, and parents are invited to attend a parents' evening so that pupils and parents are well known to the school and familiar with it before they start. The special educational needs co-ordinator is in contact with teachers of the partner middle schools throughout pupils' final year in the schools, attending annual review meetings when possible. Pupils are tested when they enter the school and learning support is focused on Year 8 classes in the first few weeks of the autumn term. Feedback from subject teachers and learning support assistants is used to plan initial provision. In addition to the methods used by subject teachers to meet pupils' needs, the needs of pupils on stages 3-5 of the special educational needs register are met through a combination of in-class support and withdrawal teaching provided by the learning support department. Pupils' needs are reviewed regularly and frequently and support is adjusted as required.
46. Assessment procedures are good. Pupils are assessed on entry to the school and information on their attainment is given to governors, parents and all staff. All assessments relate to national standards. Very good use is made of this information. It is used to identify gifted and talented pupils, pupils with special educational needs and underachievers. Each year, pupils get a full report and a progress report on their levels of attainment. Additionally, in Year 8, pupils get an extra progress report. When pupils have done well, parents are informed of their very good progress. This individual information is shared with pupils so that they have a clear picture of how well they are doing. Comparison between predicted and actual performance gives a measure of pupils' progress, which reflects the quality of teaching and learning. Senior managers use this to measure teachers' performance as well as pupils' achievement. Pupils who are not doing as well as they should are identified from the information and the senior staff support these pupils so that they can improve.
47. Progress over time is monitored closely, as well as the performance of each year group and other groups of pupils, such as those with special educational needs, those with English as an additional language, gifted and talented and boys and girls. If any group of pupils is underachieving, staff discuss the situation in order to find the cause. Staff receive detailed assessment information relating to the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, which includes details of all assessments made by the school and their attainment in National Curriculum tests at age 11. This information is used well by most teachers, in addition to their own assessment data, when planning classwork and setting homework. It is used particularly well in mathematics, where there is close monitoring of this information to identify trends, to monitor individual attainment and progress and to set individual targets. In the regular fortnightly meetings of senior staff, standards and progress are always part of the agenda. The systems for monitoring attainment and progress have been very effective in raising standards. Some departments use assessment and the information gathered very effectively. The quality and use of assessment are excellent in physical education, very good in geography and mathematics, and good in English and history.
48. The school collects a great deal of assessment information centrally; much of it is stored electronically. These recording systems are very effective. All the details are held on a computer system and full individual or group records can be accessed, sorted and printed out in seconds. Younger pupils each have an assessment folder. Year 11 have the National Record of Achievement folder. The assessment procedures involve pupils in self-assessment. They have to comment on the work they have completed, including where they have been successful and where they could improve. Target setting is developing, but in some subjects targets set lack precision, focusing on a grade rather than a particular weakness. This aspect is not fully developed for pupils with special educational needs, where short-term targets would provide

clearer guidance and incentives for improvement.

49. The assessment of pupils with special educational needs and the monitoring of their progress are very good. The school meets all the statutory requirements for the identification, assessment and provision for pupils with special educational needs. The procedures for referral for formal assessment and annual review also meet statutory requirements. Learning support targets are clear, concise and focused on the needs of the pupil. They are planned jointly between the subject teacher and the learning support department and are reviewed regularly. Pupils are involved in their own reviews.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

50. The great majority of parents are pleased with the school. They believe that the school expects their children to work hard and rightly feel that their children make good progress. They find that the school is well led and promotes values of good behaviour and respect for others. The wide range of extra-curricular activities that is offered impresses parents. Parents who responded to the questionnaire, or attended the meeting, did not raise any major concerns, although there was some disagreement about the amount, relevance and marking of homework. Some parents wanted more information about their children's progress.
51. The inspectors agree with parents' positive views. There was no clear consensus as to whether parents felt there was too much or too little homework. The inspectors found that suitable homework is regularly set and that parents' concerns may have been dealt with before the inspection. The school monitors homework closely to ensure that it is set according to the timetable in the pupils' planners. The inspectors consider that the school provides good information about pupils' progress.
52. The school has developed very effective links with parents. Written communications sent home, including the prospectus, are of high quality. Newsletters are sent each fortnight to inform parents about life and successes in the school. The governors' report to parents is excellent and is presented in a user-friendly style.
53. The annual written reports on each pupil's progress are good and meet statutory requirements. They provide National Curriculum levels or predicted GCSE grades in all subjects; this gives parents very good precise information on attainment. Clear targets are identified to improve performance. The written comments are generally helpful, although in some cases can be a little impersonal because a comment data bank is used. During the year, the school sends an interim report on effort and attainment; this is very useful and helps to flag up any concerns early in the year.
54. The school consults parents about their views and takes these into account in forming school policies. Recently the school provided booklets on the forthcoming curriculum in response to parents' suggestions. The school holds regular information evenings for each year group about the curriculum, GSCE coursework, revision skills, or the Year 9 National Curriculum tests. All Year 11 pupils and their parents have the opportunity of an individual interview with the headteacher to discuss post-16 options. These initiatives make for a close educational partnership.
55. Parents give very good support to the school and to their children's work at home. They demonstrate their support by high attendance at the progress consultation meetings with teachers and their support for school discipline, uniform and regular attendance. A few parents are not so supportive and insist on taking their children out of school during term time for holidays. The school enjoys the support of the parents' association, 'FOSBE', which organises social events for pupils and parents and has recently purchased sports kits for the school. Several parents help with sporting events and residential trips.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

56. The school is very well led and managed by the headteacher and senior staff. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership. Her clarity of vision and the ability to communicate it ensure clear educational direction and have led to the establishment of a very secure platform for growth and improvement. This was reflected in the assessment for the Investors in People award, which the school gained in 2000. A self-critical culture has been developed so that strengths and weaknesses are well understood. There is a very strong commitment to improving methods of working to raise achievement, which is shared by staff, so that the school's aims and values are reflected in all its work. Teachers responded positively even to the most minor criticisms of their teaching during the inspection and had improved their practice by the end.
57. The very good systems that have been developed for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school are central to improvement. Senior staff monitor lessons regularly. This, together with reviews of books, enables them to draw on first-hand evidence of the quality of teaching and learning to evaluate the standards achieved by pupils. Targets are set for departments and individual teachers and their progress towards these targets is monitored. This process is supported by the school's very good systems for collecting, analysing and distributing data. The school carefully identifies criteria against which to measure its performance and makes comparisons with schools both locally and nationally to see how well it is doing. The result is an annual school improvement plan that is a very effective management tool, running alongside the strategic plan which looks five years ahead. Priorities for development are defined with exceptional clarity; targets are appropriately challenging; the strategic allocation of resources reflects priorities; and time scales are realistic. Clear analysis and understanding of steps that must be taken have enabled the headteacher, supported by governors and senior staff, to manage the year-by-year growth of the school while maintaining high standards and shared values.
58. Financial management to support strategic planning is excellent. Spending is targeted well on school priorities and governors take direct responsibility for oversight of financial management. The bursar keeps close control of finance and up-to-date figures are readily available to senior managers and governors. A major constraint on the school's finances is the necessity to plan for contingencies and foreseeable needs relating to the school's rapid continuous growth. As a result of strategic planning, the school has built up a relatively large reserve, in relation to its income. This is with a view to supporting the establishment of the sixth form next September and the equipping of new buildings, which are expected to be ready at the same time. When staff identify a need for additional funds to achieve particular objectives, they are encouraged to seek them from alternative sources. The headteacher leads by example and was successful in obtaining a grant of £344,000 from the sports lottery to enhance the sports facilities included in the current building programme. Other grants are used effectively, for example, to improve ICT facilities. The school applies appropriately the principles of best value. It compares its performance with other schools and evaluates its spending against results; for example, the long-term effectiveness of staff training compared with its costs.
59. The high quality of middle management provides effective support for the achievement of the school's aims and makes a significant contribution to high standards of teaching and learning. The effectiveness of excellent management in mathematics is shown in the high quality of teaching in the department and the standards achieved by pupils. Leadership and management of the learning support department are very good so that the department provides efficient and very effective support for pupils with special educational needs. The departmental handbook is excellent. It includes job descriptions for the learning support team, programmes of study for learning support, policies and procedures, extra-curricular provision and links with other agencies, amongst other things. Clear policies for assessment, marking, recording and reporting pupils' work support the school policy. The learning support co-ordinator receives good support from the local education authority and can call on the educational psychologist and special needs advisor for support and advice. The advisor recently carried out a review of procedures for target setting and the management of special needs support and provided some helpful comments that the special needs co-ordinator has been able to incorporate in the development plan.
60. The governing body plays a full part in shaping the direction of the school. Governors have a good grasp of the challenges that face the school and fully support the school's management in establishing and maintaining standards. They effectively hold the school to account in its

progress towards the challenging targets set. The only weakness in the school's management is the failure of the governing body to fulfil its statutory duties in respect of the provision of a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. Assemblies do provide opportunities for reflection but they are not held daily; the treatment in tutor groups of the "thought for the week", which is intended to supplement assemblies, is patchy in application and effectiveness. Governors provide the school with a good sounding board to take account of community opinions in addition to the regular consultation of parents' views on the work of the school.

