

**INSPECTION UNDER SECTION 9 OF THE
EDUCATION (SCHOOLS) ACT 1992**

**Bethnal Green High School
Gosset Street
London E2 6NW**

**School number : 211/4284
Dates of inspection: 8 - 15 March 1996**

By

**Valerie Jenkins
Registered Inspector: T11378
Date: 18 April 1996**

Under OFSTED contract number: 211/S5/002084

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1. INTRODUCTION

This inspection was carried out under Section 9 of the Education (Schools) Act 1992 to report on the quality of education provided by the school, the educational standards achieved, whether the financial resources made available are managed efficiently, and the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. The findings of the inspection will contribute to the annual report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools to the Secretary of State for Education.

BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

| | | |
|-----|--|---|
| 1. | Name of school | Bethnal Green High |
| 2. | Type of school | Comprehensive all-through |
| 3. | Type of control | County |
| 4. | Number of pupils on roll | 628 |
| 5. | Age range | 11 to 16 |
| 6. | Gender | mixed |
| 7. | Headteacher | Allen Wadsworth |
| 8. | School address, telephone number | Gosset Street, London E2 6NW 0171-729 3535 |
| 9. | Name of appropriate authority | Governing body |
| 10. | Name of chair of governors | Ian Hastings |
| 11. | Local Authority area in which the school is located | Tower Hamlets |
| 12. | DFE school number | 211/4284 |
| 13. | Name of registered inspector | Valerie Jenkins |
| 14. | Dates of the inspection | 8 - 15 March 1996 |

2 Intake of pupils and the area served by the school

This small comprehensive school is situated in the Weavers Ward of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, an LEA rated as the second most deprived in the country. The area has well above average numbers of families with no parents in employment and living in overcrowded conditions. Over 80% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, a very high proportion. Of the 628 pupils, some 92% speak English as an additional language with 37% at the early stages of acquiring fluency. 88% are of Bangladeshi origin and speak Sylheti, a dialect of Bengali, as their home language. Pupils enter the school with significant reading problems although attainment in the current year 7 is higher. 1.4% of pupils hold statements of special educational need, an average figure for a London school. The school is in a period of transition as it has admitted girls for the first time and the year 7 intake is double that of year 8. This is the largest intake in 20 years and has produced a sense of optimism and buoyancy. This is enhanced by major planned building improvements.

3 School data and indicators

PUPILS

| | Number of pupils in each year group | | |
|--------------|-------------------------------------|-------|-------|
| | Boys | Girls | Total |
| Year 7 131 | 46 | 177 | |
| Year 8 84 | - | 84 | |
| Year 9 135 | - | 135 | |
| Year 10 | 111 | - | 111 |
| Year 11 | 121 | - | 121 |
| School total | 582 | 46 | 628 |

Special Educational Need

| | |
|--|---|
| Number of pupils having statements of special educational need | 9 |
|--|---|

Free School Meals

| | |
|---|------|
| Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals | 83.6 |
|---|------|

Teachers and Classes

| | |
|---|--------|
| Full-time equivalent teachers (excluding S11) | 37 |
| Pupil:teacher ratio (incl. headteacher) | 16.9:1 |
| Percentage class contact ratio | 72.1 |

Average teaching group size

24

| Teaching time per week | | Hours | Minutes |
|-------------------------------|----|-------|---------|
| Key Stage 3 | | 24 | 10 |
| Key Stage 4 | 24 | 10 | |

Pupil Attendance (percentages)

| | LAST ANNUAL REPORT TO PARENTS Unauthorised absence | THIRD WEEK IN THE TERM BEFORE THE INSPECTION | | |
|-----------|---|---|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| | | Actual attendance | Authorised absence | Unauthorised absence |
| Year 7N/A | 97.8 | 2.0 | 0.2 | |
| Year 8 " | 91.6 | 7.4 | 1.0 | |
| Year 9 " | 91.6 | 5.4 | 3.0 | |
| Year 10 " | | 92.3 | 5.7 | 2.0 |
| Year 11 " | | 93.7 | 4.8 | 1.5 |
| Overall | 93.4 | 5.0 | 1.5 | |

Number of exclusions in the last 12 months

| | Fixed period | | Permanent | | Number from Ethnic minorities | |
|---------|--------------|------------|-----------|------------|----------------------------------|-------|
| | 1 Boys | 2 Girls | 3 Boys | 4 Girls | Boys | Girls |
| Year 7 | 4 | | | | 3 | |
| Year 8 | 4 | | | | 4 | |
| Year 9 | 6 | | | | 6 | |
| Year 10 | 10 | | | | 10 | |
| Year 11 | 3 | | | | 3 | |
| | | | | | Total : 26 | |

Total (Columns 1 - 4) 27

National Curriculum Assessment

Teacher Assessment Key Stage 3 1995

Year 9 pupils on roll : 107 boys

Numbers

English

Mathematic

Science

| English | | | Mathematic | | | Science | | | Subject level |
|---------|-------|-------|------------|-------|-------|---------|-------|-------|---------------------------------|
| Boys | Girls | Total | Boys | Girls | Total | Boys | Girls | Total | |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | A - Absent for valid reason |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | D - NC assessment disappled |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | O - Not possible to arrive at 1 |
| 5 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | W - Working towards Level 1 |
| 6 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | Level 1 |
| 23 | 0 | 23 | 10 | 0 | 10 | 6 | 0 | 6 | Level 2 |
| 38 | 0 | 38 | 20 | 0 | 20 | 23 | 0 | 23 | Level 3 |
| 25 | 0 | 25 | 37 | 0 | 37 | 52 | 0 | 52 | Level 4 |
| 4 | 0 | 4 | 29 | 0 | 29 | 19 | 0 | 19 | Level 5 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 9 | 0 | 9 | 5 | 0 | 5 | Level 6 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Level 7 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Level 8 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Level 9 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Level 10 |

| | | | |
|-----|-----|-----|-------------------------------|
| 85% | 91% | 93% | of pupils gaining L3 or above |
| 27% | 37% | 22% | of pupils gaining L5 or above |
| 0% | 2% | 0% | of pupils gaining L7 or above |

National results of teacher assessment 1995

%

| English | | | Mathematics | | | Science | | | Subject level |
|----------------|--------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|---------------------------------|
| Boys | Girls | Total | Boys | Girls | Total | Boys | Girls | Total | |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | A - Absent for valid reason |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | D - NC assessment disappplied |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | O - Not possible to arrive at 1 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | W - Working towards Level 1 |
| 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | Level 1 |
| 4 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 | Level 2 |
| 13 | 6 | 10 | 13 | 11 | 12 | 12 | 11 | 11 | Level 3 |
| 27 | 19 | 23 | 24 | 23 | 23 | 26 | 26 | 26 | Level 4 |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|------|-----|-----|-----|-------------------------------|----|-----|----|----|-------------------------------|
| 2917 | 31 | 30 | 26 | 28 | 27 | 31 | 32 | 31 | Level 5 |
| | 27 | 22 | 22 | 24 | 23 | 21 | 22 | 21 | Level 6 |
| 6 | 12 | 9 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 7 | 7 | 7 | Level 7 |
| 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Level 8 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Level 9 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Level 10 |
| | 95% | | 96% | | | 96% | | | of pupils gaining L3 or above |
| 62% | | 59% | | of pupils gaining L5 or above | | | | | |
| 61% | | | | | | | | | |
| | 10% | | 11% | | | 7% | | | of pupils gaining L7 or above |

Standard Task/Test Results Key Stage 3 1995

Numbers

| English | | | Mathematics | | | Science | | | Subject level |
|---------|-------|-------|-------------|-------|-------|---------|-------|-------|---------------------------------|
| Boys | Girls | Total | Boys | Girls | Total | Boys | Girls | Total | |
| 3 | 0 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 4 | 3 | 0 | 3 | A - Absent for valid reason |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | D - NC assessment disappplied |
| 20 | 0 | 20 | 10 | 0 | 10 | 8 | 0 | 8 | O - Not possible to arrive at 1 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | W - Working towards Level 1 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Level 1 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 16 | 0 | 16 | 23 | 0 | 23 | Level 2 |
| 16 | 0 | 16 | 33 | 0 | 33 | 30 | 0 | 30 | Level 3 |
| 40 | 0 | 40 | 31 | 0 | 31 | 32 | 0 | 32 | Level 4 |
| 25 | 0 | 25 | 5 | 0 | 5 | 7 | 0 | 7 | Level 5 |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|-----|---|---|-----|---|---|-----|---|---|-------------------------------|
| 3 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 4 | Level 6 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Level 7 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Level 8 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Level 9 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Level 10 |
| 76% | | | 71% | | | 68% | | | of pupils gaining L3 or above |
| 26% | | | 9% | | | 10% | | | of pupils gaining L5 or above |
| 0% | | | 1% | | | 0% | | | of pupils gaining L7 or above |

14 year olds nationally

%

English

Science

Mathematics

| English | | | Mathematics | | | Science | | | Subject level |
|---------|-------|-------|-------------|-------|-------|---------|-------|-------|---------------------------------|
| Boys | Girls | Total | Boys | Girls | Total | Boys | Girls | Total | |
| 5 | 5 | 5 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | A - Absent for valid reason |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | D - NC assessment disappplied |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | O - Not possible to arrive at 1 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | W - Working towards Level 1 |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|-----|----|-----|----|-----|----|----|----|-------------------------------|
| 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Level 1 |
| 3 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | Level 2 |
| 1 | 6 | 9 | 12 | 11 | 12 | 10 | 11 | 10 | Level 3 |
| 3 | 24 | 28 | 21 | 21 | 21 | 23 | 26 | 24 | Level 4 |
| 3 | 38 | 35 | 23 | 25 | 24 | 30 | 31 | 31 | Level 5 |
| 1 | 21 | 16 | 23 | 23 | 23 | 19 | 17 | 18 | Level 6 |
| 2 | 4 | 3 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 8 | 6 | 7 | Level 7 |
| 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Level 8 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Level 9 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Level 10 |
| | 92% | | 90% | | 90% | | | | of pupils gaining L3 or above |
| | 55% | | 57% | | 56% | | | | of pupils gaining L5 or above |
| | 4% | | 10% | | 7% | | | | of pupils gaining L7 or above |

PUBLIC EXAMINATION RESULTS

| | School results 1994 | School results 1995 |
|---|------------------------|------------------------|
| GCSE examination results | | |
| Number of pupils in Year1 | All 56 | All 89 |
| <u>Percentage :</u> | | |
| Entered 5+ GCSEs | 89.3 | 97.8 |
| Achieving 5+ grades A*-C | 19.6 | 21.3 |
| Achieving 5+ grades A*-G | 76.8 | 92.1 |
| entered for 1+ GCSE | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| Achieving 1+ grades A*-G | 96.4 | 100.0 |
| Entered for all three subjects, English, mathematics and science | - | 98.9 |
| Achieving grades A*-C in all three subjects | - | 7.9 |
| Achieving grades A*-G in all three subjects | - | 88.6 |

| GCSE examination Results | LEA area2 1994 | 1995 | England2 1994 | England2 1995 |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <u>Percentage:</u> | | | | |
| Entered for 5+ GCSEs | 84 | 82 | 91.5 | 91.1 |
| Achieving 5+ grades A*-C | 18.7 | 21.7 | 41.2 | 39.7 |
| Achieving 5+ grades A*-G | 71.2 | 72.6 | 87.8 | 87.0 |
| Entered for 1+ GCSE | 93 | 92 | 95.9 | 95.3 |

Achieving 1+ grade A*-G 88.1 88.1 94.0 93.3

Note 1: Number of pupils in YR 11 in January in each of the examination years.

Note 2: These national statistics apply to all maintained schools in the LEA area and to mixed comprehensives in England.

Destinations on leaving school

| | Further Education/School | Employment | Training | Other |
|---------|-------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Year 11 | 88.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 |

Financial Information

| INCOME (£) | Last full financial year 1994-5 | Current year 1995-6 |
|---|--|--|
| Balance brought forward | 60003 | -102737 |
| Recurrent income (LMS) | 1527374 | 1531305 |
| Specific or special purpose grants for curriculum, staff development | 6280 | 6699 |
| TVEI | 17995 | 9350 |
| Other income managed by the school; lettings, funds raised etc. | 29981 | 74040 |
| TOTAL | 1641633 | 1518657 |
| | | |
| EXPENDITURE (£) | Last full financial year 1994-5 | Budget allocation for current year 1995-6 |
| Teaching staff | 1073750 | 1131345 |

| | | |
|---|----------------|----------------|
| Other staff | 241436 | 234630 |
| Educational resources | 138346 | 38558 |
| Premises costs | 223360 | 237116 |
| Curriculum and staff development | 6150 | 6699 |
| Other expenditure | 61328 | 51146 |
| TOTAL | 1744370 | 1699494 |
| Total expenditure per pupil (£) | 3103 | 2706 |
| Expenditure per pupil on educational resources (£) | 252 | 61 |

4 Record of the evidence base of the inspection

During the inspection 195 lessons or parts of lessons were observed. Five inspectors spent a day shadowing a class in each year group in addition to the separate subject visits. All teachers were observed teaching. Planned interviews were held with groups of pupils who were the School Council representatives and their deputies, and also of staff and governors. Individual planned discussions took place with heads of all faculties and most year team leaders and with a range of other teachers, administrative and school keeping staff. Many informal discussions took place in and out of class. Assemblies, registration and form periods were attended as well as a selection of extra-curricular activities. 29 parents returned a questionnaire asking for their views on the school and just two attended a meeting for the same purpose. A wide range of documentation was studied in advance of the inspection and more was willingly supplied during the week. Staff and pupils were unfailingly courteous and welcoming.

2. Main findings and key issues for action

Main findings

Standards of achievement

5 Bethnal Green High is a school in transition. It has just admitted its first cohort of girls following serious undersubscription. This year 7 is an abler and more ethnically diverse group and also the largest for 20 years. An exciting new building programme is about to start and these changes have engendered a spirit of optimism.

6 The pupils are lively; enjoy school and many are academically ambitious. However, significant numbers join the school with serious reading difficulties. Over 90% speak English as an additional language and internal records show a third still at the early stages of acquiring fluency in English. There needs to be a tighter programme of literacy development, including a clearer approach to the use of English in class. The older boys' custom and practice of discussing most topics in Sylheti leaves many at 16+ as hesitant speakers and writers of standard English.

7 Achievement at GCSE is improving steadily and results match those of the LEA in the 5+ A* - C range but remain well below national figures. In the 5+ A* - G category, results are good. Standards at 14+ are more worrying; pupils are expected to gain levels 5/6 at this stage but in the tests in English in 1995 only a quarter of those entered did so; in mathematics this fell to 9% and in science 10% although teacher assessment in both subjects indicated higher standards. These results reflect the lower expectations at this key stage and the inexperience of staff and pupils in tackling these new examinations..

8 In the lessons observed in both key stages during the inspection, the quality of work matched national expectations in one third; this rose to two thirds when pupils' ability was taken into account; the school has a higher than average proportion of less able pupils. Standards were significantly higher in key stage 4 (KS4), years 10 and 11, than in years 7 - 9 (KS3) when pupils' ability was considered. Pupils produce their best work in physical education and in most language lessons where expertise in written English is less important. They are also achieving well for their ability in art, information technology, science and religious education. They are doing least well in geography and design technology.

9 Standards across the curriculum are variable. In English there is serious underachievement in class, especially at KS3, and in national examinations; this is the case also in mathematics where pupils do not all work sufficiently speedily nor are the most able always challenged. Science results are much stronger at GCSE but not yet at 14+; achievement in class is sound. Design and technology results are poor and standards are too low at KS3 but improve at KS4; performance in information technology is

better although the full range of required work is not undertaken at KS3. Pupils performed poorly in GCSE humanities examinations in 1995 but are doing better work in class in history although their lack of fluency in English impedes progress. Standards in geography are much weaker and the subject is a cause of concern throughout the school. Pupils work well in languages and achieve good standards in most Bengali GCSE groups, and in French, too, achievement is sound in most lessons but less secure in YR 7 German and Spanish. Art achieves sound GCSE results but younger pupils need to develop a wider range of learning skills as a significant minority underachieve. Pupils' drama skills are below average, largely because of the narrow range of activities and skills taught at KS3 which leads to poor attainment at GCSE. In music achievement is better at KS4 where pupils have chosen to study the subject but is too variable at KS3. The school has very high standards of performance in hockey and, in other physical activities, performance is generally sound. Religious education suffers from an inadequate time allocation, and pupils' poor fluency in English affects achievement, but some make sound progress.

