

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **THE FOREST SCHOOL**

Horsham, RH13 5NW

LEA area: West Sussex

Unique reference number: 126065

Headteacher: Mr J Fadden

Reporting inspector: Rose Godfrey  
2047

Dates of inspection: 18<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> March 2002

Inspection number: 244858  
Short inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 - 16

Gender of pupils: Boys

School address: The Forest School  
Comptons Lane  
HORSHAM  
West Sussex

Postcode: RH13 5NW

Telephone number: 01403 261086

Fax number: 01403 217150

Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr B Coleman

Date of previous inspection: 16<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> January 1995

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The Forest School is a boys' 11-16 comprehensive community school. With 750 pupils on roll the school is smaller than average. Situated in the West Sussex town of Horsham the school draws its pupils primarily from the immediate suburban communities. Compared to the national picture pupils come from relatively affluent backgrounds. The proportion of pupils known to be entitled to free school meals is less than half the national average. The school is becoming increasingly popular and in 2002 has received the highest number of first choice parental preferences for many years. The school's data shows that the full ability range is represented among the pupil population and that overall the pupils' ability on entry is average in Years 7 to 9, whilst in Years 10 and 11 there are slightly more pupils of below average ability. Nearly all the pupils are white with few from other ethnic backgrounds. The majority are Bangladeshi; others are of Indian and Black Caribbean heritage. Five pupils have English as an additional language; none are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs is higher than other schools nationally. Mostly the needs relate to learning difficulties, although some pupils have emotional and behavioural difficulties. Sixteen pupils have statements of special need; this is very similar to the national average. At the time of the inspection ten teaching posts were covered by temporary contracts or supply teachers. The shortage of teaching staff was greatest in humanities and science.

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

Overall the effectiveness of the school is good. Well above average standards are achieved in national tests taken by 14 year old pupils and also in GCSE examinations taken at the end of Year 11. Good relationships exist at all levels, ensuring that pupils have very positive attitudes to work and become confident learners. Much of the teaching is good or better and pupils make steady progress in response to the good quality of education the school provides. Very good leadership at senior level ensures a clear commitment to improvement. The school provides good value for money.

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

- Pupils are successful; they do very well in national tests and examinations. The standard of their work in art, history and mathematics is above average
- Pupils are proud of their school; they try hard, behave well and have a strong sense of responsibility.
- The school has a strong inclusive culture, within which special needs pupils' individual needs are identified and met successfully.
- The school cares very well for its pupils; they are given good educational and personal support, which develops their confidence.
- The governing body, headteacher and senior leadership team provide very good leadership, and are managing the school and its improvement well.

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

- The most able pupils are insufficiently challenged in lessons.
- Provision for information and communication technology is under-developed in Years 10 and 11.
- The legal requirement for a daily act of collective worship for all pupils is not fully met.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Overall the school has made good progress since its last inspection in 1995. The school built on the strengths identified by the last inspection and most of the areas for action have been tackled successfully. GCSE results have improved at a faster rate than nationally. Staff are very aware of the importance of equipping pupils with good basic skills. Strong support for individual pupil development has been sustained. Participation in a 'Learning About Improvement' project has encouraged more effective self-evaluation involving all sections of the school. The school investigates the views of parents and pupils to help identify priorities for improvement. More rigorous classroom observation using agreed criteria has raised teacher expectations. Much more use is made of information about pupils' prior achievements to improve their learning and to raise standards.

Improvements in response to the areas for action have included producing schemes of work have increased the focus on learning intentions. The work in lessons has been matched more appropriately to the needs of particular pupils, though more still remains to be done. New leadership has strengthened special educational needs provision which is now judged to be good. Pupils are now being set specific targets and pupils' progress is being monitored more closely. Improved systems of reporting pupils' progress to parents includes the sharing of pupil targets and predicted grades. Improvements in Information Communication Technology [ICT] include increased resources, changes in curriculum organisation to increase access and the introduction of a GCSE course for Year 9 pupils. This has raised the standards in Years 7 to 9. The School Improvement Plan identifies that further development is needed in Years 10 and 11. An act of collective worship is still not provided every day for all pupils.

