

INSPECTION REPORT

FRANKLEY COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL

Frankley, Birmingham

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103529

Headteacher: Mr Clive Owen

Reporting inspector: Mr David Darwood
3552

Dates of inspection: 19 – 23 November 2001

Inspection number: 242718

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 - 18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: New Street
Frankley
Birmingham

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Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Walter Suett

Date of previous inspection: October 1999

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Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Frankley Community High School is a mixed comprehensive community school. It presently caters for pupils between the ages of 11 and 18 but as from 2002, the Sixth Form closes and the school will only serve the 11 to 16 age group. Currently there are only 7 students in Year 13 and none in Year 12.

The school, which is situated on the southern edge of Birmingham, mainly serves the immediate community which is an area of high urban deprivation. The school benefits from the Excellence in Cities initiative and hosts one of the city's six City Learning Centres funded through this scheme.

The majority of pupils entering the school in Year 7 have significantly lower levels of attainment than is found nationally. There is a high level of pupil mobility, particularly in Years 7 to 9 due to parents moving in and out of the area.

There are currently 448 pupils on roll with roughly equal numbers of boys and girls. There has been a slight increase in numbers entering Year 7 over the last two years.

At 42.4% the number of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. Similarly there are a large number of pupils on the register of special educational needs (47%). A high number of pupils (5%) have statements of special educational needs. Very few pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds and only three pupils have English as an additional language. The school has had difficulty in recruiting staff, despite its own best efforts, particularly in the areas of mathematics and information and communication technology.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a satisfactory school with many very good features. Pupils are achieving well compared to their attainment on entry. Standards are below average compared with the national figures, but are improving. The quality of teaching is good and the school is well led. Effective leadership and management have ensured a clear commitment to improvement, although, presently there is only limited long-term planning. There is a strong sense of teamwork across the school and there has been significant improvement since the last inspection. Attitudes amongst pupils are generally positive. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- As a result of effective teaching the pupils make good progress.
- The headteacher, governors and senior staff manage the school very well and provide good leadership overall.
- There has been a significant improvement in GCSE results and other national tests at 16.
- Effective use of assessment and marking helps pupils to identify both strengths and areas for improvement.
- There is a coherent programme to improve literacy skills, particularly for the least able.
- The school has extensive measures for improving pupils' attendance.
- The school provides a pleasant and stimulating environment for learning.

What could be improved

- Long-term strategic planning lacks detail and vision.
- The development of pupils' numeracy skills across the curriculum.
- The provision for numeracy, in particular the lack of sufficient mathematics teachers.
- The standards of achievement in information and communication technology.
- Levels of attendance.
- The overall provision for pupils' personal development, particularly the use of form periods and the enhancement of their spiritual and multicultural awareness.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

At the time of the last inspection the school, although improving, was still considered to have serious weaknesses. Frankley Community High School has made good progress since that last inspection in 1999. Standards are higher, particularly in terms of GCSE and other national examinations at 16. The quality of teaching has improved significantly and is now judged to be good across the school and very good in Year 13. There is an effective whole school approach to literacy and most pupils respond well to school. Although attendance rates are still low compared to the national figures, the school has worked hard to improve them and made progress since 1999. There are effective monitoring procedures in place to evaluate the school's effectiveness and clear short-term planning to address areas of weakness.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 11 and Sixth Form students at the end of Year 13 based on average point scores in GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

Performance in:	Compared with			
	All schools			Similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	E*	E	E	A
A-levels/AS-levels	N/A *	N/A *	N/A *	

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

* Insufficient pupils entered for national comparison

Pupils attain standards by the age of 14 which are below the national average but higher than those attained in similar schools. Pupils enter the school with well below average levels of attainment and make good progress as they move through the school. Levels of attainment have varied, particularly Key Stage 3 results in 2001. This was largely due to a weaker than usual cohort of pupils and lack of specialist staff, particularly in the core subjects. The overall trend at both key stages, for both boys and girls, is upwards. and is increasing at a faster rate than the national trend.

Attainment at the end of Year 11, based on pupils' overall performance in GCSE examinations in 2001, were below national averages but significantly higher than in previous

years and were very good compared to similar schools. Most subjects saw improvements with the exception of science, which saw a significant dip. In art and design and business studies results were above national averages. Results in information and communication technology were very low.

Overall standards of attainment have risen steadily and are significantly higher than at the time of the previous inspection. This progress has been helped by a strong commitment to improvement by staff, good support for learners and improved teaching strategies. Standards of attainment seen during the inspection, although variable, were usually higher than those shown by recent external examinations. Pupils with special educational needs are making satisfactory progress overall, and good progress when given additional support within whole class lessons.

Standards of literacy are low but show significant signs of progress particularly in Years 7 to 9. Standards of numeracy are unsatisfactory and underdeveloped both in mathematics and other subjects. To a large part this is due to the difficulty the school has had in recruiting specialist staff. The same can also be said for information and communication technology where pupils' skills are poor.

The school sets appropriate targets for improvement and these have been successfully reached. Individual targets for pupils are generally appropriate particularly specific reading targets for special educational needs pupils.

A small number of students follow GCE A-level courses or an Advanced GNVQ in Business. The number involved make it difficult to compare standards meaningfully against national averages. They do, however, make good progress and attain grades which satisfactorily reflect their earlier attainment at GCSE.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Most pupils have positive attitudes towards their learning. They work hard and comment positively about the quality of education they receive.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. The majority of pupils behave well in lessons. There are a small number who cause problems but in most cases they are dealt with effectively. Behaviour around the school site is satisfactory overall.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are good. A significant number of pupils lack confidence and many find it difficult to take responsibility.
Attendance	Attendance is still poor, but the school works hard to address this issue and there has been a significant rise since the last inspection.

The majority of pupils respond well to good teaching. Good relationships between staff and pupils help pupils learning and contribute significantly to the caring ethos within the school. The problem of attendance does, however, still remain an issue for the school and an obstacle

to some pupils' performance and a constraint on the school's overall performance. Many pupils lack confidence and find it difficult to take responsibility for their own learning. Disruptive behaviour by a small minority of pupils has an adverse effect on some pupils' learning.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Very good

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

The quality of teaching is good. During the inspection of the 140 lessons seen, teaching was nearly always at least satisfactory. It was good or better in two-thirds of lessons and very good or excellent in a third.

Generally teachers have a good knowledge of their subject. They use a variety of teaching strategies and have high expectations in both standards of work and behaviour. Lessons are very well planned and generally well delivered. Teachers show good class management in the majority of lessons and establish good relationships with their pupils. Very good teaching was seen in the Sixth Form where students were encouraged to develop their own initiative and research skills.

The teaching of English is very good. It is good in science and satisfactory in mathematics, although, in mathematics, the lack of specialists does adversely affect standards in some lessons. In other subjects teaching is good overall with the exception of information and communication technology. Pupils respond well to the effective teaching and make good progress overall.

Teachers' marking is usually positive and encouraging, presenting pupils with a clear view of their strengths and areas for improvement. Homework is generally satisfactory. The teaching of literacy is good and makes a positive impact on standards. The teaching of numeracy and information and communication technology skills in a structured way across the curriculum are, however, weak and there is no whole school strategy for improving this. Pupils with special educational needs are generally well supported and this had a positive impact on their attainment.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum is broad and balanced, and is strongly enriched by the wide range of extracurricular opportunities provided. It does not, however, meet statutory requirements in information and communication technology, and for some pupils, in modern foreign languages and design and technology in Year 11.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Accurate assessment of individual pupils' needs ensures that there are targeted programmes to help these pupils make progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The few pupils needing help are well supported.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Pupils are provided with good opportunities within the curriculum for the development of their moral awareness and their social skills. However, opportunities for pupils to 'reflect' on matters of belief or values or to learn about other cultures are less well developed.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Pupils are well cared for. Their progress is effectively monitored and supported.

Generally, the curriculum effectively contributes to the quality of education pupils receive. There is a wide range of extracurricular opportunities, which broaden and enhance the pupils' personal development. The present tutor period, however, does not provide sufficient time or structure to develop important issues in pupils' personal education. Pupils' progress, both academic and personal, is carefully monitored. The school is less effective in developing pupils' spiritual and multicultural awareness.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher gives good leadership overall and the school is well managed by the school management team. There is a strong commitment to improvement although longer term planning is less effective. The middle management of the school is very good.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. The governors have a high level of involvement in the school. Their contribution to financial control and management is particularly good.

Aspect (contd)	Comment
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. Monitoring procedures are thorough and effective. Information gained from these procedures is used to inform the school's action plan for improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. Available resources are generally well used, although there are shortages in religious education and food technology. Finances are linked to the school's priorities and spending is well controlled.

The headteacher and leadership team are providing a firm sense of direction and priorities are clear. They are particularly well supported by a committed and energetic middle management team. The school is having difficulty in recruiting teachers, particularly in mathematics and information and communication technology. In other areas staffing is well deployed and there is good support for special educational needs. Staff are well supported and contribute positively to the school's development. The new facilities within the City Learning Centre, the learning support centre and the refurbishment and decoration programme are providing a stimulating learning environment. There is, however, a need to identify and share the school's longer term plans.

Monitoring of the school's performance is very good, although the statutory requirements for collective worship and information and communication technology are not fully met. The governors and managers obtain good value in their purchases and through monitoring the work of the school apply the principles of best value in evaluating the work of the school and its cost effectiveness.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school. • Progress made by the pupils. • The school is well led and managed. • Good standard of teaching. • The approachability of the school. • Their children are helped to be more mature/responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behaviour of a small minority of pupils. • Homework. • Quality of information to parents.

The small number of parents attending the pre-inspection meeting and the very low number of returns to the questionnaire (4.5%) makes it difficult to ascertain the views of the majority of parents. The inspectors support the positive views expressed by the parents. The inspection team did not find a weakness in the quality of information provided to parents. Whilst there are some inconsistencies in the setting and marking of homework the inspection judgement is that, overall, the provision of homework is satisfactory and supportive of pupils' learning. The inspection findings do, however, recognise that whilst there are a minority of pupils who do sometimes impede the learning of others, the school has clear procedures for dealing with them.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The school made a decision after the last inspection in 1999 that the Sixth Form was not cost effective and therefore applied to change the status of the school from an 11-18 to an 11-16 comprehensive school. The final students, therefore, to pass through the school are in the current Year 13 and the Sixth Form provision will end in 2002.

There are seven students, (four boys and three girls), all in Year 13. They are following a range of different courses including GCE A-levels in history, biology, chemistry and English and GNVQ advanced business studies as well as one student resitting GCSE biology and chemistry.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

Students are well supported and make good progress. They are given good guidance by their tutor, who mentors their personal and academic achievement as well as by subject staff. They have access to information and communication technology facilities as well as the community library. There are a number of extracurricular activities in the school and they are actively involved.

Although numbers were small last year, students enjoyed academic success in 2001. Four students were entered for GCE A-levels or Advanced Vocational courses. One of these followed an art GNVQ (advanced) and gained a distinction. Two followed A-level English, one achieving a Grade B and one a D. These two students opted to stay for a third year to complete a GNVQ advanced business studies course and A-level history. One student transferred to another college before accreditation.

The A/S results for Year 12 in 2001 were also good in relation to students' earlier GCSE performance. There were two chemistry passes (grades A and E), two biology passes (one B, one D) and one unclassified, two English passes (one B and one C) and four history passes (two Bs, one C and one E).

Strengths

- The overall quality of teaching is very good in the Sixth Form.
- Standards are comparable to and sometimes higher than the national average.
- Relationships are particularly good and help create a caring and supportive ethos.
- Students receive appropriate guidance and advice.
- Students' work is well monitored and achievements identified, allowing effective feedback.

What could be improved

- The Sixth Form provision is not cost effective. Numbers opting to stay on into the Sixth Form are too low to provide an appropriate range of courses, hence the school's decision to close it.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan. Strengths and areas for improvement in individual subjects are identified in the sections on individual subjects in the full report.

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

The table below shows overall judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses that were inspected in the Sixth Form. Judgements are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve.

The quality overall is good but the small numbers make statistical comparisons invalid. Results are, however, better than at the time of the last inspection.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
History	Good. Students enjoy the subject. They are clearly developing independent research skills.
Biology	Good. Standards of work seen during the inspection were high. Students demonstrate effective practical skills and are working toward the higher A-level grades.
Chemistry	Good. Standards of attainment are high and progress good. This is the result of effective teaching and positive relationships.
Business Studies (GNVQ)	Good. Students progress well.
English	Good. Standards of attainment are high, as is the quality of teaching.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students have an ‘assigned’ tutor and a small work base. There are opportunities offered for visits to theatres and residentials. They receive advice on opportunities after the Sixth Form, whether in terms of higher education or careers, both from their tutor and from external careers advisers. They contribute to the rest of the school by involvement in Year 7 induction and support for school functions.

In recent years the Sixth Form population has always been small and often very fluid with students leaving and re-entering if jobs did not materialise. Between 1997 and 1999 only about 33% of students stayed on to complete accredited courses compared to a national average of 79%. Students left for employment, opted out, or found the courses inappropriate to their needs.

A few parents expressed their pleasure at the support Sixth Form students get about opportunities for higher education but one also wished to have more details about their child’s progress. The students themselves were generally positive about the teaching and support they receive. The inspection findings confirm the view that students are well supported both by subject teachers and their tutor.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

- 1 Overall, the most recent results in 2001, indicates that the attainment of pupils in National Curriculum tests and GCSE examinations was well below the national average standard. Standards at GCE A-level and in advanced vocational courses are above average and good in relation to earlier GCSE results, although the number of students entered is too small to make valid statistical comparisons. Attainment is significantly higher than for similar schools in terms of GCSE results (as measured against pupils prior attainment at 14). Results in national tests at 14, when measured against similar schools were worse in 2001 but the overall trend has been increasing. Pupils enter the school with significantly low levels of attainment in Year 7. This and the high levels of absenteeism have a significant effect on the school's standards.
- 2 Results since the last inspection in 1999 have improved considerably and the overall rate of improvement is faster than the national trend. This progress is the result of a strong commitment to improvement by staff and governors, the improvement in teaching and support given for learners.
- 3 In English the most recent results of national tests for pupils at 14 are well below those found nationally. Over recent years attainment in national tests for Year 9 pupils has varied and results in 2001 were lower than the previous year. Boys' results are well below those of girls. Currently the test results are below those for similar schools. Overall, however, the trend over time is upward. In mathematics pupils' results in the national tests at 14 have been well below national averages for the last few years. Few pupils achieve the higher levels. The performance of girls, contrary to their performance in English, is significantly lower than boys. Over the period 1997 to 2000, improvements in results have been broadly in line with the national trend, with a significant drop in 2001. Science results at 14 were also below national averages in 2001 but the overall trend is upwards and there is no significant differences between the achievements of girls and boys. Results in all three core subjects were lower in 2001, in part due to a significantly weaker year group of pupils and, particularly in the core subjects, due to staffing difficulties. In other subjects of the curriculum, based upon teachers' assessments, standards by age 14 are below average with the exception of art and design where they are close to the national average. Girls generally out-perform boys with the exception of maths.
- 4 The GCSE results in 2001 showed a significant improvement from earlier years. In 1997 the percentage of A*-C grades was 4.7%, by 2001 this figure was 35%. Although this remains significantly lower than national averages it compares favourably, when measured against prior attainment, to results of similar schools. The percentage of pupils achieving 5 or more A*-G grades was also well below the national average although the percentage achieving one or more A*-G grades was comparable to national averages.
- 5 Results in English at 16 are below what is found nationally. In the most recent GCSE

examinations the number of pupils achieving grades A*-C are high compared to those in similar schools, particularly in English literature. Results have risen progressively over the last two years. Girls perform better than boys, as is the nation picture. The results of both boys and girls in English literature are better than their performance in other subjects. Their performance in English language is better than all other subjects except history.

- 6 In mathematics, results at GCSE are below national averages, although well above average in comparison with similar schools. Boys are performing significantly better than girls. Performance in mathematics is worse than their performance in English and better than science. This owes much to the high levels of absenteeism amongst girls.
- 7 In science, results were low against national and school averages in 2001, reflecting staffing and timetable difficulties. Standards observed during the inspection and past performance indicate pupils usually achieve much better than the 2001 results might indicate.
- 8 From the scrutiny of pupils' work, observation of lessons and talking to pupils, inspectors judge that current standards of work in Years 10 and 11 are similar to those attained in GCSE in 2001, but are considerably higher in Years 7 to 9 than the 2001 national tests suggest. Pupils achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. Pupils enter the school with low standards in the basic skills, particularly literacy. Teachers give a lot of time and support to pupils during lessons to improve both their attainment and their confidence. This combined with the improvements in teaching explain why the school is doing so well compared to similar schools, particularly in English and mathematics. With the exception of English and design and technology, where girls significantly outperform boys and mathematics where the reverse is true, there is no significant variation in the achievements between boys and girls beyond that recorded nationally. The high levels of absenteeism amongst girls, is a major factor in this under-achievement.
- 9 Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall and are well supported by teachers and learning support assistants. In writing they make numerous errors with spelling although key words are often read and spelled correctly. They also have problems with sentence structure. In Years 10 and 11 these pupils often perform better with oral tasks than in written work; and their lack of proficiency in basic skills limits their overall attainment.
- 10 Taking into account pupils' attainment on entry to the school and their prior learning, nearly all pupils make good progress in literacy, although levels are still below those expected nationally. Literacy across the curriculum is developing effectively and the school has a coherent programme to improve literacy skills. Currently it is in the early stages of implementing the national strategy for literacy in Key Stage 3. All teachers are meeting the requirements to include a literacy focus in their lessons. There is some effective work on specialist vocabulary in most subjects. Writing frames are used to support work in history and geography. In information and communication technology, literacy objectives for the half term are displayed and in design and technology, pupils use a 'key words' sheet to reinforce correct technical vocabulary.