10 Pupils' oral skills need further development to match the performance seen in some science and language lessons. All subjects need to include more discussion, presentations to the class and role play where appropriate. Literacy overall is weak and pupils need to write longer pieces in a wider variety of styles with enhanced technical accuracy and presentation. Reading aloud requires improved expression and audibility. Pupils have access to too few books in class and in the library and, as a consequence, their research skills are limited. The school has made poor use of its subscription to the LEA Schools' Library Service. Their skills in numeracy are very variable and IT needs development across the curriculum although in discrete lessons it is better taught.

The quality of education

11 Pupils' attitudes to learning are generally good and very good in YR 11. There are concerns about YR 7 where not all teachers have adapted to the changed intake and enabled these pupils to learn most effectively; their concentration and collaboration remain problematic. The most successful learning, linked closely to the quality of teaching, occurs in science, physical education and in many lessons in mathematics, French and religious education. Learning is particularly weak in design technology and needs strengthening in music, Spanish and German in YR 7 and some PSHE classes. Most pupils are diligent and anxious to do well and skilled teachers gain confident responses from them. There are good relationships in most classes and pupils are supportive of one another.

12 The teaching is variable but good practice exists and was seen in a quarter of the lessons observed. Pupils respond well to demanding teaching where they are required to think for themselves, to work speedily and are probed about their judgements by skilled questioning from teachers. They show an excitement at acquiring new skills and fun in learning in such lessons. The best practice was seen in physical education, science and in some languages lessons. The weakest was in design technology and geography.

13 The school needs to consider the most appropriate teaching methods to meet the wide ability and language range in each class. The current draft language policy as yet lacks detail and practical application. Support for bilingual pupils is often poor with weak targeting of individuals, cursory records and uncertain methodology. Pupils' lack of facility in English is the biggest hurdle to success.

Efficiency

14 The school's current budgetary crisis is a matter of serious concern and the lack of a strategic financial plan, critical. The governors' decision last year not to reduce staffing levels has exacerbated the situation. Governors are not exercising appropriate responsibility for the budget, including receiving regular monitoring reports on expenditure. Teachers have an over-generous allocation of non-teaching time and there are some uneconomic groups. Poor attendance during the inspection led to many small classes, with 60% having fewer than 20 pupils. This occurred particularly in languages, IT and music.

15 Day to day financial control is sound despite difficulties with the I.T system. There are concerns about some departmental overspending. Sums allocated for learning resources are unacceptably low and the poor supply is affecting achievement.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

16 The school is largely successful in realising its aim of creating a 'friendly place where students feel secure and can grow and learn to appreciate the morals of right and wrong'. The Head gives calm, clear leadership and is a visible, strong presence. Most pupils are happy at the school and would recommend it. Staff and pupils are welcoming to visitors and the small number of parents who responded to the survey are satisfied with its values and attitudes. Assemblies promote moral development. There are opportunities for personal reflection, but the spiritual dimension is not sufficiently explored and the statutory requirement for daily worship is not implemented. Pupils' cultural backgrounds are valued by teachers. Some subjects develop pupils' social awareness effectively although stronger development of pupils' imagination and creativity is needed. Individual staff show commitment to the welfare and guidance of pupils within their care and relationships are good, although the formal monitoring of pastoral and academic development is inconsistent. The growing opportunities for pupils to exercise responsibility are valued. The School Council has enabled some pupils to play a real part in the decision making process. Most pupils are responsible; behave well and treat the school environment and equipment with respect and care. Pupils benefit from a good programme of lunch-time clubs and after school activities, sports, and some visits to local theatres. The introduction of girls into the school has been very well managed and oversight of their welfare and guidance effectively monitored.

Key Issues for Action

In order to improve the school's efficiency **the governors** need to :

deal as a matter of urgency with the school's serious financial position and set a legal budget and, subsequently, improve their role in strategic financial management

In order to raise standards of achievement, the **Head, governors** and **staff** should:

develop an effective language policy based on the current draft statement which moves beyond theory to practical guidance on teaching bilingual pupils

oversee the practice of S11 funded teachers to ensure they support targeted pupils more effectively

prepare and implement a policy on the use of Sylheti in class

institute regular monitoring by both senior and middle managers of teaching and of pupils' work, including homework

develop a whole school marking policy which gives pupils and their parents far clearer guidance on academic standards and how work can be further improved

raise teachers' expectations of pupil performance in terms of the quality, quantity, presentation and accuracy of written work

require all schemes of work to include a stronger emphasis on the development of pupils' imagination and creativity

consider pupil grouping more systematically to ensure that all are receiving teaching which meets their needs and that, where mixed ability is practised, the teaching and materials show appropriate differentiation

improve the supply of textbooks and act urgently on the condition and management of the library.

3. Standards and quality

Standards of achievement

17 Pupils entering the school at 11+ do so with poor reading skills although the current YR 7 show increased facility. The majority speak English as an additional language and the school reports a third as still being at the early stages of acquiring fluency. This is of concern as most pupils have been educated entirely in this country since the age of 3 or 5. Although there are significant numbers of able pupils, the overall ability range is skewed towards the bottom. A particular challenge for the school is that the pupils do not need to speak in English in class as Sylheti is the common language. Staff appear unsure about insisting on the use of English for key activities nor do they plan adequately for the pupils to acquire progressively more demanding vocabulary or speak in a variety of registers, including the formal. Thus at 16+ too many boys remain hesitant speakers of English with a restricted vocabulary and less than fluent writers. This is in contradiction to the school's draft "mission statement" on language which emphasises the need for "students to develop effective command of the English language" and states that "all teachers should recognise their responsibility for students' language acquisition and development". A policy is not enough and it needs to be given life by the addition of clear, concrete examples of how to achieve its stated aims. It is significant that of the more able boys gaining 5+ A*-C passes at GCSE only half included a pass in English language. Pupils in YR 7 are a much more diverse group in both ability and ethnic origin and, in most classes, English is more dominant.

18 The school is now beginning to monitor achievement more systematically. Examination results are studied over time and some pupils have been identified as "learners of concern" because of general underachievement and their progress is being watched; this needs to be more rigorous. It is of concern that some YR 11 tutor groups have over half the boys so listed. The school has also implemented formal examinations for all year groups and is beginning to scrutinise the work of individual pupils. Targets on pupils' reports need to be more tightly focussed and measurable than at present.

19 Pupils performed very poorly in National Curriculum assessment at 14+ in English, mathematics and science where the school was placed in the bottom 25% in the country. In English, one fifth of the boys failed to gain a level and the results of the others reaching expected level 5+ were half the national average. Results in mathematics and science were poorer; only 20% gained level 5 or above. A worrying discrepancy exists in mathematics and science between marks given for work assessed by teachers and those gained in the formal tests; for example 37% of boys gained L5 + in teacher assessment in mathematics but only 9% did so in the tests and, in science, the figures were 23% and 11%. This indicates a serious overestimation of ability coupled with poor examination preparation which is partly understandable in a new examination. The Governors' Annual Report does not include the test results, only the more favourable teacher assessment; this must be rectified this year.

20 There has been a steady improvement in GCSE results. Almost all pupils are entered for at least five subjects and the proportion gaining 5+ A*-C passes has improved slowly but gradually to match

the LEA average. Those gaining 5+ A*-G passes increased dramatically by 30% in two years although significant numbers of boys left the school between September 1994 and January 1995. This latter result exceeds national figures although the 5+A*-C result is about half that of the country as a whole. Results in individual subjects with 10+ entries varied widely, with good outcomes in science and art, sound in languages, just below national figures in technology but all others were variable, poor or very poor in all others. Results in the core subjects of English and mathematics were poor and this is of serious concern.

21 The school's targets for improvement at GCSE remain overly modest in the 5+A*-C category where, by 2000, they are scheduled to be 30% against a current national figure of 40%. The school has already exceeded its A*-G target. Some departments use statistics well and are fully aware of their performance in the context of local and national results and have adapted teaching methods and pupil grouping to improve outcomes. Others do not appear to use the available data.

22 In one third of lessons seen pupils' work matched national averages but when their ability was taken into account this rose to two thirds. Standards were significantly higher in KS4 and in YR 11 in particular, than in KS3 although pupils in YR 8 were achieving significantly higher standards than pupils in other years in KS3. It is of concern that pupils in YR 7 are not achieving at a higher level given the improved ability on intake but this is affected by their learning skills which are the weakest of all years. In Bengali, French and physical education pupils achieve closest to national standards and it is significant that all are subjects without significant literacy requirements in English. When pupils' ability is taken into account, they are achieving well also in information technology, science, religious education and in many art lessons. Weakest achievement occurs in geography and design and technology; this is linked closely to the quality of teaching. Teachers acknowledge the significant underachievement of many pupils and the need to match national standards by having higher expectations. Some continue to see language as the "problem" and lack of parental support as well as the need for a more "academic" atmosphere.

23 In the lessons where achievement was best, pupils were actively involved in problem solving activities and doing so independently, as in some YR 11 science lessons; they practised new skills effectively in hockey; showed sound knowledge of the Cuban missile crisis in history and were able to explain key historical terms such as fascism in YR 9. They engaged in a lively debate on weddings in YR 11 Bengali .

24 Pupils are friendly and speak readily to visitors on an individual basis. In general class discussion, they are less articulate and respond only briefly to teachers' questions, many of which do not encourage extended responses. They tend to answer questions rather than initiate them. However, in science, oral activities are planned carefully and pupils make effective presentations to the whole class. In languages, too, high levels of oral participation are required and pupils respond confidently. Oral activities need to be detailed in each scheme of work as a way of securing pupils' comprehension in advance of writing. If group work is used, there needs to be genuine debate in which each pupil has a role to play or, as in some lessons observed, pupils left all the work to the abler boys and chatted in Sylheti. Wider use of role play would also help pupils understand character and motivation in English

and the humanities. Pupils generally listen well to their teachers, but questioning revealed that they do not always fully understand what is being said and teachers need to provide more visual and verbal prompts to aid comprehension. They are less good at listening to one another although skilled teachers were able to elicit sensitive peer assessments from pupils in YR 7 drama and in science lessons where they were required to explain what they had learnt with other pupils cross-questioning them. Pupils give opinions readily when asked and spoke sensibly to inspectors in group interviews and made valuable, mature comments. Specialist language was seen to be well handled in science, in KS4 music, in a YR 11 poetry lesson and in languages where pupils conversed spontaneously in French. Good practice was also seen in RE where pupils were reporting on the Pillars of Islam and were given sensitive advice on voice projection, pace and suitable vocabulary. Most teachers do not intervene sufficiently to improve and extend pupils' vocabulary or ask them to rephrase statements to improve communication. Oracy requires a much stronger emphasis if pupils are to leave school as confident, articulate speakers of English.

25 Pupils' literacy skills are less well developed. They are required to write in a limited range of styles, mostly reporting and narrating and often only to produce brief answers to comprehension questions. They generally write too little, and rarely produce extended pieces, especially at KS3. When required to write personally, many do so with sensitivity and insight as in their NRA Statements and work on personal beliefs and religious practices but they need to do so more often. Their technical accuracy is very weak and not all teachers correct in the same way so that pupils are left unsure of the importance of accurate spelling and punctuation. They have few role models in producing fluent standard English and some teachers ignore the use of slang and pass over provocative language without comment; the former is undesirable; the latter unacceptable. Teachers often write lengthy comments on pupils' work but rarely give them marks; this leaves some, especially the less able or fluent, confused, as they cannot all read or understand the comments made. In mathematics and science pupils are given a clear account of their levels and appreciate this. Redrafting in a number of subjects usually results in neater work but errors are not always eradicated and more use needs to be made of dictionaries and spell-checkers. Not all subjects use IT enough and little writing and editing directly on screen was seen. Pupils do not present their work neatly and more attention needs to be given to this to develop a sense of pride in their work.

26 Pupils have limited access to books and are not learning research and retrieval skills. No study skills course is provided. The library is a very poor resource and does not support learning in most subjects. Pupils are asked to read aloud quite frequently including reading around the class. This is rarely done well. Most can usually read quite fluently but few can do so with expression or adequate audibility and this results in some very dull lessons. Teachers need to model good practice and urge higher standards. Pupils are not eager readers and few of those interviewed could refer to books read recently. Library loans are slight, especially of fiction at KS4. Pupils need more guidance on what to read and how to record their responses.

27 Pupils' facility and confidence in numeracy is very variable. Some struggle with very basic number work whilst others are confident and able to apply their knowledge in a variety of subjects. Pupils

handle statistical information in languages, geography and science, as well as in mathematics but the depth of understanding shown is often low. Opportunities for quantitative work are frequently offered in science and data bases and spreadsheets used in mathematics, information technology and science. IT skills are variable and need further development across the curriculum

Key points

The school should determine and implement a policy on the use of English vis à vis Sylheti in class

A detailed scrutiny of the preparation for and performance in the 1996 SATs should be made to note improvements and make plans for further gains

The new policy of targeting pupils as "learners of concern" should be more rigorously implemented and monitored and extended to other years

Schemes of work need to include more oral activities

Literacy must be improved - including quality, quantity, presentation and technical accuracy of written work

Access to books and a range of learning materials needs to improve.

The quality of learning

28 The quality of learning was sound in three quarters of lessons seen, including a quarter where it was good or very good. Although there were shortcomings in learning in the remainder of lessons, it was poor in only a very small minority.

29 Overall, learning is much better in KS 4 where the imperatives of GCSE syllabuses provide a clearer focus for teachers and pupils. This is particularly so in YR 11 where, at the time of the inspection, pupils were engaged in the latter stages of their course work. In this year group, learning was rarely less than sound, and there were good or outstanding features in almost a third of lessons.

30 Variability exists in all year groups but is most marked in YR 7, where although about a quarter of lessons seen had good features, a higher percentage had shortcomings. This results in the quality of learning for this year group being the least successful overall. In the current YR 7 there is greater ethnic diversity, as well as the school's first intake of girls. The changes to the pupil population provide a challenge to teachers and not all are able to deal with them successfully. Where shortcomings in lessons involving the younger pupils were apparent, it was mainly because they were slow to settle and unable to collaborate successfully. Learning in YR 9 also needs attention.

31 There is also considerable variability between and within most subjects, with pupils responding differently to different teaching styles and methodologies. Their responses were almost always sound or better in mathematics, French, and religious education, and even better in science and physical education where outstanding features occurred more frequently. Good features occurred in differing proportions in almost all other subjects, although there was rarely consistency and in some, the proportion of lessons with shortcomings was too high. This is particularly so in design and technology

where shortcomings substantially outweighed the good features.

32 Pupils' attitudes to learning are generally good; most are hard working and keen to do well. Some are highly motivated; they are diligent and show an ability to persevere with aspects of the work which they find difficult. In many lessons they are enthusiastic; in some they display curiosity and eagerness. Sometimes they are confident in answering questions even when they have limited vocabulary. In aspects of modern foreign language lessons they benefit from their willingness to engage in extended conversations. In Bengali they are often attentive listeners and confident speakers.

33 In most classrooms relationships are generally good between pupils and pupils and staff. In a few lessons seen, teachers adopted confrontational attitudes, particularly to boys; these were unsuccessful. Lessons with good features frequently demonstrate pupils' ability and willingness to help one another and work together. In the best drama lessons pupils form supportive working relationships which help them when evaluating others' performances. This ability to evaluate is also particularly good in some aspects of physical education where teachers often require pupils to analyse movement and describe how to bring about improvement in their actions. Pupils support one another well.