61. The school has sufficient teachers to meet its needs and they are matched well to the requirements of the curriculum. As is inevitable in a small school at this stage of development, some teachers are required to teach outside their specialist subject expertise. It is a mark of the success of the school's monitoring and support systems that this does not significantly affect standards. Again, as a result of the school's size, a number of staff have multiple roles in management. Nevertheless, they understand the part they are encouraged to play in the development and running of the school and discharge their responsibilities very effectively. Senior staff lead by example in this. The headteacher takes responsibility for a tutor group and fulfils a teaching commitment; the deputy headteacher has a teaching role and until recently also managed a subject. In each year of its growth, the school has appointed several new teachers. The very well organised induction procedures for staff new to the school have been successful in maintaining the spirit and values that the headteacher established at the outset. The support provided for newly qualified teachers is very good. Training needs for all staff are carefully identified and matched to the requirements of school improvement. The effectiveness of training is evaluated. The school has very good potential to take part in the training of teachers because its induction, support and monitoring procedures are so well developed. An efficient administrative staff makes a considerable contribution to the smooth day-to-day running of the school. Good use is made of new technology to manage administration and to make data available to staff around the school.
62. The overall provision of learning resources is satisfactory. The provision of textbooks is variable. In the English department there are sufficient books to meet the demands of the syllabuses but not enough stock to encourage breadth of reading beyond examination demands. In history, the number of books is just adequate and in science pupils need to share textbooks in class, although pupils in Year 11 are able to keep a book at home. In religious education, although there are a satisfactory number of books for class use, pupils studying for the short course G.C.S.E. examination do not have their own book for use at home. In French, texts cannot be taken home, which is unsatisfactory given the current low attainment and achievement. Some departments, such as science and English, have access to computers but others, such as history and religious education, do not. The school plans to improve the provision of computers in the near future. The library is very well stocked with a suitable range of books. The actual library space is barely adequate for the present size of the school and it is too small to support planned growth – particularly the inception of the sixth form and the consequent research requirements that will entail. Books are also becoming out of date and do not cater for pupils moving on to study in the sixth form.
63. The school's accommodation is broadly satisfactory for its needs, taking into account the inevitable compromises that have had to be made until the school has its full range of buildings. For example, accommodation for music and art is temporary and will be improved by the provision of specialist rooms in the next phase of building. Meanwhile, teachers are managing the current provision in such a way that standards are not greatly affected, although the range of activities that are possible is restricted. Activities are particularly restricted in physical education by the lack of outdoor hard surface areas. The 'street' is included in the calculation of available hard play area. Although the department has been inventive in its use of the 'street', the irregular surface and the intrusion of staircases make it unsuitable for most traditional outdoor activities and the area requires more than the usual attention to safety. Additionally, the resultant noise from games classes is a distraction for classes in adjacent rooms.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

64. To raise further the standards of work and the quality of education provided, the governors and senior management team should:

Improve standards in French by providing sufficient teaching time to enable the programmes of study to be covered fully.

(See paragraphs 3, 5, 25,13, 132)

In addition, the following minor weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

- Improve the consistency and effectiveness of the use of form time.
(Paragraphs 34, 44)
- Improve the provision of outdoor hard play areas for physical education.
(Paragraphs 63, 149)
- Increase the provision of library space to meet fully the demands of the growing school.
(Paragraph 62)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

113

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

46

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
10	29	30	31	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y8– Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	509	N/a
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	33	N/a

Special educational needs

	Y8– Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	12	N/a
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	80	N/a

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	30

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	13
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	10

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.8
National comparative data	5.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	0.4

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2000	70	51

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	57	63	54
	Girls	42	41	38
	Total	99	104	92
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	82 (68)	86 (74)	76 (68)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	37 (29)	64 (46)	45 (27)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	54	65	59
	Girls	40	47	42
	Total	94	112	101
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	78 (60)	93 (70)	84 (45)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	33 (28)	63 (35)	43 (11)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	5
Indian	8
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	11
White	470
Any other minority ethnic group	11

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	2	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	24	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y8– Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	27
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y8 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	13
Total aggregate hours worked per week	307

Deployment of teachers: Y8– Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75.7
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Average teaching group size: Y8 – Y11

Key Stage 3	27
Key Stage 4	26

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	1024026
Total expenditure	956033
Expenditure per pupil	2591
Balance brought forward from previous year	328881
Balance carried forward to next year	396874

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	509
Number of questionnaires returned	157

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	48	43	8	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	54	41	3	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	50	41	7	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	28	52	18	1	1
The teaching is good.	38	57	3	1	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	40	48	10	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	50	41	5	3	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	76	21	3	1	0
The school works closely with parents.	38	50	5	2	5
The school is well led and managed.	55	38	4	1	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	43	48	6	1	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	60	34	3	1	1

Other issues raised by parents

A few parents felt that the school is too strict in the application of rules, for example, regarding uniform. The inspection team found no evidence for this.

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

ENGLISH

65. Standards of attainment in English are well above those expected nationally by the age of 14 and above those expected nationally towards the end of Year 11. By the end of Year 9 pupils achieve well in relation to their attainment on entry and very well in relation to their prior attainment in Years 10 and 11, making very good progress overall. This is because of the quality of teaching, which is good in Years 8 and 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11.
66. The results of the 2000 National Curriculum tests at the age of 14 were above the national average and were higher than in 1999. Results were higher in mathematics and science. Using pupils' average points score for comparison, results in English were well above average in relation to schools taking pupils from similar backgrounds.
67. In work seen during the inspection, standards of speaking and listening are good across the whole age range. By the age of 14, pupils are able to listen respectfully to the contributions of others and can work collaboratively to share ideas and solve problems. The majority of pupils are able to use precise vocabulary to frame their responses. For example, in a Year 9 lesson, comparing three film presentations of one of Macbeth's soliloquies, pupils used appropriate terminology to comment on the effects created by the use of different types of camera shots. Similarly, in a Year 8 lesson, the most able could recognise and then categorise verbs under the headings of audio, visual and kinaesthetic. In a Year 11 lesson, pupils conducted a discussion and participated enthusiastically in a meeting, taking on roles as members of the local community. They used suitable tone and register and sustained the use of Standard English where suited to character.
68. In work seen during the inspection, standards in reading are above average by the end of Year 9 and close to the end of Year 11. In Years 8 and 9, pupils enjoy private reading and many pupils read before the formal start of a lesson. The fiction stock in the library has been carefully chosen to meet a wide variety of interests, especially those of boys, with many books on male sporting heroes and science fiction. Reading records and discussion with pupils show, however, that pupils in the middle bands sometimes restrict their reading to one genre, or to one or two authors. However, the majority of pupils in the middle and upper bands respond with sensitivity to class texts such as *Brother In The Land*. Pupils with special educational needs also have challenging activities and in their work on *Macbeth* they show that they understand character as well as plot and are able to make straightforward references to the text. In Years 10 and 11, the most able pupils are adept at combining their personal responses within a critical framework, such as in their coursework on the poetry of Wilfred Owen. All pupils are encouraged to apply literary terms and lower attaining pupils are able to recognise the use of metaphor in the poem *Search For My Tongue*, thus showing some understanding of the effect of changing from literal to figurative language. The needs of pupils for whom English is an additional language are well catered for in this age range. Their needs are carefully assessed and their progress is tracked. The effectiveness of this was illustrated by two pupils in a Year 11 class who were able to take part in the lesson fully and were able to understand the structure of Old Major's speech from *Animal Farm*.
69. In work seen during the inspection, standards of writing in Years 8 and 9 are good, overall. Pupils mostly take pride in their presentation and writing is generally accurate and well structured. This is helped by the use of graded spelling lists as well as games, activities and formal exercises to encourage the accurate use of grammar and punctuation. Some longer pieces of work are word-processed but in a minority of cases lower attaining pupils do not use a spell checker to correct their work. Pupils enjoy writing imaginatively. There are some inconsistencies in Year 8 where the work of some pupils is less accurate and they take fewer opportunities to write at length. In Years 10 and 11, standards of writing are very good. Pupils are given ample opportunities to write in a variety of styles and for a variety of purposes. This is supported by the strong emphasis placed on helping pupils to understand the processes of writing. They plan their work effectively, moving from "brainstorming" to drafting and to editing. They also learn how to apply the examination criteria to

their own work. There is a great commitment to personal writing across the ability range, as is shown in the essays on work experience. Although the work of pupils with special educational needs is much less accurate technically, they all understand the need to engage the interest of the reader. Skills using desktop publishing are good and leaflets on anti-smoking are very well presented.