Strong leadership and effective evaluation, leading to clear planning, means that the school is well placed to bring about further improvements in its provision and in the standards pupils achieve.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with			
	All schools			Similar Schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	B

**Key**

well above average    A

above average        B

average                C

below average        D

well below average   E

The table above shows that the school's results are well above average in national examinations taken by 16 year old pupils. The results are also above the average achieved by schools in similar circumstances. The rate of improvement in results over time is faster than the national rate. The school met the appropriate target it set for overall improvement in GCSE results in 2001.

In the 2001 GCSE examinations pupils did better in art, English, history and combined science. They did relatively less well in business studies, geography, modern foreign languages and separate sciences. The proportion of higher attaining pupils gaining the top grades was above the national average in English, mathematics and history. In geography, modern languages, music and science this proportion was below the national average.

Overall results in the national assessments of English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 9 have consistently been above average. In 2001 pupils did best in English and science where the results were well above the national average and above the average achieved by similar schools. Mathematics results were above the national average and matched the average of similar schools.

The standards of pupils' work were overall slightly above average. Standards were higher in Years 9 and 11 but were less secure in Years 7, 8 and 10. Standards were consistently above average in history and mathematics. In English standards were average in Years 7, 8 and 9 and above average in Years 10 and 11. In science and humanities discontinuity of staffing meant that standards were average in Years 10 and 11 but below average in Years 7, 8 and 9. Much of the written work is thorough, detailed and well presented.

Pupils' achievements in both national tests and examinations match the averages of schools with similar pupil intakes. This masks some inconsistency in pupils' performance in different subjects. Over the three years leading up to the Year 9 national tests pupils' achievements are best in mathematics, where pupils make the progress expected nationally. Achievement in English, although slightly less than expected, is better than in science where it is below expectation. In Years 10 and 11 pupils gaining 5A\* to G Grades and 1A\* to G grades achieve very well. However, the achievement of pupils gaining 5A\* to C grades at GCSE is average, indicating that more able pupils are not making the progress that they should. In the core subjects achievement is best in science where it is well above average. In mathematics average achievement is sustained but in English achievement is less than expected. Pupils with special needs make good progress. Pupils are confident and articulate; their good oral skills enhance their learning in many lessons.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have very good attitudes to school. Most are keen to learn and demonstrate their loyalty to the school by working hard. The school has worked hard to promote a positive work ethic among pupils.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Standards of behaviour are high in most lessons. There is a calm, good humoured atmosphere around the school. Pupils show respect for people and property. The rate of short exclusions is average and their use is appropriate and effective in maintaining good discipline.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils' personal development is very good and very positive relationships are evident at all levels. Older pupils are aware of their responsibility to provide good role models for younger pupils.
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory overall. Attendance is above the national average for secondary schools. Unauthorised absence is higher than the national average as the school follows national guidelines and does not usually authorise absence for taking holidays in term time.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11
Quality of teaching	Good	Good

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



The quality of teaching is good overall, but because of many changes in staffing, teaching quality varies throughout the school. Mathematics teaching is good and is more effective than teaching in English and science. Planning and delivery of mathematics lessons is more consistent and includes sharing of learning intentions, use of engaging starters and well focused concluding plenaries. Although science teaching is satisfactory overall, many lessons lacked pace, especially in Years 7 to 9 where teaching is less good than in Years 10 and 11. In English, where teaching is satisfactory overall, teaching quality varies with some good teaching but this is not sustained consistently across the department.

Teaching of more able pupils in higher ability sets sometimes lacked challenge especially when the pace was too slow consequently these pupils did not achieve as well as they should. In lessons where teaching was unsatisfactory, e.g. in some English, technology and humanities lessons, there was no consistent approach to how lessons were structured or classes were managed. The teaching of information and communication technology is not secure across all subjects, particularly in Years 10 and 11.

Pupils learn well in half of lessons, responding to teachers' good subject knowledge and well selected activities which engage them in their learning. Teaching in history is especially stimulating where pupils' respond well to teachers' expertise and enthusiasm for their subject. Literacy and numeracy skills are soundly taught and are increasingly underpinned by a consistent approach such as focusing on key vocabulary.