34 In some lessons pupils work well independently particularly when they are familiar with classroom routines which enable them to start work quickly and use time effectively. In such lessons, once the pace has been set, they can usually maintain it and remain engaged. Across a range of subjects, where the most successful learning takes place, pupils' attitudes contribute to a purposeful working atmosphere in which good progress is made.

35 Where learning is less successful, pupils are noisy and inattentive. Disruptive behaviour is uncommon, although in some lessons pupils engage in unrelated discussions and time wasting, or quiet inattention particularly when they are not under the direct supervision of the teacher. This is exacerbated for some KS 4 pupils who do not always come adequately prepared for lessons or on time, sometimes lacking the basic equipment to enable them to participate fully.

36 Pupils' use of Sylheti in lessons is not always appropriate. The home language is not always used as a genuine means of access to the curriculum, except by new arrivals, but sometimes as a strategy to exclude the teacher. Not all teachers are sure when and how to intervene, although when they do so pupils are usually willing and able to express themselves adequately in English. The inconsistent approach results in pupils not having their oracy skills developed sufficiently. All pupils are affected, but early stage bilingual learners are particularly disadvantaged.

Key points

The school needs to build on pupils' enthusiasm for learning and:

develop a wider range of effective teaching strategies in YR 7 and 9;

extend the good practice in several subjects across the curriculum.

4. Efficiency of the school

37 The school's budget position is a matter of serious concern. From a relatively secure position in the 1994/95 financial year when £60,000 was carried forward, the school started 1995/96 with a deficit of £102,737. The predicted deficit for the current financial year, beginning in April 1996, is in excess of £180,000. Discussions regarding strategies to reduce this figure have taken place with officers of the LEA. A two year period has been agreed, although there are uncertainties regarding the start and finish date of this arrangement. The school's worrying position is exacerbated because there is no strategic financial plan and no projections on future spending.

38 Past decisions, including cuts to the disbursement budget and reductions in the cost of supply teachers have not achieved sufficient savings, and the governors' decision to keep the staffing budget intact has been a major contributory factor to the schools' current position. The average teaching staff cost is much higher than the national average and also high in comparison with the LEA. The proportion of the budget spent on support staff is also well above average. Staffing accounts for 80% of total expenditure. Governors have very recently taken advice on redundancy procedures with a view to making reductions from September 1996, although as yet there are no firm plans in place.

39 Further adjustments to the budget position are being considered, and another very recent decision has been taken to reduce the number of classes in YR 8 from four to three. Consideration is also being given to reducing the number of boys' classes in YR 7. The commitment to teach girls and boys separately will also need to be re-considered. The arrangement is not sustainable as it will prove to be increasingly expensive as more girls are admitted to the school each year.

40 The ratio of pupils to teachers is currently 16.9 :1. This figure has increased in recent years and is now slightly above last year's national average. Teachers teach on average for 72% of the week, placing the school in the lowest quartile nationally. The average class sizes in key stages 3 and 4 are similar at 24 and 23 respectively; the smallest groups exist in YRs 8 and 11. Poor attendance during the inspection gave over 60% of classes with fewer than 20 pupils.

41 The governors' finance sub-committee does not function appropriately. There are no terms of reference to guide its work; meetings are reported but minutes are not kept, and no clear financial procedures exist. The sub-committee does not serve as a support and monitoring mechanism, and there are no procedures for reviewing decisions or for ensuring value for money. The Head takes sole responsibility for financial planning and insufficient information is shared with other members of the senior management team. As a consequence he receives very little advice from within the school. The governors have yet to produce a charging policy.

42 The available finances are administered well. The school benefits from an experienced and efficient senior administrative officer. However, her expertise is not fully utilised as she is restricted to routine matters to do with operating the financial procedures. Her work is further constrained because she is unable gain maximum effect from the system as she is dependent on the teacher in charge of

information technology for routine assistance. There is a lack of clarity over the delegated responsibilities of the deputy headteachers regarding the authorisation of expenditure. Capitation is allocated to departments according to a formula and most middle managers are clear about the system. However, actual and committed expenditure currently exceeds the budget allocation which the school reports as being partly because of the late arrival of fees from HE institutions. In the last financial year nearly 8% of expenditure was used for educational resources although this figure has fallen to just over 2% this year. Appropriate expenditure decisions are taken, although in many departments resources are in short supply.

43 The library is used inefficiently. It is impoverished and poorly managed. The subscription to the LEA's Schools' Library Service has been very poorly used and the school has chosen not to gain value for money from it.

44 The draft auditor's report of January 1996 identified no irregularities but a number of procedures were identified for improvement some of which had been reported previously. The latest report has received an appropriate response and some changes have already been implemented.

45 The school has identified areas of weakness in financial control which include the need to improve mechanisms for dealing with quotations, inventories and control of voluntary funds.

46 In view of the shortcomings in financial management resulting in the serious budgetary position, the school is providing poor value for money.

Key points

The governors need to take immediate steps to set a legal budget

Class sizes need to be reconsidered to assure equity

Expenditure on resources should be re-examined

Staff loading needs to be increased to match national levels.

5. Pupils' personal development and behaviour

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

47 The school is for the most part successful in realising its aim of creating a 'friendly place, where students feel secure and can grow and learn to appreciate the morals of right and wrong'. Most pupils are happy at the school and would recommend it to their brothers and sisters. Assemblies promote moral development through themes of respect, care for others, trust, achievement and individual responsibility. There are opportunities for personal reflection, but the spiritual dimension is not

sufficiently explored and the statutory requirement for daily worship is not implemented. Religious education provides sound opportunities for pupils to explore their own faiths and develop wider knowledge of world religions. Facilities for prayer offer pupils good opportunities to worship alongside staff and meet religious obligations, if desired. Pupils' cultural backgrounds are valued by teachers although these are not sufficiently well celebrated.

48 Some subjects broaden pupils' social awareness. In science pupils discuss ethical issues through modules on inheritance and the environment and scientific thinking is promoted alongside a respect for living things. In history the role of women, religion and the church is explored in a number of study units. Political awareness is also developed through teaching about the differences between democracy and dictatorship, communism and fascism. Languages develop knowledge of festivals and other cultures. In music learning Bengali songs helps enrich pupils' appreciation of other cultures and confirms their family background. Cultural development is less well managed. The success that many pupils enjoy through sport is celebrated and is developing their self-confidence. Playing hockey at the highest possible level has enabled some pupils to meet people from a range of different social backgrounds. It was noticeable in classrooms and assembly that pupils are genuinely proud of each others' achievements.

49 The pastoral programmes are becoming more coherent. The personal, social and health education programme has been well planned and the school has correctly identified the need for further training to improve teaching. Individual staff show commitment to the welfare and guidance of pupils within their care but not enough is made of the role of tutors in monitoring pastoral and academic development, as the school acknowledges.

50 Pupils are increasingly able to exercise responsibility and they value this. The School Council has enabled some to play a real part in the decision making process. Regular meetings with the Head give the Council status. At the time of the inspection pupils made a useful contribution to discussions about changes to the length of the school day. Most believe change is possible and cited the example of a telephone; pupils in YR 11 had wanted to operate a mini-enterprise and were frustrated at not being allowed to do so.

51 The school is welcoming to visitors and pupils are often spontaneously helpful. The small number of parents who responded to the questionnaire are happy with its values and attitudes. Pupils said in interviews that they felt the school valued uniform, equal opportunities, hockey, money and achievement.

52 Teaching focuses more upon the acquisition of knowledge, recall of facts and information rather than the expression and exploration of feelings, values and attitudes. Pupils' imagination and creativity should be further developed. In a number of lessons good opportunities to develop such approaches were lost.

53 Pupils' experiences and social development are enriched by a good programme of lunch-time clubs

and after school activities, sports and some visits to local theatres. There is a very positive attitude to welcoming outside education and drama groups into the school. A number of homework clubs support pupils' learning, although the library inadequately supports independent study.

54 The school is successfully managing a major change with the introduction of girls. This has been very well organised and the oversight of their welfare and guidance is effectively monitored. They enjoy being members of the school, saying they feel like 'pioneers'

Key points

The requirement for a daily act of collective worship should be implemented

Cultural diversity needs to be celebrated more overtly and aspects of cultural development prioritised.

Behaviour and discipline

55 Pupils react positively to the school's rules and conventions. The sensible Code of Conduct is followed. Most pupils are responsible and treat the school environment and equipment with respect and care. The majority behave well and there is little vandalism, apart from some damage to toilet facilities by a minority. Pupils report there is little bullying and that racism is not a problem in the school. Sexism and 'cussing' are more hidden weaknesses which need greater attention. Pupils have good relationships with their peers and adults. They are generally courteous and well mannered in the classroom, but more boisterous when unsupervised on narrow corridors and staircases. Many are spontaneously helpful to visitors and one another.

56 Rewards include the issuing of achievement slips which can accumulate and pupils then receive whole school certificates. Pupils welcome receiving these, particularly at KS3. The issuing of such slips is inconsistently applied between faculties. The Annual Prize Day also celebrates achievement and effort.

57 Detention is one of the main sanctions applied. Whole class detentions are particularly unpopular with pupils who regard most other punishments as fair. Pupils are given lines to complete; other practices could be considered.

58 The referral system is effective and is monitored appropriately. Analysis indicates that the school needs to consider further strategies for the managing of behaviour of pupils in YRs 7 and 9. The school seeks to deal with defaulters by a range of mechanisms and chooses, wisely, to avoid exclusion except in extreme cases.

59 The Head is a very visible presence around the school at lessons changes, breaks and at lunchtime. Pupils know exactly where they can find him and see this as valuable.

Key points

• Ways of challenging sexism need to be considered.

Behaviour in YR 7 needs to be observed carefully to ensure readier compliance with the Code of Conduct.

Attendance

60 The school's attendance has in the past been consistently good. However, during the inspection it was unsatisfactory and fell significantly below 90%. The school does have a number of serious non attenders and some on extended holidays. However, there was an acceptance that attendance was low owing to the effects of Ramadan over one month earlier; this needs to be challenged in a term when pupils are preparing for examinations. The EWO acknowledged current difficulties and expressed concern about some older boys not responding to the discipline of lone mothers. Some pupils, especially at KS4, reported having truanted this school year with only half having been caught.

61 Registers are mostly marked accurately. In a few cases teachers had not made an entry for pupils by mid morning. Monitoring of the registers is variable. The EWO and the Home Liaison teacher are utilised to contact parents when this is necessary. Better use could be made of the Home Liaison teacher to contact non English speaking parents.

62 Lateness is an issue which has been identified by the school. On one morning during the inspection well over 100 pupils were late, as well as some staff. It is poor, particularly in YRs 10 and 11 and it appeared condoned when some lessons were planned to allow for late arrivals. Detention for lateness takes place at lunchtime. The school awards certificates for good attendance and punctuality and communicates this information clearly to parents in the progress report.

Key points

Reasons for current poor attendance need closer examination.

Lateness should be tackled more vigorously.

6. Subjects of the curriculum and other curricular provision

English

63 The departmental aims are based clearly on raising achievement in all aspects of the English curriculum. However, the department has not yet been successful in enabling pupils to achieve at a sufficiently high level. In the 1995 National Curriculum tests, the SATs, pupils achieved poorly at half the national level. At GCSE results have worsened over the last three years and in language, pupils achieved only one third of the national figure of A - C passes and in literature, after substantial regradings, the proportion was lower, leaving results in both subject as very poor. The department is accurate in its internal marking of coursework and has predicted an improvement this summer. Reasons for the underachievement have been sought and some of those identified have been implemented. However, too many pupils gain a D grade: one third of the 1995 entry in language and a quarter in literature.

64 In the lessons observed at KS3 achievement matched national standards in only one but when pupils' ability was taken into account the proportion rose to one fifth. At KS4 standards remained below average but were sound in two thirds when pupils' ability was considered. This is a picture of serious underachievement. At KS3 the problems lie with low expectations and a limited range of work.

65 Pupils appear lively and verbal but when observed more closely they are only superficially articulate. They search constantly for words. Teachers have to resolve the issue of the constant use of Sylheti in class which is inhibiting fluency in English. Pupils need more help in adapting to a range of appropriate registers, especially the more formal. They do not all listen well to one another although they do to the teacher; they respond briefly to questions rather than build on others' ideas. Teachers need to ask more open-ended questions. More use of role play would help bring texts alive. The older boys are not confident users of standard English. More study of the development of the English language is needed to meet the syllabus requirements as is closer attention to drama skills taught either within the department or in closer liaison with drama staff.

66 Pupils' reading skills are generally depressed on entry and not enough is done to enhance them. At KS3 pupils are introduced to a fairly narrow range of literature and few significant authors from the English literary heritage or writing from other cultures. Pupils respond better to more demanding texts and the best work seen at KS3 was on Romeo and Juliet and myths and, at KS4, on Shakespeare and classical poetry. Pupils need to be introduced to characterisation, atmosphere, motivation and style in literature rather than concentrating on plot as they do at present.

67 The department benefits from having a Reading Room with a reasonable selection of books. When choosing novels, many pupils show a reluctance to read and select 'young' titles inappropriately. Teachers, again, need to intervene more in the choice of texts and keep more detailed records although a useful reading log has been introduced recently.

68 Reading aloud is practised frequently but not done well. Pupils read quite fluently but with limited expression and audibility. Teachers need to intervene more to raise standards and use more playscripts to bring text to life.

69 Writing is the weakest of the three English skills with pupils requiring far more help in developing fluency, accuracy and structuring essays. Too little care is given to the presentation of work and technical accuracy is very poor, even from abler pupils. Writing demonstrates a narrow vocabulary often adversely affected by stereotypical language from television and film. However, one class worked hard and gained a sense of pride in creating a sonnet using appropriate rhyme and metre. Few opportunities for writing personally and imaginatively are given. The actual body of written work is slight even at KS4 and the full range of expected writing is not covered. Pupils draft and redraft their work but later versions still contain many technical errors which wider use of dictionaries or spell checkers would assist. As in speaking, pupils need to understand appropriate writing style and practise formal language.

70 Pupils' learning skills were sound in two thirds of lessons seen. In the better lessons they concentrated well and worked independently. Quiet inattention was a feature in some classes and a sense of bubbling naughtiness in others at KS3. Group work was not always well managed and pupils wasted time, often by chatting in Sylheti.

71 Teaching was sound in two thirds of lessons seen against a national average of 80%. Better practice occurred when teachers controlled the seating, ensuring that pupils did not sit with their backs to them; when the aims of the lesson were explicit and a clear time frame given for completion of the work. In the best lessons a sense of fun and enjoyment existed or a sense of urgency prevailed. In the weaker lessons, time drifted; teachers failed to intervene in pupils' choice of books or group work and S11 help was insufficiently targeted.

72 Standards improve when teachers mark thoroughly and diagnostically but not when over generous praise is given for mediocre work. Some pupils are unable to read or understand some lengthy comments. The reasons for not giving pupils clearer views of their standards of achievement need to be reconsidered.

73 The department has several appropriate systems for recording achievement including self-assessment. Course descriptions on reports are sound although targets need some refinement. The practice of requiring pupils to submit work written in the summer holidays before joining the school is helpful but could be added to by work completed in class in YR 6.

74 The department has recently revised the KS3 schemes of work but these do not refer directly to the revised National Curriculum particularly the range of work required in each Attainment Target. As there are non-specialists in the department, clear guidance on how to teach aspects of the subject would be helpful, especially poetry and the novel. Some of the suggested texts are undemanding and some stereotypical, as are some topics. More precise advice on teaching reading is needed and book

lists for pupils could be provided to guide them in their choice of texts.

75 The KS4 curriculum is under review but is broadly appropriate. Ways of extending the more able are needed and grouping by ability at times would help. Pupils are offered support in homework clubs and revision classes. Some help with the school newspaper but there are few wider cultural activities although these have occurred in the past.

76 The department is a small but cohesive team. They share common approaches to teaching and hold regular meetings to consider aspects of delivery and concerns. As yet, formal monitoring is not occurring and some of the weaker practice is not being challenged. Expectations of pupils are insufficiently high and staff are not being forced to confront this to raise achievement. Line management within the department and from the SMT needs to be strengthened.

