

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **LONG FIELD HIGH SCHOOL**

Melton Mowbray

LEA area: Leicestershire

Unique reference number: 120308

Headteacher: Mrs L. Moore

Reporting inspector: Mr R. Palmer

31198

Dates of inspection: 29<sup>th</sup> April – 1<sup>st</sup> May 2002

Inspection number: 244552

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Middle deemed Secondary

School category: Foundation

Age range of pupils: 11 to 14

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Leicester Road  
Melton Mowbray  
Leicestershire

Postcode: LE13 0BZ

Telephone number: 01664 561234

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs Brenda Clayton

Date of previous inspection: 9<sup>th</sup> June 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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31198	R. Palmer	Registered inspector		Information about the school The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
12775	J. Goodchild	Lay inspector		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?
20119	T. Bell	Team inspector	Mathematics Provision for pupils with special educational needs	
7531	E. Cole	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Design and technology	
23480	M. J. Harding	Team inspector	History Religious education	
23188	V. Maunder	Team inspector	Science Equality of opportunity	
2141	J. Oxley	Team inspector	Physical education	
19867	M. W. Pettitt	Team inspector	Art and design Music	
19214	G. Price	Team inspector	English Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
4829	I. Waters	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
20497	V. H. Williams	Team inspector	Geography	

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Long Field High School is a co-educational, foundation comprehensive school for pupils aged 11 to 14 years. It is located in the town of Melton Mowbray, which provides about half of the school's pupils. The rest of the pupils are attracted from the surrounding villages. The school has 522 pupils, (270 boys and 252 girls), compared with 505 pupils at the time of the previous inspection in 1997. It is fully subscribed and is smaller than most secondary schools. Pupils come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds that are above average overall. The attainment of pupils on entry at age 11 is above average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals (about one in every 16) is below the national average. Very few pupils are of non-white ethnic background. Currently, no pupils need support to speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs, just over one in five, is above average. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs, about one in 14, is above average and has increased since the previous inspection. The pupils with statements have a diverse range of needs that include autism, moderate or severe learning difficulties, emotional and behavioural difficulties and physical difficulties.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

The school has a deservedly good local reputation. It provides a good quality of education that helps pupils of all backgrounds and levels of attainment to achieve well. Good leadership, particularly from the head teacher, plays an important part in the school's continuing success. Standards are above average overall. They improve as pupils move through the school as a result of good teaching and pupils' very positive attitudes to work. Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9 is higher than would be expected from their levels of attainment when they joined the school. It is above average overall and well above average in many subjects. Good provision for the care of pupils promotes their all-round personal development. The policy for the inclusion of all pupils is very effective. It makes an important contribution to pupils' very good social and moral development. The school has many more strengths than weaknesses. It manages its resources well and provides good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Pupils achieve well. By the end of Year 9, attainment is above average overall and well above average in English, science, geography, history and information and communication technology (ICT).
- Good teaching and good pastoral care enable pupils to achieve well.
- Good leadership sets a clear direction for further improvements in the quality of education.
- Provision for the personal, moral and social development of pupils is very good.
- Pupils enrich their learning experiences through active participation in a good range of extra-curricular activities.
- Very good provision for pupils with special educational needs helps them to make the same good progress as other pupils.

#### **What could be improved**

- Standards in mathematics, though similar to the national average, are below those in the other core subjects of English and science.
- About one third of the teaching was satisfactory rather than good. A small amount was less than satisfactory.
- The quality of marking varies from very good to unsatisfactory.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Improvement since the previous inspection in 1997 is good. The school has maintained its previous strengths and built well upon them. Results in the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9 remain above average. They have improved at a similar rate to the national improvement and represent good achievement based on pupils' levels of attainment when they joined the school. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is now very good. In respect of the five key issues for action that were identified in the previous report, improvement has been good overall. Better provision for high-attaining pupils now enables these pupils to achieve well in most subjects. Standards in art and design have improved and are now satisfactory. Procedures for monitoring and evaluation have improved and are satisfactory. More effective monitoring has led to a good quality of teaching and learning. However, in a few subjects, such as science and mathematics, monitoring does not always ensure the spread of good practice. Departmental development plans and the school improvement plan now contain specific and measurable targets that are closely related to the school's priorities. Finally, the school now meets the requirements in respect of reports to parents about pupils' progress in subjects. The school has the capacity and the commitment to make further improvement.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 14 year olds based on National Curriculum test results.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
End of Key Stage 3 tests	A	B	B	B	well above average A above average B C average below average D E well below average

Results in the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9 have been consistently above the national average over the past four years. They are improving at the same rate as results are improving nationally. They represent a good achievement for the school because, at the time of the previous inspection, results were already above the national average and, since then, the school has admitted a higher proportion of pupils who have learning or behavioural difficulties. The results also indicate good achievement when compared with pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6. In 2001, results were well above average in English and science. In mathematics, results were average, having been above average or higher in the three previous years. Compared with the results attained by similar schools, results were well above average in English, above average in science and well below average in mathematics. Over the past three years, girls' results have been higher than those of boys in English but below those of boys in mathematics and science. Currently, standards are above average overall. They are well above average in English, science, geography, history and ICT. Pupils achieve well overall and very well in English, geography, history, ICT and religious education. Standards in mathematics are average and indicate satisfactory achievement. Standards are above average in literacy and average in numeracy. Pupils of all levels of attainment, including those with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented, achieve well in most subjects because they receive good teaching, acquire good skills and understanding and have positive attitudes to their work. The school achieved its suitably challenging targets for performance in the national tests in 2001 in English and science, but not in mathematics.



## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils want to do well. They participate very enthusiastically in the wide range of activities provided. Their very positive attitudes to learning help them to make good progress in lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. The large majority of pupils behave well in class and around the school. They are friendly and polite. The management of the few pupils who have behavioural difficulties is good.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils develop very good skills of independent study that enable them to think for themselves and to present their views about topical issues very effectively and maturely. Personal development is very good, partly because staff know the pupils very well. Very good relationships among pupils and between pupils and staff create a very positive climate for learning that helps pupils to achieve well.
Attendance	Very good. Attendance is well above the national average. Unauthorised absence is below the national average.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9
Quality of teaching	<b>Good</b>

*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 and the quality of learning are good throughout Years 7 to 9. Teaching is often very good and occasionally excellent. A small amount of teaching seen was less than satisfactory. Teaching meets the needs of boys and girls of all backgrounds and levels of attainment well. In most lessons, pupils enjoy the work because it is interesting, relevant and of sufficient difficulty to make them think hard. Teaching in the core subjects is good in English and science and satisfactory in mathematics. Teaching is very good in history, ICT and religious education. It is good in all other subjects of the National Curriculum apart from art and design and music in which it is satisfactory. The strengths in teaching include teachers' good management of their classes and effective planning of lessons. Teachers have generally high expectations that lead to pupils' achieving higher standards than expected from their levels of attainment when they joined the school. Teachers make increasingly effective use of assessment to help pupils to improve their work. However, in a few subjects such as mathematics, they do not always use marking to give pupils enough guidance on how to improve their work. The teaching of literacy is good in English and other subjects. The teaching of numeracy is satisfactory in mathematics and other subjects. Pupils use ICT well to enhance their learning in subjects when given the opportunity. In the three lessons seen that were less than satisfactory, pupils made very little progress because the pace of learning was too slow, the work was not matched well to pupils' different learning needs and the teacher's knowledge of the subject was inadequate.

Pupils make good progress in most lessons because teachers use their good, specialist knowledge to enthuse the pupils and to encourage them to have high expectations. Pupils make a good contribution to their own learning through working hard, concentrating well and

showing interest. They reinforce their understanding of the work in good discussions and reviews about what they have learned. They cooperate well with each other when working in pairs and groups. They have a good knowledge of their progress and current levels of attainment. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because teachers know the pupils and their needs very well and set work of appropriate interest, variety and difficulty. Pupils of high attainment have been carefully identified. They make good, and often very good, progress in most subjects as a result of receiving work of suitable difficulty. However, the high-attaining pupils are not sufficiently stretched in art and design or in music. Very good relationships between teachers and pupils help to provide a pleasant and purposeful environment for learning.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The broad and balanced curriculum meets the needs of all pupils and satisfies statutory requirements. Pupils enrich and extend their learning experiences through active participation in a good and wide range of activities outside the classroom, which includes an outstanding programme of activities in physical education.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Provision has improved considerably. These pupils now make good progress because, as a result of very effective assessment, they receive good teaching and very good support. Pupils with autism make very good progress
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Provision is very good for social and moral development. It is good for cultural and spiritual development. Pupils acquire a good understanding of life in a multicultural society. They respond well to the many opportunities to exercise responsibility.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The school succeeds in its aim of achieving the social inclusion of pupils of all backgrounds and levels of attainment. Staff know the pupils and their needs very well. Effective use of assessment enhances pupils' academic and personal development. Suitable procedures for child protection and for health and safety are in place.
How well does the school work in partnership with parents	Very good. Parents make a very effective contribution to pupils' academic and all-round development through their very close partnership with the school.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. Strong and effective leadership from the head teacher gives a clear direction for improvement and sets suitably challenging targets for staff and pupils. Management in subjects is generally good. Strategies to raise standards have improved the quality of teaching and learning.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses well and take suitable action to secure improvements. They monitor the school's work closely, are supportive and carry out their duties well, apart from the provision of a daily act of collective worship.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school makes increasingly good use of data to assess how well it is doing and to set challenging targets. Effective systems are in place to monitor and evaluate standards, behaviour and attendance. The sharing of good practice in teaching is not apparent in a few departments.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Financial management is good. The school makes effective use of its good learning resources to support pupils' learning. Deficiencies in the accommodation and staffing for mathematics hinder pupils' progress. The school considers very carefully all its spending options when purchasing resources to seek best value. It carefully relates spending to the priorities of the school's improvement plan.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils like school and expect to work hard.</li> <li>• Teaching is good and pupils achieve well.</li> <li>• Leadership and management are good.</li> <li>• Pupils become mature and responsible.</li> <li>• It is easy to discuss a problem with staff.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The setting of homework is inconsistent.</li> <li>• Links with the school could be closer.</li> </ul>

Inspectors strongly support parents' justifiably positive views about the good quality of education provided by the school. In respect of homework, the findings of the inspection team are that homework is of good quality overall and of suitable amount. Homework is used well in most subjects to reinforce and to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding and to develop their skills in research. However, inspectors support the views of those parents who said that homework 'came in waves' so that sometimes there was too much and sometimes too little. They disagree with those parents who felt that links between home and school were not good enough. The school does establish a close working partnership with its parents in a good variety of ways such as consultation evenings, reports, pupils' organisers and booklets of information.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and pupils' achievements**

1. The overall levels of attainment of pupils when they join the school at the age of 11 vary from year to year. Results in national tests taken by pupils at the end of Year 6 show that the attainment of pupils when they started at the school was average for the current Year 9, above average for Year 8 and slightly above average for Year 7. The proportion of pupils in Year 7 who had obtained the highest standards of Level 5 or above at the end of Year 6 was average in all three core subjects of English, mathematics and science.

2. As they move through the school, pupils of all backgrounds and levels of attainment make good progress and achieve well overall. The few pupils of minority ethnic heritage are indistinguishable from other pupils in terms of their work and progress in all subjects in Years 7 to 9. Many pupils attain much higher results in the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9 than expected from their levels of attainment at the end of Year 6. In 2001, for example, many pupils had increased their National Curriculum levels by more than the expected one to one and a half levels. Nearly eight out of every ten pupils had increased their National Curriculum attainment by two levels or more in English. In mathematics and science, around six in every ten pupils had increased their attainment by two levels.

3. Taking into account the above-average proportion of pupils who have learning or behavioural difficulties, the school's results in 2001 represent good achievement. Results fluctuate from one year to the next but represent at least good achievement relative to pupils' capabilities and prior attainment.

4. The school achieved its suitably challenging targets for performance in the national tests in 2001 in English and science but did not reach its target for mathematics.

#### ***National curriculum assessments of pupils at the end of Year 9***

5. In 2001, pupils' results in the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9 were well above average in English and science. They were average in mathematics. Compared with the results attained by similar schools, the results were well above average in English, above average in science and well below average in mathematics. Compared with pupils' prior attainment at the end of Year 6, they indicate achievement that was very good in English, good in science and satisfactory in mathematics. Pupils' attainment in the national tests in mathematics in 2001 showed a decline from the usually above average attainment of previous years.

6. Teachers' assessments of the performance of higher-attaining pupils in the national tests taken at the end of 2001 were below the results that these pupils actually attained. These assessments were not due to any lack of expectations on the part of teachers. They were partly because teachers were over cautious in their assessments. More importantly, the school's improved procedures for raising the attainment of high-attaining pupils were proving successful. The school now uses data carefully to identify the higher-attaining pupils and provides work of suitable difficulty, interest and challenge to extend them in most subjects. In English, for example, the proportion of pupils attaining the higher grades of Level 6 and above in the national tests in 2001 was well above the national average and was in the top five per cent of similar schools. In science, the proportion of pupils reaching Level 6 and above was well above average. However, in mathematics, the proportion reaching Level 6 and above was the same as the national average but below the average for similar schools.

7. In all three of the core subjects, the results in the national tests in 2001 indicated a good increase in the proportion of pupils reaching the nationally expected Level 5 at the end of Year 9, compared with the proportion reaching the nationally expected Level 4 at the end of Year 6.

8. Since the previous inspection in 1997, the school's results in national tests have improved at a broadly similar rate to the national improvement. They represent good achievement based on the prior attainment of pupils and taking into consideration the increased proportion of pupils who have special educational needs, including a large number with severe learning or behavioural difficulties.

9. Girls' results in the national tests in 2001 were higher than those of boys in English. They were slightly below those of boys in mathematics and science. Over the past three years, the gap between the performance of girls and boys in these tests was much narrower than that nationally.

10. In 2001, teachers' assessments showed that the proportion of pupils achieving the expected National Curriculum level or higher at the end of Year 9 was well above average in geography, history, ICT and modern languages, above average in physical education, average in music and slightly below average in design and technology and art and design.

***Standards and achievement in classes observed during the inspection.***

11. Standards are above average in classes observed. In Years 7 to 9, pupils are attaining standards in the core subjects that are similar to those attained in national tests in 2001. By the end of Year 9, work in class, homework and written work, teachers' assessments and internal test results indicate that standards are well above average in English, science, geography, ICT and history, above average in design and technology, modern languages, physical education and religious education. They are average in mathematics, art and design and music. Pupils' listening and speaking skills, although above average, are not as good as their well above average skills in reading and writing.

12. Achievement is good overall. Pupils' current achievement throughout Years 7 to 9, relative to their prior attainment and capabilities is very good in English, geography, history, ICT and religious education. It is good in science, design and technology, modern languages and physical education. It is satisfactory in mathematics, art and design and music. The main reasons that achievement is satisfactory rather than good or better in mathematics and music are that management, teaching and the use of assessment are not as consistently good as in other subjects. In mathematics, standards are adversely affected because of recent staffing difficulties. The cramped accommodation in mathematics slightly hinders learning because it restricts the range of learning activities when classes are large. In art and design and in music, the provision for gifted and talented pupils is unsatisfactory compared with the good and often very good provision made in other subjects.

13. Pupils of all levels of attainment and backgrounds achieve well in most subjects because they receive good teaching, acquire good skills and understanding and have positive attitudes to their work. In most classes pupils achieve well because they work at a fast pace to produce work of good quality or better. Pupils have a good knowledge of their levels of attainment. They increase their understanding of work in many subjects through their own critical evaluations of their performance. In most subjects, pupils know what work is needed to reach the next level.