In French lessons, teaching focuses on the accurate use of language. In other subjects such as music, pupils use technical terminology correctly. In some subjects progress in literacy is limited on occasion by written assignments that provide too little opportunity for interpretation or explanation. The school's literacy development plan is an effective document, designed to ensure that the strategy helps to raise standards. Pupils with special educational needs particularly are benefiting. The plan is designed to have a staged implementation of the national strategy and is linked to the national programme of training.

- 11 Standards of numeracy achieved in mathematics are low and numeracy is insufficiently developed in other areas of the curriculum. Even in subjects like design and technology and geography opportunities for the development of numeracy skills in different contexts are missed. For some pupils with special educational needs, simple numeracy operations prove difficult. For example, in one lesson pupils could add decimals accurately but did not understand what a decimal was or the value of the digit in decimal numbers. Short-term meaningful targets for numeracy skills are not always set.
- 12 Information and communication technology skills are poor and presently there are no clear schemes of work for these to be developed in a coherent way either within discrete information and communication technology lessons or across the subjects of the curriculum.
- 13 In 2001 GCSE results exceeded the school's targets both in terms of the number of pupils obtaining 5 or more A*-C grades and the average point score. The target for one or more A*-G grades was met. In deciding its overall targets the school considers a range of factors, for example attendance, cognitive ability test (CAT) scores, national tests and teachers' predictions for individual pupils. Whole school and individual pupil targets are set. The current targets for 2002, however, need to be reconsidered if they are to be genuinely challenging. The school has already exceeded these targets in terms of 5 or more A*-Cs and average point scores. The English targets are too broad and science quite low, bearing in mind the performance of the current Year 11 pupils in past tests and in their current work. Challenging target grades have been set for the Sixth Form.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

- 14 The majority of pupils have a good attitude to their learning and behave well in lessons. However, there is a minority of pupils and parents who do not seem to see the relevance of education to their lives and therefore do not value it. This leads to a number of pupils being disinterested in learning, which has a negative effect on their attitude, behaviour and achievement. Most pupils respond positively towards school and appreciate the activities and courses provided. Many pupils speak highly of the support they receive from teachers. Throughout the school most pupils work hard in lessons to complete the tasks they are given, especially when these are interesting and well matched to their ability. This makes a positive contribution to their learning and achievement in lessons. However, a minority do not share the positive attitudes and their behaviour at times disrupts lessons. Teachers use effective strategies to manage unsatisfactory behaviour, but despite this it still sometimes has a negative impact on

the learning of the whole class. The unsatisfactory attendance of a large number of pupils has a negative effect on their progress over time.

- 15 Behaviour in lessons is good overall. Pupils listen well to the teacher and to other pupils. They are well motivated to succeed by interesting, timed tasks that are well matched to their needs. Many pupils find it difficult to sustain their concentration for long periods, especially when the tasks involve writing, and so work best when they have a variety of tasks to complete. For example, in French there was effective use made of the language assistant in working with a small targeted number of pupils allowing the teacher to focus on other activities with the rest of the class. Poor behaviour was only observed in a small number of lessons. In most of these a small group of pupils were disruptive and demanded a lot of the teacher's time and attention.
- 16 Pupils with special educational needs try hard to achieve their best and most have a positive attitude to work. However, a significant minority of pupils have special needs related to their behaviour and, for this group of pupils, attitudes to work are frequently unsatisfactory.
- 17 The majority of pupils usually enjoy their work, especially when they find it challenging. They try hard to co-operate and work in small groups when they are given the opportunity, but they often find this difficult - particularly when having to listen to other pupils. For example, in Year 8 French lesson the teacher frequently had to remind pupils about the importance of listening to the views and answers of others. Poor listening skills in some lessons limits pupils' ability to become actively involved in the tasks and activities. For example, in a Year 9 information and communication technology lesson, pupils listened passively to the teacher with little actual involvement. When using equipment however, in areas like science and design technology, pupils usually co-operate sensibly. Pupils often support one another well. In particular, Year 7 pupils take turns to support a physically disabled pupil sensitively and effectively. The quality of behaviour in many lessons is dependent on the very good classroom management of the teachers rather than on self regulated behaviour from the pupils.
- 18 Many pupils find it difficult to take responsibility for their own work and to work independently when they are offered the opportunity to do so. Pupils lack the necessary skills and self-discipline. Across the school there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their ability to reflect on their work and to undertake self-evaluation of it. The exception is in art and design, where pupils are challenged to think and learn for themselves as well as having opportunities to reflect on their own work
- 19 Standards of behaviour outside lessons are generally satisfactory. The school functions as an orderly community due to the high levels of supervision within the building but a small number of pupils find it hard to comply with expectations. The narrow corridors lead to some incidents of pushing and jostling, although most of this is good-humoured. Staff deal quickly with any unacceptable behaviour. However, outside the building pupils know that unacceptable behaviour is not always seen and a minority of pupils takes advantage of it. Behaviour in the dining hall is satisfactory

overall. Almost all pupils are polite and courteous to adults, especially when they are alone or in small groups. Most are confident to engage adults in conversation, although they often find it difficult to listen accurately to questions.

- 20 Most pupils show good levels of respect to staff but a small number find it difficult to be equally respectful towards their peers. This occasionally results in some name calling and boisterous behaviour. Usually pupils treat their own, other pupils' and the school's property with respect. There is some graffiti and litter but pupils state that this is much diminished over recent years. The school has worked particularly hard and with success to remove and reduce graffiti. Any vandalism is treated seriously and remains one of the main reasons for exclusion. The quality of relationships throughout the school is good, especially between teachers, other adults and pupils. Most pupils respond well to the positive role models provided by staff in lessons and around the school. Pupils appreciate the support that teachers give to them and respond positively to it. They generally treat others with courtesy and consideration and show respect for the feelings and values of others in lessons but find it difficult to maintain these attitudes outside the classroom. The good relationships between teachers and pupils promote a good working atmosphere in most lessons. Pupils report that there are some incidents of bullying but that the school takes a strong line when these do occur, ensuring that incidents are dealt with both quickly and effectively. They feel safe in school.
- 21 The programme of extracurricular activities, including the Duke of Edinburgh Award, has a positive impact on the personal development of those pupils who choose to take part. However, many do not participate. Most pupils appreciate the programme of social education. They realise that the topics are relevant to their lives and find the lessons helpful. However, the current system does not provide enough structured teaching time for this aspect of the curriculum, particularly in Years 10 and 11 beyond that allocated for tutor period. The school provides a number of opportunities for pupils to take responsibility, for example, by participating in the school council. However, such opportunities are limited and a significant number of pupils lack the maturity and social skills needed to deal successfully with responsibility. Some positive projects involving the community take place, for example, the garden project through which pupils worked with pupils from local junior schools. The school has won the national 'Barclay's New Futures' competition, the prize being a sum of money to spend on community projects, which will involve pupils taking responsibility and planning spending.
- 22 The school rules are based around the principles of 'courtesy, co-operation and respect', a phrase that appears throughout the school. The rules are clearly defined and linked to this central theme. They are well publicised, included in pupils' diaries and well understood by almost all pupils. Pupils also understand the system of rewards and sanctions. Most pupils value the standards stickers that they receive for five key areas of school life, including attendance, good work and behaviour, courtesy, co-operation and respect. The rate of exclusions in the school is above average when compared to similar schools but is falling. Last year there were three permanent exclusions and thirty fixed-term exclusions. However, when the current Year 10 is removed from the statistics, this falls to sixteen. This term there have been twenty-two fixed-term exclusions and one permanent one. Of these, seventeen

concern pupils in Year 10, many of whom are very disaffected. This year group has been particularly affected by staff changes over recent years. Of the few parents who responded to the questionnaire or attended the meeting, a significant number have concerns about the standard of behaviour. Of particular concern to them was the behaviour seen out of school, which is largely beyond its control. The school tries as best it can to address this through assemblies and social education lessons.

- 23 Attendance at the school was very well below the national average at the time of the previous full inspection in 1997, at 78.7%. The school has worked hard and with good success to address this but attendance, though significantly improved, remains well below the national average. Levels of unauthorised absence are very high compared to the national average. In the academic year 2000 to 2001 attendance was 83.6%, with 10.9% authorised absence and 5.5% unauthorised absence. So far this year, attendance is showing improvement and is often reaching or exceeding the school's target of 88%. Attendance in Years 8 and 10 is lower than in other years. The attendance of girls is significantly lower than that of boys across all year groups and is a cause for concern. This is especially true of Year 9; so far this year girl's attendance is around 10% lower than boy's. The school has worked very hard over the last four years to achieve an improvement of almost 5%. Such improvements as have been achieved have been very hard won and the school is aware that constant vigilance is required to maintain and extend the improvement. Analysis of absence is very thorough. The school strongly promotes the importance of regular attendance, but is battling against the lack of interest in education of a significant number of parents and pupils.
- 24 Punctuality at the start of the day is a problem. The significant level of lateness in the morning is appropriately recorded and leads to an automatic detention. However, this does not motivate all pupils to ensure that they attend promptly.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

- 25 In Years 7 and 8 the pupils are divided on entry into two equal mixed ability groups based on data about their attainment and personal development. They are registered and taught for most subjects in one of two forms in each group. In English, mathematics, science and some other subjects they are setted into two broad ability classes in each group, and in physical education they are taught in single sex groups. In Year 9, because of the lower numbers, there are only three forms, which are mixed ability. For English, mathematics and science there is one higher ability set and two others. In Key Stage 4 the options are organised into a higher and lower range of courses. There is a good range of GCSE and vocational courses. In the Sixth Form seven students are completing their studies in Year 13.
- 26 The overall standard of teaching observed was good. Good teaching is having a very positive effect on pupils' learning. However, this is sometimes hampered by the very low standards of pupils' attainment on entry, pupils' low self-esteem, the high levels of absenteeism and the fact that the improvements in teaching are recent. There has been a very high turnover of staff, and some departments, such as mathematics and information and communication technology have not been able to appoint specialist

teachers. As a result the impact of the good teaching on standards is not yet evident throughout the whole school. The performance of pupils in external examinations and tests has improved considerably since the previous inspection, but this is inconsistent across the subjects and key stages. In 2001 Year 11 did particularly well, apart from in science, and Year 9 did particularly badly in all subjects.

- 27 A total of 140 lessons or parts of lessons were observed during the inspection. 84 in Key Stage 3, 49 in Key Stage 4, and 7 in the Sixth Form. In 96 % of these the quality of teaching was satisfactory or better. Only six unsatisfactory lessons (4%) were observed. 64% of the teaching was good or better and 35% was very good or excellent. Only one of these unsatisfactory lessons was in Key Stage 4, and none were observed in the Sixth Form. Most of the excellent teaching was seen in Key Stage 3.
- 28 The quality of teaching overall in English is very good in both key stages and this is an improvement over the last inspection. English is taught in groups which are broadly divided by ability. All the teachers of English show a very good understanding of their materials and texts. Teachers use a variety of teaching methods, giving pupils the opportunity to work as individuals and in groups, selecting the appropriate methods to meet the learning needs of the pupils. These are major factors in enabling pupils to make good progress. Visiting writers are periodically invited to school to work with pupils. This broadens the English curriculum and enhances learning. Teachers provide relevant and interesting work for pupils and the statutory requirement to deliver the National Curriculum programmes of study is fully met.
- 29 In mathematics, teaching is satisfactory overall and has improved significantly since the previous inspection when a significant proportion was unsatisfactory or poor. There were only two unsatisfactory lessons observed this time both taught by non-specialists. Teaching was mostly satisfactory, and sometimes it was good and very good. The department has only one full-time qualified teacher and hence overall, teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject are weak. When teaching is good, staff explain the content of the lesson clearly; what pupils are to learn, and how the lesson fits into a sequence of lessons on the topic. Planning is thorough and caters for the range of abilities in the set, with easier work for lower attaining pupils and challenging extension work for the higher attaining pupils. Pupils are involved in the lesson and develop their speaking and listening skills when explaining to the class how they tackle problems. Questions are targeted carefully to check pupils' understanding. Discipline is good and any instances of misbehaviour are quickly checked. These teaching strategies ensure pupils waste little time in lessons and ensure that learning is good. In some lessons with younger pupils, specialist teachers use national numeracy strategies effectively, helping pupils to develop their mental mathematical skills
- 30 The quality of teaching in science is good overall. Organisation of pupils' practical work is well managed and there is a pleasant working relationship between pupils, and between pupils and staff. The setting arrangements in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 work well but, at times, there is an over-dependence upon work sheets.

- 31 All teachers are meeting the requirement to include a literacy focus in their lessons. There is some effective work on specialist vocabulary in most subjects. Writing frames are used to support work in history and geography. Literacy objectives for the half term are displayed in all rooms and in design and technology, pupils use a 'key words' sheets are to reinforce correct technical vocabulary. In French lessons, teaching focuses on the accurate use of language. In other subjects such as music, pupils use technical terminology correctly. In some subjects progress in literacy is limited on occasion by written assignments that provide too little opportunity for interpretation or explanation. The school's literacy development plan is an effective document, designed to ensure that the strategy helps to raise standards and pupils with special educational needs particularly are benefiting. The plan is designed to have a staged implementation of the national strategy and is linked to the national programme of training.
- 32 Plans are in place to implement the National Numeracy Strategy, but across the curriculum there are at present few examples of the use of numeracy skills. Pupils' skills in this area are not, therefore, being reinforced in subjects other than in mathematics. Similarly there is no co-ordinated approach to the teaching of information and communication technology. Whilst there are examples of good practice within particular departments, or by individual staff, there is no whole school strategy to develop pupils' level of competence
- 33 Teaching in religious education is good overall. It is often very good and sometimes it is excellent. The planning of lessons is thorough and frequently it is very imaginative. All pupils including those with special educational needs make good progress. Good use is made of a range of resources, for example, pupils in Year 9 after a brief introduction to the five pillars of Islam, were organised into groups. Each group were asked to research one of the five pillars. Some groups were directed towards a CD-ROM package, another group were asked to study a collection of artefacts and information cards, while another group used text books and posters
- 34 The quality of teaching seen was good across all other subjects in Key Stages 3 and 4 with the exception of information and communication technology where it was unsatisfactory. It was very good in music and art and design. In the Key Stage 4 form tutor periods seen, 20 minutes was insufficient time to deliver a meaningful personal and social education lesson. In many of these the quality of teaching was less effective and the pupils' learning was unsatisfactory. This form period is the only personal and social education lesson pupils have access to in Key Stage 4. In Key Stage 3 the pupils also have a regular one hour lesson which is much better organised and the teaching in these personal and social education lessons is of good quality overall. Teaching in the Sixth Form was very good. There are only seven students but their teachers take great care in the planning and preparation of their lessons to ensure that they are well prepared for their examinations.
- 35 One of the major strengths of the teaching is the very effective planning in all subjects, apart from some instances in information and communication technology. There has been substantial staff development of teaching skills with the core of experienced staff in the school and the large number of newly appointed teachers. This has clearly been of benefit. The teachers are very effective in their identification

of appropriate learning activities and opportunities to provide differentiated work for those pupils with extra needs. The planning sheets identify these pupils and indicate strategies and tasks to help those with special educational needs to keep up with the others, but also to stretch the more able. Teachers identify clear learning objectives for the lessons and share them with the pupils, reminding them during the activities of what they are expected to achieve, and setting time limits to keep the pace of the lessons high. Teachers generally have high expectations of their pupils, challenging them to succeed and improve and they are providing them with full and practical help to help them meet these expectations. This is very important as so many pupils are easily discouraged, working well when results are good, but giving up easily or not attempting work when the going gets tough.

- 36 The teaching methods used are effective. Pupils studied well and were focused on their learning most of the time. Some pupils are difficult to teach, as was observed in the very few lessons where the teaching was ineffective and there was not full control of discipline. In these cases the small number of potentially awkward pupils managed to change the ethos of the class to one of non co-operation. It is to the teachers' credit that in the great majority of lessons this minority of pupils did not affect the learning in the classroom, they studied well, completed work and progressed appropriately. The result of this is that there is a large measure of control and direction in the teaching, which is deliberate and considered. There could possibly be more scope for initiative and responsibility for the pupils, but this needs to be planned for carefully. The teachers work very hard and effectively to establish and maintain control. For example, in an English lesson in Year 10, the teacher re-focussed the group very effectively on their learning following low level disruption, and in another in Year 9, a situation was de-fused by firm handling and humour to ensure effective learning. In science, in a lower Year 10 set the teacher used the learning support assistant very effectively to settle pupils down and encourage them to listen to the instructions as well as to help special educational needs pupils to achieve the learning objectives and support them with their reading and writing skills.
- 37 Teachers use effective teaching strategies such as immediate and engaging starts to lessons to capture their pupils' attention, for example, using attractive computer presentations or well structured question and answer sessions. In the best lessons there were high expectations with positive relationships between the teacher and pupils, and also between the pupils themselves. Outside the classroom there were clearly tensions between pupils and quick reactions to perceived slights or injustices, but in class pupils almost invariably co-operated, worked in pairs and mixed gender groups, helped each other when required and generally created an ethos of learning and progress. There are clear and well understood classroom routines so that pupils know what to do and get on with it. Teachers use regular reviews to focus activities during the lessons, diagnosing difficulties, consolidating learning and giving praise when appropriate.
- 38 Support staff are used well to enhance learning. This was especially noticed in science, modern foreign languages and religious education. They are included in the teachers' planning and used effectively to create flexibility in grouping and to target groups for intensive support.