#### **OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum has good breadth and balance, caters well for pupils' needs and interests and meets legal requirements. All pupils have equal access to learning opportunities throughout their time in school.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The school identifies pupils with individual needs well and they make good progress. Skilled learning support assistants help teachers to match the work and resources to pupils' needs.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Appropriate support is provided and pupils who have been helped are using the English language well. They are able to socialise successfully and are making sound progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Individuals are valued, their beliefs respected. Pupils develop self-confidence and feel that they matter. They are appreciative of others' successes. The school makes good provision for pupils' social, moral and cultural development and satisfactory provision for their spiritual development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides a very good level of care and support for all its pupils. Parents and pupils appreciate the secure environment that has been created. Child protection procedures are fully met.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher's very good and purposeful leadership ensures that there is clear direction for the school's future development and improvement. The strengthened leadership team is making an increasingly strong contribution to improving the school's effectiveness. Subject leadership is more variable, although strong in several areas there is need for improvement in others.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors are enthusiastic in their support of the school and use their wide range of skills very effectively for the school's benefit. They are well informed about what happens within the school. With the exception of the daily act of collective worship they ensure that the school fulfils its statutory obligations.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Careful monitoring and effective intervention are helping to improve the overall effectiveness of the school. Systems of evaluation are firmly established. These include feedback from pupils and parents.
The strategic use of resources	Learning resources are used effectively. The budget is managed carefully to get the best value for money. The school consults widely about important matters, obtains resources at the most competitive prices and uses them in the best way to achieve its aims.

## 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>• The school expects the pupils to work hard and achieve their best</li> <li>• The pupils make good progress in school</li> <li>• The teaching is good</li> <li>• Parents feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or problems</li> <li>• The school helps pupils to become mature and responsible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some aspects of homework</li> <li>• The information parents receive about how their child is getting on.</li> </ul>

Overall parents are positive about the school and its provision for their sons. The inspection team agrees with parents' positive comments. The team did not find evidence that the setting of homework is a weakness overall; mostly homework was appropriately challenging and built well on the work done in lessons. In questionnaire responses, some parents expressed concerns about the information they receive about the progress their son is making, whereas parents who attended the meeting prior to the inspection felt that the school successfully keeps parents informed and involved. The inspection team agrees with the latter view. Some inconsistency in teachers' practice in the application of aspects of the school's rewards and sanctions policy was evident concurring with parents views.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

**Pupils are successful; they do very well in national tests and examinations. The standard of their work in art, history and mathematics is above average.**

1. The school is successful in enabling pupils to do very well in national tests and examinations. The overall attainment of pupils on entry to the school is average. Pupils' results in GCSE examinations have improved steadily over the last five years. They are now much higher than at the time of the last inspection.

2. In 2001 the overall results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 were well above average, showing an improvement from 2000 when they were above average. These results have improved at a rate which matches the national trend. The English and science results were well above average whilst the results in mathematics were above average. The pupils did particularly well in English in 2001 where the results achieved were well above those reached by boys nationally. Compared with schools in similar contexts the school's results were above average in English and science.

3. The school's GCSE results have risen at a faster rate than nationally over the past five years. The overall results were well above the national average in 2001, an improvement over the previous three years when they were consistently above the national average. Results at 5 or more grades A\* to C have been consistently well above the national average over the past five years. The proportion of pupils gaining one or more A\* to G grades have also been above national averages, indicating that lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs have done well. Overall the results achieved by the pupils in this school have been well above national averages for boys.

4. The school has also done well when its GCSE results are compared with those achieved by similar schools. Overall results are above the average of schools with similar proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals. The proportions of pupils achieving 5A\* to G grades and 1A\* to G grades were well above the average achieved by such similar schools in 2001. However the proportion of pupils achieving 5A\* to C grades only matches the average of similar schools, indicating that higher attaining pupils are not achieving as well as they should.

5. Compared with schools in which the pupils achieved similar results in the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 achievement was average overall. This was because of differences in performance of higher attaining and average and lower attaining pupils. Whilst the results of average ability and lower attaining pupils were well above the average achieved by similar schools the performance of more able pupils was not as good, only matching the average of similar schools.

6. The school met its formally agreed targets for results in GCSE examinations in 2001. The targets were based on a good range of data about pupils' previous attainment, including the results of standardised tests carried out by the school at the start of Year 7. The targets also took into account the varying proportions of pupils with special educational needs in each year group. Increasing amounts of evidence from school self review are being used to inform the setting of targets. More challenging targets have been set for 2002 and 2003 as a consequence of this additional information.