### ***Pupils with special educational needs***

14. Pupils with special educational needs, including those who have statements, make similar progress to that of other pupils and achieve well in most subjects. They make good progress in lessons and when they are withdrawn for particular support because teachers and classroom assistants prepare work of appropriate levels of difficulty and provide additional help for them. Procedures for the assessment of these pupils are very good. Teachers often modify the work to take account of the information provided about individual pupils' needs. A scrutiny of a sample of the work of pupils with statements across a range of subjects in Years 7 to 9 indicated they are making good progress because teachers match the work to pupils' learning needs. The coordinator for special educational needs ensures that pupils' individual education plans are thorough, up-to-date and used effectively by teachers and support assistants to promote good learning. Pupils who have behavioural difficulties make good progress in classes because they receive good support and most teachers manage them well.

15. The school makes very good provision of staffing, resources and support for pupils with special educational needs. However, these pupils make good rather than very good progress overall because, in a few lessons, teachers do not set enough, short-term targets to motivate them and do not place enough emphasis on improving careless and untidy work. In a few subjects, for example mathematics, teachers do not provide enough opportunities for these pupils to increase their competence in using the specialist vocabulary of the subject.

16. The few autistic pupils make very good progress as a result of good teaching and very good help from the learning support assistants. They benefit from the additional support provided by an external specialist service for autism. These pupils achieve very well relative to their capabilities and prior attainment.

### ***Pupils who are gifted or talented***

17. In Years 7 to 9, pupils who are gifted or talented are making good progress in most subjects. They are receiving increasingly good provision as a result of the school's identification of their particular needs. Departments prepare work and activities of appropriate interest and difficulty to help these pupils to achieve well. Occasionally, when a pupil shows an outstanding ability in the subject, that pupil is entered for the GCSE examination at the end of Year 9. The school justifiably only does this for pupils who are expected to achieve the highest possible grade. In recent years, a small number of pupils have entered the GCSE examinations for mathematics and German at the end of Year 9. These pupils all attained A\* or A grades.

### ***Literacy and oracy***

18. Across the curriculum, pupils' skills in literacy are well above average. In most subjects, pupils read very well and produce written work of at least good standard. In subjects such as English, geography, history and religious education, pupils display very good skills in reading and writing. Pupils develop and make very effective use of their very good literacy skills as a result of the successful implementation of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy, which is co-ordinated and monitored well in these subjects. A good range of writing is evident in modern foreign languages but pupils' presentation of work is often disappointing because they have few opportunities to develop drafting and re-drafting skills and do not act on corrections.

19. Taking into account their standards when they joined the school, pupils of all levels of attainment improve their standards in literacy very well. By the end of Year 9, pupils have reading and writing skills that are well above average overall. Most pupils read independently both for research and for recreation. They show well above average levels of accuracy in

spelling, punctuation and grammar. Written work is well above average and helps pupils to improve their standards of work across all subjects.

20. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are above average at the end of Year 9. Most pupils are confident and competent speakers. In all years and in many subjects, pupils engage actively in lively and relevant discussions in class. A small number of pupils readily and suitably contribute at length in these discussions. Most pupils listen carefully and think before responding. A few pupils try to answer questions before fully understanding what is required.

### ***Numeracy***

21. Standards of numeracy are average. Pupils use these skills satisfactorily to enhance and extend their work in many subjects. They improve their skills in manipulating number through frequent, mental 'warm-up' exercises in mathematics lessons. The development of pupils' mathematical skills and their use to support work in other subjects are not as good as those in literacy because the teaching of numeracy across subjects does not yet enjoy the same high priority. A co-ordinated and improving strategy, based on the Key Stage 3 National Strategy is in place to develop numeracy across the curriculum. Some subjects already make a positive contribution to pupils' numeracy. For example, in design and technology, pupils develop their skills in measuring and estimating. In science, they measure liquids, weigh objects and draw accurate and appropriate graphs of their results. In geography, pupils plot graphs and draw tables and comment suitably on what they show. In ICT lessons, pupils make effective use of numeracy in problem-solving activities and in the use of spreadsheets.

### ***Information and communication technology***

22. Pupils' skills in ICT improve as they move through the school so that they are well above average at the end of Year 9. Pupils of all levels of attainment make good use of their computing skills to promote their learning in most subjects, when given the chance. Pupils handle computers with confidence, competence and accuracy. They are very proficient at communicating their ideas using a range of software. They use the Internet well for research and can download text, images and graphics with considerable skill

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

23. The attitudes of pupils towards school are very good. They support pupils' learning very well. Pupils are keen to come to school and are prepared to work hard. They get a real sense of satisfaction when they achieve success in their studies. They participate enthusiastically in the good and wide range of opportunities to enrich their learning experiences that the school provides. All pupils, including those from ethnic minorities, those with special educational needs and those from widely different social and economic backgrounds, are fully and successfully integrated into the school community. The school's aim of providing very well for the social inclusion of all pupils is achieved. This is an important and contributory factor to the very good personal development of pupils. Racial harmony is good. The few pupils of minority ethnic origin play a full and active part in everyday life in the school and do not stand out from the rest.

24. The very good relationships among pupils and between pupils and staff have a very positive influence on pupils' good achievement. They contribute well to the purposeful and friendly environment for learning that permeates the school. One of the most striking characteristics of the school is the mutual respect shown between staff and pupils. Pupils are respected and valued for their individuality. Accordingly, they respond positively and, during their time at school, develop into confident young people. Many and good opportunities for collaborative or group work help to develop further pupils' very good social skills. Pupils willingly support each other in their learning. Pupils in Years 8 and 9, for example, work well

together in the curricular enrichment lessons. Pupils react well to encouragement from teachers and willingly and maturely express their feelings on a range of moral and social issues. They listen with sensitivity to the views and opinions of their peer group that may differ from their own.

25. Behaviour in and around the school is good. The school is a socially harmonious community. Behaviour in lessons was very rarely less than satisfactory; often it was good or very good and occasionally excellent. When behaviour was less than good it was usually related to the quality of teaching that failed to stimulate pupils' interest. A small number of pupils, who have emotional and behavioural problems, present challenging behaviour on occasions. Teachers use the school's effective strategies well to manage this small group of pupils and to support their emotional and behavioural needs. Bullying is not an issue in this school. Pupils throughout the school respond positively to good encouragement to accept responsibility for their actions and to treat everyone with respect.

26. Since the previous inspection the instances and number of pupils excluded for a fixed term from the school has increased. In the previous academic year, there were 21 periods of fixed term exclusion compared with 10 reported in the previous inspection's report. The school has admitted pupils who have been excluded from other schools for reasons of poor behaviour and attitudes. This accounts for some of the increase as the school has tried to modify and improve the behaviour of these pupils. The introduction of the 'assertive discipline' procedures for the management of behaviour during this academic year has succeeded in reducing the number of fixed-term exclusions. The number of pupils permanently excluded has reduced from three to one. Governors are appropriately involved in the exclusion procedures.

27. The development of pupils' initiative and personal responsibility is very good. It is one of the strengths of the school. By the time they move on to the upper school, at the end of Year 9, pupils are confident and articulate young people. They express their feelings and concerns in a mature and logical manner. From first entering the school, pupils are encouraged to accept responsibility for managing their own learning. Research tasks and project work support the development of this skill. Pupils make informed choices in Year 9 about what subjects they are going to study when they move into Years 10 and 11 at the upper school. The school council provides an effective forum for pupils to air their views. The school is part of a pilot scheme in which members of the Youth Forum of Melton Borough Council visit the school to identify issues of importance to pupils in their local community. This initiative contributes well to pupils' understanding of citizenship.

28. A good and wide range of visits, both in this country and overseas, extends pupils' understanding of the wider community. The residential visits are particularly popular and make an important contribution to the development of pupils' social skills.

29. Attendance is very good. In 2000/01 the rate of attendance was 93.8 per cent, which is well above the national average. Authorised absence was below the national average. The systems for recording and monitoring attendance have improved since the previous inspection through the introduction of a computerised system for the monitoring of attendance. Absence of pupils is rigorously pursued in partnership with the education welfare officer. Pupils arrive punctually at school and for lessons.



## HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

30. The quality of teaching is good throughout the school. Pupils learn well and make at least good progress in most lessons. Teaching meets the needs of boys and girls of all backgrounds and levels of attainment well.

31. Teaching was satisfactory or better in just over 19 out of every 20 of the lessons observed. It was good or better in two out of every three lessons seen and very good in one out of every three lessons. In one lesson teaching was excellent. Teaching was less than satisfactory in three of the 103 lessons observed, including one lesson in which it was poor.

32. In the core subjects, teaching is good in English and science and is satisfactory in mathematics. In other subjects, teaching is very good in history, ICT and religious education. It is good in all other subjects apart from art and design and music, in both of which teaching is satisfactory. The teaching in personal and social education lessons is good overall but ranges from very good to satisfactory. The only lessons in which the teaching observed was less than satisfactory took place in science and music. The one lesson in which teaching was excellent occurred in science.

33. Although teaching is good overall, the quality in individual lessons ranges in most subjects from satisfactory to very good. This is the case in mathematics, for example. Just under one-half of the teaching seen in mathematics was good or better. The other half of teaching in this subject was satisfactory and lacked the same pace and challenge of the better lessons. In a very good mathematics lesson on probability, for a Year 8 class of high-attaining pupils, the teacher had a lively approach and constantly encouraged pupils to do their best. The lesson was successful because the teacher had planned the work carefully and had prepared good learning resources that were of suitable difficulty to stretch pupils of different levels of attainment in the group. The very good introduction to the lesson gave pupils a clear understanding of what they had to do and why. While pupils were carrying out their tasks and investigations, the teacher used his very good knowledge of the subject well to monitor and support the work of individuals and small groups. Pupils benefited from the good explanations given by the teacher and responded well to the questions he posed to check their understanding. As a result, pupils worked at full stretch throughout the lesson and made very good progress in their knowledge and understanding of the topic. Throughout the lesson, pupils were challenged to think. Their learning was enhanced through the teacher's high expectations.

34. However, in the satisfactory lessons seen in mathematics, as was the case in satisfactory lessons seen in other subjects, pupils play a less active part in the lesson and the work is not always suitably matched to their individual needs. In these lessons, teachers do not always make best use of the time available so that some activities are too rushed and there is insufficient time to revise what has been learned during the lesson. In the mathematics lessons in which teaching and learning were satisfactory rather than good or better, teachers' expectations were not always high enough. The marking of pupils' work was inadequate and did not point out to pupils what they should do to improve. Most but not all of the teaching in mathematics that is less than good is by supply teachers. In a few of the satisfactory lessons in other subjects, such as art and design and science, the teaching was uninspiring and the good pace of learning owed much to the very positive attitudes adopted by the pupils to their work.

35. The teaching has several strengths. The most evident one is the very good way that teachers manage their classes and plan their work. Prominent and important features in most of the good or very good lessons were the active participation of pupils, the effective use of the teacher's good knowledge of the subject to inspire the pupils and the provision of a

variety of interesting, well-planned and carefully-timed activities carried out at a suitably brisk pace. The large majority of teachers have suitably high expectations for pupils' progress. The very good relationships between teachers and pupils help to create a purposeful and enjoyable learning environment. Pupils' learning in most lessons was good because they were conscientious, cooperative, hard working and concentrated well.

36. The school has successfully adopted many of the recommendations for teaching contained in the Key Stage 3 National Strategy. Accordingly, most lessons begin with a 'starter activity' or short revision of previous work. Teachers then usually ensure that pupils are fully aware of what the aims of the lesson are and what pupils are expected to do. Many teachers display the lesson's aims prominently and relate them to National Curriculum levels of attainment. In most lessons, pupils learn well and are motivated because they receive work and activities that are matched well to their capabilities. Teachers generally include a plenary session during or at the end of lessons to check pupils' progress and understanding. In the best lessons, the plenary sessions are used very well to reinforce pupils' understanding, as was seen in a personal and social education lesson for a Year 9 class dealing with the sensitive topic of teenage pregnancy.

37. Most teachers make increasing and effective use of assessment to set targets for pupils' learning and to influence what they teach and how. However, in music, teachers make insufficient use of assessment to determine what should be taught. Marking in most subjects is thorough and encouraging for pupils. It helps them to improve by showing what they need to do to improve. In mathematics, marking is unsatisfactory.

38. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in most of their subjects because they receive good teaching and very good care and support. Teachers know what pupils' learning needs are. They know how to deal with them through the good individual education plans that contain details of pupils' difficulties, targets for improvement, reviews of progress and appropriate teaching strategies. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because teachers make effective use of these individual educational plans to meet their needs within specific subject contexts. The help provided in class by support assistants is very beneficial to pupils with special educational needs and helps them to maintain concentration and to develop confidence in tackling work of appropriate difficulty. For example, in a mathematics lesson for a Year 7 class of pupils with special educational needs, pupils worked well at their own level on weighing tasks and increased their understanding of heavy and light weights. At the same time, sensitive support from both the class teacher and a support assistant met their behavioural needs or learning needs. Through close and effective monitoring of pupils' understanding and attainment, teachers gain a clear picture of individual pupils' achievement and progress towards their targets.

39. In a few lessons, particularly in mathematics and music, pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory rather than better progress because the work does not always cater well for their individual needs. In these lessons, teachers place insufficient emphasis on pupils' development of the specialist vocabulary of the subject. Teachers do not always set short-term targets to give pupils an incentive to learn and provide insufficient guidance to pupils on ways to improve the neatness and layout of their work.

40. The few pupils with autistic difficulties make particularly good progress because they receive very good teaching and support, including specialist help from an external support unit for autism.

41. Gifted and talented pupils make good progress overall. The school has carefully identified the highest-attaining pupils and provided programmes to extend their learning in nearly all subjects. Although their progress is unsatisfactory in art and design and in music,

the effective use of good strategies for raising their attainment, including the improved use of information derived from assessment, means that these pupils make very good progress in English, geography, history, ICT and religious education. Their progress and achievement are satisfactory in mathematics and good in all other subjects.

42. Pupils reinforce their learning and develop their skills in study and research through the use of homework that is generally of good quality. Most pupils complete their homework conscientiously. In most subjects, teachers adjust the teaching programme to deal with those aspects of the work that pupils experience difficulty in understanding. Inconsistency among teachers in the setting and timing of homework occasionally results in pupils having too much and sometimes too little to do. A few parents at the pre-inspection meeting correctly observed that homework was of good quality but that it 'sometimes arrived in waves'.

43. Pupils acquire good basic skills and a good overall knowledge and understanding of the work in most subjects. They enjoy working independently and cooperate well with each other in paired and group work. Pupils generally work at a fast pace and produce much work of good quality.

44. The teaching of literacy is good overall and in most subjects. It helps pupils to acquire skills that are well above average in reading and writing and to become competent in spelling, grammar and punctuation. Most teachers help pupils to learn the meanings and spellings of key words and how to use these words in the right contexts. In English lessons, teachers use good strategies to help pupils to improve their spelling through such activities as 'paired spelling' corrections. Reading reviews help pupils to recognise the characteristics of different types of writing. In most subjects, teachers pay good attention to the development of pupils' speaking skills. They provide many good opportunities for discussion and help pupils to develop skills and confidence in debating issues.

45. The teaching of numeracy is satisfactory in mathematics and across subjects. Although teachers have received information and some training about the mathematical elements of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy, numeracy does not currently enjoy the same high profile in the school as literacy. Nevertheless, the teaching of numeracy is occasionally excellent, as seen in a Year 7 science class in which all the pupils were actively considering the frequency of reproduction of bacteria and how long it would take to progress from one bacterium to a figure of well over 500 million bacteria. Pupils also receive good opportunities to develop and use their measuring and data handling skills in subjects such as design and technology, ICT and geography.

46. In many subjects, teachers encourage pupils to use their ICT skills to extend their learning. In English, for example, pupils of all levels of attainment, especially the high attainers, make very good use of ICT to prepare and present their work and to improve their written responses. In mathematics, pupils have too few opportunities to use ICT to enhance their work. The teaching of computing skills in ICT lessons is very good. Pupils learn how to use computers independently and appropriately.