77 Learning resources are poor. Pupils have limited access to textbooks, novels, plays and, particularly, poetry. They rarely use books, other than novels or plays, in class and are not able to take them home for private study. Given that the library is very poor and that pupils have few books at home or parents who can help them, this is very serious indeed. The budget allocation is reasonable but expenditure has gone largely on set texts.

The department now needs to:

- continue to seek ways of improving performance at KS3 and at GCSE

- introduce pupils to more formal uses of spoken and written English

- develop the schemes of work further to include the full range of activities of the NC, especially in speaking and listening and reading

- provide written guidance on the teaching of poetry, the novel and creative and personal writing

- monitor teaching and written work formally and vigorously in order to raise expectations

- develop closer links with the drama department

Mathematics

78 Standards of achievement in mathematics are poor at both key stages, with the majority achieving national expectations in only about a third of classes with a slightly higher proportion at KS4 where the ablest students are clustered in some classes. In another third many are achieving below national expectations and most are underachieving in the final third. This is not surprising given the ability profile, pupil mobility and language needs. When pupils' abilities are taken into account, most are achieving appropriate levels in about half of lessons with a significant number underachieving in the rest. In YR 7 too little note is taken of pupils' primary school experiences and as a result progress is

limited, although according to some pupils they did little mathematics at their primary schools. A small minority of pupils in all years, and YR 7 in particular, are very limited mathematically, for example having difficulty sorting odds and evens; they need a detailed remedial programme. In all years many pupils work at too slow a pace and have significant gaps in their knowledge and understanding. Standards are also affected by pupils' attitudes and the expectations of teachers who sometimes underestimate their ability and, in particular, fail to challenge the able. Many pupils display good understanding of their work, but others complete tasks without real comprehension. It is essential that teachers check understanding by discussion with pupils on all tasks. Many pupils' progress is hindered by their inability to read. Strategies to offset this, for example by setting more tasks to groups, should be tried. Pupils' facility with basic number is often weak and they need more regular mental activities such as number games and speedy responses to oral questioning.

79 At KS4 there is some clustering of the ablest pupils in some mixed ability groups; a sensible recognition that such pupils need to work with others of similar ability. Many at KS4 acknowledge that they are underachieving because of a lack of work in earlier years, but now they are aspiring to college are attempting to catch up, but recognise that they may have left it too late. However, given the right attitudes pupils do achieve very well as has been seen by the success of early entries. Pupils display a range of competencies in mathematics. For example, some in YR 8 successfully use spreadsheets to display scattergraphs and others use successful strategies with non standard axes on a computer screen, whilst in YR 11 many round decimal numbers with confidence; others find averages from grouped frequencies with ease whilst others in the same class struggle with basic averages. Some in all years display good collaborative skills and have sound ideas of how to tackle investigative work, but others, particularly those with language needs, are too teacher dependent.

80 Results in KS3 tests were disappointing with only 8.4% achieving level 5 or more, compared to 57% nationally and 31% in Tower Hamlets. Teacher assessments predicted 37% with at least level 5 compared to 61% nationally and 43% in Tower Hamlets. The department must seriously address preparation for KS3 tests to improve performance. Standards at GCSE have steadily improved, although remain poor by national comparisons. In 1995 18.9% achieved grades A*-C compared to 40% nationally and 21.7% in Tower Hamlets. All on roll were entered and with one exception achieved a grade, which is a positive indicator. Results show that most performed badly on the aural element of the examination. Whilst this is being addressed a syllabus change is being considered. The challenge for the department is to raise the bulk of pupils from the E/F grades currently achieved to grades C and D and some of those currently achieving C up to B. Pupils are also entered for statistics based on attendance at a voluntary lesson after school in YR 11. Results are sound for a group which is for keen rather than able students and is benefiting achievement. The group has grown to 25 this year and is an encouraging development.

81 The quality of learning was sound in most lessons: all at KS3 and three quarters of those observed at KS4. Pupils are generally hard working, keen to do well and often able to apply their knowledge. There is a good working atmosphere in many classes and relationships are sound. Poor behaviour is the exception, but at KS4 a minority of disaffected pupils are arrogant, rude to teachers and

inappropriately use Sylheti to exclude others. Pupils generally experience a variety of mathematical activities with schemes of work indicating 70% of time on individualised work appropriate to their needs and 30% on whole class activities including work with spreadsheets, Logo and investigative tasks. However, not all teachers are confident enough to use the full range of activities and some pupils are missing out on key elements. Most pupils make progress within lessons, but the pace of work of many is too slow and their quality of understanding very varied. Most attempt investigative work with enthusiasm and often use sound strategies. Pupils need to adopt more rigorous methods, for example using formulae rather than counting squares to find areas. They also need more opportunities to discuss mathematics and develop the confidence to respond orally. Teachers are sensibly encouraged to sign off tasks as pupils complete them; this should include questioning to ensure understanding. Learning experiences in some classes are affected by an over-emphasis by teachers on administration rather than on teaching and by the discouragement of collaboration. Some pupils supplement their learning by attending extra lessons provided generously by staff, but formal requirements for homework should be increased substantially. Able pupils are also taken to masterclasses and encouraged to enter mathematical contests.

82 Most teachers are experienced exponents of SMILE, the mathematics scheme used, and are soundly supported by two Section 11 teachers. The quality of teaching was sound or better in three quarters of lessons, including a quarter where it was good. Poorer teaching in the other quarter results from an inability to get older pupils working, an over concentration on administration and a poor understanding of how children best learn mathematics. Teachers need to adopt a wider repertoire of teaching strategies within lessons, breaking up some lessons into discrete activities. Teachers have work well planned and often have a clear idea of which pupils they need to work with during a lesson. Some ask good, searching questions, but others tend to tell rather than question. Relationships between teachers and pupils are sound, although sometimes too negative, and expectations of pupils' work are sometimes too low. Marking is up to date, but is not always diagnostic.

83 Sound support to those with language needs is provided by two support teachers who are qualified in mathematics. However, the head of mathematics should have a greater role in deploying these staff to ensure that it is provided to classes where there is the greatest language need. Provision for those with special educational needs is less clear. The department does not have copies of IEPs. Monitoring provision of support to these pupils could form part of the role of the second in department.

84 Using SMILE, the department has an integrated assessment and recording system, which should provide detailed information on pupils' progress. Sound advice is given in the departmental handbook, however greater use should be made of KS2 test papers in setting initial work in YR 7 and of KS3 results. Inaccurate scores from KS2 results reported by the department should be investigated. Progress of pupils is tracked by the head of department and analyses produced. Greater use should be made of this information to improve performance, which could usefully include a summary sheet at the front of all SMILE records so that at a glance the level and pace of pupils' progress can be assessed. This would aid monitoring by senior managers. The department uses a variety of proforma including a record card for those completing too little work and standard letters. An exemplar report in the

handbook is an example of good practice. Greater involvement of pupils in their own assessment should be encouraged.

85 The department has sound aims and objectives, although not all staff appear to understand fully the philosophy of SMILE. Schemes of work which have been produced by the head of department, with limited assistance, are sound, but could contain more information on whole class activities and be more prescriptive about when they should occur. The time allocated to mathematics is rather low, but plans to move to four periods out of thirty will correct this. The head of department provides good leadership and efficient administration. He has begun monitoring work and intends observing classroom practice but recognises correctly that this should be part of a whole school initiative. The departmental development plan is brief but wide ranging and indicates that it is developing as a team.

86 There are five teachers of mathematics, plus two support teachers, but not all are well qualified in the subject. Observation of lessons indicates that some would benefit from greater opportunities for staff development. Whilst some of this is now sensibly being addressed by a more mathematical emphasis at departmental meetings on, for example, investigative and computing work, staff would benefit from following more structured refresher courses such as Open University diplomas. The level of involvement of one of the department is limited by having to teach two other subjects as well as fulfil a middle management role. The department is fortunate in having five large classrooms and a departmental base. Each room is adequately resourced with computers, although they are not used consistently by all staff. Access to network rooms is also available. Capitation is very low, allowing only for the provision of basic resources to complete the course, with little opportunity to purchase new, more expensive items.

Teachers need to use primary records more fully to assure continuity and progression.

Able pupils need to be clearly identified and challenged especially at KS3

Schemes of work need to explain the SMILE scheme more fully and give guidance on whole class and small group teaching.

Science

87 At KS4, standards of achievement are at national expectations. In the past year, the number of GCSE entries for dual science has doubled whilst correspondingly maintaining standards. This is commendable. All pupils in the YR 11 cohort now have a target of dual science except where language achievement indicates that this is not appropriate. Levels of achievement, taking account of pupils' abilities, are appropriately sound. The use of setting to create a high achievement group in YR 11 allows the learning needs of all pupils to be met across the ability range in this year. This successful department offers many bilingual pupils a high "value-added" component through its teaching. Standards as measured through SATs at KS3 are currently poor notwithstanding the fact that many pupils are bilingual learners. The department is aware of this underachievement by younger pupils

under test conditions.

88 The quality of learning is predominantly sound and pupils are gaining understanding of key scientific concepts. Some bilingual pupils in KS3 find it difficult to develop precision in answering scientific questions. This has been recognised by the department and strategies to develop reading for scientific meaning through the directed use of textbooks, along with an emphasis on units of measurement and oral presentation mean that most lessons make consistent demands of pupils. Pupils themselves described how they enjoyed a strong sense of achievement in science and were motivated. The quality of learning is most consistent at KS4, where older pupils respond to the targets set by module tests and the feedback offered on their performance. In many lessons, pupils took responsibility as “teamleaders” for planning, time-managing and checking safety aspects of their work in groups, with the expectation that at the end of the lesson they could be asked to summarise to the class what the team had specifically learnt. This created strong motivation in many lessons and pupils accepted this responsibility well. Pupils were also encouraged to see presentations to their class and poster displays as a valuable form of additional revision and peer-tutoring.

89 The quality of teaching is sound or better with good features seen in most lessons. Teaching material is well organised. Lessons are well planned and the content is scientifically accurate. There is a good match to the abilities and experiences of pupils. Some very good lessons were observed, characterised by particularly skilful management of oracy. Pupils are expected to be independent learners and this is supported by an appropriate choice of individual, small group and whole class teaching. Homework is well planned and pupils are offered sound feedback through marking, which is consistent across the team. Investigations are well managed and pupils are encouraged to develop approaches where they plan, carry out and evaluate their practical work.

90 A variety of forms of assessment are used with end of unit tests, practical and written work. Oral assessment is well-developed and pupils have developing recall and presentation skills. Current assessment methods are accessible to pupils with a good balance between recall, application and problem-solving. Marking is informative with sound diagnostic features and characterised by good communication to pupils about their level of working. Science investigations are regularly assessed and pupils are clear about the criteria used for the phases within investigation. There is continuity with primary feeder schools and a sound understanding of pupils’ initial levels on transfer. Pupils are offered opportunities for self-assessment and given course descriptors before the start of every module. Teachers are able to assign pupils to levels with a high degree of confidence.

91 The teaching schemes are coherent and the issues of matched work, progression and continuity are well addressed. Planning for science investigation (AT1) is clearly embedded in the context of the other attainment targets. There is good use of published commercial schemes and sufficient textbooks are available to support classroom work but not to take home. Safety and communication are highlighted in teaching delivery

92 There is good support by mainstream science teachers of pupils’ special educational needs. An

identified member of staff leads on special needs, but this area is jointly addressed by the whole team when developing new curriculum units. There is good differentiation in terms of classroom practice and curriculum delivery. The work is frequently well matched to the learning needs of pupils. There is use of tandem approaches between language and learning needs but staff show an ability to distinguish between ESL and SEN needs through their use of assessment. There is a range of well developed resources to support specific learning needs and a good teacher repertoire of skills.

93 There are some very well applied approaches and consistent philosophies across the department that indicate very effective leadership. All staff have job descriptions and the department works cohesively. There is effective use of administrative I.T. and the department has a working handbook that is clear and concise. Within the department there is a fair distribution of responsibilities and agreed policies are consistently applied. There is good evaluation of curricular work and team action in response to any issues arising. The department has a clear development plan and it has been very successful in raising standards at KS4 through introducing double science to an increasing proportion of pupils. There are good monitoring procedures and minutes of meetings confirm the use of clear agendas and agreed outcomes. The department maintains links with local primary schools including receiving groups of visiting pupils and offering on-site activities. There are links with local colleges and H.E. institutions.

94 Staff are adequately qualified with a spread of science qualifications and experience. The department deploys its staff fairly and all show adequate subject knowledge. The team work with an assigned Section 11/LAP teacher who is science trained. There is very good integrated teamwork in the department overall and this includes the two supporting technicians. The technicians have had access to appropriate safety in-service training and there is an on-going programme of staff development linked to the departmental development plan.

95 Funding is linked to curriculum planning and value for money is obtained. There is adequate basic equipment which is very well used. The department lacks some more advanced equipment, specifically for the teaching of radioactivity. It has obtained some data-logging equipment through TVEI which also supported staff training in its use.

96 The department has six laboratories and two preparatory rooms. Five laboratories are the principal teaching areas and one is used for I.T. The department makes good use of its accommodation and despite its ageing and variable condition, good display is maintained and there is a high level of efficient use. The school is considering refurbishment as a corollary to a bid to become a technology school under the DFEE initiative.

The KS3 SATs results will need careful analysis to ensure improved attainment.

Technology

Design technology

97 Achievement in design and technology at both key stages is unsatisfactory when compared with national standards. When their ability is taken into account, pupils are underachieving at KS3, but at KS4, pupils are achieving satisfactory standards in most lessons. Pupils' manipulative skills are much better than their designing skills. They are generally confident and competent when using small and large equipment but they do not always pay due regard to safety. Designing skills are underdeveloped both in the presentation of ideas and in the practical outcomes. Some pupils in KS3 can sketch well and produce neat and accurate drawings, but these are not used effectively as working drawings. Written work is generally less than satisfactory, in terms of accuracy and presentation, but pupils explain activities well. At KS4 finished products are often of a good quality though unexciting and there is a narrow range of designs and outcomes. Design briefs are used but research and investigations are poor. Pupils are not often able to state success criteria or relate their work to needs and values of people who will use them. They are able to evaluate their work in descriptive terms, but their ability to use technical vocabulary is poor. Their ability to listen for extended lengths of time is sometimes inhibited by their facility with English. Some pupils use number well to describe drawings, but their graphical skills are low. Examination results are below the national average, and, although they did not improve significantly this year, the number of entries almost doubled.

98 The quality of learning is less than satisfactory at KS3, but mainly sound at KS4. In the best lessons, pupils are motivated, co-operative and biddable. They are proud of acquiring new skills and achieving successful outcomes. They concentrate better when they are engaged in practical activities. In poor lessons, too much time is wasted where pupils are inattentive for considerable lengths of time and make little progress. Behaviour is poor where pupils are not given appropriate support, or the tasks are too open ended. Many pupils are not confident learners and make little progress when they sit for too long listening to explanations. Some pupils do not understand the specialist vocabulary and therefore do not always understand the implications of the task.

99 The quality of teaching is less than satisfactory at KS3, but mainly sound at KS4. Where teachers respect pupils and offer support within and beyond lessons, pupils respond well and often make good progress. Best lessons begin with a review of previous work and end with some reinforcement of the learning. Some teachers adopt a loud and confrontational approach to which pupils often respond noisily. Plans do not indicate the knowledge, skills and understanding to be taught and they do not pay enough attention to technology. Design skills are not taught and neither are those of research, investigation or problem solving. There is insufficient use of IT and kits especially at KS3. Teachers use a limited range of strategies for helping pupils whose English is limited, or who have particular learning needs.

100 Assessment systems are developing well, but the criteria for assessments, and the evidence on which they are made are not always clear. Pupils appreciate the feedback they receive from marking. The curriculum is insufficiently broad and balanced. There are too few opportunities to disassemble and evaluate every day products, or to consider the impact of technology on daily life, or to work with compliant materials. The health and safety policy is not sufficiently comprehensive and does not

include risk assessments. The range of resources is limited and some are not well used or accessible. The accommodation is dated and some is particularly poorly managed.