70. The contribution of other subjects to improving standards of literacy is good. All departments have a teacher with responsibility for literacy in support of the whole-school policy and the framework is in place for the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy in September. Pupils with low levels of basic skills can attend the literacy summer school before joining Year 8 and all pupils have a course in study skills in their first year. Some departments, such as food technology, mathematics, music and physical education, make effective use of key words and in science and physical education there is a strong emphasis on the use of specialist language. Research skills are developed in subjects. For example, in art, pupils spend a week in the library working on their still-life projects in Year 8. Similarly, Year 11 pupils in geography refine their skills when gathering information on the rain forests. In design and technology pupils make notes when preparing tasks and there are many opportunities to undertake extended writing in history. Opportunities for speaking and listening are extensive in drama but less well developed in other subjects. In history, science and information and communication technology pupils present their work with care, taking obvious pride in their presentation.
71. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good in Years 8 and 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11; pupils approach tasks with enthusiasm. They also speak with great appreciation of the support they are given by their teachers. The only exception to this is a group of Year 8 pupils whose lessons have been disrupted by the long-term absence of their teacher; they carry out the tasks they are set but complete them with little commitment or pleasure. A positive spirit is promoted by the merit system and the wide variety of extra-curricular activities, such as theatre visits and clubs. These broaden learning opportunities and also contribute significantly to pupils' personal development.
72. The overall quality of teaching is very good. In Years 8 and 9 it is good overall, and sometimes excellent. Teachers have high expectations. They present a series of well-planned activities, making sure that pupils understand the purpose of lessons. Planning takes account of the needs of individuals so that pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language are able to benefit from lessons because tasks are carefully matched to their individual needs. In the majority of lessons, a brisk pace is established. However, in a minority of lessons this pace is not maintained until the end and this causes some pupils to lose concentration. Homework is used productively to consolidate and extend what has been learned. In Years 10 and 11, the overall quality of teaching is very good with some of it excellent. Here too, teachers set high expectations and this has resulted in pupils of lower prior attainment making very good progress. Teaching schemes that are graded in difficulty present challenging but attainable tasks to all pupils so that progress is very good. The questioning techniques which teachers use are very effective in encouraging pupils to re-present their answers, either for extra clarity or to encourage the use of specialist vocabulary. Relationships between pupils and teachers are very warm and behaviour is very good. As a result, teaching in English contributes significantly to the personal development of the pupils. For example, the analysis of language in *Animal Farm* led to a consideration of the morality of the use of propaganda. The study of poems such as Wilfred Owen's *Anthem For Doomed Youth* offered chances to reflect on the value of life. Assessment is used effectively. Teachers recognise the strengths of pupils' work but also set targets for improvement.
73. The quality of learning is correspondingly very good overall. In Years 8 and 9, where learning is good, pupils engage positively in activities, showing enthusiasm and a willingness to persevere to gain new knowledge. Those with special educational needs also manage to sustain concentration for most of the lesson. They respond well to encouragement from their teachers and progress at a similar rate to others in their classes. Pupils who are very able remain fully engaged and relish the challenge of the more demanding work. Pupils are also able to identify their own strengths and weaknesses and this motivates them to improve. There are no significant differences between the achievement of boys and girls or that of pupils for whom with English is an additional language. All make good progress in relation to their prior attainment. In Years 10 and 11, where the quality of

learning is very good, pupils are intellectually curious and they sustain concentration over long periods of time. They work very well in pairs or groups and they use homework well to consolidate their skills in learning independently. They learn to apply the examination criteria to their own work so they are fully involved in the assessment process. This gives them a real sense of the ways in which their work is improving and helps them to achieve the highest standards for themselves. As a result they make very good progress.

74. The department is very well led and this is a key feature in the success of this subject. A team of enthusiastic teachers works together well. The curriculum team leader has a clear vision for the direction that he wishes the department to follow. It is a vision shared by the other teachers and one to which they are all committed. This corporate approach ensures consistency of provision across the age and ability range. Careful monitoring of teachers' work, both in and out of the classroom, provides support and ensures consistency of standards. This extends to supply teachers who work in the department. Targets have been identified to enable the department to improve; priorities have been carefully thought out.

MATHEMATICS

75. In the 2000 National Curriculum tests at the age of 14, pupils reached levels well above national averages. When compared with similar schools, their achievement was very high. Standards have improved over the last two years at a faster rate than nationally and are higher than in English and science. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs, gifted pupils and pupils with English as an additional language are all reaching levels in mathematics well above what might be expected. Some are achieving standards well above national averages. One pupil with English as an additional language took GCSE one year early and achieved the highest possible grade in mathematics.
76. In work seen during the inspection, by the age of 14 pupils are attaining levels well above those expected nationally. They show good skills when working with number. They can use fractions, decimals and percentages accurately to solve problems. For example, higher attaining Year 8 pupils can find squares and square roots of numbers. They understand shapes and their properties, can draw and measure angles accurately and can find areas of two-dimensional shapes and volumes of three-dimensional objects. Lower attaining pupils can draw angles to the nearest degree and estimate them accurately. Pupils measure accurately and can solve problems involving measurement. They are able to collect data, draw graphs and comment on what they show. Skills in problem solving are less well developed as a result of the lack of opportunity to develop these skills.
77. In work seen during the inspection close to the end of Year 11, pupils are attaining standards well above national expectations. They are confident and competent in higher level number skills. Their mental mathematics skills are high. They understand algebraic techniques and can use them when solving problems. They develop high levels of understanding of shapes and can use algebra effectively to calculate sides, angles and areas. A high attaining Year 11 group accurately calculated sides and angles in revision work for their tests. Pupils are able to gather information, sort it and display it in different types of graphs. Pupils with special educational needs are achieving levels well above national averages. These pupils, in the lower attaining groups, are able to do the work the rest of the group are doing and achieve a high level of success. For example, they are able to find the areas of circles using algebra and rounding their answers to sensible numbers. Pupils with English as an additional language are not disadvantaged and assessment records show that they are achieving very high standards in mathematics. Gifted and talented pupils are suitably challenged and many are predicted to achieve the highest grade possible in their final examinations.
78. There are no significant differences between the attainment or progress of boys or girls. Younger pupils develop their mental skills appropriately at the beginning of most lessons where activities are planned to keep skills sharpened. They learn new mathematical words, record them and use them to explain their working. Older pupils have developed confidence and competence when

working with numbers. They develop their speaking skills by explaining their strategies when solving problems, using appropriate mathematical language. However, there are few computers and limited software available within the department and, as a result, insufficient opportunities for all pupils to develop their skills in information and communication technology. Mathematical skills are well developed in other subjects across the curriculum. For example, in science, Year 10 pupils practice high level algebra skills when working on electricity and magnetism problems.

79. The quality of teaching in mathematics is very good overall. It is particularly good with older pupils when specialist teachers take lessons. In the better lessons, teachers' planning is thorough and takes account of the range of pupils within the group. Work matches the attainment and needs of all pupils. Higher attaining pupils have more difficult work. Lower attaining pupils have additional support and sometimes work designed specifically for them. Introductions to lessons are clear and pupils know exactly what they have to do. Very good specialist knowledge ensures that the appropriate language is used and that pupils develop their language by explaining how to solve particular problems. Careful monitoring of pupils when they are working ensures that they are helped when they have problems and no time is wasted. Teachers question pupils to check that they really understand the work and lessons move at a brisk pace. Marking is thorough and constructive comments praise success or show ways to improve. Resources are used well and lessons include a variety of activities to stimulate interest and help learning. Very detailed records of individual attainment over time give a clear picture of how pupils are progressing and where pupils are underachieving. This information is used very effectively to set individual targets, to challenge pupils, to help when planning lessons and to target pupils who are underachieving. High standards of behaviour are expected. When pupils have particular problems, some teachers see them during breaks or after school. Some come to school for extra help during the weekend or in the holidays. As a result, learning opportunities are maximised and pupils make rapid progress. When lessons are not quite as good, marking is not of a high standard. Careless and untidy work or poor setting out sometimes escape comment. Lessons do not have the same pace and the knowledge of non-specialist teachers results in inaccurate use of language and insufficient problem solving or investigational work. However, this does not have a significant impact on standards. Non-specialists are well supported by specialist staff and helped with their planning. The consistently high quality of teaching and very good use of assessment information has a very significant impact on the quality of pupils' learning and the high standards of achievement. Teaching of basic skills is good overall. There is very good teaching of mental mathematics skills, particularly with the younger pupils. Additionally, subjects such as design and technology, science and geography incorporate mathematical skills in their lessons. Language skills are well developed through opportunities for pupils to explain their methods and through the emphasis on key mathematical words for a topic.
80. Pupils make good progress throughout the school. They enter the school with attainment levels ranging from below to in line with national averages. Towards the end of Year 11, pupils achieve standards in mathematics well above national expectations. Gifted and talented pupils are well challenged and achieve the highest possible levels in mathematics. Most pupils with special educational needs are achieving standards above and sometimes well above national expectations and some pupils with English as an additional language are achieving very high standards. They demonstrate high levels of mathematical competency across all areas of mathematics.
81. The attitudes of pupils to learning are generally very good. They enjoy lessons. Unusually, discussions with pupils indicated that mathematics is one of the most popular subjects in the school, a significant reflection of the high quality of provision by the department. In several lessons observed, pupils' behaviour was exemplary and their keenness to learn contributed strongly to the high standards they achieved.
82. The quality of leadership of the department is outstanding. The head of mathematics has done an astonishing amount in the short time she has been at the school, building on the high quality of work of the previous teacher responsible for the subject. Documentation is very thorough, covering all aspects of teaching and learning in mathematics. She has a clear vision of what has to be done in order to continue to raise the high standard of provision within the department. Planning has identified all of the areas in need of development. Very good teaching has been achieved

through high standards of support for non-specialists and through working together effectively as a team. Teachers are prepared to go well beyond the call of duty, often giving up their break times, offering time after school and sometimes at weekends and during the holidays. The monitoring role of the head of department is insufficiently developed. She has had little time to monitor the quality of teaching and learning within the department, although she has sound knowledge of the standards of teaching. The quality of assessment information is very high. Records of pupils' attainment over time are very detailed and provide a clear indication of individual progress and whether pupils are achieving standards that are appropriate to them. This information is used well by the department and ensures teaching is pitched at an appropriate level to challenge pupils within a particular set and contributes to the raising of standards.