47. The school has improved the good quality of both teaching and learning identified in the previous inspection report. It has increased the proportions that are good and very good and has reduced the amount of unsatisfactory teaching from nearly one in every ten to about one in every 30 lessons observed. The two subjects that previously had major weaknesses in teaching have improved. Teaching is now satisfactory in art and design and good in modern foreign languages. The teaching in mathematics currently is satisfactory but not as good as at the time of the previous inspection, partly because of difficulties in staffing caused by illness and problems in recruitment.

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

48. The broad and balanced curriculum meets statutory requirements for the teaching of subjects of the National Curriculum and for religious education. It provides a good range of learning opportunities and caters well for the needs of boys and girls of all levels of attainment. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, enjoy equal access to a full range of subjects. A good programme of extra-curricular activities, including an outstanding provision of sporting activities, and a very effective, timetabled programme of curricular enrichment provide a valuable extension to pupils' learning. As at the time of the previous inspection, curricular provision is of a higher quality than that often found in schools of a similarly small size.

49. The timetable gives generally appropriate amounts of time for teaching of the National Curriculum. However, the time allocated to the teaching of music and art and design is a little lower than that recommended and has an adverse effect on standards. Provision for drama is satisfactory. It is taught as a separate subject to Year 7 pupils. In Years 8 and 9, a limited amount of drama is taught as part of the curricular enrichment programme. School productions each summer, such as Willy Russell's, 'Our Day Out' in 2001 help to give a small number of keen pupils additional opportunities in drama.

50. Pupils with special educational needs follow a full curriculum. None are disapplied from the National Curriculum subjects. For the group of pupils with significant special educational needs in Year 7, a good process of integration ensures that, wherever possible, these pupils are integrated into the day-to-day life of the school. This includes lessons with the rest of the year group and access to any clubs.

51. Provision in ICT has improved the curriculum since the previous inspection. Pupils in all years are taught ICT well across all subjects and very well in separate lessons in Year 7. Special 'help' clubs ensure that pupils have very good access to additional ICT support outside lessons.

52. The art and design curriculum has improved since the previous inspection, despite the continued low allocation of teaching time. Pupils' work displayed around the school shows the good variety of topics covered. Art clubs provide additional opportunities for pupils to extend their learning, although the number of pupils taking advantage of this additional provision is small.

53. In design and technology, the overall curricular provision has also improved. It is now good. Small numbers of pupils extend their experience of the subject in the very good, additional ICT activities.

54. Pupils enhance their academic and all-round personal development through participation in the school's good programme of additional activities outside of lessons. In sport, the excellent provision includes additional activities such as dance, athletics, cricket, tennis and rounders for pupils in all years. A rugby team was due to participate in a 'curtain raiser' match at Twickenham the weekend after the inspection. About one in three pupils take part in at least one sporting activity. This is typical of the wide involvement of pupils from the school in team sports in the local area.

55. Pupils' enhance their very good social development through involvement in a residential experience at some point in their three years at the school, arranged through physical education, modern foreign languages, the arts subjects or science. Returns from form tutors indicate that every pupil attends, on average, one additional activity each week

either at lunchtime or after school. In English, a drama club and an annual production enhance pupils' opportunities for dramatic experience. In ICT, a computer club is open most lunchtimes in each of the two computer rooms, This club is well attended and helps many pupils to practise and develop their computing skills. In science, the good provision of extra-curricular activities includes several clubs such as the robot and green clubs. A good feature of all these additional facilities is that the numbers of pupils with special educational needs who become involved are high. This emphasises the inclusive character of the curricular provision. The library offers additional ICT facilities that are used regularly, one notable example of good use being the small group of pupils who are setting up a school website. In general, however, the library is not widely used, either during the lunch break or during lesson times, apart from the regular library lessons, which the English department organises.

56. Good provision for careers education is made in the programme for personal and social education in Year 9. Included are lively elements such as a 'Raising Aspirations Day' and a valuable partnership with the Leicestershire Education and Business Company. A Long Field Industry Day, which is one product of this link, gives pupils a valuable opportunity to undertake an exercise simulating a business situation. The Zinergy Project, developed jointly by the school and the careers service, gives pupils useful experience of going through processes for recruitment. Pupils with special educational needs have valuable and close ties with the local, link careers officer, who has one-to-one interviews with each pupil and attends their annual reviews.

57. The programme for personal and social education is very good. It is organised well by heads of year and is revised annually. Pupils' evaluations of the course are collated and used in the updating of schemes of work that take full account of pupils' changing needs. The programme is coordinated well over three years and provides good coverage of all the required areas, including sex and drugs education. Bullying issues are addressed fully in modules for pupils in all three years. Citizenship is a particular focus in Year 8 and is covered well. Topics include democratic processes, fund-raising events and the work of charities.

58. Provision for the teaching of basic skills is very good in ICT, good in literacy and satisfactory in numeracy. The co-ordinator of the national basic skills strategy has organised an effective programme that is helping to raise standards, through initiatives such as the literacy progress units for lower-attaining pupils. The school has made good progress in implementing the Key Stage 3 National Strategy for learning.

59. Good links exist between the school and partner institutions. Useful and productive curricular links have been formed with the local upper school. These include regular science visits by Year 9 pupils to the Eco Centre and transitional units of work in English that Year 9 pupils carry with them into the upper school. Good links occur between the modern foreign languages departments of the two schools. They have jointly put together a language project aimed at raising standards in Years 10 and 11. The school has played an important part in establishing a learning resource on the worldwide web to support learning in modern foreign languages. In humanities, pupils have good opportunities to begin modules as part of the GCSE short courses that they will pursue at the upper school. Curricular links with the large number of feeder, primary schools are satisfactory. Induction arrangements for Year 6 pupils are very good. They help pupils to settle quickly into the school. These include Saturday morning 'taster' sessions, an open week for pupils and their parents, two organised days in school and an evening meeting.

60. Community links are good. These mainly occur through the school's curricular enrichment programme. This good curricular feature is provided for all pupils in Years 8 and 9. In the teaching groups for some modules, pupils from the two years are mixed, which provides valuable social experiences. The programme considerably broadens the range of learning experiences for pupils. It includes such diverse activities as additional drama lessons, sports such as swimming, experience of working in primary and special schools, fieldwork, visits and external speakers. Some financial support is received from local organisations to help particular pupils go on school trips. Good educational links with the local police occur through the Youth Group Forum. Very good sporting links exist through a community tennis partnership and occasional coaching for pupils offered by a well-known football club.

***Pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development***

61. Provision for pupils' personal development is very good. It has improved since the previous inspection.

62. Provision for spiritual development is good. This is a school with a purposeful and friendly ethos in which pupils can grow and flourish, respect others and be respected. Daily witness to this is the great care for the most vulnerable members of the school, who have severe and special educational needs. The very high attainers can construct web sites, take GCSE examinations early and attend summer schools for gifted and talented pupils. The school is an inclusive community in which all are encouraged to aspire to success. Pupils have good opportunities to be inspired by human achievement and example, and by the wonders of nature, as seen in geography lessons. Opportunities for creativity are good through a range of subjects including art and design and music. In a citizenship lesson, pupils considered their vision for a better Britain and were designing posters and badges to campaign for this. Religious education makes very good spiritual provision through a unit of work on spiritual awareness and many opportunities for reflective consideration of matters of belief and values in all lessons. Some learning in religious education promotes spirituality very well. In a 'guided fantasy', pupils journeyed to visit a wise person and asked 'the most important question in the world'. Afterwards, their discussions revealed some deep spiritual insights as they had, without prompting, asked some of the ultimate questions about life and its meaning. In a personal and social education lesson, pupils gained confidence and a healthy concept of their ideal self, as the ideas of over-thin beauty, as portrayed in the media, were challenged and pupils realised that beauty is far more than superficial.

63. Daily assemblies promote spiritual and moral development satisfactorily through the weekly themes, but in half those seen, collective worship was omitted. The school policy for collective worship is not fully implemented. In a Year 8 assembly of good quality on the theme of trust, pupils were actively involved and worship was achieved through a suitable, silent pause after the presentation. This allowed pupils to respond to what they had heard in quiet reflection or prayer according to individual belief.

64. Provision for moral development is very good. The clear code of conduct is known well by all. The good balance of rewards and sanctions and the high expectations for behaviour, in and out of lessons, encourage personal responsibility very well. Teachers and support staff set the tone for this by good example and by very good relationships with pupils. Community service is encouraged. The generous support for a range of charities, local, national and global, fosters compassion as well as good citizenship. Pupils worked well on a project to build a sensory garden for Melton. They raised money for the mayor's annual cause recently. They work with the local volunteer bureau each year to collect Christmas parcels for senior citizens and to provide a concert for them. Pupils gain a very good awareness of those less fortunate than themselves, through a charitable link to Zimbabwe. Each year, pupils usually take part in either the Oxfam or World Vision fast, and raise money for Children in

Need and UNICEF. Currently some pupils are engaged in campaigning for justice in world trade, following a visit from a Traidcraft representative.

65. In many lessons, pupils explore well the moral and ethical aspects of a wide range of topics. This is particularly the case for environmental issues in which the school has developed a specific policy. Pupils learn how to make up their minds about what is right and wrong and have a keen sense of justice. This was apparent in physical education lessons with regard to fair play in games. It is helped by the regular visits of a local magistrate, who leads pupils through a typical case. Pupils work in groups to consider evidence, reach a verdict and give an appropriate sentence. This is a valuable experience for moral development. In history and religious education, pupils learn to 'stand in the shoes' of others such as a First World War soldier, a Holocaust victim or a Hajj pilgrim. This helps them to learn tolerance and to understand and respect different people and viewpoints. Effective units of work on prejudice and stereotyping increase pupils' awareness of moral issues. The education to challenge racism is an area of improved provision and is good. The school has undertaken a research project recently, the conclusions of which indicate that the school's work on this matter does make a difference in helping pupils to adopt mature attitudes.

66. Provision for social development is very good. A strong corporate identity is fostered in assemblies and in many other ways. Pupils' social development is promoted very well through appropriate programmes for personal and social education and careers, the curricular enrichment courses and citizenship, extra-curricular activities and residential visits. Every pupil has the chance of a residential experience away from home in this country and in France and Germany. Pupils improve their social skills and awareness through a wide range of opportunities to take responsibility and use initiative. This happens formally through elections to the school council, which is a mature and active body that devised the one-way system and worked on the code of conduct. It happens informally in the many projects happening in the school, such as the charity work, or the school web site for which there is a dedicated Year 8 team.

67. Cultural development is a good feature of the school's provision through many lessons in English, modern foreign languages, art and design, design and technology, geography, history and religious education. A good tradition of inter-school competitive games is upheld through physical education. The provision is good for learning about British, European and world cultures. Regular fieldwork trips around Melton and to Rutland Water develop pupils' awareness of their environmental heritage. Multicultural awareness is enhanced through such events as visits to churches in Loughborough, to the cathedral and castle in Lincoln, and to a Hindu temple in Leicester. Pupils participate in a range of cultural activities. Each year, pupils receive visits from authors and theatre groups and participate in visits to art galleries. They perform in musical groups, concerts and regular musical productions and an annual dance show. Many take part in visits to France and Germany. Pupils are prepared well for life in a culturally diverse society. The historical study of the achievements of the Mughal Empire and work in religious education on world faiths are important features. Provision for multicultural work is good. Recently, special features have been the Africa Day, the theme of African music in music lessons, and the 'Indian Experience' module in the curricular enrichment programme. The work for the international charities previously mentioned also assists pupils' understanding of communities in many countries.

## HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

68. The quality of care and assessment of pupils is good. It is one of the school's strengths. The social inclusion of all pupils, who come from a wide range of economic and social backgrounds as well as from a wide range of attainment, is a very successful feature. This is a caring school in which the individual needs of its pupils are important.

69. Pupils receive a very good quality of educational and personal support and guidance. The transition from primary school to the middle school is effective. Pupils in Year 7 settle in quickly. They feel that they are supported well in their early days in school. Those identified as having literacy difficulties receive extra support. Tutors stay with their group throughout their time in school. This creates a constructive, working partnership between pupils and tutor. Arrangements for transfer into the upper school are satisfactory. The very good curricular enrichment programme and the effective personal and social education programme support pupils' personal development very well.

70. Revision classes at lunchtime and after school help pupils to prepare well for the national tests to be taken at the end of Year 9. Study skills are an important part of the support that pupils receive and find useful. Mind mapping, for example, is taught as part of some science lessons to help pupils to retain and retrieve information. Homework clubs at the end of the school day provide additional support for all pupils. Pupils are appreciative of the support that teachers give over and above their normal teaching hours. Gifted and talented pupils benefit from the opportunity to take part in summer schools in science, mathematics, ICT and sport. Currently, however, the needs of these pupils are inadequately met in art and design and music.

71. The monitoring of pupils' academic performance and personal development is good. Termly academic monitoring reports enable tutors to identify whether pupils are experiencing difficulties by comparing their performance across subjects. These reports form the basis for discussion between tutor and pupil. They lead to the setting of targets to resolve problems and to raise pupils' standards of work.

72. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are good. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. The school makes very effective use of the recently introduced, computerised system to monitor and record attendance. A weekly printout of pupils whose attendance has fallen below 90 per cent ensures early identification of those who are beginning to be a cause for concern. Any problems about a pupil's attendance are discussed with the education welfare officer. Action is then taken to identify what help can be offered to support the pupil to attend school regularly.

73. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are good. The learning environment of the school promotes respect for each person. The recently introduced system of 'assertive discipline' as a means of managing behaviour is successful. Pupils have a clear understanding of what constitutes good behaviour and the sanctions if they misbehave. Pupils value the range of rewards for good work and behaviour, particularly the termly raffle prize. The annual Awards evening is a celebration of success and is shared with parents. Pupils gaining certificates of merit are congratulated in the termly newsletter. They gain in confidence and self-esteem as a result.

74. Procedures for eliminating bullying are very effective. The topic of bullying and how to counteract it is taught as part of the programme of personal and social education. Pupils are clear about the action to take if incidents occur. Heads of year keep careful records of any incidents and what action has been taken.



75. A small number of pupils present difficult and challenging behaviour. The school works in good partnership with an appropriate range of external agencies and services to provide support for these pupils and to devise strategies to manage them effectively.

76. Procedures and arrangements for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare are good. The nominated person for child protection is fully trained, is known to staff and is aware of the responsibilities of the position. The staff handbook contains appropriate procedures to follow if incidents occur. Suitable procedures are in place for children in the care of the local authority. The provision to manage health and safety is satisfactory. It complies with statutory requirements.

### **Assessment**

77. Procedures for assessing pupil's attainment and progress are good. However, teachers' assessments of National Curriculum standards at the end of Year 9 are sometimes too cautious. This was seen, particularly, in the higher proportion of pupils who gained Level 6 and above in the English tests in 2001, compared with the much lower number who reached a similar standard according to teachers' assessments.

78. The results of external examinations are analysed systematically and compared with other schools in the local authority and nationally. Use of the data is being increasingly developed to look at how pupils best learn and their achievement. For example, the levels pupils gained in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2001 have been very carefully considered to evaluate the amount of improvement each individual pupil made in English, mathematics and science compared with their previous attainment in these subjects in the national tests taken at the end of Year 6. The acting deputy head and the head of mathematics have been looking very closely at these evaluations of progress to try to understand why performance in mathematics dropped last year compared with results in English and science. The reasons for the differences in attainment of pupils are being investigated to help to develop strategies to even out overall performance.

79. Pupils' results in national tests taken at the end of Year 6, and data from the school's own procedures for assessment, are used well to build up a picture of pupil's attainment when they enter the school. This data forms a good baseline for tracking pupils' progress over their time in school and for predicting their potential levels of attainment in National Curriculum subjects by the end of Year 9. This helps subject staff to set appropriate targets for pupils. Pupils in Year 9 are aware of their predicted levels and the level at which they are currently working.

80. Use of information gleaned from assessment is good overall. Very good practice in the geography and physical education departments, in which staff regularly assess pupils' work and monitor their progress against predicted grades, ensures good or better achievement by pupils of all capabilities. However, the use of such data to promote pupils' learning is currently unsatisfactory in music and mathematics.

