

INSPECTION REPORT

ANSFORD COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Castle Cary

LEA area: Somerset

Unique reference number: 113865

Headteacher: Mr R Benzie

Reporting inspector: John Carnaghan
1352

Dates of inspection: 19th - 21st May 2002

Inspection number: 244891

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: Mixed

School address: Castle Cary
Somerset

Postcode: BA7 7JJ

Telephone number: 01963 350895

Fax number: 01963 351357

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr A Llewellyn

Date of previous inspection: 16th October 1995

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		
1352	John Carnaghan	Registered inspector
19560	Hilary Herring	Lay inspector
1049	Brian Evans	Team inspector
12857	Robert Bailey	Team inspector

The inspection contractor was:

PkR Educational Consultants Ltd
6 Sherman Road
Bromley
Kent
BR1 3JH

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The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Ansford Community School is a mixed, 11 to 16 comprehensive school situated in a rural area, which is for the most part socially advantaged. With 724 pupils on roll, it is smaller than the average and has similar numbers of boys and girls. The school population has grown steadily in recent years. The percentage of pupils (6.2) known to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. Where comparison is made to similar schools in this report, these are schools where between five and nine per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The percentage of pupils on the special educational needs register (15.8) is below the national average; the percentage with statements of need (2.1) is broadly in line with the average. There are 54 pupils at the higher levels of the special educational needs (SEN) code of practice, 17 of whom have statements of special educational needs. Their needs, in the main, concern moderate learning difficulties, emotional and behavioural difficulties and dyslexia. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is very low (1.3 per cent), as is the proportion of those speaking English as an additional language (less than one per cent). The numbers of pupils who join or leave the school during the course of the school year are average for the size of school. In this country district, pupils come from a wide area and a large number of primary schools. Their attainment when they enter the school, as shown by the outcomes of National Curriculum tests, and standardised testing undertaken by the school, is broadly average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Ansford Community School is very good school. Pupils achieve very well in their time at the school and most leave with well-above-average GCSE grades. These successes are to a great extent due to the strong ethos of the school and the consistent and successful focus which teachers maintain on pupils' learning. Teaching is very good overall, with strengths in teachers' planning and high expectations. However, a few lessons are needlessly pedestrian. The school is very well led and managed; the head teacher and governors share a positive view and great enthusiasm for the future of the school. Senior and other managers make strong contributions to the school's continuing success, but there are some inconsistencies in the methods different subjects use to mark and assess pupils' work. The school curriculum is good but information and communications technology (ICT) is insufficiently accessible to pupils because of equipment and accommodation shortages. Unsatisfactory accommodation hampers the efforts of physical education (PE) teachers to cover a wide range of sports and activities. The school spends its income wisely, giving good value for money.

What the school does well

- It ensures that pupils reach standards of attainment that are generally well above the national average. These standards have risen considerably since the last inspection.
- The ethos of the school promotes effectively pupils' developing maturity. Warm constructive relationships are evident throughout the school and are beneficial to pupils' learning.
- Teaching is very good overall with a number of strong elements; in particular teachers have a very good knowledge of how pupils learn and regularly apply this in lessons so that pupils achieve very well.
- The new headteacher, with the support of the assistant heads, has done much to raise the morale of the school. The very good leadership and clear vision for the future shared by the head teacher and governors ensure that the school has considerable capacity for improvement.
- The school works very hard building and maintaining an impressive range of international links. These are of positive benefit to pupils' learning and development.
- Monitoring of personal development and elimination of oppressive behaviour are very good.

What could be improved

- There are inconsistencies between departments in marking and assessment.
- A minority of teaching, while thorough, lacks the inspiration needed to enthuse pupils.
- The school does not yet provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to use ICT in all subjects.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

In the lengthy period since the school was last inspected in 1995, the standards have improved markedly. Most of the key issues have been addressed. The school has increased the time allocation for religious education (RE). More use is made of ICT in the different subjects of the curriculum, although advances in this area are limited by shortages of equipment. Standards in physical education have improved and are now well above average at the end of Year 11. Able and talented pupils now have sufficient challenge in most of their lessons. The school is still not complying with the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. Overall, the school has improved considerably since the last inspection.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	A	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E

In 2001, the result of the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were well above average in mathematics, above average in science and broadly in line with the national average in English. Particular circumstances, especially in staffing, account for the dip in English results. Over the last four years, English standards in Year 9 tests have been well above average in every year except 2001. Indications from pupils' current work is that they will be at least above average in 2002. In comparison with similar schools in 2001, both mathematics and science were broadly average; English was below average. The trend over the last four years is for improvement which is at least as great as the national improvement. The attainment of these pupils on entry to the school was generally average, therefore these figures represent good achievement. Girls performed slightly better than boys in Year 9 tests.