7. Standards in the core subjects were highest in mathematics where pupils had completed a good quantity of work. Year 9 pupils planned an investigation systematically and were able to identify patterns, the most able presenting these in numerical and algebraic formats. Year 11 pupils' work included interesting, extended topics such as designing and analysing responses to questionnaires. Pupils have also covered a good amount of work in science which is organised and presented well with good use of diagrams and graphs. Year 11 had completed a secure

range of investigations into topics such as photosynthesis and rates of reaction. In English Year 11 pupils write analytically about the literature they have studied, showing good understanding of wider issues as well as good developing knowledge of the texts.

8. Standards in mathematics, history and ICT were above average in Year 9 and were higher than in English and science where they were average. In mathematics this was due to a high level of consistency across the department and in ICT it was linked to the high expectations of the GCSE course taken by Year 9 pupils. By Year 11 standards are above average in art, history and mathematics. Very good standards of literacy were evident in pupils' work in history with clear evidence of wider reading around the topic to build up pupils' knowledge and develop good capacity to analyse text, evaluate and extract information from a range of sources. The work of Year 10 pupils, learning about the legal position regarding alcohol consumption, showed good analysis of factual material to inform their preparation for discussions. In art, Year 11 pupils used their good knowledge of assessment criteria to evaluate GCSE material and to identify how they could improve their current work. Displays of artwork around the school were of high quality, in a wide range of media.

9. Pupils' standards and achievements in ICT are higher than reported by the last inspection, particularly in Years 7 to 9. ICT is taught as a discrete subject in these three years. The introduction of a GCSE course in information technology, which all pupils prepare for in Year 9, has raised standards in this subject. Pupils are well motivated by the good quality teaching. Pupils' GCSE portfolios include work on the use of the Internet for researching information, spreadsheet modelling, designing and creating a database and word processing of project reports. In Year 9 lessons pupils were working on a computer aided design project. In presenting projects pupils have imported photographs and other graphics to illustrate their work, and have skilfully formatted the text in a variety of ways. The use of ICT in Years 10 and 11 is less secure. Audit of the use of ICT in each curriculum area has not yet resulted in systematic identification of how ICT can be used by each subject to enable pupils to apply and extend the skills they learnt in earlier ICT lessons. Portfolios of work developing in science showed a sound range of uses of ICT in this area. Other subjects in which ICT has been regularly and successfully used include design and technology, mathematics and music.

**Pupils are proud of their school; they try hard, behave well and have a strong sense of responsibility.**

10. Pupils clearly like coming to school. They are proud of the school and most are enthusiastic about the range of activities it provides and are keen to take part in the full range of school activities. Pupils are committed to the school and many attend voluntary activities, including classes to boost their attainment and revision classes. Pupils' improving levels of attendance, commitment to learning and contributions in many lessons lead to better progress and higher standards of achievement.

11. Pupils in all year groups have good attitudes to their learning and most are interested in their work. They have a natural curiosity and take a keen interest in their lessons. Pupils of all ages and abilities have high levels of perseverance, productivity, confidence and concentration whether they work as individuals or in a small group. Pupils are articulate and often give extended answers to questions, drawing on their personal experiences to illustrate points. Some have the confidence to raise their own questions, as for example in a Year 10 personal and social development lesson where pupils discussed views about alcohol consumption. Pupils explored different viewpoints by evaluating facts and then forming and sharing their opinions with others. Only in a small minority of lessons, particularly where teachers are relatively new, do pupils lack concentration, especially when they are not directly supervised or when asked to work independently.

12. The constructive relationships that exist in most classrooms are characterised by pupils listening attentively and responding respectfully to the teacher and to other pupils. There is often good humour in the classrooms and in some lessons, such as history, there are lively

discussions. Pupils take full advantage of opportunities to work collaboratively and share their views and solutions in a mature manner.

13. Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. Very little time is wasted as pupils usually respond quickly to their teacher's instructions. Pupils are courteous to each other and to adults. They show considerable respect for each other and for adults in the school. Pupils are trustworthy and show respect for property. There is little oppressive behaviour as pupils respond well to good role models of staff and other pupils. Interviews with pupils revealed that the school, through an effective procedure, deals swiftly with instances of bullying.

