

INSPECTION REPORT

DEBDEN PARK HIGH SCHOOL

Chigwell

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 131876

Headteacher: Mr Chris Bowler

Reporting inspector: Mr R Peter J McGregor
3525

Dates of inspection: 13-16 February 2001

Inspection number: 230030

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11-16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	High Road Chigwell Essex
Postcode:	IG7 6DW
Telephone number:	020 8500 9995
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Reverend J Delfgou
Date of previous inspection:	None

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
3525	R Peter J McGregor	Registered inspector		The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught?
9053	Vivienne Phillips	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school work in partnership with parents? Community links
28199	Peter Lawley	Team inspector	English English as an additional language	
27719	Paul Metcalf	Team inspector	Mathematics	How well does the school care for its pupils?
29742	Patricia Fyans	Team inspector	Science	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
2501	Raye Allison-Smith	Team inspector	Art and design	How well is the school led and managed?
1583	Paul Morgan	Team inspector	Information and communications technology Design and technology	
25073	Stuart Jordan	Team inspector	Geography Religious education	
4617	Roslyn Fox	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
3725	Michael Thomas	Team inspector	Music	
22042	John Challands	Team inspector	Physical education Special educational needs	
10761	Patrick Willan	Team inspector	History Equal opportunities	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Debden Park High School opened in September 1999 as a new comprehensive school in temporary accommodation in Chigwell. It accepted 70 pupils from St John's Chigwell which operated from 1998-1999, with a temporary director, as an annex of St John's Epping. These pupils are now in Year 9. A new school is nearing completion, purpose-built under a private finance initiative (PFI) by a major civil engineering company. The school buildings will be owned by the company for the next twenty-five years and the local education authority will pay to use them for that period. The present roll is 325 pupils in Years 7 to 9. Each year from September 2001, the school will take in a further 180 pupils, with an intended final roll of 900 pupils aged 11 to 16, which would make the school similar in size to the national average of 955 pupils. The school was over-subscribed in 2000. Entry into the school, when it is oversubscribed, is determined by the attendance of siblings and how near to the school pupils live. Very few pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds. A few pupils speak English as an additional language, but none are at an early stage of learning English. Compared with national averages the proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below average at 11%, with 6% at the higher stages, most with specific or moderate learning difficulties. The number with Statements is similar to the national average at 2.5%. The proportion of pupils entitled to have free school meals, 22%, is a little above the national average of 18%. Entry standards, as indicated by national tests taken in the pupils' final year in primary school, are broadly average. The areas from which the pupils come represent a broad range, some areas socially and economically disadvantaged and others advantaged.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Debden Park is already a good school, very effectively managed and led, where pupils enjoy their education and achieve well. Current progress and achievement in several subjects is very good indeed. Attainment at age fourteen is above average overall, with some average and well above average work. Teaching is good with a high proportion of very good lessons observed. Pupils do not use computers enough in lessons. The pupils are very well cared for and supported, both academically and socially, resulting in their very good personal development. The school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Very good achievement in lessons in art, music, drama and information and communication technology
- Pupils' very good attitudes to work, and very good behaviour, both in classes and around the school
- Very good or excellent teaching in well over a third of lessons observed
- A school ethos that promotes personal development and achievement
- Very supportive parents involved in the school's development
- Excellent leadership and management by the governors, headteacher and deputy headteacher, leading a very hard working and enthusiastic staff team

What could be improved

- Insufficient access to, and use of, computers in many subjects.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Debden Park, as a new school that has only been open for one and a half years, has no previous inspection report on which to base judgements on improvement.

STANDARDS

National tests will be taken for the first time by fourteen-year-olds in 2001 and as the oldest pupils in the school are in Year 9, there are no GCSE results. Current standards in Year 9 are above average overall with some average and some high quality work. In English, mathematics and science, on present performance, pupils will attain above average results in the national tests in the summer of 2001.

Pupils' achievements, relative to their prior learning, are good with some very good work in a range of subjects. Achievement is satisfactory or better in all subjects because of the positive attitudes of the pupils and the sound or better quality of teaching. Year 9 pupils spoke of their weak introduction to learning when they were in Year 7 at another school, however. The outcome of this is clear in the standards of attainment today in subjects such as music, information and communication technology (ICT), French and art. Even with high quality teaching in all of these subjects the pupils are still catching up, in order to attain the highest standards. Current progress and achievement is of a significantly higher quality than that indicated by the average and above average standards attained in several subjects.

The highest standards, in addition to English, mathematics and science, are currently in drama, music, art, and ICT as a subject, where teaching is so very good and pupils' achievements in lessons are very good or excellent. Progress in all four areas is very good and attainment is average or above in the areas taught. Standards in French are similar to national expectations but current achievements are good and sometimes very good. Pupils do not use computers sufficiently in subject lessons and aspects of National Curriculum ICT have not been taught, resulting in below average standards in these areas. In all other subjects, attainment is similar to national expectations and achievements are satisfactory or better.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are happy to come to school and want to learn and do well. Pupils have an interesting and enjoyable time at school, resulting in enthusiasm and high motivation.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Staff have high expectations and set clear boundaries. Above average temporary exclusions, but falling. Aggressive behaviour is not tolerated.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Calmness and consideration for others results in high quality relationships. Pupils follow the example set by staff and work very well together. They take responsibilities seriously and appreciate how their actions impact on others.
Attendance	Broadly average. Improving as a result of a whole school approach. Good punctuality.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

Pupils make good progress in their learning as a result of the good quality teaching, which was satisfactory or better in 98% of observed lessons. Of the lessons observed, 39% were very good or excellent and 73% were good or better. Only 2% were unsatisfactory, where groups of pupils in the lessons observed made insufficient progress in their studies. The quality of teaching of Year 7 was very good, and the best quality in subjects was of art, music, ICT and drama, with nearly as effective teaching in mathematics, English and French.

Most teachers have very good subject knowledge and pupils are often questioned rigorously at the beginning and end of lessons to check their learning. Teachers use a range of methods and techniques which enable pupils to learn effectively. Enthusiastic exposition and clear explanations led to excellent learning in several lessons. Pupils shared ideas and enjoyed learning.

About half the teaching staff observed had one or more excellent or very good lesson. The quality of teaching was good in English and mathematics and sound in science. Literacy and numeracy skills are well taught in a range of subjects, although teachers do not all adopt a consistent approach.

Occasional weaknesses include boys presenting their work rather scruffily and high attaining pupils insufficiently challenged in some lessons. The staff work extremely hard to meet the needs of all pupils at Debdon Park.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Broad and balanced. Good tutorial work at the end of day and PSE lessons. Good subject planning, Modular approach to planning for history and geography results in a lack of continuity in learning. Very good extra-curricular clubs and activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Thorough and detailed and well matched to needs. Good assessment, although subject targets in pupils' individual education plans not yet as clear as they could be.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good in all areas. High priority given to developing a sense of community, making opportunities for pupils to think and reflect, to know right from wrong and to recognise and value individual successes and talents.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very well. Very good health, safety and child protection arrangements. Tutors know pupils very well. Excellent procedures and practice for promoting high attendance. Very good behaviour guidelines thoroughly and consistently implemented. Excellent pupil planner, at the centre of rewards system, very effectively used. Good assessment but not enough use yet made of known data.

Pupils benefit from a weekly curriculum time that is greater than recommended. The full requirements of National Curriculum ICT are not met, with insufficient use of computers in many subjects because of the lack of space and facilities in the current temporary accommodation. The requirement for a daily act of collective worship is not fully met, although the school offers many opportunities for pupils to think about and appreciate their world. An innovative system of 'Next Step' goals is very helpful to pupils in setting achievable targets in each of their subjects.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. Inspired leadership. Highly effective team. Shared responsibility and commitment to success. Very effective subject leaders and year team leaders. A clear vision for the future, built upon pupils doing as well as possible at Debden Park.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Excellent. Complementary skills. Governors work together for the good of the school. Fully aware of the roles of 'critical friend' and 'providing a steer' to the direction of the school; both carried out rigorously.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. All teachers regularly observed teaching, supported and helped to improve further. Whole school focus on teaching and learning. Excellent school improvement plan, regularly reviewed and thoroughly implemented.
The strategic use of resources	Excellent. Very effective, extremely detailed planning for the new school, for the benefit of the pupils. Best use of current adequate resources, with the longer-term plan for the new school in September 2001 clearly in mind.

Staffing, accommodation and resources are currently satisfactory in the temporary facilities, but with great variation - some elements good and others unsatisfactory. Several staff are knowledgeable and very successful, but a shortage of specialists in some areas comes as a result of the small number of staff currently employed. Cramped accommodation is used to very good effect, though food technology and sports' facilities are lacking. Some subjects have good, new resources but others, such as science, have shortfalls. Computers – or space to use them – are insufficient in subject lessons, though very good use is made of those available.

The school applies best value principles in all that it does. Using temporary accommodation for teaching, whilst working with a civil engineering firm in a private finance initiative to build the new school, has required many considered and wide-reaching decisions.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children make good progress • Behaviour in the school is good • Teaching is good • They are kept well informed about how their children are getting on • They feel comfortable about approaching the school • Their children are expected to work hard and do their best • The school is well managed and led • Their children are helped to become mature and sensible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The right amount of homework should be set • More clubs and activities should be available
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A high proportion of parents responded to a questionnaire about the school and their views were overwhelmingly supportive. Inspection evidence supports the parents' very positive views of the school. Inspectors judge that a very good range of extra-curricular activities is available and that homework is appropriate, although with some inconsistencies amongst staff. The meeting held for parents was as positive as the questionnaire returns, with no substantial criticisms.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. National tests will be taken for the first time by fourteen-year-olds in 2001 and as the oldest pupils in the school are in Year 9, there are no GCSE results. Current standards in Year 9 are above average overall with some average and some high quality work. In English, mathematics and science, on present performance, pupils will attain above average results in the national tests in the summer of 2001.

2. Pupils' achievements, relative to their prior learning, are good with some very good work in a range of subjects. Achievement is satisfactory or better in all subjects because of the positive attitudes of the pupils and the sound or better quality of teaching. Year 9 pupils speak of their weak introduction to learning when they were in Year 7 at another school, however, and the outcome of this is clear in the standards of attainment today in subjects such as music, ICT, French and art. Even with high quality teaching the pupils are still catching up, in order to attain the highest standards in these subjects. Current progress and achievement is of a significantly higher standard than that indicated by average and above average standards attained in subjects.

3. In **English**, attainment rises steadily to the above average level from a position where the average attainment of pupils entering the school matches that expected nationally. Pupils' achievement is good and sometimes very good in relation to their starting points. They start by listening attentively and answering questions sensibly, reading aloud with understanding and enjoyment, and writing well in a variety of styles. Pupils then progress to listening supportively to each other, sharing ideas generously, explaining confidently how language is manipulated to entertain and captivate an audience in what they have read, and writing longer, well-structured pieces of their own. They demonstrate an increasingly sophisticated grasp of style and content. In drama in Year 7, pupils create interesting characters based on what they have read and by Year 9, as a result of very good progress, can take decisions collectively to specify their intentions before they devise a piece of drama. Pupils' achievements in drama are very good.