The school has maintained GCSE results, based on average points score, which have been well above the national average for the last four years. The proportions of pupils gaining five or more grades both in the range A*-C and A*-G were well above average. The proportion gaining at least one grade A*-G was average. In comparison with similar schools, pupils' average points score was above average. Girls performed marginally better than boys, but differences were not significant. Judged by average points score, all subjects except art and design, attained standards which were well above the national average. Given that these pupils entered school with standards which were broadly average, this strong and consistent improvement represents very good achievement for pupils both in Years 10 and 11 and over their five years in the school. The school set challenging targets in the last two years in terms of average points. It comfortably exceeded them in 2000 but fell marginally short in 2001.

Overall, current standards of Year 9 pupils are above nationally expected levels in English, mathematics and science. This represents good achievement for these pupils. Standards of pupils currently in Year 10 are well above national expectations in English, mathematics and science; no Year 11 pupils attended formal lessons during the inspection – they were taking GCSE examinations. The achievement of these pupils, with their increasing commitment and maturity, is very good. Pupils show standards of literacy, which are well above national expectations with particularly high standards of speaking and listening. These skills are developed in a wide range of lessons, including drama and mathematics. Strong mathematics teaching and frequent contributions from other subjects, such as science and geography mean that standards of numeracy are also well above expectations.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils have a positive attitude to school life and usually show maturity and commitment both to their learning and to the school as a whole.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils are generally calm and courteous and behave sensibly both in and out of classrooms. A small minority misbehaves where teaching is less strong.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Warm relationships make a strong contribution to the positive ethos. Pupils help one another naturally in their learning. There are very good opportunities for pupils to take responsibility in the life of the school.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Broadly similar to national averages.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The teaching of English and mathematics is very good. All subjects give due attention to the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy, which are very well taught and promoted across the curriculum. Many teachers have a very clear understanding of the way pupils learn and consistently use opportunities to reinforce and develop pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. Lessons are well planned and usually have a range of brief activities which both maintain pupils' interest and the pace of their learning. Teachers show strong subject expertise, which inspires pupils' confidence. Pupils respond well to the high expectations set by the teachers in most lessons. Homework is set regularly and used well to consolidate and advance learning. It is usually marked quickly, allowing pupils feedback on their efforts and encouraging them to move on to the next area. There are inconsistencies in teaching; marking can be variable in quality and each subject has a different style of marking, which confuses pupils. Some teaching can be dull and fails to capture pupils' enthusiasm sufficiently.

The school meets the needs of most of its pupils well. Teaching in groups formed on the basis of prior attainment encourages work to be matched to pupils' learning requirements. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported in their learning; in particular, individual education plans indicate specific learning targets. These are summarised in a way which raises teachers' awareness of each individual's targets and the appropriate strategies to employ. Learning objectives are usually explained carefully at the beginning of the lesson and reviewed at the end so that pupils know how well they have achieved and what is the next step in their learning. Not all subjects make sufficient contributions to the development of pupils' ICT skills.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum is broad and relevant to pupils' needs. There are strengths in the provision of drama for all years and of vocational subjects for pupils in Years 10 and 11. The very good range of international links enhances the curriculum. There are insufficient ICT opportunities and the timetable leads to some imbalances in time allocation in a few subjects in Years 7 to 9.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Procedures to identify and support pupils with special educational needs (SEN) are very efficient, affording these pupils very good opportunities to achieve well.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. The very few pupils with English as an additional language are well provided for.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Excellent cultural provision has been developed through the school's numerous international links. Pupils' moral and social development is well supported in the school through activities like assemblies and tutor periods. Spiritual provision is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Well. Teachers know pupils very well and care for their needs. The monitoring of personal development and the strategies to eliminate oppressive behaviour are very effective. Assessment information is widely available but is insufficiently used to set targets for improving standards.