81. The quality of marking of pupil's work, though satisfactory overall, varies among subjects from very good to unsatisfactory. In subjects such as the humanities and in ICT and design and technology, many examples were seen of well-marked work with constructive comments that helped pupils to understand how they can raise their standards of work. However, in mathematics, marking is unsatisfactory because much work is unmarked and pupils receive insufficient guidance on how to improve.

82. The responsibility for monitoring the quality and use of assessment lies with heads of department. This means that the senior management team has not been sufficiently involved in monitoring for consistency across subjects in the implementation of the school's policy on

assessment. The introduction of performance management and the work on assessment currently being developed by the acting deputy head teacher are addressing this shortcoming.

83. Systems for the assessment of the work and progress of pupils with special educational needs are very good. They operate very effectively because the coordinator of special educational needs carries out very good and comprehensive monitoring. Teachers and pupils follow up the results of this monitoring with appropriate remedial action. Besides the assessments used by the rest of the school, the coordinator uses a bank of other tests well to identify individual needs. Visiting specialists carry out additional tests as appropriate. Very detailed records of assessment are used well to track pupils' attainment and progress and to set challenging targets for individual pupils. This information is used well when constructing individual educational plans and to monitor attainment and progress when these are reviewed. As a result of suitable testing to identify individual needs, all pupils with special educational needs receive the recommended level of support. Pupils with behavioural difficulties are managed well. They are monitored sensitively so that they rarely disrupt the work of other pupils.

### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

84. The school's partnership with parents is very good. It plays an influential and positive part in pupils' good achievement. The parents, justifiably, have very good views of the good quality and effectiveness of what the school provides and achieves. Nineteen parents attended the meeting prior to the inspection and about one in six parents completed the questionnaire on parent's views.

85. The parents who responded to the questionnaire and those who attended the meeting felt that their child was expected to work hard and was making good progress. They said that teaching was good and that the school benefited from good leadership and management. They felt comfortable about approaching the school with questions or problems. Concerns were expressed about the ability of the school to work closely with them, the information they received about the progress of their child and the amount and frequency of homework that children received.

86. Inspectors agree with parents' positive comments and that this is a good school. However, they disagree with those parents who felt that links between home and school were not good enough. The school does establish a close working partnership with its parents in a good variety of ways. The amount and quality of homework that pupils receive are good and contribute positively to pupils' good achievement. However, as pupils who complain about having too much homework on Fridays have stated, there are occasions when pupils get too much and sometimes too little homework, because teachers do not always set homework to a strict timetable. The picture becomes further complicated when pupils leave to the last moment the completion of a project for homework that was intended to span a few weeks.

87. The school has very good links with parents. Pastoral staff ensure that ongoing contact is established with parents of pupils who are causing concern. The quality of information provided for parents about the progress of their child is good. The quality of annual reports is good overall but does vary among subjects from very good to satisfactory. Most departments ensure that parents are clear about what their child has studied, the current rate of progress and what needs to be done to improve. The format of the termly, academic overview is being reviewed so that it can be sent home to parents to give them more information about the progress of their child. Parents value the pupil organisers and see these as a useful and regular means of communication between school and home.

88. The school provides a suitable range of meetings for parents. These include the annual consultation evening that gives parents the opportunity to discuss their child's progress with subject staff; settling-in evenings with tutors in the autumn term and the chance to meet with upper school staff about the choice of subjects their child will study when they move up to Years 10 and 11.

89. The special educational needs department works very closely with parents in the identification, assessment and monitoring of pupils with special educational needs. There is regular contact, particularly at the time of review of individual education plans or statements. Parents, correctly, have a high regard for the school's very good provision for pupils with special educational needs.

90. The contribution of parents to children's learning is very good. Most parents willingly collaborate with the school to resolve difficulties when they occur. Many parents actively support the school in several ways and are active not just in fund-raising. They support school events, help with school productions in drama, accompany school trips and transport pupils to after-school events. In recent years, parents have also provided very effective support for a small number of very high attainers to take the GCSE examination in German or mathematics and attain the highest grades of A\* and A at the end of Year 9. The majority of parents ensure that pupils complete homework and coursework to meet deadlines.

91. Parents are very supportive of the school's curriculum. Many help to escort pupils on trips, in refereeing matches and through the thriving parent teacher association, which raises several thousand pounds for the school each year.

#### **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

92. Leadership and management are good. They contribute well to the school's purposeful, friendly and positive climate for learning. The school is making good progress towards achieving its main aims. The motto of 'in your own way, success – opportunity, challenge and fulfilment for all' is evident in the school's daily life. The social inclusion of pupils is a successful feature, particularly taking into account the very wide differences among pupils' social and economic backgrounds. The few pupils of minority ethnic heritage and the large proportion of pupils with special educational needs are made to feel equally as welcome as all other pupils. This feeling of inclusion is a major contributory factor towards the good achievements made by pupils of all levels of attainment and backgrounds. Governors and senior staff have readily admitted pupils with learning or behavioural difficulties to the school even though they could have used the school's popularity and over subscription as an excuse to limit the proportion of these pupils. They recognise that the school's overall profile of attainment of pupils on entry has declined slightly as a result. They take the view that it is the school's place to do its best for pupils of all backgrounds and to maximise each pupil's individual potential. In this aim, the school is successful. The very good quality of care and the school's success in helping pupils, particularly those with special educational needs, to achieve well have provided the school with a deservedly good, local reputation. Parents who live several miles away from the school are pleased with their decision to send their children to this school.

93. The effectiveness of the school's leadership and management is indicated in the many good improvements made since the previous inspection of 1997. Standards remain above average despite a rise in the number of pupils with statements of special educational needs. Provision for pupils with special educational needs has improved and is now very good, particularly for autistic pupils. The school is popular and oversubscribed, with about one half of the pupils coming from outside the school's natural catchment area. Improvement related to the five key issues for action that were identified in the previous report has been

good. Better provision for high-attaining pupils now enables these pupils to achieve well in most subjects. Standards in art and design have improved as a result of good in-service training and support and are now satisfactory. Procedures for monitoring and evaluation have improved and are satisfactory. Departmental development plans and the school improvement plan now contain specific and measurable targets that are closely related to the school's priorities. The school now meets the requirements in respect of reports to parents about pupils' progress in subjects. The school has the capacity and the commitment to make further improvements.

94. The strong and effective leadership of the headteacher sets a good personal example to pupils and staff. It provides a clear direction for the school's work. The acting deputy head teacher provides good support. Governors have a constructive and positive working partnership with the school. They call the head teacher and senior staff suitably to account for the school's performance. There is a shared commitment among staff to raise standards further. Pupils like coming to school. They work well and participate willingly in all aspects of school life. Teachers know their pupils well in this small school and, through very good relationships with pupils, contribute well to pupils' academic and all-round development.

95. The school is managed well and has a good team spirit. It achieved the status of 'Investor in People' in November 2000. This status was confirmed again in March 2002 as a result of the school's commitment to achieving high standards for pupils and having high expectations both of staff and pupils. It has achieved the Sportsmark award for the quality of its provision in physical education and received the Artsmark award in May 2002. The school makes particularly good use of the expertise gained during its days as a self-governing, grant maintained school, particularly to manage its finances effectively.

96. Pupils in Year 9 were correct in their observations that the school's leadership and management were, as represented in the words of one boy, 'good because they set a good example and treat people equally and fairly'. Other pupils in Year 9 were partially justified in saying that one of the strengths of management was the consistency in which staff carried out policies, for example on behaviour. These pupils were also right to point out that there were exceptions and supported the views of some parents that though homework was of good quality, its setting was too random. They referred to 'masses' of homework being set on Fridays.

97. The supportive governing body carries out its duties effectively and responsibly. Governors are well informed and make effective use of a good range of expertise. They keep a close and careful watch on the school's performance. They have a very good awareness of what the school does well and a generally good understanding of areas that need to improve. They take effective action to make improvements, as shown, for example, by their support of the head teacher's initiatives to improve the provision for design and technology and in the acquisition of good ICT resources. The school makes suitable provision to meet all its statutory requirements, including those for special educational needs. However, the monitoring of the provision for a daily act of collective worship does not ensure that this requirement is always fully met.

98. Procedures at whole-school and departmental level for monitoring and evaluating the school's performance and taking effective action to secure improvements are good. The school has a considerable amount of very useful and informative data relating to pupils' attainment and potential. The data is analysed carefully and the results are shared with staff so that meaningful targets for improvement are set. The programme for review and evaluation provides the senior management team and governing body with a good insight into the school's strengths and weaknesses. Effective monitoring ensures that pupils' attendance is well above average. The procedures for the assessment of pupils with special educational

needs are very good. They play an important part in the good achievement and personal development of these pupils.

99. The monitoring of teaching and learning, though satisfactory overall, varies from very good to unsatisfactory. Shortcomings in the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning occur in mathematics, science and music. Standards and the quality of teaching in art and design have improved considerably. They are satisfactory now because the senior managers have provided much guidance and support, including the use of outside consultants. The placing of the art and design department within the design and technology department, which enjoys very good leadership and very effective management, has led to considerable improvements in the provision for art and design. By contrast, standards and the quality of teaching in the mathematics department have recently declined from good to satisfactory. The headteacher and senior staff have recognised the need to take action. They have provided the relatively inexperienced mathematics team with consultative support and intend to increase this. However, the sharing of good practice within the department is limited, with the result that teaching varies from very good to satisfactory. Insufficient monitoring of pupils' work in mathematics has resulted in inadequate marking of pupils' work by some teachers. The use of supply teachers and the long-term absence of mathematics staff have contributed to the variation in the quality of teaching in mathematics and highlight the need for closer and more effective monitoring to ensure a more consistently good quality of teaching.

100. The quality of leadership and management in subject areas is good overall. It is very good in design and technology, geography, history, modern foreign languages and religious education. It is good in all other subjects except mathematics, art and design and music in which it is satisfactory. Heads of department have improved their managerial skills through the school's programme of in-service training and the application of the system for performance management.

101. The co-ordinator for special educational needs provides very good leadership and management. Documentation is very thorough and provides the necessary guidance to staff. Procedures for assessing pupils' work, progress and personal development are very effective in helping these pupils to achieve well. The coordinator is aware of the strengths of the department and the areas in need of development. Effective systems are in place to ensure that annual reviews of pupils with a statement of individual needs are systematically carried out. Additionally, departmental reviews include an assessment of the effectiveness of the classroom assistants. Good reviews of pupils' individual education plans occur twice a year. Teachers use the results of these reviews and data from assessment, either by the school or visiting specialists, to identify and make provision for pupils' specific needs.

102. Following appropriate consultation, the governing body produces a comprehensive school improvement plan that sets out the school's priorities for a period of three to four years. The school plan for the period 1999 to 2002 is currently being reviewed. It contained appropriate educational priorities such as improvements in teaching and learning and curricular provision. At the heart of the school's agenda, appropriately, are the intentions to raise achievement further and to continue to promote social inclusion. These features are prominent in the draft plan for action over the period 2002 to 2005, which closely relates to the local education authority's plans for improvement. The plan also envisages further developments to incorporate the Key Stage 3 National Strategy more fully into its work. Suitably detailed developmental plans for every department in the school are clearly linked to school priorities. The plans provide effective direction for the school's further improvement.

103. Financial administration is good. It is detailed and thorough. This was confirmed by the findings of the latest audit report of the school's financial management. The annual

budget reflects the priorities identified in the school improvement plan. Additional funding has been allocated recently, for instance, for the provision of excellent new accommodation for science. Specific grant for areas such as staff development, special educational needs, and computing are all spent as intended. Although the school appears to carry over a surplus of around £300,000, from its days as a grant maintained school, this is not a true reflection of its budgetary circumstances. The money for the completion of the new science accommodation, amounting to approximately £120,000 is included in the surplus. The new plan for further improvements, anticipates that the school will spend this accrued surplus during the next year or so on such identified priorities as improvements in accommodation in music and physical education, additional learning resources for some departments, improving provision for health and safety and further acquisition of computing resources.

104. The finance committee undertakes a full evaluation of the quality and cost of existing and future services before these are renewed. This ensures that as far as possible the school receives value for money. Governors and staff seek best value through such measures as auditing the needs of the curriculum, internal consultation and use of competitive tendering. Heads of department seek out best buys when ordering new books and equipment. In general, therefore, the school is an efficient organisation.

105. The school provides a good quality of education. It gives good value for money. It manages its generally good resources for learning well. The staffing, accommodation and learning resources allocated for pupils with special educational needs are very good. These resources are managed very well in addressing the identified needs of these pupils.

### **Staffing**

106. The number, qualifications and experience of the teachers satisfactorily match the demands of the curriculum. They are a contributory factor to the good quality of teaching in most subjects. The level of support staff is good. Staffing difficulties resulting from long-term staff absence and difficulties in recruiting suitably qualified teachers in mathematics hinder pupils' progress in a few classes. Staffing difficulties in other subjects such as German have been alleviated by the specialist support provided by members of the senior management team. Procedures for the induction of new and newly qualified teachers are good.

### **Accommodation**

107. Accommodation is good overall. The prioritised plan for improvements in accommodation has successfully promoted pupils' learning in some key subjects. In science, the excellent accommodation has a very positive influence on pupils' learning. It provides well for the use of a wide range of learning activities. The very good accommodation for the library and the English department provides a very good environment for pupils to develop their literacy skills. By contrast, the accommodation in mathematics, though satisfactory, consists of temporary and uninviting classrooms that restrict the range of teaching and learning methods and activities, particularly when the size of the class approaches 30 pupils. The accommodation is maintained very well. The absence of litter and graffiti is indicative of the good quality of care from the caretaking and cleaning staff and also of pupils' respect for property.

### **Resources**

108. The provision of resources for learning is good across the curriculum. The library is used well by pupils for reading and research during timetabled lessons. It has a good range and provision of books. The librarian provides a valued service that helps pupils to develop their study, ICT and reading skills. The librarian liaises closely with departments to ensure that provision in the library matches the needs of topics currently being studied by pupils in different subjects. Books on display are changed at suitable intervals to reflect topical issues or projects undertaken in subjects. Resources are supplemented through the good links with

the local town's library resources. Although the provision in the library is better than that found in many schools' pupils do not use it as extensively as befits such a good resource.

109. Provision of software and hardware for ICT is good. The allocation of funds to departments is fair and reasonable. Subject to meeting the criteria set out in the school or departmental development plan, departments can apply for extra resources to be purchased. Suitable plans have been drawn up for the provision of more computers to be allocated within departments so that all pupils should have immediate access to specialist programs. Residential trips, day visits, sporting activities and programmes for enrichment encourage pupils to look further than the school for resource and stimulus.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

110. In order to raise its good standards further, the school should include the following key issues in its action plan.