14. Pupils are active in the life of the school and are clear about their loyalties to it. As pupils mature they increasingly show qualities such as initiative and by the time they are in Year 11 they take an active part in school life. Increasing numbers are involved in assemblies, charity fund raising activities and in the local community. A very positive learning environment is created and sustained throughout the school. Parents who attended the meeting commented positively on how good levels of display around the school contribute to a pleasant atmosphere which creates a respect for property and stimulates learning.

**The school has a strong inclusive culture, within which special needs pupils' individual needs are identified well and met successfully.**

15. Since the last inspection, when provision for special needs pupils was judged unsatisfactory, the school has focused on developing the Learning Development Department to have oversight of special needs provision. An experienced and committed co-ordinator was appointed together with a full complement of dedicated staff. In 1998 there was a significant increase in the number of pupils with identified special needs, an increase of one third. As the school was not fully subscribed and therefore had capacity for pupils to join in all year groups, the complexity of pupils' individual learning needs also increased as the school took in additional pupils. The strong line management of the leadership in this key area has secured a very good level of improvement and the provision made by the school is now judged to be good.

16. This good provision for the pupils with special educational needs is reflected in their good progress at both key stages. There is a clear vision for the development of special needs throughout the school, and departmental documentation is well planned and implemented. Effective assessment procedures identify both those pupils with additional learning needs and the higher achieving pupils. This information informs the pupils' individual education and pastoral care plans, and their academic progress is monitored daily by support assistants and teachers. The management of Annual Reviews and, where applicable, Transition Planning, is good, with contributions made by the pupils, their parents, staff and external agencies where this is relevant. All parents receive a copy of their child's individual education plan. The quality of these is good, with literacy, numeracy and behaviour targets accurately reflecting the recommendations of the Annual Review.

17. The standard of teaching and classroom support for special needs pupils is good. Withdrawal sessions cater very well for pupils with weak literacy and numeracy skills or with specific learning difficulties, but all pupils receive the greater part of their education in classes which are set by ability. This is in line with the school's policy and practice of educational inclusion, which is good. However, although all staff have copies of the pupils' individual education plans, catering for individual needs within lessons is inconsistent across the curriculum. This is particularly so in the case of higher achieving pupils, who are not always sufficiently challenged during lessons.

18. The school takes effective steps to ensure that all pupils benefit from school and works closely with local agencies which help to support pupils needing additional support. Senior leaders are using performance and assessment information to consider how different groups of pupils have achieved and then discuss these outcomes with subject leaders. This has enabled the school to have a clear picture of the progress made by particular pupil groups and where

necessary to take the necessary steps to provide any additional support needed. Pupils from different ethnic backgrounds are well integrated and participate fully in all aspects of school life; they achieve well. Parents confirmed that the school seeks to promote good relationships between different ethnic groups.

19. Much of the work provided for pupils of different abilities is well matched to the wide range of learning needs. In particular pupils of average or lower attainment achieve well, especially in Years 10 and 11. More able pupils have access to a wide range of extra-curricular learning activities, including the 'enrichment group' that the school provides for these pupils which is appreciated by both pupils and parents. These pupils are also encouraged to study for additional GCSEs such as Classics and statistics which they take at the end of Year 11. However, during the school day many continue to work at the same pace and level as other pupils and, apart from GCSE information technology which all pupils take in Year 9, they are not encouraged towards early examinations in their specific talents. Consequently their progress is no more than satisfactory.

**The school cares very well for its pupils; they are given good educational and personal support, which develops their confidence.**

20. Pupils are cared for very well. Teachers and support staff use both formal and informal methods to monitor carefully their emotional and learning needs. Staff know pupils well, and they use this knowledge to good effect in negotiating an appropriate course of action when individual pupils need help. In addition, the school has good access to a number of individuals and groups who are called on to support the learning of all pupils.

21. The school works hard to ensure that pupils attend school regularly and respond positively to the education provided. The rate of unauthorised absence is above average, partly because of the school's policy which complies with national guidance that absence for holidays is not usually authorised.

22. The procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour such as bullying are good. Parents and pupils report that where bullying does occur it is dealt with quickly and effectively. Pupils' welfare is ably supported through the actions of senior staff, who are active in promoting regular attendance and high standards of behaviour and achievement. As a result the school is a calm, orderly place.