4. Pupils' standards on entry in **mathematics** are broadly similar to national expectations. The work taught is reasonably balanced and pupils make good progress, attaining above average standards at age fourteen. Pupils achieve well in lessons considering their abilities. Mental mathematics skills are above average because of the emphasis on this work in lessons. Pupils learn how to solve equations, calculate volumes and apply Pythagoras' theorem to right-angled triangles. Overall pupils' achievement is good.

5. Year 9 work in **science** is above national expectations, showing good progress from the average or below average standards on entry into Year 7. Achievement is good. Pupils recall factual information very well and use technical language accurately. Higher attainers have a good grasp of concepts such as gravity and maintain detailed notes of their studies. Some lower attainers' written work is of an insufficiently high standard but they showed good understanding for their ability. Progress and achievement for the pupils currently in Years 7 and 8 is sound. Standards in the aspects of physics, chemistry and biology taught are similarly good although lower attainers' understanding of experimental science skills is weaker.

6. The standard of work in **art** in Year 9 is broadly in line with national expectations with a significant number of pupils on track to attain higher levels by the end of the key stage. Pupils have achieved well given their low standards when they entered the school, with some excellent achievement currently. Pupils have a good technical vocabulary and talk enthusiastically about their work and progress in the past year because of the high quality teaching. Pupils have learned to appraise their work critically and have the confidence to experiment. They have significantly improved their designing, drawing and painting skills and are learning how to work independently.

7. Attainment in **design and technology** at the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with national expectations in most aspects. However, attainment is well below average in control technology, as the school does not yet have appropriate resources to teach this. Overall, pupils make satisfactory learning gains as they move through the key stage, developing from a very wide range of attainment and experience in the subject at the start of Year 7. There is some underachievement by higher attaining pupils when they undertake research for their design work. By the end of the key stage pupils understand the stages involved in the design process, they have developed sound skills and products made are well finished.

8. The standard of **geography** of pupils currently in Year 9 is in line with national expectations. They have an appropriate sense of place, use their atlas skills effectively and have a good understanding of geographical terms. Some skills are not practised sufficiently, but when compared to their earlier attainment, pupils' achievement in geography is satisfactory. The lack of continuity in learning, because of the modular approach used for geography and history, restricts achievements.

9. At age fourteen, pupils' standards in **history** are broadly in line with national expectations. Several pupils' perceptive oral comments about their studies of the Second World War showed above average attainment. Achievement was often good in lessons but, over time, achievement is satisfactory.

10. Attainment in **ICT** in Year 9 is in line with national expectations in most aspects of the subject but control technology and the logging and recording of data are not taught because of a lack of facilities. Computers are used very little in subject areas and the standard of ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. This too is a result of inadequate facilities in the temporary buildings. By the end of the key stage, pupils use word processing and publishing software with reasonable skill. They use spreadsheets and the Internet for research purposes. Pupils' achievements in the areas taught have been unsatisfactory in the past but are now good as a result of high quality teaching.

11. Standards in **French** are in line with national expectations overall at age fourteen. Tenses are used as expected. Although reading and writing skills are well developed, speaking and listening skills are slightly weaker. Pupils generally achieve well throughout the key stage and, contrary to national trends, there are more boys than girls in higher ability groups. Some Year 9 pupils' attainment, particularly boys', is lower than it could be, mainly because of underachievement when they were in Year 7.

12. Standards in **music** attained by pupils approaching the end of Key Stage 3 are in line with those expected nationally. Current progress and achievement in all years are excellent as a result of the quality of teaching. These are developing from a low base point of knowledge and understanding when these pupils were in Year 7, so achievement over time is good. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 attain standards above, and in some activities well above, those expected nationally. Pupils play electronic keyboards well and use music terminology correctly and they make very perceptive comments when appraising their performances. The quality of pupils' singing is satisfactory.

13. Attainment in **physical education** in Year 9 conformed to national expectations in the full range of activities observed. Basic skills are sound and provide a platform for future development. Higher attaining pupils refine these basic techniques and incorporate them into games. In all years pupils appreciate the benefits of regular exercise. The ability to evaluate is apparent in many activities but planning skills are not quite so well developed. Pupils make sound progress and their achievements are satisfactory.

14. The standard of work in **religious education** of pupils currently in Year 9 is in line with national expectations. Pupils are strongest in their knowledge and understanding of major religions and their teachings. Some written work is spoiled by poor presentation and careless errors. When compared to their earlier attainment, pupils' achievement in religious education is satisfactory.

15. Pupils with **special educational needs** achieve well overall. Most pupils are working at, or above, their level of ability. Progress is particularly good when pupils are supported in class by special support assistants

and work is closely matched to pupils' levels of attainment. The small classes are very helpful to these pupils' achievements, enabling staff to give more time to individuals. Progress in literacy and numeracy development is good because of the school focus on these skills, as well as the additional support provided.

16. Pupils' **literacy** standards are above average. Key technical words for subjects are emphasised, understood and learnt. For example, in religious education, pupils build up personal lists of words to learn and understand. Standards of presentation and accuracy in written work are average overall, although inconsistent, showing strengths in geography and weaknesses in science, for example. Reading standards are above average because pupils are encouraged to read for pleasure and enjoyment. Standards of speaking and listening are also above average with some well above. Pupils make good progress in improving their literacy standards as they move through the school. **Numeracy** standards are also above average and here too the pupils make good progress as they move through from Year 7 to Year 9, achieving well. There are inconsistencies in teaching aspects of numeracy, however, which mean that standards are not as high as they could be.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

17. Pupils are happy to come to school and their attitudes to all the opportunities offered are very good. They are very interested in the stimulating activities provided in many lessons, including art, music and drama where levels of enthusiasm are very high, whether or not pupils show aptitude for the subject. The blend of challenge and praise offered results in highly motivated pupils who are keen to try things for themselves. In mathematics, they respond very well to the lively input and positive atmosphere by 'having a go' at problems and by not being afraid to make a mistake. Pupils recognise that they are in school to learn and usually make very good efforts to work hard and be successful.

18. Behaviour is very good, as a result of the school's high expectations and systems for managing pupils. In lessons, they listen carefully to instructions and do what is asked of them without fuss. They are conscientious and carry out practical activities safely and responsibly. Outside lessons they behave in a civilised way indoors and are active and energetic at play. One or two individuals have difficulty following the school code of conduct, but their lapses in behaviour do not detract from the overall standard achieved. The school has set boundaries very clearly, resulting in an above average level of exclusions in the past two years, to ensure that there is no confusion about the unacceptability of aggressive behaviour and sexual harassment. Now that pupils recognise how the school is serious about high standards of behaviour, the exclusion rate is falling. Oppressive behaviour such as bullying is rare and not tolerated.

19. Relationships within school are very good and provide a very strong foundation for raising pupils' expectations of themselves and fostering a desire to work hard and do well. In the best lessons, the pupils' drive to please teachers whom they hold in very high regard, results in very good work, including creativity and critical thinking. They try very hard to follow the outstanding example of the head and deputy head teachers in relating calmly, constructively and considerately to everyone. Pupils thrive in an atmosphere where people value and see the best in each other. They work very well together. For example in an art lesson, successful collaboration and shared decision-making contributed to an excellent rate of learning about shoe design.

20. Personal development is very good. In a lesson on mono printing, linked to the work of Bridget Riley, pupils working in cramped conditions showed high levels of personal responsibility to get the task completed. They responded well to opportunities to work independently and evaluated the results. In some lessons, pupils have less chance to use initiative with their learning and to organise tasks for themselves. They enjoy the responsibilities they have as monitors and members of the school council. They value each other's work and views highly, as seen in a religious education lesson when discussions of love, friendship and personal sacrifice were related to the story of Jesus. They respond very well to the school's efforts to ensure a high degree of understanding about the impact their actions have on others.

21. Pupils with special educational needs behave well in lessons and most pupils are confident they will succeed because of the support they receive. Their attitude to work is enthusiastic and they have good relationships with other pupils and with their teachers.

22. Attendance is satisfactory. It is close to the national average and improving. The number of term-time holidays and difficult journeys to the temporary site has depressed attendance levels although the school is working very hard to minimise absence for whatever reason.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

23. Pupils make good progress in their learning as a result of the good quality teaching, which was satisfactory or better in 98% of observed lessons. Of the lessons observed, 39% were very good or excellent and 73% were good or better. Only 2% were unsatisfactory, where groups of pupils in the lessons observed made insufficient progress in their studies. The quality of teaching of Year 7 was very good, and that of Years 8 and 9, whilst still good, was not of quite such a high quality. In all subject areas, teaching was satisfactory or better, with the best quality in art, music, ICT and drama, and teaching nearly as effective in mathematics, English and French.

24. Most teachers have very good subject knowledge which enables them to question pupils rigorously and to respond confidently to their questions. Questioning was used particularly well at the beginning and end of several lessons. In a few lessons, however, teachers were not teaching their specialist subjects, because of timetabling difficulties that result from the small number of staff. On the few occasions where this was seen, pupils made much less progress because expectations were unclear or work was not well matched to needs; on one occasion the lack of teacher knowledge was apparent to the pupils who then misbehaved. Usually, however, very good teacher knowledge led to good or better progress, and in subjects such as art, ICT, drama and music, expectations were very high indeed, work was challenging, and pupils' learning was sometimes excellent. For example, in a Year 8 lesson where pupils were emulating the characteristics of African drumming and singing, the teacher's enthusiastic exposition and explanations led to excellent learning. Pupils shared ideas well and developed a true sense of performance. In an equally successful art lesson for Year 8, key words were displayed and referred to during the lesson, ensuring important ideas were clearly understood. Pupils worked very well together, supported by the teacher. Excellent management and organisational skills resulted in very good use of time, in a small and cramped classroom with few facilities. A blend of urgent encouragement and excellent examples – from the teachers' own professional knowledge of design – resulted in pupils making excellent progress in learning about the design process.

25. Very little use is made of computers in subject lessons, principally because many rooms are too small. Very good use is made of the school's computers, however, in specific ICT lessons. The ICT room is too small even for the small classes of around twenty pupils, with the result that three or four often have to spill over into an adjacent room if it is free. A great range of machines is available – laptops and full sized computers, including Apple and Windows environments – and all are used to very good effect as a result of expert teaching. In a Year 7 lesson, for example, pupils learnt quickly and thoroughly how to use a spreadsheet. Each pupil worked at her/his own machine as the teacher explained clearly what they were expected to learn during the lesson. Opportunities to extend pupils' understanding of mathematics and geography were used to very good effect. For example, it was explained that the two terms 'column chart' and 'bar chart' used in ICT and mathematics respectively mean the same. Pupils were inputting information on populations into their spreadsheets, when, as a result of the teachers' questions, it became clear that pupils were unsure where countries were in the world. A large atlas was then used to show population densities in different areas of the world, which captivated the class and gave meaning to their spreadsheet work. Learning and teaching were excellent.

26. Further examples of very good and excellent teaching were observed in several subjects, including English, mathematics and science. About half the teachers observed had one or more excellent or very good

lesson. The quality of teaching was good in English and mathematics and sound in science. There was no unsatisfactory teaching in any of the three core subjects.

