

INSPECTION REPORT

**ADMIRAL LORD NELSON SECONDARY
SCHOOL**

Portsmouth, Hants

LEA area: Portsmouth

Unique reference number: 116476

Headteacher: Ms D Smith

Reporting inspector: Mike Young
4345

Dates of inspection: 28 January – 01 February 2002

Inspection number: 242884

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Admiral Lord Nelson Secondary School

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 to 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Admiral Lord Nelson Secondary School
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Portsmouth

Hampshire

Postcode: PO3 5XT

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Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of governors: Patricia Brooks

Date of previous inspection: 02/06/1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
4345	M Young	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? How high are standards – the school's results and pupils' achievements? How well are pupils taught? How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
13895	A Smith	Lay inspector		How high are the standards – pupils' attitudes, values and personal development? How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
4908	I Farquhar	Team inspector	Mathematics	
3538	D Wheatley	Team inspector	English	
11481	L Lindsay-Clift	Team inspector	Equal opportunities; science	
19278	R Allan	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT)	
11190	W Burke	Team inspector	Art	
8530	J Adams	Team inspector	Design technology	
17618	M Hillary	Team inspector	Geography	
18032	I Randall	Team inspector	History	
16795	M Higgins	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
15866	J Forster	Team inspector	Music	
1085	J Laver	Team inspector	Physical education	
30427	F Shuffle-Botham	Team inspector	Religious education	
22042	J Challands	Team inspector	Special educational needs; English as an additional language	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Admiral Lord Nelson is an 11-16 mixed school of 950 pupils, 469 boys and 481 girls. The school has developed rapidly since the last inspection (1997), when it consisted of years 7 and 8 only, and is now housed in an impressive new building situated next to Langstone Harbour, Portsmouth. The pupils' attainment on entry is now broadly average where they were clearly below average in 1997. The school is oversubscribed. Pupil mobility is low. But on socio-economic indicators such as the poverty mapping conducted by the local authority, the intake is still below average. The school has identified boys' writing as a problem on entry.

Fifteen pupils are from a non-white background and 9 (or 1 per cent) have English as an additional language, but none are at an early stage of development. Nine per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals and 26 per cent are identified as having special educational needs, which is above average. There is a complete range of needs, with moderate learning difficulties and behaviour both well represented. The number of statemented pupils is increasing, from 1.5 per cent last year to 4 per cent currently, with the school admitting pupils with increasingly complex needs. The school's rapid growth has combined with some rapid promotions to lead to significant staff turnover; 24 teachers left the school and 32 were appointed in the last 2 years.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Overall, Admiral Lord Nelson is a very good school. Pupils entering the school with average or below standards make very good progress to achieve well above average standards at GCSE. Teaching is good overall, with a high proportion of very good teaching in years 10 and 11. The additional support that pupils receive outside of lesson time creates very good learning opportunities for pupils at the school. The school's senior leadership is excellent, with the headteacher and senior team fulfilling most of the hopes that the governors and the community placed in this new school. Given the standards achieved, the quality of provision and not least the extended use of the very good facilities by the school and community, the school gives very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Outstanding Leadership of the headteacher, governors and key senior staff
- Good teaching and very good support for learning outside the classroom
- Very good achievement at GCSE overall and in science in particular
- Promotion of very positive attitudes and very good relationships
- Excellent extra-curricular opportunities and a fair deal for all pupils
- Very good provision for pupils' moral and social development
- Very good monitoring and support of pupils' academic performance and welfare
- Providing very good information to parents on pupil progress

What could be improved

- What boys' achieve in design technology at Key Stage 4
- Standards in music at Key Stage 3 and history at both key stages
- Provision for religious education at Key Stage 4

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was inspected in 1997, prior to the move to the current building and when only two years (7 and 8) attended. It was judged to be a good school with a lot of potential, but without the results to demonstrate this publicly. Since then there has been rapid improvement, with good standards of teaching maintained and standards attained now well above average at GCSE. The previously identified 'Key Issues' have been effectively dealt with except for the daily act of collective worship, which the school still does not provide.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
		2000	2001	2001	
GCSE examinations	[N/A]	[C]	[A]	[A]	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E

Pupils achieve standards at GCSE which are well above those that might have been expected from their standards on entry. By the end of Key Stage 3, at 14 years, results in the 2001 tests were above the national average for the expected level (5) in each of the 3 core subjects of English, mathematics and science. While there are not yet sufficient results from the school to determine a trend, standards at 14 years have certainly improved over 2000, in each of the core subjects. Standards attained in 2001 were broadly in line with schools in a similar context, that is with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to a free school meal. Girls' standards are significantly higher than boys' in English on entry, notably in writing, but this gap is beginning to close by the time they reach the end of year 9. Overall pupil achievement is good by the end of year 9, reflecting the effort that is put into motivating them and into fostering good learning habits.

Standards at GCSE in 2001 were well above the national average, whether measured by the proportion of pupils getting 5 or more A* to C or A* to G grades, or by the average points score achieved by them. The gap between boys' and girls' performance at GCSE in 2001 continued to close and is now about half the national gap. This represents particularly good achievement for the boys, given where they started from, but the average points score for both boys and girls improved significantly over the level achieved in 2000. The school is enabling its pupils to reach standards well above those in a similar context, with very good support for pupils' learning out of lesson time making a major contribution to this success.

The school has exceeded its own, challenging targets and there is every reason to believe this will continue. Of the subjects, standards in history and music are below average at the end of Key Stage 3 and also in history at GCSE, by which stage standards are above or well above average for most subjects. Pupil achievement in science and art is very good for the older pupils, while boys underachieve on some design and technology courses. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress overall, achieving more than might have been expected from their standards on entry.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are very positive about their school and about learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good overall, there are a small minority who misbehave but they are effectively dealt with. Temporary exclusions are above average.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are very good. Pupils respond very well to the many opportunities they are given to take responsibility.
Attendance	Attendance is good and very well managed, pupils are punctual.

The pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. This standard is better than that reported at the last inspection and has a positive impact on pupils' progress, making an important contribution to the standards they achieve. A small minority of pupils find it difficult to concentrate and mar a few lessons by inappropriate behaviour. However, the school is an orderly and well-mannered community in which the majority of pupils display good standards of behaviour both in lessons and around the school. Temporary exclusions are above average, but are used appropriately to maintain high standards of behaviour. There was very little evidence of bullying, of sexism or racism in the school. Relationships are very good and contribute greatly to the friendly and open ethos of the school. Attendance is good and procedures for monitoring are very good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11
Quality of teaching	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 overall, with around one-third of lessons having very good teaching. There are hardly any unsatisfactory lessons and none at Key Stage 4. The proportion of very good and excellent lessons also rises at Key Stage 4, reflecting the effort teachers are putting into maximising achievement on GCSE courses. Teaching is satisfactory in mathematics at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. It is good in English at Key Stage 3. There is consistently very good teaching in science through years 7 to 11 and in a number of other subjects for Key Stage 4: English, history, languages, textiles, physical education and art. Teaching is good in all other subjects at key stage 4, except information and communication technology, where it is satisfactory. The school provides extensive opportunities to learn outside of lesson time. The school knows its pupils and provides accordingly.

Within lessons, a key factor which helps pupils make good progress is the very good subject knowledge of teachers. A great deal of thought goes into the most effective means of capturing the pupils' interest. The feedback provided to pupils, to enable them to improve their work, is another strength of the teaching. A variety of resources is well used to support learning, not least learning support assistants. Pupils know clearly how they are doing in their subject and what they have to do to get better. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils. In the very few unsatisfactory lessons, all with younger pupils, expectations were not

as high and pupils not as well managed as was generally the case.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The quality of the curriculum is good, with very good access and support.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good overall, there are also very good instances of direct support in classrooms.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Of the nine pupils with EAL none are at an early stage of development; their progress is comparable with that of other pupils.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Provision for moral and social development is very good. Provision for cultural development is good and for spiritual development it is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Care for the pupils is very good in all respects.

The school offers a good range of learning opportunities. Aspects of the provision for pupils are very good or, in the case of extra-curricular activities, excellent. But there are also weakness in provision at Key Stage 4, in religious education and in information and communication technology, where statutory requirements are not met, in that not all aspects are covered by all pupils. The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship and the limited time available for religious education for years 10 and 11 does not cover all aspects of the agreed syllabus. Conversely, a particular strength of the curriculum is the equal access offered to all, which the school works hard to ensure.

The monitoring of pupils' academic and personal development is very good. Procedures for the assessment of pupils' academic progress are good. Parents are very supportive of the school. They are pleased that their child is expected to work hard and achieve their best.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership of the headteacher and key staff is excellent, with an outstanding contribution from the headteacher in achieving and maintaining the kind of school the governors wanted Admiral Lord Nelson to be.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors have made an exceptional contribution to the development of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Monitoring, evaluation and willingness to act on the results are excellent.
The strategic use of resources	The use of resources is very good and the school makes purchases in accordance with the principles of Best Value.

The leadership of the school is excellent. The school is clearly focussed on continuously

improving standards, teaching and the care and support given to pupils. Teaching and pupil progress are both very well monitored. Leadership is also good, or frequently very good, at the level of middle management. Good teamwork, very good leadership on effective teaching strategies and the capacity to lead rapid improvements in standards are among the strengths of the leadership of the school. The Literacy and Numeracy Strategy has been successfully introduced at Key Stage 3

The school has been affected by the current national difficulties in recruiting and retaining new teaching staff. However, such is the commitment of its experienced staff and the strength of its induction procedures, that the high turnover of teachers has had remarkably little adverse impact on pupil achievement. Since the last inspection the school has moved to a new purpose-built site next to Langston Harbour, which provides very good accommodation and facilities for the school and the community.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High expectations of what pupils can achieve. • The leadership of the headteacher. • The range of activities outside lessons. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homework, particularly in year 8. • The quality of information for parents. • The behaviour of a small minority of pupils.

A number of parents, at the pre-inspection meeting and in writing, were concerned that after a good start, the amount of homework fell in year 8. The inspectors found that the school had already realised this and taken action in the previous term, so that the homework set was now appropriate. Some parents were concerned about the information they received; at the parents' meeting this seemed more about regular newsletters than reports. Parents were very complimentary about a recently introduced parents' evening format that involved both parent and pupil. Inspectors found the quality of information to be very good and could only conclude that some parents simply were not receiving it. Parents also said that a minority of lessons could be disrupted by the most challenging pupils. While actual instances of this were very rare, inspectors could see the potential for disruption that existed through some of the more challenging pupils, though mainly very well contained by the very good ethos and effective classroom management. Inspectors endorse the parents' positive views of the school, which are clear strengths.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

Results and Pupil Achievements

1. Pupils achieve standards at GCSE which are well above those which might have been expected, given their standards on entry. The attainment of the 2001 intake was broadly average. Attainment on entry has improved from below average over recent years, with improving Key Stage results, though performance at the higher levels is not yet as encouraging as performance at the expected standard of level 4. Cognitive ability tests confirm this broadly average picture, but with weaknesses such as scores below the national median for language. The school identifies the quality of boys' writing as a problem on entry.

2. By the end of Key Stage 3, at 14 years, results in the 2001 tests were above the national average for the expected level (5) in each of the 3 core subjects of English, mathematics and science. The average points score that pupils achieved was broadly in line with the national average, however, reflecting a weaker achievement at the higher levels (of 6 and above) in English and science. While there are not yet sufficient results from the school to determine a trend, test results at 14 have certainly improved over 2000, in each of the core subjects. The greatest improvement was in English, where standards attained were below average in the 2000 tests. What pupils achieved in 2001 was also broadly in line with schools in a similar context, that is with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to a free school meal. Girls' standards are significantly higher than boys' in English on entry, notably in writing, but this gap is beginning to close by the time they reach the end of year 9. Overall, pupil achievement is good by the end of year 9, reflecting the effort that is put into motivating them and into fostering good learning habits.

3. Standards at GCSE in 2001 were well above the national average, whether measured by the proportion of pupils getting 5 or more A* to C or A* to G grades, or by the average points score achieved by them. The school encourages all pupils to achieve their best at GCSE and is reluctant to take any pupil out of a full GCSE programme. The gap between boys' and girls' performance at GCSE in 2001 continued to close and is now about half the national gap. This represents particularly good achievement for the boys, given where they started from, but the average points score for both boys and girls improved significantly over the level achieved in 2000. The school is enabling its pupils to reach standards well above those in a similar context, with very good support out of lesson time making a major contribution to this success.

4. The school exceeded its targets for 2001. The target for 5 or more A* to C grades in 2002 is 5 per cent below this, reflecting the lower standards of that cohort of pupils on entry and at Key Stage 3. Nevertheless, the school aspires to exceed its target again next summer. While GCSE results in 2000 were well below what the pupils achieved in 2001, particularly for the higher grades of A* to C, the value added to pupils' attainments from the point of entry was comparable.