- 39 Resources are used appropriately to support teaching and learning, the use of the extensive information and communication technology facilities in the City Learning Centre is of great benefit, and design and technology, physical education and modern foreign languages use it particularly well. Overall information and communication technology is not used well to support teaching in many subjects and the school's resources are under-used. The lack of an information and communication technology co-ordinator or whole school plan for development are major reasons for this weakness.
- 40 The teachers mark and assess the pupils' work very thoroughly. Books and other work are reviewed regularly to monitor progress and standards. The marking is detailed and supportive, indicating pupils' achievements and there are regular discussions with pupils to share this information and point to ways to improve. This is particularly important because of the number of absences that some pupils have. This affects the continuity of their lessons and coverage of the curriculum. The teachers are given detailed analyses of their pupils' attainment on entry to the school, including the large numbers who join during the school year. These now indicate learning styles as well test results and build up a picture of the individual and group each teacher has for each subject. This enables the teacher to plan the most effective strategies for success, and the regular ongoing assessments are reviewed to identify progress.
- 41 This process has now been extended to identify targets for individual pupils' self assessment sheets are used well in many subjects particularly music and information and communication technology. Groups of Key Stage 4 pupils are monitored by senior management to review their individual progress and discuss it with them.
- 42 Homework is generally used well, although it is sometimes set on an irregular basis, and varies from teacher to teacher. The planners are used well to record and monitor the homework. A scrutiny of these indicates that some subjects set homework more regularly than others, but when set it does extend learning, especially in examination classes where coursework is a large part of the assessment.
- 43 The teaching is well planned to cover the needs of all the pupils in the school. Teachers prepare resources such as worksheets to address the needs of different groups in their classes. Both boys and girls have appropriate tasks and texts. The more able and those with special educational needs are identified in teachers' planning and taught appropriately. The recent arrangements to identify and support gifted and talented pupils are particularly well organised and promise a lot for the future. As they have only been in place for half a term a judgement cannot yet be made on their effectiveness. There are very few pupils who have English as an additional language, but their needs are met in the teaching provided.
- 44 The good teaching evident in the school has been effective in tackling the very low attainment that pupils have on entry. The high levels of absence of some pupils make the continuity of learning difficult, as does the very large number of pupils who join the school during the year. So learning, although overall good, is sometimes not as effective as it could be despite the efforts and performances of the teachers in the classroom. Teachers are clearly aware of these obstacles to learning, and take positive

steps to overcome them. Pupils who are absent for long periods or join the school late are given an effective induction course to bring them up to speed with the rest of the class. Earlier learning is consolidated well with reminders, reviews and ongoing discussions. Pupils have good knowledge of their own learning, they can evaluate their work against specific criteria, such as the pupil friendly level descriptors that are provided in each subject, and the reviews they have about progress towards their individual targets.

- 45 Some of the development of skills is relatively weak, such as the technical skills in physical education, designing skills in design and technology, and speaking skills in modern foreign languages. In other areas the pupils are developing their skills better, such as in art and design, instrumental skills in music and computer aided design in design and technology. Generally pupils' knowledge of subjects is better than their understanding.
- 46 The work that the teachers provide builds effectively on what pupils know, understand, and can do already. This is identified through detailed assessment and monitoring, by faculty heads and senior management as well as subject leaders. The teachers encourage the pupils to do their best at all times, and most pupils are responding by working hard and maintaining a positive attitude to learning. Very few lessons, only 8%, had evidence of any unsatisfactory attitudes or behaviour, and the interviews with pupils showed that they overwhelmingly approved of what the school is doing for them. One particular year, Year 10, is identified as giving regular problems to staff, but even they responded well, their attitudes and behaviour were positive in 80% of lessons. Learning was satisfactory in 90% of their lessons observed and was very good in a quarter of them.

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

- 47 The curriculum that the school offers the pupils is generally broad and balanced, but there are some areas where it does not meet statutory requirements. A large proportion of the pupils do not take a modern foreign language or design and technology in Key Stage 4. In Year 10 they have been formally disapplied from following the National Curriculum, but in Year 11 this is not the case so the school is not complying with the requirements of the 1996 Education Act. The school is also failing to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils, or religious education for its Sixth Form. Apart from these, the school is providing a worthwhile range of opportunities for its pupils, including a youth award and vocational courses. It has devised the curriculum to meet the interests and attitudes of its pupils effectively, especially for those with special educational needs, some of whom work in the learning support centre which is funded by the Excellence in Cities initiative and used by several local schools
- 48 The curriculum has been devised and planned over a period of time to meet the perceived needs of the pupils who attend the school. The Key Stage 3 curriculum covers all statutory subjects, and drama. There is a personal and social education programme which covers the key areas of health, sex and drugs education. This is well planned. Physical education has been enhanced by the inclusion of dance and

adventurous and outdoor activities. The Key Stage 4 options have been devised to meet the different abilities of the pupils. Those taking no foreign language, for example, can include study skills, or extra work for their GNVQ in art and design and business to enable them to succeed in a smaller number of examinations. Some of the decisions made, such as the reduction in numbers taking modern foreign languages and design and technology in Key Stage 4, have been made with their pupils best interests in mind, but will have long-term implications in terms of resources and staffing. For example, the decision to introduce Spanish in Year 7 alongside French will involve considerable resource, staffing and timetable implications when this dual language strategy works through to GCSE. The move to a five period day last year meant that physical education and religious education had to be placed in one timetable slot. Pupils are moved from one to the other fortnightly. This means that their education in both subjects is disjointed, and there is not enough time for pupils to cover the physical education curriculum in sufficient depth unless they are taking a GCSE in the subject. Some examination subjects such as GNVQ art and design, and GCSE physical education now offer extra support in the lunchtimes and after school to ensure that they can cover the work required. In information and communication technology no schemes of work were provided and there is no evidence that the statutory requirements are being met in terms of control, measurement and data handling.

- 49 In the Sixth Form there are seven students in Year 13 who are completing their studies towards A-level GCSE and GNVQ. Overall provision is good for them, although no religious education lessons are provided.
- 50 The school has placed an appropriate emphasis on developing pupils' literacy skills. Literacy in all subjects is developing effectively and the school has a coherent programme to improve literacy skills. Currently it is in the early stages of implementing the national strategy for literacy in Key Stage 3. However, the teaching of the basic skills of numeracy have been less effective and there is no implemented whole school strategy.
- 51 The extracurricular provision is satisfactory. There is a good range of clubs and activities at lunchtimes and after school, and the school provides a suitable programme of trips and visits to enhance the curriculum. The lunchtime is quite short, and pupils have little time to get a meal and take part in the activities, but many take advantage of the links with the youth club, which opens at lunchtime, and use the sports hall and City Learning Centre well. There are several revision and support classes for examination students provided by the teachers, many of whom give up their time to help their pupils and encourage them to achieve better grades through extra study. There is also a lunchtime GCSE course in Spanish.
- 52 Most pupils have access to the whole curriculum. Those that do not take a modern foreign languages or design and technology GCSE have an opportunity to study learning skills or have extra time in other subjects, which should be of benefit to them. Pupils in Key Stage 3 have a full programme of personal and social education, but for Key Stage 4 pupils these opportunities are limited to two twenty minute form lessons a week, which is insufficient to cover all their needs. The pupil in a wheelchair has good provision, with a lift and several willing helpers to enable him to access the

facilities of the school. However, the practical rooms for design and for art are very difficult to access at the moment. Pupils with poor attendance records particularly some girls are underachieving. The school is aware of this and is taking appropriate action so that short and long-term absentees are effectively supported on their return to school.

- 53 Overall the school's provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is satisfactory. The work the school does to develop the spiritual awareness of pupils, by providing them with knowledge and insights into values and beliefs is not very effective. Although there is some good work in religious education, there are missed opportunities where it would be expected to be found, such as in art and design, literature, music and science. In assemblies there were few instances where pupils were given the opportunity to reflect on religious and moral issues. The school provision for collective worship does not comply with statutory requirements. The school does work well to develop pupils' moral development and the provision is good. The school effectively promotes the principles that distinguish right from wrong, and provides a moral code as a basis for behaviour. This shows up as a knowledge of moral codes rather than a strict adherence to them at all times. Pupils are quite clear about what they should or should not do in school, but sometimes a lack of awareness of others' needs or unwritten codes of behaviour outside school appear. There are reminders of rules and courtesy around the school, in classrooms and corridors, and assemblies deal with this well. Issues such as bullying and prejudice are raised in religious education and personal and social education. Pupils know to respect the rights of others to learn as observed in lessons in modern foreign languages and religious education. The social development of pupils is also well provided for. Although the opportunities for initiative and personal responsibility are limited in class, they do show positive attitudes to learning, have opportunities to explore social issues and express their own views clearly and confidently. They are happy to discuss issues with the learning mentor.
- 54 The provision for the development of the pupils' appreciation of their own cultural traditions is overall satisfactory. There are positive examples of European culture around the school in art and design and religious education. There are also opportunities to write to French pen-friends and visit galleries, theatres and other events. However, in this school where nearly all pupils are of white British heritage there is little evidence of opportunities to enhance pupils' awareness of the richness and diversity of other cultures. There are examples of some multi-cultural projects in art and design, the study of other religions in religious education and the study of steel pan drums in music, but overall this aspect of cultural development is weak.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

- 55 The school provides good care for its pupils. The steps taken to ensure pupils' welfare, health and safety, including arrangements for child protection and first aid, are good. The arrangements for dealing with child protection issues are very clear and comply with legal requirements. At the time of the inspection in 1999, not all staff were aware of the procedures. This has now been addressed through regular in-service training and all staff are aware of them. Teachers pay good attention to health and safety in practical lessons such as art and design, design and technology and

physical education. Pupils are appropriately supervised out of lessons but the nature of the site means that those determined to avoid supervision may do so. The school has appropriate procedures in place to audit health and safety but currently these are not fully documented - an issue that needs to be addressed.

- 56 Pastoral care is the responsibility of the head of guidance faculty, working with the heads of year, form tutors and a teacher who is designated as a learning mentor. The guidance faculty is newly established, with the aim of linking curriculum faculties more closely with the pastoral team. The heads of year work closely with their team of form tutors to raise attendance and monitor behaviour. The school has an experienced primary liaison co-ordinator; this enables good working relationships to be maintained with the partner primary schools. Both form tutors and year heads develop good relationships with pupils and know them well. This knowledge is used sensitively in the pastoral care they provide. The high quality of relationships helps to ensure that pupils trust tutors to deal with any concerns they may have. The learning mentor is available to work with pupils on a one to one basis to deal with concerns such as attitude to work, attendance and bullying. She is well known to both staff and pupils and provides a valuable service. In particular, pupils value the fact that they can refer themselves to her and that the sessions are confidential.
- 57 Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by the special educational needs co-ordinator and learning support staff. The school has moved forward significantly in becoming more inclusive and developed a supportive ethos in caring for pupils with special educational needs. The school has access for the disabled to the main building as well as a lift and adapted toilet facilities.
- 58 Form tutors spend a significant amount of time with their form each week. The use of this time was criticised in the inspection report of 1997 and inconsistencies remain. There is still considerable variation in the effectiveness of form time and, for a significant number of pupils, the majority of it is not used productively. Some tutors use the time effectively to develop an understanding of their pupils and to monitor their personal development but this is not consistent. In Years 10 and 11, form tutors also teach the social education sessions. Although an appropriate curriculum is in place for this course the twenty-minute sessions are too short to allow tutors to develop the themes in sufficient depth. In Years 7 to 9, social education is taught in a single hour-long lesson each week by specialist teachers. The programme of study for social education has been revised and rewritten in the last two years to reflect the new aspect of citizenship. It is well planned and the co-ordinator has taken care to ensure that, where some strands are not yet fully in place, they are covered in other subjects. For example, units of work on healthy eating and food hygiene take place in food technology. Pupils generally appreciate the social education lessons and realise that the topics are relevant to their lives both now and in the future.
- 59 The school works extremely hard to promote the importance of regular and prompt attendance. Good attendance is rewarded through the standards system. Improving attendance is also rewarded. Parents are regularly reminded of their responsibility to ensure their child attends school but many do not support the school's stance. Newsletters are used frequently to stress the link between good attendance and good achievement and the headteacher writes individual comments on annual reports to

highlight the connection. In an attempt to encourage good attendance patterns in Year 7, the school provides a popular, free breakfast club. Registers are completed accurately at the start of every morning and afternoon session. Attendance is monitored very thoroughly and the school makes effective use of electronically produced data. This allows truancy and other unauthorised absence to be picked up very quickly. The school has an attendance officer who provides pastoral staff with regular information about absences. Contact is made with home on the first day of any unexplained absence, either by telephone or by a visit from the attendance support worker. The school works very closely with the education social workers to improve attendance but any rise in attendance levels is hard won. The attendance support worker monitors lateness every morning. This incurs an automatic detention and persistent cases are followed up.

- 60 The school promotes the importance of good behaviour effectively. The behaviour policy and school rules provide a clear framework for good behaviour. The school has a system of rewards and most pupils appreciate these. Pupils in Year 7 already know what is expected of them and appreciate the standards system and merits. Most pupils comply with the school's expectations and there is a range of provision for the minority who do not. Pupils may be placed on the report system so that their form tutor monitors their behaviour and attitude daily. If this is not successful then an individual behaviour plan (IBP) is drawn up. This is monitored on a daily basis by the head of year. Parents are involved in individual behaviour plans whenever possible. There is evidence that these are effective in enabling pupils to understand and take control of aspects of their behaviour. If behaviour is still unsatisfactory, pupils may be placed in the learning support centre. This enables them to receive individual support for their behaviour and avoids exclusion. Parents are informed and involved early in any instances of poor behaviour and the majority supports the school's actions fully. However a minority does not.
- 61 Procedures for exclusion are very clear and consistently followed. Pupils are given many chances to improve their behaviour before permanent exclusion.
- 62 The school has a clear anti-bullying policy. Bullying is also addressed in form time, social education lessons and assemblies. The emphasis is on reporting any incidents as soon as possible so that the situation can be dealt with quickly. Pupils can report bullying directly to the learning mentor using a report slip. Pupil's state that reported bullying is sorted out promptly by staff. However, pupils reported that a significant amount of bullying takes place outside school and, although the school tries to address this, it is beyond its jurisdiction.
- 63 The school is very effective in assessing how well pupils are doing academically. The monitoring of their academic performance is good, with a very effective system backed up with clear and detailed marking and assessment policies that are developed with the staff and used by all of them. The marking is regular, accurate, and comments are used to reward success, inform the pupils of the level at which they are working, set individual targets, and point to ways to improve further. These assessments are backed up by clear analyses of pupils' performance, produced by senior management, which are provided for the teachers and shared with the pupils.

The teachers are then able to use these in their planning and identify how to help each pupil to improve further. This has been taken further with an identification of pupil's preferred learning styles so that the work can be further refined and tailored to individual pupils.

- 64 Gifted and talented pupils have recently been identified and a programme to support their learning developed with the help of money from the Excellence in Cities initiative. Pupils' individual strengths have been notified by teachers, and those identified in three or more subjects have formed a core group. They and their parents have been informed and they are monitored to see how they progress. This is a new project, but early indications are that the pupils involved are responding positively. Alongside this, a new focus group, who are predicted to achieve high GCSE grades, has been identified from assessments. The senior management regularly monitor this group on their progress towards their targets, each taking a number of them, and it anticipated that this will pick up any who are faltering during Year 11 and encourage them to perform to their best.
- 65 Currently, teachers' assessments in English are making an important contribution to the standards and progress of pupils. Examination results, the results of school tests and work done in class are carefully analysed. The results of the analysis are used to plan lessons and support, to ensure that pupils make the best progress. The work of learning support assistants is based on this analysis and, as a result, they make an important contribution to the learning of pupils with special educational needs.
- 66 The monitoring of pupils' subject performance is a strength in mathematics. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are good, as is the use of assessment to guide curricular planning. However for pupils with special educational needs, insufficient use is made in mathematics of assessment to find out what they understand and to use this as a basis for planning. They have no short-term targets to give them incentives to learn, and have insufficient opportunity to develop mathematical language. This is, in part the result of a lack of specialist staff who can offer the appropriate guidance.
- 67 Marking is carried out on a regular basis in science, it is constructive and encouraging. In most cases observed, teachers' marking identified achievement and indicated actions needed for improvement.
- 68 The majority of teachers are very conscientious in their monitoring of their pupils' academic progress, behaviour and personal development. This has a positive impact on pupils' progress.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- 69 Those parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire or attended the parents' meeting are generally supportive of the school but both response to the questionnaire and attendance at the meeting were very low. Only 4.5% returned the questionnaire and around 2% attended the meeting. This is too low to be a representative sample. Of those who did respond, most parents state that their child likes school, is expected to work hard and is making good progress due to good teaching. Most parents would feel comfortable to approach the school if they had concerns and feel that the school is

well led and managed. However, a significant proportion of parental returns state that behaviour in the school is a matter for concern, are unhappy about the amount of homework provided and do not feel that they are well informed by the school. Inspection evidence supports the parents' positive views of the school but did not bear out parents' concerns over homework. Although there are some inconsistencies in the setting and marking of homework, the amount is appropriate and it does make a contribution to pupils' learning. The quality of information provided for parents is good. While there is some evidence that a minority of pupils do sometimes impede the learning of others, the school has clear and effective procedures for dealing with them.