83. The quality of provision in mathematics is of a very high standard and is a strength of the school.

SCIENCE

84. In the National Curriculum tests in 2000 at the age of 14, pupils achieved results well above the national average and well above the average for schools taking pupils from similar backgrounds. Boys' results were better than girls'. Since the school opened, results have improved at a faster rate than nationally. Results in science were better than those in English but were not as good as in mathematics. These results represent good progress in relation to pupils' prior attainment.
85. In work seen during the inspection, standards are above those found nationally at the age of 14 and close to the end of Year 11. Higher attaining pupils have a good record of work, are developing good habits and are maintaining high standards. Teachers keep good records of pupils' achievement particularly in Years 8 and 9. Pupils of all abilities are developing good subject knowledge and a good depth of understanding of underlying principles, so that they know, for example, the routine tests for the main food groups and can use them in practical situations. Teachers provide opportunities for revision and support to ensure that pupils progress at a good pace. Pupils have opportunities to do their own research and use information and communication technology to improve the presentation of their work. Pupils are used to predicting outcomes of practical tests and are learning to modify their ideas in the light of their findings. Teachers stress the importance of accuracy in measuring and in recording observations and in the use of terminology.
86. Pupils' attitudes are good overall. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils in Years 8 and 9 are very good, particularly when teachers provide a range of activities in lessons and maintain a good pace, often reminding pupils of the time they have to complete a task. Pupils know what they need to do and know what they are expected to achieve because they are told the aim of the lesson at the outset. For example, pupils could discuss ideas about the behaviour of particles with a view to sharing their ideas with the rest of their class so that they could go on to do some practical tests. Pupils of all abilities work well together in practical lessons, dividing tasks efficiently and sharing equipment and resources, sometimes working at different tasks in order to contribute to the overall result. Pupils help others who have not completed a task to finish it and will all ensure that equipment is cleared away and that books are collected at the end of lessons. However, in a few Year 10 lessons, a minority of pupils, particularly higher and middle attaining boys, are inattentive and lack motivation. They spend time chatting, have gaps in their written work and do not listen to instructions. Teachers generally pick this up and these pupils are kept back or given additional work to do at home.
87. The overall quality of teaching, and the learning it promotes, is good. It is never less than satisfactory and in half of all lessons it is good. Lessons start promptly and time is used well. Teachers have clear aims which pupils write down so that they know, for example, that by the end of the lesson they will understand the difference between a circuit in series and in parallel. Pupils are expected to use proper terminology; pronunciation is emphasised, with appropriate units of measurement in response to questions. Marking of work is informative and pupils know what they need to do to improve, although there are some inconsistencies. For example, spellings are not always corrected. Teachers keep detailed assessment records and progress reports on current attainment. Specific areas for improvement are targeted and pupils are beginning to develop their

own self-assessment. Homework is used appropriately and regularly to extend learning and to offer opportunities for pupils' own research. Pupils use a range of different styles of recording work and have opportunities for extended writing to make the subject matter more interesting and to check their understanding. For example, a Year 9 class wrote an interesting story about the life of an oxygen molecule swept into the lungs of a human during breathing. Relationships among pupils and between pupils and teachers are good. Pupils are confident in answering challenging questions and develop good reasoning skills. They are expected to carry out calculations and draw graphs as a matter of routine; pupils in lower attaining groups record results and tabulate measurements confidently. Pupils are aware of safety in the laboratories and use aprons and goggles to protect themselves during practical lessons. All pupils in Years 10 and 11 are entered for the co-ordinated double award science course. Although they are continually monitored and tested, it is quite difficult in the early part of the course to predict grades and, for this reason, pupils are given a progress grade within a fairly broad band. Some pupils have interpreted this as a predicted examination grade and are becoming disillusioned early on in the course so that they become demotivated. The head of department is keen to implement a modular GCSE course in order to improve pupils' motivation and raise attainment.

88. Leadership and management of the department are good. Although new to the school at the beginning of the academic year, the head of department has a clear vision for development, is committed to the ethos of the school and has a clear view of what needs to be done to raise standards. He is aware of the underachievement of some pupils in Year 10 and believes that the implementation of a modular course will do much to overcome this problem. There is considerable excitement about the development of sixth form science courses and a physics specialist has been appointed for September 2001. Resources are used well to promote learning, with work sheets that are matched to the needs of different ability groups. Accommodation is adequate but some lessons do take place in ordinary classrooms, making practical work difficult. However, there are four new laboratories planned for September 2001. Preparation areas are good and equipment is well maintained. The staff work as a team and are well supported by the technicians.
89. In order to secure improvement, the department needs to promote high expectations of pupils, particularly boys in Year 10, by improving their attitudes in some lessons through better information about their achievement. The GCSE course should be reviewed to ensure that provision meets the needs of all pupils and opportunities for pupils self-assessment should be further developed.

ART AND DESIGN

90. Teacher assessments at age 14 in 1999 showed pupils attaining below national average standards overall, with boys well below but girls well above. In 2000, overall attainment was above the national benchmark and, although girls' attainment was substantially higher than the national figure, boys also did well, exceeding nationally expected standards and coming significantly closer to matching the attainment of girls.
91. In work seen during the inspection, attainment at the age of 14 is broadly average. Pupils have average drawing and colouring skills. Still-life drawings are realised effectively in ink, watercolour or pastel. Pupils have a reasonable grasp of what is meant by mixed media and are familiar with the processes of research, exploration and trials which lead to finished pieces of art work. Sketchbooks show sound work on perspective and pattern, texture and figures. Knowledge of artists and styles is not a strong feature. Three-dimensional work is evident in various permanent artefacts around the school, for example the 'Walk of fame', a set of tiles embodying pupils' handprints and various personal items. Working with visiting artists is a strong feature of the department. Work shows the results of fruitful interactions of this kind, such as with Simon Tipping, which resulted in ceramic chimneys, or with Jessica Ross, who created, with Year 8 pupils, large-scale acrylic paintings of heads and features now mounted and forming an arresting feature of the 'street'. Pupils with special educational needs and pupils for whom English is an additional language achieve similar standards to the majority.

92. In work seen during the inspection, attainment close to the end of Year 11 is above average. Pupils' work shows good brush control and colour blending management and broadly above average ability in use of scale to transfer shape. There is evidence of very good work in three dimensions with research, investigation and realisation carried out very well. Documentation is sometimes weak, with little research into artists' styles in pupils' own words. Nevertheless, pupils' individual strengths are well developed. Pupils with special educational needs, starting from a base of very low prior knowledge and understanding and weak motor skills, achieve relatively well. Within each GCSE group there is a wide range of ability. Work on the theme of life and death has stimulated some quite profound ideas and some moving interpretations based on pupils' experience.
93. The quality of teaching is good in all years and sometimes very good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers' knowledge and understanding are very good. Teaching of basic skills, planning, expectations, methods and management of pupils are consistently good. Teachers make good use of time; support staff are deployed effectively. The quality and use of ongoing assessment are very good. This contributes to raising standards by supporting the planning of teaching and also ensures that pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. The head of department provides good leadership and management of the subject.
94. In all years, pupils acquire their subject knowledge, skills and understanding at a faster rate than might be expected because of good teaching. Their creativity in lessons is good. For example, Year 8 produce well-observed still life studies in ink, watercolour or pastels. Year 10 pupils make very good critical investigation of 'the image'. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress. For example, a pupil who arrived in this country only three years ago has created a particularly meticulous individual study. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to their classmates. Behaviour in lessons is good and attitudes are positive. Older pupils have good independent learning habits. Good behaviour provides the essential background for good teaching, which in turn leads to good progress and better than average attainment in Year 11.
95. At this stage of the school's building development, there is no provision for a kiln, photography, or a dedicated space for sixth form work. The temporary art rooms lack good natural light or height. Such deficiencies are only temporary; they do affect attainment and progress, but not greatly.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

96. Standards are good in design and technology throughout the school. At the age of 14, pupils' attainment is above the national average overall. Teachers' assessments and predictions for the first GCSE entries indicate above national average A* to C passes and inspection evidence substantiates this view.
97. Good progress has been made since the school opened because courses are well structured, resources are well organised and competent teaching makes for effective learning. Pupils have a very good understanding of the design process and work to realistic design briefs in a range of resistant and compliant materials in the workshops and kitchen.
98. After entering the school with some, but often varied, experience in the subject, Year 8 pupils rapidly develop their design and making skills. They show creativity in their designs for a steady hand game and use a range of hand and power tools safely to produce work of a high standard. They recognise the importance of measuring accurately to achieve a good finish and are developing a good understanding of the properties of materials. They understand how specialist tools can be used to aid manufacture, for example, wooden jigs to help bend thick wire into a particular shape. Year 9 pupils, work productively on a 'Toys that move' project. They choose their best design from a selection of rough ideas and develop this by making use of card templates. They are proficient at making eccentric cams using hand and power tools and they understand how oscillating and reciprocating movements are developed from cams and cam

followers. Drawings and plans communicate original ideas; self-assessment and group discussion are used to advantage in the evaluation of results. For all but the gifted and talented, freehand drawing and graphical presentation are weaker elements, although written material is generally accurate and neat, especially in food technology.