27. Teachers use a range of methods and techniques which enable pupils to learn effectively. Demonstrations, worksheets, thorough exposition, group and individual work were all observed being used well. A strong emphasis on independent learning was apparent in many lessons although this was not always the case. The school approach to discipline is understood by teachers and pupils, who almost always work to these rules. High standards of discipline are insisted upon throughout the school. Work is thoroughly assessed and the positive points made about pupils' work were used to encourage individuals to overcome difficulties. Teachers use homework to reinforce and extend understanding of work covered in school. It is usually marked and pupils appreciate that completing homework is important if they are to attain high standards.

28. Occasionally, relative weaknesses in a range of lessons resulted in satisfactory rather than good progress. Pupils' work, often of boys, was rather scruffily presented in some science, design and technology and religious education lessons. High attaining pupils were insufficiently challenged in some mathematics, design and technology and physical education lessons. Over-directed teaching resulted in too great a learning dependency in one or two lessons, out of step with the school drive to help pupils become independent reflective learners.

29. Literacy and numeracy skills are well taught in a range of subjects. The active tutorial time at the end of the day is used very effectively to help pupils improve their skills, particularly in reading and in number work. One example of very good practice was observed, when pupils reinforced mathematics skills, using them in contexts such as calculating attendance percentages. Inconsistent approaches amongst staff, however, detract from these very worthwhile initiatives.

30. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good and where support is provided in lessons by special support assistants it is of a very good quality and enhances pupils' progress. The paired reading scheme is a significant factor in the early progress made by pupils with special educational needs. Good use is made of pupils' individual education plans to inform planning, although identification of subject specific needs and the setting of related targets is inconsistent across departments. Most teachers plan for the needs of these pupils and work closely with the special educational needs co-ordinator and her staff. All staff have a good knowledge of individual pupils and their specific difficulties, and an appropriate range of teaching strategies and resources are used. Support staff are very well deployed.

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

31. The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum for all pupils. All the National Curriculum subjects and religious education are taught in Key Stage 3, enhanced by the addition of drama, personal and social education (PSE), active tutorial work at the end of the school day and a very good range of extra-curricular activities. The curriculum is supported by well-planned schemes of work in all areas leading to a good range of learning opportunities. These schemes are structured and written to a good common format and include clear learning intentions for the pupils, the activities to be carried out and assessment opportunities. These are particularly imaginative in the expressive and performing arts. Planning is well advanced to provide an appropriate curriculum for Key Stage 4, when the school expands into Year 10 in September 2001. Option booklets for parents indicate that the National Curriculum requirements should be met, with a good range of academic and vocational GCSE courses. A second foreign language is being introduced into the curriculum in September 2002.

32. Provision is similarly good for pupils with special educational needs. In addition to the full curriculum followed by all pupils, good support is provided using school staff and external providers. Planning is thorough and detailed and work is well matched to needs in most lessons.

33. The school has good strategies for teaching numeracy and literacy across the curriculum. Initiatives to support development in these areas include staff meeting discussions, and numeracy teaching and individual reading in active tutorial work. The strong school focus on these key skills is apparent in curriculum planning in all subjects.

34. PSE schemes of work are good, with each area cross-referenced to the framework of the National Curriculum and supported by exemplar materials for use in the classroom. Drugs education is appropriately covered. Sex education is taught by covering the scientific aspects of human reproduction in science lessons and moral and social issues within PSE. The draft policy is clear and suitable, although a number of pupils indicated that some of the material covered in Year 9 would be better placed in earlier years. Current arrangements are under review as the programme is developed and extended into Years 10 and 11. A draft new PSE framework has emerged from a staff in-service day, ensuring that 'citizenship' is given due importance. Careers education, planned within the PSE curriculum, is good. It is scheduled for late autumn and early spring for Year 9 pupils, to help pupils and their parents when making option choices for Year 10. A good careers fair is provided to enable pupils to ask questions of specialist advisers.

35. A very good range of extra-curricular opportunities enriches pupils' learning. A variety of weekly clubs includes mathematics, science (British Association of Young Scientists), PE, art, music and ICT, all of which are well attended. A successful homework club takes place after school, for which a late bus is arranged to ensure pupils can easily get home. This important activity provides pupils with a quiet and pleasant working environment, including access to the school's library and ICT facilities. In addition, a large number of pupils take advantage of the good range of foreign language trips abroad. A curriculum enrichment day for the current Year 9 has been provided where pupils could explore factors affecting learning, aspirations, expectations and working together, following on from their work in PSE and active tutorial lessons.

36. The school has a very strong community ethos, which supports its work well. The school curriculum is an area the headteacher, parents and pupils discuss openly, providing an impressive foundation for future development. There are good links with the main feeder primary schools. Debden Park pupils visit one of these to share ICT skills and there are also drama links. Sixth form students from a local school attended the Year 9 option evening, providing good successful role models for the younger pupils.

37. Within this good overall provision, although the planned curriculum for specific ICT lessons is very good, the school does not meet statutory requirements in ICT across the curriculum and in the control element in design technology. The school's inadequate ICT facilities and very small classrooms in the temporary school accommodation do not enable this work to be carried out. Planning is in hand for September 2001, when many more computers will be available in the new school, to enable pupils to 'catch up' in the use of ICT in all required subject areas. The modular arrangement for teaching history and geography is also a weakness. Pupils study units of either geography or history alternately, resulting in a lack of continuity in their learning. Skill development in both subjects is not as good as it could be as a result.

38. The small sized classrooms available for teaching several subjects mean that teaching groups are below average in size, which is very helpful to both pupils and staff. Pupils are taught in a mixture of banded, setted and mixed ability groups, depending upon the size of the year group – which has an impact on the number of groups that can be formed – and curriculum team leaders' views of the best form of class arrangement for their area. Present arrangements are successful, with work generally well planned to meet the needs of the full range of prior learning in each class.

39. The available curriculum time of twenty-five hours is as recommended for pupils in secondary education, taught as twenty-five one hour periods, and very little of this curriculum time is lost on the small school site as pupils move between classes. In addition to this time, pupils benefit from further teaching for over an hour each week in their tutorial time at the end of the day. Overall, this represents good provision.

40. The school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social, cultural and personal development is very good. It reflects the high priority given to developing a sense of community where people are valued, everyone is expected to contribute and pupils will go on to become responsible, independent members of society. There are many good opportunities for thinking, reflecting and considering what it means to be human. Probing questions are used to inspire pupils, as for example in a mathematics lesson, where pupils were fascinated by the number patterns they were studying. Some teaching enables pupils to experience several moments of wonder, as in a textiles lesson, where pupils were captivated by work on surface decoration, and in music, when pupils were inspired by certain types of music to sing together with zeal. Pupils are encouraged consistently to think about their lives. An excellent example of this was observed in assembly with the W. H. Davies verse on leisure "What is this life if, full of care, we have no time to stand and stare?" Staff have a thought for the day, introduced each morning at the briefing meeting, which they share with the pupils in tutor time, and occasionally within lessons. Assemblies are thought provoking and broadly Christian, providing a collective act of worship on the days they are offered to year groups. The requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship is not fully met. Spiritual development overall, however, is cultivated very well.

41. There is consistent and very high quality support for pupils' moral and social development. The example given by adults, led by the head and deputy head teachers who set the tone impressively, ensures a very strong focus on knowing right from wrong and showing consideration for others. The school's working ethos reflects its positive and fundamental values of respect, self-discipline, mutual care and support. Moral issues such as exploitation and justice are discussed directly in lessons such as English, history, geography and religious education. In many lessons, very good opportunities are provided for pupils to learn to work together productively and to appreciate the different contributions that others can make. In physical education this includes aspects of competition, fair play and careful evaluation of performance. Pupils are expected to take on responsibility, show initiative and contribute to school life, for example through the school council and Christmas cabaret.

42. Cultural development is fostered very well. The contributions of art, music and drama to pupils' cultural awareness are exceptionally strong. Pupils have very good opportunities to take part in school productions and undertake projects based on work of contemporary artists, designers and musicians. Residential and day trips abroad foster appreciation of the language and traditions of French culture, in particular. Useful work in subjects such as religious education on world faiths and interactive displays in geography promotes well a knowledge of different cultures and traditions. The school recognises that, at present, more opportunities are available for pupils to appreciate their own cultural heritage than to develop an appreciation and understanding of other cultures.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

43. Procedures to ensure the health, safety and child protection arrangements for pupils are very good. The school takes health and safety requirements very seriously and the quality of care is evident in the tutors' detailed knowledge of individual pupils and the relationships which exist between them. The school makes sure that child protection arrangements comply with locally agreed requirements. Staff training, including specific training for staff who are new to the school, ensures that they are kept up to date on child protection procedures.

44. The school has very effective measures to promote good attendance and behaviour, and to eliminate oppressive behaviour including harassment and bullying. The transport by bus of many of the pupils to and from the temporary school buildings resulted in attendance problems last year, particularly when pupils missed the buses. Further problems resulted from parents taking their children on holidays in school time. The school's determination to raise attendance and reduce unnecessary absence is reflected in very clear messages to parents and pupils that regular attendance is essential for high achievement and examination success. A challenging target has been set for the school of 93.5% attendance for the current year, similar to national statistics. The school does not authorise any absence that could be avoided, including inappropriate term-time holidays, which has resulted in high 'unauthorised absence' figures. Currently, the display of

attendance data each week throughout the school, in coloured bar charts comparing all classes in the school, the presentation of a cup for the best attending class, and the inclusion of the detailed attendance policy in the school prospectus pack for both parents and pupils, show clearly the priority given to improving attendance. Current attendance, although rising, is below the target figure, but the procedures in place to bring about improvements are excellent, and appreciated by many parents.

45. The school's behaviour policy provides clear guidelines on classroom rules and reflects the school's philosophy of positively reinforcing good behaviour. Procedures for rewards and sanctions are clearly laid down and these procedures are applied consistently and appropriately. The occasional instances of inappropriate behaviour are dealt with quickly and effectively. Very high quality weekly planners are used very well for recording rewards and sanctions and these planners are checked regularly so that behaviour is carefully monitored. Pupils are aware of the school's approach to bullying and this is reinforced through the school's active tutorial work and the PSE programme. Pupils confirm that there is very little incidence of bullying and harassment in the school. In the very few instances reported, these were rigorously investigated and successfully resolved.

46. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are good overall, with several innovative, high quality aspects. The school has its own centralised computerised system for recording data, which includes information on pupils' national assessment results, nationally recognised intelligence test results, reading ages and predictions for their likely performance at the end of Key Stage 3. This information could be better used than at present. For example, staff are awaiting results of the Key Stage 3 tests, rather than using information already available to plan and carry through support to improve attainment. There is also insufficient linkage between teaching objectives and assessment practices in some subjects, including history and science. The use of assessment information to guide curricular planning is generally good, however, and assessment information is used well by tutors to check for underachievement and to inform discussion on academic progress.