The working partnership with parents is good and parents are both interested in and very supportive of the school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher displays strong leadership qualities and has a clear vision for the future of the school. He receives strong support through the capable management of the senior staff and middle managers.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Well. They provide strong support and a wealth of experience in their work with the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. The school has a wide range of information and data on its performance and is starting to use it to make improvements.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Resources are sensibly allocated in accordance with identified needs and the school development plan. Specific funding is clearly used for its designated purpose.

Resources are adequate. The accommodation is old and rather rambling, space is at a premium and the accommodation for physical education is inadequate. Best value principles are applied well across the school.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• that their children are expected to work hard and achieve• that the school is well led and managed• that teaching is good• that they feel comfortable about approaching the school if they have worries or concerns• that the school helps their children to develop and mature	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• a minority do not feel the school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons• a minority do not feel well informed about their child's progress• a small group do not feel the school works closely with them• a small group felt that their children did not get the right amount of work to do at home.

Parents' views of the school are generally very favourable. Inspectors endorse all their positive views. Activities outside lessons were judged by the inspection team to be satisfactory. Information for parents is satisfactory and the school does work closely with parents. Concerns about homework were not apparent during the inspection; the way that homework is used by teachers is generally good.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

It ensures that pupils reach standards of attainment that are generally well above the national average. These standards have risen considerably since the last inspection.

1. Pupils come to Ansford from a wide area and a range of primary schools. Evidence from National Curriculum testing and other assessments shows that their standards at the beginning of Year 7 are broadly similar to national averages. However, pupils make a brisk start to their learning and as soon as the third term of Year 7 there are indications that much of the work that they do is above average.
2. Much of the work that pupils undertake in lessons stimulates their imagination; it is varied and interesting. For example, in English, pupils reached higher than expected standards in working on 'a Survival Guide to Ansford School'. In science, much of the work pupils do is of mature quality. Notes are accurate and are valuable revision resources. Pupils employ their good literacy skills in reporting their investigations and are often able to give lucid explanations of their observations in their own words. The activities undertaken indicate that teachers use imaginative approaches and adapt the tasks so that pupils with varying aptitudes have the correct degree of challenge and are all able to make good progress.
3. Regular testing and informal assessment provide a strong stimulus to pupils to achieve high standards. Mathematics teachers use regular testing, and re-testing if necessary, as part of the classroom routines. Pupils expect this and it increases their motivation to learn. Many lessons, in mathematics and other subjects, start with a review of homework. In mathematics the first pupils to arrive in lessons write the answers to homework problems on the board, as a matter of course. When all pupils are present the teacher will start the lesson by asking the class about each answer, 'Is this right?' the pupils then mark and correct their own work. This rapid response to homework is satisfying for pupils, values what they have attempted and gives clear indications to teachers about how well pupils are learning. The subsequent lesson plan may then be modified, taking into account the degree of competence that pupils have demonstrated.
4. In 2001, National Curriculum tests and teachers' assessments in all subjects indicated that standards were above the national average. In the years 1998-2000 they were well above average. English results were above and well above average in 1998-2000 but fell back to be broadly in line with the average in 2001. The reasons for this fall have been closely analysed by the school. New teachers and the illness of experienced teachers led to insufficiently clear guidance on how to undertake the tests; there is also evidence that a lack of practice of extended writing and answering questions on texts led to lower marks. It is clear from the work being done by current pupils in Year 9 that these concerns have been effectively addressed and that standards are rising again. Mathematics results have been well above average for each of the years 1998-2001. In science, standards were well above average in 1998-99 and above average in 2000-01. In comparison with similar schools in 2001, standards overall and in mathematics and science were in line with averages. In English, standards in 2001 were below average.
5. The way in which teachers provide appropriate work for all pupils, whatever their prior attainment is notable and means that each pupil has every opportunity to reach her or his full potential. The analysis of English books showed that pupils of low attainment have been enabled to do their work through good support from teachers and classroom assistants and sensible and sensitive adaptation of tasks to their aptitudes. Teachers

are given very clear indications of the learning needs and appropriate strategies to employ for each pupil on the SEN register. They know pupils very well and incorporate this information into their planning and the approach which they adopt in lessons. This is also true of pupils with very high levels of attainment. For example, these pupils in science showed very strong skills in analysing and assessing the strengths and weaknesses in their own work as well as good technical accuracy.