- 70 The school provides a wide variety of good quality information for parents. The prospectus and annual report of governors both provide the required information. The prospectus is well produced and presented and is written in clear language. The annual report of governors is a long, formal booklet which is not consistently easy to read. Newsletters are attractive and provide reminders about attendance and punctuality as well as information and celebration of achievements. The school also makes effective use of the local press to celebrate its successes. An appropriate home-school agreement is in place. Some parents do not believe that they have sufficient information about the curriculum, but the information is provided within their child's books, together with their targets within the subject. The homework diary also contains a wealth of useful information that parents are able to access if they choose to do so. Parents are expected to sign their child's homework diary regularly; most comply. The school sends all parents a short version of the school improvement plan each year, so that they are informed about the school's targets.
- 71 Parents are provided with a summary report on their child in the autumn and spring terms and a full annual report each summer term. The summary reports give a clear indication of their child's attitude, effort and attainment in each subject. Annual reports are of a satisfactory standard overall. Social education is reported but there is insufficient detail for parents to gain a clear idea of progress and skills in this important area. Last year some reports contained gaps due to long-term absence of staff, which is unsatisfactory. Reports in English and mathematics generally give a clear picture of the pupil's attitude, effort and standard of work, indicating strengths and areas for development. Pupils make comments and negotiate appropriate targets with their teachers. The headteacher frequently uses the annual report to provide a personal exhortation to improve attendance.
- 72 The school has made a number of efforts to involve parents in the life of the school community but these have often been met with apathy. For example, when the school arranged a series of meetings about aspects of its work, no parents attended any of them. Attendance at school concerts and productions is satisfactory; while many parents support their children, other parents refuse to allow their children to participate due to family commitments such as babysitting. Attendance at parents' consultation evenings is unsatisfactory, ranging from around 65% down to 30% across year groups. The school holds well-organised open days for prospective parents but again attendance is disappointing. A significant number of parents remain reluctant to become involved in school life on any level despite the school's considerable efforts.

- 73 Heads of year work hard to establish and maintain good working relationships with parents through telephone calls and letters. The majority of parents supports the school well over disciplinary matters and attendance but a significant minority does not. The special educational needs co-ordinator tries to ensure that parents are fully informed and involved in their child's individual education plans and in the review process, and most parents respond.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- 74 Overall, the leadership and management of the school by the headteacher and senior managers are good. This contributes significantly to the school's effectiveness and to the improvements made in the face of challenging circumstances. The headteacher has a clear focus in improving the quality of education and raising standards and he works hard to lift the image of the school.
- 75 There are aims for the school, including encouraging pupils to have a positive attitude towards learning and to promote not just academic success but self-esteem and respect for others. The headteacher and senior management team have fostered a strong ethos for improvement and this is well known to staff and pupils. The staff positively support the direction in which the school is going and consequently, its aims and values are clearly guiding its policies and practices. The leadership team has a good grasp of what the school needs to do to improve and these needs are reflected in the school's priorities.
- 76 In 1997, prior to the appointment of the present headteacher, an inspection of the school judged it to be in need of special measures to help it raise standards and the quality of education. In 1999 an inspection by HMI felt some progress had been made but that were still serious weaknesses to be addressed. The school subsequently drew up an action plan which has now been incorporated into the school's improvement plan. It recognises that the heart of improvement is the development of high quality teaching and a drive to improve the low levels of attendance that have had such an adverse impact on standards. There is a whole school commitment to the plan and a recognition that it impacts on everyone. The school's improvement plan is constructed following wide consultation with all staff, teaching and non-teaching. A summary is subsequently sent to all parents for comment. It gives clear short-term targets which are reviewed and focused on an annual basis. The plan has enabled effective curriculum development targeted at increasing the relevance of the curriculum for pupils particularly at Key Stage 4, to take place. However, at times, the need to respond to previous inspection reports, and the challenge of coping with a wide range of rapidly changing situations, not least of which is the difficulty of recruiting staff, has led to a concentration on short and medium term planning at the expense of longer-term strategic development. The headteacher has a clear vision of what Frankley Community High School could and should be, but presently this vision is not explicitly shared and planned for. Planning in general is resulting in concerted action to address short-term priorities, for example the effective development of a literacy strategy across all subjects to raise pupils' reading and writing skills. However, it remains essentially a year-by-year activity. There is a need for more explicit longer-term thinking. The failure to do this means that the school is, at times, reacting to events rather than planning for longer-term development. For example, the

introduction of Spanish to regenerate interest amongst pupils in modern foreign languages was a good initiative. Modern foreign language teaching as well as pupils' attitudes towards it, have improved as a result. However, the implications of this for resources at Key Stage 4 were not fully planned for. A similar situation exists, for the current year, in the rota arrangements for religious education and physical education. A sensible and creative response to curriculum issues has resulted in a lack of continuity in these subject areas.

- 77 Staff generally show confidence in and respect for the headteacher and the senior staff. There is a strong sense of team and good relationships between staff and between staff and pupils. Individuals, staff and pupils, generally feel valued and supported.
- 78 The school is very well managed. The headteacher has created a team of senior and middle managers that has a good balance between long-serving staff and staff who are relatively new to the school. They work well together, in order to meet the school's priorities, in particular those relating to attainment, behaviour and attendance. Despite the difficulties of improvement in these areas, given the overall low prior attainment of pupils and disadvantageous socio-economic circumstances of the school, good progress has been made since the school was last inspected. These staff meet regularly to share ideas and outcomes of monitoring reviews. This enables best practices to be disseminated across the school. The overall quality of middle managers and the leadership and support they give to their colleagues is very good. The area of concern is in information and communication technology, where there is currently no permanent co-ordinator.
- 79 The management team monitors the work of the school, including the detailed analysis of attainment data. The school not only compares its performance with other schools, using national, local education authority and similar schools' data, but also analyses the performance of different groups of pupil in the school. For example, a recent trend in what appears to be under-performance of girls was monitored and a series of actions have been put in place to try and raise their attainment. Faculty heads are fully involved in the monitoring process which includes scrutiny of pupils' work, teachers' planning records and classroom observations. It is through the effective monitoring procedures that the school has been able to identify and disseminate best practice. This is one of the reasons for the significant improvements in the quality of teaching.
- 80 The school has a Performance Management Policy in place and objectives for raising standards have been set for staff and the headteacher. The school has built the review part of the performance management process, into its programme of continuous professional development so that the needs of individual staff and of the school can be, as far as possible, integrated. Classroom observations required by the policy are conducted by senior staff and other team leaders and there are also opportunities for other staff to watch one another teach so that monitoring is seen as a way of disseminating and sharing best practice.
- 81 The governing body is very well informed and aware of its roles and responsibilities. There is an effective committee structure which enables the governing body to

manage its responsibilities and day-to-day work effectively. Chairs of each of the committees meet regularly and full reports are given to the full governing body. Governors do not simply rubber stamp the school's policies and practices but function collectively as a critical friend. For example, governors are linked to specific faculties and are actively involved in the monitoring of their faculties, helping in the production of written reports to the full governing body.

- 82 The budget is set appropriately against the school's development plan. There have recently been major problems in terms of a large deficit to overcome. This was, in part, due to errors in the formula calculations and the need to operate both as a school and community resource. Recent reviews and support from the local education authority have now led to a five-year action plan to address this deficit. So far the plan is on line. The school now currently operates a balanced budget and there are formal termly reviews of expenditure. The advice of recent audit reports have been taken and the principles of 'best value' now operate well. Examples of this can be seen in the changes in cleaning and catering contracts to provide a more cost effective and efficient service. Currently, however, with the school's development planning operating on a year-by-year process, the governor's contribution to the strategic direction of the school is necessarily limited. This means, for example, that it is difficult to evaluate the long-term impact of major resource investments on pupils' learning. The school makes good use of additional funding from specific grants, especially those for building improvements and Excellence in Cities. The recent decision of the governors to close the Sixth Form provision was based on the need to make efficient use of the school's resources.
- 83 Management of special educational needs is good. The number of learning support assistants has increased and the quality of teaching has improved. The special educational needs co-ordinator, with the support of two senior teacher assistants, monitors the efficiency of this team. This quality assurance mechanism provides helpful information on observed practice and identifies future development areas. It also provides guidance on planning for effective teaching strategies. The deployment of learning support assistants and specialist teachers into subject based work rather than just being attached to individual pupils is good practice and is having a positive impact on raising standards. The school also operates a 'special educational needs link' teacher within the school to help share departmental practice. However, currently this system does not work effectively and needs to be reviewed in order to give clearer direction on their role and purpose.
- 84 The school has a good mix of experienced and younger staff, many of whom have been given managerial responsibilities. They have responded very well to the training, support and encouragement they have been given to fulfil their roles. The great improvements in teaching by all staff and the high standards of management by those with a promoted post show how successful this strategy has been. There are, however, still big gaps in the provision of specialist teachers in mathematics and information and communication technology, where, despite the school's best efforts, it has been unable to secure appropriately trained teachers of a high enough calibre. This adversely affects standards. In the past this problem has also affected other areas such as music and religious education, and the inconsistencies in staffing have held back the progress of pupils and is cited by some of them as the reasons for their

disaffection. Some Year 10 pupils have had no specialist mathematics teachers this term.

- 85 The teaching staff are generally well deployed and there is good support for pupils with special educational needs. Learning support assistants are deployed very well by teachers to enhance learning in their classes.
- 86 As a community high school, Frankley shares a lot of its accommodation and resources with others. The school has the advantage of being the base for south-western Birmingham schools' City Learning Centre funded by the Excellence in Cities initiative. This is an outstanding resource for design and technology and information and communication technology and the school makes full use of it. Many teachers use the resources extensively to enhance the standards in their subjects, and the other schools in the partnership visit the City Learning Centre regularly. The local public library is based on the school site and its resources are available for pupils and staff to use during school time and out of school hours. This is a very good arrangement for the school, but not all subjects take advantage of it.
- 87 The school's own resources and accommodation are satisfactory. There are, however, some areas where they are not used effectively. In mathematics, for example, lessons are taught in different rooms around the school and teachers do not take the same group in the same room regularly. This adds to the inconsistency observed in that subject. In design and technology the provision for food technology is poor. The resources for information and communication technology are extensive but not well used either to teach discrete information and communication technology or to develop its use in other subjects. The lack of a hall that is large enough to accommodate all pupils prevents the school from holding whole school assemblies. The use of the drama studio for assemblies limits its use for specialist drama and dance lessons. However, there are good displays around the school and in classrooms, which provides a stimulating learning environment in most areas.
- 88 The school has made good progress since the last inspection. It is raising standards, particularly at Key Stage 4. The quality of teaching is now good and very good in the Sixth Form. There is a strong caring ethos and management and leadership are good. There have been improvements in attendance, pupil behaviour and development planning. Despite its high unit costs, the school is now providing at least satisfactory value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- 89 The school governors, in conjunction with the headteacher and staff, should take the following actions to raise standards:
- (1) Improve the long-term strategic planning of the school by:
 - Developing and sharing a clear long-term vision for the school and exploit strategies to achieve that vision. (Paragraph 76, 82)
 - Ensuring there are staff, resources and accommodation available for effective long-term development. (Paragraph 48, 76)

- (2) Develop pupils' skills and levels of attainment in information and communication technology, by:
- Auditing pupils' information and communication technology capability as early as possible to ensure that work in Year 7 and onwards builds upon their prior experience and knowledge. (Paragraph 184)
 - Ensuring that the full National Curriculum programme for information and communication technology is taught. (Paragraph 12, 78, 191)
 - Ensuring that all subjects identify opportunities for information and communication technology in their schemes of work. (Paragraph 39, 87, 150, 169)
 - Identifying best practice in using information and communication technology within the school and in other schools. (Paragraph 181, 190)
 - Tracking the progress of pupils' information and communication technology skills across and between years. (Paragraph 12, 184, 191, 207)
 - Developing strategies to monitor and evaluate the implementation of information and communication technology and its impact on learning and pupil motivation. (Paragraph 84, 190, 191)
- (3) Improve the standards of mathematics and numeracy by:
- Appointing qualified mathematics teachers and investigating a targeted training programme for non-specialists. (Paragraph 29, 84, 120, 121, 123)
 - Ensuring that all staff have a good understanding of the approaches to developing numeracy skills as part of the Key Stage 3 numeracy strategy. (Paragraph 11, 117)
 - Developing a whole school numeracy strategy and ensuring that all subjects include systematic programmes for reinforcing numeracy skills. (Paragraph 32, 50, 187)
- (4) Improve levels of attendance by:
- Continuing with the present strategies and continually reiterating to parents and pupils the relationships between successful learning and good attendance. (Paragraph 23, 59, 71)
 - Ensuring that all staff continue to stress the importance of regular attendance for the progress both of individual and groups. (Paragraph 23, 211)
- (5) Enhance the overall provision for pupils' personal development, particularly the use of form periods and the development of pupils' spiritual and multi-cultural awareness by:
- Reviewing the use of time, staffing and resources in order to provide a more coherent approach to personal development, particularly at Key Stage 4. (Paragraph 34, 52, 58)
 - Identifying schemes of work that focus on pupils' social skills of self-regulation, responding to the needs of others, awareness of their role in the community and ways in which they can make a positive difference.

(Paragraph 53, 54, 214)

- Actively involving all staff in the personal and social education programme to allow more time both for targeted mentoring and for discussion with and between pupils. (Paragraph 58)

90 The school governors, in conjunction with the headteacher and staff, may also wish to address the following areas:

- Individual education plans regarding class targets need to be given sharper focus and careful monitoring. (Paragraph 11, 66, 119, 122)
- Address the underachievement of girls in mathematics. (Paragraph 3, 6, 115, 116)
- Develop pupils' independent learning skills. (Paragraph 18, 36, 53, 99, 183, 186, 217, 222)
- Meet statutory requirements for collective worship and information and communication technology. (Paragraph 53,182,191)
- Ensure that health and safety procedures are fully documented. (Paragraph 55, 189)

The numbers in brackets relate to the main paragraphs of this report where these issues are mentioned.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	140
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	63

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	11	38	44	40	6	0	0
Percentage	8	27	31	29	4	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y13
Number of pupils on the school's roll	448
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	190

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y13
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	22
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	209

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	3

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	52
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	75

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	10.9
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	5.5
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	46	43	89

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	6	9	12
	Girls	15	11	9
	Total	21	20	21
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	24 (49)	22 (39)	28 (32)
	National	64 (63)	66 (66)	66 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	6.5 (11)	6.5 (20)	4.5 (10)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	9	15	13
	Girls	20	17	18
	Total	29	32	31
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	32.5 (47)	36 (49)	35 (37)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	5 (8)	15 (12)	10 (15)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	45	27	72

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	15	32	41
	Girls	11	18	25
	Total	26	50	66
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	35 (20)	66 (72)	92 (92)
	National	49.8 (43.4)	88.8 (90.6)	94.3 (95.6)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	28.3 (24.3)
	National	39.1 (38.4)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	41
	National	n/a

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	1
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	302
Any other minority ethnic group	29
British	23
No response	85

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	4	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	25	3
Other minority ethnic groups	8	0

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

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	32.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	13.7

Education support staff: Y7– Y13

Total number of education support staff	16
Total aggregate hours worked per week	440

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	67.5
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	23.2
Key Stage 4	19.1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000
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	£
Total income	1,475,889
Total expenditure	1,419,037
Expenditure per pupil	3,250
Balance brought forward from previous year	-286,897
Balance carried forward to next year	-230,045

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	20
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	20
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	3
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	3
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	3

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	448
Number of questionnaires returned	21

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	29	57	10	0	5
My child is making good progress in school.	29	57	10	5	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	19	24	29	24	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	0	48	24	19	10
The teaching is good.	19	62	14	5	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	38	38	10	10	5
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	43	43	10	5	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	48	33	14	5	0
The school works closely with parents.	14	62	10	10	5
The school is well led and managed.	38	33	10	5	14
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	52	29	10	5	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	29	43	5	0	24

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF

THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

ENGLISH

Overall the provision for English is **very good**.