Extend the breadth and balance of the curriculum and plan this to indicate learning outcomes for the full range of pupils' abilities;

develop a wider range of teaching strategies which will develop all pupils' design skills, and their understanding of technology;

review the health and safety policy and raise pupils' awareness; and

rationalise the accommodation.

Information technology

101 Standards of achievement in relation to both national expectations and the pupils' ability at both key stages are generally sound. At both key stages, a significant minority of pupils are underachieving in relation to national norms, and in relation to their ability in KS3. Pupils are often confident in their use of IT in specialist lessons and can use a range of different programmes and applications - some with a good level of independence. With support, most pupils can work through exercises which enable them to understand different purposes and functions of IT, including the use of graphics, spreadsheets, databases, control and word processing. By the end of KS3, some pupils are able to create a set of instructions for controlling traffic lights, and are beginning to understand the need for accuracy. By the end of KS4, some pupils are able to identify and work out how IT could benefit other curriculum areas, and evaluate applications in terms of their benefits to business. Some pupils remain very dependent on support to work effectively with computers. In KS3 there is relatively little emphasis on problem solving or extended investigations. Across the curriculum, pupils' skills are not sufficiently extended and developed within other subjects, and although some subjects use them regularly, for instance mathematics, science, music and English, there is much scope for development. The school reports that examination results are low due to a change of syllabus half way through the course.

102 The quality of learning is largely sound in specialist lessons, but less than satisfactory in a substantial minority of lessons at KS3. Pupils often report that they enjoy lessons in IT, because of the control it gives them over the quality of their presentation. Many are well motivated and co-operative in lessons, and make progress, but some girls are more diffident about using IT. Where the learning is less satisfactory, pupils are not always purposefully engaged throughout the lesson and spend considerable lengths of time playing with the facilities. Some are confused by some exercises and find them difficult; others find them easy and tedious. Some pupils place greater reliance on the support from a neighbour than on the printed materials. Where IT is used in other subjects, the learning is often enhanced, particularly in music.

103 The quality of teaching is mainly sound with some less than satisfactory, particularly in KS3. Lessons are well organised and managed, and the atmosphere in lessons is usually calm. The planning

is tightly structured but the schemes of work are incomplete. Teachers generally question well to rehearse previous knowledge and help pupils to make connections at the beginning of lessons. A great deal of individual verbal feedback is given in lessons and at KS4 this is done in depth with individuals. Revision tests are given to reinforce learning in KS4. Teaching materials are well presented, but there are too many of them, and they are not helpful for all pupils' learning needs. Pupils should have more opportunities to work on projects which relate to their everyday life. Work is not yet assessed to establish the extent to which all pupils are receiving their entitlement.

104 Information technology lessons use a significant amount of curriculum time and should be better linked to other areas. The school has a favourable ratio of computers to pupils, but there is no technician to maintain and repair them on a regular basis. There is an expectation that one person in each department is an IT specialist, but expectations of their function is not clear and there are no meetings to discuss developments or plans for the future. All departments do not have IT integrated into their schemes of work and those that do have few clear strategies for ensuring that pupils receive their entitlement. IT rooms are often well used by pupils out of school time, and some pupils regularly use their own facilities to do homework.

The use of IT across the curriculum requires more detailed planning and monitoring

Problem-solving and investigative work needs to be built into schemes of work in IT and across the curriculum.

The lack of an IT technician causes systems failures and this needs to be eradicated.

History

105 Standards of achievement in history are variable. In the GCSE humanities examinations in 1995 standards were poor having declined from sound results in 1994. In all lessons standards are better when pupils' abilities are taken into consideration, although there are significant shortcomings in a number of lessons. Some pupils produce good coursework at GCSE, although the pace of work is slow and many pupils cannot write with the fluency required at GCSE and need considerable support with redrafting. Those in KS3 also make good attempts at extended writing in history. In most years, pupils' recall of historical facts and information is sound and many can explain the historical significance of events. Some have grasped concepts such as democracy and dictatorships and can explain these with reference to appropriate historical periods. Pupils are less good at interpreting and analysing evidence. Pupils can write imaginatively and with empathy although there are too few opportunities to do so.

106 Most pupils are willing learners and behave well. They are eager to respond to questions. Many persevere at written work in spite of difficulties and, in most instances, the quality is sound. Some KS4 groups are behind on their coursework and need careful monitoring. When required pupils can work in groups, share ideas and tasks. The shortcomings reflect general levels of literacy which hold back progress. Investigation and analytical skills are not so well developed and this leads to some teacher

dependency. With the exception of some YR 11 pupils the ability to connect the past to the present and learn lessons today from the past is not very strong and more teaching of this aspect of history should be encouraged in KS3.

107The quality of teaching is variable. About half of the lessons observed were satisfactory or better. The unevenness in teaching is affecting standards. In the sound lessons the pace of work is good and pupils are questioned effectively about past work and teachers require them to think through their answers and advise them on the use of subject specific terms. Some pupils in KS3 have been effectively taught about aspects of 20th Century history and understand the main political ideas such democracy and dictatorship. Similarly in YR 11 pupils have a good grasp of elements of the history of the Cold War and can explain and explore the relationships which governed and shaped events. There is less evidence that pupils have been taught to question evidence and interrogate sources of historical information in all years. The major shortcomings are the inconsistent application of the faculty policies. Marking is variable; some pupils receive very little feedback on their work whereas others have full feedback. Tasks in some lessons are insufficiently demanding and limit achievement. In most lessons classroom management is sound, although the pace of work in some lessons could be increased. Better and more stimulating resources would help to stimulate pupils' historical curiosity. The good advice on how to make work accessible to second language learners and those at the early stages of English fluency is not usually taken up by teachers and in some classes bilingualism and special educational needs are not reflected in teachers' planning.

108History is taught through the humanities faculty. The history curriculum is well designed and many of the policies are sound and offer good guidance. Most teachers of history have major responsibilities outside the department and this is leading to some inconsistency. The monitoring role needs development in order to ensure the good practice is shared and weaknesses addressed. There are not enough history textbooks and the library inadequately compensates for this shortage.

Lessons need to focus more on the analysis and interpretation of historical evidence.

Departmental monitoring is needed to address the differences between teachers.

Geography

109 Geography is part of the humanities faculty but is taught as a separate subject in KS3 and as part of Integrated Humanities GCSE at KS4.

110 Standards in geography are below national expectations at both key stages. Integrated Humanities GCSE results were sound in 1994 but poor in 1995. In 1994 36% of the pupils entered gained A-C grades, but in 1995, although the entry rose by two thirds, the number of pupils gaining A to C passes was halved to 18%.

111 Underachievement is widespread both against national standards and in relation to pupils' capabilities. Standards were unsatisfactory in over 90% of all lessons seen. Most pupils in KS3 were

able to extract facts from text, maps and data, and in some cases could draw conclusions about physical and human processes, but they were rarely asked to write or talk at length and this constrained their depth of understanding. In KS4 pupils' spoken and written knowledge of physical processes was sound but their ability to communicate understanding about issues was insufficiently well developed, and a small minority were unable to apply basic geographical skills. Some good GCSE coursework on the development of Docklands was seen and pupils were achieving an appropriate range and depth of analysis and skills. In most lessons comprehension or copying were emphasised. The most able pupils did less than their best in response to undemanding work, while an absence of suitable learning structures caused less able or less literate pupils to fail. In a few classes poor management of behaviour and resources resulted in underachievement. In some KS3 classes where teaching was sound, pupils of all abilities were able to recall geographical facts, but their written work did not do them justice.

112 The quality of learning observed was generally sound. Pupils listened well and were good at working together, applying themselves consistently to written tasks and in some cases producing a considerable amount of work. In a number of classes there was an atmosphere of mutual respect between pupils and the teacher, but in about a quarter of lessons seen, pupils were inattentive and learned very little. Misbehaviour was linked to too few books and poor classroom management.

113 Teaching was sound in only half the lessons seen. About one third of KS3 and all YR 10 lessons had a number of shortcomings. This variation in quality depresses learning. At KS3 the better lessons were ones where teachers sustained a good working atmosphere and pace, aimed oral questioning at helping pupils articulate their knowledge and provided sufficient resources for all. In some lessons at both key stages teachers helped individuals to model written answers from text. At KS4 there was variability in classroom management, with good discipline in some lessons and widespread disorder in others, but the work generally lacked sufficient challenge. Shortcomings in teaching throughout were linked to low expectations, insufficient lesson planning and a poor match of task to pupils' learning needs.

114 Marking is variable in terms of quantity and quality and does not contribute to raising standards; some work is marked up to date and some class sets have rarely been marked. There is no target setting and pupils do not respond to corrections. Record keeping is variable and information on pupils' performance is not used to inform planning. Annual reports comply with statutory NC regulations and contain satisfactory comments on pupils' effort, but the department lacks a common understanding of attainment in geography. Analysis of Integrated Humanities GCSE results is carried out but is not used to raise achievement.

115 The overview of the KS3 geography course meets with statutory requirements for coverage of the National Curriculum. Planning is variable overall, and consideration of assessment, language acquisition and differentiation are underdeveloped at KS3, although progression in map skills is being addressed. GCSE planning is sound and reflects syllabus requirements appropriately. Teachers use schemes of work to plan their lessons but there is an absence of appropriate methodology to guide good practice in the department.

116 Leadership of the geography curriculum is very weak and improvement in the quality of teaching is urgently required in a department with five teachers, not all of whom are specialists. The lack of curriculum development and organisation is depressing standards, and this is compounded by a serious lack of resources. Inset needs are not systematically identified and subject-specific Inset has not been provided. Some collaboration between IT and geography has enabled GCSE candidates to engage in sound data interpretation at GCSE, but there is no regular IT provision. Some fieldwork has been introduced for KS3 pupils, but these developments need to be planned as part of the course.

The SMT needs to take action to address the many serious weaknesses in this subject.

Modern languages

Bengali

117 Standards in Bengali are sound in KS3 and good in KS4. In 1994 GCSE results were above the national average with 100% (A-F) passes and approximately 67% achieving A - C. In 1995 GCSE results were slightly below the national average with approximately 58% achieving A-C and 100% passes (A-F).

118 In KS3 the majority achieve national expectations. Pupils have developed reading and writing skills as required by the National Curriculum. Their listening skills are appropriately developed but some are not yet competent in spoken Standard Bengali. In the main, their progress in the transition from Sylheti to the Standard variety is sound. In KS4 most pupils achieve national expectations and many beyond. They are confident in using Standard Bengali in speaking and listening and their skills in reading and writing are good in relation to GCSE requirements. The majority read with accuracy and some fluently. Most are able to write in well formed script. In both key stages pupils achieve appropriately for their abilities and competence in Bengali. Pupils speak Sylheti, a dialect of Bengali, and their listening and speaking are of a higher order in National Curriculum terms. However, pupils have to acquire reading and writing skills, so that their achievement at GCSE represents added value.

119 The quality of learning is sound with some good features. In both key stages pupils are willing to learn Bengali and use it for real purposes. In most lessons pupils are generally able to work without close supervision and respond well to the tasks set but their motivation varies according to the quality of teaching. They are able to work well in groups when tasks require collaboration. In both key stages the opportunity to take an active part in the lesson and to become an independent learner is restricted by the type of tasks offered to pupils. Shortcomings in learning include lack of opportunity to work independently of the teacher, to practise or consolidate new language and lack of confidence in speaking.

120 The quality of teaching was sound, and sometimes good, in half of the lessons observed. Teachers have command of their subject, plan lessons and use the target language for most aspects. Teachers use it consistently with good models of pronunciation and accuracy in language usage but there is not enough insistence on pupils using the target language in speaking.

121 Good teaching is characterised by clear objectives, which are conveyed to pupils, high expectations, and the provision of an organised sequence of purposeful activities offering variety and opportunities to progress. Shortcomings include a lack of clear exposition and limited activities, little opportunity for independent learning and restricted use of information technology. Pupils' work is regularly assessed, but the results of assessment do not sufficiently inform teachers' planning.

122 Accommodation for Bengali is good with subject specific displays. The quality and quantity of available books and dictionaries are adequate for GCSE Bengali but not for delivering the National Curriculum. Bengali is well managed with appropriate schemes of work referenced to the National Curriculum.

Teachers need to give pupils greater confidence in speaking Bengali and develop pupils' independent learning skills.

French

123 Overall standards of achievement in modern foreign languages are sound. In KS3 the majority of pupils reach age-referenced expectations in French. In Attainment Target 1, Listening, pupils can follow instructions and understand short and longer passages of spoken language. In Attainment Target 2, Speaking, pupils can respond appropriately to what they see and hear and take part in structured tasks with confidence. By YR 9 pupils are beginning to use the target language spontaneously to express and justify opinions and share a joke. In Attainment Target 3, Reading, pupils show understanding of short texts related to the lesson content, but achievement is underdeveloped in relation to independent reading. In Attainment Target 4, Writing, pupils can note down and create statements about the lessons topics and generally make themselves understood in a range of familiar topics. In KS4 achievement is sound overall in all four key skills. Levels of accuracy and fluency in both speaking and writing are variable but some pupils are able to express themselves with reasonable fluency in speech and writing. In both key stages pupils generally achieve appropriately for their abilities.

124 Performance in GCSE reflects the full range of grades from A to G. The entry numbers are too small for valid statistical comparisons to be made with national averages.

125 The quality of learning is rarely less than sound and is often good in both key stages. Pupils are confident in using the language and have ample opportunities to explore language and increase their understanding of language patterns, structures and forms. Progress is made in knowledge and understanding in the majority of lessons. Pupils can infer meaning and are willing to refine their knowledge by active and spontaneous use of the target language. They generally work effectively in pairs and small groups, although on occasion too much chattering impedes the pace of learning. Pupils normally have a good facility for language learning and enjoy their lessons. Attitudes are usually very positive.

126 The quality of teaching is variable but is only rarely less than sound and often displays features of good practice, particularly in relation to strategies which build on pupils' ideas and promote the use of the target language. There is a good range of activities provided, including songs, poems and surveys which motivate pupils and offer them opportunities to use and extend their knowledge of language creatively. Lessons are normally well planned, with clear objectives. Pace is brisk and expectations are usually appropriately high. Work is generally well matched to the age, interests and abilities of pupils. Where there are shortcomings, these relate to lapses in the use of the target language, less effective use of resources, relaxed pace and lower expectations. Overall there are many strengths in the teaching which can be developed more systematically, for example, in planning for the incremental progression in pupil use of the target language to manage their learning.

127 Existing resources are generally effectively used but there needs to be further development of visual resources, including the use of the overhead projector. There is a shortage of text books and reading materials, which restricts achievement. Currently information technology is underused and underresourced in the faculty.

128 Although current provision fully satisfies statutory requirements, there is a need to rationalise the curriculum offer for modern foreign languages. The YR 7 programme is expensive in both resources and group size. Uptake of French is low in KS4. This leads to small uneconomical groups. Time allocation to first and second foreign languages is short and does limit coverage of the programmes of study.

129 There has been much progress made in forging policy and practice across the faculty. Arrangements for assessment and recording of progress are thorough and are playing an important role in developing common approaches across the languages taught. The faculty is well led and administered. The faculty makes very valuable contributions to community links and primary liaison.

Ways of promoting French at KS4 need to be sought.

Art

130 Overall, this is a sound department, with some strengths and some inconsistencies. The GCSE examination results in 1995 were just above the national average. The number of pupils taking the subject has increased steadily in recent years, with the percentage of pupils gaining the higher grades remaining consistently high. The departmental development plan includes an objective to improve the examination results further.

131 Achievement of pupils currently involved in GCSE work is variable, with notable improvement in the performance of those in YR 11 as they respond to the imperatives of the final phase of the examination course. These pupils are generally able to undertake research satisfactorily, and many have sufficient technical and expressive skills to produce work worthy of a grade C or above. However, for many pupils, these skills emerge late in the key stage and there needs to be more emphasis on the development of learning skills earlier in both key stages.