5. In English at Key Stage 3, pupils' achievement is good. They are given a firm foundation in reading and analysing an appropriate range of fiction and non-fiction books. Wide reading encourages insight into character, plot and theme. This work contributes significantly to the development of their oral and writing skills. Standards of presentation could be better across the Key Stage, however. This weakness particularly affects boys'

writing. Standards are above average by the end of Key Stage 4. The gap between boys' and girls' achievement is less than that found nationally owing to the concerted efforts to address the weakness in boys' writing. The achievement of most of the pupils in English, including those with special needs, is good, that of the most able is very good.

6. In previous years in mathematics, standards have been below national averages, but the school has been successful in bringing standards above the national average by the end of Key Stage 3. Previously, boys did better than girls in the national tests, but now there is no difference between them. This improvement in standards continues into Key Stage 4, with good achievement by pupils. Last year, GCSE results were well above the national average; again boys and girls did equally well. During Key Stage 3, pupils improve their basic number skills year on year and they begin to see how shape and space are used. Measurement and data-handling skills improve sufficiently to help their work in science, geography, history and design and technology. At Key Stage 4, pupils improve their skills and use them successfully in coursework: they carry out mathematical investigations, and make and test hypotheses. Standards in science are good by the end of key stage 3 and very good by the end of Key Stage 4, with very good achievement by pupils in this subject. Pupils make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of scientific facts and are provided with good opportunities at Key Stage 4 to undertake practical investigations.

7. For the other subjects of the curriculum, current standards in year 9 are above average in art, with good achievement in this subject. They are broadly average for other subjects except history and music, where they are below what might be expected at this stage. Given the progress they have made from entry, what pupils are achieving is good in most subjects except history, design and technology and music, where achievement is more average. Current standards in year 11 are rather better than in year 9; standards in history are still below average, as they are in some aspects of design and technology, but standards are good in the majority of subjects and very good in art. Judging by its track record, the school will succeed in raising the standards pupils achieve at GCSE even higher by the time they take the examination. What pupils achieve is similarly good across most subjects, excepting design and technology and in ICT where it is more average. Though standards are below average in history, year 11 pupils are making good progress given where they have come from in year 10. In contrast, boys underachieve in some design technology courses.

8. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress overall, achieving more than might have been expected from their standards on entry, in some cases much more. The progress of pupils who are supported in lessons is frequently very good. The school uses withdrawal from lessons sparingly, but where this was seen progress was also very good, thanks to the skill of the learning assistants in helping pupils to organise time effectively and progress in the basic skills. There are 9 pupils for whom English is not their first language, but none of these is at any early stage of developing their English language and their good progress reflects that of other pupils. Standards of literacy and numeracy are good at Key Stage 4, and sound at Key Stage 3. The impact of the National Strategy in year 7 is encouraging pupils to respond and make links to their previous learning and, particularly in English, there is some good progress.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

9. The pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. This standard is better than that reported at the last inspection and where teaching is good or better has a positive impact on pupils' progress making an important contribution to the standards they achieve. The pupils' attitude to school is also very good and the majority of pupils work enthusiastically, are well motivated and co-operate well with each other and other adults in the classroom. Many demonstrate high levels of concentration and are keen to complete work. However, a small

minority of pupils find it difficult to concentrate. They are inattentive and mar a few lessons by inappropriate behaviour. When this happens the quality of learning is sometimes restricted for those pupils. The few instances of disruption within lessons are most noticeable where expectations are not as high as usual.

10. The school is an orderly and well-mannered community in which the majority of pupils display good standards of behaviour both in lessons and around the school. They are courteous and willing to help visitors to the school. There was very little evidence of bullying, racism or sexism during inspection. Although there are a significant minority of pupils who demonstrate a potential for disruptive behaviour, this is well managed by teachers. The reasons for exclusions are appropriate even though the number of fixed exclusions is much higher than that found in other comparable schools. However, this sanction together with the very good strategies for promoting good behaviour and the good teacher management of behaviour is effective in addressing the difficulties created by the small number of disruptive pupils. The school secures a safe environment for the great majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs and for whom English is not their first language, who are well integrated into the school.

11. Relationships are very good and contribute greatly to the friendly and open ethos of the school. This is similar to the judgement made at the time of the last inspection. The pupils are open and friendly and there is an atmosphere of mutual respect between pupils, the teaching staff including the learning support assistants, and visitors. They show respect for one another's views, beliefs and culture and are caring towards each other. Most are keen to work collaboratively together both in the classroom and in other aspects of school life. They co-operate well with one another and are frequently supportive of each other's efforts. Older pupils often support the pastoral needs of those in the lower years, encourage them with their learning and many willingly befriend those who are younger or lonely.

12. The pupils respond very positively to the many opportunities to take initiative and responsibility. The teachers foster the development of the pupils' personal and social skills, and pupils are given opportunities to reflect on the impact of their behaviour and actions in personal, social and health education lessons (PSHE), religious education, assemblies and tutor time. Many pupils are actively involved in school life as form captains, librarians, members of the school council and in year 11, as prefects. They are involved in schemes to buddy each other, for example year 8's helping with the new intake of year 7, and in training to counsel younger pupils. Pupils are active in fund raising for charities. For example, some pupils in year 10 have set up a Barnardo Business Incentive Scheme to try to raise £500 for Dr Barnardo's, and the whole school takes part in non uniform days to raise monies for charities such as UNICEF. In November pupils helped to raise £980 for the BBC Children in Need appeal.

13. Attendance is good and well above the national average. This is better than reported at the time of the last inspection. Most pupils are punctual in arriving at school and settle to lessons promptly. There is little unauthorised absence, although the school is concerned that an increasing number of pupils are taking too much time out of school for family holidays.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

14. The quality of teaching is good overall, with around one-third of lessons having very good teaching. There are hardly any unsatisfactory lessons and none at Key Stage 4. The proportion of very good and excellent lessons also rises at Key Stage 4, reflecting the effort teachers are putting into maximising achievement on GCSE courses. Teaching is satisfactory in mathematics at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. It is good in English at Key Stage 3. There is consistently very good teaching in science through years 7 to 11 and in

a number of other subjects for Key Stage 4: English, history, languages, physical education and art. Teaching is good in all other subjects at key stage 4, except information and communication technology, where it is satisfactory. There are no subjects at either key stage in which teaching is unsatisfactory.

15. Years 10 and 11 also see an intensification of the efforts outside lesson time to help pupils learn. The school recognises that many of its pupils may not be able to concentrate effectively outside the school environment and so provides extensive opportunities to learn outside of lessons. This can be, for example, taking advantage of the facilities provided to do homework at the school. But much more structured opportunities are also provided, through mentoring by senior managers, by the many subject clubs to raise your GCSE grade and by support for key skills. One year 9 girl described the impact of this additional support on her own achievements, particularly improving literacy. She candidly explained how, without additional support in school, she would have gone home and simply watched TV. Instead, she is now proud of what she has learned and the level she has reached. The number of additional hours put in by pupils reaches a peak in year 11 among those aspiring to higher grades. The school knows its pupils and provides accordingly.

16. Within lessons, a key factor which help pupils make good progress is the very good subject knowledge of teachers. This is reflected in very good planning for most lessons, providing a strong stimulus to learning. A great deal of thought goes into the most effective means of capturing the pupils' interest and so promoting engagement with the knowledge and concepts of the lesson. A good example of this was provided by an excellent English lesson on quiz shows in year 10, where the teachers' subject knowledge and challenging questions helped lower ability pupils see the familiar in a new and more objective light. Good subject knowledge comes through in effective questioning and in very good routines to reinforce learning. A regular routine in science lessons is a brisk revision of key points at the beginning of the lesson and a summary of learning at the end. A variety of resources are well used to support the learning, not least the school's investment in learning support assistants.

17. The feedback provided to pupils, to enable them to improve their work, is another strength of the teaching. In GCSE dance the teacher's challenging questions made pupils consider how to improve their grades, while the critical feedback to year 11 pupils in drama similarly led them to see how to improve their performance. Pupils know clearly how they are doing in their subject. There is equal clarity about what they have to do to get better. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils. The message is very clear that everyone can succeed if they try hard enough and pupils receive and understand it. In a year 8 French lessons pupils themselves demanded to be put in the 'hot seat' to be tested on their vocabulary. In design and technology in the same year pupils had the confidence to cut and assemble duffel bags, from materials they had designed and printed themselves. The very good pace of lessons reflected the high expectations, as in a German lesson with year 9 where the pace and expectations were such that the pupils learned in two lessons what might take an average class two weeks.

18. In the very few unsatisfactory lessons, all with younger pupils, expectations were not as high and pupils not as well managed as was generally the case. The school does have a fair number of challenging individuals, including some on the special needs register and teachers have to be able to cope with this. Occasionally this was difficult for younger teachers. Parents were also aware that the school had pupils in it who could be disruptive, but the skill of teachers and the powerful ethos of the school, with its clear boundaries and expectations, mainly prevented this disruption of lessons. A particular teaching strength in religious education, for example, lay in the calm and decisive manner with which pupils were managed, enabling teachers to challenge and stimulate their classes.

19. Some parents expressed a worry that amounts of homework fell in year 8, after a good start in year 7 and before the intense demands of Key Stage 4. The school was aware of this concern and had taken remedial action in the autumn. All the evidence seen by inspectors confirmed that this action had been effective and that similar demands to the rest of years 7 and 9 were now being made on year 8.

20. Pupils with special needs are mostly supported in their subject lessons by learning support assistants, though the school does have some withdrawal groups for pupils with literacy needs in year 7. Liaison between teaching and support staff is good. The learning of pupils with special needs is good overall, with some very effective support seen by learning assistants. Both teachers and learning assistants know the pupils and their learning difficulties well. Individual education plans provide a good general framework for pupil progress but do not yet have subject specific targets.

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

21. The school offers a good range of learning opportunities. Aspects of the provision for pupils are very good or, in the case of extra-curricular activities, excellent, but there are also weakness in provision at Key Stage 4, in religious education and in information and communication technology.

22. A particular strength of the curriculum is the equal access offered to all, which the school works hard to ensure. This equality is reflected in the policy on GCSE entries, in the support a number of pupils receive to participate effectively in their lessons, in the quality of guidance for choices, or again in the successful girls' soccer team. Pupils also get good guidance, with a rising proportion going on to further education. Year 11 pupils were positive about the careers' advice they get. Moreover this access is to learning opportunities which are highly relevant to pupils' needs, with grouping strategies designed to fit those needs. Thus in year 7 a great deal of effort goes into improving the literacy of lower attaining pupils and indeed throughout in making learning stimulating and exciting. In year 7 there are now both extension and catch-up groups respectively for above and below average pupils, measured by their standards on entry. This was a relatively new means of taking pupils forward from the point they had arrived at, as well as a response to the National Strategies in Literacy and Numeracy. Thus far it has been more effective in Literacy than Numeracy.

23. There is an exceptional range of extra-curricular activities with, for example, over 40 sports teams and clubs that pupils can participate in as well as drama, music many others range of possibilities. The school estimates that 80 per cent of its pupils join at least one club. In addition to these activities is the time invested in improving pupils achievement outside the classroom. A year 11 pupil who needs to improve their grade can expect something like 3 sessions a week of one to one and a half-hours of mentoring in addition to their lesson time and subjects offer their own improvement clubs. The school is a lively place in the evening.

24. Pupils are offered a broad and balanced range of curriculum opportunities at Key Stage 3, with a strong emphasis on meeting their various needs through lesson planning and through the different approaches to pupil grouping found in the subjects of the curriculum. There are, however, weaknesses in the planning of design and technology which were linked to the 'carousel' arrangement for teaching the different aspects of that subject. At Key Stage 4 the very good range, access and effective pupil support which are the hallmarks of the school's curriculum continue, with a guided choice which maintains the breadth of an extended care.

25. The time for religious education is relatively low at Key Stage 4 and part of the broader

personal and social education programme. This programme is successful and appreciated by the pupils for the practical help it can offer them with managing their life inside and outside school. However, the provision for religious education does not currently meet all the requirements of the local Agreed Syllabus despite good plans to do so. Similarly there are aspects of information and communication technology which are not covered in the core course for all pupils. Pupils are not taught to design, control or automate events unless they take particular design technology options and there is no planned use in science of equipment to sense and record external events, so that all requirements are not met for all pupils.

26. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good at Key Stage 3 and very well integrated with the school's provision for all its pupils. This continues at Key Stage 4 where the expectation is very much that all pupils will access the full range of GCSE courses. This does mean there are currently no opportunities for pupils to participate in alternatives, for example vocational courses. The school is introducing vocational information technology from year 10 next year, however, with further similar developments if this is successful. The policy of integration and access for all is successful, given the achievements of pupils with special needs and indeed lower ability pupils in general.