47. The school provides very effective support and advice for all its pupils, informed by the monitoring of their academic progress, personal development, behaviour and attendance. Pupils are very well cared for by their tutors who have a very good awareness of their individual needs. Pupils respond well to the individual attention they receive. Regular meetings are convened to identify underachievers and strategies are discussed for their support and encouragement. An innovative and effective target setting scheme is used, in terms of 'Next Step' goals, which identify short-term targets for each pupil in each of their subjects. This process is currently under review, to ensure that the number and appropriateness of the targets set are right. The dilemma with such a sophisticated and worthwhile system, is how to ensure that the targets are challenging and achievable, retaining pupils' motivation. There is a tendency for targets to be selected in easily measurable areas where success would be likely, rather than important but less specific aspects. Pupils are also assessed regularly in terms of effort and attainment, and this information is shared with parents on a half-termly basis, enabling their work to be tracked over time. The school offers an academic tutoring day, which allows teachers, pupils and their parents to discuss pupils' strengths and identify areas for improvement. The very good level of care and support contributes much to maintaining high standards of behaviour.

48. Arrangements for assessing, recording and reporting the progress of pupils with special educational needs are good and fully meet statutory requirements. Procedures for identifying pupils' needs are in place and are very thorough and effective. Liaison with primary schools is good and forms the foundation for an initial assessment, which is then developed through testing of pupils on entry. These processes enable pupils to receive appropriate support from the time they enter the school. Procedures for evaluating and reviewing progress are good and each curriculum area has identified a member of staff who takes responsibility for special educational needs, although responsibilities and tasks for these staff are at an early stage of clarification. Subject specific targets on individual education plans are good in some areas but lack detail in others and are being adapted to ensure that targets are realistic, achievable and helpful. The overlap between these targets and those specified in the Next Step goals is as yet unclear. Support staff work well with subject

staff in lessons, assessing individual pupils' progress, and this information is used well to plan ahead to provide needed help. The small classes are particularly helpful.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

49. Parents are very supportive of the school and very positive about its work. A core of very determined parents, whose passion and inspiration ensured that the school was opened, has made an outstanding contribution to its development within the heart of their community. There are good links with parents as a whole, some of whom find it difficult to be actively involved, because of their distance from the temporary site and personal circumstances. The school makes very good efforts to reach all parents with information through newsletters, planners and letters. It believes very strongly in partnership and is establishing very secure foundations to develop this fully, once the move to the permanent site is complete. Overall, links with parents are very effective.

50. The information provided for parents is of very good quality. The formal documents such as the prospectus and governing body's annual report are easy to read and often colourful and lively. Reports give a very good idea of the progress made by pupils in each subject, which topics have been covered and where improvements are needed. Although the criteria used are explained very clearly, they are not linked to the levels associated with the National Curriculum with which pupils and parents are now quite familiar. Pupils and parents want to be clear how performance compares with that of others of the same age, not just with those in the same teaching group.

51. Parents are involved constructively in the school's life and work, as governors, members of the parents and teachers' association (PTA), as helpers on trips and as staff. Others help indirectly. They attend meetings, come to school productions, ensure that their children attend regularly, work with the school to improve the behaviour of individuals and make good use of planners to support homework. In general, parents are involved and contribute well to their children's learning, because they are kept very well informed and partnership is so highly valued by the school. This offers a very firm base for pupils' personal and academic achievement.

52. A high proportion of parents responded to a questionnaire about the school, almost 78%, and their views were overwhelmingly positive about almost all aspects of school life. They were exceptionally pleased with staff expectations of their children - that they should work hard and do their best, the positive way in which staff responded to any questions parents might have, and the leadership and management of the school. A minority of parents believe that more extra-curricular activities should be provided and that the wrong amount of homework is set; neither of these minority criticisms is supported by inspection evidence. Homework is generally sufficient, marked and appropriate, although there are some inconsistencies amongst staff, and a very good range of extra-curricular activities is arranged and promoted for the pupils' benefit.

53. Fifty-five of the parents who returned their questionnaires also wrote about the school, several at great length. These letters were very supportive of what the headteacher and his staff have achieved in the past eighteen months, but they also included a number of criticisms: a second foreign language was requested, a few parents were concerned about unfair discipline and problems with the coaches, others about poor communication and too much pressure being applied to the pupils. In each of these cases inspection evidence indicated that, where problems or issues have arisen, answers have been found. The meeting held for parents, where twenty-two attended, was as positive as the questionnaire returns, with no substantial criticisms.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

54. The inspired leadership of the headteacher, and the management of the school by the headteacher, deputy headteacher and all key staff, are excellent. They are a highly effective team, both in dealing with day-to-day

management tasks and as strategic thinkers and planners. The involvement of staff and pupils has led to a shared responsibility and a commitment to success. There is real ownership of the school ethos, the curriculum and what is being achieved, by all in the school community, both for the school in its current temporary setting and for the school in its new building.

55. Plans are well in hand to make the transition from the temporary premises to the purpose built new building as smooth as possible, and for deadlines to be met. The headteacher and staff are well prepared and plans are running to schedule. The whole project is being very well managed and co-ordinated at all levels. The headteacher holds the key position in these arrangements and has shown great skill in managing the innovative and demanding 'private finance initiative', concerned with the construction of the new school. He receives excellent support from the deputy headteacher, who manages the school in its temporary building whilst he works with the building contractors at the new site on every aspect of the new school. The vision for the school, skilfully communicated and embraced by all, is for an inclusive community that seeks to achieve excellence in all that it does, promoting the arts and valuing the experiences they provide.

56. Under the direction of the headteacher, the leadership team expertly carries out responsibilities, providing an effective steer to current developments and ensuring that all staff are actively involved and have ownership for the decisions that are made. As a result staff are highly motivated and, along with the pupils, feel very proud to be part of the team that is shaping a new school. There is a shared sense of purpose and dedication to turn the vision into reality. The school has achieved 'Investors in People' status, a certification process which focused on the clarity of vision and planning, the quality of communication and of support for staff, and the effectiveness of performance review. The assessors for the certification company were very complimentary about all these aspects of school life.

57. Through collaboration with governors, pupils and staff, the headteacher has written a policy that assists in ensuring equality of opportunity for all. All pupils have full access to the curriculum provided and, in the new building, disabled access is provided to all the facilities available. The school's many carefully-considered policies are reviewed to ensure that they promote equality of access and opportunity, and a member of the leadership team takes responsibility for ensuring that what is written is carried out in practice.

58. The governing body fulfils its responsibilities with great skill and foresight. They have been steadfast in their negotiations for a new school and remain committed to the project and funding arrangements. Their skills complement each other and together they form a very knowledgeable and well-informed team, who know the school very well indeed. They are aware of what the school has so far achieved and what could be improved. The targets they have set the headteacher, for example to improve attendance of pupils, reflect this and demonstrate their active involvement, both in shaping the school priorities and in their role as a critical friend. Like the headteacher and the staff, they have targets against which their own performance and effectiveness can be measured. Governors undertake regular training, most recently on analysing assessment data, and make regular visits to the school.

59. In an atmosphere where everyone is striving towards the achievement of common goals, a very positive climate for improvement has been established. The capacity for continued growth and further improvement is considerable, as school numbers increase and more staff are recruited. Regular opportunities are created for staff to reflect on the impact of management decisions on pupils' learning and to debate what is going well and what can be improved. Minutes of staff briefings, meetings and in-service days show how self-critical staff are. For example, in an analysis of strengths and weaknesses, teachers commented on their humour, commitment and the positive atmosphere, but also their need to talk less, to be more consistent and to ensure the 'important' took precedence over the 'urgent'.

60. Senior managers are very effective in leading developments, for example in helping team leaders pinpoint where their monitoring could be more rigorous. An area currently being addressed is the extent to which whole school priorities are seen to be having an impact and can be detected in the work of pupils. Much emphasis has been placed on developing the quality of teaching and learning. All teachers have been

observed regularly by their team leader or the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Curriculum team leaders and year team leaders are all effective in their respective roles, each holding a whole school responsibility as well as for a specific subject or year group.

61. Targets have been set that are part of the whole school programme of appraisal and performance management. Progress is overseen by teachers' line managers and, where appropriate, the targets are closely linked to the school improvement plan. The programme of induction for newly qualified staff and experienced teachers joining the school is excellent. All support staff are part of the school team and are consulted, involved and valued. The headteacher and the leadership team have together laid the foundations for a corporate approach to school improvement. Through this the school is well placed to build on what has been achieved to date and to extend the process of self-review and critical appraisal as the school expands. The various systems for monitoring performance are very good and have led to effective action.

62. Special educational needs support is very well managed by the co-ordinator. The policy is clear and the handbook is a useful working document. All teaching and support staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and support staff are effectively deployed. Support from outside agencies is good and communication within the team, and with all those who work with special educational needs pupils in the school, is good. The mutually supportive, very well informed team ensures that pupils with special educational needs are valued and educated effectively. A member of the governing body is well informed about the good practice taking place.

63. The school has embarked on several initiatives in its short life, aimed at improving teaching and learning. New ideas are considered with care by senior managers, to ensure that they do not detract from the important day-to-day tasks. Three examples are: the Next Steps approach, with clear, achievable targets for the pupils; involvement in an action research project with several other schools, where the outcome intended is for pupils to attain high-order independent learning skills; and the demanding teaching at the end of the day in active tutorial time where numeracy and literacy skills are key elements. Although some have so far been more successful than others, both staff and pupils have benefited greatly from them and further developments and improvements are in hand. These represent excellent professional initiatives and reflect the headteacher's vision for the school.

64. Strategic use of resources is excellent. Drawing up the two-year whole school plan for development and improvement was a very effective exercise. It enabled governors and staff to agree the goals that are shaping the school and result in the training programme and monitoring activities. The budget has been allocated according to these priorities and there is a strong link between planning and spending. Financial management is very tight and meets the requirements of all financial partners. A recent external assessment of the school systems made some minor recommendations that have since been acted upon. The principles of best value have been, and continue to be, an important part of the financial management of the school. Systems are in place that will, in the future, enable the school to compare its standards and costs with other schools.

65. The development priorities that were identified in 1999 have been met or are on track to be met, most by the end of the year. As the 1999-2001 development plan comes to an end and the planning cycle is being repeated, curriculum team leaders are having a greater input. The areas for improvement they have identified in their subjects will be reflected in whole school planning as well their own improvement plans. All teachers have their own laptop computer which has enabled them to develop their ICT skills and prepare teaching materials and documents to a uniform layout. It has also enabled staff to work off-site, efficiently and effectively, often in their own time. This use of personal laptop computers has proved to be a very good use of time and resources. The current accommodation places great constraints on the opportunities for using computers for teaching in many subjects.

66. Overall staffing, accommodation and resources are currently satisfactory, but with great variation in all three areas. The shortage of subject specialist teachers in some subjects, for example in humanities, is limiting pupils' progress and in some cases the range of learning opportunities. These shortages are a result, primarily,

of the current small size of the school, but plans are well formulated to address this in the next academic year as pupil numbers increase. The accommodation, although cramped and lacking some facilities - for example many rooms are too small to use ICT in subject lessons, the school has no food technology room and facilities for physical education are not appropriate – has been adequate as a temporary measure for the past two years. Pupils and staff know they are moving to excellent new facilities and have collaborated to the best of their abilities to make do with what is available at the temporary site. The school is making best use of the resources it has and has made plans to address the current shortfalls, for example, in the number of computers available and in the range of science equipment.