23. The arrangements for child protection are very good. The school has adopted the local guidelines, and ensures that staff are kept well informed through regular meetings, staff training days and the induction programmes for new staff.

24. The school places considerable emphasis on pupils' personal safety and is effective in providing a secure learning environment. Health and safety matters are reviewed regularly. In cases of illness and accidents in school, staff with first-aid qualifications are on hand. Health and welfare are promoted successfully through the programme for personal, health and social education.

25. The school also places considerable emphasis on developing pupils' sense of confidence and responsibility towards themselves and others in the school community. Pupils of all ages are caring of each other, and take their responsibilities seriously. For instance, pupils are encouraged to report any issues for which support and help might be needed. Senior staff hold a regular 'clinic' for parents to bring matters needing swift resolution.

26. The many strengths in the school's provision for pupils' academic achievement and personal development contribute to an ethos of high expectations, shared by staff and pupils. Pupils' progress is monitored regularly, and they are set targets to encourage them to aim high. In addition, subjects such as art, mathematics' and science make good use of test and

examination criteria to check that pupils are achieving appropriate standards and to set targets for their future work.

**The governing body, headteacher and senior leadership team provide very good leadership and are managing the school and its improvement well.**

27. The school is very well governed and self-critical. Governors bring a high level of skills and expertise to their role. They monitor performance and have a good understanding of strengths and weaknesses of the school and the challenges it faces. They set realistic but appropriately challenging targets and identify the right priorities for development and improvement. Apart from not meeting the requirement for providing a daily act of collective worship for all pupils governors fulfil the remainder of their statutory duties well and help in providing a sense of direction for the school.

28. The headteacher has set a clear agenda for the school which incorporates a high commitment to raising standards and improving pupil achievement. He has set clear aims which are articulated in all aspects of the school's work. Very good relationships, care for the individual and a commitment to providing equality of opportunity for all, ensure that the school values are a reality and contribute to the well established climate for improving pupils' achievement and raising standards. The headteacher has put in place a much strengthened and cohesive leadership team which is increasingly contributing to decision making of a high order. A second assistant headteacher has already been appointed to complete this team. Teamwork is mostly well established and the majority of staff share a common purpose.

29. The school has a secure understanding of school improvement, is successful in achieving what it sets out to do and is looking to improve further. A very clear, well constructed Improvement Plan supports the improvement strategies. This well formulated plan identifies clearly priorities for the school's development. The targets in the plan are challenging but achievable. The plan is costed effectively, allocates responsibilities appropriately and includes clear timescales. Currently implementation of some areas is subject to delay as the present plan contains a large number of priorities. Reducing the overall number may enhance their achievement within the timescales identified. The implementation of this plan is monitored well by the leadership team and by the governing body. This is a key factor in identifying the effect of the improvement strategies on pupils' achievements.

30. The school's analysis of data has improved significantly since the last inspection. Departments are receiving increasing amounts of relevant data and they are beginning to use this to predict likely performance. This is not yet sufficiently well established and the understanding of many subject leaders on how to use this information is not embedded in their work. The quality of subject leadership is strong in mathematics and science these staff have a clear understanding of their roles and are taking steps to make their work more effective. Leadership at this level has been strengthened by a number of recent appointments, for example in design and technology and modern languages. Leadership of English and humanities does not yet contribute sufficiently well to ensuring effective overall provision; further development is needed to raise the quality to that of the stronger departments.

31. Monitoring and evaluation have been developed significantly since the last inspection. There is now a regular set of practices to monitor not only progress with the implementation of the School Improvement Plan but also teaching quality, standards of pupils' work, and the progress pupils are making. These developments have been enriched by the school's engagement with the 'Learning About Improvement' project which encouraged a wider range of self-evaluation and review activity. This has resulted in improvements in classroom observation through the use of agreed criteria and an increased level of feedback about the school's provision from both pupils and parents. The school's monitoring and evaluative procedures would be improved through more systematic and rigorous use.