27. There is a developing programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE), which includes careers education, sex education, drugs education and some aspects of citizenship. This is well planned and is well taught by most tutors. In addition the school invites a number of speakers into school to offer talks in specialist areas. Many subjects of the National Curriculum also contribute to pupils' personal development in areas such as building relationships and solving problems. The PSHE co-ordinator is now well placed to build all the strands of this aspect of pupils' education into a well delivered consistently cohesive programme.

28. The school has established very good links within the local community and these enhance the educational provision of all pupils. Since the last inspection the nature of the school has changed and links with the community have been strengthened. The school is able to offer the site facilities for local provision of community and adult education and entertainment. The various sports facilities enables the school and pupils to benefit from a number of links with the many sporting clubs that represent a diverse variety of sports in the local and surrounding area. For example, the school benefits from hosting the Portsmouth Table Tennis Club, and this has contributed to the school becoming a centre of excellence for Table Tennis.

29. The many ongoing links between extra-curricular activities and the community, such as music, drama, local sporting clubs, and local newspaper enrich the curriculum and make a good contribution to the attainment and personal development of many of the pupils. The school enjoys very good working partnerships with the local further education colleges and the other local schools in the area. Arrangements and provision for the smooth transfer of pupils from the partner primary schools are very good. The school has built some high quality links with the Navy, (for example, pupils from ALNS take part on HMS Victory in the Second Sea Lords Carol Service), the Army and local business personnel and employers. These enable some of the very good provision for careers guidance and the personal development of pupils, for example, in improving interview techniques and providing opportunities for work experience.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision

30. Provision for the moral and social development of the pupils is very good, provision for the cultural development is good, provision for their spiritual development is satisfactory.

Assemblies provide good opportunities for social and moral development, however they do not include an act of worship. The uneven provision of religious education in years 10 and 11 reduces the opportunities for pupils to consider ultimate questions such as 'why are we here?' The school is considering the ways of enhancing the provision for the spiritual development of the pupils, however at present practice is uneven across the school. In some areas of the curriculum opportunities are missed. Provision is very good in religious education where pupils are encouraged to reflect on their own beliefs and to consider the effects of belief on questions concerning the sanctity of life, and the compatibility of a loving deity along side the suffering of man. Pupils in year 9 had the opportunity to experience 'stilling' and to consider their responses to it. In art there is an emphasis on self-reflection and pupils are encouraged to express feelings and emotion through art. Pupils appear confident and positive about themselves and are encouraged to believe in their abilities to succeed.

31. Provision for the moral development of the pupils is very good. There are very clear messages in school about individual responsibility to protect the rights of others and positive attitudes and behaviour are celebrated openly. The school prospectus clearly gives a commitment to equality and in many areas of the curriculum, such as religious education, dance, history and PSE pupils consider the effects of prejudice and discrimination. A day is dedicated to consideration of human rights issues, and 'Black History Day' focuses on the achievements of black heroes. Ethical issues are investigated through science where pupils debate the ethics of genetic engineering and undertake very good work on care for the environment and living things. In geography pupils undertake work on the issue of fair trade and the use of child labour. In design and technology good opportunities reinforce the need for re-cycling and to care for the world's resources. Pupils are given the opportunity to consider the ethics of marketing and the moral code that gives rise to vegetarianism.

32. The school makes very good provision for the social development of pupils. Pupils are confident with adults and supportive of their peers. year 8 pupils support the new year 7 classes in the early weeks, and year 10 pupils, trained in year 9, act as 'buddies' for younger pupils. The head boy and girl, with the year 11 prefects, are available for advice and attend school functions as school representatives. The wide variety of extra-curricular clubs enables pupils to take responsibility and leadership roles, such as leadership of the 'Nelson Club' and in coaching younger pupils in sport. Pupils work together to perform musically, and in drama productions, and they give local performances such as carol singing upon the 'Victory' which enables them to gain confidence and to feel part of their community. PSE and religious education lessons provide a good range of activities to support social development.

33. Provision for the cultural development of pupils is good. In music and art pupils are encouraged to appreciate a range of artists and musical styles and the school is enhanced by the displays of pupils' work about the building. Pupils are encouraged to perform, however there are limited opportunities for them to gain first hand experience of professional artists or musicians. The school has very good links with the naval base in Portsmouth and pupils are encouraged to be proud of their past. Opportunities to appreciate other cultures are found in many areas of the curriculum. During the inspection pupils were appreciating a French breakfast, and had the opportunity to enjoy a Chinese meal at lunchtime to celebrate the Chinese New Year. In religious education pupils following the GCSE course experienced some aspects of Jewish culture during their visit to a synagogue in North London, and in mathematics pupils had the opportunity to study Islamic and Hindu art. The annual French and German exchange visits enable pupils to appreciate their European partnerships, and the activity holiday to Ardeche was clearly a success. Opportunities for pupils to appreciate non-western culture are limited however and Asian and African cultures are under-represented.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

34. There are many very good aspects of support for pupils' welfare and these make a positive contribution to the educational standards achieved by the school. Since the last inspection many aspects of the pastoral system have been improved and strengthened to become part of firmly established practice. The school has a friendly ethos marked by the provision of a clean and ordered environment in which pupils can learn effectively and in which parents are made welcome. There is evidence of easy relationships and trust between pupils and teaching staff and pupils are offered a very good range of opportunities to receive help and support for personal difficulties. Arrangements to promote pupils' general well being are a strong aspect of the school. Health and Safety around the school is generally good, although at the time of inspection a few areas in art and design required some attention.

35. Appropriate child protection procedures are fully in place, and work very effectively through the Student Support Manager (Welfare). Recent training in aspects of child protection has been undertaken. Liaison with class tutors, learning support assistants and other staff is very good and all are kept aware of child protection issues. The good use of learning support assistants contributes positively to the general well being and progress of pupils. The school has an appropriate Health and Safety policy. The arrangements and records for dealing with first aid, sickness, accidents and emergencies are excellent and well understood by pupils. Several members of staff hold first aid qualifications and the whole school provision is co-ordinated by an experienced member of the school support team. Fire drills are regularly undertaken and accurate records kept. Mustering instructions are on view in the school buildings. Form tutors provide pupils with lessons in Personal, Social, Health Education (PSHE) and this is delivered through lessons, tutor times and assemblies. Most lessons are well developed and provide pupils with many very good opportunities to explore a wide variety of issues.

36. The school has highly developed procedures for monitoring and promoting discipline and good behaviour. These support the high expectations of staff. All staff work to promote a consistent approach to behaviour throughout all aspects of school life and this is reinforced in lessons and assemblies and by the example of all the adults who work in the school. Sanctions and rewards are used effectively and there is very little bullying and harassment. The use of internal isolation and fixed term exclusions from school are an integral part of the procedures and are effective in maintaining the good standards of behaviour and ensuring the safety of everyone in the school community. A policy of immediately involving pupils, teachers and parents in any incidences of poor or oppressive behaviour effectively helps the school to avoid serious incidences. The consistency of approach to the procedures used and the well developed monitoring by the heads of Key Stages is an important element in the success of the school's discipline policy.

37. The monitoring of pupils' personal development is very good. The headteacher, teachers, form tutors and learning support assistants all know the pupils very well and are committed to an ethos that encourages all pupils to expand their personal development alongside their academic studies. This development is well promoted through the many clubs provided by the school, the provision of a school council, and through a number of opportunities for pupils to take on responsibilities, such as becoming School Prefects in Y11. The form tutors normally stay with the same pupils throughout their time in the school and this also enables tutors to know and understand pupils, and their families, very well. Records are kept of pupils' personal successes in all areas and these enable staff to monitor progress consistently and systematically throughout the pupils' time in the school.

38. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are very good. They are consistent and work well. The use of a computerised system allows staff to monitor attendance very closely. Registers are completed and stored in accordance with statutory

regulations. Support staff, form tutors and the heads of year follow up reasons for unauthorised absence with phone calls and letters home. They are supported by the Educational Welfare Officer who works closely with the school. The Headteacher also takes the opportunity to remind parents of the benefits of good attendance and to advise parents not to take holiday during the school term through newsletters sent home. During inspection lessons observed started on time and most pupils were punctual. There are effective procedures to account consistently and accurately for all pupils arriving late and for those leaving or joining the school during the school day.

39. Procedures for the assessment and monitoring of pupils' academic progress are good. They are used well to ensure teaching is effectively directed towards raising pupils' attainment. Especially during years 10 and 11, teachers set challenging targets and frequently monitor pupils' progress towards them. Consequently they provide clear guidance that enables pupils' to concentrate their efforts on those areas in most need of improvement. This is particularly effective in English, mathematics, science and history. In some subjects, assessments cannot be used as effectively to promote improvements. In modern foreign languages in years 7, 8 and 9 this is because they are not sufficiently linked to the level descriptions; in religious education it is because they are not sufficiently frequent; in design and technology this is because they over-estimate pupils' attainment. Assessments at the end of year 9 in information and communication technology are of limited value for representing attainment across all aspects of the programmes of study. Learning support assistants make an important contribution to the assessment of pupils' with special educational needs through their frequent review of individual education plans.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

40. Many parents are very supportive of the school. They are pleased that their child is expected to work hard and achieve their best; they also feel the school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons and that the school is well led and managed. This judgement is more positive than that reflected by the findings of the last inspection, although the school has changed quite significantly since that time

41. A significant number of parents noted that they would like to see the quality and consistency of homework improved and many said this about year 8 in particular, however inspection evidence shows that the homework is appropriately set for all pupils. They also noted that they do not feel well informed about their child's progress or that the school works closely with them. Inspectors could find little evidence to support these views. The quality and quantity of information provided by the school for parents on the progress of pupils is very good and the majority of parents enjoy good relationships with the headteacher and staff and feel that the school is approachable.

42. The quality and quantity of information the school provides for parents is very good. Parents are provided with newsletters, letters on specific topics such as careers, informative reports on pupils' progress, and curriculum information. The governors' annual report and school prospectus both offer parents other useful information and both these publications are clearly and very attractively presented. The use of student planners to record school work, attendance and merits provides a home school link as these enable parents and teachers to monitor the pupils' progress and offer an opportunity for parents to make written communication with the form tutors. Parents feel that parents' evenings are useful and most feel generally well-informed about their child's progress. The school has offered parents a Home-School Agreement. The school has an open-door policy for parents wishing to discuss matters or make complaints.

43. The parents' involvement in their children's learning is good. Parents of pupils with a statement of special educational need receive appropriate information through an annual review and are invited to attend meetings to discuss these. Parents are keen to attend parents' evenings, support school productions and musical events. A few parents are able to offer help in school and many are willing to help with transport and supervision for extra-curricular activities, school outings, trips abroad and sporting events. The Parent Staff Association undertook a recent audit of parents willing to offer help with school activities. All these links between the school and parents make a positive contribution towards the quality of pupils' learning at school.

44. There is a recently rejuvenated Parent Staff Association (PSA). This organisation arranges social and fund raising functions for the school with the help of parents, friends of the school, staff and pupils. They are active in providing refreshments for the various parents' meeting that take place in school and fund raise by running raffles. At present the PSA does not raise sufficient funds to enable other extra provision for the school. Rather, the PSA is keen to engage in projects aimed at involving parents more closely in the work of the school. For example the PSA introduced the first parents' open tea in November. A number of parents were offered the opportunity to talk to the headteacher and some of her senior team on an informal basis. Another event is the ICT evening for Year 7 parents.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

45. The leadership of the school is excellent, with an outstanding contribution from the headteacher in achieving and maintaining the kind of school the governors wanted Admiral Lord Nelson to be when it was conceived. The previous report, of 1997, described the governors involvement as 'exceptional' and they have kept to that benchmark. The vision for the school is encapsulated in the twin aims of "dare to dream, aim to achieve". Typically the school's leadership does not leave it at those broad aims, instead picking out in useful detail what they mean in the school's prospectus, as well as threading those ambitions through the School Improvement Plan to give it direction and coherence.

46. The plan itself is a thorough guide to practical action for improvement in all aspects of the school's life, as well as a reassessment of the core mission. The school is clearly focussed on continuously improving standards, teaching and the support given to pupils. The headteacher has a broad senior management team, which helps to keep this focus among all staff. The core belief, that is both clearly communicated and demonstrated in action by the senior team, is that all pupils can achieve beyond expectations. The results of this permeate the school and staff form a cohesive and mutually supportive team committed to this end.

47. The exceptional nature of the governors' contribution lies in their understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, its local context and in their willingness to take a broader view of their school's contribution in that context. They consider what their school can contribute to the local primary schools and to secondary neighbours. Most of all the quality of their contribution lies in the strategic vision for a school which has raised the achievement and aspirations of pupils in this part of Portsmouth. The governors means of knowing their school and willingness to challenge any weaknesses are also impressive. They do not, however, meet the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship and the current arrangements for older pupils' religious education do not meet all the requirements of the agreed syllabus.