- (1) Raise attainment in mathematics so that it is as high as that currently in English and science by:
  - recruiting sufficient, specialist mathematics teachers;
  - increasing support for the leadership and management of the department;
  - monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in mathematics more effectively in order to share good practice;
  - improving the quality and consistency of day-to-day assessment of pupils' work;
  - as circumstances permit, bringing the quality of accommodation for mathematics to the same high quality of accommodation as that for English and science.(Paragraphs: 5, 12, 34, 37, 47, 80, 81, 99, 106, 107, 120, 124, 129, 130)
  
- (2) Raise further the proportion of teaching that is good or better by:
  - more effective, rigorous and consistent monitoring of teaching and learning, particularly in mathematics, science and music in order to share good practice;
  - gaining the active participation of all pupils in lessons, through work that matches well to their individual needs and makes effective use of all the available time;
  - providing work of suitable difficulty for high-attaining pupils in art and design and music;
  - providing appropriate training and support for non-specialist and supply teachers.(Paragraphs: 18, 34, 99, 129, 136, 139)
  
- (3) Improve the quality and consistency of marking so that in all subjects pupils have a clear awareness of what they need to do to improve and receive good encouragement to succeed.  
(Paragraphs: 34, 37-39, 81, 115, 117, 124, 125, 137, 183, 190)

In addition to the key issues above, the following less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

- Monitor the school's policy for the provision of a daily act of collective worship to ensure that it meets statutory requirements.  
(Paragraphs: 63, 97)
- Monitor the setting of homework across subjects so that pupils do not have occasions when there is too much to do or too little to do.  
(Paragraphs: 42, 86, 96)
- Provide sufficient curricular time for the teaching of art and design and music.  
(Paragraphs: 145, 146)



## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	103
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	39

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	32	34	30	2	1	0
Percentage	1	32	34	30	2	1	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y9
Number of pupils on the school's roll	522
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	28

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y9
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	36
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	107

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

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	16

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.8
National comparative data	8.1

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.4
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	77	77	154

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	54	51	58
	Girls	66	55	60
	Total	120	106	118
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	78 (77)	69 (78)	77 (78)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	61 (18)	44 (48)	49 (43)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	52	52	54
	Girls	67	63	51
	Total	119	115	105
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	78 (77)	75 (75)	69 (78)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	34 (38)	39 (40)	38 (42)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

### **Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	1
Indian	3
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	0
White	514
Any other minority ethnic group	3

### **Exclusions in the last school year**

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	20	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

### **Teachers and classes**

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y9**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	30.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.2

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y9**

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	109

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y9**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77.3
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y9**

Key Stage 3	23.9
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Financial information**

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	1 363 488
Total expenditure	1 216 462
Expenditure per pupil	2 367
Balance brought forward from previous year	154 486
Balance carried forward to next year	301 512

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	7.2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	10.2

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	522
Number of questionnaires returned	82

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	41	52	6	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	51	45	1	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	30	62	1	1	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	20	60	16	4	0
The teaching is good.	30	66	1	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	37	49	13	1	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	55	41	4	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	66	29	2	1	2
The school works closely with parents.	35	51	12	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	51	45	1	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	40	49	6	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	51	43	2	0	4

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

### ENGLISH

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

#### Strengths

- Good teaching leads to methodical and effective learning. Teachers plan lessons well.
- Pupils learn quickly because they are very well motivated in lessons.
- Attainment at the end of Year 9 is very good compared with pupils' levels of attainment when they joined the school.
- Good leadership and management ensure that the work is structured well to achieve high standards in English.

#### Areas for improvement

- Inconsistent marking means that pupils in different classes do not receive equal levels of support for their learning.
- Teachers insufficiently promote pupils' advanced speaking and listening skills.

111. As a result of the good teaching they receive and their very positive attitudes in lessons, pupils achieve very well. Most pupils make very good gains in English compared with their levels of attainment on entry to the school. Work seen during the inspection was well above the national average and of a similar standard to that attained by pupils in the most recent national tests. Pupils enhance their achievement through their use of their very good study skills and an ability to work independently.

112. Pupils enter the school with above average levels of attainment. In 2001, the results in the National Curriculum tests for pupils at the end of Year 9 were well above the national average and well above those achieved in similar schools. Results have been rather erratic over the past three years but the overall improvement has clearly outstripped national improvement in English. Over this time, the performance of boys against national figures has been very similar to that of girls. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress, both when supported in lessons and when taught in small separate groups. Pupils' attainment in English is higher than that in science. It is much higher than in mathematics.

113. Pupils invariably behave well in lessons. They are keen to achieve high standards in their work in English. Their good motivation characterises all they do. As a result, pupils make very good progress. Pupils of all levels of attainment sustain their concentration until the end of lessons. They usually present work in books very neatly. Tasks are rarely unfinished. Pupils are friendly and co-operative. They have very good relationships with their teachers that help to make lessons positive and enjoyable.

114. Work seen during the inspection is well above average. In their reading and written work, pupils in all three years and of all levels of attainment consistently achieve standards that are markedly higher than might be expected from their previous levels of attainment. Almost all pupils are independent readers and enjoy reading activities. This was clearly evident in a library lesson for Year 8 pupils in which levels of interest in what books others were reading and enthusiasm for their own choice of book were very apparent. When reading aloud, they are engaging and usually fluent readers. Even pupils who have some difficulty with reading are often enthusiastic about books. Pupils' writing contains many fewer errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation than is usual. All pupils structure their writing, using appropriate language for different purposes, in stories, letters, essays, reviews, poems,

magazine articles and advertising copy. Many pupils write easily and at length with a very good range of vocabulary and expression. They show good ICT skills in the preparation and presentation of many assignments. Pupils are competent communicators when speaking and listening. Discussions in groups are lively and focused. For example, higher-attaining pupils in a Year 9 lesson collaborated very well in small groups when they evaluated examples of written work against national criteria. Pupils are keen to participate in discussions and debates. However, their advanced skills in speaking and listening are not as well developed as those in reading and writing. In a debate on the moral dilemma faced by characters in the play 'A Game of Soldiers' by Stuart Jackman, pupils in a Year 8 class demonstrated good basic speaking skills in thoughtful contributions. However, they had little confidence in addressing the class, preferring instead to direct their comments to the teacher. In drama, pupils have average levels of attainment in their knowledge and practical work.

115. Teaching and learning are good. Teaching was good or better in five out of every six lessons observed and in almost two lessons out of five it was very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Teachers make effective use of their good knowledge of the subject when planning and teaching lessons. This is evident in the high quality of materials chosen for lessons and in the good balance of activities. Lessons offer pupils appropriate challenge and successfully engage their interest. In the best lessons, teaching shares several common strengths. Teachers make good use of the national strategies for literacy to improve standards of spelling and to enrich pupils' vocabulary. Pupils are made clearly aware of the steps in learning that they are to make so that their efforts are focused and effective. In a very good lesson, Year 8 pupils were working on Nigel Hinton's novel, 'Buddy'. The class teacher had planned activities around the theme of 'prejudice'. Pupils moved quickly from a brisk starting activity on prefixes to sharing in reading extracts aloud and then to enthusiastic analysis of what they had read. They then worked hard on identifying aspects of prejudice evident in Buddy's embarrassment about his father's appearance and behaviour at a school parents' evening. Lower-attaining pupils had a simplified task and worked equally well with good help from a learning support assistant. All pupils made very good progress, which the teacher took care to praise at the end of the lesson. Pupils extend their understanding of the work because they are frequently involved in evaluating their own and others' work. They quickly scan material and form clear judgements about strengths and weaknesses, which helps them to see ways in which they can improve their written work. In lessons in which pupils make less rapid progress, the planned activities limit their levels of participation. As a result, concentration and enthusiasm wane so that the pace of pupils' learning is slow. Teachers generally mark pupils' work conscientiously but they do not all mark with the same thoroughness. Many pupils do not always get sufficient indications of what they must do to improve.

116. Pupils' very good achievement is better than that expected from the good teaching and learning seen in lessons. Pupils have very positive attitudes to the subject that cause many to supplement their work through reading and writing for purposes of recreation and research. The effective teaching of literacy in many subjects helps pupils to improve further their skills in reading and writing. Pupils' expectations and motivation to succeed are high. High-attaining pupils, including those who are gifted and talented make very good progress in lessons and through very good use of their skills of research and presentation in project work.

117. In most subjects, pupils read well and produce written work of a good standard. Much good teaching of literacy occurs in history and religious education. Pupils receive good advice on the effective structuring of sentences and paragraphs and ways of handling material. In history, very good links are made with the English department in Year 9 pupils' work on poetry of the First World War. Written work is varied and imaginatively chosen to encourage lively

responses. In science, the department helps pupils to develop their literacy skills by giving them confidence in using basic scientific terminology. However, teachers place insufficient emphasis on the development of pupils' writing skills in science, particularly in describing experimental methods, and do not always mark work for spelling or grammatical errors. Opportunities for developing reading are limited in a few subjects such as art and design and modern foreign languages. A good range of writing is evident in modern foreign languages but presentation is sometimes disappointing and pupils have few opportunities to develop drafting and re-drafting skills.

118. The very good accommodation for English helps to create a very positive and attractive environment for learning. Pupils extend their learning through good use of the very good facilities and resources available in the well-organised library.

119. Good leadership and management of the department have led to good improvements since the previous inspection. Schemes of work have been suitably revised in the light of changes to the National Curriculum. They now include adequate coverage of pre-twentieth century literature. Teaching has improved. The introduction of national strategies has strengthened the teaching of basic literacy. Approaches to the teaching of spelling are better organised and structured so that standards have risen. The departmental handbook clearly sets out the shared educational vision for English teaching. Systems for monitoring and supporting pupils' progress are satisfactory, although there are no formal procedures for identifying underachievement.

## **MATHEMATICS**

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

### **Strengths**

- Positive attitudes and good behaviour assist pupils' learning in mathematics.
- In 2001, many more pupils reached the nationally expected level in mathematics at the end of Year 9 than they had previously at the end of Year 6.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Strategies for raising attainment in mathematics are insufficient. Monitoring of teaching and learning is not rigorous enough to ensure improvements.
- Marking is unsatisfactory.
- Current staffing difficulties have an adverse effect on standards.

120. In 2001, pupils' results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 matched the national average. Over the period 1998 to 2001, results have fluctuated from well above average to average. Over the past three years, the school's results in these tests in mathematics have fallen whereas results nationally have been rising. The schools' performance in these tests in 2001 was well below that of similar schools. However, a good aspect of the results in 2001 was that the proportion of pupils reaching the national expectation of Level 5 or above was nearly seven pupils in every ten, compared with only five in every ten who had attained the nationally expected Level 4 at the end of Year 6. The standards of attainment in mathematics of pupils on entry are generally below the national average. There is little difference between the attainment of boys or girls. When compared with other core subjects, performance is below that in science and well below that in English.

121. By the end of Year 9, standards of work seen in books and lessons broadly match national expectations. They are comparable with standards attained in the most recent national examinations. Attainment in number, shape and measures and data handling is average overall. It is often above average and occasionally well above average. Pupils make



satisfactory progress in most areas of mathematics. The National Numeracy Strategy is fully in place. As a result, pupils are developing their mental skills through short activities at the beginning of lessons and can use number effectively when solving problems. For example, a group of low-attaining pupils in Year 9 showed good understanding of simple percentages when practising these skills in a mental session at the beginning of a lesson. High-attaining pupils demonstrate good skills when using algebra to solve problems from test papers. Year 8 pupils demonstrate good understanding of probability when applying their knowledge to decide whether a car would fail its MOT and the chances that it would pass. Many pupils have good skills in estimating measures. They can estimate lengths with a good degree of accuracy. However, their skills in estimating weights and capacities are less competent. For example, a low-attaining Year 9 group solved calculations using measures of length but could not accurately estimate the weights or capacities of objects round the classroom. Pupils have insufficient planned opportunities to extend their weighing and measuring skills and to use mathematics in problem solving.

122. Higher-attaining pupils, including the gifted and talented pupils, make satisfactory progress. They receive work of suitable challenge and difficulty. The attainment and progress of pupils with special educational needs are satisfactory. However, in a few lessons, teachers make insufficient use of assessment to find out what pupils understand so as to use this as a basis for planning. In these classes, pupils have no short-term targets to give them incentives to learn. A few lessons lack a practical emphasis and links to real situations. Accordingly, a few pupils cannot make sensible estimates of real lengths, weights and volumes. As a result, they are not able to spot answers that are not sensible. Low-attaining pupils do not always have sufficient opportunities to develop their mathematical vocabulary.

123. Teaching and learning are both satisfactory overall. No unsatisfactory lessons were observed. Teaching was good and occasionally very good in about half the lessons seen. When teaching is good, teachers plan effectively to cater for the full range of attainment within the class. They explain the work and aims of the lesson clearly. Teachers monitor and support pupils whilst they are working, to ensure they are kept focussed. They stop the lesson when further explanations are needed and use time well. Teachers make good use of classroom assistants to support pupils with special educational needs. They deal with misbehaviour quickly and effectively so that pupils are kept on task. Computers are used well to enhance the classwork. Homework is used well to support and extend the work in class. This ensures that pupils' knowledge and understanding of the topic are good and that they make good progress in their learning.

124. In those lessons observed in which teaching was satisfactory rather than good or better, the planning lacked sufficient detail and did not include work that was appropriate to meet the needs of all pupils. High standards of behaviour were not always expected. Marking was superficial in these classes. Some work was not marked at all. The pace of these lessons was slow with overly long introductions from the teacher.

125. Marking is unsatisfactory overall. In some books, large sections of work are not marked. Insufficient comment is made about careless and untidy work. Few comments are made about ways for pupils to improve. Some teachers ignore missed pages and incomplete work.

126. All lessons follow the National Numeracy format. Teachers often make good use of stimulating activities based on the National Numeracy Strategy to help pupils to improve their mental mathematical skills and to develop speaking and listening skills. However, teachers are inconsistent in the way they use these mental activities. Some teachers do not use these activities but use mental tests as a substitute, which are less effective in developing pupils' skills and understanding.

127. Standards of numeracy are satisfactory overall. Pupils' make satisfactory use of their skills in numeracy to assist their work in other subjects. The contribution of other subjects to the teaching of numeracy is satisfactory. A co-ordinated and improving strategy helps to develop these skills across the curriculum. Numeracy skills are good in science. Pupils make good use of these skills to assist their work in science in measuring liquids, weighing objects and drawing graphs of their results. However, graphical skills are satisfactory rather than good because there is insufficient use of data analysis in science. In design and technology, pupils develop their measuring and estimation skills. In geography, they plot graphs and draw tables and comment on what they show.

128. Most pupils enjoy mathematics, behave and concentrate well. The positive attitudes in these lessons contribute well to pupils' learning. However, the quality of learning is satisfactory rather than good overall because the teaching is satisfactory and does not provide enough opportunities for pupils to use their initiative well and teachers' marking does not give pupils' good enough guidance on how to improve.

129. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. However, there are considerable problems of staffing within the department that are impacting substantially on standards. Half of the teaching staff were absent during the inspection. One of the two remaining, specialist staff was due to leave immediately after the inspection. The better lessons tend to be taught by the permanent staff, who know the pupils and the school's systems well. The head of department has only been in post for two years. Much of his time is spent supporting the supply teachers. This leaves little time for moving the department forward. Schemes of work are in draft form. The monitoring of the teaching and learning within the department is not rigorous enough to ensure that improvements occur. Good support for the department has been provided through the local education authority. The accommodation is satisfactory. However, it consists of temporary and uninviting classrooms that restrict the range of learning activities, particularly when the size of the class approaches 30 pupils.

130. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory despite attainment not improving significantly. Current staffing issues considerably impede progress. Permanent staff in the department have had training in the implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy. New textbooks have been purchased. New schemes of work are in development. Computers are used more often in mathematics. Problem-solving activities and investigational work are being developed. More use is being made of information from assessment to track the attainment and progress of groups and individual pupils. The senior managers of the school are aware that standards in mathematics are not as high as in the other core subjects. They are aware of the need to develop strategies to improve standards in mathematics.

## SCIENCE

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

### Strengths

- Standards in science are well above the national average.
- Good teaching and pupils' positive attitudes help them to make at least good progress.
- Extra-curricular activities add good value to pupils' learning experiences.
- Effective leadership and management have a clear focus on raising standards further.

### Areas for improvement

- ICT, particularly data logging, is used insufficiently to support teaching and learning.
- Monitoring is insufficiently rigorous to ensure consistency of teaching and learning
- Some marking gives insufficient guidance to pupils about how to improve their work.
- Practical and investigative skills are satisfactory rather than good.

131. Pupils' results in the national tests at the end of Year 9, in 2001, were well above the national average. They were above average when compared to similar schools. Over the past few years, boys have achieved better results than girls, though in 2001 there was no significant difference between them. Between 1997 and 2001, the results have fluctuated slightly from year to year, but have been consistently well above average. Results in science were broadly similar to what they were at the previous inspection. In terms of average point score, the school's performance in science in 2001 was better than it was in mathematics, though not as good as it was in English.