67. Expenditure is currently very high; new equipment and resources have to be purchased each year, as the school grows in size. Spending patterns, understandably, do not follow expected norms at this stage in the development of a new school. Nevertheless the many very positive aspects of the school - good and often very good teaching, very good attitudes and behaviour, good achievement throughout the school and above average attainment in Year 9, excellent leadership and management, very good care and personal development - indicate that the school provides very good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

68. The governors should now draw up an action plan to address the following issues:

- (1) Improve the quality of information and communication technology facilities and ensure that computers are used in subject areas, as required by the National Curriculum
(paragraphs 10, 25, 37, 66)

Governors should also consider including in their plan these less important issues

- (1) Use of the high quality assessment data to better effect in planning to meet pupils' needs and further raising standards (paragraph 46)
- (2) Persevere with the innovative and helpful 'Next Steps' programme, improving the appropriateness of pupils individual targets, and linking these to the individual education plans of pupils with special educational needs (paragraph 47)
- (3) Improve the arrangements for teaching and learning of history and geography, so that better continuity in learning is achieved. The present modular approach does not enable this to happen (paragraph 37)
- (4) Improve the presentation of some boys' written work (paragraph 28)
- (5) Relate attainment comments in marking and reports more closely to National Curriculum levels (paragraphs 50, 98,101)
- (6) Ensure that the highest attaining pupils are always given sufficiently challenging and demanding work. (paragraph 28)
- (7) Ensure specialist teachers are available for all subject areas (paragraph 66)
- (8) Ensure the requirement of a daily act of collective worship is fully implemented (paragraph 40)

COMMUNITY

69. The school has an exceptionally strong commitment to serving the community of which it is part. It has established very secure foundations on which to build active links with its local and wider neighbourhood to ensure that it continues its energetic development as a community school. Very good relationships with local primary and secondary schools have been fostered purposefully whatever their views prior to this school's opening. There are very good links with a range of local organisations such as churches, sports clubs, theatre groups and libraries that are already providing very good support for pupils' personal and intellectual development. Links with the wider community based on use of the Internet and trips such as those to France enrich pupils' learning opportunities and support the community ethos firmly.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	90
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	37

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
10	29	34	24	2	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y9	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	325	n/a
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	73	n/a

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y9	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	8	n/a
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	36	n/a

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	10

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	17
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	8

Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	7.3	School data	1.4
National comparative data	5.9	National comparative data	0.4

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	
Indian	5
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	1
White	314
Any other minority ethnic group	

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	26	
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y9

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	23.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	13.9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y9

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	173

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y9

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	69.5
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y9

Key Stage 3	19
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Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	587535
Total expenditure	531764
Expenditure per pupil	2700
Balance brought forward from previous year	n/a
Balance carried forward to next year	55771

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	325
Number of questionnaires returned	252

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	42	48	9	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	45	51	4	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	43	49	4	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	32	51	13	3	1
The teaching is good.	43	50	2	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	42	43	13	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	58	36	3	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	68	29	2	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	36	44	12	4	3
The school is well led and managed.	52	40	4	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	43	50	3	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	34	40	18	3	6

Other issues raised by parents

Very pleased with what the headteacher and staff have achieved in difficult temporary circumstances; some said too much, some too little homework; a second foreign language requested; a very small minority concerned about unfair discipline, problems with coaches, poor communication and pressure on pupils.

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

ENGLISH

70. By Year 9, attainment is above the standard expected nationally. It rises steadily to this level from a position where the average attainment of pupils entering the school matches that expected nationally. Pupils' achievement is good in relation to their starting points, and often very good, particularly in drama. A few pupils have English as an additional language but none are at an early stage of learning English or need additional support.

71. In their first year in school, pupils listen attentively and answer questions sensibly in class. They read aloud, with understanding and enjoyment, tackling a range of texts of varying difficulty, from pre-twentieth century short stories, to plays such as 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'. Pupils use technical terms such as 'alliteration' accurately, to make clear how language is used to create special effects. They write well in a variety of styles using accepted conventions of sentence structure and paragraphing to order and communicate their thoughts logically. Handwriting is legible, and spelling satisfactory, except for that of some lower-achieving boys whose work is untidy and who spell words as they sound rather than according to convention. In drama, pupils create interesting characters based on what they have read and are skilled in working together to find ways to bring them to life.

72. In Year 9, pupils listen supportively to each other, sharing ideas generously, and take decisions collectively to specify their intentions before they start to write or to devise a piece of drama. They read with understanding and explain confidently their knowledge of how language is manipulated to entertain and captivate an audience. For example, pupils in one group, including those with special educational needs, used their knowledge of the term 'rhetoric' to pick out examples of vivid language in a speech from 'Macbeth'. Pupils tackle successfully a good range of writing and are challenged and supported in their efforts by teachers. They analyse and evaluate reliably the main features of different types of writing such as scripts, stories, or newspaper reports. When they write longer, well-structured pieces of their own, they demonstrate an increasingly sophisticated grasp of style and content. For instance, one pupil's original ghost story was told plausibly from the point of view of a teenager, using dialogue and description well to build suspense, culminating in a chilling final sentence to round it off. In drama, pupils work very well in small and large groups. One class worked together particularly enthusiastically to draw up a table summarising the main characteristics and contrasts between three characters in a scene from Willy Russell's 'Blood Brothers'. Co-operating well in small groups, they went on to develop their own dialogue and use subtle body language in a short scene to demonstrate what they had analysed in a practical dramatic situation.

73. The quality of teaching was good or better in most English lessons seen. In several it was very good. Very good teaching was seen in all drama lessons observed. Teachers plan their lessons effectively to make sure that pupils take part in a variety of activities which keep them working hard and hold their interest. A characteristic strength in the teaching of both English and drama is the teachers' use of lively question-and-answer sessions, informed by their good subject knowledge. This method is utilised at the start and end of lessons to make sure that pupils have remembered and understood what they have been taught. Teachers are also skilled in asking individuals questions and in coaching and prompting them to build up their confidence as they write. Marking is both sensitive and encouraging in the way it draws attention to pupils' strengths and the effort they put into their work. It could be improved by offering them much more specific guidance on what they should do in order to improve further. Very little use is made of information and communication technology in English lessons at present.

74. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. They sustain concentration, enthusiasm, and willingness to respond to teachers' questioning and direction throughout lessons. Good progress over time and within lessons follows on naturally from their eagerness to think about and to answer questions in class. Boys generally try as hard with their work as girls. Teachers are very skilled in encouraging and helping pupils to persevere with

writing, even when they find it difficult. Pupils with special educational needs try hard in class and achieve well in relation to their starting points, because teachers are aware of their requirements and adapt their approaches appropriately. In drama, very good pupil attitudes and behaviour underpin their attentive and thoughtful responses to the guidance and suggestions the teacher gives.

75. The management of English and drama is very good. A series of practical working documents help teachers organise their lessons and use common ways of checking and recording how well pupils are doing with their work. Drama is especially well organised to ensure that skills build in sophistication as pupils move up through the school. The leadership of English is particularly effective in the way it enables teachers to work as a team. The high quality of planning has given a clear sense of direction and stability at a time of staff change. For example, very good systems have been developed to test and record pupils' performance as well as to provide information, which is used to improve lessons. In this way, attention is given to the needs of all pupils, including the distinctive needs of the slower learners and of more gifted pupils.

Literacy across the curriculum

76. Across the school, teachers plan effectively and use good methods to promote pupils' listening, speaking, and writing. In English, mathematics, science, geography, art, drama and design technology, key technical words for the subject are displayed and referred to. Religious education teachers mark key terms thoroughly and encourage pupils to build up personal lists of words to learn and understand. In science and music, pupils contribute fully to discussions in class where they develop and explain their ideas and understanding. At the same time, in science, the pupils' presentation, sentence structure and punctuation lack pride and consistency, particularly in their first two years in school. In this subject, written work is not always marked specifically enough to help pupils overcome these weaknesses. By contrast, teachers in geography and ICT insist upon good spelling and grammar. Language teachers help pupils skilfully to learn about patterns of language, for instance by pointing out the similarities of spelling, sound and structure which exist between many French and English words. Good note-taking skills are promoted in art and science. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are promoted well in physical education. Here, they discuss their work, ask questions, and decide how well they have done, explaining the reasons for their judgements. There are good examples of the use of poetry both within and beyond English lessons; for example when pupils consider earthquakes in geography, or significant events in religious education. The school works very hard to encourage pupils to read for pleasure and enjoyment. Well thought-through and successful approaches include regular reading in tutor groups, and a programme of special events and activities such as a Shakespeare day, a book week, and a video club in which pupils see film versions of books they have read. Overall, pupils' standards of literacy are above average.

MATHEMATICS

77. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is above national expectations. Pupils' standards on entry are broadly similar to national expectations. The work taught is reasonably balanced and covers all of the attainment targets although the emphasis on using and applying mathematics is insufficient. Numeracy skills and mental skills are developed well, especially through warm up activities at the start of lessons and through asking questions such as "Are you one million seconds old?" or "How long would it take you to count to one million?" Pupils can solve linear equations, calculate the volumes of prisms and find the lengths of a right-angled triangle using Pythagoras' theorem. Higher attaining pupils can identify upper and lower bounds, solve quadratic sequences, recognise Pythagorean triples and draw cumulative frequencies. In relation to their attainment on entry to the school, pupils' achievement is good.

78. Overall, the quality of teaching and pupils' learning observed were judged to be good, with a high proportion of very good work. Teachers demonstrated good subject knowledge and provided confident exposition and clear explanation of the work, so that pupils had a good understanding of what they had to do. Lesson planning was thorough and the work was referenced to National Curriculum levels although these

were not always shared with pupils. Lessons got off to a quick start and pupils worked hard for the duration of the lesson so that curriculum time was maximised. Occasionally, however, teachers talked for rather too long and work was not well enough matched to the full spread of ability in the class.

79. Teachers manage classroom activities well and enjoy very good relationships with their pupils. Question and answer sessions are used to very good effect although there was a tendency for boys to dominate discussions at times, where this was not carefully managed by the teacher. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by the teacher and by other pupils in the class, so that they make good progress. The team informally identifies gifted and talented pupils in mathematics and provides some support, but these pupils are not yet sufficiently stretched and challenged by the work provided. The presentation of boys' work was untidy in several books seen, whereas girls' work tended to show greater care.

80. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour were very good. Pupils have positive attitudes to mathematics and want to do well. They behave well and respond to challenges when these are presented to them. Pupils enjoy a very good rapport with their teachers and they are courteous and considerate of one another.

81. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and the work is supported by schemes of work, which are fully aligned to the National Curriculum. These schemes are very useful in achieving a consistently good approach. Assessments are regularly recorded in mark books although not in a form that can easily highlight strengths and weaknesses in terms of individual attainment targets. The provision for literacy is satisfactory and all of the mathematics rooms contain references to technical vocabulary although opportunities to develop and extend pupils' literacy skills are sometimes missed. The provision for ICT is satisfactory but limited access to computer facilities does not allow the team to use computers as detailed in the schemes of work. The team operates a monthly mathematics competition and the work in lessons is complemented by a weekly mathematics club, which provides a full programme of interesting and challenging activities.

82. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The curriculum team leader has a clear vision for the development of mathematics and has provided a cohesive educational direction for the team, which reflects the aims and values of the school. In a relatively short period of time, she has engendered a strong team spirit amongst the knowledgeable and hard working teachers. There is a shared commitment for improvement and a capacity to succeed. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching is rigorous but the available data is not sufficiently analysed to identify strengths and areas for improvement. Overall, however, the mathematics team is a strength of the school.

Numeracy across the curriculum

83. The provision for numeracy across the curriculum is good although there is no whole school numeracy policy to provide a coherent framework to develop pupils' skills in a consistent manner. The provision is particularly effective in active tutorial work and the PSHE lessons and overall standards of numeracy are above average. Pupils make good use of percentages to work out attendance rates in tutorial time and to calculate the efficiency of a power generator in science. Number work is supported in history through a simulation game of life in a medieval village and, in RE, through work on the parable of the sower and the feeding of the five thousand. Algebraic skills are rehearsed in science where pupils substitute in formulae for force and pressure, and in English where they look at patterns of writing in extracts from 'Macbeth' and 'Midsummer Night's Dream'. Spatial skills are supported in art where pupils use symmetry to prepare printing blocks and make three dimensional models from their two dimensional drawings. In geography, pupils make good use of latitude and longitude and in a PSHE lesson they measure their pulse rate after exercise, and draw graphs to analyse their findings. Pupils make good use of data processing in ICT to calculate statistical measures and draw graphs.

SCIENCE

84. Lesson observation and past work showed that the standard of work attained in Year 9 is above national expectations. Pupils were very good at recalling factual information and had good oral skills to explain scientific ideas using technical language. They were keen and enthusiastic learners, as in a lower set lesson on gravity, where pupils eagerly put forward ideas to explain the differences between a ball and a piece of paper falling through the air. As the teacher changed the demonstration to test out each suggestion, they quickly thought up new possibilities. In a higher set lesson on gravity, pupils rose to the challenge of discussing the changing ideas from Aristotle through to Newton. The standards of written work seen were also above the national average for the higher ability pupils. However, middle and lower ability pupils found written work more challenging, often mis-spelling key words and making grammatical errors which remained uncorrected. Their presentation skills were also limited and they found extended writing and higher level scientific skills, such as planning experiments, more challenging.

85. On entry to the school, the standards that the current Year 9 pupils had attained in science were similar to or a little below the national average. In relation to these prior levels, their achievement and progress have been good. On entry to the school pupils in the current Years 7 and 8 had attained standards close to the national averages in science. Both these groups of pupils are making satisfactory progress in lessons. In a top set Year 7 lesson, pupils were very attentive as they each contributed something they had learned about electricity. 'I have learned about parallel circuits and that houses use them', 'I have learned that in a parallel circuit the current splits'. They clearly enjoyed being part of a human model to show the effect of resistance to the flow of electricity and they set up their experiments efficiently. Pupils in a lower ability set in Year 8, in a lesson on energy transfers in power stations, were able to explain changes of state of water, could produce ideas about efficiency: 'Use up excess steam by condensing it and running it through the system again'; and could do simple efficiency calculations. However the written work of all abilities was less good. Their presentation skills were weak and they made spelling and grammatical errors.

86. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to other pupils. They are well supported in lessons due to the targeting of available support into Year 7 mixed ability classes and the lower sets in Years 8 and 9.

87. Overall the teaching observed was satisfactory. However some good and very good teaching was seen and no unsatisfactory lessons were observed. The good subject knowledge of teachers enabled them to plan tightly organised lessons so that a good pace was maintained ensuring that pupils worked productively. Their very high expectation of behaviour created a good learning environment to which the pupils responded well, moving around even the small laboratory with safety and consideration for others. The pupils responded well to challenging work, often showing intellectual curiosity. Teachers checked prior learning with very business-like question and answer sessions at the beginning of each lesson. They also shared learning objectives with pupils and checked progress against them at the end of each lesson. Together these techniques enabled pupils to have a good knowledge of their own learning in terms of facts and scientific ideas. Where weaknesses were observed, they included too much teacher-led work, which did not encourage independent learning, and a lack of analysis of tasks set, leading to an inappropriate level of challenge for some pupils.

88. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good, particularly in Year 9. Pupils often worked as hard as possible throughout the hour long lessons, often in silence when they were working on individual tasks. The main weakness observed was the lack of care many pupils took with their written work.

89. The science team is well managed. The developing schemes of work do not yet cover fully the cross-curricular skill elements, especially literacy and information and communication technology. Current schemes of work and procedures, however, have enabled less experienced members of the team to make a promising start to their teaching careers. They have been well supported by the very good monitoring and evaluation of the work of the team and by the very good data analysis that enables all teachers to track the performance of individual pupils. The limited resources (one small laboratory and restricted practical resources) due to the special circumstances of the school, are well managed so that their effect on pupils' learning is minimised. The technical support is also well managed. It is just sufficient for the current needs of the school but will

need to increase as the school expands. The science team work very well together, with a shared commitment to improvement.

ART AND DESIGN

90. The standard of work in Year 9 is broadly in line with national expectations. A significant number of pupils are on track to attain higher levels by the end of the key stage. Pupils achieve well given their low standards when they entered the school and in lessons observed achievement was very good. They are articulate and have a good technical vocabulary. In a Year 9 class, pupils explained in detail the steps they took in their practical work. They firstly made the drawings and sketches of themselves and then, by studying the work of Lichtenstein and Warhol, changed and refined their style of drawing to resemble the work of the American pop artists. Currently sketchbooks are mainly used for homework and contain drawings and colour-work. There is scope to build on this work, so that sketchbooks become more personal and contain a wider range of research, investigation and annotation. In Years 7 and 8 the majority of pupils are making very good progress having had the benefit of very good teaching throughout their secondary education. They have learned to appraise their work critically, and increasingly have the confidence to experiment and make changes as they work. The experiences, working with a range of different materials and processes, have successfully fostered independent learning. For example, in a Year 8 class, pupils made several drawings of their designs for shoes and having selected the preferred one they then worked in pairs to decide how the two dimensional design could become a three dimensional object. The combination of teamwork, technical skill and creativity led to some visually stimulating and very imaginative solutions.

91. In all years pupils with special educational needs make good progress and benefit from good quality one-to-one feedback on their work and progress.

92. Pupils are very enthusiastic, keen to learn new skills and have excellent attitudes and behaviour. Their keenness and cooperation ensures that a lot of work is completed in the lesson. Many return to the studio to work during lunchtime and after school.

93. The quality of teaching and learning are excellent. Pupils' responses to questions showed high levels of involvement and critical understanding – toward their own and others' work. The particular strengths of the teaching lie in the quality of relationships that have been established. Pupils are challenged and inspired by the teaching. They arrive at lessons knowing the lesson will be fun and that they will achieve well. Very high expectations are the norm and pervade all aspects of work, behaviour and lesson planning. This leads to very purposeful learning where pupils are absorbed by the activity and eager to learn. The brisk pace of lessons reinforced the sense of purpose and challenge. The teacher rarely missed an opportunity to probe for deeper meanings, give praise when it had been earned and encourage even higher standards. Skilful use of questioning, sometimes used while a particular technique was being demonstrated, was very effective in developing pupils' basic skills. Pupils' behaviour was expertly handled.

94. Management of the subject is very good. A good start has been made on the curriculum for pupils in Years 7-9. Documentation is thorough and provides a suitable framework of different experiences. Lesson aims clearly communicate to pupils the work to be covered but the termly or half termly assessment criteria need more detail in order that pupils can plot their progress year on year. Developments in ICT have been hampered by the lack of facilities in the accommodation. A plan for integrating ICT within the curriculum at Key Stage 3 and 4 is now needed. The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, social and cultural development.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

95. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with national expectations in most aspects of the design and technology curriculum. However, attainment is well below average in control technology, as the school does not yet have appropriate resources to teach this aspect of the curriculum. Overall, pupils make satisfactory learning gains as they move through the key stage. On entry in Year 7 they have a very wide range of attainment and experience in the subject. By the end of the key stage their skills, knowledge and understanding have improved and most pupils achieve in line with expectations. However, there is some underachievement by higher attaining pupils, particularly when they undertake research for their design work. The school recognises these weaknesses and plans are already in hand to improve resources and the quality of the curriculum to make it more challenging for all pupils.

96. By the end of the key stage, pupils understand the stages involved in the design process. They carry out simple research and make design proposals, which are clear. Pupils plan out the main stages for making their products and work with appropriate skill and accuracy. They evaluate their finished artefacts with reasonable success. Ideas are simply presented but sketches have sufficient detail for pupils to use them to make products, which are mainly well finished. For instance, pupils completed some very good examples of weaving based on a sports logo theme. These were well crafted and showed good use of complementary coloured threads to improve the impact of the design. When using resistant materials pupils use a good range of techniques. For example, when producing a Tangram puzzle in wood they enclosed the product in a vacuum-formed container and presented the finished article within a well designed card package. The quality of evaluation is variable. The best examples involve pupils in group discussions of their work followed by personal written evaluations which address the strengths and weaknesses of the product and the effectiveness of their own work. This approach leads to a clear understanding of what was successful and results in targets for action to improve their work in future. Weaker evaluation practice is not as well structured and fails to use appropriate criteria. This results in evaluations which are superficial and do not lead to relevant targets for improving performance.

97. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory, although it varies from very good to unsatisfactory. Learning is satisfactory overall but is strongly influenced by the quality of teaching. Staff teaching design and technology are not all trained to teach the subject. The school supports non-specialist teachers by using a common scheme of work, together with consistent planning and assessment procedures. Some support is given by sharing expertise amongst all staff. This ensures that all pupils receive similar experiences throughout the key stage. However, where teachers lack specific subject expertise, their knowledge and expectations are not always high enough and good practice is not always evident. For example, whilst the unit on graphics covers a broad range of techniques the quality of work is very variable and some technical aspects of drawing are not sufficiently well taught. The good and very good teaching employs appropriately chosen activities supported by skilful demonstrations. For example, in a very good textiles lesson the teacher was able to model the skill of fabric painting with expertise and confidence and this encouraged all pupils to emulate the same standards. The most effective teaching benefits from the use of well-chosen questions. These enable pupils to reflect on their work and help them to improve their performance. In the best lessons, pupils were enthusiastic, worked at a good pace and made good progress in their understanding or skills. Where teaching had weaknesses or was unsatisfactory, activities were not always well planned. For example, in one lesson the teacher chose an evaluation activity which was not suited to the type of product the pupils had made. This resulted in pupils failing to understand the purpose of the activity. Consequently they lost interest and did not gain anything worthwhile from the lesson.

98. The management of the subject is satisfactory overall and has some strengths. Schemes of work provide a consistent basis for planning by staff with a range of subject expertise. Although some support is given to non-specialist teachers, more guidance is needed to improve consistency across the team. Assessment practice provides sufficient evidence to give teachers an understanding of what each pupil has learned in each unit. On this it should be possible to base a secure judgement of performance against the National Curriculum attainment targets at the end of the key stage. However, written comments in assessment folders lack consistency and do not focus sufficiently on what pupils have achieved or set targets to improve their work.

Resources are satisfactory for resistant materials but are barely adequate for teaching textiles where rooms are cramped and access to sewing machines is limited. The school lacks facilities for food technology.