48. Teaching and pupil progress are both very well monitored. The knowledge of individual pupil capabilities, by managers as well as teachers, has the sharpness which is necessary to underpin the targeted support they receive. The management team itself

intervenes to mentor pupils in year 11, again taking in many who otherwise may not themselves have believed they could achieve A*-C grades. The headteacher and her deputy are equally well informed on the quality of teaching across the subjects and decisive action is taken when this falls short of the school's high standards. For example, the school had itself identified each of the main weaknesses. This willingness to act explains why there is so much very good teaching in the school and so little unsatisfactory teaching, in circumstances where recruitment is getting progressively more difficult and turnover is high.

49. Leadership is also good, or frequently very good, at the level of middle management. It is very good in English, mathematics, science, geography and physical education. It is good in languages and religious education. Good teamwork, very good leadership on effective teaching strategies and the capacity to lead rapid improvements in standards are among the strengths of the best leadership at this level. There have been, in the recent past, changes in leadership in design and technology and music as well as weaknesses in ICT and history. In each case the senior management has acted rapidly and standards are now rising under new leadership. The National Literacy and Numeracy strategies have, on the whole, been successfully introduced by the school, but it is difficult to say that there is yet very much impact. Partly this is because the school was already clearly focussed on raising standards of literacy and numeracy as major contributors to its overall thrust on achievement. There is more detail below on these strategies.

50. Planned expenditure to support the school's development is very good, as is the school's financial management. The school is sharply focussed on getting the best value it can for its expenditure and successfully applies the principles of best value to enhancing its provision. Specific grant, such as for teacher development or special needs support, is very well deployed to further the educational goals of the school.

51. Overall resources for learning are good. The allocation received to set up a new school has meant that most subjects are well resourced and there is an above-average provision for information and communication technology. Resource expenditure is carefully monitored and closely linked to the school development plan. The library acts as a good resource base and staff in the library are active in promoting initiatives as well as enabling access to wider resources. There are very good resources for art and music, which have a positive effect on learning and standards.

52. The school has been affected by the current national difficulties in recruiting and retaining new teaching staff; however, such is the commitment of its experienced staff and the strength of its induction procedures, that the high turnover of teachers has had remarkably little adverse impact on pupil achievement. Of particular note are the great efforts put into supporting and encouraging temporary, new, unqualified and non-specialist teachers in modern languages, religious education, history, information technology. Pupil progress has suffered in design technology, particularly in resistant materials and graphics, where there has been little support due to staffing instability throughout the team.

53. The head teacher and senior management team see continuing professional development as central to their strategy for continually improving the school. Accordingly there are very good procedures for performance management and staff development in general. The supportive and encouraging 'can do' culture, that is significant in helping all pupils to achieve well, stems directly from climate amongst the whole staff. Newcomers to the school comment that it is not just the designated induction activities that support them, but that they feel encouraged and valued by the whole staff.

54. There are significant examples of professional development opportunities being used very well to support the school's planned improvement. Most notably, the NVQ accredited training for

learning support assistants provided at the further education college has helped some lunchtime supervisors to become support assistants. Some support assistants are now planning to enrol on degree courses with a view to eventually training to teach. The teaching staff have benefited from a number of initiatives to develop professionally, for example, Masters degree courses that are based on improvement projects in the school, an accredited course to improve subject leadership and encouragement to apply for Advanced Skills Teacher status. These development opportunities are particularly strategically well planned because they are of direct benefit to the school and its pupils as well as to the individual teacher.

55. The school's accommodation is very good. Since the last inspection the school has moved to a new purpose-built site next to Langston Harbour. The new building provides an exceptional environment for the school. Light, open, communal spaces contribute to the calm, stimulating atmosphere that pervades the work of the school and provide easy access to a full range of specialist accommodation and classrooms. Open spaces are imaginatively used for display and the building is very well used both before and after school, to provide a very wide range of extra curricular opportunities.

56. Good teaching accommodation makes a positive impact on learning and the standards the pupils achieve. Recent developments have further enhanced opportunities with new dance, media studies and music studios and a fitness deck shared with the community. Physical education facilities are particularly good, yet the growth in pupil numbers has resulted in some English, humanities and modern foreign language lessons being taught in classrooms without the specialist subject facilities required. Some design and technology rooms are too small to accommodate a full range of activities and the base for learning support staff is too small. The accommodation is well maintained and respected by the pupils and the Governors and Headteacher constantly look to creative ways of further enhancing the opportunities the school provides.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

The school has already improved rapidly. To improve further improve senior managers and governors should:

- (1) Tackle the underachievement of boys in design and technology at Key Stage 4
 - by improving pupils' analysis of problems in order to provide greater depth
 - by raising expectations of the quality of projects and the pace at which pupils work
 - by improving the pupils motivation through greater variety and stimulation
 - by ensuring, as far as practical, a stable staff for the department(see paragraphs 7, 91 and 93)

- (2) Raise standards in music at Key Stage 3
 - by encouraging a greater depth when pupils appraise music
 - by ensuring able pupils extend and refine their composition(see paragraphs 7, 123 and 124)

- (3) Raise standards in history
 - by encouraging pupils, particularly boys, to write longer and more detailed pieces and always finish work
 - by encouraging boys to state and support their views in writing
 - by consistently pointing out ways to improve(see paragraphs 7, 101, 102 and 106)

- (4) Improve provision for religious education at Key Stage 4
 - by fully implementing the planned course
 - by ensuring there is sufficient time to meet the requirements of the agreed syllabus, so that pupils develop an understanding of religious concepts and the role religion plays in contemporary life(see paragraphs 25 and 147)

- (5) Other weaknesses, not included above, which should be considered by the school:
 - covering all elements of ICT in the Key Stage 4 core programme
 - the health and safety issues raised about the kiln and design technology(see paragraphs 89, 94 and 116)

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

The implementation of the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy

The National Literacy Strategy (NLS) has been introduced in the last year. The English department has effectively incorporated the ideas in the Strategy into all areas of its work. For instance, the 'audit' or review process has been carried out very thoroughly and has led to the sharpening up of improvement strategies, such as the scrutiny of pupils' work, target-setting and tracking of pupils' progress. Year 7 pupils have been grouped to provide for a 'fast-track' top group and a lower attainers' group who receive extra support. In the former groups, pupils enjoy rising to the high expectations and are making good progress. In addition, there is after-school provision for gifted and talented pupils. 'Progress' or 'catch-up' Units are being taught to those in the latter group who entered the school with literacy levels just below the average. Appropriate training and support have been provided for the teaching assistants who take these small group sessions.

It is too early to gauge the impact of this strategy but the signs are encouraging that pupils are applying the learning, of, for instance, spelling rules, to their writing. There are concerns, however, that the pupils are withdrawn from mainstream lessons to receive this extra support, missing other work in consequence. With regard to literacy in other subjects, whole staff sessions introducing the Strategy and exploring the implications for reading and writing across the curriculum have been held and a working party of staff set up to take this further. The role of this group needs to be sharpened and its work in supporting and monitoring practice across the subjects further developed.

All mathematics staff have been trained in the Numeracy Strategy. The mathematics department has been using the strategy (at least in part) prior to the formal introduction last September. Schemes of work are based on the Strategy, pupils are assessed against the learning targets and the teaching materials are used in class. There is evidence of more focused curriculum planning to reflect NNS outcomes. The mathematics department has been recognised by the LEA as being good enough not to need specific support. The audit was carried out in conjunction with and support of the local authority adviser. The action plan was agreed with the local authority adviser. All staff were fully informed and willing to teach according to Strategy guidance. The effect of change is limited, however, since the Strategy had already been deployed in the teaching of mathematics.

The catch-up programme in year 7 numeracy has been adversely affected by a combination of spilt classes and weak classroom management in one case. Further, the individual education plans of pupils with special needs give insufficient guidance on specific targeting. Whilst the teaching is stronger in one group, there is no evidence of different attainment at present. The Strategy demands good control, effective questioning and the ability to use the final plenary session effectively. The main obstacles have been the staff changes and the lack of sufficiently robust classroom management skills in some lessons. Further training, classroom support and monitoring would all help to address these issues.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	151
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	52

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	4	42	65	36	4	0	0
Percentage	3	28	43	24	3	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. [When the total number is substantially less than 100, add] Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one [two, three, etc] percentage point[s]. [Where the total is close to or greater than 100, use only the first sentence.]

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	950
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	57

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	18
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	204

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	9

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	7
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	12

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.7
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
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)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	90	94	184

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	60	69	66
	Girls	77	70	67
	Total	137	139	133
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	74 (59)	76 (74)	72 (64)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	22 (20)	45 (44)	28 (28)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	60	65	68
	Girls	76	65	70
	Total	136	130	138
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	74 (74)	70 (77)	75 (77)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	32 (32)	42 (40)	37 (24)
	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	72	79	151

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	43	70	72
	Girls	52	76	77
	Total	95	146	149
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	63 (40)	97 (97)	99 (98)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	45.7
	National	39.0

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	0	N/a
	National		N/a

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	2
Indian	4
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	8
White	935
Any other minority ethnic group	

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	59
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.8

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	36
Total aggregate hours worked per week	885

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	73.6%
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	23
Key Stage 4	23

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	24
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	32
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other	1	
Indian	4	1
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese	1	
White	112	2
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

Financial information

Financial year	2001
	£
Total income	2,734,067
Total expenditure	2,697,884
Expenditure per pupil	3,177.66
Balance brought forward from previous year	106,839
Balance carried forward to next year	143,072

Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	1.5
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	950
Number of questionnaires returned	107

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	51	46	3	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	58	41	0	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	36	54	8	1	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	28	52	16	3	1
The teaching is good.	47	52	1	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	42	41	16	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	58	38	4	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	71	29	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	41	44	10	3	2
The school is well led and managed.	65	29	4	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	56	37	2	1	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	71	25	0	0	4

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

ENGLISH

The overall provision in English is very good.

Strengths

- The leadership of the department is very good; it promotes real teamwork and high standards;
- Above average standards and very good achievement at Key Stage 4;
- The achievement of boys at Key Stage 4 is particularly good, a result of target setting and focused improvement strategies;
- The teaching is good overall; it is very good at Key Stage 4.

Areas for improvement

- Place greater emphasis on the presentation of work, particularly at Key Stage 3
- Ensure consistency in the quality of marking

57. The standards of attainment on entry show an improving trend over the last few years and are currently broadly average. In the light of this, the progress made by pupils during their time in school is good. The GCSE language results in 2001 were above average. The proportion attaining the highest A*/A grades was also above average. The achievement of boys was particularly good in comparison with their counterparts nationally. The results represented a significant improvement on those of the previous year and were the result of very focused and targeted improvement strategies. Attainment in English literature was not quite as strong; the results in 2001 being broadly average although the department awaits the outcome of appeals made to the Examining Board about some of its pupils.

58. Inspection evidence shows standards at Key Stage 4 to be above average in both language and literature. The gap between boys' and girls' achievement is less than that found nationally owing to the concerted efforts to address the weakness in boys' writing. Strategies have included the use of 'frames' and to give structure, very detailed feedback in marking, target-setting and tracking of progress. Analysis of examination scripts and joint scrutiny of pupils' work is also used effectively to pinpoint common weaknesses. These are then tackled through the teaching in mainstream lessons and extra workshops, as well as by individual mentoring.

59. In depth analysis of literary texts is a strong feature in years 10 and 11. Pupils have developed the skills of analysing and interpreting texts, orally and in writing, they quote appropriately to illustrate points they are making and can write extended pieces in a range of styles. For example, pupils can quote from a Shakespeare text in an apposite way to argue a case or make a telling point. In 'media', they can take everyday images from screen or print and analyse objectively in the light of intended audience and purpose. These skills are now being give a good foundation at Key Stage 3 and are really built on and developed at Key Stage 4. The most able pupils, particularly girls, display a sure and sophisticated command of language. Virtually all, including those with special needs, take pride in providing well presented, often word processed, pieces for their coursework. The individual attention that boys receive makes a big difference to their achievement. Pupils with special needs and the most able are also making very good progress.

60. At Key Stage 3, the attainment of the year 9 pupils in the National Curriculum tests in 2001 were above average in relation to the proportion achieving the expected Level 5 or

better. For the higher levels, 6 and above, the results were below average. Results improved significantly over 2000.

61. The inspection found current standards to be in line with the average overall. The achievement of most of the pupils, including those with special needs, is good, that of the most able is very good. In years 7 to 9, pupils are given a firm foundation in reading and analysing an appropriate range of fiction and non-fiction books. They are encouraged to read widely, i.e. beyond the texts they study in depth, and are developing good skills of critical analysis and insight into character, plot and theme. This work contributes significantly to the development of their oral and writing skills. Standards of presentation could be better across the Key Stage, this weakness particularly affects boys' writing. The literacy strategy is beginning to make a difference to standards in year 7.