132. Inspection evidence shows that pupils are attaining broadly similar standards to those obtained by pupils last year in the national tests taken at the end of Year 9. However, progress is better amongst boys. Standards are well above those expected for pupils of the same age nationally. Most pupils have a very good knowledge of the topics they are studying. For example, pupils of all levels of attainment have a good knowledge of how igneous, sedimentary and metamorphic rocks are formed. The higher-attaining pupils appreciate that the rate of cooling and crystallisation affects the size of the crystal in igneous rocks. Standards are not quite as high as they could be because pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to experience and understand the place of science in everyday life. For example, a Year 9 class studying techniques of separation could explain the Liebig condenser and the process of distillation, but were unable to apply this knowledge to large-scale applications such as those found in oil refineries, the brewing industry or desalination plants. They knew about the process of chromatography, but could not explain what food companies might do to help people to find out what additives are in their foods. Though pupils make satisfactory progress overall in developing experimental and investigative skills, these skills are not developed as well as other knowledge-based areas of science. This is a consequence of too few opportunities for pupils to make their own predictions, to define problems based on scientific knowledge and understanding or to plan their own investigations. Pupils are good at carrying out experiments planned by the teacher. They record observations, take accurate measurements and present data well in the form of charts and graphs.

133. By the end of Year 9, most lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are achieving well. Higher-attaining pupils in the top groups, including those who are gifted and talented, make generally very good progress. Although the department helps pupils to develop their literacy skills by giving them confidence in using basic scientific terminology, teachers place insufficient emphasis on the development of pupils' writing skills, particularly in describing experimental methods. Numeracy skills are good overall. Pupils make good use

of these skills to assist their work in science. However, graphical skills are satisfactory rather than good because there is insufficient use of data analysis. Pupils' ICT skills, although good and improving, are generally not fully developed, because of the lack of opportunity to use computers for data-logging in science. Pupils extend their knowledge and understanding of science through active participation in such extra-curricular activities as the science revision clubs. By the end of Year 9, the achievement of pupils of all levels of attainment is good overall in relation to their prior attainment, which, when they joined the school in Year 7, was above average.

134. Pupils' attitudes and responses to science and their behaviour are good. Pupils enjoy their science and most see science as a journey of discovery. They are willing to try out new ideas and techniques, and in the best lessons, are keen to pose questions. Good relationships lead to effective collaboration in group work. When teaching is less than good, a few pupils have less positive attitudes and lack real enthusiasm, though for most pupils the will to broaden their knowledge and skills remains high.

135. The overall quality of teaching and learning seen was good. Some notable examples of very good and excellent teaching occurred, which was reflected in the very good and excellent learning of pupils in those lessons. A small amount of teaching was less than satisfactory. The best teaching has high expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving; has clearly planned, stimulating activities, and is imaginative in the choice of activities used to explain complex ideas. For example, a Year 7 class gained an excellent understanding of the growth and reproduction of bacteria, through an enjoyable, educational activity, in which they used mouldable clay to model binary fission. They went on to consider the conditions in which bacteria flourished. They gained useful and first-hand experience of producing their own, pure cultures to check their hypotheses.

136. Some of the features which made lessons excellent or very good, namely the active involvement and participation of pupils in their own learning, the careful structure of the lesson, the provision of a wide variety of teaching and learning methods, including the effective use of paired and group work, were not always prominent in the satisfactory lessons. This meant that some pupils were more passive learners, making insufficient progress. In an unsatisfactory lesson, the teacher tended to talk for too long and was over dominant to the extent that the pupils were unable to perform the procedures of an experiment, without having to be issued with the same instructions over and over again. As a result of such rigid guidance, pupils did not develop their skills of interpreting and following a set of instructions for themselves. In the most effective lessons, pupils make good, and often very good, progress as a result of the teachers' good use of assessment of their work and progress, to identify areas of underachievement. In the two lessons seen that were less than satisfactory, the pace of learning was too slow and the level of difficulty of work was inappropriate. In one of these lessons the teacher's knowledge of the subject was insecure and some of the resources used were inappropriate.

137. Teachers mark work regularly and in encouraging ways. However, they do not always give pupils a clear enough indication of how well they are progressing, of what they have got wrong, and what they need to do in order to improve. The best practice gives pupils cause for thought through encouraging further progress and checking that comments have been acted upon.

138. Learning is good. Pupils acquire good, and often very good, knowledge and understanding in science. They are developing competent practical skills. They improve their basic skills of literacy, ICT and numeracy. The teaching of these basic skills is good overall. The teaching of ICT, however, varies from very good to satisfactory across the department so that not all pupils enjoy the same experiences. In a very good Year 8 lesson, pupils used

the computers competently to produce and deliver a PowerPoint presentation, on rock formation. Such activities and experiences are not open to all pupils.

139. Good leadership and management of the department have been the key factors in the good improvements made since the previous inspection. The head of department is new to the position, has a good understanding of the department's strengths and weaknesses and is working to overcome them. Staff generally work well together with a commitment to building on what has already been achieved and to improving standards further. However, very occasionally, a teacher does things in 'his own way' and adversely affects the quality of teaching in the department. The monitoring of teaching to ensure consistency of teaching and learning and to raise standards is not quite rigorous enough. New schemes of work have been produced, but they contain insufficiently explicit references to ICT and applications of science in everyday life. The very good improvement in accommodation and learning resources since the previous inspection, through the addition of a new laboratory and additional learning resources, has had a very positive effect on the quality of pupils' learning.

## ART AND DESIGN

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

### Strengths

- Standards and the quality of teaching have improved since the previous inspection.
- Very thorough assessment ensures pupils know what they need to do to improve.
- Pupils establish good working practices through the example of teachers' skilled demonstrations and orderly classroom management.

### Areas for improvement

- Planning does not always ensure that pupils have maximum time for practical work.
- High-attaining pupils underachieve.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to use computers.
- The low allocation of time for art and design adversely affects standards.

140. Standards in art and design at the end of Year 9 match the standards expected nationally. The standards of work seen during the inspection indicate that the teachers' assessments in 2001, which indicated that standards were below average, were over cautious. Attainment has risen steadily over the past few years as a direct result of the school's strategies to raise achievement in the subject through improvements in the curriculum and in the quality of teaching and learning. There is little difference in attainment between boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs and lower-attaining pupils achieve standards that match their capabilities. Higher-attaining pupils and gifted and talented pupils do not reach the highest standards of which they are capable. These pupils make unsatisfactory progress because they do not always have work that stretches them fully.

141. Pupils' are developing competent drawing skills. Work in a Year 8 lesson revealed effective observational drawing of lilies, with some skilful application of tone and shading. Development of drawing skills is patchy in some groups across Years 7 to 9 because the limited time available in lessons restricts continuity. Sketchbooks are utilised well to extend practical skills in homework, to research ideas and to develop preliminary sketches into new forms of art work, as in the Year 9 'Expressive Art' project. Pupils' work in three dimensions is finished to a good standard, as in paper collages influenced by impressionism and in papier-mâché work derived from a study of Munch and Picasso. Pupils make bold and effective use of colour in painting derived from their study of pointillism. Ceramic work in Year 8 reveals effective manipulation of clay to produce heads derived from gargoyles. Pupils

complete their products in art and design to a good level of finish. Pupils are diffident in evaluating their work. Their work often lacks imagination and relies too much on given models. Work in print is modest in scope.

142. Pupils enter the school with a wide range of artistic competencies that are average overall. During their time at the school they make satisfactory progress. Pupils with special educational needs and pupils with low levels of academic attainment often make good progress in the practical components of the course. Pupils of higher academic attainment, including those who are gifted and talented, do not always make the progress of which they are capable, because the teacher's expectations are not high enough, so that pupils do not receive work of sufficient difficulty and challenge. There is little difference between boys and girls in the rate of progress achieved.

143. Pupils demonstrate good attitudes and behaviour in art and design lessons. They are attentive and willing participants when engaged in practical work. They show enthusiasm for the subject that enables them to work productively on their individual tasks. They form positive relationships with the teacher that help them to respond well to advice and constructive criticism. When asked to assist in tidying away materials they are willing participants.

144. The quality of teaching and the quality of learning in art and design are satisfactory overall. Occasionally they are good. Pupils with special educational needs and lower-attaining pupils learn particularly well when teaching provides a well-disciplined, encouraging, patient and good-humoured atmosphere. The teacher's good use of good practical skills in art and design help to establish effective, working practices amongst pupils. For example, in a Year 8 lesson, techniques to be used for developing work from initial drawings were demonstrated well. The orderly management both of the lesson's resources and of the displays of work in the art room reinforced the standards of presentation expected of pupils. The close attention paid to assessment, including the regular review of pupils' work towards the end of most lessons gives pupils a clear idea of how well they are achieving. Homework of suitable quality and amount is used effectively to support learning both in practical skills and in research on the work of artists. Marking provides pupils with useful comments about how to improve their work and understanding. The teaching of literacy is satisfactory. Careful attention is paid to helping pupils to understand the meaning of new and unfamiliar terminology when appropriate. In a few lessons, pupils have insufficient time for practical work because the teacher assigns too much time to explanations. Occasionally, pupils do not understand key teaching points when they are given to the whole class at the same time as pupils engage in individual, practical activities. Pupils' scope for imaginative work is restricted in many lessons because teaching is too prescriptive and pupils are too reliant on close copying of given examples. Teaching does not explicitly challenge the highest-attaining pupils to think deeply and creatively about their assignments.

145. The department is led satisfactorily by the art and design co-ordinator. It has improved its work under the guidance received from the head of the design and technology department. The quality of assessment and record keeping is good. It ensures that pupils have a clear idea of how they are progressing. Regular displays of pupil's work are provided in the department and around the school that successfully encourage pupils to take a pride in their efforts. The curriculum makes a good contribution to pupils' understanding of other cultures, especially through such themes as 'Africa Day' and work on traditions in Indian art. Annual trips to London enrich pupils' cultural experience of art and design. The low allocation of time for art and design lessons restricts opportunities for pupils fully to consolidate such key art skills as drawing to the extent of which many are capable. This also limits the types of three-dimensional work that pupils can be offered. Pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to

explore the potential of computers for the generation and modification of work in art and design.

146. Improvement in provision for art and design since the previous inspection is good. Pupils' standards in drawing and their knowledge of artist's work are now competent. Teaching has a clearer focus on raising standards. Suitable amounts of homework are now set. However, the allocation of time for lessons in art and design remains low.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Pupils achieve high standards and make good progress.
- Pupil's well-presented work in design results in products of high quality.
- Good procedures for assessment and monitoring help to raise standards.
- Good teaching interests and motivates pupils of all levels of attainment.

### Areas for improvement

- Pupils make insufficient use of ICT to improve their skills in graphical communication or to improve work in design and manufacture.

147. Attainment at the end of Year 9, as indicated by teachers' assessments in 2001 was close to the national average. Currently, standards of work seen in classes and in scrutiny of pupils' work and projects are above average in Year 9 and higher than those indicated by teachers' assessments in recent years, because the quality of teaching and learning has improved. The standards represent good achievement based on pupils' prior attainment when they joined the school. Attainment is above average in resistant materials, food, electronics and textiles. Attainment is much higher than at the time of the previous inspection. The very good leadership and improved accommodation and resources have had a very positive effect on standards. Inspection evidence indicates that progress over time, as well as in lessons, is suitably fast. Pupils of all levels of attainment, including pupils with special educational needs and the pupils who are gifted and talented, achieve well.

148. In Years 7 to 9, pupils use a wide range of tools and materials with increasing confidence to make products of good quality. They apply their satisfactory graphical skills to design and make items using food, acrylic, wood, metal and electronics. In a Year 8 lesson, pupils made a sensor device to test the watering of plants. They composed an electric circuit, added a buzzer, light and a vacuum from an acrylic cover to seal the unit. Pupils achieve well, especially those with special educational needs, some of whom have severe learning difficulties. In a Year 9 class, pupils used their skills well to design and make a jig in preparation for manufacturing a puzzle. They improved their knowledge and skills of working with wood and their understanding of factors of quality control. Graphical skills are satisfactory rather than good because pupils do not have enough practice in using computer programs, for example, to illustrate diagrams in two and three dimensions. Work on theory is presented well. The teaching of literacy is effective, for example, through good use of technical language to expand pupils' knowledge and understanding.

149. The teaching of the basic skills of literacy is good within the department and helps to raise standards. The quality of hint sheets in electronics is particularly high. Worksheets in other areas are adapted well for pupils of differing attainment. As a result, pupils' self-esteem increases and they become more independent in their learning and less reliant on the teacher. Pupils' use of their adequate skills in numeracy to assist their work is satisfactory, both in number and measurement. The use of ICT is mostly directed to computer-control and

robotics. Pupils have too few opportunities to use computers to develop their skills in graphical communication, for example, to consider the effect of rotation on design and how this affects the final product.

150. Pupils' very good attitudes to work assist their good learning. Pupils behave very well and enjoy using the facilities to create their own ideas and to improve their skills in making. Pupils' relationship with teachers and each other are very good. Pupils frequently help each other to promote positive attitudes to learning. Their approach to learning is co-operative. They take pride in the element of surprise 'when things go right'.

151. The quality of teaching and the quality of learning are good. They are better than at the time of the previous inspection. Almost one third of lessons seen were very good. The teaching is effective because teachers have high expectation of what pupils might achieve. For example, work in resistant materials in Year 9 is occasionally of a comparable standard to a GCSE high grade. Good planning, organisation and management of lessons and the teachers' enthusiasm for the subject help the pupils to sustain concentration. Teachers provide a sufficient range of easier or difficult tasks to keep pupils on task and use effective teaching strategies to raise standards. When teachers from other subject areas are required to teach design and technology, shortcomings appear in the teaching. This is mainly due to lack of subject knowledge and skills to use specialist equipment. On occasion, this is compounded when the learning support assistant is equally non-specialist in the topic of study. Homework is set consistently. It is used well to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding, often in the nature of research when topics are at an early stage.

152. The leadership and management of the department are very good. There is now an established team of specialists and satisfactory resources. This is due in part, to the effect of the headteacher's good management in helping the head of department to raise the profile of the subject. A consequential change has been made to the way in which the National Curriculum programmes of study are taught. The approach from design to manufacture enables pupils to develop a good range of skills, techniques, processes and knowledge. The procedures for monitoring, evaluating and developing the provision have provided clear direction for improvement. As a result, suitable priorities and achievable targets have been set for the department. Teachers make effective use of the good procedures for the assessment of pupils' work. The careful analysis and moderation of pupils' work at the end of units in Years 7 to 9 have made a major contribution to the good improvement in standards. The department prepares pupils well for adjusting to the provision for GCSE on transfer to the upper school. Assessment and monitoring are used effectively to improve teaching and learning.

153. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Standards for boys and girls have improved and are now good. Similarly good standards are now attained across all aspects of the subject. The quality of teaching is better and is good. Leadership and management have improved considerably and are very good. The improved accommodation and resources have had a further and positive effect on raising standards.



## GEOGRAPHY

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

### Strengths

- Good teaching helps pupils to attain well above average standards.
- Pupils' good attitudes to work help them to achieve very well.
- At times teaching is very good. Teachers care very well for their pupils.
- Pupils' very quick grasp of geographical ideas and skills leads to very good achievement.

### Areas for improvement

- Insufficient fieldwork limits the enrichment of learning in geography.
- Work on local, Ordnance Survey maps and graphs of statistical data is limited.

154. Teachers' assessments in 2001 judged standards of work at the end of Year 9 to be well above average. Standards of work seen are well above the national average at the end of Year 9. Pupils' achievement over Years 7 to 9, given that standards are above the national standards at entry in Year 7, is very good. This is because teaching is good, with the pace and coverage in lessons very good and pupils are interested and fully involved in their studies. Pupils grasp geographical ideas and skills very quickly.

155. By the end of Year 9, pupils have a very good grounding in geographical skills. Map work is competent but there is insufficient use of local Ordnance Survey maps and local examples to extend and enrich pupils' learning in geography. Pupils do not have enough practice in the accurate presentation of statistical data graphically. However, their analyses of data and graphs when these are provided are very good. Pupils acquire a very good knowledge of location and a good understanding of spatial problems.