GEOGRAPHY

99. The standard of work of pupils currently in Year 9 is in line with national expectations. They have an appropriate sense of place and use their atlas skills in developing their locational knowledge. The pupils have a good understanding of geographical terms and use these appropriately in their written work and in answering questions; they compile glossaries in their exercise books, evidence of the befitting emphasis placed upon the development of pupils' literacy skills. They have a good appreciation of the links between human activities and physical process and this is clear in their work on eco-systems, for example when the causes of global warming are investigated. Pupils have frequent opportunities to practise and develop the skills necessary for more independent learning through geographical enquiries. However, they have insufficient opportunity to practise other skills, for example map reading and the interpretation of photographs. Pupils collect data, as a part of fieldwork in the local area, which they are able to interpret and illustrate in graphs and charts, though such practise of numerical skills is restricted.

100. When compared to their earlier attainment, pupils' achievement in geography is satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because teachers have a good understanding of their requirements and match the work to these. As a result their achievement is good.

101. Overall, the teaching observed was sound and most lessons were good or better. They were well prepared, a variety of methods were used and teachers had high expectations of the pupils. As a result, very effective use was made of the time and resources available. Year 8 pupils investigating the setting-up of a car factory in the local area were able to compile the evidence necessary to make a decision between the various sites and to present their findings to the class. All pupils made very good progress as a result of the clear explanation and support provided by the teacher. Teachers exploit opportunities to draw parallels between places, as in the 'Flooding' case study in Year 8 where pupils were able to compare the impact of natural hazards on more and less economically developed countries. Moral, social and cultural aspects of the pupils' education are addressed; for example, frequent references are made to the differences and inequalities which result from economic development. Teaching was weaker where the subject knowledge of non-specialist teachers resulted in a lack of confidence, as when Year 8 pupils were confused by the information provided and failed to make satisfactory progress as they lost interest and their behaviour deteriorated. In almost all cases pupils' work was marked thoroughly and in line with the school policy. Not enough advice is given to pupils, however, on how they might improve their work or what their attainment is relative to National Curriculum levels.

102. Pupils responded well to the good teaching. They showed interest in the topical issues covered and a willingness to work hard. They were keen to contribute to the lessons in answering and asking questions. There is a significant minority of pupils who do not take enough care over their written work. Pupils worked very well in collaboration with others and listened carefully to the points made. Overall, behaviour was good, a result of the involvement of the pupils in their learning and the very good pupil management skills of the teachers.

103. Pupils are taught geography and history in alternating blocks; it is possible for six weeks to pass between one geography lesson and the next. This results in a lack of continuity in pupils' learning and uneven progress. For example, in the autumn term, Year 7 pupils have insufficient opportunity to practice and consolidate the mapping skills taught during their first weeks in the school.

104. The subject is managed effectively by the curriculum team leader. The schemes of work are of a particularly high quality providing a very good basis for lesson planning. Though opportunities for the use of ICT are written into each topic, present access to computers is restricted. Pupils are encouraged to use those

resources available in school and at home to complete their enquiry work, the success of this strategy being evident in the very good examples of such work on the walls of the classroom. There are very effective systems in place for the monitoring of teaching and learning. The team development plan outlines clearly the priorities for the next three years and the team has the commitment to achieve further improvement.

HISTORY

105. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils are working broadly in line with national expectations for history. There were several instances of good work seen during the inspection. Pupils in one of the Year 9 mixed ability groups were seen making perceptive oral comments about two cartoons on events leading up to the Second World War, easily identifying the different intended messages and able to offer reasons for this. This showed sound background understanding of the context. Year 9 pupils' projects on the First World War showed great sensitivity to the experiences of those who endured the trenches, often linking their observations to the events which led to, and continued to affect, their situation. In work seen in Year 8 one particularly notable 'letter to The Times' denounced the trial of Charles 1, coupling royalist sympathies with an analysis of the judicial failings of the process. In Year 7, the higher attaining pupils were able to write an account of the murder of Becket and then respond to new evidence presented to them, explaining what the impact of that might be on their judgement. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory when compared with their earlier attainment.

106. The majority of pupils could sustain or partly sustain a narrative of major events but were not always able to extend this sufficiently to demonstrate their understanding. This was notable in the Year 9 group seen, whose level of understanding of the cartoons from the Second World War was not matched in their follow up written work. In Year 7 not all pupils showed the literacy skills necessary to match the new evidence presented to them to their account of Becket's death.

107. Pupils with special educational needs made good progress as a result of the use of a range of strategies. In Year 7, a class seen working on a game about life in medieval times was supported by a learning support assistant who worked with several pupils to enable them to meet the expected outcomes of the activity. In another Year 7 group, the use of a writing frame for follow-up work enabled lower attaining pupils to demonstrate what they had learned. Texts and other materials were accessible.

108. Teaching was satisfactory overall and often good. The most effective teaching combined pace and challenge with good subject knowledge and confidence in the expected outcomes. For example, in a task exploring how a villain might have felt through his varied experiences during a year in his life in the middle ages, pupils' suggestions were regularly linked, by the teacher, back to the historical context in which events happened. Teaching that had weaknesses did not always reinforce the historical context in which the experiences occurred. Some marking of children's work suffered similarly, with little reference to the history aims of the set task and whether these had been met. The unsatisfactory state of some pupils' books did not reflect the thought that had been put into teaching. On occasion opportunities were missed to involve the pupils more in considering new materials through small group discussion and, for example, reporting their thoughts back to the class.

109. During the inspection the pupils seen in history lessons were always interested, cooperative and engaged in their learning. Rooms were re-arranged for group activities without fuss, games were played with enthusiasm and pupils moved easily from stirring activities to well-ordered follow up reflection and industrious written work. On the few occasions that pupils deviated from this norm, the teachers swiftly took remedial action and maintained a productive atmosphere. As with geography, the modular approach to teaching history means that progress is interrupted and achievement is less than it could be.

110. The team is well managed and led. Schemes of work are very clearly laid out for others to see and be guided. Numeracy and literacy are built into planning and both aspects were seen during the inspection. Text resources are good and were used appropriately for the different groups. The classrooms are bright and have

pupils' work prominently displayed to encourage good habits. The trip to the war sites of the First World War for Year 9 pupils is an exciting opportunity to enrich the taught curriculum.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

111. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with national expectations in most aspects of the ICT curriculum. The major weakness lies in the school's inability, at present, to teach control technology or provide opportunities for logging and recording data. The use of ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. This is due to the significant shortage of space in classrooms to use computers and of ICT resources. However, subject schemes of work identify a good range of opportunities for its use. Senior managers and team leaders are aware of these weaknesses and when the school moves to new premises, the full range and quantity of resources will become available to teach all aspects of the subject.

112. By the end of the key stage pupils can use word processing and publishing software with reasonable skill. They use a wide range of formatting techniques to enhance the presentation of their work and are beginning to select the appropriate software and styles of presentation for different audiences. For example, when preparing two types of advertising leaflet about the school, one for potential pupils and the other for parents, they identify how the information and presentation needs to vary to make the greatest impact on each type of reader. Pupils can accurately enter data into spreadsheets from their own and prepared sources of information. They select data with care and produce charts and graphs, which best display an analysis of the information. Pupils are beginning to use formulae to calculate and to model different alternative outcomes. They have used the Internet for research purposes. For example, when writing about significant historical figures they have accessed biographical information and incorporated it into their own writing. Most subjects provide opportunities for pupils to extend these skills through homework and sometimes in class. There are examples of good project work in history and geography, which include good research and presentation skills. However, limited resources are available for all subjects to use during lesson times. Successful completion of this work relies on pupils having access to computers at home or by their attendance at computer clubs at lunchtime and after school.

113. The curriculum team leader joined the school at the beginning of this academic year and is teaching all pupils ICT. Prior to this, teaching was undertaken by non-specialist staff and pupils' attainment and achievement were unsatisfactory. However, standards are now rising rapidly and pupils of all abilities are achieving well because of the high quality teaching. Pupils are beginning to work independently with confidence and enthusiasm.

114. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is now very good. The scheme of work has been devised to meet the needs of all pupils and to raise standards rapidly. Lessons are well structured so that clear objectives are set from the start and expectations for performance are shared between the teacher and pupils. This ensures pupils are well motivated and fully engaged in their learning. The quality of questioning is good. Questions are well chosen to enable each pupil to respond at their own level of understanding and all pupils participate confidently. Pupils are very well supported when working independently through carefully chosen prompts and questions. This encourages them to think for themselves. Time is used very effectively throughout the lessons and pupils are encouraged to work with high productivity. The development of literacy is well supported and pupils are encouraged at all times to use appropriate rules of grammar and spelling in their work.

115. The subject is very well managed. The team leader provides a model of good practice in her approach to the teaching of ICT. She is well supported by the headteacher who has a clear vision for the development of ICT within the school. He has ensured that resources in the new building have been well planned so that ICT has the potential to become an integral part of every pupil's learning experience in each subject. An active working party, made up from all teams, meets regularly to formulate policy. The curriculum has recently been improved to meet the needs of pupils and standards are rising rapidly. Good assessment records identify

the achievement of each pupil. These are used to measure progress against the National Curriculum attainment targets and to support the planning of the curriculum. The ICT training needs of staff have been identified and a programme of training has been devised which is partly completed. Resources provided from the New Opportunities Fund for the training of teachers and school librarians are being used effectively.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French

116. Standards in French are in line with national expectations overall at age fourteen. Higher attaining pupils attain standards that are above national expectations, using the perfect, present and the immediate future tense when talking about weekend activities and draw on the imperfect tense to describe the weather, with some support. Lower attaining pupils attain standards that are below national expectations; they have covered the perfect tense but cannot use it without extensive support from the teacher. Although reading and writing skills are well developed, speaking and listening skills are slightly weaker; pupils are not yet using French to communicate for themselves.

117. When compared with their earlier attainment, pupils generally achieve well throughout the key stage. Some middle ability pupils, particularly boys in Year 9, underachieve. This is partly because of disrupted provision in their first year of learning, when they attended St John's Chigwell, and partly because too little allowance is made for their particular learning needs in both Years 8 and 9. Contrary to national trends, higher ability boys do better than girls in Years 8 and 9. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Learning assistants contribute effectively to their progress.

118. Teaching is good overall. Teachers have good subject knowledge and very good classroom management. Lessons are well prepared and teachers identify learning outcomes clearly. They make very good use of the time available. Lessons begin with helpful reviews of work covered previously, which means that pupils build up a steady bank of knowledge and develop their skills in a consistent way. In the best lessons, teachers use French extensively, giving pupils ample opportunity to develop their listening skills. This is not the case in every lesson; some pupils learn French in a way that relies too much on English for explanation and discussion. Work is well assessed and marked regularly but the information gained is not always used to inform the next stages of learning. Both literacy and numeracy skills are well developed. Teachers relate French vocabulary to English cognates effectively and use topics such as daily routine to explore number and algebra in more detail.

119. As a result of the good teaching, learning is also good. Pupils are motivated and engaged. They use dictionaries and glossaries for support and are often actively involved in the learning, as in a Year 9 middle ability group, where pupils prompted further discussion about the use of intonation to form a question.