99. In Years 10 and 11, pupils build well on their earlier experiences, developing their understanding of the design process effectively to design and make useful products to meet specific needs. Year 10 pupils appreciate the problems of batch production when decorating small individual cakes. They decorate six cakes showing a range of design ideas - some traditional, some very original and highly creative. They use a wide range of techniques - cutting and replacing top sections, coloured icing, crystallised fruits, etc. Their finished projects show high standards of competence and technical and design skills through the use of materials, discerning choice of colour and an understanding of the value of simplicity.
100. The design and make work of Year 11 pupils is overall of a high standard. Pupils produce a wide range of solutions to a '*Storage and Leisure*' design brief, for example, a box for a chess set with an inlaid board on the lid and various ingenious ideas for CD storage units, using wood metal and plastic. These all show advanced making skills, precision in the use of tools, accurate measuring, knowledge of joints, and clear understanding of the properties of different materials. Pupils' design sheets are informative and the best work shows individual style and high levels of presentation. However, the graphical standards of many could be improved, for example, through more judicious use of colour and more carefully formed lettering for headings. Greater use of information and communication technology is needed in some areas to aid communication through charts and graphs and component lists. Pupils show obvious enjoyment in the course; many return to the workshops and kitchen after school. Their study skills are good and standards are improved through good research and links with local craftspeople.
101. Pupils in all years generally display good attitudes and are keen to learn. The purposeful and productive atmosphere throughout the department and notably in practical work promotes very good learning and progress. A few pupils lack confidence and show negative attitudes to their own learning but almost all pupils are well behaved, work safely and form constructive working relationships with their teachers and peers.
102. The overall quality of teaching is very good. Teaching is very good or excellent in seven out of ten lessons and is never less than satisfactory. Teachers have very good subject knowledge that they communicate well to pupils. Schemes of work are thoroughly documented and planned to cover National Curriculum and GCSE examination requirements. Projects and lessons are structured for maximum efficiency. There is excellent use of time and resources in almost all lessons in both areas of the subject. Well presented, challenging tasks provide very good learning opportunities in the best lessons, with clear aims and objectives that are shared with pupils. The sequential delivery of technological concepts and practical, focused tasks enable pupils to progressively build their knowledge, understanding and skills. For example, during the teaching of mechanisms when staged class demonstrations and individual practical sessions integrate theory and practice most effectively, or when the aroma of toast and frying bacon is used to introduce a lesson on sensory analysis. Generally lesson content is ideally suited to pupils' prior attainment. In a minority of cases, where pupils standards of attainment cover a wide range and include pupils with special needs, greater care is needed to provide appropriate work, and, if possible, further learning support.
103. The department is effectively and efficiently led and managed. Design and technology extends pupils' horizons, and plays a major part in their personal development. There is clear direction and vision for the subject with strong emphasis on the pursuit of excellence. Much effort has gone into forming and writing policies and establishing a course structure that not only meets National Curriculum requirements but is also rich and varied. Assessment procedures are very thorough and make full use of analysis of prior attainment. Team spirit is strong and shared commitment and capacity to succeed are excellent. Development plans are bold, with appropriate priorities to improve standards and to develop sixth form courses.

GEOGRAPHY

104. This is a very effective department. Pupils' attainment at the age of 14 is above average and standards attained by the majority of pupils towards the end of Year 11 broadly match those expected nationally. The standard of work seen in Year 10 suggests that achievement is improving.
105. All pupils make good progress from Year 8 to Year 11 and achievement is good. Most have good knowledge and understanding of geographic processes and patterns and of environmental themes. For example, in Year 9 pupils are already using appropriate geographic terms and have a good understanding of processes such as coastal erosion and deposition. The majority of pupils in Years 10 and 11 are able to interpret geographic information and make reasoned judgements. This was shown well in a Year 10 lesson on population movement when pupils were searching for information using secondary sources and making reasoned evaluations.
106. Pupils with special education needs and higher attaining pupils make equally good progress as a result of a skilful match of classroom tasks to the needs of individual pupils. For example, in a Year 10 lesson on cities, excellent progress was made as a result of the teacher's skilful use of video to illustrate and extend pupils' understanding of the problems of fast growing cities in poor countries.
107. In nearly all lessons, good relationships and behaviour, fostered by enthusiastic and stimulating teaching, contribute strongly to positive attitudes to learning. The great majority of pupils respond well. They are eager, enthusiastic learners who readily engage in productive group and pair work, helping each other to search for information and solve problems. However, a small minority of pupils, especially in Year 9, have a short concentration span, are sometimes too ready to spend time on low-level tasks and need prompting to move on to more challenging activities such as interpreting information and offering explanations.
108. Teaching overall is very good. All teaching is at least satisfactory and in two-thirds of all lessons it is very good or excellent. In the great majority of lessons, teachers' very good subject knowledge is skilfully transmitted to pupils through lively exposition. Teaching is invariably clear, stimulating and authoritative, drawing on many topical examples to illustrate and bring to life geographical themes. Very good use is made of aids and demonstrations, such as wave tables, to reinforce pupils' understanding, as for example in a Year 9 lesson on coastal management when these were used very well to stimulate pupils to explore how coasts erode.
109. Learning is accelerated in nearly all lessons by the very skilful management of pupils through high expectations of behaviour. Teachers create a relaxed yet productive atmosphere in classes which is highly conducive to learning. Teachers expect much of pupils. For example, pupils in a Year 9 lesson on coasts studied processes more commonly dealt with in GCSE courses. Teachers encourage pupils to persevere when faced with difficulty and, as a result, they readily engage in classroom activities, working with diligence and enthusiasm. Higher attaining pupils, in particular, are attaining a deep understanding of complex geographic issues such as the environmental conflict arising from urban development.
110. Questioning is often effectively used to challenge and develop pupils' understanding. Teachers skilfully use a wide range of learning activities, which are challenging, interesting and usually well matched to the needs of individual pupils. These are having a positive impact on attainment, particularly that of higher attaining pupils. Group work, role-play and simulations are used very well in enabling pupils to challenge and support each other in their learning. This was clearly demonstrated in a Year 11 lesson on urban change in Milton Keynes, when pupils researched a topic, comparing recent and post-war maps and then shared their findings with the class.
111. In most lessons, very good levels of concentration and interest are well fostered by a brisk and purposeful pace. Time is used to the full, with teachers engaging pupils in productive and interesting tasks. These are usually well matched to pupils' prior attainment, resulting in them maintaining interest and becoming active learners. The teacher's careful planning accelerates progress in most lessons, which are designed around activities that encourage pupils to find out rather than being told. The confidence of teachers not to over direct pupils in this way is rewarded

by the pupils' sense of achievement at their discovery of knowledge. For example, in a Year 10 lesson on urban renewal when the sequence of tasks led pupils to "discovering" the link between urban land use planning and community needs.

112. Homework is used well to support pupils' interest and understanding of their work. Many tasks are set which encourage independent research skills, particularly the use of computers to search for and present information. Nearly all pupils are keen to succeed and most understand how well they are achieving.
113. The subject is well led and managed by an efficient and effective head of department. She has created a shared commitment to raise standards. The department identifies clear, quantified targets for improvements and devises strategies to reach them. The shared vision of the department fully matches that of the school. The geography staff complement each other in terms of their range of experience and the head of department is beginning to have a strong impact on creating a culture of self-evaluation in the subject. Leadership would be enhanced through a more systematic approach to monitoring the work of the department through lesson observation and the use of performance data. To build its achievements, the department should continue to develop consistent teaching methods that maintain and improve the attainment of all pupils and make greater use of assessment to monitor pupil progress and intervene when underachievement is identified.