6. By the end of Year 11 the strength of pupils' achievement throughout the school is evident in their GCSE results. In terms of average points score per pupil and the percentage of pupils with five or more grades A*-C, pupils' performance has been well above the national average every year in the period 1998-2001 and also well above the average for similar schools. In comparison with similar schools, the results were also well above average. In individual subjects the 2001 GCSE results show strong consistency. In terms of average points score, pupils performed at levels which were comfortably above the national average in every subject except art and design. The results gained by girls were better than those of the boys, as they have been for the last four years, but by no greater margin than is the case nationally.
7. Pupils display good skills in their use of literacy and numeracy in other subjects. All departments are well aware of where these issues can best be raised across the curriculum and most provide good opportunities for this. Pupils have opportunities to practise and develop their skills in literacy and numeracy in most subjects of the curriculum, but particularly in science and geography. Speaking and listening skills are well above average because pupils have opportunities to make presentations and report back to the class. In Years 7 and 8, pupils are taught library and research skills; they can access the computerised library catalogue from networked computers and make good use of the library to help them with their projects. Familiarity with the mathematics department's strategies for teaching numeracy enables other departments, particularly science, history and geography, to reinforce pupils' mathematical skills by, for example, analysing and interpreting data on population patterns in a variety of countries and representing this in a way which is readily understandable. The increasing commitment of pupils and the strong focus they and the school maintain on success in public examinations means that progress is very good in Years 10 and 11, while it is good in Years 7 to 9.

The ethos of the school effectively promotes pupils' developing maturity. Warm constructive relationships are evident throughout the school and beneficial to pupils' learning.

8. Teachers treat pupils as mature young adults and have high expectations of them. This philosophy encourages pupils to take responsibility for their own learning and most at the school respond to this favourably. Pupils say that they like their teachers and respect them because, whatever the subject, they can always get support when they require it. They speak warmly of their experiences on residential trips run by the school.
9. Behaviour is generally good. In the cold and windy weather of the inspection period, pupils were regularly confined to the cramped communal areas of the building during their breaks and lunch-times. Behaviour was almost all good and the atmosphere peaceable and harmonious. A large proportion of pupils travel to and from school by bus; at the end of the day they have to queue but are orderly and patient; some groups were supervised effectively by senior pupils.
10. No unsatisfactory behaviour was seen in lessons and in many cases it was very good or excellent. The degree of willing co-operation with teachers is highly beneficial to

pupils' learning. For example, a Year 9 French lesson discussing a pop star was enlivened by pupils' enthusiastic and good-humoured involvement. The alacrity with which pupils settled as they came into the lesson and switched from task to task meant that the pace of learning was very good at all stages of the lesson. The level of participation in the oral element of the lesson was another positive factor.

11. Pupils are encouraged to work together in all lessons. Thus, it quickly becomes second nature to help one another in their learning activities. For example, Year 10 pupils take part in paired reading activities each week, hearing younger pupils read. In a successful session, where a teaching assistant gave clear direction at the start, there was a purposeful atmosphere and the older pupils adopted a supportive and helpful role throughout. The session ran largely unsupervised and reading records were appropriately updated at the end. In a Year 9 tennis lesson, girls worked very well in pairs on the brief activities, as instructed. Relationships were constructive and no disagreements were observed. Throughout the lesson, the pupils were very responsive and keen to answer the questions.
12. The school provides good opportunities for pupils to develop responsibility. The school council is an effective body, which is involved in making decisions about the school. For example, the council has been closely involved in decisions about the catering arrangements for school meals, in ensuring that smoke alarms are fitted in toilets to prevent smoking and improving the quantity and quality of lights in the drama studio. The school council has great autonomy and has clear procedures and a most effective pupil chairperson. The school, under the new headteacher has increased the effectiveness of its rewards and sanctions, and behaviour in the school shows indications of improving as a result.