132 Achievement in lessons is variable; it is broadly in line with age related expectations, although there is underachievement in both key stages for a significant minority of pupils. When their capabilities are taken into account achievement is generally better but remains variable. Often pupils from the same year group or within a key stage demonstrate a wide variation in skills, knowledge and understanding. From evidence of current work, folders, work books, displays, and discussion with pupils it can be seen that there are pockets of high achievement against pupils' capabilities. For example, some KS3 pupils can record well from direct observation and produce good drawings which show sensitivity. In some classes pupils are able to develop their knowledge of the elements, and work creatively and imaginatively, particularly in printmaking where they generally have a secure grasp of the processes. However, there is also evidence to show that pupils in some classes produce work which is technically poor. Often it lacks expression and imagination as they rely too heavily on secondary source material. In these cases, the use of this material is not well managed by teachers and sometimes results in pupils' achievement being well below the level expected for their age and capability.

133 Provision at KS3 needs rationalisation. Although the planning of particular units of work is sound there is not a systematic approach to the delivery of the skills and processes required by the National Curriculum Programmes of Study. As a consequence continuity and progression are not secure across the key stage, and by the time pupils reach YR 9 the achievement of many is depressed. The situation is exacerbated by the effect of previous timetable arrangements which reduced the experience of the current YR 9 pupils. In addition, staffing changes, including the arrangements for mentoring students on teaching practice, although well managed, cause disruption to pupils' progress.

134 Pupils' learning and the quality of teaching are also variable. In both respects lessons are mostly sound, with good features in evidence in a few cases. Pupils generally show enjoyment and satisfaction with their work although they rarely show deep involvement until they reach KS4. They are generally attentive but are often slow to settle; some work at a slow pace and some of their work is incomplete. They are able to select tools and materials appropriately and are not unduly dependent on the teacher. Classroom routines are usually understood and pupils use them effectively. In the best cases they are able to describe the processes and discuss the likely outcomes, but too often they are unable to say how their work might be improved and refined. Some pupils work diligently and at a good pace, and some can use information gained from previous lessons to progress current work.

135 Where learning is less successful pupils are very casual about the process; they pay little attention to detail and accept low quality work. Overall, they are insufficiently secure in knowing how to use information to develop their ideas in a range of ways or by using a range of media. They do not always recognise the need to research, and preparatory work is weak, particularly at KS3. Across both key stages, their understanding of art, gained from historical and critical studies, is weak, and too few pupils are able to make connections between their work and the work of artists. Their knowledge and use of technical language is also generally poor.

136 The best teaching includes clear expositions and the use of appropriate strategies to help pupils

plan and develop their work. Interventions are focused on the development of ideas and techniques. In these cases, teachers use accurate assessments of pupils' capabilities to help them make progress. However, where lessons have shortcomings, the teacher places too great an emphasis on the activities and too little on the intended learning outcomes, and sometimes work is insufficiently challenging.

137The head of department is the only full-time teacher and virtually all areas of development require his personal involvement. Day to day management is sound with appropriate targets set for future development. A very good system is in place which keeps a visual record of pupils' work on computer. This is used effectively for assessment purposes, it celebrates achievement but also enables pupils and teachers to identify progress. Good progress has been made in other areas of assessment with further work needed to ensure that pupils can make better use of the process. Pupils' use of information technology is increasing, with some able to recognise the potential for developing their work. The provision of homework and the use of sketchbooks need attention so that pupils are better able to research and extend their ideas.

Regular monitoring of classroom practice is needed to eliminate differences in practice and resultant achievement.

Drama

138Drama is a popular subject within the school, frequently leading to large numbers of pupils being entered for public examinations. Standards achieved at G.C.S.E., however, fall significantly below local and national averages, and there is evidence of under-achievement in relation to pupils' ability. A contributory factor to disappointing examination results is that many pupils have not had continuous study of the subject throughout KS3. Inadequacies in curriculum planning and inconsistencies in the quality of teaching have also put a ceiling on achievement. There is particular scope for pupils to develop their work with dramatic text, increase their repertoire of dramatic skills, and work to reduce stereotypical interpretation of ideas.

139The quality of learning is generally sound, although immaturity and unsatisfactory listening skills impede learning in some YR 7 classes, and conversely active, enthusiastic and autonomous learning behaviour enhances learning in a couple of YR 9 and 10 classes. Most pupils form effective working relationships, cope well with their own self-consciousness, and are keen to respond creatively to the challenge teachers provide. Unfortunately, the quality of teaching, although frequently sound, fails to capitalise on these favourable circumstances to the full. Teachers are generally experienced and have few difficulties with class management, but all appear insecure in some aspects of their subject knowledge. This leads to relatively passive, discursive lessons delivered in an instructional and pedestrian teaching style, with teachers frequently over-reliant on notes. The body of knowledge of drama as an art form is not well taught and staff appear limited in their repertoire of drama teaching strategies. Initiatives currently underway in year 10 G.C.S.E. classes that profile the more physical and stylised aspects of performance are having a positive impact on pupil progress.

140The quality of schemes of work are variable and the majority need revision. One scheme of work, for example, established to raise issues relating to race, was seen to reinforce racial stereotyping. It is unclear how pupils will cumulatively acquire the knowledge, skills and understanding about theatre they need from the plans currently in place. The department has a systematic approach to the regular assessment of pupil progress, including imaginative use of pupil self-assessment. This is particularly effective at helping pupils set targets for improvement at KS3. However, the department would benefit from a clearer shared vision against which to measure its planning decisions. Current assessment criteria which are overtly performance based assess skills, knowledge and understanding that are not securely enshrined in the planned curriculum. All members of the department would benefit from moderation of their judgements to ensure there is a corporate view of what good written and practical work in drama looks like.

141The lack of opportunity for professional development in drama teaching methodology for all staff delivering this subject is a serious issue. There is a need for all teaching team members to broaden their subject-specific understanding and thus raise their confidence. In turn, this might impact on the

department's choice and use of resources which is currently limited. There is a need to augment the range of resources available and link these to particular differentiated schemes of work, encouraging pupil autonomy in resource use. The three drama rooms are barely adequate in size for the size of classes and age of pupils. This has a particular impact on the standards that can be achieved in the physical aspects of theatre. A purpose-adapted space is planned in a later phase of building development. It will be important at this point to upgrade lighting equipment to allow for more effective teaching of the technical aspects of the subject in due course.

Teachers need to update their subject knowledge and revise schemes of work as a result.

Music

142Standards of achievement in relation to national norms are below average at KS3 and average or better for most pupils at KS4. At KS3, achievement is weakest in YR 8 as a result of a gap in provision the previous year. This was caused by the school's decision to expand GCSE teaching in music without increasing staffing.

143At KS3, the pattern of attainment is variable in all classes. In most classes a minority of pupils extend practical and listening skills at a satisfactory rate, and are working in line with or close to national norms. The majority have a weaker skill base in one or both areas. The reasons for this are complex, but relate principally to learning, teaching and resourcing. At KS4, the small group of thirteen pupils following the GCSE option have, in the main, acquired standards in composing which are higher than average, and very good in some cases. Standards in performing are a little lower, but still in line with national averages. Most pupils are able to discuss their work intelligently, and use appropriate technical language.

144Standards in relation to ability are stronger overall at both key stages. At KS3, just under half of the lessons observed were satisfactory, and the remainder unsatisfactory particularly in YR 9, but in each group, some pupils were achieving well. These individuals can perform short melodies or parts of them, accurately, with good fluency, and discuss outcomes with understanding. Lower achievement is characterised by patchy participation and repetitive rehearsing. Often pupils do not respond spontaneously to technical errors; do not appraise critically, and, therefore, have difficulties developing the ability to perform suitable material accurately. At KS4, standards in relation to ability are satisfactory or good. Pupils can refine their work independently and compose extended pieces using melodic and rhythmic material in developmental combinations. Pupils discuss their work intelligently and creatively, demonstrating good appraising skills.

145The quality of learning at KS3 was satisfactory in just under half of the lessons viewed, and weaker in the remainder, although in all classes some pupils were learning well. These pupils use personal rehearsal time well to improve their co-ordination and reading skills and work independently, using theoretical knowledge to inform and improve outcomes. They are often also keen to participate in teacher - led discussions. Unsatisfactory work is characterised by lack of participation in whole class work, coupled with erratic use of personal rehearsal time. These pupils tend to be uncertain, aurally, of

intended outcomes, and often work with little discrimination. As a result, they do not find ways of correcting errors, and waste time when unsupervised. Use of variable fingerings (on keyboards) also prevents some pupils from establishing patterns of co-ordination upon which they can rely. These pupils, do not, however, disrupt others, and always sit quietly during activities which are teacher-led.

146At KS4 learning is good. Pupils work co-operatively and constructively in groups or pairs and can make a wide range of independent decisions, especially when composing. Their behaviour is mature. They use IT effectively to develop and consolidate composition work, much of which is imaginative. These pupils take a pride in their work, and the atmosphere in classes is positive.

147Teaching is satisfactory or better at KS4. At KS3 outcomes were more variable, with just over half the lessons observed satisfactory, and the remainder unsatisfactory. At KS4, pupils are effectively grouped by ability for rehearsals, and this has a clear impact upon standards. The guidance for use of IT in composing is good, and well targeted to need. Pupils explore selected aspects of software to good effect. At KS3, certain aspects of teaching are sound; these include effective pupil groupings based on need and lesson content, benefiting both the more and the less able; clear questioning during expositions; appropriate use of technical language; differentiation for the more able. However, some aspects need review, including planning activities for lessons which are broadly related but not directly cumulative; a tendency to divorce theory from practice; copying from the board; insufficient targeted support for practical work - especially at the transition from teacher-led work to group work; a tendency to focus upon pitch recognition when teaching music reading at the expense of activities necessary to convert recognition into expressive music making. Pupils' work is regularly assessed in performing and composing, and systems of peer/self assessment are beginning to be introduced informally during lessons and have a positive impact upon motivation. Assessment also influences groupings of pupils when this is related to ability. The department needs to work now upon extending and diversifying the assessment criteria according to topic and learning objectives, and updating annual reports to take more account of progression across KS3. Listening and appraising also need to be assessed.

148The planned curriculum for KS3 is quite well balanced in performing and composing (although if keyboards are to remain the principal source of access, some work on fingering and hand co-ordination might be woven into practical contexts) but opportunities for listening and appraising are too narrow and do not comply with the detail of the orders. The department has a small but increasing stock of sound recordings to support this aspect of the curriculum, and some compilations have been made for GCSE pupils. However, the acquisition of these resources has been far too slow.

149Departmental capitation is low. Sharing of keyboards is a matter of concern. There are insufficient transformers. Persistent faults in software during the academic year 1994-5 did not prompt an effective back-up strategy to support pupils in the event of coursework being lost. Residual faults are still in evidence, and should be investigated as a matter of priority.

150Management of instrumental teaching is conscientious. Provision has been effectively targeted, and

provides good opportunities for pupils in YR 7 to continue studies started at primary level, and GCSE pupils to enhance their keyboard skills. Some YR 7 pupils have also worked with a choral amateur this year, which has enriched their curriculum. The department offers regular opportunities for pupils of all ages to use equipment outside the curriculum, which has had clear benefits for GCSE pupils.

The SMT needs to work with the head of department to improve attainment at KS3.

Physical education

151The school has a well earned reputation for achieving very high standards in hockey. Over the years many pupils have competed successfully at the highest level and some have achieved representative honours. Pupils benefit from the head of department's strong commitment and willingness to devote a great deal of time after school and at weekends. High standards extend well beyond those who represent the school. Some outstanding teaching helps pupils of all abilities develop very good technical and tactical skills, and clear understanding and knowledge about the game. They demonstrate accuracy and consistency and have a range of strategies to outwit an opponent. Their knowledge about rules and conventions of the game is well developed. They practise enthusiastically and are proud of their success.

152Across a range of other activities required by the National Curriculum, achievement for the majority of pupils is broadly in line with national expectations. In a small minority of cases, pupils are underachieving for their age because some basic skills are not secure, or, in the case of KS4 pupils, the higher order skills in some games are not sufficiently developed. In some activities pupils achieve very well when their capabilities are taken into account; in gymnastics many pupils show natural agility, and although very few are able to demonstrate quality actions through extension and body line, they are steadily learning to channel their energies into formal gymnastic movements, involving flight, rotation and inversion. In health related fitness activities, pupils are beginning to understand the effects of exercise on the body, as well as some key physiological principles. Achievement in basketball, table tennis and in netball is more variable although is generally sound. Where there is underachievement it is when pupils are unable to apply the skills satisfactorily in a competitive situation.

153In lessons, pupils' attitude is usually good or very good. They are keen, enthusiastic, often self-motivated, prepared to start work quickly and able to practise independently once the teacher has given instructions or further advice. They generally listen attentively and are often keen to provide answers to questions, demonstrating confidence even when they are unsure of the answer. In the best cases, good progress is made because they can collaborate and build on one another's ideas. They work productively with clear understanding of how to improve performance. Some are able to make analytical and evaluative comments. In some cases, particularly in hockey, where pupils are familiar with the teachers' practice routines, they are able to interpret instructions effectively. On the rare occasions that pupils do not make sufficient progress it is when they do not collaborate successfully and they lose concentration.

154The good quality learning is closely linked to good, and sometimes very skilful teaching. The three

members of the department have a wide range of experience and expertise, between them they have good subject knowledge and where it is insecure they help one another. In most lessons their subject knowledge is translated into effective methodology which ensures sufficient physical and intellectual challenge. The collaborative approach and in some cases the joint planning contribute to the promotion of good learning. Good relationships exist, teachers' expectations are appropriately high, and in most cases their knowledge of pupils' capabilities informs their decisions about the nature of the learning activities and the strategies for keeping the more challenging pupils engaged. Teachers' questioning is often of good quality, with pupils being required to speculate, predict and make judgements. Where questioning is less successful the first response is accepted and too few pupils are sampled to monitor their understanding. Interventions are timely and focused, based on good analysis of movement although occasionally the whole group is addressed with a point which is only relevant to a small number or an individual. Usually sufficient time is allowed for pupils to practise and refine their work, and target setting is used effectively in some lessons to help pupils bring about improvement. The best lessons, include a clear expectation that pupils should plan, perform and evaluate, in accordance with the requirement of the Attainment Target. This is often done well but is not consistently applied and it should, therefore, become a feature of all lessons across the whole department. On the rare occasions that shortcomings occur, it is because skills are introduced without sufficient regard for pupils' ability and understanding. Demonstrations are given but there is insufficient follow up to ensure pupils' success, and practice activities are not reinforced within the context of a game.

155The number and nature of the activities meet the requirements of the National Curriculum and although there are slight differences in the provision for boys and the recent intake of girls, the programme has been carefully considered. The KS3 units of work are well presented, providing teachers with good guidance on intended learning outcomes and assessment criteria. Further work is needed to develop the planning and delivery of the KS4 programme. An assessment and recording system is developing; some excellent practice already exists with pupils' progress recorded systematically during a unit of work. In some lessons there is clear evidence of assessment being used to determine content and delivery, and to plan for the range of abilities. A significant feature of this department is the overall achievement of pupils of all physical and intellectual abilities. Extra-curricular provision is expanding to accommodate the intake of girls; although boys and girls are taught separately in lessons, they work well together in lunch time and after school activities.

156The head of department is sharply focused on teaching and learning. He places less emphasis on management matters although the handbook is very impressive and is an effective management tool.

157The department works in extremely unfavourable conditions. The gymnasiums are in a state of disrepair and have a heating system which is totally inadequate. The outside areas are used effectively but are barely adequate for the delivery of the planned curriculum. Overall, the conditions adversely affect the quality of learning, but pupils do remarkably well under the circumstances.

The good practice seen needs to be observed more widely and disseminated.