156. Gifted and talented pupils are identified and taught with other higher attainers in an express group. They receive appropriately challenging work that extends them so that they make very good progress, particularly in the development of thinking and analytical skills. Average attainers also achieve very well over Years 7 to 9, building progressively on existing knowledge and understanding of topics taught. This is particularly evident when pupils study human and environmental aspects of the subject. Lower attainers and pupils with special educational needs perform well. They are considerably helped by the structured and focused teaching that is appropriate to their needs. These pupils achieve particularly well when they receive the support of learning assistants.

157. Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive. Most pupils show a real interest in their work. They are attentive and work conscientiously on set work. Pupils' behaviour is good. It is sometimes very good. Pupils develop constructive relationships with their teachers and trust them. They relate well to each other when working in pairs or groups. Pupils' individual response to questions varies but is generally good. However, teachers do not always seek responses from pupils in order to assess accurately the extent to which pupils remember and understand their prior learning.

158. Teaching and learning are good. Much very good teaching was observed. Teachers are committed, caring and supportive of pupils within their charge. Classroom management and control are usually very good and built on very good relationships with pupils. These provide a good base for learning. Lessons have brisk pace and high expectations. Lessons are planned well and imaginatively. They make effective use of teachers' good expertise in the subject. Considerable and appropriate emphasis is placed within lessons on enquiry. A few lessons, although of satisfactory quality, are too dominated by the teacher. In the majority of lessons, teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to investigate situations and to

raise issues for themselves. The best learning occurs in lessons that have a variety of practical activities that require pupils to involve themselves in their own learning. Similarly, when visual aids such as video extracts, photographs, maps, diagrams, and graphs are used, learning is noticeably better than when such resources are not in use. The good dialogue between the teacher and class extends pupils' knowledge and they gain a good and often very good understanding of the topic taught.

159. The fieldwork undertaken greatly enriches the curriculum and results in most effective learning. It is inadequate, however, as there is no study of the physical landscape or an area outside the local area. ICT has been suitably developed since the previous inspection. The quality of ICT skills observed in the scrutiny of pupils' work, particularly in project work, was good. Standards of literacy are good and above the national average. Key words are used well in teaching but, in a few lessons, insufficient time is made available to developing written skills. Pupils' standards of numeracy are satisfactory for the needs of the subject.

160. The overall quality of teaching and learning seen in lessons was good rather than very good, because a few lessons were satisfactory. However, pupils' overall achievement is very good because they acquire very good basic skills in geography and a very good understanding of work in the subject, as a result of their own and teachers' high expectations. They also make very good progress over time because the improved system of assessment gives them a very good knowledge of what they need to do to improve. In the satisfactory lessons, one or more of the following features occurred. The use of maps and atlases was not a regular and frequent enough practice. The aims of the lesson were not always shared with pupils at the beginning. Insufficient time was sometimes set aside at the end of the lesson to test for effectiveness of learning in meeting these aims. Occasionally, learning suffers when teachers do not take sufficient time to place the lesson thoroughly in the context of previous study so that all pupils make appropriate linkages. In a few lessons, there is not enough consolidation and reinforcement of the main teaching points visually on the board or overhead projector to ensure whole class learning is very good.

161. A suitable and effective, temporary arrangement exists for the leadership and management of the subject. Two experienced teachers share the responsibilities as acting, joint heads of department. They work well and cooperatively together as a team, with the result that the department is very professionally and competently managed on a day-to-day basis. The work of the department is reviewed and monitored frequently and regularly, through classroom observation and the scrutiny of pupils' work. The policy for assessment has improved recently and is very good now. It means that teachers know pupils' levels of performance and their levels of attainment and how they can improve their work further. Teaching methods and the curriculum are reviewed regularly and modified to ensure more effective teaching and learning. Staff work very well as a team and are very committed and dedicated teachers. The quality of teaching accommodation in the three humanities rooms is very good. Wall displays of good quality help to provide a very effective learning environment. Learning resources are very good overall and used well to support pupils' learning. However, the further improvement in standards is hindered by a few shortfalls such as the lack of a fieldwork budget, insufficient overhead projectors as standard equipment and a shortage of computers.

162. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. In particular, well above average standards of work have been sustained. The department has very good capacity to improve the good teaching and learning further and to meet the points raised in this report.

## **HISTORY**

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

#### Strengths

- Pupils reach standards well above the national average
- Pupils achieve very well in history.
- Very good teaching helps pupils to learn very well.
- The schemes of work are of high quality and include good opportunities for fieldwork.

#### Areas for improvement

- Pupils do not find it easy to evaluate their work and to set specific targets in history.

163. Attainment at the end of Year 9 as measured by teachers' assessments is well above the national average and has improved steadily over recent years. The trend in improvement is greater than the national and county trends. Evidence gathered during the inspection confirms this picture. This represents very good achievement for most pupils. On average, pupils progress two National Curriculum levels from their attainment on entry to the school.

164. Girls attain higher standards than boys at the end of Year 9 and the gap between the attainment of boys and girls is similar to the national difference. Boys and girls both attain standards that are well above national expectations. Boys' high achievement reflects the efforts made by the department to use a variety of teaching styles and tasks that engage boys and girls equally well. Pupils of all levels of attainment achieve very well as a result of good, stimulating teaching and very good procedures for assessment. Higher attainers, including those who are gifted and talented, do very well since one pupil in every five reaches Levels 7 or 8. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress because they receive good support and work that is of suitable difficulty and interest.

165. Pupils acquire a very good and appropriate knowledge and understanding of the important features of the past societies that they study. Literacy skills are very good. Most pupils write competently for a range of purposes. Examples of good, well-sustained and organised writing include letters to The Times from a mill owner in 1836 disputing the findings of a Royal Commission on factory conditions. Other good writing was seen in pupils' reports on fieldwork at the Black Country Museum that evaluated whether the museum accurately portrayed the past and what its limitations were. Some of the writing noted the absence of authentic smells and squalor. Pupils' essays gave an overview and evaluation of significant changes in Britain between 1750 and 1900. Higher-attaining pupils have a mature and conceptual understanding when considering different interpretations of historical events, changes and their causes. They are perceptive about conflicting and corroborating evidence. Most pupils gain a good grasp of chronology. It is one of the ways in which numeracy is used effectively in the department. Oral skills progress as much as written skills. Some lessons focus particularly on the development of pupils' speaking skills. They enable pupils to make sustained and reasoned answers.

166. Pupils' very good behaviour and attitudes contribute substantially to their very good achievement. Motivation and interest are high. Pupils concentrate well on tasks in lessons. They persevere well and independently when completing homework. Their research skills develop well. Pupils practise and develop their skills of ICT well to enhance their work in history. They improve these skills as a result of very good teaching and through using their very good skills in research to work independently. On the whole, pupils enjoy history lessons.

167. The quality of teaching and the quality of learning are very good. As a result, pupils' achievement in history is very good. Teachers use their very good knowledge of their subject to enthuse the pupils. Skills in class management are very good. Lessons are challenging and of appropriate difficulty for pupils of all levels of attainment. Lessons in history are lively,

paced very well and use a wide range of different activities that engage pupils' interest very effectively. In several lessons, teachers made very good use of poetry and drama to bring the First World War to life. Lessons begin well and very purposefully. The focus for learning is made clear. The best lessons end with pupils consolidating their learning through very effective reviews of what has been learnt. Teachers plan very well for the inclusion of basic skills within lessons. Learning support assistants work successfully in collaboration with teachers in the lessons in which they are deployed. Marking is very thorough. It is encouraging and makes clear how further progress is to be made. Each unit of work is assessed formally and is matched very well to key skills in history. Pupils join in the process and are required to evaluate their learning and to set targets. Sometimes, they have difficulty with this and require more help to set themselves targets specific to history.

168. Statutory requirements are met. Very good leadership and management have a very positive influence on pupils' very good achievement. The curriculum is broad and balanced It is enlivened by a very effective programme of fieldwork that includes visits to Lincoln Castle and Cathedral and to the Black Country Museum. History makes a very strong and positive contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils.

169. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. This is a very good department. Standards have improved. Documentation is thorough.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Attainment is well above average and pupils make very good progress.
- Good resources enable pupils to develop their ICT skills in many subjects.
- The very good quality of teaching helps pupils to learn quickly.
- Pupils are highly motivated and bring their good knowledge from home to school.

### Areas for improvement

- The system of recording achievement in ICT lacks refinement and consistency across subjects.

170. By the end of Year 9, attainment as measured by teachers' assessments was well above average in 2001, with a high proportion of pupils reaching National Curriculum Level 5 and above. The proportion reaching Level 6 was also well above the national average, with a small percentage achieving beyond this.

171. Across the school, pupils have regular, frequent and planned opportunities to apply what they have learnt in the Year 7 ICT lessons. They do so particularly in the Year 8 tutorial course and in the Year 9 curricular-enrichment programme, as well as in all other subjects. Boys and girls perform equally very well and attain very good standards relative to their capabilities. Departments take responsibility for different aspects of the curriculum. This is a very good development since the previous inspection and helps pupils to extend their learning across the curriculum. Pupils of average and above average attainment receive work of suitable difficulty. They respond very well to the challenges set because they are highly motivated. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress because work is linked closely to their individual education plans. Good attention is paid to how different groups of pupils learn and to exploring ways of using the technology to help raise standards in all subjects. Pupils enter the school with above average levels of attainment. By the end of Year 9, their attainment is well above average and represents achievement in ICT that is very good both for boys and girls.

172. The well above average standards at the end of Year 9, are based upon work seen in lessons, a scrutiny of pupils' workbooks and discussions with and demonstrations from pupils of what they know, understand and can do. These very good standards result from very good teaching and improved access to the technology. Pupils can manipulate the 'Windows' environment successfully to access their files on the network and to save their work. They are particularly proficient at communicating their ideas using a range of software. They can insert pictures, re-size images and manipulate fonts with considerable skill. Year 7 pupils have a good knowledge of presenting their work by multi-tasking, using more than one programme at the same time. In Year 8, they acquire a good understanding of the main functions of data handling, music making and e-mail. Pupils in Year 9 can search the Internet for igneous and sedimentary rock formation and transfer the information into a presentation for the class. In design and technology, they make a birthday card with an embroidered picture, incorporate clip art and text and present it in an envelope illustrated with scanned photographs. This problem-solving approach uses computers to advantage and is an efficient use of teachers' time and resources. Very good teaching provides pupils with the confidence and competence to make very good progress in the subject.

173. Pupils work hard to achieve high standards. They show initiative when searching for alternative, relevant web sites. They use the Internet well for research and can download text, images and graphics with considerable skill. They have a good attitude towards ICT. Behaviour is very good. Pupils help each other willingly. Pupils' ready co-operation in the sharing of knowledge contributes substantially to their moral and social development.

174. The quality of teaching and the quality of learning are very good. They have a very positive influence on raising standards. From Year 7, pupils build successfully upon their previous work at the primary schools, by, for example, interrogating the Internet. Teachers' planning clearly identifies what pupils are expected to learn and pupils, in turn, work towards the set targets. For many, the use of a home computer allows pupils to explore new ideas for themselves. This is illustrated well by the highest-attaining pupils building a school web site. Teachers challenge pupils to reach the higher levels of the National Curriculum. By frequently referring to these requirements, pupils know what they must do to achieve them over time. In this way, a target is meaningful for pupils and motivates them to achieve very well. Teachers use a wide range of teaching methods well to support learning. For example, the use of an interactive whiteboard stimulated pupils' learning in one lesson when pupils translated from French to English, although this was not a modern foreign languages lesson. Another aid to learning is the active, enthusiastic support given to the pupils by the teachers. Methods of assessment are used very effectively to help pupils to improve. A system for assessing levels in ICT across subjects at the end of Year 9 is moderated by the coordinator and used well to guide staff with future planning. However, the ways in which different subjects record pupils' attainment in ICT lack consistency and refinement.

175. Teachers provide many good opportunities for pupils to practise and improve their skills in literacy. They pay close attention to improving pupils' work in spelling and writing. Pupils with special educational need make very good progress as, for example, in a mathematics lesson in which pupils moved a screen turtle to draw different shapes, using a 90 degree turn. They used mathematical vocabulary well to identify several shapes and to write a simple string of commands to move the turtle up, down, left and right.

176. In many subjects, such as geography, teachers encourage pupils to practise and develop their ICT skills to extend their learning. In English, the high-attaining pupils make particularly good use of ICT to prepare and present their work and to improve their written responses. In some subjects such as mathematics, art and design and music, pupils have too few opportunities to use ICT to enhance their work, partly because access to computing

facilities is restricted. In design and technology, pupils often use computers to assist their work but they do not make enough use of specialist programs to develop fully their skills in graphical and design work. In science, pupils apply their ICT skills satisfactorily but they have too few opportunities to carry out exercises in data logging.

177. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. This is in part due to the role of the governors and senior staff in planning how to improve the ratio of pupils to computers, keeping abreast of the technology and training teachers. Good leadership and management have helped to raise standards and improve the quality of teaching and learning. Pupils can use their ICT work in many areas of the school and this helps them to become independent users of ICT. When planning the ICT curriculum, too little account is taken of or surveying the availability of ICT in homes to avoid pupils without such facilities being disadvantaged. With the projected further support in terms of specialist and specific subject resources and the monitoring of cross-curricular developments, the school is poised to make good gains from its investment.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

### Strengths

- Very good leadership and management help pupils to achieve well.
- Good teaching helps pupils to make good progress
- The department contributes well to pupils' cultural development.
- Very good improvement has been made since the previous inspection

### Areas for improvement

- Pupils' written work sometimes lacks accuracy and good presentation.

178. In 2001, teachers' assessments of pupils' overall standard of attainment by the end of Year 9 in French and German showed that the proportion of pupils achieving level 5 was above the national average. The proportion of boys reaching Level 5 was above the average for boys nationally, whilst the proportion of girls achieving Level 5 was well above the average for girls nationally. Girls achieve better than boys, and the difference between the two is much greater than that nationally. The trend over the past four years shows that more pupils, boys and girls, are attaining above average standards each year.

179. The work seen during the inspection indicates that pupils are above average by the end of Year 9. Pupils' understanding of the foreign language used by teachers in the classroom is good. They understand and respond well to tasks set in French or German. Higher-attaining pupils in a Year 9 French lesson understood different tenses. Lower-attaining pupils in a Year 8 class showed a good understanding of street directions. Pupils retrieve information from conversations heard on cassette, for example, weather forecasts. In a Year 9 French class, pupils of average attainment made up sentences using three different tenses appropriately. Pronunciation is generally good. Pupils cover a wide range of topics and grammatical constructions during the course. Pupils in Year 7 write about birthdays and the family. Pupils in Year 8 write about their daily routine, with the higher-attaining pupils learning and using an additional tense. Pupils in Year 9 write about travelling to different countries by various means of transport, using the past tense. Higher-attaining pupils in French in Years 8 and 9 have completed interesting projects on a variety of topics. By the end of Year 9, the majority of pupils understand the perfect tense in French and in German. They use it well with varying degrees of accuracy. A few Year 8 pupils in French, for example, had omitted accents on the past participles, In German, in Year 9, not all the past participles of strong verbs had been correctly spelt. In general, pupils copy vocabulary and phrases accurately.

Few pupils, however, redraft their own written work or complete corrections in order to improve accuracy.

180. Pupils achieve well. The department takes an active part in strengthening pupils' literacy through a focus on key vocabulary and important verbs, together with their constructions. In a Year 9 French lesson, for instance, higher-attaining pupils revised the appropriate prepositions for use with countries and towns in a revision exercise. The teacher stressed the correct use of accents. In a lesson on the weather, another teacher linked *vent* with ventilator. In a Year 9 German lesson, lower-attaining pupils showed a good understanding of numbers and consolidated them in oral and aural exercises. The lesson finished with a short numerical game 'elf' involving the whole class. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. They are integrated well into classes. The support they receive from assistants is at least good and is often very good. A contributory factor to good achievement is the very good assessment data produced by the special educational needs department. In several lessons observed, pupils had additional or varied material to help them with the same tasks as others in the class. Gifted and talented pupils generally make good progress. A few girls in Years 8 and 9 had produced outstanding project work, which was word-processed, presented well and, occasionally, beautifully illustrated.