62. The quality of teaching is good overall, it is very good at Key Stage 4. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. This is utilised, together with detailed knowledge of examination requirements, to ensure pupils understand and meet the grade criteria. A very significant aspect of the department's success is the optimism and belief in them that the teachers convey to pupils. Class management is strong. Teachers have high expectations of thinking and of responding to questions. They expect concentrated attention and for the most part they get it. Pupils appear to have assimilated the belief that they can achieve and most appreciate the extra effort their teachers make. In the best lessons, the teaching approach is lively, brisk and well prepared. In most cases, planning and assessment files are meticulously kept. In an excellent lesson on the conventions of quiz shows, the teacher's very good subject knowledge, her lively and very pacy approach and challenging questioning really enabled lower attainers to view a well known television show in a new and objective light. They learned to analyse the 'why' and the 'how' regarding purpose and audience. In another strong lesson, the teacher used humour and a light touch, together with challenging questions, to push pupils to exercise precision in extracting information from two texts when comparing writing techniques. The quality of the marking makes a very significant difference to pupils' achievement at both key stages. Some of it, especially at Key Stage 4, is superb, making a real difference to the quality of subsequent work. At Key Stage 3, however, not all teachers mark to the same consistently high standard, in one case, insufficient marking is demotivating pupils.

63. There are also some occasional weaknesses in the teaching, mainly at Key Stage 3. Not enough attention is paid to the presentation of written work. The weakness concerns poor handwriting, unfinished work, and the care of writing books, by boys in particular. Occasionally, too, lessons do not provide sufficient challenge. Either too much time is allowed for an activity resulting in slow application and quiet off-task chat, or the task itself requires too little in the way of thought or effort. For instance, too much time highlighting an undemanding piece of text or drawing. Sometimes a combination of these is present, resulting in slow progress.

64. The leadership and management are very good. The good picture found at the time of the last inspection (when only years 7 and 8 were in the school) has been built on and improved. The head of department sets the tone, combining high expectations of quality with a good humoured and supportive manner. Very good teamwork and mutual support are evident in how the work is shared. Newly qualified teachers are well supported. There is a strong focus on improving learning and standards. The department has both the will and the capacity to improve further and a good range of strategies to do so. Monitoring processes have picked up weaknesses in some of the marking and planning at Key Stage 3, which are being addressed. The curriculum is in process of being revised to sharpen assessment, the range of tasks and to focus on objectives identified through the National Literacy Strategy.

65. There is a very good range of ways by which progress is tracked: unit cover sheets, guidance and assessment sheets for the units, including self-assessment, oral assessment/target sheets. A good range of extra-curricular provision is made, including theatre visits, links with the local college, and involvement in writing competitions. The virtually new accommodation is attractive and welcoming. Good displays of pupils' work and posters further brighten the classrooms. However the department office is too small to be wholly convenient for meetings. Resources are good although more readily available TV/video playback facilities in the rooms would further support teaching quality.

66. Drama is taught through years 7 to 9 to all pupils, then provided as a GCSE option. Achievement in the 200 examinations was weaker than in other subjects, but some rapid improvements should lead to better standards in 2002. Work seen was above average, some was well above, supported by good teaching. Adventurous improvisations were further improved by a penetrating teacher critique of their strengths and weaknesses and pupils were both committed and mature in their approach in year 11.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Well above average attainment at Key Stage 4.
- Teaching at Key Stage 4;
- Very good leadership and management of head of department and curriculum leaders;
- Commitment to improving standards for all pupils;
- Good relationships between staff and pupils which enhances the learning.

Areas for improvement

- Consistency of teaching standards between staff;
- More specific individual education plans which highlight particular mathematical needs;

67. The standards of attainment of the current year 7 group of pupils were broadly in line with national expectations on entry to the school. In previous years, standards have been below national averages, but the school has been successful in bringing standards above the national average in the tests at the end of Key Stage 3. Previously, boys did better than girls in the national tests, but now there is no difference between them.

68. This improvement in standards continues into Key Stage 4, with good achievement by pupils. Last year, GCSE results in the A*-C range were well above the national average; again boys and girls did equally well. This improvement is a result of effective teaching together with a carefully planned curriculum and systematic monitoring of pupil progress and is reflected in current standards.

69. During key Stage 3, pupils improve their basic number skills year on year and they begin to see the how shape and space are used in the wider world. For example, they study geometric patterns which occur in Islamic and Hindu cultures and they estimate the cost of different types of tiles used as floor cover. Measurement and data-handling skills improve sufficiently to help their work in science, geography, history and design and technology.

70. This year, the department has introduced the National Numeracy Strategy in year 7, which has been designed to improve the levels of Numeracy in Key Stage 3. This has been successfully introduced on the whole, but it is too early to make judgements about its

effectiveness. Further, several changes of staff and have affected the smooth implementation of the strategy, while individual education plans give insufficient guidance on specific targetting.

71. During Key Stage 4, pupils improve their skills and use them successfully in coursework: they carry out mathematical investigations, and make and test hypotheses. A good example of this was seen in a year 11 class where some pupils were testing to see whether differences in attainment between boys and girls existed in English and French. Another student compared results at Key Stage 3 with GCSE results. In both cases, pupils accessed data via the computer and tried to devise methods of comparison.

72. Some effective use is made of graphic calculators and computers, but computer use is still being developed. In both key stages, achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good. More able pupils benefit from extension work and mathematical competitions. There are no significant differences between the achievement of boys and girls in either Key Stage.

73. Teaching at Key Stage 4 is good and sometimes very good; at Key Stage 3, a small number of lessons were unsatisfactory, due mainly too ineffective class management. All lessons are carefully planned and the pupils have a clear idea of what is expected of them. Lessons are supported by good resources. Teachers take a keen interest in pupils' learning and encourage them to do their best. A good example of this occurred in a year 9 lesson about translation on a co-ordinate grid, an abstract and potentially difficult topic for lower attainers. By skilful use of visual prompts the teacher kept the pupils' attention and they responded with written work well above the standard that might have been expected. Control is generally good and relationships between staff and pupils are very sound. Pupils respond by showing a willingness to get on with their work.

74. Teachers keep thorough records of pupil progress and regular testing keeps staff and pupils informed as to progress; this information is also used to set targets for learning. Pupils benefit from extra help in mathematics clubs and from the staff being readily available for extra tuition.

75. Since the last inspection there have been a considerable number of staff changes, making it more difficult to manage consistent improvement.

76. However, the head of department and the key stage curriculum co-ordinators give a very good lead in subject management and teaching. The department has continued to strengthen its planning and management strategies in order to improve student achievement. Teaching guidelines are clear, teaching is effectively monitored and there is a strong emphasis placed on improvement of standards.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Very good achievement at both Key Stages.
- Very good teaching at both Key Stages.
- Very good attainment at Key Stage 4, and good at Key Stage 3.

Areas for improvement

- To contribute formally to the teaching of relevant aspects of the teaching of National Curriculum ICT, including the appropriate assessment.

77. The pupils' results in the 2001 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 were close to the national average, although the percentage of higher levels attained was not as high as might be expected. Results were below the average for similar schools. The current standard of work of the oldest pupils at Key Stage 3 is above the national average. Given attainment on entry to Key Stage 3, achievement, including progress over time and gains in lessons, is very good. Factors contributing to the very good achievement are: some very good teaching; creating 'top' express groups in year 9 and focusing their learning on the higher levels included in the National Curriculum tests; and offering after school tuition for pupils studying at these higher levels. Progress of the pupils with special educational needs is also very good.

78. The percentage of pupils attaining A* to C grades in GCSE double award science in 2001 was well above the national average. Performance in science was better than in other subjects in the school. The 2001 results represented a considerable improvement on those in 2000, which were in line with the national average. The current standard of attainment of the oldest pupils at Key Stage 4 is well above the national average. Given attainment on entry to Key Stage 4, achievement, including progress over the key stage is very good. Factors contributing to this good achievement are: very good teaching; offering good opportunities for pupils to complete course work after school; providing extra revision sessions before external examinations; and in lessons, a sharp focus on examination requirements and explaining to pupils how they might improve. Progress of the pupils with special educational needs is very good at this Key Stage too.

79. There has been a considerable improvement in standards since the time of the last inspection.

80. At Key Stage 3, the vast majority of the pupils have a good knowledge of science facts, and the higher attainers are developing a good understanding of concepts such as the chemistry of photosynthesis; symbol equations; and electro-magnetism. At Key Stage 4, the pupils add to their knowledge and understanding. The higher attainers readily understand mono-hybrid genetic crosses; relative molecular masses; and centripetal force. At Key Stage 3, pupils are effectively learning the skills of scientific investigation. At Key Stage 4, particularly in year 11, pupils have good opportunities to complete science investigations. Higher and middle ability pupils work proficiently and produce some very good quality written reports. Throughout the school, the pupils of all abilities make good use of graphs and charts; there is a particular emphasis on the interpretation of these. The higher attainers at Key Stage 4 are learning competently to apply mathematical principles to science, for example, calculating rates of reaction, calculating acceleration, and using Boyle's Law. The majority of pupils produce good quality written work. The pupils are learning well the definitions and the spellings of science vocabulary associated with each particular unit of work; they are becoming confident to use such words in the correct context. All year groups

competently use ICT as a tool, for example, in word processing; in the analysis and presentation of data; and in research using the internet and CD ROMs. There is no planned use of ICT to monitor, measure, and record external events and physical variables, using sensors; the department lacks suitable equipment for these purposes.

81. The teaching of science is very good. The teachers have very good relationships with the pupils, and high expectations of them. Lessons are well planned and prepared. The teachers' subject knowledge is good and they have a very good knowledge of examination requirements. They give clear expositions, engage pupils' attention, and enable them quickly to gain knowledge and understanding. Many teachers question pupils skilfully enabling them to think through ideas for themselves. They have good routines for revising key points at the beginning of lessons and summarising learning at the end. In the best lessons the teachers show much enthusiasm and provide challenging tasks; the pupils work with interest and at a good pace. An example of a very good lesson was one on electro-magnetism with the higher ability pupils in year 9. Using a step by step demonstration, the teacher briskly questioned the pupils about the factors, which were affecting the strength of the electro-magnet. The pupils were challenged by these questions; answered with keen interest; and gained a very good knowledge of the topic. This enabled them to set up investigations for themselves which reinforced their learning and furthered their understanding. The teacher's enthusiasm and frequent reference to everyday science stimulated the pupils' interest and they concentrated well until the end of the lesson. Characteristics of the teaching of the lower attaining pupils are patience; the provision of a wide variety of activities to maintain pupils' concentration; and appropriate good quality printed resources.

82. The leadership and management of the department is very good and makes a significant contribution to the overall quality of teaching and the standard of attainment. There is a strong commitment to raising standards. The head of department thoroughly analyses past performances; monitors the results of on-going tests; and sets targets for the department's performance at the end of each key stage. A personal target, in the form of a National Curriculum level, or a GCSE grade is set for each pupil; pupils at both key stages are fully aware of their targets, their current attainment, and what they should do to improve. Pupils' individual progress, and that of the department, is closely monitored; any lack of progress is identified, and appropriate strategies are put in place to help to remedy shortcomings. Assessment and recording are very good throughout the department and facilitate effective monitoring. Accommodation and resources are good and contribute to the high standards attained.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- The leadership and management of the subject is very good
- Quality of teaching and learning is very good
- Well above average standards reached by Year 9 and Year 11
- Quality of displays enhances the school environment

Areas for improvement

- Department documentation is too limited
- Assessment as part of classroom practice is inconsistent
- Lack of technical help
- The efficiency of the kiln extraction system is an issue for health and safety

83. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average by the end of year 9 and well above average by the end of year 11. These standards are the result of teaching that is often very good. Pupils' levels of achievement in relation to standards on entry to the school are good in years 7-9 and very good in years 10-11. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour including the quality of their learning in art and design are judged to be very good. The majority of pupils make good progress in the early years in the school and very good progress in the upper years.

84. By the end of year 9, in 2001, pupils' overall level of attainment by teacher assessment is well above average; all achieve what might be expected for their age and a significant proportion gain more. From the evidence in sketchbooks, drawing, painting and written work, as well as from speaking to pupils, attainment is judged to be above rather than well above average. Pupils attain well as a result of teaching, which is based on very secure subject knowledge, and understanding, detailed planning and the use of very good resources. In one lesson for example pupils worked at a very fast pace investing both physical and mental energy as they undertook a series of exercises that helped them to understand how Van Gogh and Munch used colour to express emotion. Sketchbooks are used well for observational studies and research. Pupils actively interrogate text downloaded from the Internet. Pupils with special educational needs do not always receive help from learning assistants within art lessons. In one class lack of such provision slowed learning not only for the pupils concerned but also for other pupils. The use of ICT is less than might normally be expected by this stage.

85. By the end of year 11, pupils' standards are generally well above average in painting and printmaking although not in three-dimensional studies. Teachers regularly share quality criteria with classes and pupils' work hard within lessons to match these objectives as for example in a printmaking session based on portraits where the quality of lino-cutting was very good although the quality of printing needed to be improved. Teachers have an expectation of greater independence by pupils and this level of expectation has worked well for previous year groups. Whilst current higher attainers are willing to respond more there is reluctance by middle and lower attainers. Some year 11 pupils are reluctant to do homework or research assignments and numbers attending catch-up sessions have dropped. This lack of motivation and willingness to accept responsibility is showing more clearly in the weakness in sculptural work.