Strengths

- Leadership in English is very good.
- Teaching is very good; all teachers have high expectations and work very hard to help pupils improve.
- Preparation for lessons is very thorough and the English curriculum is broad and well co-ordinated.
- Marking is very good and enables pupils to understand how they can improve.
- Standards are rising steadily.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils' confidence in some speaking and listening activities is too low.
- Pupils do not read sufficiently widely for pleasure and for information.

91 During the inspection 24 English lessons were observed including four drama lessons. In addition, discussions were held with members of staff and pupils; work was scrutinised in all year groups; the school's documentation and performance data was analysed, together with the previous inspection report.

92 Overall, attainment in English is below the standards found nationally of pupils in this age range.

93 Results in the most recent national tests for pupils at 14 are well below those expected nationally. Over recent years attainment in National Curriculum tests for Year 9 pupils has varied and results in the 2001 fell from the previous year. Boys' results are well below those of girls. Overall however, the trend over time is upward.

94 The percentage of pupils achieving the level expected of them nationally when assessed by their teachers at the end of Year 9 was slightly higher than the test results in 2001. During the inspection, pupils' attainment was below the national expectation (Level 5) in most lessons observed. This is consistent with the average level of performance in National Curriculum tests over the last few years.

95 Standards in Key Stage 4 are below what is found nationally. In the most recent GCSE examinations taken by 16 year olds in 2001, the number of pupils achieving grades A*-C in English language was significantly below the national average for all maintained schools, and below the national average in English Literature. However, results were very high compared to those in similar schools, particularly in English literature. The school broadly matches the national entry rate in the subject. Results have risen progressively over the last two years.

96 Girls achieve more highly than boys in both English and English literature at GCSE. The results of both boys and girls in English literature are better than their

performance in their other subjects, while their performance in English language is better than in all other subjects except history.

- 97 Although standards overall achieved by pupils during the week of the inspection were below those expected nationally, there were significant examples of a small number of pupils attaining higher than national expectations. Pupils' attainment in GCSE lessons is similar to that shown by the school's recent GCSE results. Attainment in Year 9 lessons is higher than recent results in the national test for 14 year olds.
- 98 Standards of attainment in the Sixth Form are high. Students do well in comparison to their performance at GCSE. However, the number of students involved is so small it is difficult to make valid comparisons with national figures.
- 99 Generally, pupils are competent speakers and they work together effectively in pairs and small groups to extend their thinking. In both key stages, they are able to clearly recount details from their prior learning. However, they often lack confidence in developing their ideas in whole class discussions and many are reluctant to take a lead in a more public forum. By Key Stage 4, pupils are able to express opinions very effectively in groups. For example, Year 11 pupils engaged in thoughtful and lively discussion about the responsibility for the deaths of Romeo and Juliet. Pupils in a Year 7 class recounted why they were enjoying the book they were currently reading to others in the class. Here the pupils were confident and articulate in expressing their views. Pupils are effective listeners, demonstrating this clearly in their responses to teachers' questions and instructions.
- 100 Pupils are satisfactorily developing their ability as writers. In Key Stage 3, they are writing in a range of different forms and most pupils have developed a clear sense of audience and purpose. Pupils are developing the ability to write in the appropriate style. Year 8 pupils were able to begin writing newspaper articles appropriately, demonstrating their knowledge of the expected style.
- 101 By Key Stage 4, the majority of pupils are able to write using Standard English with few grammatical errors. They can paragraph their writing efficiently and know how to lay out direct speech in writing, though this is not always done consistently. The most able pupils are able to write extended essays using a width of vocabulary, with detail effectively organised. However, a significant number of pupils have difficulties with writing. Standards of note making and understanding the use of note making skills are satisfactory. Handwriting and spelling are variable and in some cases poor.
- 102 Pupils are broadly competent readers. Generally they are coping effectively with their reading materials, but standards of reading aloud often lack fluency.
- 103 In Key Stage 3, when enabled by their teachers, pupils are enthusiastic readers. The opportunities for pupils to visit the public library on the school site encourages their reading and they are keen to seek out new books to read, improving their knowledge of books and their standards of reading. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils are able to recount the subject matter and story-line of the fiction they are studying and they have a clear understanding of characterisation.

- 104 In Key Stage 4, pupils have a firmer understanding of characterisation in literature. They are able to understand character and motive and to relate cause and effect. These aspects were clearly demonstrated in work by a Year 10 pupil based on *An Inspector Calls*, where an extension to a scene was very well written in the style of the author.
- 105 Overall, standards of literacy across the curriculum are below those expected nationally. However, literacy across the curriculum is developing effectively and the school has a coherent programme to improve literacy skills. Currently it is in the early stages of implementing the national strategy for literacy in Key Stage 3. All teachers are meeting the requirement to include a literacy focus in their lessons. There is some effective work on specialist vocabulary in most subjects. Writing frames are used to support work in history and geography. In information and communication technology, literacy objectives for the half term are displayed and in design and technology, pupils use a 'key words' sheets are to re-enforce correct technical vocabulary. In French lessons, teaching focuses on the accurate use of language. In other subjects such as music, pupils use technical terminology correctly. In some subjects progress in literacy is limited on occasion by written assignments that provide too little opportunity for interpretation or explanation. The school's literacy development plan is an effective document, designed to ensure that the strategy helps to raise standards. Pupils with special educational needs particularly are benefiting. The plan is designed to have a staged implementation of the national strategy and is linked to the national programme of training.
- 106 Taking into account pupils' attainment on entry to the school and their prior learning, all pupils in both key stages and the Sixth Form including those with special educational needs and the few pupils who are learning English as an additional language, make good progress in English. During the inspection the progress of boys and girls was similar. Teachers provide relevant and effective programmes of work and their skilful management of lessons ensures that work is productive. Progress was good or better in all but a very small number of lessons during the inspection. Pupils were observed to be making progress in their ability to find evidence to support argument (Year 11) and they were increasing their understanding of a novel (Year 7 and Year 10). Pupils often effectively consolidated their prior learning by reviewing learning towards the end of lessons. In the very small number of lessons where progress was unsatisfactory, a small minority of pupils disrupted learning and teaching time was lost while they were brought back to the learning task.
- 107 Pupils' responses to their work in English have improved since the last inspection. In 1999, responses to their work across all subjects were satisfactory or better in 80% of lessons. During this inspection the figure rose to nearly 90% in English.
- 108 Pupils were attentive during teachers' expositions and whole-class discussions. They settled to their tasks and generally kept up their involvement and concentration. Pupils were co-operative, willing to respond to teachers' instructions and questions and to work with each other in pairs and groups. However, pupils rarely challenged what teachers said or raised their own questions, with some demonstrating a lack of confidence in speaking at length or in detail in front of an audience.

- 109 The quality of teaching overall is very good in both key stages and this is an improvement over the last inspection. English is taught in groups which are broadly divided by ability. All the teachers of English show a very good understanding of their materials and texts. In every lesson seen, teachers shared lesson objectives with pupils and ensured that the purpose of the lesson is clear to the whole class. They use a variety of teaching methods, giving pupils the opportunity to work as individuals and in groups, selecting the appropriate methods to meet the learning needs of the pupils. These are major factors in enabling pupils to make good progress. Visiting writers are periodically invited to school to work with pupils. This broadens the English curriculum and enhances learning. Teachers provide relevant and interesting work for pupils and the statutory requirement to deliver the National Curriculum programmes of study is fully met.
- 110 During the inspection, teachers responded very well to pupils' oral contributions to lessons; they praised pupils' answers and effectively encouraged them to extend and clarify their ideas. The marking of pupils' written work is always systematic, positive and encouraging, clearly identifying pupils' strengths and weaknesses and showing how they can improve. All classrooms where English is taught have on display learning objectives and information for pupils on how they can raise their attainment in English. This provides a useful guideline to support improvement.
- 111 Teachers' management of classes and their relationships with pupils are very good and this contributes significantly to the success of lessons. Where instances of misbehaviour by a small minority of pupils were observed, teachers minimised the disruption to learning by quickly focussing them back on the learning task. English teachers regularly set homework and relate it closely to the work being done in class; it is regularly marked.
- 112 Currently, teachers' assessments are making an important contribution to the standards and progress of pupils. Examination results, the results of school tests and work done in class are carefully analysed. The results of the analysis are used to plan lessons and support, to ensure that pupils make the best progress. The work of learning support assistants is based on this analysis and, as a result, they make an important contribution to the learning of pupils with special educational needs.
- 113 Provision for drama has been improved since September by the appointment of a drama specialist and a drama course is being offered at GCSE. In the drama observed teaching was of a good standard. The aims were set out clearly in each lesson and teaching focused on enabling pupils to develop their skills in drama, to reflect on their performance and to build their confidence. Learning overall is satisfactory, but some pupils lack confidence when taking part in the activities.
- 114 The department is very well led and the teachers work extremely well together as a team. The English team has drawn up extensive relevant documentation to support teaching and learning. The department handbook and other supporting documentation provides clear and appropriate guidance on all aspects of English for each year group and contains useful exemplars of standards. The national strategy for Key Stage 3 is being put in place in stages and this programme is planned by the literacy co-ordinator. Because of the appointment of new staff, the training programme linked to

the strategy is particularly important. The department has a well-designed development plan which together with the accompanying literacy development plan, links closely with the school development plan.

MATHEMATICS

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- The leadership of the head of faculty, particularly during the inspection week.
- The monitoring and support for non-qualified staff by the head of faculty.
- Monitoring of pupils' subject performance.
- Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress.
- Use of assessment to guide curricular planning.
- Significant improvements in the quality of teaching.
- The performance is above that of similar schools in mathematics.

Areas for improvement

- There is a serious shortage of mathematics specialists in the department which has a significant impact on standards.
- Computer resources and accommodation are inadequate.
- The setting system produces some wide attainment groups which makes teaching of these groups difficult, even for experienced staff.
- Using and applying mathematics at Key Stage 3 is insufficiently developed.
- The performance of girls is significantly lower than boys at both key stages.

115 Pupils' results in the national tests at 14 have been well below national averages for the last few years. The average points score is well below national averages and the number of pupils attaining the benchmark, Level 5 or above, is well below national averages. Few pupils achieve Level 6 or above. The performance of girls is significantly lower than boys. Over the period 1997 to 2000, improvement in results has been broadly in line with the national trend with a significant drop in 2001, with a weak cohort of pupils.

116 At GCSE, pupils' results have been below national averages although well above average in comparison with similar schools. Boys are performing significantly better than girls. Pupils' performance in mathematics is worse than their performance in English.

117 Standards of Year 9 pupils' work seen in books and lessons are well below the national average. However, taking into account pupils' attainment on entry they make progress during Years 7 to 9 in most areas of mathematics and achieve satisfactorily. They are able to use number effectively when solving problems. Higher attaining pupils demonstrate good understanding of algebra in graph work when plotting straight line graphs. Low attaining pupils develop their basic skills including understanding properties of shapes. Year 8 pupils are able to draw different types of graph and comment on what they show. Some teachers developed mental and oral skills effectively during a short activity at the beginning of lessons. Pupils

demonstrated good mental skills when working out the difference between pairs of numbers, able to add and subtract quickly in their heads. There are, however, insufficient opportunities for pupils to practise using and applying their mathematics skills in problem solving, to work in groups or to use computers.

- 118 Standards of Year 11 pupils' work are also below the national average. However, pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 10 and 11, and develop confidence and competence in all areas of mathematics. Higher attaining pupils use higher level algebra skills when working with equation. Low attaining pupils show clear gains in knowledge and understanding of number and are able to use number skills when looking at special numbers. Pupils show good levels of independent working and problem solving skills in their coursework tasks. Mental and oral skills are well developed by some teachers, but this is inconsistent and some pupils have few opportunities to practise these skills. Achievement at the end of Year 11 is satisfactory
- 119 The quality of presentation in the books of some boys, particularly in lower attaining groups, is unsatisfactory and sometimes poor. The attainment and progress of pupils with special educational needs are satisfactory, although in weaker lessons, planning lacks detail and they do not make sufficient progress. In these lessons, insufficient use is made of assessment to find out what pupils understand and to use this as a basis for planning. They have no short-term targets to give them incentives to learn, and have insufficient opportunity to develop mathematical language. Progress is better, where work is closely matched to need and where explanations are clear and focussed. Higher attaining pupils make satisfactory progress but in some lessons work is not sufficiently challenging. The work is too easy and they coast along rather than moving forward at the right pace.
- 120 Teaching is satisfactory overall and sometimes good or very good. It has improved significantly since the previous inspection when a significant proportion of teaching was unsatisfactory or poor. This time two unsatisfactory lessons were observed and these were taught by non-specialists. The department has only one full-time qualified teacher and hence, overall teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject are weak. When teaching is good, staff explain the content of the lesson clearly, identify what pupils are to learn, and how the lesson fits into a sequence of lessons on the topic. Planning is thorough and caters for the range of abilities in the set, with easier work for lower attaining pupils and challenging extension work for the higher attaining pupils. Lessons move forward at a pace. Pupils are involved in the lesson and develop their speaking and listening skills when explaining to the class how they tackle problems. Questions are targeted carefully to check pupils' understanding. Whilst pupils are working, teachers monitor their work, picking up any problems as they arise and stopping the group to explain where necessary. Marking is thorough, identifying errors and showing pupils ways to improve. Discipline is good and any instances of misbehaviour are quickly checked. These teaching strategies ensure that pupils waste little time in lessons and ensure that learning is good. In some lessons with younger pupils, specialist teachers use national numeracy strategies effectively, helping pupils to develop their mental mathematical skills
- 121 In those lessons where teaching is not so good, teachers have weak subject and

sometimes teaching knowledge, explanations are unclear or too rushed and key points are not emphasised. Opportunities are missed, for example, to use an overhead projector for work on turning shapes and symmetry. Computers are not used to enhance pupils' learning and they have few opportunities to contribute in lessons. High standards of behaviour are not always expected. Some marking is superficial, with some work not marked and few comments on ways to improve or on careless and untidy work.

- 122 The teaching of pupils with special educational needs and low attaining pupils is satisfactory overall. However, in some lessons, all pupils do the same work. Assessment is not used to diagnose both group and individual weaknesses and devise well-matched learning programmes. As a result, some topics are inappropriate and pupils have little understanding of underlying mathematical ideas. One group of pupils could add decimals accurately but didn't understand what a decimal was or the value of the digits in decimal numbers. Short-term, meaningful targets are not always set to improve pupils' mathematical skills and presentation of work and little use is made of computers. Mathematical language is insufficiently developed, for example, by focussing on key words for the topic, and the behaviour of some pupils is unsatisfactory. Some work used with these pupils is inappropriate, with an over emphasis on reading skills. Attendance in some classes is poor. Pupils miss a lot of work and do not make appropriate progress as a consequence. In better lessons, pupils enjoy mathematics, are very enthusiastic and have good levels of concentration. Positive attitudes in these lessons have a significant impact on the quality of work.
- 123 Improvements since the last inspection have been hampered by staffing problems which have impacted on standards and progress. There is only one full-time and one part-time mathematics specialist in the department, and five non-specialist teachers. The leadership of the department is very good and her monitoring role is very effective. However, teacher support takes up so much of her time that she has little time left for her other duties. Documentation and planning are thorough but there are no detailed long-term plans to systematically address issues such as raising standards, developing the numeracy provision and the use of computers. Resources in mathematics are unsatisfactory overall. Computer systems are very limited and pupils can't get the necessary access to computers on a day-to-day basis to enhance their learning. Software is very limited. Other resources are adequate. Accommodation is unsatisfactory with mathematics taught in rooms around the school and some teachers taking lessons in different rooms during the week with the same group. In some lessons, because of lack of ventilation, classrooms can be very stuffy and hot. Very good display in most classrooms, however, positively enhances the working environment.
- 124 Despite areas in need of improvement, there has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. Teaching is better and pupils make satisfactory progress. There are improved systems for assessment and monitoring, plans are in place to implement the National Numeracy Strategy and the departmental plans address the main issues raised in the inspection. However, the recruitment of specialist staff remains a serious problem.

SCIENCE

Overall, the quality of provision in the science department is **good**.

Strengths

- The planning of the teaching programmes is detailed and extensive.
- The marking of pupils' work is regular and informative.
- All schemes of work for Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 are in place.
- The department's literacy policy is being fully implemented.
- The support system for special educational needs pupils within the department works well.
- There is good technical back up for the teaching staff.

Areas for improvement

- A wider variety of teaching methods are required.
- A more positive use of the department's numeracy policy.
- More effective use of information and communication technology
- Raising the profile of spiritual and multi-cultural developments in science.

125 All pupils work towards the core award of a single GCSE certificate in science. In addition some pupils in Year 10 opt for the double award in Science. All the required schemes of work are in place. The department meets the demands of the National Curriculum in its administration and provision of these schemes. During the inspection, six lessons in Key Stage 3, six in Key Stage 4 and two in the Sixth Form were observed. These observations, together with the scrutiny of pupils' work and departmental documentation; interviews with various members of staff, including the head of department, community librarian, the science technician; and discussions with pupils; provide the basis for the evidence gathered.

126 Standards of attainment at age 14 and 16 are well below the national averages for these ages, but comparable with similar schools. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is difficult to assess, due to incomplete information from contributory schools although it is clear from the results available that standards are significantly below the national average.