Religious education

158 There is underachievement in religious education although standards are much better when pupils' abilities are taken into consideration. It is the lack of time for religious education in KS4, along with weaknesses in pupils' ability to write fluently and confidently about religion and concepts which are depressing standards. Most achievement is sound, particularly in KS3 when pupils' ability and language fluency are considered. Some pupils can explain terms and give reasons for their opinions; others show understanding of concepts such as worships and can compare elements of Christianity and Islam. In written work some show understanding of the importance of religious practices to individuals and communities and can explore meaning and significance, although many need help with drafting and redrafting of written work to communicate their ideas adequately.

159 Most pupils are interested in religious education, especially in KS3 and are well motivated. Some YR 7 pupils have made evident progress in their understanding of places of worship. Others in YR 8 had researched different aspects of Judaism, although their ability to write in their own words was problematic. In YR 9 exploration of the concept of good and evil had produced a range of responses, some of which illustrated well pupils' understanding of the difference between religious and non religious approaches. GCSE standards are more variable; whilst description is sound comparative analysis is less good.

160 The quality of learning is sound in almost all lessons. Pupils are tolerant and show genuine interest in different religions. Most are keen to write about their own religious experiences and usually do this well, including much detail. Weaknesses in literacy inhibits the progress of some pupils and in GCSE groups it is difficult to consolidate learning in the curriculum time allowed.

161 The quality of teaching was sound to good in the majority of lessons . These are well managed and secure subject knowledge coupled with a ability to make topics relevant to pupils' background and experiences is leading to some worthwhile outcomes. Some pupils have responded well to teaching and write at length on religious topics. Teaching encourages pupils to respond positively to religious ideas and offers them an opportunity to affirm their own religious belief and practices. Teaching contributes effectively to the realisation of the school aim by encouraging mutual respect and celebration of cultural differences. The weaknesses of teaching in a minority of lessons occurred when aims were imprecise and teaching lacked the skill to make the subject relevant to pupils' lives and experiences.

162 Religious education is part of the humanities faculty but operates largely as a single person department. There is a clear understanding of the requirements for KS4 and resources are effectively managed. While there is an absence of modified materials and documented approaches to support the needs of second language learners the teaching of religious education is successful in promoting language development. In a number of lesson pupils receive good advice about reading aloud with meaning, public speaking and explaining and using religious terms accurately. Marking is also conscientiously carried out and good advice given on the correct use of English as well as the religious content.

More time in KS4 is needed

Schemes of work require further development.

7. Factors contributing to these findings

The quality of teaching

163The quality of teaching was sound or better in 70% of the lessons observed, including a quarter in which it was good or very good. There was little difference between the key stages, although it was significantly better in YRs 8 and 11. There was marked variation between subjects. The highest quality teaching was found in science, languages and physical education. Very little poor teaching was seen overall although significant weaknesses were noted in geography and design technology.

164Some good teaching was found in most subjects and this was characterised by clear learning objectives, high expectations, good pace, rigour and sound subject knowledge. There were well planned opportunities to practise skills and the use of equipment was well managed. In such lessons, pupils' excitement was palpable. In religious education and modern foreign languages teachers were able to draw effectively upon pupils' background experiences and use these to enhance learning. In the better teaching in mathematics, teachers questioned both individuals and the whole class well and encouraged pupils to find alternative solutions and extend their work. In the best lessons in English a sense of fun and enjoyment existed and pupils were actively involved. Overall, when learning support was well organised and the teachers had expertise in the subject, achievement was higher, but there is a confusion between working with pupils with special needs, those with limited English and a desire on the part of the support teachers to help out generally. This needs to be rectified.

165Most teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour, but sometimes too low ones of their work and are not always skilled in getting them to work sufficiently fast. In a few classrooms, the overly simple work, coupled with poor classroom management, led to unacceptable behaviour. Shortcomings in teaching were shown in lessons which lacked purpose; had unclear aims and where the pupils lost interest because of poor stimulus material or a limited challenge in the tasks set or a narrow range of teaching strategies. In some lessons questioning was not matched to pupils' needs and tended to produce confusion or overly simple responses. Standards are helped when teachers mark thoroughly and diagnostically, but not when over- generous praise is given for mediocre work.

Key points

- Weaknesses in teaching in geography and design technology need to be addressed by senior managers.

Support teaching in class needs to improve in many cases and be more appropriately focussed.

Assessment recording and reporting

166There is a recently written policy which acknowledges a range of different systems as long as they are consistent within faculties. Pupils and their parents would benefit from a simpler whole school approach. Many faculties have sound policies on assessment, recording and reporting for instance

English, mathematics, science, physical education and art, which indicate that regular assessments are made. Criteria used are not always well focused and do not always relate to specific elements of planned learning, and pupils do not know what they have to do to achieve higher marks or grades except in general terms. Teachers' plans do not indicate that they have been amended following assessments of particular groups of pupils and, thus, their identified needs are not being met.

167 There is a marking policy but this is not always consistently followed. Where teachers write comments on the work, many pupils find this helpful, but not all can read or understand them. Some faculties, for instance, science, mathematics and design and technology, write comments and give a clear indication of the level at which pupils are working which helps them to understand their strengths and weaknesses. Comments from some teachers are not sufficiently rigorous to encourage pupils to evaluate their work, and pupils need, and a number said they would like, more direct information and help from teachers to enable them to improve. The quality of marking is sometimes better for more able pupils.

168 Many subjects are beginning to use self-assessment, for instance science, art, drama, English, design and technology and information technology, but the process is not yet rigorous enough. The value of target setting is accepted, but pupils are not sufficiently involved in identifying them.

169 Most departments are developing sound systems for recording achievement, usually based on attainment and effort. Valuable records are kept in art where work is scanned and logged with a picture of the pupil. In some teachers' records there is insufficient data to provide a firm basis for the awarding of marks. Profiles of basic information are created from primary school records, but there is little evidence that these are used to better meet pupils' learning needs, indeed, they are too rudimentary for this purpose. Some subject areas, such as science and design and technology are beginning to compare the marks awarded for particular pieces of work by different teachers and this has been useful in raising expectations, particularly of teachers who are new to the school.

170 The school meets statutory requirements to report to parents on their children's National Curriculum subject assessment at the end of KS 3, and reports on all years are issued annually. Subject reports outline the course of work which has been covered, but the comments made by teachers often relate more to their attitudes and behaviour than the knowledge, skills and understanding that pupils have gained. Some subjects use a check list which may make understanding of important aspects of individual pupils' progress less accessible for some parents. On many reports there is space for targets. These are too general to be useful to pupils and are not discussed and shared in a way which enables them or their teachers to use them effectively to improve learning. Many pupils are unaware that they have been set targets. Some pupils are given similar targets from year to year indicating little progress. Again a common system of reporting would facilitate pupil and parental understanding.

171 During those terms when a report is not issued, the school gives brief progress reviews on attainment in academic, personal and social development, as well as attendance. This is a potentially valuable exercise. The system is not yet fully used by form tutors and heads of year. It is not clear

what support is available from the school for those pupils who have been identified, or for those who request further help with their work.

172Some teachers are unaware of the particular learning needs of stated pupils and those who lack proficiency in English; at other times learning and behavioural needs are confused even by teachers supporting pupils with statements. Lack of information about new pupils was cited by teachers as especially problematic. Without this information and guidance about how to meet the pupils' needs, many teachers and parents are unable to provide appropriate support. Reports do not make clear when a pupil is receiving extra help with English as a second language, what progress has been made, and teachers' records on targeted pupils are not all sufficiently detailed to generate this information.

173It is the school's policy to enter all pupils for GCSE but the substantial drop-out rate significantly reduces the number entered from the initial September YR 11 roll. Predicted grades are generally given to YR 10 and 11 pupils but the amount of support provided for them to improve their grades is sometimes insufficient to make any real impact. Some pupils make good use of local libraries to help improve their work. Examination results are analysed on the basis of previous results and predicted scores, but not by ability or length of time in UK education. Many pupils have unrealistic career ambitions because of the lack of useful knowledge of their own strengths and weaknesses and it is imperative that they are given clear and unambiguous information. The school is generating a great deal of useful information but systems are not yet in place to use this effectively.

Key points

The school should:

develop systems to give better feedback to pupils about their strengths and weaknesses.

provide firmer structures for helping pupils improve their work.

devise strategies for monitoring that the systems and structures are effective.

The Curriculum

Quality and range

174The school produced a draft curriculum statement in March 1996. Discussion is, thus, at an early stage and the policy has yet to be endorsed by governors. Governors have yet to exercise their responsibilities in terms of the curriculum, such as the use of the 20% of freed time and this would provide a useful starting point for the recently formed sub-committee.

175The draft policy reiterates the school aims, demonstrated in the badge, which symbolically links breadth of educational experience, a friendly secure environment, and preparation for the world of work with an emphasis on earning a living when pupils leave school. This latter aim may need refinement in a context where almost 90% leave school to go to college and only 4% actually seek employment. There are no objectives to facilitate delivery of these aims nor an evaluation of their success.

176The philosophy is enacted through a common curriculum at KS3 taught to mixed ability tutor groups. The rationale for such grouping is not made explicit nor is guidance available on teaching groups with widely divergent language and learning needs.

177The current KS3 programme meets the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum but the planned move to a 30 period week from September 1996 gives too little time to music and religious education. The proposed emphasis on science and technology needs to be made explicit. The language awareness programme in YR 7, too, is expensive and not all pupils are clear that German and Spanish will not be continued into YR 8. The school has already identified the heavy bonus used in YR 8 and plans to reduce the four tutor groups to three. Throughout this key stage the allocation to technology, including information technology, is generous, and to the arts and religious education low. The girls are taught in separate groups; it is questionable whether their separation, especially as they enter KS4, will be financially viable.

178At KS4 there is a largely common curriculum which meets statutory requirements. However, a clearer explicit rationale would be helpful to enable pupils and their parents to understand the school's curriculum emphasis on science and technology rather than the creative and performing arts. The school has received funding for a GNVQ course in information technology. The aim is for one quarter of the year group to be taking such a course by 1997; the school needs to ensure that prior planning and careful selection of pupils make this an appropriate course of study. The new GCSE syllabuses offer tiered papers in some subjects; the wide practice of mixed ability teaching may be difficult in this context. The draft curriculum statement supports mixed ability teaching and indicates that the necessary differentiation will come through the faculties. There is, however, already some setting in science and clustering by ability in mathematics. Differentiation is not well addressed in most subjects and needs significant work.

179 Pupils said, quite accurately, that they had access to too few books in class and in the school library to enable them to research topics adequately. At the time of the inspection, for example, YR 11 boys had fewer than 40 books on loan from the library. Much of the S11 help is given to KS4 but there is limited evidence of time being used to adapt materials or prepare new ones to meet the wide range of language needs. Tapes, videos and other visual material are not widely used.

180 The curriculum statement refers to close monitoring of progress by subject teachers; this is carried out too generally at present with a reluctance to issue marks or grades and many pupils unsure how to improve their work as a consequence. It also refers to the need for regular homework, something which the pupils interviewed indicated they were quite happy to complete. However, it is set irregularly in most subjects. The sound policy on homework now needs to be implemented and monitored.

181 All departments have been required to produce a Handbook to an agreed format. Not all have followed the helpful suggestions and most would benefit from clearer guidance on teaching methodology. It was surprising to read in January 1996 of the need for S11 and mainstream staff to plan jointly; this is a fundamental aspect of the provision. Extra-curricular activities add to the curriculum. These include sports and dance clubs as well as homework and revision classes. Cultural enhancement is less apparent. Work experience is offered to YR 10 pupils who enjoy it and write about it in a lively way as part of their English course work.

Key points

The school aims needs to be revisited, refined with objectives determined to secure delivery

The curriculum philosophy needs to be made explicit to pupils and their parents in the form of written guidance with a governors' statement on the use of the freed 20% of time at KS3.

A rationale for teaching mixed ability classes needs to be prepared with guidance on good practice.

The time allocation for arts subjects and religious education needs to be reconsidered

Marking needs to give pupils a clearer idea of their standards and how to improve their work

The use of S11 staff in accessing the curriculum for pupils needs to be re-examined and made more effective

Equality of opportunity

182 There is a draft equal opportunities policy which mentions race, ethnic origin, sex, age, disability, religion, language, and sexual orientation, but the strategies suggested only refer to cultural aspects. Responsibility for implementing, monitoring and evaluating the policy is devolved to the Heads of Faculty, but none acknowledged that they had done so. Equal opportunities incidents are

regarded seriously; reported as part of the referral system, and sanctions issued. Although the school has begun to find ways of measuring the extent of pupil progress at the end of KS4, there is no monitoring of equal opportunities in relation to the school's policy or aims.

183 There is a draft Language Policy which supports the equal opportunities policy by valuing all languages and dialects, encouraging students to recover or develop and maintain their heritage language. It intends to make focused provision to meet individual needs, including provision for bilingual beginners joining the school as late arrivals who might have little previous experience of formal education. More pupils are supported in KS4 than in KS3 and this situation should be reconsidered. Support via withdrawal for ESL pupils in KS4 occurs when double science is timetabled. This assumes that such pupils are unable to cope with double science, and prevents them from gaining a potentially useful qualification.

184 Many pupils speak Sylheti spontaneously with their peers, and are rarely challenged by teachers or asked to work specifically in English although S11 guidance in the school refers to the need for "an English speaking environment". Where this occurs, as in science, achievement is enhanced especially if support is given by a subject specialist. More attention needs to be paid to the acquisition of spoken and written standard English.

185 The lack of a comprehensive record keeping system for pupils learning to speak English as a second language (ESL) prevents the school from providing focused provision. Teachers' records show that targets are not generally well focused either for Section 11 teachers, or for subject teachers, or for the pupils. Some classes have a very high proportion of pupils with language needs, but make variable progress depending on the quality of support received by the S11 teacher which is often inadequate. Collaboration between the subject teacher and the support staff is also variable although the need for this is emphasised in the Handbook. There is some good practice in terms of liaison between ESL teachers and subject teachers, particularly when the support teacher has subject expertise. The lack of specially designed resources or adapted materials across the curriculum inhibits progress. There is no explicit rationale for support in class or by withdrawal; the latter is not always well timed. The confusion of some S11 teachers about their role is serious as they support pupils with SEN and any others who request help. Both are inappropriate and a misuse of funding. Record keeping by S11 teachers has improved but not all target named individuals sufficiently precisely. Records also show a gradual improvement in fluency levels but in KS4 one third remain at stage 1 and 2; this is very worrying.

186 Girls have been admitted to the school for the first time this year and have been sensitively and effectively integrated. They are well supported by the female deputy and are confident and lively both in and out of class. A good range of activities is provided for them, including dance where girls from a range of cultures are learning about Indian dance. Boys also benefit from learning dance and netball. The range of activities and materials used in design technology is narrow and does not acknowledge those which may be more familiar to girls, such as food and textiles, owing to lack of accommodation. Boys demonstrate some sexist attitudes but these are more covert.

Key points

The progress of ESL pupils needs to be monitored more carefully with timed intervention especially for those 'stuck' at stage 3 fluency;

The practice of withdrawing pupils from double science should be reconsidered;

The range of experiences in design and technology should be extended.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs

187 Responsibility for special educational needs lies in the faculty of Learning Support, which includes English as a second language. There is one special needs teacher who supports the Head of Faculty in the identification and assessment of pupils with special needs and who then makes provision for them. There is no clear distinction between language and learning needs. Most pupils are said to have both. No group screening or individual assessment standardised tests are given on entry. Currently information comes from a variety of sources and lacks consistency. The system of internal referral by subject teachers is understood but not used by all staff.

188 146 pupils are identified as being at stages 1 or above on the special needs register. Of these, 9 pupils have full statements and 6 are undergoing full assessment. The register is produced for all teachers but not all teachers keep copies to hand, some feeling the responsibility lies with the SEN staff. The register needs to be expanded to include categories other than emotional and behavioural and learning difficulties. The specific nature of need should to be defined to match details in pupils' individual files which show sensory impairment, language and communication disorder, dyslexia and medical conditions.