86. Over the period 2000-2001, the proportion of pupils gaining grades in the range A*-C in GCSE was above the national average with all pupils gaining A*-G grades. In 2001 pupils achieved significantly better in this subject than they did in their other school subjects and current standards are well above average. Whilst girls attained better in the higher grades than boys, both achieved better than national averages.

87. Teaching in years 7-9 is always satisfactory and usually good or very good. As a result of this teaching pupils make good progress in developing painting, collage and printmaking skills as well as in using sketchbooks. Although pupils come into the school with a range of art experiences, in year 7 they quickly learn to acquire techniques use new materials and understand for example the style of artists such as Picasso. All pupils achieve well because of the challenges offered to them. In one year 7 lesson pupils benefited from the careful planning, well chosen collage resources and exemplar model offered by their teacher and as a result progressed quickly in their understanding of Cubist processes. Even though no learning assistant was present pupils with identified behavioural problems worked well and made good progress. In another year 7 class pupils have been involved in a literacy project and have produced well-planned booklets for a local art gallery.

88. In most year 8 classes pupils respond well as they study Gaudi's work or engage in the painting of fruit and vegetables leading to the creation of a fantasy shoe design. A few boys and girls engage in social chatter and do not work consistently in the lessons seen; this inattention is directly linked to less secure classroom management strategies. In this year group girls present their work better than boys do although there is little difference in the content of the work seen. Homework is set regularly and pupils usually respond well; if they do not teachers follow this up rigorously.

89. In lessons seen in year 10 pupils experience very good and occasionally excellent teaching. In an excellent lesson teaching was rigorous, enthusiastic and challenging for all pupils at the appropriate level and as a result learning was excellent. Pupils quickly understood and applied colour contrast in their painting of food, as part of a Pop art project. In this lesson pupils evaluated each other's work and were generous with their praise. Two outstanding achievements were noted in the painting of a chocolate bar and a dark skinned plum.

90. Very good progress has been made since the previous inspection with new purpose built accommodation and much improved storage space and resources. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. There is vision and commitment to high achievement for all pupils but documentation is very limited and insufficient at the long-term planning and development stage. Weaknesses show up in inconsistencies in assessment as part of teaching linked to the lack of an assessment on entry from which progress could be judged, dating of work in sketchbooks and accurate levelling of work by the end of year 9. Statutory requirements are met. Spiritual, social, moral and cultural provision is very good but multi-cultural is more limited. Art displays greatly enhance and are enhanced by the public spaces available. There is no effective technical help within the department and this puts pressure on already hardworking teachers. The extraction system for the kiln is inefficient and a potential health and safety concern.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision for design and technology is **sound**. However, it is **unsatisfactory for some pupils in year 11**.

Strengths

- The very good standards achieved in textiles.
- The department's potential for improvement.
- The department's contribution to the pupils' social, moral and cultural development.

Areas for improvement

- The achievement of boys at GCSE: particularly those studying resistant materials and graphic products.
- Planning at Key Stage 3 needs to build on previous learning.
- The use of assessment and target setting to raise standards.
- Safety issues requiring attention.

91. By the end of year 9, the pupils achieve standards that are average overall and are sometimes good or very good. They are consistently good in textile technology and often very good. Pupils of all abilities make sound progress over the key stage and pupils with special educational needs make good progress, due to the good individual support provided by classroom assistants. However, in some lessons the more able do not reach the higher levels of achievement of which they are capable as teachers fail to set high enough targets for them to reach. Also the pupils often find out how they could have done better after

completing a task, rather than being told how to reach high standards before they start. The pupils' knowledge, understanding and making skills are often better than their designing skills as the teachers often fail to build on learning gained with different teachers earlier in the year. Planning for making is particularly good and pupils also use surveys well to find out the view of others. Good use is made of ICT to support learning in lessons and to present work using text, diagrams and graphs. Computers are also well used to analyse the nutritional qualities of food and Computer Aided Manufacture has been introduced when the pupils make plastic torches and printed circuit boards for electronic circuits.

92. By the end of year 11, overall the pupils achieve standards that are below average. The number gaining A*-C grades in textiles is well above average, while the standards in food and graphics improved last year and were close to average, having been below average in 2000. However, standards have remained well below average in resistant materials over the past two years. Also the boys do poorly in design and technology compared with the girls. In 2001 only 29 per cent of boys gained A*-C grades compared with 63 per cent of the girls. The girls generally do as well as in their other subjects, yet the boys do less well. In lessons seen, the picture is similar. Year 11 pupils in textiles and food are making good progress and achieving above average standards. Yet many pupils in resistant material and graphics are currently making slow progress in their coursework and achieving below average standards. However, the new head of department and his staff are working hard with these pupils to try and make up lost ground. In year 10, standards are at least average in all material areas and good progress is currently being made.

93. The quality of teaching and its impact on learning varies from sound to very good and is now good overall at both key stages. The teachers make particularly good use of opportunities to develop the pupils' social, moral and cultural knowledge in design and technology lessons, which is a strength of the subject. The teaching of food technology is good and in textiles it is very good. In textiles, the pupils are highly motivated by learning through creative activities, excellent displays and the stimulating exemplar materials used in lessons. This, together with the teacher's enthusiasm, inspires children to confidently develop new knowledge and skills and to design and create imaginative ideas. For example, pupils in year 9 confidently used mood-boards to develop designs for ties, while pupils in year 8 independently cut and assembled duffel bags from attractive materials they had designed and printed. Food lessons are well organised and the pupils are very clear of the teacher's expectations. The lessons move with good pace and the teachers use discussions well to build on previous learning.

94. Teaching in graphics and resistant materials is generally sound and sometimes good. Where it is good the lessons focus on learning through doing, with good pace and variety in the activities used. For example, a year 7 class made good progress in learning about tools through using them and pupils identified key features for the note pads they were designing by trying out and evaluating existing products. However, in some instances insufficient thought is given to providing a variety of stimulating activities through which pupils can learn. For example, in some year 11 graphics and resistant material groups, progress has been slow and pupils have shown insufficient motivation in their project work, through a lack of variety and stimulation in lessons. However, in most instances pupils enjoy their work in design and technology and consequently their behaviour and attitudes to learning are good. Homework is well used to support learning.

95. The leadership and management of the subject is now sound and improving. Constant changes in teaching staff, including five different heads of department since the last inspection, has resulted in the department not making the progress expected. Change has been greatest in resistant materials and graphics and has contributed to the unsatisfactory progress made in these areas. However, the new head of department has made good

progress during the term he has been in post and the department now has the potential to address key weaknesses and to do well. Teachers work hard and are committed to raising standards. The role of the two teachers who are second in department needs to be clarified, however, in order to make best use of their talents and to ensure cohesion in departmental developments. The department is well resourced, yet some practical rooms are small and limit the range of opportunities available. For example, casting, welding and heat treatment cannot be regularly used as there is insufficient space to do so safely. There is also insufficient space for ICT equipment or other resources in the one small food room. A number of safety issues require attention.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Standards are high given prior attainment of pupils
- Teaching is good; some very good teaching was observed
- Management of the subject is very good

Areas for improvement

- The use of assessment at Key Stage 3

96. Attainment in geography is good. GCSE results for 2001 were above the national average. More able pupils and boys did better than the national averages. These results represent very good progress for pupils given the attainment of pupils on entry to the school. The present year 11 pupils are working at standards that are in line with national expectations for pupils of this age. Given the amount of hard work and support that the department gives to these pupils they can be expected to reach the predicted targets.

97. Pupils in all years are making good progress in geography, including those with special educational needs. Pupils in years 10 and 11 are reaching good standards in their coursework and pupils in years 7 to 9 are developing good geographical enquiry skills in their study of the local area and Kenya. Pupils in years 7, 8 and 9 can generate their own geographical questions, which is unusual. They have a basic knowledge of the United Kingdom and other places around the world. They write extended descriptions and explanations because they are encouraged to and teachers use various literacy strategies to help them. Year 7 pupils navigate a historical town's web site with confidence. Higher ability pupils in years 7, 8 and 9 produce some thoughtful conclusions and evaluations of their geographical enquiries. Some lower ability pupils have problems with their spelling, punctuation and grammar. Teachers are aware of this and putting measures in place to support these pupils. Teachers employ a wide range of strategies to help all pupils develop their literacy skills, including the use of key words, glossaries and writing frames.

98. Year 9 pupils are able to discuss the issues surrounding inequalities in world trade in a very sensible and mature fashion. GCSE pupils are reaching a very high level of understanding of environmental and social issues connected with tourism in the Alps and local transport issues. Year 11 pupils can explain, with examples, why people in some countries find it more difficult to cope with natural hazards. The most able pupils have completed some very good coursework, which includes good use of information technology.

99. Overall teaching in geography is good, sometimes very good and occasionally excellent. Teachers work hard to produce a wide range of interesting and motivating activities which engage pupils in the learning. Teachers have high expectations of what

pupils can do and set them challenging tasks. The pitch of the work is high and teachers are not afraid of using “difficult” resources. However, all pupils are well supported in their work. The department has also produced a range of activities using cards, role play and simulations which engage all pupils, whatever their ability. In one excellent year 9 lesson the teacher used artefacts, video clips, magazines and literacy support sheets to involve all pupils in activities related to fair-trade issues. Given the pace and enthusiasm of the teacher, all the pupils thoroughly enjoyed the lesson and some less able boys were able to contribute their own opinions and reach a good level of understanding. Good teaching leads the pupils to respond very positively and there are generally good relationships. The majority of pupils work conscientiously and co-operate effectively in pairs and small groups. In a minority of lessons, a small number of pupils occasionally call out and talk while the teacher is talking. These pupils could cause further disruption, and it is only by consistently good teaching that they do not.

100. Leadership and management of the subject is very good. There is a good mix of experienced and talented staff. The department works hard to produce an interesting and challenging range of activities for the pupils. The department has a good support programme planned for GCSE pupils. Assessment of pupils work at GCSE is sound but could be improved for younger pupils, through more accurate use of levels.

HISTORY

Overall, the quality of provision in history is **good**.

Strengths

- Improvement in standards of attainment over the last 18 months, especially in years 7,8 and at GCSE.
- Leadership of the department, providing vision and potential for improvement, with excellent support to non-specialist teachers.
- Long and short term planning for progression.
- A consistently high standard of teaching.

Areas for improvement

- Weaknesses in the attainment of boys, particularly in written work
- Attainment in year 9 is below the expected standard
- Standards of written narrative, description and explanation.

101. Attainment at the end of year 11 and year 9 is below national average, but the evidence from work seen in the school is that standards are rising rapidly. From a very low point two years ago of 20.5 per cent A*-C grades at GCSE, standards by the end of year 11 are still below national average in GCSE, but are rising year on year. The school’s estimate that the GCSE results will improve this year to within 10 per cent of national average is borne out in work seen during the inspection. The work of year 10 pupils seen during the inspection provides evidence that standards are continuing to rise.

102. Pupils’ discussion in GCSE classes shows good understanding of historical events, situations and skills. For example, GCSE coursework and revision tasks seen during the inspection show that when asked to select the key ideas in an argument, they can use their knowledge of the period to make valid decisions. They also select relevant supporting evidence to support an argument. More able pupils by year 11 sum up effectively by stating the importance of sections of their argument to the whole study. The most able organise their argument by linking their statements in such a way as to prove their point. The department have rightly identified the area of weakness in that many pupils, especially boys,

underestimate the range and detail needed in written work unless they are given clear prompts in the form of planning sheets. Pupils seen working on source analysis in year 10 are confident when extracting information. Almost all, using the clear structures that teachers have devised for them, understand the topics and sources well enough to draw accurate inferences from the sources. The most able pupils, working at very high levels, show clear understanding of the range of ways in which they can use sources to help them make decisions.

103. Standards in year 9 are still below national expectation, but the pupils in year 8 who have been taught under the present subject leadership since entering the school have reached the levels expected for their age group. There is some evidence that year 7 has improved on the work of year 8. While almost all year 9 pupils understand that they have to consider both sides in an argument, some of the lower attainers show that they find it difficult to change their original point of view. The highest attainers give valid reasons for their choice of evidence to support a point of view. They are beginning to appreciate the value of balanced argument when reaching historical conclusions, and approach questions with an open mind. Only a very few were confidently and independently linking aspects of the evidence to the context or to other given data in order to produce their argument. The majority of pupils had some problems working with evidence whose context was not immediately apparent to them, but given teacher guidance they showed that they could understand its relevance to a question.

104. The attainment level of pupils on entry to the school is higher now than it was for the present year 9. Year 7 and 8 groups seen are producing work that is at least satisfactory, whereas the work of year 9 is still below average. Year 7 pupils are beginning to recognise that there is not a single version of history, but is dependent on a balance of the evidence. Some of the highest attainers seen this week were able to work this out for themselves from the careful groundwork prepared by their teachers. The majority saw the importance of considering all of the evidence.