127 Results in 2001 reflect the staffing and timetable difficulties the school faced during the academic year 2000/2001. These included a new head of department, two newly qualified members of the department, and a timetable that reduced the amount of curriculum time available. The results of national tests for 14 year olds in 2001 also reflect the fact that two groups, when in Year 8, had no science teacher for a term. This accounts for half of the year group. With the exception of the 2001 results the overall trend in standards is upwards. Results of national tests at 14 and 16 indicate no significant difference in the results of girls and boys.

128 Standards of work seen during the inspection show that pupils are making satisfactory progress although levels of achievement are low compared to national averages in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Starting from a low base of pupils' knowledge and skills, effective teaching enabled a mixed ability group in Year 7 to measure resistance through a microwire using metre rules and ammeters, achieving some excellent results. A top set Year 9 demonstrated their knowledge of reflection ($I=R$), and used

this to develop a series of mirrors to see round corners. A lower set in Year 9, were able to recognise chemical patterns from the reactivity of metals. A lower set in Year 10 could name five different food types and how the body used them. They knew that the enzyme in saliva was used in breaking down starch, and could name five different organs in the digestive system. A top Year 11 group, used a spread sheet of information to revise the solar system.

- 129 In both key stages work in the top sets was well presented and demonstrated organisational skills. Pupils were keen to talk about their work and were familiar with the standards to which they were working. Within the middle and lower sets, work was not as well presented, and the pupils were somewhat reluctant to talk about their work.
- 130 Pupils in both key stages, and of all abilities demonstrated a variety of practical skills during the inspection. Most of the lessons observed reflected the department's policy on literacy but there was little evidence of numeracy skills being actively promoted.
- 131 The work of pupils with special educational needs was satisfactory overall. Class books were well organised and the level of work was appropriate to pupils' abilities. Overall, the work and progress recorded demonstrated the expertise of the teaching staff, together with the care and concern of the learning support assistants involved.
- 132 Results at GCE A-level are slightly above national averages good and much improved since the last inspection. However, the small numbers involved made detailed statistical comparisons against national figures invalid. Standards of work seen indicate that students are performing well in comparison to their prior attainment at GCSE. They are producing work associated with the higher A-level grades. The A-level biology students demonstrated their practical skills in replacing damaged hose in apparatus designed to measure rate of photosynthesis of *Elodea*. The A/S-level student was able to describe food tests, and knew the structure of alpha and beta glucose. Those following the chemistry course are achieving equally well. They are able to identify various compounds, such as amines, amides and alcohols and research the formulae of organic compounds.
- 133 Pupils' achievement overall is satisfactory. The progress made by pupils reflects the considerable effort and emphasis placed by staff on their teaching programs, and upon their constructive marking policy, which is implemented throughout the department.
- 134 The quality of teaching seen at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 was satisfactory with some good features. The outstanding features relate to the detailed lesson planning, clear explanations, effective use of reviews to check pupils' understanding and the constructive marking of pupil's work as well as matching work to the needs of pupils on the special educational needs register and extension work for the more able pupils. Good examples were seen of teachers' managing difficult lessons, setting clear and precise learning objectives, together with the use of key words. These aspects, together with the use of writing frames, reading out aloud in class and an emphasis on spelling helped in the development of pupils' literacy skills. Where teaching was less effective there was an over reliance on worksheets and work wasn't sufficiently challenging or failed to build upon prior achievement. The lack of specialist teachers

has been a key factor in poor results over the last few years.

- 135 The library within the school is a public library, with an excellent science section. During the autumn term, however, there had been little use of the library by the department. With access to project packs (50 books available at any one time) this resource would reinforce the department's literacy programme. Organisation of practical pupils' practical work was well managed.
- 136 The setting arrangements in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 allows for the satisfactory management of effective teaching methods, which may at times be over dependent upon work sheets. Specialist support for special educational needs pupils in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, help to meet the needs of pupils across the whole ability range.
- 137 Evidence of the department's administrative and organisational strengths are shown through the continued efficient working of the department during the absence of the head of department over the current autumn term. Both key stages have a full complement of lesson plans, which relate directly to the National Curriculum. Laboratory facilities are satisfactory. Resources, both apparatus and text books, are satisfactory although there is little evidence of information and communication technology resources. The staff receive quality support from the school's technician. Assessment policies and a tracking system of pupils' achievements are in place. Most of the pupils in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 were aware of their current grades, and understood the grading system.
- 138 The leadership and management of the department are good. There is a pleasant working relationship within the department that is committed to the education of its pupils. The department needs to implement fully its policies for numeracy and information and communication technology. The constant and continual support of staff in their teaching roles contributes to the students' social and moral development. However, during the inspection there was little evidence of cultural and spiritual education. This remains an important area of the pupils' experience that needs to be reconsidered.
- 139 Since the last inspection in 1997, there has been an all round improvement. Teaching throughout the department has improved. As a result of this the pupils are now learning more effectively. A major challenge for the department and the school remains the massive demands on staff made by the number of pupils on the on the special educational needs register, and to the continued high absence rates of the pupils. Since the last inspection assessment and moderation procedures have improved and text books have been replenished. Safety procedures for the department are in place. During the inspection staff demonstrated their familiarity with the Health and Safety regulations. Through out the inspection there was no evidence, within the laboratories or the teaching classrooms, of the poor behaviour reported in 1997.

ART AND DESIGN

Overall, the quality of provision in art and design is **very good**.

Strengths

- GCSE and GNVQ Intermediate results combined are above national averages;
- Teaching and learning are very good;
- Monitoring and assessing pupils' progress are excellent;
- Leadership and management are excellent;
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and provides very good enrichment for pupils;
- Staff develop excellent relationships with pupils
- There is very good scope for pupil's creative development and independent learning;
- Literacy is very well taught.

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient use is made of information and communication technology;
- The use of National Curriculum level descriptors in Key Stage 3 requires standardisation.

140 Standards achieved by pupils in National Curriculum teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 are in line with national averages. However, the use of National Curriculum level descriptors requires standardisation to improve the accuracy of some of the higher levels being awarded.

141 The number of pupils achieving GCSE grades A*-C in 2001 was slightly below the national average. When combined with the additional numbers achieving passes in GNVQ Intermediate Part and Full Award, the overall pass rate for art and design is above the national average. The overall trend since the last inspection is upwards.

142 Pupils enjoy the Key Stage 3 art and design curriculum. They work creatively and originally in a wide range of two and three-dimensional media painting, creating collage, ceramic forms, sculpture and relief in a variety of genres. Standards are good and at least comparable to national standards. They draw very well in pencil, charcoal, pastel, paint and wash and undertake very good exploration and investigative studies in their sketchbooks which also serve as a very effective record of their progress in acquiring the skills, techniques, knowledge and understanding required by the National Curriculum. They study the impact of art and artists upon society and use the work of artists and designers from different times and cultures to stimulate their own interpretations and creative work. They use speaking, listening, reading and writing frequently to evaluate their work and that of their peers, and frequently undertake oral evaluations of their learning during art and design lessons. They work very well in groups, researching and investigating design briefs, propose solutions and carry them through into finished works very effectively.

143 In Key Stage 4 pupils develop their composition skills through using a good range of techniques and quickly develop a view on the purposes of art and design in everyday life. They make gallery visits and participate in community art and sculpture projects. The GNVQ Intermediate course enables pupils to learn to manage the creative process and develop a very good level of the commercial costs involved in producing works of art and other outcomes. However, most pupils do not transfer their graphic skills to designs in their work in design and technology.

144 Standards have improved considerably since the last inspection and are above average

overall.

- 145 The quality of teaching has improved markedly and ranges from excellent to good, being very good overall.
- 146 Teaching seen ranged from excellent to good. It is very good overall. Teachers plan and work together to deliver a consistently high standard of lessons, some of which are team-taught. Lesson plans are very comprehensive and ensure that pupils of all abilities are challenged, learn for themselves through experiencing investigative work, receive direct teaching in skills and techniques, and are equipped to make very good progress with all aspects of the art and design curriculum. Learning is very good and has show considerable improvement through very well structured teaching strategies designed to raise pupils' confidence whilst increasing levels of challenge and expectation. Social inclusion is also very good. This is achieved with all pupils of all abilities by ensuring that pupils with special educational needs are supported through differentiated tasks and additional support whist working, and by ensuring that gifted and talented pupils receive extension activities in lessons and via additional homework tasks.
- 147 Pupils are now making very good progress due to high expectations and improved self-esteem. The excellent quality of monitoring and assessment has made a major contribution to these improvements. Learning is supported by a highly effective formative assessment system which provides pupils with very good quality advice on the progress they are making and targets to be achieved to further their progress. Each piece of work is assessed against National Curriculum levels and pupils advised as to how to achieve the next level in terms of improving particular aspects of their work. They are asked to sign an acceptance slip to accept the improvement targets and have an opportunity to comment on their own progress and achievements as a part of this process. The department has also succeeded in improving pupil's attitudes towards art and design, which in turn has stimulated and motivated them to accept the creative challenges set before them. The giving of frequent praise and encouragement and the use of an awards system is proving to be a very effective motivator for almost all pupils in all year groups.
- 148 Literacy is very effectively taught in most art and design lessons and includes the development of key words relating to most aspects of the subject. One particularly effective lesson was seen where pupils spent the last 15 minutes working in groups matching a set of keywords and their meanings against the clock. The words and meanings were then reviewed to consolidate the learning gains.
- 149 The teaching of numeracy skills through art and design work was not seen during the period of the inspection but there is evidence to prove that the department makes a contribution to this area, particularly in GNVQ art and design.
- 150 The leadership of the department is excellent with very good induction and support for newly qualified teachers, the on-going monitoring of classroom teaching, very effective curriculum management and monitoring, and a strong commitment to the aims and objectives of the school and its overall improvement targets. The teaching

staff maintains a highly stimulating and constantly changing learning environment. They use all the available resources to very good effect to support learning and provide good access to pupils who wish to work beyond the timetabled day. The limited use of information and communication technology, however, is an outstanding issue. It could interest and motivate pupils if fully integrated into the art and design curriculum.

- 151 The teaching staff have ensured that almost all of the issues in the last inspection report have been fully addressed to the extent that art and design is very popular and has improved significantly.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- The good quality of teaching in all specialist areas.
- Good relationships between pupils and teachers.
- The development of the use of information and communication technology in design and technology.
- Pupils' enthusiasm for making products.

Areas for improvement

- Clearer leadership of the department – particularly in creating a team approach to planning.
- Consistency of approach and planning within the department.
- Lesson content at Key Stage 3 so as to provide more opportunities to stretch the more able and to place more emphasis on creativity and design.
- Supporting pupils on GCSE courses at Key Stage 4.
- The use of assessment at Key Stage 3.

- 152 The curriculum offered by the department is broad but pupils have more time to work in the areas of food and textiles than they do in resistant materials and in systems and control. There is good use of information and communication technology through the facilities offered by the City Learning Centre where pupils use computers to aid the designing and making of their products. At GCSE there has been a wide range of design and technology subjects taken by current Year 11 including resistant materials, food, textiles, electronic products and graphic products. This range of options has not been taken up by Year 10 pupils and they take design and technology courses in food or resistant materials only.

- 153 By the end of Year 9 in 2001 teachers' assessments identified attainment to be well below national expectations. This situation is reflected in the inspection findings. The low attainment is in part due to the very low attainment of pupils on entry to the school but also by the lack of progress made over the key stage. Pupils show generally good practical skills. They can apply very attractive and creative surface decoration to fabric materials in Year 7 and Year 8 and can shape and assemble wood in the construction of a prototype torch in Year 8. Pupils have had a mixed

experience of the subject, however, due to staffing difficulties. They have not had the opportunity to achieve higher levels of attainment. Pupils have few occasions when they can apply their creativity through the designing of products, they have however been taught a range of making skills. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of some industrial processes are very good, for instance in the injection moulding of plastics in Year 9 and process manufacturing of food products in Year 7.

- 154 There was a marked difference in the standards of attainment achieved by girls and boys reported in the 2001 formal assessments at the end of Year 9, with nearly twice as many girls achieving Level 5 or above as boys. During the inspection, however, the differences seen were less noticeable.
- 155 Examination results at the end of Year 11 in 2001 were substantially below national average in all specialisms within design and technology and they have shown a steady decline over recent years. Not all pupils take a design and technology subject at Key Stage 4 but the level of attainment of those that do is generally lower than in the other subjects that they take. Year 11 pupils show satisfactory standards of making. They select tools and processes independently and work with a good regard for health and safety in making, for instance circuit casings in electronic products or experimental meals for one in food. Designing, however, is less strong and many pupils' folders show a lack of creativity, and are not very well organised. Standards of presentation, especially graphical work, are generally poor.
- 156 At both key stages, the lowest ability pupils who benefit from constructive support from teachers show satisfactory achievement. However, some average and many higher attaining pupils are not being sufficiently challenged to enable them to achieve their full potential.
- 157 Pupils' skills in using information and communication technology are used to develop and enhance their work. In Year 11 pupils use three-dimensional solid modelling software confidently to explore and visualise their resistant materials designs. Year 10 pupils use publishing software to produce guidance on food safety. Year 7 pupils produce designs for cast pewter jewellery the patterns for which are produced using a CNC milling machine. There is a clear focus on the development of pupils' literacy skills. However their evaluation and planning work is usually very brief, lacking in accuracy and detail. Numeracy is applied satisfactorily and pupils can measure, weigh and make basic calculations with confidence.
- 158 Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. Teachers make objectives for each lesson very clear and pupils are rarely in doubt as to what they should be doing and why they are doing it. There are instances of different types of lessons taking place, which provide interest and involvement for all pupils. This could be seen for instance when Year 7 pupils created a food production line for sandwich making; the use of a mock conveyor belt provided an increased awareness of producing high quality products within time constraints. Year 11 pupils in graphic products working on their own ideas showed a lot of enthusiasm for producing prototypes, which will test out their theories.
- 159 Teaching overall is good, with examples seen of very good teaching. Staff have a

very good subject knowledge and impart a range of tips and hints to assist pupils in the acquisition of skills and knowledge to develop their understanding. Generous use of praise, humour and respect contributes to the good relationships between pupils and teachers, which is a strength of the department. Teachers are very well organised and manage pupils well. Resources are ready to hand and the use of very good technician support is very effective in ensuring that lessons in food proceed at a suitable pace.

160 Individual lesson planning is very good. It is very detailed making clear the objectives for each lesson and the individual needs of many pupils, especially those with special educational needs. The co-ordination of work done by different teachers and the overall departmental planning for what work is to be covered by which teacher, however, are unsatisfactory. There is no mapping of the coverage of the programmes of study. Policies on how skills are to be developed in different areas, which would give a more consistent approach to the way in which work is taught in design and technology, do not exist. The sharing of good practice and strengths within the department needs to be achieved to ensure a greater consistency of approach. Teachers mark work thoroughly in Years 7 to 9 giving some feedback and constructive comments. The accurate use of levels of attainment for assessment is only just being considered and many of the projects undertaken do not allow pupils to achieve higher levels. In Year 10–11 pupils have received some good, mostly verbal, support towards their GCSE projects. However, the formal feedback they receive is rather general and infrequent. They need to have detailed more frequent feedback as to how they can improve work for each objective in order to achieve higher standards.

161 Since the last inspection standards have remained below the national average. Progress in Year 10 and Year 11 is now slightly better than in Years 7 to 9. Teaching is now good or better in almost all lessons. At the time of the last inspection teaching was less than satisfactory in nearly half of lessons. This is a remarkable achievement and would indicate that this should become an improving department as the effects of the better teaching are seen in pupils' performance. The school still does not meet the legal requirements for all pupils to study design and technology in Years 10 and 11, even though some pupils are now formally disapplied from the subject in Year 10. There is now sufficient support for low attaining pupils but there is still a lack of opportunity for the able and creative design technologists. There is a significant improvement in pupils' access to information and communication technology hardware but there are still issues with the quality of the accommodation and resources within food technology.

GEOGRAPHY

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good
- Curriculum planning and organisation are effective with key priorities identified
- Improving attitudes to the subject as evidenced by renewed take-up of geography by pupils at Key Stage 4.

Areas for improvement

- The development of numeracy skills.
- Better application by pupils of knowledge and skills to geographical contexts in order to improve examination results.
- Poor attendance requiring frequent re-induction of pupils.