189 Individual Education Plans (IEPs) have been produced for some, but not yet all, pupils. Current IEPs are of good quality and pertinent to the needs of individuals. Not all staff are aware of targets or the specific needs of pupils and, therefore, are not addressing them satisfactorily. Pupils' files are inconsistent in format and need to be rationalised and based on each pupil's central record rather than dispersed.

190 The special needs policy meets the statutory requirements of the Code of Practice. There are no formal systems for monitoring the in - class delivery of the policy and no criteria for evaluating provision. Annual reviews are correctly undertaken. There is a named governor with responsibility for special needs.

191 Support is given in - class, or by means of withdrawal for individuals or groups. The quality of support is good. Much high quality differentiated material is provided across subject areas. The teacher's records provide on-going assessment of progress and note areas of concern. These vary in format but provide adequate information. Additionally, Section 11 staff support special needs in class. This is appropriate only if pupils have dual need. Visiting teachers from the LEA Support Service work with statemented pupils, on a sessional basis. Not all of these teachers, however, were present during the inspection. Where the opportunity for prior planning exists, the quality of support is enhanced and teachers work effectively as a team. A programme of meetings with visiting and school based staff has been devised by the newly appointed team leader for the service. These are to begin shortly.

192 A named person in each faculty with oversight of special needs

would help target the most needy pupils and provide suitably differentiated reference books and materials to aid curricular access. It would also ensure consistency across subjects. Science is the exception where this is occurring and is enhancing pupils' achievement

193 Library resources for special needs are poor and uninviting.

There is no system of colour coding to encourage use of books. The easy readers are kept on a separate shelf and not interspersed amongst other stock. Conversely, the reading room jointly used by the English and special needs departments is attractive and inviting. The reading club is a sound initiative.

194 It would be helpful for there to be a room which could be used as an office and teaching base for special educational needs. This would enable display to be used as an aid to learning as well as provide a secure environment for pupils and resources.

Management and administration

195 The school has indicated a need to reconsider its aims but has not yet done so. The aims include the desire to offer all pupils a broad educational experience, which it does, and to develop achievement, at which it is less successful, especially at KS3. The school is certainly a "friendly place" where pupils feel "secure" but the final aim centres inappropriately on the need to earn a living once pupils leave so that they can "take their place in society". Pupils all acknowledge the aims, encapsulated in the school badge and can explain the symbols.

196 The move to coeducation was prefaced by a stated set of values: "attendance, uniform, discipline, exams" when the quality of education might have headed this list. The plans for the integration of girls has been carefully planned and well implemented. The change of name was discussed fully with parents and pupils and the boys felt 'high school' would add status. Most pupils are happy with the changes in the school and its new uniform although some of the older boys regret the inclusion of girls.

197 The YR 7 intake is the largest in twenty years and has brought great hope to a school which has been seriously declining in popularity. The management challenge will be to maintain this momentum at a time of serious budgetary problems.

198 The development plan is an interesting one with immediate and long term targets. Many staff could not, however, recall these. Most targets are appropriate, but it is surprising that achievement does not feature more predominantly, especially in view of the poor SATs results. The GCSE targets are too modest with only 30% expected to achieve 5+ A*-C passes by 2000, and the 80% expected to gain 5+A*-G passes has already been exceeded, as have the numbers going on to college. Each target has a named person in charge. There are wide variations in the quality of the individual plans particularly in monitoring and use of performance indicators which are, in some cases, too bland. Financial costings are vague. Departments have prepared parallel plans to

match aspects of the whole school one and these, too, are variable with performance indicators proving the most elusive. In view of the school's serious financial difficulties, the development plan needs to be tightly costed.

199 The Head gives strong, calm, personal leadership and is a visible presence around the school. Changes in the team have helped galvanise change but regular and consistent monitoring of classroom practice and the quality of pupils' written work have yet to be implemented. Not all members of SMT have a clear role although a series of tasks has been allocated. They are very supportive of the Head and form a cohesive group.

200 Middle managers, too, are variable and although most have sound current curriculum knowledge this is not universal and where weaknesses exist, there has not been any recent professional development. Departments, especially the more effective ones, work well as teams and have development plans to guide their practice and regular minuted meetings to track progress. Most, but not all, have devoted time to a detailed consideration of the changes in the new National Curriculum. Lack of monitoring is a weakness in most departments, particularly of teaching and scrutiny of pupils' work. Challenging of poor practice is required in some cases. The APCs, too, have yet to take up the monitoring aspect of their new roles. Tutors do not yet all undertake academic oversight of pupils in their care.

201 Governors, although generally supportive of the school, are not yet taking up their legal responsibilities sufficiently vigorously. In recent months, energy has been expended on the coeducational issue and consideration of GM status and meetings have been difficult and unproductive. This is now past and governors need to address themselves with urgency to the pressing problems faced by the school.

202 The school has produced a wide range of new or revised policies and the majority have yet to move into practice. The Staff Manual is a very thorough and helpful document giving guidance on most aspects of school organisation and management, but not teaching methodology or the processes of consultation and decision making. The role of the senior management team could also be included together with details of the responsibilities of individual team members.

203 Other documentation includes the Prospectus which is accurate but omits some key details and appears rather dull. This contrasts with the lively and effective weekly Staff Bulletin. The Governors' Annual Reports are brief but generally informative with helpful headline summaries. Accurate information is not always presented, for example, pupils' scores in the SATs were not included but only the more favourable teacher assessment.

204 The Head favours open consultation and the seeking of consensus although this is not documented.

The Bulletin contains agendas and minutes of management meetings and these are clear and

straightforward and indicate open sharing of views, indeed, the IDP emphasises the need for “professional relationships based on openness and shared goals” and this is what is occurring. Meetings were viewed favourably by staff although not all were sure of the role of the staff meeting in the decision making process. The SMT meet three times a week in school time; some of these meetings could more profitably be held outside teaching time. The larger whole school meetings observed during the week were efficiently run with open debate apparent. Some of the faculty meetings were less secure and attendance of a senior manager would be helpful. The role of governors as the final arbiter in most decisions was not well understood.

205 Job descriptions have all been recently revised and are an essential prelude to appraisal. Not all have yet been agreed.

206 The school runs well on a day to day basis and administration is sound. The timetable is not, however, always accurate. The use of time in extended registration needs to be monitored, as for many, it is time wasted.

Key points

Reconsider the aims and produce performance indicators to track progress.

Enhance the IDP with tighter costings, clearer success criteria and some revision of targets.

Implement monitoring by SMT and middle manager of teaching and the quality of work, including homework.

Secure the implementation of the many new policies and monitor their effectiveness.

Reconsider the role and responsibilities of the SMT and ensure they operate their line management function more vigorously.

Resources and their management

Teaching and non-teaching staff

207 There is no policy to guide staffing although redundancies were avoided last year to preserve staff morale. The proportion of the budget spent on teachers is low although the per capita cost is very high indeed. Expenditure on support staff is high, in the top 25% in the country. Staffing costs have become very serious and the school is poised for major redundancies.

208 Three quarters of the staff are men although there are sufficient women in senior posts to act as role models for the girls, including a new deputy head paid for by the LEA in her first year. The age profile is very similar to the national pattern but there are rather more teachers in their early thirties and fewer in their early forties. One third of the staff joined the school in the last two years but there is a

strong core of experienced teachers. Over 80% are graduates. A significant number of teachers are working outside their specialist areas and this affects achievement in some, notably geography, whereas qualified geographers are teaching other subjects.

209 Teachers are in the classroom for 72% of the week on average; this is low against a national average of 76%. The Head teaches very little but the deputies take a half timetable, in all cases sometimes outside their specialist areas; this is unhelpful. Senior teachers could be required to teach more and the anomalies in the allocation for other staff ranging from 17 to 21 periods of 25 need to be rationalised to assure equity.

210 Staff development and appraisal have been neglected in recent years but have been allocated to the new deputy head who has prepared a good policy which emphasises both personal and school needs based on the targets gained from appraisal. All the allocated GEST funds have been used and staff have attended a range of appropriate courses this year although a number indicated there was no funding for cover. The school has rightly stated that attending courses is not the only form of acceptable in-service training and that involvement in working parties is a useful form of professional development. The school has been heavily involved in working with students on initial teacher training courses but has sensibly cut back on the range of institutions involved and now needs to ensure that future placements will be able to observe good practice in subject delivery. Appraisal is about to be reactivated and new guidance has been prepared based on the LEA model. It outlines clearly the roles and responsibilities of appraisers and appraisees. This needs to be progressed urgently; it will strengthen line management procedures and make lesson observation a central function of middle managers' roles. At present the formal support given to new staff, with a quarter having less than five years experience, needs strengthening.

211 Professional training days this year have been devoted to revising school policies rather than training and another is planned for GCSE moderation, which is not technically training either. It is of concern that the school plans to break the legal requirement for 5 training days for staff by offering twilight sessions, in order to finish the school year earlier.

212 The majority of staff interviewed are happy in the school and feel appreciated. Some commented on the lack of professional development and poor resources.

213 Administrative staff work hard to support the school and carry out day to day financial management, PA functions, as well as work often carried out by MROs in other schools. Their training needs are difficult to meet as the school has elected to use a computer system at variance with most other LEA schools and its training programme is, therefore, inappropriate. The lack of an IT technician results in inefficiencies in the system.

Key point

Plans for professional development and appraisal are sound and require implementation.

Resources for learning

214 Resources for learning are barely adequate in most subjects in quantity and quality. This has a lowering effect on the standards of achievement and quality of learning. The school attributes this to lack of money. Textbooks are insufficient in number to support homework and sometimes to support learning in the classrooms. Pupils are rarely able to take these home, including literature set books; this is unacceptable. Resources from the LEA Schools' Library Service have not been borrowed despite the subscription having been paid.

215 The library is very poor and not conducive for learning. It is poorly stocked and managed. It has been under financed for a number of years. Too many books and other materials are not on display and, therefore, inaccessible to pupils. There is a limited range of newspapers and magazines available only on request. The few audio-visual materials available are not used, as pupils and teachers are unaware of their existence. Classes do not use the library to support learning and no classes are timetabled for regular use. The library is open in the mornings, lunchtimes and after school and is used a meeting place by pupils. They are not encouraged to be involved in its administration. The school has recognised that this an area of significant weakness. In contrast, the careers library is good and well stocked with relevant literature. It is well used by YR 10 and 11 pupils.

216 The total number of computers available is good but their use is more variable. They are used well in some lessons other than IT, including art where they are used to record the work of the pupils, in science and in music for KS4. Access to equipment is hampered by fear of theft in some areas.

217 Pupils make sound use of some local resources such as the local library and the Whitechapel Gallery.

Key point

Inadequate resources are depressing achievement.

Accommodation

218 The accommodation is generally fit for its purpose and is an interesting mixture of styles. The building is in a reasonable state of repair except for PE but in a poor state of decorative order. A limited amount of refurbishment has been carried out recently but this has yet to overcome the years of limited investment. The plans for a new gymnasium are well advanced and building work for this should commence shortly.

219 The total volume of space is good. Each Department is logically arranged and has a base, except SEN. The size of the classrooms is mainly satisfactory except in music and CDT. The former has poor sound proofing. The main hall is impressive and used appropriately. The dining areas are good and they are well organised to ensure a constant flow of pupils with limited queues.

220 The main playground is bleak. The recently created girls' playground is attractive with seating and provides a safe and secure environment for those girls wishing to use it.

221 The site is clean and graffiti free. A recent health and safety review has identified the flooring in some classes and the school has already replaced some. Security of the site has reportedly been considerably improved with the erection of the new perimeter fencing.

222 Displays are generally unsatisfactory except in art and science. Many are poorly presented and contain untidy work. They would benefit from clearer contextualisation and questions to guide observers.

223 The accommodation is used by a Youth Club and by a Bengali class outside school hours.

Key point

Guidance on effective display is needed.

Pupils' Welfare and Guidance

224 The school provides a safe and secure environment and pupils are well known as individuals to staff. Heads of year have recently been re-named Achievement and Pastoral Curriculum Co-ordinators (APCs) but few yet have a clear understanding of their role in monitoring all aspects of pupils' attainment and progress. APCs have different systems for maintaining records. A central confidential file is kept, but this is inadequate in providing an overview of the whole child and is merely a receptacle of some information such as reports. No APC has comprehensive working files on each pupil. Evidence of strengths and weaknesses in different subjects, attendance and punctuality, and progress are kept in different places. Pupils' files should be reviewed urgently to ensure that appropriate documentation is available and that the necessary data is collated to permit effective oversight.

225 Some form tutors are working closely with pupils to set targets and are developing useful insights which will enable them to support pupils in their learning; some also monitor homework diaries in KS3, but not in terms of quality or quantity of work set. Homework is not always set but the system for following up on this is unclear. Homework diaries in KS4 are not well used nor are they regularly checked. The Day Sheets used to monitor classes are useful but comments are insufficiently specific to bring about improvement. Pupils interviewed did not often identify their form tutor as having an oversight of their work or to whom they would go with a problem. The role of form tutor is not well developed or consistently practised, so that some pupils have better support than others. Form time is not well used by many teachers and opportunities are lost to support the learning of pupils.

226 The PSHE programme is in transition. It is well conceived with appropriate and relevant information to support the health and well-being of pupils in a sensitive and considered manner. It is well structured and will be used to deliver the Youth Award Scheme. There has been a consultation with parents and the governing body. Due consideration has been given to the changing population of the school. In developing the programme, a decision has been made to pilot one issue and use this as a model for delivering others. Teachers are chosen carefully to deal with potentially controversial issues, such as sex education. The success of other areas of PSHE in many other classes is inhibited by teachers' lack of knowledge and skill in delivery.

227 Child protection procedures are in place and there is a named person known to staff. Procedures are well understood and effective. Bullying in school is not seen to be an issue either by pupils or most teachers. The school gains valuable support from outside agencies and the school nurse plays a key role in pupils' health and well-being.

228 Pupils are well supported by the borough careers officers. Further support is gained from a business mentoring scheme which benefits about a third of the pupils in YR 11. Careers education is delivered through the PSHE programme, but this is an area yet to be developed to ensure that appropriate knowledge, skills and understanding are provided. Careers advice about college opportunities is well handled. No evidence of the value of work experience in the past is kept, but plans to develop the system under a new head of careers are well founded, thorough and anticipate a shared responsibility with form tutors.

229 There is a Model Health and Safety policy but this is not specific to the school. There should be a policy which describes in detail what the school's policy is and risk assessments should be carried out. This should be monitored by governors.

Key points

Pupils' files should be the central record of all their activities and progress.

The role of form tutor in oversight of pupils' attainment and progress should be further developed.

The PSHE programme needs continued development.

A Health and Safety policy, monitored by governors, is required.

Links with parents, agencies and other institutions

230 The school makes appropriate efforts to involve parents in the life of the school and to keep them informed. They receive regular reports on their children's progress and 80% attend meetings to discuss this. A newsletter, is translated into Bengali is also provided. Responses to the questionnaire indicated that parents would welcome much more information about what their children are learning than they receive at present.

231 The Home-School Liaison teacher, funded through Section 11, is available to translate and interpret when requested to do so. More effective use of this resource could be made. Governors reported concerns about the community with some breakdown in families and an increasing prevalence of gangs and drugs; such concerns are in sharp contrast to the calm, secure atmosphere of the school.

232 Primary liaison has been prioritised by the school to increase the intake and an extensive programme developed. Last year over 50 schools were contacted throughout Tower Hamlets and Hackney and 36 visited. This was successful and the roll increased dramatically. Some primary schools use the specialist accommodation, including science, IT, PE and music. Curricular links now need to be developed to assure continuity of learning.

233 Links with sixth forms and further education colleges are good. Representatives visit the school regularly and these occasions are used appropriately by the YR 10 and 11 pupils. The current postholder is developing these links well by visiting and encouraging colleges to make presentations to pupils.

234 Links with industry are good. There are appropriate and developing arrangements for pupils to undertake work experience. Employees of a national bank listen regularly to pupils reading. There is an effective business mentoring scheme whereby pupils are mentored by employees of banks, airlines and national newspapers.

Key point

Parents and pupils should receive information regularly on planned work.