## **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

### **The most able pupils are insufficiently challenged in lessons.**

32. The school's provision for more able pupils has been improved in a number of ways since the last inspection. A policy for 'More Able Pupils' has been developed and is included in the staff handbook. This contains a clear rationale for making provision for more able pupils and includes a range of criteria for their identification. This identification is informed by dialogue with the primary school before pupils arrive at the school in Year 7. These criteria have been used to set up a register of all pupils identified as 'more able' and this register, which is reviewed annually, is available to all staff. There is now a teacher who works with and has specific responsibility for more able pupils. A range of enrichment activities has been made available to more able pupils but only limited progress has been made in ensuring that these pupils are appropriately challenged in lessons. Subject schemes of work do not identify clearly enough how the learning needs of these pupils will be catered for. Teaching does not yet consistently use sufficiently imaginative resources or make sufficiently intellectual or creative demands on the pupils to ensure that their learning is taken forward. Homework, although set regularly for these pupils, is too often routine and does not develop pupils' learning opportunities sufficiently.

33. Much of the work to improve provision for higher attaining pupils has consisted of activities to enrich and extend pupils' experience out of school hours. Parents' comments were supportive of this provision which included the opportunity to learn Russian as an additional language. Pupils are also attending 'Thinking Skills' sessions which help them to develop skills of analysis and self-motivation. Many have attended external enrichment courses and master-classes. These very worthwhile, imaginative activities have been greatly appreciated by the pupils involved who spoke enthusiastically about them. This provision has clearly made a positive impact on the self-esteem and motivation of the pupils. However at the time of the inspection these activities had not been integrated sufficiently well with the mainstream curriculum. This lack of coherence with the day to day curriculum is limiting the potential for sustained impact on the learning of these pupils consequently the longer term effect on the performance of more able pupils is uncertain.

34. Placing pupils in teaching groups by ability has been increased by introducing a setting in more subjects from early in Year 7. At the time of the inspection pupils were taught English, mathematics, science and modern languages in ability sets. Teaching in some of the top sets lacked the stimulus necessary to engage, excite and challenge higher attaining pupils. In a Year 11 lesson where pupils were using their ideas about reactivity of different metals to help them revise their knowledge about extraction of metals the pace was laboured. Questions were used to check pupils understanding rather than to challenge and take thinking further consequently although pupils recalled and consolidated their previous knowledge they did not develop their understanding by extending or applying their knowledge into new situations. The relatively limited demands of the lesson failed to make the most productive use of the time available for this potentially high attaining group. Although the pupils behaved well they lacked confidence to engage in their learning and offer contributions of their own. Consequently pupils were not able to develop their thinking or make high enough gains in their knowledge and understanding of the topic. In many lessons there is a need to do more to increase and sustain the pace, breadth and depth of learning for these higher attaining pupils.

### **Provision for information communication technology [ICT] is under-developed in Years 10 and 11.**

35. The school has made satisfactory progress in addressing the key issue from the last inspection report requiring improvements in pupils' achievement and attainment in information technology. A number of significant improvements have been achieved, particularly for pupils in Years 7 to 9. All Year 9 pupils are now following a GCSE course in their timetabled lessons. This sets high expectations for these pupils who are well motivated and show sustained interest in their lessons. In 2001, the first year of the course 29 percent of pupils achieved A\* to C



grades. As the course has been consolidated and further developed in its second year of implementation coursework assessment indicates that approximately two thirds of the pupils will achieve these grades in 2002. This represents good progress for these pupils.

36. The need for further development of information communication technology has been identified in the school's current Improvement Plan which is supplemented by the National Grid for Learning ICT Development Plan. The implementation of these plans has increased resources for ICT, improved the curricular provision, supported training of staff and enabled pupils to have greater access to ICT in their learning. The number of computers has increased significantly with good provision in business studies, mathematics and science. Computers and keyboards have been provided for music and a Control Technology room has been developed in the design and technology department. Technical support has been put in place and an experienced member of staff has taken on the role of systems manager. Discrete ICT lessons have been timetabled into Years 7 and 8, leading into the Year 9 GCSE course. Staff training has commenced. In a few subjects areas such as mathematics and science portfolios of pupils' achievements have been developed to provide exemplars of appropriate standards and increase understanding of the levels of the National Curriculum.