HISTORY

114. Teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment at the age of 14 show that standards have risen over the last two years and are now above the national average. The first pupils to follow the GCSE history course are to be examined this year. Predictions based on assessment data indicate that results will be in line with the national average for grades A*-C.
115. In work seen during the inspection, the attainment of pupils at the age of 14 is above the standard expected for pupils of the same age nationally. Pupils display a satisfactory understanding of primary and secondary sources and use them to gain information about the period studied. Projects completed over several days display the ability to explain events from the past, for example the Reformation, and to present the information logically and in a variety of ways. A good example of this is shown in a pupils' teaching pamphlet designed for younger children. Pupils can prepare a simple argument to support different theories, and reach a reasoned judgement on questions such as 'Was Cromwell a hero or a villain?' Higher attaining pupils write fluently and demonstrate independent thought, supporting their statements with some evidence. However, lower attaining pupils depend upon information supplied and make statements that reflect less investigation. Pupils in Year 9 recognise that there may be long and short-term causes of events and higher attaining pupils can evaluate the importance of these contributory factors. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress due to a teaching style that encourages discussion and explanation by pupils of what is learnt. Information sheets are designed to meet the needs of pupils of different levels of ability while not limiting the requirement that pupils use history skills to complete their tasks. Pupils for whom English is an additional language are supported in their language development by the open questioning that takes place in lessons, and their achievement in history matches that of their peers.
116. In work seen during the inspection, the attainment of pupils towards the end of Year 11 is above average. Pupils study the development of medicine over time and in doing so build up a picture of diverse cultures ranging from the Egyptian civilisation to the present day. Their understanding of the factors that contribute to change is good and higher attaining pupils can make links between different factors, for example, the growth of trade and the spread of ideas. Pupils recognise that there may be several factors leading to an event or circumstance and they can identify the most significant factor. A good example was when pupils considered the relative absence of significant female figures in history before the twentieth century. Lower attaining pupils could identify significant factors but did not do so by comparing one with another. Pupils study the rise of National Socialism in Germany between the two world wars. They use sources confidently to select and extract information in support of their judgements. Higher attaining pupils recognise motive and can empathise with the people from the time, while still recognising the possible

unreliability of the sources used. They use evidence to explain the significance of its contents rather than simply for description. Pupils of all abilities recognise that history may be seen from a variety of viewpoints and that self-interest may be a strong motive behind actions. This is shown in their understanding of the different approaches by the Great Powers towards the peace settlement after World War 1. The practice of re-drafting extended writing assignments results in pupils producing work that is generally well structured and includes their own summary of the task. Lower attaining pupils produce work with a similar structure, but that lacks development of statements and includes only single factors when reasoning. Limited supporting evidence is used to back up judgements.

117. The quality of teaching is good overall and very good in the GCSE classes where specialist teaching enables pupils to develop the skills required for the study of history. Teachers generally have high expectations of the behaviour and the responses of their pupils and, as a result, the atmosphere in lessons is usually business-like and mature. Lessons are very well planned with clear objectives that are shared with pupils and a closing period when pupils review what has been learned in the lesson. Very good management of pupils ensures that they are focused on the tasks set and that group and paired work is effective, enabling pupils to learn from each other. Good use is made of question and answer to assess pupils' understanding. Teachers encourage pupils to develop their responses further by careful prompting and requests that the pupils provide reasons for their answers. In the best lessons, there is a partnership between teacher and pupil, where the teacher guides pupils' discovery and investigation. Teachers manage well the use of double periods for a minority of groups in order to support pupils' concentration. However, lower attaining pupils, in particular, find it difficult to sustain concentration during the long lesson. Marking of pupils' work is encouraging and supportive but the use of assessment of whole year groups is still being developed. Pupils have the opportunity to evaluate their own work. However, teachers do not always ensure that pupils are clear enough about standards required so that they can reflect on the standard of their work before they submit assignments for assessment.
118. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils in lessons are very good. Pupils work well in groups, listening to each other and sharing ideas and opinions. Higher attaining pupils are willing to challenge what they read, demonstrating a desire to understand. Concentration levels are good and pupils are concerned to complete tasks set. Pupils have very good relationships with one another and their teachers and as a result they are very positive in their learning.
119. The management of the department is very good. The head of faculty monitors teaching and regular meetings are held which enable ideas to be developed and exchanged. History is taught within the humanities faculty and the suite of rooms available supports the exchange of good practice between teachers. The head of department provides very good support for non-specialist teachers through detailed lesson plans and discussion. Monitoring of pupils' progress in the key elements of history is still in the developmental stage; however, there are plans to put this in place. The department makes good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through its practice of encouraging them to reflect upon what they have learnt and to consider the consequences of changes in the past. Good use is made of the visits to Bradwell Abbey by pupils in Year 10, and to the Imperial War Museum by pupils in Year 9, to enable them to gain first hand experience of items from the past. However, the department has no artefacts of its own and the use of video footage is limited by the need to share a television with other departments. There is good co-operation between the history and information and communication technology departments over an extended project undertaken by Year 9 pupils but general opportunities for the use of computers to support teaching and learning are under-developed.
120. The department is developing its schemes of work as the school grows and a good foundation has been laid to support sixth form study at A level next year.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

121. Standards of attainment in information and communication technology (ICT) at the end of Year 9, and towards the end of Year 11, are above those found nationally. Very good teaching and provision for the subject have resulted in very good learning for all pupils.

122. In 2000, teachers' assessments at the age of 14 showed overall attainment to be well above that expected nationally. Similarly high standards were observed during the inspection in the work of the current Year 9. A notable strength of achievement in both Years 8 and 9 is the confidence pupils show in extending their learning and skills through the exploration of software and the process of discovery.
123. Pupils join the school with a wide range of ICT skills. They soon develop their interest and capability, irrespective of their previous experiences. Years 8 and 9 have separate ICT lessons, where they quickly learn to use a range of computer applications and organise their work into convenient 'files' and 'folders' for easy retrieval. At the age of 14, all pupils are able to use computers independently and are making good use of word-processing, database, spreadsheet and desk-top-publishing software. They are also using the Internet for researching topics for other subjects. Year 8 pupils, for example, design their own web-sites for the school Intranet. Having designed a front page, they are beginning to understand how to link it to other pages with the hyperlink facility. They import text and pictures from other sources, including the Internet, and are developing a good working knowledge of publishing software. Year 9 pupils can create a field structure in a database application. They carry out complex searches of their completed database, using mathematical symbols, with clear understanding of their meaning in this context.
124. In Years 10 and 11, pupils build effectively on their prior attainment, through the four compulsory subjects, English, mathematics, science, and design and technology. Some computer work forms part of the syllabus in several other subjects, notably business studies, geography and physical education. In Year 11, all pupils have at least average, and many an above average, understanding of word-processing software and are able to use it effectively to enhance presentation in other subjects. Overall, capability covers a wide range; those with computers at home often show advanced knowledge, whilst others use few short cuts, and rely on basic commands and layout. Keyboard skills, however, are weak and this slows productivity for many.
125. All pupils approach their computer work with very good attitudes. They are well motivated, and are keen to learn new skills. Teachers have established a very positive learning environment and built very good working relationships with pupils. In return, pupils have responded with enthusiasm and strong aspirations to achieve high standards in all areas of the subject. They see the potential of new technology and appreciate and respect the high quality of the school's new computer facilities.
126. The quality of teaching is predominantly very good; it is occasionally excellent and never less than satisfactory. In the dedicated ICT lessons, teachers' expertise is used in conjunction with the high quality resources, to motivate and challenge. Course structure and lesson planning are excellent. All lessons have a clear learning pathway, supported by high quality worksheets. Aims and objectives are shared with pupils. Projects are presented to the whole class in stages and pupils' understanding is checked, enabling lessons to proceed at a good pace. Homework that is regularly set and constructively marked is related to the lesson topic and often to the place of technology in society. There is extension work for higher attainers. Teachers have very good knowledge of pupils' individual needs and appropriate questioning promotes and reinforces learning. Pupils with special educational needs are set appropriate work. They gain confidence through success and are inspired to further effort by the high quality presentation that can be achieved using a computer. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils and encourage them to work independently. Pupils are mutually supportive and readily share their skills and knowledge. Teaching strategies are very effective and allow for limited resources. For example, in one lesson half the class worked on a data protection exercise while the other half worked on computers, searching a hotel database for 'bad' customers! The overall high quality of teaching is reflected in very good learning and the standard of achievement.
127. The subject is extremely well led and managed, both strategically and on a day-to-day basis. There is very clear direction for the subject, with an excellent shared commitment by staff across the school to succeed. Much effort has gone into ensuring that the full National Curriculum is taught to all pupils in all years, through liaison with other teachers and a programme of staff training. However, the school acknowledges that further work is needed on assessment

procedures, particularly to co-ordinate and collate the cross-curricular achievements of pupils as they progress through the school.