120. Management is good. The team leader is extremely focused and has put in place an effective series of structures to enable the team to meet its goals. Monitoring and evaluation are good. As yet, there are no subject specific policies such as a target language policy to support more inexperienced teachers and to encourage more extensive use of French in the classroom. Resources are good in all respects with the exception of ICT. The team currently has no access to computers in school apart from those in the homework club. Accommodation is cramped and restricts the sort of activities teachers are able to do, including the use of the television and the overhead projector, which are rarely used because of health and safety issues. Display is very good. It both celebrates achievement and supports learning and has turned the teaching area into a very positive learning environment. There is a good French club, a day trip to France that most Year 7 pupils go on and residential visits for both Years 8 and 9 that are very well supported.

MUSIC

121. Standards attained by pupils approaching the end of Key Stage 3 are in line with those expected nationally. Year 9 pupils' 'rap' compositions show good understanding of the principles of rapping. They use electronic keyboards well to provide suitable backing rhythms and declaim their rap texts rhythmically and convincingly. They use music terminology correctly and make constructive, evaluative comments on their own and their peers' work. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 attain standards above, and in some activities well above those expected nationally. Most Year 7 pupils play melodies competently on electronic keyboards, maintaining a steady pulse and using logical fingering. Pupils in Year 8 emulate the style of African 'call and response' songs well in their group work. They successfully maintain percussive rhythms whilst simultaneously singing their calls and responses. They make very perceptive comments when appraising their performances, and also comment critically yet accurately on the quality of the recordings made. The standard of pupils' work, together with the confidence they display in performance, is well above that expected of Year 8 pupils nationally. In all year groups, pupils show good knowledge and understanding of the topics they are studying. For example, Year 7 pupils have good technical understanding of the major scale and Year 9 pupils have good knowledge of the history of rap. The quality of pupils' singing is satisfactory. It is strong and confident in the lower register but the tonal quality becomes thin in the upper register.

122. Pupils' achievement is very good. The standard of their work reflects significant gains in the development of performing skills and musical understanding over time. For example, Year 7 pupils show a well-developed understanding of the major scale and secure performing skills. Also, the quality of pupils' critical appraisal in Years 8 and 9 reflects very good progress in developing the ability to identify what needs to be done to improve their work and then implementing these ideas in practice.

123. The quality of teaching in Key Stage 3 music is excellent. In-depth knowledge and understanding of the subject is used well to plan imaginative sequences of activities that enable pupils to satisfy National Curriculum requirements. High levels of staff performing expertise on keyboards and other instruments, for example complicated African drum rhythms confidently played, significantly enhance class activities and provide an excellent model for pupils. A combination of very high teacher expectation and very good pace results in pupils experiencing a diverse range of activities within lessons, each addressed at a level that promotes significant learning. Due account is taken of pupils' differing levels of musical expertise when allocating them to groups for practical work, thus ensuring a good musical balance within each group and providing opportunities for pupils to contribute at a level which is appropriate for them. Planned extension tasks are implemented systematically, though targets for more musically able pupils are not always sufficiently challenging to maximise their learning. Teacher assessment in lessons is on-going, and shared well with pupils to assist them in becoming more critical in their approach to their work. Homework is carefully planned as an integral part of class work and completed homework is frequently used by pupils in lessons as a basis for practical activities.

124. As a result of the excellent teaching, pupils' learning is also excellent. Pupils in all year groups respond well to the strong culture for learning that has been established. When engaged in group work, pupils make significant progress in developing their performances within very short practice times. Perceptive, evaluative comments from group members are used well to raise the standard of music making. Pupils emulate the teacher's performing confidence in their performances. Their knowledge and understanding across a wide range of topics, from accurate identification of musical structures to good knowledge of African music, and their competency in playing electronic keyboards and programming them with suitable musical backings, reflect excellent progress over time.

125. Pupils' behaviour and attitude to learning in lessons are excellent. In classes across the key stage, almost all pupils are very keen to learn and sustain high levels of concentration for extended periods of time in lessons. At best, they become totally absorbed in activities. They share ideas productively when working in groups and are supportive listeners when their peers perform to the class. When listening to recorded music, they show maturity by listening in total silence with their eyes closed.

126. Day-to-day organisation of the subject is managed efficiently. The developmental targets inherited by the music teacher who took up post in September 2000 have been prioritised appropriately, and have resulted in the formulation of a detailed scheme of work, which satisfies the requirements of the National Curriculum 2000 for music. A purposeful start has also been made in developing suitable assessment procedures. A clear vision exists for the effective development of this curriculum area in the future. This includes establishing more regular opportunities for pupils to perform to audiences.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

127. Attainment in Year 9 conformed to national expectations in the full range of activities observed. Many pupils are able to apply the techniques, skills and competition rules to several aspects of the physical education curriculum, including netball, football and dance. Basic skills are sound and provide a platform for future development. In dance, many Year 7 boys are able to create and perform dances using a range of movement. Year 8 and 9 girls in netball have good basic handling and passing skills and are beginning to develop good shooting skills and some tactical awareness. Higher attaining pupils are able to refine these basic techniques and are beginning to incorporate them into the game situation. Year 8 boys in football have sound passing and basic control skills. In Years 7, 8 and 9, pupils have a good understanding of how to prepare for and recover from specific activities and to appreciate the benefits of regular exercise. The ability to evaluate is apparent in many activities but planning skills are not quite so well developed. There are examples of pupils becoming independent learners, and pupils are also being given the opportunity to either take responsibility or display initiative in their lessons, particularly through evaluating the performance of others and through refereeing and umpiring.

128. Pupils learn and make sound progress in most lessons in Years 7, 8 and 9 and learning was never less than satisfactory. Pupils are encouraged to develop, not only skills, but also a good understanding of the techniques and rules. In most lessons pupils demonstrated increasing control and levels of accuracy in a range of skills, although in dance basic control and quality of movement was not sufficiently developed. An example of good progress for pupils was observed in a Year 8 football lesson where boys consolidated basic control skills and developed crossing and shooting skills before applying these in a controlled game situation. The most able pupils in some lessons are not presented with appropriately challenging situations and make insufficient progress. Progress in observing and evaluating performance is being successfully developed in many lessons. Evaluation of individual performance by staff is used to improve standards during many lessons. Target setting for whole classes is a feature of most lessons and individual pupil target setting is already a significant factor in the good progress being made in several lessons. A good range of extra-curricular activities, and fixtures with other schools, provide opportunities for pupils to extend and develop their skills although this is limited as only physical education staff are involved at the moment.

129. Pupils' attitudes to learning are generally positive. Most are enthusiastic, well behaved, and co-operative, demonstrating a real enjoyment of the subject. They are attentive and their capacity to sustain concentration is usually good. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff are good. There are some opportunities for pupils to work independently and collaboratively, and opportunities for pupils to take responsibility are developing.

130. The quality of teaching was sound in most lessons. Good teaching was seen in Year 8 in both netball and football lessons. A secure knowledge of the subject is regularly conveyed to pupils through perceptive observation of performance and good teacher-directed question and answer sessions. Thorough planning, incorporating varied teaching strategies and an appropriate sequence of activities involving both individual and collaborative learning is a feature of many lessons. Where lessons were not quite so good the pace of the lesson was slow and opportunities were missed by teachers to intervene and focus particularly on the development of individual skills and aspects of team play. Discipline and class management is good. Day-to-day assessment of performance during lessons is regularly used to enhance teaching and learning, and the

recording of assessment and the involvement of pupils in this assessment to help set targets for improvement were significant factors in the good teaching observed.

131. The curriculum meets statutory requirements although breadth is restricted at the moment through lack of appropriate facilities and lessons are too long. Schemes of work are appropriately detailed working documents identifying activities and overall teaching strategies, although they do not identify strategies to develop the potential of pupils of differing abilities, including the most able. Although there is no designated team leader for the subject, the member of staff in charge of physical education has worked hard to lay the foundations for a fully functioning department in the future. Day-to-day communication is good and staff are good role models, are very committed and give generously of their time. Although faculty meetings are beginning to provide some opportunities for evaluating the work of the team and exchanging ideas on good practice, there are no regular team meetings. Development planning identifies appropriate priorities and includes some planning for future Key Stage 4 courses but does not yet identify how these priorities will be achieved. A department handbook is developing. Some teaching has been monitored by the team leader for the curriculum area and appropriate development targets set.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

132. The standard of work of pupils currently in Year 9 is in line with national expectations. Pupils are strongest in their knowledge and understanding of major religions and their teachings. Higher attaining pupils are able to interpret the symbolism most effectively. The emphasis placed on the development of pupils' literacy skills ensures their understanding and use of terms in describing matters of belief and faith. However, too often their written work is spoiled by poor presentation and careless errors. It can be difficult to understand, as they do not always write in sentences. The range of learning activities includes opportunities for pupils to reflect upon their own beliefs and values in developing an appreciation of what it means to be of another faith. Pupils are less practised in stating and supporting their position on moral issues, though in a Year 9 lesson, where pupils compared the problems of Corinth at the time of Paul with television 'soaps', they were able to identify issues and recognise the impact of peoples' actions on others.

133. When compared to their earlier attainment, pupils' achievement in religious education is satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Their needs are recognised, and their achievement is sound.

134. Overall the teaching observed was satisfactory. The thorough planning of lessons ensured effective use of the time and resources available. Teaching was most effective in Year 7 where teacher expectations were higher and the resources used stimulated pupils, as a result they were attentive and diligent. Pupils were able to make very good progress in identifying parallels between the story of the life of Jesus and 'The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe'. The weaknesses observed were mainly in pupil management and their reluctance to be involved in the work. The work set did not always meet the needs of the pupils. This was evident in the work of both lower attaining pupils, where too many exercises were incomplete, and when simple exercises failed to challenge the more able. Pupils were questioned skilfully to check and extend understanding as when Year 9 pupils considered Paul's contribution to the spread of the Church. Lower attaining pupils experienced problems in organising their work but where writing frames were provided they were much more successful. The marking of work is thorough and comprehensive records are kept. Pupils' progress is monitored effectively.

135. Through the 'West Essex Action Research Project', opportunities for practising numerical skills through the teaching of religious education have emerged. Very little use is made of ICT in the teaching, but a minority of pupils make good use of their skills in this area in completing homework.

136. Pupils' attitudes are satisfactory. They responded with enthusiasm when teaching was very good, showing a real interest in the subject. Year 7 pupils entered the room asking if they could read the poems they

had written at home. Pupils work purposefully and, with support, can sustain their efforts, as in a Year 9 group who wrote letters to 'soap' characters regarding their problems. Behaviour was satisfactory overall, the very good behaviour of Year 7 pupils contrasting with silly behaviour by a relatively small number of pupils in other lessons.

137. The schemes of work, which fulfil the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus, provide a good basis for further planning and the preparation of lessons. Appropriate plans have been drawn-up for Key Stage 4 that will ensure that all pupils study the subject. The teaching of religious education makes an important contribution to pupils' spiritual development. Opportunities for the understanding of teachings of right and wrong are included in each topic, pupils are developing a sound appreciation of the relationship between religion, culture and society, and the respect for the rights of others to hold different beliefs is evident in the conduct of lessons. The subject is managed effectively as part of the humanities faculty and the team has the commitment and capacity necessary to achieve further improvement.