- 162 The department, following a period of staffing uncertainties and difficulties has now been able to stabilise the leadership and staffing of the subject. A broad and balanced curriculum is offered which meets National Curriculum and chosen examination requirements. Six lessons were observed, one in each year of each key stage together with a scrutiny of pupils' work in both Key Stages 3 and 4.
- 163 Pupils enter the school with a very limited knowledge of the subject in terms of places and locations, and have significant weaknesses in literacy and other basic skills. A literacy strategy is in place and the performance of pupils steadily improves across Key Stage 3 in terms of both oral and written work. Numeracy skills are insufficiently developed. Despite the improvement made, the attainment in Year 9 is below the national average as are pupils' results in the Year 9 statutory assessment. There was no significant difference, in recent results or in work seen, in the performance of boys and girls. Achievement at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. The majority of pupils including those with special educational needs make sound progress in terms of their capabilities. For example, in a Year 8 lesson a group containing a significant number of pupils with special educational needs were building up a profile of tourism in Majorca and using a range of source material well.
- 164 GCSE results have been influenced by a very low take-up of the subject at Key Stage 4 in 2000 and 2001. There have also been issues relating to the staffing of the subject. There were only eight pupil entries in 2000 and only one pupil in 2001 who obtained a B grade. In 1999, the last year of sizeable entries, results were well below the national average. Staffing issues have now been resolved by the school, and arrangements are satisfactory. There is now a renewed take-up of the subject by pupils in the current Years 10 and 11, and steady improvement in entries to the GCSE course. Work seen confirms that attainment although below average at Key Stage 4 is moving in the right direction. Pupils' achievement at Key Stage 4 is satisfactory. Project work based on the local area showed that a significant number of pupils were able to carry out small scale inquiry based on the Rubery shopping area effectively, organise the evidence and justify their conclusions. Most pupils are able to approach map work and other geographical activities with a degree of confidence: a good example involved the Year 11 group using indicators appropriately to assess levels of development.
- 165 Teaching is good overall, and no unsatisfactory lessons were seen. The characteristics of the best lessons were clear objectives, good planning and preparation and effective use of a range of methods and resources. Pupils are encouraged to have good attitudes to the subject and to learning. Examples of effective teaching and learning include a Year 11 lesson where pupils were examining population change and knew how to interpret the data and make decisions using the information provided. In work seen in Year 9, pupils were providing ideas about building a community, also examining the role of the environment and looking at changes in facilities in the local area. The marking of pupils' work is regular and consistent and teachers' comments are positive

and encouraging. Monitoring and assessment of work are effective. There is, however, scope to extend the use of National Curriculum levels at Key Stage 3 to further inform curriculum planning. Teachers also work effectively with in-class support staff who are well briefed and thus can contribute fully to lessons.

- 166 The department, which is located within the humanities faculty, is well managed. Documentation including aims and policies is clear, and targets and priorities are set. Curriculum planning and organisation are good. There is a strong commitment to raise academic standards in a number of ways including strategies for the evaluation and development of the subject.
- 167 There is clear evidence of progress since the last inspection. The under-resourcing of the department has been addressed and good atlases and suitable textbooks are provided for key stages. Initiatives are now in place to introduce information and communication technology to a range of applications within the curriculum at both key stages. Attitudes and behaviour in lessons have significantly improved and the great majority of pupils respond well in lessons. Teacher and teacher-pupil relationships are good. Pupils know what is expected of them and they respond accordingly.

HISTORY

The quality of provision overall is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Pupils' behaviour in lessons.
- Teachers have high expectations that pupils will behave well and work hard.
- Teaching of literacy skills especially in Years 7 to 9.
- Monitoring of the work of the department.

Areas for improvement

- Learning objectives for lessons to be closely linked to stages in learning identified in the National Curriculum and GCSE courses
- Teaching and learning that extends the academic challenge for more able pupils in all lessons.
- A planned and systematic use of information and communication technology to support the teaching and learning of history.
- A planned and systematic range of opportunities to incorporate the spiritual and cultural development of the pupils.

- 168 The subject offers an appropriate course for all pupils in Years 7 to 9 that meets statutory requirements. These pupils have the opportunity to study aspects of history from the Roman times up to the twentieth century making use of a variety of sources of information that include text, video, pictures and computers.
- 169 Pupils in Years 10 and 11 and students in Years 12 and 13 study appropriate courses leading to external examinations. The number of pupils opting to study history in Years 10 and 11 has significantly increased in the last two years. However, the subject has yet to implement a systematic use of information and communication technology to support the learning of all pupils. Similarly, the subject has not yet implemented a cohesive approach to the spiritual and cultural development of pupils.

Both of these features were highlighted at the time of the last inspection.

- 170 The attainment of pupils overall is below national averages although standards achieved by Sixth Form students are satisfactory. Pupils are well supported by teachers who effectively use their subject knowledge to plan and manage their learning enabling them to make progress.
- 171 Standards achieved by pupils by the age of sixteen are well below standards achieved nationally. This was also the judgement made by the last inspection report. Examination results for 2001 reveal that the percentage of pupils attaining the higher grades A*-C was below the national average but higher than the results of many other departments in the school. The percentage of pupils attaining a pass grade A*-G was above the national average.
- 172 In the past two years the percentage of pupils attaining the higher grades has remained well below national performance. However, the percentage of pupils attaining a pass grade has risen from just below to above national performance. In this same period pupil performance in history has been consistently above that of many other subjects in the school.
- 173 Standards achieved by pupils the age of 14 in 2001 are well below those achieved nationally. This was also the judgement made by the last inspection report. The percentage of pupils attaining Level 5 and above is lower than some subjects in the school. The percentage of girls attaining Level 5 and above was higher than boys.
- 174 Standards in the Sixth Form are good but the very small numbers involved makes comparisons with national figures invalid.
- 175 The standard of work being achieved by the current Year 10 and 11 pupils is higher than that achieved in previous years. Higher attaining pupils are now able to explain the causes and consequences of hyperinflation in Weimar Germany. They can also use their historical knowledge and understanding to select and justify which factor they believe contributed most to the collapse of the Weimar government. Lower attaining pupils, including those with statements of special educational needs, display a good knowledge and understanding of the events being studied.
- 176 Overall, the standard of work observed during the inspection of pupils in Years 7 to 9 remains below that achieved nationally. Some higher attaining Year 9 pupils can evaluate historical sources to determine their usefulness, for example, in finding out about factory conditions in the nineteenth century. In many other lessons, however, higher attaining pupils are given insufficient opportunity to extend their thinking and fully develop such skills. For example, in a Year 7 class investigating a mysterious death the pupils spent too long gathering information leaving little time for analysis of the importance or reliability of the sources being used.
- 177 Overall, pupils' progress in learning is satisfactory when measured against their prior attainment. Progress is good in the Sixth Form. The majority of pupils including those with statements of special educational needs are able to recall information from

previous lessons and can use historical terms such as ‘trapper’ or ‘drift mines’ with accuracy and understanding. On occasions some pupils make good progress in lessons. This is particularly the case for lower attaining pupils including those with special educational needs when they are well supported by classroom support teachers and, in one lesson observed, supported by information and communication technology. Progress of higher attaining pupils is restricted in some lessons when the teacher’s planning and use of time have not sufficiently taken into account the learning needs of all pupils. As a result there is not sufficient time given for higher attaining pupils to analyse and evaluate the significance of what they are learning. This was exemplified in a Year 9 higher attaining class studying the development of coal mining.

- 178 The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. In lessons observed the quality of teaching varied from very good to satisfactory. Where teaching is most effective teachers manage the pupils skilfully using stimulating activities that interest the pupils and help them to sustain concentration. In addition, they make effective use of learning support assistants whose time is managed well in order to assess and support the learning of the pupils. In Years 7 to 9 the most effective teaching also makes good use of strategies designed to support the development of the pupils’ literacy skills. Many of these attributes were observed in a Year 8 class examining the importance of symbolism in the reign of Elizabeth I. As a result the behaviour of pupils in most lessons is good. This represents significant progress from the time of the last inspection when poor behaviour and poor teacher management skills led to the disruption of the learning in some classes.
- 179 Where teaching is less effective, teachers’ planning is not sufficiently linked to the progress pupils should make as defined by the National Curriculum or by the requirements of GCSE examinations. As a result, in some lessons teachers leave insufficient time for activities aimed at extending the academic challenge for higher attaining pupils. In addition, there are occasions when teacher explanation and exposition are over long or lacking in clarity and this tends to restrict the progress of the pupils.
- 180 Improvements in the standards of pupils’ behaviour are indicative of the effective leadership and management of the recently appointed subject leader. In the relatively short time the subject leader has been in post an effective monitoring programme of the work of the department has been implemented. Similarly, the subject has developed a good record system built upon performance data and a developing teacher assessment system more closely aligned to National Curriculum expectations. These systems are still in the early stages of implementation but they represent significant improvement since the time of the last inspection and are already being used to set challenging performance targets for the subject.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths:

- Good access for pupils to information and communication technology facilities in the school specialist areas, through the deployment of computers to departments, and growing use of the City Learning Centre by other subjects.
- Strategies for behaviour management.
- Support for pupils with special educational needs in information and communication technology lessons.
- Support from the information and communication technology technician for the maintenance of computers along with support to teachers and their pupils during lessons.

Areas for improvement:

- The school is having difficulty in recruiting a co-ordinator of information and communication technology who will manage the department and resources effectively.
- In particular there is an urgent need for the following developments to be in place:
 - Schemes of work in both key stages to comply with statutory requirements.
 - Assessment at the end of Key Stage 3 and reporting this to parents.
 - analysis of examination results and pupils' performance throughout both key stages in order to set target for pupils.
 - Reporting to parents at the end of Key Stage 3 (non compliance).
 - an internet contract with parents.
 - Delegated responsibility for risk assessment of health and safety.

- 181 Pupils have specialist information and communication technology lessons in Years 7 and 8, a short module within design and technology in Year 9, and a GCSE option in Years 10 and 11. There is growing support for information and communication technology by several subjects across the curriculum. Sources of evidence for the inspection were five lesson observations, one in each year, scrutiny of pupils' work, and discussions with teachers, pupils and the information and communication technology technician.
- 182 Pupils' attainment in GCSE information technology in 2001 showed an improvement over previous years with 14% of pupils attaining grade C for the first time, although overall attainment of grades A*-C is significantly below national averages. The number of pupils achieving grades A*-G is improving but still well below national averages. No records of assessment were available of pupils' attainment in information and communication technology at the end of Year 9.
- 183 In GCSE lessons Year 10 pupils were in the early stages of preparing different tables and data forms for their database work, and in Year 11 pupils were improving their skills of word processing through the compilation of standard letters and data sources for mailmerging documents. The majority of pupils taking GCSE in both years lack independence and are strongly reliant upon their teachers for individual guidance, in particular a significant minority of girls in Year 10 were unwilling to work unaided and this has a negative impact on their progress. Pupils' portfolios from Year 11 show standards which are well below national averages, for example they produce formal business letters which lack appropriate use of language and grammar, and knowledge of layout is weak.

- 184 In Years 7 and 8 pupils follow the same programme of work. The lack of records of previous work by Year 8 pupils impedes their progress. Pupils are developing skills with a spreadsheet. Less able pupils and those who have been absent have been introduced to writing simple formulae for addition and subtraction. They find this difficult but make some progress when they have individual support. More able pupils who can work independently, make better progress in inserting their own formulae onto the spreadsheet and use this to present the data as a bar chart with correctly labelled titles, axes and legends. Pupils' portfolios show some use of word processing, and although attainment at Levels 1 and 2 in communicating information by the majority of less able pupils is well below expectations, it is in line with that expected for their ability. The more able pupils are able to import an image taken from a digital camera for a personal profile document and attainment is in line with expectations for their age.
- 185 In Year 9 pupils follow an information and communication technology/design and technology module and use *Publisher* to prepare templates for a packaging project. The majority of pupils find this too difficult. Some pupils, both those who have been absent and a minority of the more able, find it difficult to access their work during the course of the lesson and make poor progress. However, the majority of pupils make some progress relying strongly on help given by teachers and support staff. A pupil with English as an additional language made good progress with the individual support from a PGCE student.
- 186 Overall, the quality of teaching is unsatisfactory. There is a part-time non-specialist supply teacher who is developing a sound programme of work for Years 7 and 8 with support from a deputy headteacher and local education authority advisers, and a second teacher who also has responsibilities in mathematics. Effective teaching in Key Stage 3 has good strategies for managing pupil behaviour and discipline is maintained throughout the lesson, enabling pupils to make progress with their skill development. The majority of lessons in both key stages contain a series of short activities which maintain pace, and teaching guides to software have been prepared showing the steps pupils can follow while they acquire practical skills, but these are used only by the most able pupils. Teaching points are introduced effectively in both key stages when pupils sit away from computers to listen, thus avoiding distractions, and they return to computers to carry out practical activities. In the majority of Key Stage 3 lessons there is a good support for pupils from the departmental technician and a PGCE student, and in one lesson a learning support assistant. This ensures that all pupils can carry out some of the activities and has a positive effect on progress. However, weaker pupils do not develop long-term skills where they lack opportunities for independent learning. In Key Stage 3 there is good support for pupils with special educational needs. In a minority of lessons where pupils wait for support, or share computers, they become distracted, and behaviour deteriorates impeding their learning. There is a lack of differentiated activities to meet the needs of the wide ability range. Lessons are planned with activities and pace more obviously suited to the needs of the more able pupils and thus teaching input does not meet the immediate needs of the less able pupils who complete work more slowly, or those who have been absent. Marking is weak in Key Stage 4, but there is some good development of assessment procedures in Key Stage 3 with pupils receiving guidance for improvement and making a self assessment of their own performance.

- 187 In Key Stage 3, spreadsheet work supports the development of pupils' numeracy skills, but the activities are not co-ordinated with corresponding work in mathematics. There is good provision for literacy skills, objectives are well displayed, and pupils develop word lists of computer terminology which they learn for spelling tests.
- 188 There have been some improvements since the last inspection but they have been insufficient due almost entirely to staffing problems.
- 189 Three well resourced specialist networked computer rooms are available, with a range of appropriate software, printers, a digital camera, a scanner, and an LCD projector. Computers are deployed to several departments, and the school library. There is access to the world wide web but there is no internet agreement with parents. Some computers are ageing and the school policy for replacement is unclear, although equipment is well maintained by the experienced technician who benefits from training received in his part-time role with the City Learning Centre. During the inspection, the school facilities for information and communication technology were underused. There are insufficient textbooks. However, teachers develop appropriate teaching materials and there is an appropriate range of up-to-date books on information and communication technology in the school library. Computer rooms have been well designed for health and safety requirements, but there is no delegated responsibility for risk assessment.
- 190 The school benefits from access to the new City Learning Centre, a state of the art computer facility funded by the Excellence in Cities project and available to 18 schools. Several departments including English, design and technology, history, modern foreign languages and physical education use the City Learning Centre where teachers are supported in teaching and integrating information and communication technology into their subject work. When possible, pupils use the City Learning Centre to access the internet at lunchtimes. The lack of computer clubs in the information and communication technology department means that pupils are unable to continue or catch up with their class work. Use of information and communication technology is being developed across the curriculum, but in the special educational needs, mathematics and art and design departments use is well below that expected. Information and communication technology training for staff under the New Opportunities Fund has had a slow start. There is a need for a more systematic approach by the senior management team to the use of the school's information and communication technology facilities.
- 191 The school has been unable to recruit an information and communication technology co-ordinator and this has a negative impact on the management of the subject. The lack of schemes of work in information and communication technology, or an audit of cross-curricular support, means that the full National Curriculum requirements are not met. There is no assessment of pupils' information and communication technology capabilities at the end of Key Stage 3 and thus it cannot be reported to parents. Examination results are not fully analysed, inhibiting the ability of teachers to plan for improvement in attainment. Teaching practice is not yet monitored.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching and use of support staff.
- Assessment and monitoring of progress.
- Teamwork in curriculum planning.
- Creating an ethos which values learning and sets high expectations for behaviour.
- Leadership and management of the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Full compliance with national requirements in Key Stage 4.
- Long-term planning for Spanish.
- Raising the level of pupils' speaking skills.
- Developing pupils as independent users of the foreign language.

192 All pupils follow a course in French and Spanish in Year 7 and choose one of these to follow in Years 8 and 9. Currently only French is available at Key Stage 4.

193 Attainment has been well below the level of national expectation in recent years, with no pupils achieving above Level 4 at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2001 and only one pupil out of ten entries achieving above Grade D at GCSE in French. Entry numbers for GCSE have been very low but all pupils entered over the last three years have achieved a pass grade. Girls have performed better than boys but their results have still been well below national average figures for girls.

194 Standards amongst pupils currently at the school are improving and pupils are achieving well based on their prior attainment. The higher attainers in both Spanish and French are working at levels of national expectation for their age which is a significant improvement on recent years. In French in Year 9 these higher attaining pupils produce good quality extended writing about themselves and their interests when writing draft letters for pen friends in France. Lower attaining pupils in Year 9 can write two or three short sentences with guidance and support. They are able to make brief statements using memorised phrases. By Year 8 in the pupils' fourth term of Spanish the acquisition of new language and rate of progress are appropriate. Higher attainers are beginning to use phrases from memory, combining new and familiar language in speech and writing. The rate of work and recall amongst lower attainers is more rapid than is seen amongst similar pupils in other schools. A small number of higher attainers in the Year 11 group of 10 pupils are writing at levels commensurate with higher tier GCSE, producing accurate complex sentences in a range of tenses on topics such as tourist brochures and healthy living. The proportion of pupils gaining grade C or above at GCSE is set to improve on the previous year. However, due to a history of disrupted teaching when in Key Stage 3 gaps in knowledge of vocabulary limit the attainment of many of the pupils in Key Stage 4 and written work is often limited in expression, using a narrow range of vocabulary and structure. Pupils at both key stages lack confidence in speaking independently in French or Spanish and attainment in this skill is low.