181. Pupils' attitudes are good. Pupils are well behaved in lessons. They respond well to the teacher in lessons. They learn well and enjoy the games or competitions that they play, in particular when it involves boys against girls. They work well independently, in pairs and in groups. In a Year 7 French lesson, pupils worked in different groups and completed tasks co-operatively. The special educational needs group worked very well with the support assistant and produced several short sentences on their whiteboards. In a Year 7 German lesson, however, boys in the class were not responsive to the teacher and made satisfactory rather than better progress.

182. The quality of teaching in French and German is good overall. Teachers have a competent knowledge of their subject. They make effective use of the foreign language in the classroom to promote pupils' aural skills. Tasks are set in the foreign language, but teachers ensure that all pupils understand what they have to do. The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are taught well. Pupils are productive and work at a good, steady pace in many lessons. In a Year 9 French lesson, for instance, pupils practised and revised sentences on their whiteboards that covered the whole range of levels, finishing with the perfect tense. The teacher was able to assess the quality of their writing when they held up their work. Corrections were pointed out to the class. The missing element was the oral contribution, because the teacher read out their contribution to the class instead of the pupils.

183. Lessons are planned well, with a formal start and finish. Objectives for the lesson are written on the board or on card, and pupils write them into their books. Pupils, therefore, are well able to focus on what has to be achieved. Teachers appropriately begin every lesson with revision and then introduce different activities and skills to help pupils to maintain their concentration and interest during lessons. Teachers' expectations are suitably high. Teaching methods are effective. Teachers make good use of the overhead projector, cassette recorder and illustrated cards in most lessons. In a Year 7 French lesson, every pupil had to give the date of her or his birthday or that of a member of the family or of an animal. This task was an effective revision of previous work and helped to improve pupils' oral skills and confidence. Posters of French footballers are sometimes used in lessons to motivate boys' interest. Teachers make good use of time and work closely with the support assistants. Homework is set regularly. Written work is marked well with teachers putting in corrections and missing accents. However, pupils do not always respond appropriately so that some do not complete corrections or redraft their work. This aspect is not monitored

closely enough as a means of helping pupils to improve the accuracy and presentation of their written work.

184. The leadership and management of the department are very good and have a positive influence on good achievement. The head of department has worked very hard to raise attainment and to improve the aspects that were criticised in the previous report. Documentation is good. Effective use is made of information from assessment to monitor pupils' progress and to set targets for the department. Most pupils are aware of the level at which they are working. In many cases, pupils assess the impact of their work and set themselves targets for improvement. Good monitoring of teaching takes place. The teacher who is replacing temporarily a vacancy on the German staff has received good support. The good allocation of curricular time for Year 9 is beneficial to pupils' progress. The department makes a good contribution to pupils' cultural development with regular residential visits in Year 8 to France and Germany and through stimulating displays in the classrooms. Pupils had produced very interesting diaries about their visit to France, with photographs and enthusiastic comments.

185. Very good improvement has been made since the previous inspection. Standards of attainment have improved. Higher-attaining pupils are challenged well and write at the higher levels in extended work and in projects. All pupils are helped to develop their skills during the course, so that they are prepared well for the next stage of their education. Teachers' confidence and competence in using ICT are improving with training. The use of e-mailing is being developed in Year 7. The department is committed to high achievement and has the capacity to improve further.

## MUSIC

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

### Strengths

- Teachers use their musical skills well to develop pupils' instrumental and vocal work.
- Peripatetic, instrumental teaching sets good standards for work in performance.
- Several pupils make good progress in extra-curricular activities in music.
- The new leadership and management have the capacity to make good improvements.

### Areas for improvement

- The achievement of high-attaining pupils is unsatisfactory.
- Improvement since the previous inspection has been unsatisfactory.
- Assessment of pupils' work does not show pupils what they should do to improve.
- The low allocation of time restricts the curriculum in music.

186. Standards in music at the end of Year 9 were average in 2001 according to teachers' assessments. The standards of work seen during the inspection are average and represent satisfactory achievement overall. Standards have remained constant over the past few years. There is little difference in standards attained by boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs and lower-attaining pupils attain standards that match their capabilities. The attainment of higher-attaining pupils and gifted and talented pupils is not high enough.

187. Standards in singing, composition, listening and performance are average. In Year 8 work on African music, pupils demonstrated confident and competent performing skills in rhythmic percussion, often able to sustain their part in complex work. In Year 7 work on sea shanties, pupils could recall stylistic features and use appropriate terminology. In Year 9 composition, pupils showed some imagination in their initial ideas, but were diffident in evaluating their work and unsure about how to develop their ideas further. Pupils have



satisfactory accuracy in their vocal work, including rhythm and diction. Most pupils have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the specialist vocabulary in music. In a Year 9 lesson about the concerto, pupils showed a satisfactory knowledge of aspects of structure in musical composition. They could also give adequate explanations of the key features of music from different periods of time.

188. Pupils with special educational needs and lower-attaining pupils make satisfactory progress across the music curriculum. Higher-attaining pupils and those deemed gifted and talented make unsatisfactory progress in class because they do not always receive work of sufficient difficulty and challenge in lessons and in homework. However, they make good progress in their instrumental lessons as seen in a percussion session in which attainment was above average. There is little difference between boys and girls in the rate of progress made in lessons and over time.

189. Pupils have good attitudes to music lessons. They behave well in all lessons, treat resources with respect and work with concentration and enthusiasm. When working in small groups, they work reliably and productively.

190. The quality of teaching and the quality of learning are satisfactory overall. Some of the lessons observed were very good. One unsatisfactory lesson was observed. Peripatetic teaching is good. Much of the classroom teaching helps pupils to enjoy music. This results in pupils showing enthusiasm and working hard. In these lessons, pupils learn well as a result of the teacher's effective skills in class management centred on the consistent discipline, good humour and respect for each individual. Teachers possess good practical skills on a range of instruments on which they demonstrate musical points and stimulate good responses from pupils. In Year 8 work on African music, these skills were utilised very well to enable pupils to develop their skills in performance with confidence and enthusiasm. Peripatetic teachers help pupils to make good progress by providing work of brisk pace and challenge, centred on the acquisition both of technical and interpretative skills. Teaching pays careful attention to literacy. Occasionally, as in the one unsatisfactory lesson observed, too much time is spent on a single activity. This restricts pupils' development across the full range of the music curriculum. In a Year 7 lesson on sea shanties, the teacher missed opportunities to use the given song to develop points on listening, structure and evaluation of vocal technique. Day-to-day assessment and marking are inadequate. Pupils are unclear as to what they need to do to improve further. Current teaching does not explicitly seek to challenge higher-attaining pupils sufficiently.

191. The new, improved and satisfactory leadership and management have already developed appropriate priorities for the subject. The range of world musical topics provided in the curriculum enhances pupils' multi-cultural education. Several pupils extend their skills in performance through the well-managed extra-curricular activities offered. For example, pupils made good progress during a lunchtime session for a chamber music ensemble.

192. The department provides few opportunities for pupils to explore the use of computers in composition work. The current limitations in planning and assessment require more systematic monitoring and development to help pupils to reach their full potential.

193. Music has made unsatisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils have an improved understanding of the music they listen to and a better familiarity with the elements of music. However the planning of the curriculum across Years 7 to 9 still lacks coherence. Best use is not made of the limited time available in each lesson to ensure that all aspects of the music curriculum are taught equally well. The new leadership and management in music have brought some improvements and have the capacity and commitment to raise standards in the subject from satisfactory to good or better.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Good teaching helps pupils to achieve well and to attain above average standards.
- Excellent provision of extra-curricular activities extends and enriches pupils' learning.
- Very good procedures for assessment help pupils to improve.

### Areas for improvement

- In a few lessons, the pace is not quick enough because the teacher talks for too long.
- The sharing of good practice in teaching is not as effective as it should be.

194. Standards of attainment were above average at the end of Year 9 in 2001, according to teachers' assessments. These assessments are similar to the standards of work seen during the inspection. Pupils achieve well during their three years in the school. Girls are attaining slightly higher standards than boys, but the gap is closing this year. Because most activities are matched to pupils' levels of attainment and capabilities, pupils of lower-attainment and higher attainers both progress at the same rate.

195. In work seen in Year 9 during the inspection, most pupils have reached an above average standard in hop, step and jump techniques. Boys and girls both show good height in their take-off. Pupils help each other to progress by evaluating one another's performance. Year 9 girls demonstrate very good ball skills and an awareness of strategies in rounders. Year 7 pupils have reached an average standard in tennis skills and are beginning to rally in pairs with more consistency. Year 8 pupils strike the ball effectively in rounders and cricket. Throwing and catching in these groups is not yet at the same good standard. The lower attainers reach a standard appropriate to their capabilities because teachers match tasks carefully to pupils' needs and provide good support. The higher attainers benefit from very good opportunities to develop their talents further through participation in the excellent extra-curricular provision. Most classes show the ability to evaluate their work effectively. Pupils know their levels of attainment. Pupils' average standards on entry improve to above average at the end of Year 9.

196. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. Most pupils are enthusiastic, change quickly for lessons and are keen to answer questions. Behaviour is good and, apart from a minority of pupils, concentration is sustained. Relationships are good. Pupils co-operate effectively with one another. The collaborative working helps pupils to progress well in practising their skills. When the opportunity is provided, most pupils take responsibility for their own learning by working and planning in pairs and small groups. In a few lessons, pupils disrupt the flow of activity because their interest has not been maintained.

197. The quality of teaching and the quality of learning are good overall. There is some inconsistency in the teaching because the quality varies from satisfactory to very good. Occasionally, prolonged explanations by the teacher and lack of pace hinder pupils' progress. However, in the majority of lessons there is good planning, effective class management and a variety of activities well matched to pupils' capabilities. The groups in rounders and athletics make very good progress partly because of the effective use of resources. The use of ICT is encouraged and a camcorder is used well in procedures for assessment. All lessons include a warm up and a feedback time to ensure that pupils have understood the work fully. In the very good lessons, demonstrations assisted progress. The very positive attitudes of girls had a positive influence on learning in a session of rounders. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is effective. Pupils have good opportunities to record, evaluate, measure and

understand key words. Displays and resources assist pupils to understand their levels of attainment and rates of progress. The poor weather conditions during the inspection affected progress in the planned programme. The larger groups had to spend half of their time in a classroom so that active participation was reduced.

198. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and is broad and balanced. Schemes of work are almost complete and meet the requirements of curriculum 2000. Literacy is developed well, for example through effective use of key words. Provision for pupils to practise and develop their numeracy skills is good, as for example, in the use of measuring equipment. Assessment procedures are very good. Pupils are aware of their levels of performance. The leadership and management are good overall and contribute well to the department's good standards. The documentation is thorough and presented well. The commitment of staff to raising achievement is very good. A few inconsistencies in teaching indicate that the sharing of good practice is not as good as it should be. The dual responsibilities and workload of the head of department are demanding but manageable at the moment. The links with outside agencies are very good and have helped the school to gain a renewal of the Sportsmark award. Other staff, who support the specialist staff during lessons, have a positive influence on the learning of lower-attaining pupils. There are approximately twelve teachers who contribute to the excellent extra-curricular sporting activities. About one in every three pupils regularly take part and accordingly enrich and extend their work in physical education and games. The accommodation that includes good indoor facilities and very good outdoor spaces is a positive influence on standards because it allows pupils to experience and practise a wide range of activities. The surface on the tennis area is particularly beneficial to pupils' progress in acquiring the skills of the game. The local swimming pool is used well for the curriculum enrichment programme. However, the lack of a large indoor facility impedes practical activity during inclement weather.

199. Improvement is good since the previous inspection. Teaching has improved and is now good. Procedures for assessment are now very good. Extra-curricular sport is excellent. Areas for improvement centre on the monitoring and development of consistency in some elements of the teaching.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Pupils achieve very well in relation to their previous attainment and capabilities.
- Very good teaching helps pupils to reach standards that are above average.
- The provision for pupils' personal development is very good.

### Areas for improvement

- Insufficient use is made of religious objects in lessons.

200. Attainment at the end of Year 9 is above national expectations and those of the locally agreed syllabus. This represents very good achievement for most pupils from their attainment in religious education on entry to the school. Recently, the department adopted the national advisory levels of attainment for religious education. Data are not yet available for a review of progress and there were no Year 9 classes during the inspection. However, Year 8 pupils are clearly already working above national expectations for their age group.

201. The quality of teaching and that of learning are very good. There is little difference in the quality and rate of learning by any group. Pupils with special educational needs and pupils who are higher attainers all do well because teaching sets an appropriate level of challenge.

Marking and assessment are very thorough, following the good practice of the humanities department in linking pupils' work to the levels of the National Curriculum. Accordingly, pupils of all levels of attainment are clear on how to progress. Boys and girls both achieve very well. In a few lessons boys are noticeably more confident in speaking and ask perceptive questions, as they did in a Year 7 lesson about Christian belief in the resurrection of Jesus. In other lessons, girls were leading. For example, when Year 8 classes took part in a 'guided fantasy' to seek wisdom, it was the girls who led the discussion afterwards. They wanted to know the purpose of life, whether there was life after death, and were able to make links to previous work on suffering. Teachers are very skilled in providing different types of tasks that, over time, encourage boys and girls to perform well orally and in writing, and also to learn very effectively through participating actively in investigative activities.

202. Literacy is encouraged well. Pupils can organise their learning to communicate effectively for a range of purposes. Some work of high quality was seen, not only describing the Hajj with accurate detail, but also assuming, with sympathetic understanding, the role of a pilgrim. Other work recorded what had been learnt of the life of Ann Frank, setting it in the wider context of the Holocaust. It showed that pupils had a mature grasp of events. Pupils develop and practise their ICT skills well. Pupils' work and progress are carefully tracked and assessed. Most pupils are competent in research and presentational skills using ICT. Some attention is also given to numeracy as the need arises. Year 7 pupils find Bible references with ease and have a competent, chronological grasp to enable them to understand the historical context of work. Conceptually, pupils progress very well, as they show in their understanding of how beliefs influence behaviour, and on issues such as suffering and injustice. The subject makes very good provision for pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural, as well as their intellectual, development.

203. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are very good. Motivation and interest are generally high. Largely this is because pupils enjoy their lessons. This reflects the very good quality of teaching that they receive. Teachers use their very good knowledge across the range of world faiths well to promote pupils' knowledge and understanding of the subject. Teachers use their very good skills in managing their classes to ensure very good pace and progression of learning. They provide a wide variety of interesting and challenging tasks that engage pupils very well. Pupils have ample and very good opportunities to work productively and to debate and discuss their work in pairs and groups. Expectations are high. Teachers plan very well for a balance of learning, about religions and from religions, so that pupils can relate what they learn to their own lives. Pupils learn to appreciate the contemporary relevance of many issues. These good features were seen, for example, in Year 8 lessons on Gandhi.

204. The course of study meets statutory requirements. It is both broad and balanced. In Year 9, pupils begin their study of the GCSE short course, which is effective in maintaining their interest and raising standards. Improved assessment has also helped standards. The humanities department is clear that continuing to develop assessment in religious education is a priority for future development. This appropriately includes building a portfolio of work samples. The teachers have also identified that they could use a better collection of religious artefacts in lessons. Suitable plans are in place to seek training on the sensitive and effective use of artefacts. Religious education is organised very effectively as part of the humanities department. It benefits from a successful, collaborative approach by the two leaders who are jointly managing humanities temporarily. Their enthusiasm and high standards are an important factor in the overall very good achievement of pupils in religious education.

205. Progress since previous inspection is good. From all the evidence available from samples of work it is clear that standards have improved since the previous inspection.