37. As some of the improvements are not yet sufficiently embedded the impact on pupils' learning and achievements is limited, especially in Years 10 and 11. The expectation that pupils in Year 10 will have the opportunity to improve the grades achieved in Year 9 or to extend the short course to a full course is not being realised. Consequently these pupils are not making enough progress in extending their achievements from Year 9. This is because the delivery of cross curricular ICT through subjects is not well enough developed. Whilst clear progress is being made in mathematics, music and science the use of ICT to enhance teaching and learning is not secure in the majority of subjects. Opportunities for using ICT have not been developed well enough in subject schemes of work and consequently pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not have sufficient opportunities to build on skills and knowledge acquired previously. Neither teachers nor pupils are yet confident enough about the expectations of the requirements of the subject; consequently opportunities to identify and set targets for pupils to improve are not used well enough. Discontinuity in staffing has proved a limitation to staff training, especially in humanities and science.

38. Greater coherence must be achieved in the school's provision for ICT. This must include more effective planning for the delivery of ICT through all subjects of the curriculum across the school in order to build on the secure foundations laid in Years 7, 8 and 9. All schemes of work need to be developed to identify clearly opportunities for using ICT to support learning and they also need to ensure appropriate progression and access to the full range of ICT experiences. ICT assessment must be improved so that pupils receive useful feedback which will help them improve their future work. Staff training needs to ensure that skills and abilities are developed to enable ICT to be used with increasing confidence to provide more relevant and stimulating resources associated with effective teaching.

**The legal requirement for a daily act of collective worship for all pupils is not fully met.**

39. The last inspection identified the need to ensure that provision is made for a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. The school now provides a weekly theme for assemblies and form tutor groups, for example the theme during the inspection week was 'The Commonwealth Today'. The identification of a theme gives coherence to the school's attempt to meet the statutory requirements. Pupils attend two individual or combined year group assemblies each week. On some occasions a number of pupils do not participate in collective worship because they have chosen to participate in 'Paired Reading Schemes' where they support younger pupils who need opportunities to develop and improve their reading skills.

40. The standard of collective worship in assemblies is very good. In the tutor periods there was focussed discussion on the theme but there is inconsistency between different tutor groups. A Year 8 group, for example, took part in a teacher led discussion about diversity. Instead of

pausing for reflection the teacher introduced an organisational activity which shifted the focus too rapidly away from main purpose of the session.

41. Progress made in addressing the key issue from the previous inspection 'that the school should ensure that provision is made for collective worship' is unsatisfactory. The school still does not meet the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.

#### **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

42. Building on the improvements which have been achieved since the last inspection, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

43. Improve the levels of challenge in work made available to more able pupils in lessons and the work set for individual study;

44. Develop and improve provision for information communication technology in Years 10 and 11 building on the good foundations laid in Years 7 to 9 by developing coherent provision across the subjects of the curriculum;

45. Ensure that that the statutory requirement collective worship is met so that all pupils are able to take part in a daily act of collective worship.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	38
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	26

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	9	7	14	3	0	0
Percentage	6	26	20	40	8	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than two percentage points.

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	750
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	59

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	16
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	201

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	5

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	32
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	40

### Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	6.4
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	1.3
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	155	0	155

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	128	119	126
	Girls	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Total	128	119	126
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	83 (65)	77 (73)	84 (72)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	44 (26)	51 (49)	43 (44)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	115	117	117
	Girls	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Total	115	115	117
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	77 (71)	76 (84)	77 (71)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	31 (30)	53 (49)	43 (46)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	133	0	133

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	78	130	132
	Girls	0	0	0
	Total	78	130	132
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	59 (61)	98 (95)	99 (97)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	44.7
	National	39.0

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	0
	National	n/a

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	4
Indian	2
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	6
Chinese	1
White	720
Any other minority ethnic group	13

### ***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	38	0
Other minority ethnic groups	1	0

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

### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	19
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	22
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	8.4
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	5.4
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	3.0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	750
Number of questionnaires returned	277

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	28	53	13	5	1
My child is making good progress in school.	35	56	6	2	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	17	60	16	3	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	16	55	22	6	1
The teaching is good.	20	69	5	0	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	31	44	19	4	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	51	40	4	4	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	53	42	3	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	29	48	15	5	3
The school is well led and managed.	30	53	6	6	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	30	56	9	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	22	47	13	5	13

### Other issues raised by parents

Parents expressed concerns about current difficulties the school was experiencing in retaining and recruiting staff of suitable calibre. Parents were aware that the current discontinuity in staffing reflected a national problem and was due to circumstances beyond the control of the school. However, parents were concerned that if not resolved these staffing issues would prove detrimental to pupils' learning.