128. The subject is expanding rapidly, for example through the use of the Internet for research, and the consideration of ethical issues, such as the place of technology in today's society. The subject is beginning to make a significant contribution to the spiritual, moral, social, cultural, and personal development of pupils.
129. Development plans are innovative, yet appropriate and sharply focused on raising attainment. They include significant improvements to resources, links with local schools, GCSE and A level courses from September 2001 and developments to enable pupils to access their school work files from home.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

130. French is the only modern foreign language currently offered by the school. Throughout the school, standards are below average and below the standards that might be expected when considering pupils' attainment on entry to the school. In 2000, the proportion of pupils assessed by their teachers as working at the nationally expected level at the age of 14 was broadly average but this was not matched by work seen during the inspection in the current Year 9.
131. In work seen during the inspection at age 14, standards in listening, speaking, reading and writing are all below average. This is because most pupils join the school with very little experience of French and teachers have to start the National Curriculum course from Year 8 instead of Year 7. In addition, the time allocated to French is less than the national average proportion. This means that pupils are unable to catch up on what they have missed. Speaking is the weakest skill because not enough time is spent developing pronunciation and listening to French. Most pupils are able to write sentences in French, with varying degrees of accuracy, but there is not enough planned development of longer pieces of writing for higher attaining pupils. In lessons, writing for some middle attaining pupils is limited to copying vocabulary. Reading is not systematically included in lessons, although pupils learn to recognise words by matching lists of French and English vocabulary. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to other pupils. They make good progress in lessons but not over time, because they have too little teaching. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress compared to others because most already have good techniques of language learning. This means that higher attaining pupils are able to write accurately, showing a good understanding of grammar.
132. In work seen during the inspection towards the end of Year 11, standards in the four language skills continue to be below average. This is because pupils have gaps in their knowledge because of the lack of time spent learning the language lower down the school. There is no foreign language assistant to help practise speaking, so this remains a weakness. Higher attaining pupils start to develop their writing but lack confidence in using a variety of tenses and structures. Standards have also suffered because the continuity of learning has been affected by changes of teachers, with some pupils having a different teacher each year.
133. The quality of teaching is always at least satisfactory and occasionally it is good. Lessons are planned to take into account the needs of individual pupils, including those with special educational needs. Teachers know their pupils well and have good relationships with them. The best lessons have a range of activities, which cover the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. A very good lesson in Year 8 enabled pupils to make very good progress in their learning because it was carefully planned with a variety of activities in the four skills. It was conducted at a brisk pace and introduced new vocabulary in an exciting way. Pupils took their work seriously, responding well to the teacher and enjoying the lesson because they were fully involved in the pair work, chanting and song. However, in a Year 10 lesson, progress was only satisfactory because the teaching was less lively and higher attaining pupils were not sufficiently challenged. The teacher did not refer to tenses other than the present, although these had been covered. As a result, an opportunity was missed for the "recycling" of language patterns.

Teachers use assessment at the end of each unit of work to judge the progress their pupils are making. This is linked to National Curriculum standards in Years 8 and 9. Marking is completed regularly and gives some information about what pupils know and can do and what they need to do to improve their work. Pupils have some awareness of the levels at which they are working. There is good use of information and communication technology, but this is restricted by the time allowed for language teaching.

134. The quality of learning is satisfactory in lessons but less good over time because the low amount of time spent in French lessons means that there is not enough reinforcement of learning and the pace of learning is restricted. This is particularly the case in Year 8, where the time allocation is low for all pupils, and in Year 9 for those in the middle and lower bands. Although in Year 10 a more substantial amount of time is provided, in Year 11 some pupils again have a reduced allocation, thus making it impossible for the GCSE syllabus to be covered effectively. Another Year 11 class has two of the three French lessons at the end of the day. This is affecting standards because pupils' learning tends to be less productive towards the end of the day when they are tiring.
135. Pupils show interest in their work and have a positive attitude to it. They behave well in lessons. Work is well presented and carefully completed. Pupils lack confidence in their oral work and strategies for improving this need to be implemented.
136. The department makes an important contribution to the cultural life of the school through visits to France, the German exchange and involvement in the Comenius Project, which links Shenley Brook End School with schools in six other European countries.
137. The issue of low provision of curriculum time is the largest single factor contributing to the below average standards of attainment. This needs to be dealt with as a matter of urgency so that pupils are given the opportunity to reach their potential.

MUSIC

138. Teachers' assessments at the age of 14 in 1999 showed pupils attaining significantly better than the national average overall, with boys in line with the national picture but well behind the girls, whose performance was very high. In 2000, all far exceeded the national average and boys made substantial gains to almost catch up with girls. This indicates very good levels of achievement in Years 8 and 9.
139. In work seen during the inspection, attainment by the age of 14 is above average. Pupils have good analytical listening skills. For example, they can recognise 'hooks and riffs' from played examples. They have good knowledge and understanding of keyboards and notation and most are able to locate and play notes of straightforward melodies, together with some basic harmonies, either working in pairs or, in several instances, playing solo. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language perform equally well at these activities. Composing activities, such as improvising 'blues' melodies and fills, are well done at a number of different levels so that all understand and produce good compositions. Musical vocabulary is well developed and terms such as "bass", "acoustic guitar", "cabasa" (an instrument which makes a rasping sound) "riff", "ostinato" (both mean repeated musical phrases), names of notes and values are reasonably well understood by most pupils. Knowledge of composers and their works and styles is not so strongly developed, which is hardly surprising given the modest allocation of time for music lessons. Good use is made of the two computers in the department, but by a relatively small number of pupils. However, good quality keyboards are available in sufficient numbers for all pupils to acquire some understanding of the very sophisticated features of modern musical technology.
140. In work seen during the inspection, standards close to the end of Year 11 are above average. The small number of pupils involved in GCSE music have their lesson for one hour per week after school. All have good performance skills derived from receiving additional instrumental tuition to an appropriate standard, which in turn helps their knowledge and understanding of music and

develops skills that they are able to apply effectively in their compositions. Their weakest areas are the knowledge and understanding required for critical listening. Acquiring this in the limited lesson time is challenging, but their teacher expressed great confidence in pupils' ability to do so.

141. Altogether 36 pupils enhance their musical attainment with additional instrumental lessons, a reasonable and broadly average proportion, and rather more than this number participate in musical groups, such as orchestra, choir and various smaller ensembles.
142. The quality of teaching is very good. Teachers' knowledge and understanding are very good, as are their teaching methods, planning and management of pupils. The pressure arising from lack of time in Years 10 and 11 may lead to work being rather rushed so that important ideas may be in danger of being imperfectly understood or recalled. Nevertheless, pupils in all years acquire their knowledge, understanding and skills better than might be expected in relation to their attainment on entry to the school. Year 8 pupils enjoy their lesson on 'blues' and are eager to participate in the ingenious game their teacher has invented to help them learn about it and then to apply their knowledge to playing the various features on keyboards. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make equally good progress at this. Behaviour is very good and attitudes are positive at all levels, which enables very good teaching to lead to very good learning and above average attainment.
143. The limited time available for music in Years 10 and 11 imposes severe constraints and may affect GCSE standards. Also, the shortage of accommodation, combined with substantial class sizes in Years 8 and 9, makes group work difficult and hinders both teaching and learning. It is planned to improve these shortcomings in the current building programme.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

144. The results of teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment at the age of 14 in 2000 were in line with national averages. Boys' results were slightly better than girls'.
145. In work seen during the inspection, attainment at the age of 14 is above the level expected for pupils of the same age nationally in outdoor and adventurous activities but below expected standards in gymnastics. Pupils show planning and evaluative skills in the team challenges set for them. They help one another to achieve the desired result and pupils of all abilities are involved in the co-operative ventures. Pupils' prior attainment is low in gymnastics and the opportunity to practice sequence work is insufficient to improve performance standards in the current Year 9. During the inspection, there was an improvement in Year 8 pupils' agility and response when apparatus was arranged in a more varied and challenging way. Attainment close to the end of Year 11 is in line with national expectations in GCSE practical activities. In netball the standard is good and the basic skills are developing through the game. Tactics and strategies are understood and pupils can umpire a match effectively. Planning and evaluating a cross-country run were efficiently demonstrated and performance showed an improvement in the timed run. Badminton and table tennis are undertaken with vigour and shot selection is as good as might be expected. Scrutiny of pupils' written work shows a commitment to the presentation and organisation of their theoretical tasks. Work in Year 11 is extended sufficiently for pupils to be on course to reach the targets set. Pupils of all abilities are entered for the examination and the targets are very challenging, based on accurate assessment procedures.
146. Most activities are performed with enthusiasm and energy. Pupils in all years concentrate well and co-operative teamwork is excellent. Pupils show an ability to take responsibility for their own learning, for example, warming up before a lesson is usually completed without the teacher's direction. Very few pupils do not take an active part in physical education lessons, but those that do not are involved in the activity by refereeing or helping to coach others. Motivation is high; pupils make haste to their lessons and change quickly so that no time is wasted. Pupils exhibit well-developed social skills and relationships are very positive.
147. Teaching is good overall, slightly better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 8 and 9. Teaching is very good in badminton and outdoor and adventurous activities and it is good in athletics and

netball. The teacher's lack of knowledge in gymnastics hindered pupil progress in one lesson but later lessons allowed pupils to improve their performance on apparatus, which was varied and challenging. Overall, planning is very good and takes into account the abilities and backgrounds of all pupils. Lesson plans clearly outline tasks to challenge all levels of ability appropriately. Teachers ask pupils to evaluate their own work and plan for future targets. Relationships between teachers and pupils are positive and are reflected in the number of pupils who extend their learning by attending extra-curricular classes and activities. Class management is generally good. Teaching objectives are made clear and good feedback is given in all lessons. Pupils are encouraged to warm up and evaluate their performance. Tasks and resources are selected to help all pupils to make progress. However, in gymnastics, resources need to be consistently used and safety checks carried out. Extra groups and activities would help progress in outdoor and adventurous activities, table tennis and hockey. Pupils with special educational needs are encouraged to reach individual targets with the help of support staff. GCSE groups are making good progress and are provided with opportunities to develop their expertise in information technology. Pupils make effective progress, particularly in Years 10 and 11, because of the good teaching overall. Their learning skills are well developed; they assess their own performance and show initiative. Pupils are aware of tactics and strategies in badminton and netball and their planning skills are developed by co-operative work in outdoor and adventurous activities. Teachers' feedback at the end of lessons helps pupils to evaluate their own strengths and provides challenges for their developing skills. Individual targets help GCSE pupils to direct their attention to relevant revision topics. The department establishes good learning habits.

148. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and further development of dance is planned next year. There is equal access to the subject for all pupils. About 90 per cent of the school population take part in the after-school games programme and over 20 staff, many from outside agencies, conduct the sessions. All pupils, whatever their ability, are encouraged to attend additional clubs before school, at lunchtimes and after school. The gifted and talented pursue their chosen sport into clubs in the community and others attend to improve their basic skills. As a result of this programme, the school has been awarded 'Sportsmark Gold' – the highest award a school can achieve for promoting sporting activities. An outstandingly good assessment policy has been developed to meet the requirements of Curriculum 2000; excellent recording procedures and target setting promote pupils' learning. Very informative documentation has been completed and put into practice in a relatively short time.
149. Very good management provides effective direction for the department and the performance management policy is beginning to have a positive effect on teaching skills. Qualified specialists teach most of the activities and a few sessions are taught satisfactorily by non-specialists. Priority should now be given to in-service training in educational gymnastics. Good displays in corridors around the school contain appropriate notices and information. The next phase of accommodation is in progress to provide very good indoor facilities with the completion of the sports hall. Outdoor facilities have expansive grass areas but insufficient hard surface areas. This is unsatisfactory because the lack of appropriate surfaces restricts the learning opportunities that can be provided, for example in hockey (where the skill level is below national expectations), and tennis.
150. The department has made rapid progress since the school opened. When the full teaching complement is in place and additional facilities are completed the learning opportunities for physical education should be of the highest quality.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

151. In work seen during the inspection, the attainment of pupils by the age of 14 matches the standards required by the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils have a sound understanding of the use of symbolism and the main features of religions in general. They acquire a useful body of knowledge relating to the key moments in the life of Jesus, his birth, baptism, death and resurrection. Pupils investigate the divisions that took place at the time of the Reformation and have a good understanding of the concept of denominations in Christianity. They investigate

'Ultimate Questions', for example the concept of the existence of a god, and the belief in life after death. They consider different theories relating to the creation of the world. Pupils demonstrate their recognition of the use of creation stories through their own inventions. Their understanding of the concepts behind the ultimate questions studied is weak, however, due to the very limited opportunity provided to reflect upon them and to consider their relevance today. For example, pupils consider the traditional Christian image of heaven and hell but do not go on to consider the concept behind such an image or its place in the 21st century. Pupils in Year 9 study the significant features of Buddhism and higher attaining pupils reflect on the consequence of Buddhist belief. The majority of pupils' work, however, suggests that they do not apply the facts they have learned to the effects that belief might have on the lives of believers. Written responses to questions tend to be brief, lacking development and evidence of depth of thought.

152. In work seen during the inspection, the attainment of pupils close to the end of Year 11 matches the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils study contemporary issues such as euthanasia and abortion and consider the teachings of Christianity and Hinduism with reference to these issues. Pupils recognise the concept of the sanctity of life and can relate it to biblical teaching, for example the Ten Commandments. However, when considering examples of moral dilemmas they do not readily apply this knowledge unless directed by the teacher. Pupils empathise with people facing moral dilemmas and recognise that there may be different valid opinions as to the suitable outcome. Higher attaining pupils recognise that there may be several factors that affect decisions. However, lower attaining pupils show less awareness of the complexity of choices. Pupils investigate the key practices of the Hindu and Christian faiths and have an understanding of the rituals that support the individual's rites of passage through life, for example, birth, marriage and death. They consider the relationships that may lead to marriage and the means by which the size of family may be regulated. Written work indicates a satisfactory understanding of these issues and pupils are compiling a useful body of knowledge.
153. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in all years. Lessons are well planned and the aims and objectives are shared with pupils, enabling them to focus on the key issues. Good use is made of video footage to stimulate discussion and to challenge preconceptions. The need to cover the material of the course limits opportunities for discussion that would support the development of understanding. Teachers promote learning by involving pupils in their lessons and they make efforts to include all pupils in the oral work of the class. They treat the opinions and ideas of their pupils with respect, encouraging them to listen to the views of others. In some lessons there is too high a tolerance of informal chatter, which can result in teachers having to repeat the responses of pupils - adding to the noise levels of the group. Teachers have a very good rapport with their pupils, enabling them to develop the confidence to participate readily in the oral work of the class. Pupils are not significantly disadvantaged by the limited use of non-specialist teachers because of the support given by the head of department and well-planned lessons. The use of a consistent team of teachers who can build up their expertise, supported by relevant training, is required if standards are to be raised further.
154. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils are satisfactory. Pupils are generally attentive and well mannered, displaying a respect for the beliefs and opinions of others. They respond well to visitors, as in a Year 8 lesson when they interviewed a Christian worker. They reacted sensitively, demonstrating good social skills. Pupils discuss issues with confidence and are generally co-operative, working well in groups. A minority of pupils are unwilling to apply themselves fully to tasks set, and written responses at times show lack of effort and thought.
155. The management of the department is good. The department is part of the humanities faculty and the head of faculty monitors teaching. Regular meetings are held that enable teachers within the faculty to exchange information. Teachers who teach mainly outside the faculty do not generally attend and there is no monitoring of non-specialist teaching by the department. However, a specialist teacher teaches the majority of lessons and detailed lesson plans are provided for non-specialist teachers. The newly appointed subject co-ordinator is re-writing the schemes of work in order to enable older pupils to have the opportunity to study for the short GCSE course. This is intended to provide a greater incentive for pupils to develop their responses and a clear focus for teaching. Pupils in Year 11 who wish to sit for the examination this year are being offered additional lessons outside the regular timetable. The day-to-day marking of pupils' work is regular and encouraging. Regular assessment of the attainment of pupils in order to monitor and measure

their progress in relation to the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus is in the early stages of development. The department has built up its collection of video footage and religious objects, although additional resources will be required in order to support the development of pupils' understanding of items outside their experience. At present, computers are used informally by pupils for the presentation of their work and for research purposes. There is no planned use of computers in the schemes of work but this is under review. There has been no use of local places of worship, such as the Milton Keynes Ecumenical Cathedral, although the department does benefit from the support of the 'Bridge-Builders Trust' who visit the school to discuss issues of belief with the pupils. Teaching is mainly in the subject base, which is attractive and where display is used well to celebrate pupils' achievement.

DRAMA

156. Drama is an optional GCSE subject offered in Years 10 and 11. Based on the limited opportunities to observe drama classes during the inspection, standards are in line with national expectations and the quality of teaching is satisfactory.
157. Teachers have good subject knowledge and offer a suitable range of activities exploring the three strands of creating, performing and critical evaluation of performance. Pupils are also given the chance to work with artists from visiting theatre groups. In practical work, pupils have the chance to become familiar with techniques such as "hot-seating" and "thought-tracking" as means of character exploration as well as learning about the technical aspects of performance, such as set design and the use of props. Pupils devise their work from chosen stimuli, such as the Beatles' song *She's Leaving Home* and they also work on scripts by established playwrights. A sense of purposeful work is not always sustained throughout the lessons because of a lack of pace and the time could be managed more carefully. As a result, pupils do not always have sufficient demands made upon them. An important factor affecting the standards achieved in drama is the lack of a large teaching space. This has restricted pupils' chances to develop their practical skills as fully as possible.
158. The quality of learning is satisfactory but pupils' attitudes to learning are good because of the enthusiasm generated by the teachers. However, although they can deliver lines from scripted texts with fluency and clarity in the majority of cases, they do not have the same confidence in their practical work. For example, in an exercise on character in a Year 11 class when they had to maintain still poses, many of the pupils spoke and changed their position. Similarly, in a Year 10 class, when performing work was in progress, pupils found it difficult to sustain focus and remain in role. This is not through an unwillingness to co-operate but rather reveals a lack of awareness of how to use space effectively, combined with an under-developed sense as to what it means to cross the line from "real" life into the life of the drama. In written work the most able pupils are able to identify and comment upon the effects of a range of dramatic techniques, for example, those used in *Blood Brothers*. However, in the evaluation of their own work on *She's Leaving Home* there was a lack of clear awareness when applying the same techniques to their own work.
159. Drama makes a significant impact on the life of the school. There is a wide variety of extra-curricular activities on offer which are very popular with the pupils. Trips to the theatre, opportunities to perform, drama club and the chance to work with professional artists make a very good contribution to the personal, social and cultural development of the pupils.