105. Where they are not succeeding, particularly the boys throughout the school, is in their written expression of views that they are happy to state in class discussion. In classes seen at all ages, boys are more willing to express their own views than girls, but the girls' writing is more thoughtful, better supported from the evidence and deals with a wider range of points. As a whole, the writing in exercise books is brief and superficial, very often incomplete.

106. Good learning over the past 18 months has enabled pupils' achievement to rise from a very low position at that time to good at present. This is mainly because of the standard of teaching by all members of the department, which is almost all good or better. The department share lesson plans devised in the main by the two specialist historians. Although the non-specialists have some gaps in their knowledge of historical fact, their understanding of process and their teaching of history is very good. As a result the pupils' learning is at least good in almost all lessons and is often very good. For example, the teachers' practice of breaking down learning into small steps that build over a lesson, with a range of activities to maintain pupil involvement, is particularly helpful. In the lessons seen where year 7 learned to examine a range of evidence about King John, their attention was securely caught by the human family tree that set the context for the activity. They thoroughly enjoyed and took a lively part in the debate that the teacher organised by giving them opposing collections of evidence, using it to make valid points. All of the class left the lesson eager to get at the truth and having learned a great deal about the importance of having a range of evidence. The department repeat this quality of planning in all year groups, with equal benefit to pupils, especially when teachers evaluate their success, discuss the issues with their colleagues and amend their planning accordingly. The fast pace of lessons intended to maintain pupils' interest is lessening the length and quality of written work. Teachers do encourage pupils to

use historical terms correctly.

107. The department as a whole give very clear guidance on standards expected, on how these translate into practice, and provides oral feedback both to individuals and to groups in relation to the way forward. All pupils are fully aware of the standards that they have reached and the extent to which they can improve. There is therefore a confident air in history discussions. Although teachers regularly mark pupils' work with grades for effort and comments that commend good work, the quality of guidance on the pages of their exercise books is not consistent throughout the department. For example, only one teacher consistently points out ways in which the pupil could improve on thinking and expression. The thorough evaluation of year 11 mock examination work has brought about their very effective analysis of the pupils' needs. Seeing a need to do so, they have brought about a real improvement in pupils' organisation of their answers in a very short time.

108. In most ways the curriculum is broad and balanced. The department has revised the curriculum in the past 18 months, making it much more relevant to the needs and abilities of the pupils. Pupils enjoy the course now, with topics that flow together logically and clear progression in the historical process, given the catching up that has to be achieved in the upper school. This has had a major impact on teaching and therefore on learning.

109. The department is now starting to build up pupils' breadth of experience of history, running two successful clubs, both of which meet valid purposes, and building up the number of planned visits to places of historical interest. Although teachers did not use ICT to promote learning during the inspection, there has been very good use of desktop publishing, website design and internet in years 7, 8 and 9. One area for concern is the lack of GCSE textbooks, although the department revision guides are a substitute that is being used in a very imaginative way to enhance skills of analysis and explanation.

110. Despite a temporary fall in standards, therefore, the work of the department under its new leader has reversed the trend. There has been a very good improvement over the last 18 months, and the potential for further improvement is excellent.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Improved attainment at GCSE level in year 11; and Key Skills in years 10 and 11;
- Achievement in years 7, 8 and 9, especially by boys;
- Good quality resources, a well managed network and very good accommodation.

Areas for improvement

Management and co-ordination of the subject in order to:

- establish and maintain consistent procedures for teaching and assessing ICT in other subjects;
- ensure that all pupils in years 10 and 11 are taught the full range of the National Curriculum Programme of Study.

111. Teachers' assessments of ICT at the end of year 9 in 2000 and 2001 indicated that pupils' attainment was above that found nationally. However, since September 2001, none of the units of work for year 8 or 9 have yet been taught so standards, with the exception of year 7 who are taught regularly by subject specialists, are lower. Considering pupils' low levels of competence in ICT when they join the school, their achievement by age 14 is good.

112. Throughout years 7 to 9, pupils use ICT efficiently to collect, organise and edit information from various sources, including the Internet. They draft and refine written work to create high quality presentations. They are sufficiently familiar with database, spreadsheet and word processing operations to apply their skills productively in other subjects. This is particularly so in English, geography, science and art. For example, pupils manipulate photographic images and graphics from the internet before incorporating them in their own artwork. In a geography lesson, pupils easily toured a virtual town and used a desk top publishing package well, incorporating photographs of coastal defences after suitable adjustments to size and scale. Pupils use ICT for control purposes in design and technology but all do not learn to use it for measurement or sensing in science.

113. Attainment at the end of year 11 in recent years has been well below the national average with poor levels of Key Skills accreditation. Neither the GNVQ course nor the GCSE course chosen to replace it were sufficiently successful for pupils to make the progress expected from their attainments at the age of 14, hence their achievement by the age of 16 was unsatisfactory. However, in recent months rapid improvements have ensured that now standards in year 11 are much higher. Trial examination results, confirmed by informal external verification, indicate that attainment is now similar to that of other GCSE and Key Skills candidates nationally and achievement is now satisfactory.

114. Pupils continue to apply broad ICT skills and knowledge to good effect in their GCSE courses. In years 10 and 11 they can select and use appropriate ICT tools well. For example, when engaged in project work for Key Skills accreditation. In a year 10 lesson where pupils were designing a living space, they identified suitable variables to enable them to sort and filter data within the spreadsheet they were using to manage the costing of the project. While engaged on a similar task, year 11 pupils were using on-screen rulers to ensure furniture would fit into the spaces available. In discussion, GCSE pupils show their understanding of the wider impact of ICT, such as the security of personal information and the role of data protection legislation.

115. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress throughout the school. Those pupils with a particular flair for ICT develop their talents to a high level. This is evident in website designs completed during projects in English. Differences in the attainment of boys and girls reflect the general pattern of higher attainment by girls evident at the beginning of year 7. Within this general pattern however, the most recent assessments show that boys make very good progress, closing the gap significantly.

116. During the inspection, opportunities to see direct teaching in years 7 to 9 were insufficient to support an overall evaluation of teaching in those years. The school teaches ICT in years 8 and 9 through other subjects with the support of an ICT specialist. This year's programme has not so far been agreed fully between subject areas so has yet to begin. Hence this could not be seen during the inspection. However, good applications of ICT were evident in other subjects, notably English, science and geography where reinforcement of ICT skills contributes significantly to their mastery. In year 7 pupils are taught some aspects of the Programme of Study in specialist lessons; this teaching is satisfactory.

117. Teaching in years 10 is satisfactory; in year 11, it is good and accounts for the rapid progress made by pupils on the GCSE course. Strengths in teaching include good knowledge of the subject and specifications for external examinations as well as good attention to literacy skills. For example, by using the writing guidance provided by the teacher, GCSE candidates completed good accounts of test procedures for a recently completed project. During a year 11 Key Skills lesson the teacher discussed the syntax of formulae in detail so that pupils could edit them correctly. In this way, pupils worked

independently of the automatic spreadsheet functions and checked that they operated properly over the required cells. However, teachers do not routinely clarify how different characteristics of work relate to specific grades. Consequently, pupils do not always know how to focus their efforts most efficiently. Pupils following the Key Skills programme are not all taught to reflect critically on the impact of ICT on society. Although teachers take every opportunity to emphasise right and wrong, teaching does not contribute sufficiently to the spiritual, social or cultural development of pupils. Other than in some design and technology options, pupils are not all taught to use ICT to monitor, control or automate events. In science, inadequate equipment hampers the teaching of ICT to gather and log data. Not all requirements are therefore met for all pupils.

118. Management of the subject has recently been strengthened; some aspects are strong but others remain weak. The new subject leader has a clear view of the immediate needs of the department and is taking effective action. Thorough monitoring has identified weaknesses in GCSE work so that they can be remedied through a well-planned revision programme. Former staffing difficulties and the absence of adequate co-ordination have adversely affected the development of the scheme of work and arrangements for the cross-curricular teaching programme in years 8 and 9. Some firm arrangements have now been made and teaching is to begin very soon. Teachers' assessments at the end of year 9, based on work undertaken during concentrated but infrequent periods, have been too generous. They do not reflect pupils sustained attainment so do not provide a sufficiently reliable basis for good target setting or curriculum planning. Teachers and support staff work well together, giving generously of their time to ensure that pupils have good access to facilities outside lesson times. They contribute well to the school's links with parents through the website. The department enjoys very good accommodation, well-equipped with computers and projectors. Portable equipment allows small group work to be undertaken throughout the school. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory and levels of attainment are now reported to parents.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Achievement at GCSE is very good;
- Teaching is good overall, with high expectations and well structured lessons in Key Stage 4;
- Pupils with SEN make very good progress by the end of Key Stage 4;
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning;
- There is good provision of extra-curricular clubs, trips and events.

Areas for improvement

- Speaking is taught less effectively than the other skills;
- Marking and assessment, particularly at Key Stage 3, are inconsistent;
- Pupils' written work is often less well organised and presented than in other subjects.

119. The 2001 GCSE French results (no German was studied in that year) were above the national average. This represents very good achievement by pupils that were below average on entry to the school. Girls did better than girls nationally and boys did very much better than boys nationally. Far more pupils were entered for GCSE French than is generally the case, yet only one pupil failed to achieve a grade. These very good results can be directly attributed to the teachers' high expectations and very focused teaching style. Additionally, the

head of department worked very hard to keep all pupils positive, encouraged and up-to-date with their work during a long period of staff disruption caused by illness.

120. Pupils in year 10 and 11 perform particularly well in their written coursework, both in French and German. Most write at length using past, present and future tenses appropriately. They can give opinions on a range of subjects. They make good use of vocabulary and phrases to make their writing sound mature and stylish. Pupils are well prepared for the speaking exam in year 11, but generally get less regular speaking practice in lessons. This leads to relative difficulty with fluency and pronunciation, especially in French. Where the teacher uses a lot of French or German to lead the lesson, the pupils develop good listening skills. They are confident grasping the meaning of language spoken at native speed. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress. They are able to achieve much higher standards than might be expected for their ability where they are taught in classes with more able pupils. This is because the teaching is clearly structured and supportive.

121. By the end of year 9, pupils' attainment is in line with the national expectation. The teaching of the younger pupils focuses on developing their understanding and recall of key vocabulary. They learn to copy language carefully so that they make relatively few spelling mistakes in French or German. They learn to use the past tense in year 8, but do not always remember it later, because they have too few opportunities to practice it regularly.

122. Teaching is good overall, although some lessons are less well prepared than others. Marking is often sketchy. Insufficient attention is given to improving pupils' presentation in their exercise books. The best teaching is lively and thoroughly engaging. It convinces pupils they can achieve. The good teaching and high level of teacher commitment elicit a very positive response from the pupils. They are attentive and try hard. They behave well because they are heavily involved in learning. For example, fast pace and high expectations kept one year 9 class so focused on learning shopping vocabulary that they learnt in two lessons what it takes an average class two weeks to learn. In a year 8 lesson, pupils bounced into the room clamouring to be put into the 'hot seat' to be rigorously tested on their recall of vocabulary in front the rest of the class. A potentially difficult year 10 class concentrated hard whilst their teacher took them through a carefully planned series of card activities. As a result, they could confidently recognise at least ten new phrases by the end of the lesson.

123. Following a difficult period, the department is now once again fully staffed. The new team is very well led. They have the commitment and capacity to improve and raise standards even further.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- The introduction of high quality resources, especially in music technology
- The department's self-review process and strategic planning

Areas for improvement

- It is not made clear enough to pupils in Key Stage 3 what they need to do to improve and to achieve higher levels in the National Curriculum.

124. Teachers' assessments of year 9 pupils in 2001 were very high, but do not match the standards observed during the inspection, which were slightly below average. This may have

been due to teachers' inexperience in the new assessment requirements. Most pupils do have a secure understanding of terms and techniques, such as pentatonic scales and variations, enabling them to compose effectively, although the more able pupils do not extend or refine their work as much as they could.

125. Most pupils play keyboards and percussion instruments accurately and confidently but some have difficulties with co-ordination or playing to a pulse. Overall, their appraising (listening and responding to music) is at too simple a level. On the basis of the lessons seen and the recordings heard, pupils enter the school a little below the level expected at the end of Key Stage 2 and most pupils reach levels 4 or 5 in year 9, a little below the level expected at the end of Key Stage 3. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, make sound progress through the key stage, although the more able need challenging to achieve more.

126. A relatively high proportion of pupils study music at GCSE and, in 2001, results were in line with the national average and with these pupils' results in other subjects. Given the lower standard observed in Key Stage 3, pupils' achievement in Key Stage 4 is good. The current year 11 pupils are also progressing well but, taking into account their ability levels, the proportion reaching Grade C is expected to be lower, this year.