195 Excellent progress is often achieved in lessons due to the high quality of lesson

planning and delivery. Pupils move rapidly on through word and sentence level work to memorisation tasks and guided use of the language learned. In a Year 8 Spanish class with a large number of pupils with special educational needs pupils made rapid gains in understanding new vocabulary and were able to use short phrases from memory by the end of the lesson. Pupils' attitudes towards language learning are very good. They are keen to be involved in learning activities, are engaged by the variety and pace of the teaching and are able to maintain concentration throughout the lesson. They clearly do not approve when any minor disruption occurs.

- 196 The quality of teaching is very good. All lessons observed were graded good or better. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good and augmented by the effective use of a French assistant to provide native speaker input. Expectations are high, both of academic performance and behaviour. There is some variation in the use of target language, depending on the ability level of pupils, but when used well it raises the level of challenge for pupils. Long-term planning in the schemes of work and lesson planning are of a very high standard. Lesson objectives are stated clearly at the start of the lesson and these objectives are either summarised or evaluated with the pupils at the end of the lesson. There are clear lines of progression in the work pupils do with tasks set building well on prior learning. Activities are varied and stimulating with little or no loss of time in transitions. Pupils are fully involved in understanding the learning process and this gives added purpose to their language learning.
- 197 Management and deployment of support staff are excellent. This is a key factor in the success of lessons. The subject teachers receive excellent support from the learning support assistant and French assistant who play a full role in lesson planning and the preparation of learning materials. This was seen to work to particularly good effect in a Year 9 French lesson where the learning support assistant worked with all pupils in small groups to give intensive practice in reading and writing whilst the French assistant worked with the same groups to develop their speaking skills. The lead teacher in this lesson presented new language in a way which took full account of pupils' preferred learning styles. Teachers have good control of pupil behaviour and are very skilful in dealing calmly with any disruption, focusing pupil attention on the priority given to learning and respect for others.
- 198 Marking in exercise books is thorough and helpful, identifying for pupils the next steps in learning. Policy and practice in assessment are exemplary. Pupils are aware of their levels of attainment and what they need to do to move on. They are fully involved in setting performance targets and are assisted in evaluating their own learning needs. Pupils are shown the relevance of language learning through pen friendships, e-mail links and visits to France. Curriculum enrichment has been provided by the visit of a French theatre company.
- 199 The department is extremely well led and efficiently managed by a most committed and imaginative head of department who profits from very effective support from the head of faculty. Strengths and weaknesses are clearly identified and the overriding priority of changing attitudes to language learning has been directly addressed. There is a need to move towards full compliance with statutory orders at Key Stage 4 and plan for the further development of Spanish over the next three years.
- 200 The department has made tremendous improvements since the last inspection through

the commitment and dedication of high quality specialist teachers and support staff, ably led and managed by the head of department. Attainment is improving and moving closer to national norms. Attitudes towards the subject are now very positive. The quality of teaching is never less than good and often very good or excellent, with thorough planning and effective use of a wide range of resources. There are comprehensive schemes of work in place and pupil progress is supported by a most effective assessment policy. Development plans are closely linked to school priorities and spending is well targeted. Statutory requirements are fully met at Key Stage 3 is but there are still some gaps at Key Stage 4. Leadership and management are now very good as are monitoring and evaluation of the department's work.

MUSIC

Overall, provision for music is **very good**.

Strengths

- The quality of teachers' planning, teaching and management of pupils.
- The management of the department.
- The teaching by instrumental teachers.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in music lessons.
- The teaching of oracy and literacy through musical activities.

Areas for improvement:

- The integration of music technology into the music curriculum
- Schemes of work to indicate more clearly expected learning outcomes;
- Assessment information to be clearly linked to National Curriculum assessment levels.

201 Music is taught to all pupils in Key Stage 3 and to those pupils in Key Stage 4 who opt to follow the GCSE music course. Since the last inspection, numbers choosing to continue with music beyond Key Stage 3 have increased substantially. In the present Year 11 there are 32 pupils following the GCSE music course. This is well above the national average for a school of this size. The significant number of extracurricular activities and the range of specialist instrumental teachers who visit the school during the week enrich the music curriculum for many children. The evidence base for the music report consists of the observation of one lesson from each of Years 7, 9, 10 and 11 and two instrumental lessons. In addition limited, recent recordings of pupils' composing and performing were made available. No work from previous years was available for inspection.

202 GCSE results in music in 2001 were well below the national average and represented a significant decline from those achieved in 1999 and 2000. A factor in this decline was the previous music teacher leaving at the end of the Easter term and the school

being unable to appoint a replacement until the new academic year. For the same reason there were no formal Key Stage 3 assessment for pupils in 2001.

- 203 Pupils' standards in music on entering the school are below national expectations and at present remain low throughout their time in school. Progress from year to year is erratic with some work in Year 8 being better than that achieved in Year 9. There are particularly low standards in Year 11. This has not been helped by little of the pupils' written and recorded work having survived the transition from the previous academic year during major changes in teaching staff. Recordings of Year 7 pupils demonstrated their ability to perform simple tunes. However, there was often a lack of fluency and continuity in these performances with many hesitations and errors. Year 8 recordings of the same music demonstrated some progress in pupils' technical skills and a few pupils could combine their performance of the melody with another's performance of a harmony part. 'Blues' recordings by Year 9 pupils showed that whilst most pupils could play a 'walking bass' part reasonably fluently, most were unable to combine this with the blues chord pattern or melody even when these were played by other pupils.
- 204 Teaching by the recently appointed music teacher that was observed during the inspection was never less than very good and in a Year 9 lesson was excellent. Teaching is characterised by very high expectations of pupils' behaviour and the setting of demanding standards for work. Planning clearly focuses on improving pupils' learning and understanding in music and excellent questioning helps pupils to remember what they have done in previous lessons and to use that learning to move forward. Lessons are very well structured. Pupils work in groups with a clear idea of what they need to achieve and the time they have to accomplish the task. Particular efforts are made by the teacher to include pupils with special educational needs. For example, in a Year 10 lesson the teacher used her own musical skills to ensure that a simple composition by a pupil was heard to best musical advantage. An especial strength of the teaching is the way in which pupils' literacy and oracy skills are developed through music learning. In a Year 7 lesson, for example, pupils explored the meaning of the word 'onomatopoeia' and then used this learning to perform music made up of onomatopoeic words. Pupils are involved in assessing their own and others' work. This provides further opportunities for pupils' musical learning as well as the development of their social skills.
- 205 A consequence of this very good teaching is that pupils typically make great strides during the course of a lesson. In a Year 10 GCSE lesson, pupils began with a very tentative performance of Pachelbel's *Canon*. However, by the end of the lesson they were playing with technical assurance and secure ensemble and a sense of enjoyment and involvement with the music. Similarly in a Year 9 'Blues' lesson pupils performed walking bass, chords and melody with confidence and skill which was markedly in contrast to their tentative performances recorded a few weeks earlier.
- 206 Teaching in the two instrumental lessons observed was of equally high quality. A good guitar lesson demonstrated how composition and improvisation can be used effectively to help pupils to improve their instrumental skills. In a very good steel pan lesson, pupils from a wide age range performed with confidence and a good sense of style.

- 207 The management of the department is very good. The new head of department, supported by the senior management team, has quickly and clearly identified the key areas for development and has established high expectations for standards and behaviour in lessons. A new scheme of work has been introduced which is clearly linked to the National Curriculum. Assessment systems are being effectively used as a means of raising standards. However, the scheme of work does not as yet clearly identify the musical learning aims of each module and the way in which these are to be assessed. Most importantly, the department has not yet developed strategies for the integration of music technology into the curriculum as a means of raising standards of attainment.
- 208 Music was not reported on in the last inspection. However, the introduction of very good teaching and the new schemes of work and strategies for assessment that are in the process of being implemented are already beginning to have a positive impact upon musical standards.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Leadership and management of the subject are good.
- Long-term planning is good.
- GCSE results have improved significantly.
- The contribution the subject makes to the improvement of pupils' literacy skills is good.

Areas for improvement

- Short-term planning that focuses on intended learning outcomes for different groups of pupils.
- The development of specific criteria for assessing pupils' progress through using a National Curriculum levels.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, social and cultural development through physical education.

- 209 When pupils join the school in Year 7 their standards of attainment are well below average. This is true for both girls and boys. By the end of Year 9 the standards they attain in most activities remains below the level expected for their age, though they have made sound progress in their learning. In a Year 8 dance lesson, for example, girls showed a clear ability to understand the meaning of an adapted story they were using as a stimulus and to choreography a short motif in pairs. They used changes of speed, level and direction well. The standard in football is broadly average whilst in most other activities it is below average.
- 210 Throughout Key Stage 4 pupils continue to make sound progress but by the end of Year 11, overall standards remain below the level found in other schools nationally. GCSE examination results, for those opting for an examination course in the subject, have risen steadily since the last inspection. In 2000, results for higher A*-C grades were well below national averages, but in 2001 there was a significant improvement

and, although results remained below average, they were much closer to the national level. In both years the department achieved a 100% pass rate for grades A*-G and was in line with national figures. Results indicate a significant difference between the performance of girls and boys. Girls are under-represented and tend to under-achieve at examination level.

- 211 Across both key stages the majority of pupils make good progress in their learning during each lesson, but this is generally not sustained over long periods. In many lessons a significant proportion of pupils on register are absent. When linked to poor attitudes to learning by some pupils and generally poor listening skills, this partly explains why pupils do not make progress at a faster rate. This was the case at the time of the last inspection.
- 212 Pupils learn best in dance where they are presented with stimulating challenges that require creative and open-ended responses. In other areas of the curriculum, where the development of more specific skills and techniques are required, pupils learn less well. This is because they are unable to sustain motivation if they do not achieve immediate success and their behaviour then tends to deteriorate to unacceptable levels. In GCSE theory lessons, for example, all but the most able are unable to cope with the more abstract concepts, but were content to spend time on practical learning activities. There are significant differences between girls and boys, with girls generally being the better learners because they tend to listen better and have a more positive attitude.
- 213 Teaching is satisfactory overall, with some very good and excellent teaching seen in dance, and good teaching in a Year 10 GCSE lesson on the physiology of muscles and a Year 11 GCSE badminton lesson. Strengths in teaching across the subject are found in well-organised lessons and teachers' high expectations of pupils' performance and behaviour. Teachers' planning, use and emphasis of key vocabulary for the development of literacy skills and their management of pupils' behaviour are also strong features. Where weaknesses were identified it often related to a lack of focus on intended learning outcomes for pupils with different levels of attainment. This is evident in the lack of targets for learning set during lessons, the end-of-lesson review sessions and the marking of GCSE written work. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into activities and teachers work very hard to meet both their needs and those of the more able pupils.
- 214 The curriculum meets statutory requirements and provides a broad and balanced programme in Key Stages 3 and 4. The introduction of dance and of outdoor and adventurous activities is making an important contribution to improvements in the subject. Schemes of work are comprehensive and now identify learning objectives as well as ideas for developing literacy skills. However, the focus in teachers' plans on what content is to be covered rather than the knowledge, skills and understanding to be learned is a weakness. Provision for pupils' moral development is satisfactorily met through reinforcing concepts of fair play, right and wrong, playing to the rules and respecting the referee's decisions. Provision for pupils' spiritual, social and cultural development through physical education is a weakness. More could be done to enable pupils to consider and to reflect on the impact of their actions on others. The department makes a valuable contribution to the school's extracurricular programme

and there is a good balance in these between recreational activities and school teams. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme provides different opportunities for pupils who will benefit from a broader range of personal challenges and disciplines. Plans to join with other schools to compete locally at rugby league is a positive development. The department makes effective use of the school's assessment and monitoring process, but has yet to develop specific criteria for assessing pupils' progress through a National Curriculum level and to use those assessments to make decisions about the planned curriculum for groups and individuals.

- 215 Accommodation and resourcing are satisfactory and the department is benefiting from recent refurbishment. Library provision to support pupils' independent study at examination level is insufficient.
- 216 Leadership provides very effective direction for the department. The monitoring of teaching and learning is developing and this is leading to the sharing of good practice. The physical education department now has a good team. There is a very positive ethos in the department and a shared commitment to improve. Weaknesses are evident in strategic development planning particularly in identifying the key priorities for the department and in establishing clear success criteria against which to measure progress.
- 217 The department has improved on many since the last inspection. Statutory requirements, including risk assessments, are now met. Progress has been made in long-term planning, monitoring of teaching and learning now takes place and there has been a broadening of extracurricular provision. However, little progress has been made in developing pupils' ability to sustain concentration and effort or use their initiative.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The provision for religious education is **good**.

Strengths

- The overall quality of teaching.
- The quality of teaching and support, particularly for lower ability pupils and pupils that have special educational need.
- The day to day assessment and knowledge of each pupil; and the planning of lessons to meet their needs.

Areas for improvement

- Raising the overall attainment of pupils.
- Increasing opportunities for pupils to reflect and develop the skills of forming and supporting their own views and opinions.
- Increasing opportunities for more able pupils to be able to show initiative through research and activities which require sustained or extended writing.
- Further increasing the range and use made of resources particularly text books, artefacts, visual material and information and communication technology.

- 218 All pupils follow a religious education course based on the Birmingham Agreed Syllabus. There has been no GCSE course for the last few years although the school has just recently introduced a GCSE short course. The present head of department has only been in post for a short time but has made a significant impact in raising the profile of the subject with pupils.
- 219 The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is well below the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils make good progress so that by the end of Year 9, although the attainment of pupils is still below the expectations of the agreed syllabus it is no longer well below. The attainment of pupils by the end of Year 11 is also below local expectations. However, there are no recent GCSE results or any other information available in order to assess standards against national figures. The low attainment levels of pupils on entry to the school together with the only recent appointment of an effective teacher of religious education largely explains the pupils' low levels of attainment.
- 220 Pupils by the age of 16 have a rudimentary, factual knowledge of different religious traditions. Often this knowledge is insecure and lacking in detail. They are able to refer to aspects of religious life like church, Bible, Jesus, Muhammad, the Qur'an, the mosque but often their knowledge is sparse and sometimes inaccurate.
- 221 Pupils do have some grasp of religious values and motives but most pupils' understanding is vague and does not show specific knowledge of, or insight into, a religion. For example, one girl in Year 9 while learning about Islamic prayer was asked to suggest a reason why Muslims prayed. She suggested that it was because 'they believe in God'.
- 222 Pupils are prepared to express their own views and make personal evaluative judgements. However, most pupils lack formal skills to express themselves in a clear and persuasive manner. Many students feel it is sufficient to state an opinion and require prompting to identify reasons to support their view.
- 223 Teaching overall is good. Often the teaching is very good and sometimes it is excellent. The planning of lessons is thorough and frequently it is very imaginative. The pace of the lessons and management of the pupils are often excellent. The pupils for most of the time are required to be engaged in the lessons with questions which are snappy, neatly structured and supported with clues and hints as to the answer the pupils might offer. The pupils are usually given a variety of different tiered activities and very effective use is made of support staff. All pupils make good progress. Good use is made of a range of resources. For example, pupils in Year 9 after a brief introduction to the five 'pillars of Islam' were organised into groups. Each group was asked to research one of the five pillars. Some groups were directed towards a CD-ROM package, another group was asked to study a collection of artefacts and information cards, while another group used text books and posters. The aims of the lessons are typically well shared with the pupils. Excellent use is made of the plenary session during which the pupils very effectively reinforce their learning by feeding back their work. Pupils are often interested, engaged and frequently enthusiastic.
- 224 Although the teaching of religious education is a real strength a large proportion of the

work engages the pupils in factual or descriptive knowledge. Some of this is very creative with pupils writing rap songs and imaginary diaries. However, activities which more specifically require thoughtful analysis, interpretation or explanation are more limited. Sometimes pupils misconstrue potentially more demanding activities and turn them into descriptive opportunities. For example, pupils in Year 8 after looking at the story of The Fall in Genesis Chapter 2, did not represent in their response the theme of a marred relationship or flawed human existence. Instead in an improvised drama based on ignoring a parental deadline and stopping out late, the story of The Fall becomes an everyday story of being naughty and not doing what you've been told.

- 225 Although pupils are regularly asked to evaluate and express their own opinion such opportunities are relatively under-developed. Opportunities to extend pupils by requiring them to reflect and develop ideas in more depth are insufficiently used and the spiritual aspects of what it means to be human are not given sufficient priority. Whilst different religions and cultures are studied, many pupils have only a limited appreciation of the impact of different cultures on everyday life .
- 226 Although the department is now attempting to extend pupils, particularly the more able, with structured writing frames, research assignments and extended writing opportunities, more needs to be done. Currently there is only limited use made of investigative work to enable pupils to develop independent research skills.
- 227 The management and leadership of the subject are good. The monitoring and support of non-specialist staff is satisfactory although the discussion of classroom activities and the dissemination of specialist skills is an area for improvement.
- 228 In response to the last inspection very good progress has been made, particularly since the opportunity of a new head of department. The quality of teaching has greatly improved. A greater variety of teaching, using a variety of resources and strategies like role-play, drama, music, artefacts and information and communication technology have been introduced. The negative attitude of the pupils has been reversed. The attainment of pupils in both key stages has risen. The documentation and planning generally have improved. Finally, after a lapse of a number of years external accreditation in the form of GCSE short course has been re-introduced.