127. Ten per cent of pupils receive instrumental teaching from visiting staff although there is currently little correlation between their work and pupils' learning in class. Both boys and girls are attracted by the range of instruments offered. There is a similarly broad range of opportunities for pupils to make music together in clubs and ensembles, including a choir, a hand-bell group, keyboard clubs and rock bands.

128. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. In all of the lessons seen, the pupils responded enthusiastically to the musical styles and activities that were introduced. Their behaviour is consistently good. They respect each other's work and treat the instruments and equipment very well. Progress was hampered in only one lesson, where pupils were allowed to become too lively and their concentration and quality of work suffered. Usually, the pupils work well although sometimes without being sufficiently self-critical; they are sometimes happy to repeat basic tasks that they can already easily do, rather than taking the initiative to move on to new challenges.

129. Teaching is satisfactory overall but often good, especially at Key Stage 4. The teachers take a positive and constructive approach, giving good support that matches individuals' needs and praising their achievements. A good range of activities are employed and good use is made of available resources. The teaching was particularly effective when, for example, pupils in year 11 were given clear frameworks within which to construct compositions and when well-chosen backing tracks supported keyboard practice and improvising in year 8. It was less effective in a year 9 lesson when the pupils were not given sufficiently clear examples of the quality of playing that should be reached and, as a result, the pupils were not challenged to improve.

130. The new Head of Department is introducing a scheme of work at Key Stage 3 that encompasses a broad range of musical styles from around the world and will make full use of the very good music technology that is just being installed. Some aspects, however, need to be made clearer, in particular, how key musical skills [such as singing, keyboard playing, appraising] are built up over the three years and what abilities pupils, including the more able pupils, need to develop in order to achieve each National Curriculum level.

131. There were no recommendations for improvement in the last inspection report and, given the major changes in staffing, accommodation and resources, direct comparisons are

artificial. It is apparent, however, that the perceptive review of the previous acting head of department and the new strategic planning that is in place now provide a secure foundation for improving achievement in all aspects of the subject.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Very good leadership and management of a developing department;
- Excellent extracurricular provision, contributing to rising standards;
- Good teaching and learning with frequent feedback;
- Good standards in GCSE dance;
- Very good accommodation, also contributing to higher standards.

Areas for improvement

- Providing more opportunities in lessons for pupils to evaluate their progress;
- Attracting more girls on to the GCSE course.

132. Teacher assessments in 2001 judged that standards of pupils in physical education by the age of 14 were broadly in line with national expectations. During the inspection it was not possible to observe more than one lesson in year 9, but pupils in years 7 and 8 show knowledge, understanding and levels of performance in line with national expectations for these age groups. Since most pupils join the school with standards below expectations, particularly in gymnastics and dance, this represents good achievement. Pupils of all abilities, including the more able and those with special educational needs, make good progress in developing a range of skills. Most pupils develop a good understanding of concepts such as dynamics and unison in dance, and learn how to interpret various motifs. In hockey, pupils learn to improve basic stick handling techniques, although less able pupils show a limited tactical awareness and understanding of space when playing a game. Pupils in gymnastics make very good progress in improving the quality of movement using compositional principles, and a pupil with Aspergers Syndrome achieved particularly well in one lesson. There is no significant difference in overall standards between boys and girls.

133. The proportion of pupils attaining an A*-C grade in the 2001 GCSE examination was close to the national average, and was an improvement on the 2000 results. In both years, girls, who formed a much smaller proportion of the entry, achieved better than boys. The standard of performance and theoretical understanding seen during the inspection in the GCSE course was above national expectations for 16 year-olds, and represents good achievement for all pupils, including the more able and those with special educational needs.

134. The standards of those observed in core lessons for pupils between the ages of 14 and 16 are closer to national expectations. Despite variations in individual lessons, there is not a significant difference in attainment overall between boys and girls in both core and GCSE lessons. Boys achieve a good standard in the basics of rugby, learning to handle the ball under pressure, and developing particular skills such as the chip kick and grubber kick; whilst they learn the art of scrummaging and rucking. Both boys and girls make less progress in developing shot-making skills in badminton. Although they learn the basics of various shots such as the overhead clear and drop shot, and different types of service, many average and lower attainers find it difficult to sustain a rally because of weaknesses in their footwork, racket control and hand/eye co-ordination. Particularly good are the high standards achieved by many girls in dance. They produce set pieces and personal compositions based on particular motifs, and develop good evaluative skills. They also collaborate very effectively

in performance, after studying a piece such as “Penguin Café” for inspiration.

135. Progress in theoretical understanding is more variable. However, pupils studying for GCSE develop a good understanding of the various components of fitness and how these relate to particular sports such as netball. They also develop a good understanding of social and cultural factors such as how the media and sport relate to each other. The presentation of work is good.

136. The overall quality of teaching in physical education is good, and results in good learning. The teaching is always lively and knowledgeable. Consequently pupils respond enthusiastically, form good relationships with teachers, and make good progress in developing their skills. A strong feature of the teaching is the frequent feedback which teachers give to pupils both individually and in groups, enabling them to quickly refine their technique in various games and dances. It is a feature, for example, of GCSE dance lessons in which the teacher asks challenging questions in order to get pupils to consider how they could improve their examination grades. Very good classroom management and the range of teaching strategies used result in a very focused learning environment in which pupils make rapid progress, and enjoy the lessons. It is very evident for example in gymnastics and rugby lessons. In a year 10 rugby lesson the teacher had very high expectations, gave particular tasks to pupils of different levels of ability so that they could all develop skills at an appropriate rate, and progressively worked through a series of structured practices.

137. On the very few occasions in which aspects of teaching are less effective, teachers miss opportunities to involve pupils more in their own evaluation, for example when observing dance performance and commenting on the qualities before getting pupils to make their own critical analysis; or when teachers neglect to consolidate basic techniques such as a correct badminton grip, resulting in less able pupils finding it difficult to apply more developed skills in a game situation.

138. Leadership and management in physical education are very good. The commitment and lively approach of staff, reflected particularly in the large number of clubs and teams operating out of school hours, has a direct impact on raising standards and contributing to the enthusiasm of pupils. Higher attainers achieve good results in these activities, for example in basketball and girls’ football competitions, but all pupils, if willing to practice, are given opportunities outside of usual school hours. These extracurricular activities are amongst the strengths of the school. The very good accommodation, such as the specialist dance studio, also contributes to pleasing standards. The head of department has produced helpful schemes of work and other documentation, whilst the quality of assessment is improving. The department works hard to improve literacy, for example by encouraging a range of writing styles in GCSE theory work, and it also makes a good contribution to pupils’ moral and social development. This was observed for example in a challenging year 7 lesson in which dance was used as a way of exploring prejudice.

139. The strengths observed at the time of the previous inspection, such as good standards, good teaching and the extracurricular provision, have been maintained. There has been a major improvement in accommodation, which has substantially improved the quality of provision. Therefore there has been good progress in physical education since the previous inspection.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is **good** for years 7 to 9 and for the GCSE course. Provision of statutory religious education for all in years 10 and 11 is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teaching provides good opportunities for pupils to develop their own ideas and beliefs.
- High expectations of behaviour create an effective working environment.
- The pace of lessons and variety of learning strategies stimulate pupils to become involved.
- The standard of oral work is raised through skilful questioning by the teachers.

Areas for improvement

- Raise the quality of marking so that standards of written work are lifted, and pupils know what to do to improve.
- Develop literacy strategies so that the support for writing matches the good support already given for reading and oral work.
- Continue to develop the statutory religious education course for years 10 and 11 in order to provide opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of the beliefs of others.

140. Results for the full course GCSE in religious studies in 2001 were above the national average for grades A*-C. All pupils achieved a pass grade. This represents good achievement. The exam was first taken in 2000 and the trend in results is rising. More girls than boys are following the exam course.

141. In work seen during the inspection, standards by the end of year 9 are average. This represents good achievement. A significant minority demonstrate in their oral work in particular, higher than average attainment. Most pupils develop a sound understanding of the nature of religion and are aware of the key features of the faiths studied. Pupils in year 9 have an overview of the key features of Buddhism, recognising the significance of its founder. Higher attaining pupils are aware of the Buddhist belief in karma and the effect of positive and negative actions. However, the amount of uncompleted written work means that slower pupils do not take advantage of the opportunities presented to reflect on what they have learnt and so learning lacks re-enforcement. Written work is sometimes marred by poor presentation and there is insufficient demand for improvement in this. Pupils have a clear understanding of the effects of prejudice and discrimination using the example of the Holocaust. Higher attaining pupils demonstrate thought and sensitivity in their diary of a Jewish family. Topic work is well researched and presented, some pupils choosing to use computers for research and presentation.

142. The standards of pupils who have chosen to follow the GCSE course are average. Very good support for the examination and coursework is likely to lift their attainment in the examination. Pupils have a good grasp of the concept of prejudice and discrimination and the restrictions placed upon the Jews in Nazi Germany. Pupils in year 11 were clearly affected by their visit to the synagogue, although their re-call of specialist terms is weak and they do not generally make the effort to strive to remember. Pupils consider the concept of a deity and the effect that such belief has on lifestyle and moral dilemmas. The use of case studies enables pupils to recognise the problems in making moral decisions. Pupils explain their own opinions and provide some reasons for the opinions of others. Higher attaining pupils use religious teaching confidently to explain religious standpoints, for example when considering the sanctity of life, and a minority can give valid reasons for their own beliefs.

The majority record the beliefs of others, but there is little evidence that they consider the validity of different viewpoints, and do not include detailed reasoning in their own responses. A minority do indicate greater reflection, such as in their consideration of the causes of the tragedy at Dunblane.

143. Progress of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. When there is additional learning support or where the majority of the class have special educational needs progress is good, as the teacher makes use of appropriate strategies. Where whole class teaching takes place in a mixed ability class, unfinished work reduces the progress of these pupils. There is little significant difference between the progress of boys and girls. Boys are more reluctant to extend written responses, but they are more willing to contribute to the oral work of the class. Gifted and talented pupils in years 7 to 9 make good progress in the accelerated groups where the pace of the lesson and good questioning provides appropriate challenge.

144. No lessons were available to be seen in the religious education modules of the personal and social education course.

145. The quality of teaching is good. Some examples of excellent teaching were observed. A particular strength in teaching is the calm yet decisive manner with which pupils are managed. As a result of this, lessons proceed at a good pace that challenges higher attaining pupils, and enables staff to use teaching methods that stimulate and actively involve the pupils. Most teachers use skilful questioning to encourage pupils to develop their responses further, and challenge pupils to explain and give reasons for their choices or opinions. The manner and respect with which teachers receive the responses and questions of their pupils encourage pupils to become involved and to respect the responses and questions of their peers. On the one occasion when the lesson was less successful a minority of pupils were allowed to dominate the lesson, which resulted in a loss of momentum and the focus of the lesson being missed.

146. Teachers set high standards for themselves and for the pupils in lessons, and pupils rise to the challenge. Expectations of written performance are not so high and over generous praise for written work and lack of follow up when work is unfinished, results in some pupils achieving less than their best. Pupils' attitudes in class are good overall, very good in the higher attaining sets. Relationships are good, encouraging pupils to 'have a go' and not to be afraid to be wrong. In some classes boys are more pro-active than girls in oral work, in written work boys are more likely to delay working in a few cases. Behaviour is generally very good. Pupils following the GCSE course are well motivated, making the most of the teacher's willingness to give additional time after school.

147. The leadership and management of the department are good. Most lessons are taught by the head of department who has a clear vision for the subject, and a commitment to the success of the pupils. End of topic assessments are clear and an integral part of the course. Pupils understand the requirements of the marking levels and are encouraged to identify where they have fulfilled these on their topic sheets. The department is developing some opportunities for pupils to use ICT for research and for presentation of work. This is an area they have already identified for further development. The department makes very good contributions to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. Good use is made of the local church and synagogue, but there is insufficient use of visitors from faith communities or others that would enable pupils to gain first hand experience of the effect of belief on lifestyle.

148. The department does meet but there is a lack of formal meeting time to share expertise and to involve the full team in the monitoring of the subject. This results in a

considerable workload for the head of department. The upper school core religious education is managed separately as part of PSE course delivered by form tutors. The time allocation for specific religious education is unlikely to be sufficient to deliver all the requirements of the certificate of achievement it has identified. The planned course is not yet fully in place. The school has sought to supplement the course by providing one day for each year group in years 10 and 11 when visiting speakers lead talks and workshops. While these are valuable opportunities they are unlikely to fulfil the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus as there is insufficient opportunity for pupils to develop the relevant understanding of religious concepts or to develop a knowledge and understanding of the role religion plays in contemporary life.

149. The department has made very good improvement since the last inspection. The GCSE course has been successfully introduced and all pupils are making good progress. Teaching is good and the management of pupils is now a strength of the department. The subject base is now a bright and attractive place where pupils can celebrate their achievements.