Teaching is very good overall with a number of strong elements; in particular teachers have a very good knowledge of how pupils learn and regularly apply this in lessons so that pupils achieve very well.

13. There is very good consistency of practice in much of the teaching in the school. Of the lessons seen, 12 per cent were excellent and 30 per cent very good. Only 25 percent of lessons were less than good; of these, 22 per cent were satisfactory and 3 per cent unsatisfactory. The most consistent element in teaching is the focus that teachers maintain on learning. They have a good knowledge of the requirement of the National Curriculum and the GCSE examinations and apply this consistently in lessons. Teachers invariably explain learning objectives clearly and check that they have been reached at the end of the lesson. Because teachers know pupils and their learning needs well they have appropriate expectations and generally provide activities which have an appropriate degree of challenge. In an excellent Year 8 science lesson on sound, the teacher was able to guide pupils through oral questions, which were subtly adjusted to their attainment levels. The closing session reinforced pupils' understanding by encouraging them to explain to three of their peers what they had learnt about sound. The regular checking on learning in many lessons means that pupils are relaxed about the regular assessment that is undertaken; this is good preparation for public examinations.
14. Teachers have good subject knowledge. This inspires confidence amongst pupils and enables them to live up to the high expectations that are set. In a very good Year 10 geography lesson on age-sex pyramids, the teacher's simple, clear introduction and quick consolidation of earlier work on this topic led rapidly into pair work on analysis of various countries' pyramids. Pupils had a clear idea of what they had to do and how to go about it. Whilst pairs of pupils supported each other strongly, the activity was

challenging and some had to request help from the teacher. His interventions were swift and accurate with the result that, by the end of the lesson, pupils had consolidated earlier learning thoroughly and made very good gains in interpreting statistical data. The techniques which pupils used, also contributed to the development of their numeracy skills.

15. Lessons usually proceed at a good pace because teachers plan a series of short, interesting activities which maintains pupils' interest. The planning and preparation of lessons are usually efficient, so that activities can be started with a minimum of fuss. Lessons usually start with quick questions to check and reinforce earlier learning. In a Year 7 geography lesson, flash cards were used to re-visit ideas on the use of cars in urban areas. The teacher set tight deadlines for each subsequent task and drew the class together every ten minutes to check progress. As a consequence, pupils' response was very positive and their thinking skills clearly developed throughout the session.
16. Homework is well used. It is the norm to see homework set and/or collected in lessons. It is the way in which homework is used that is noteworthy. In a Year 10 leisure and tourism lesson, for example, pupils were set homework which involved using the internet to research various types of questionnaires. Helped by good provision of text books, mathematics teaching incorporates homework as a matter of the learning routine. For example, mathematics lessons nearly always start with reference to homework and teachers use the discussion of homework both to analyse and reinforce learning. Pupils value homework and use it as an opportunity to show the teacher and class that they have grasped salient points. Pupils with SEN are very well taught, this is greatly helped by how well all teachers know each individual's specific learning needs. This allows the work pupils do and the support they receive to be closely tailored to their learning needs.

The new headteacher, with the support of the assistant heads, has done much to raise the morale of the school. The very good leadership and clear vision for the future shared by the headteacher and governors ensure that the school has considerable capacity for improvement.

17. The headteacher was appointed in January 2002. This followed a period when the school did not have a permanent headteacher and was run effectively by a group of senior staff. While this was, rightly, a time of little innovation in the school it is a testament to the quality of senior staff in the school that both its ethos and high standards of achievement were maintained during this period. The current head teacher has a good grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses. He has got to know pupils and staff very well. He goes out of his way to be a presence in the day-to-day life of the school and has a cheery greeting for pupils, teachers and parents alike. He is very positive about the school and is unstinting in his praise and support for his colleagues and the pupils. The headteacher has successfully reduced the rate of exclusions at the school during recent months. In the development of plans for the future of the school, the headteacher has engaged in extensive consultations with pupils, teachers, parents and governors. He has elected to wait to see the outcomes of the inspection before finalising the school's development plan for the next three years.
18. The school currently has two assistant headteachers. They are both energetic and thorough in their management of aspects of the school and played a major role in maintaining the strengths of the school during the interregnum when it ran without a permanent headteacher. For example, the school's strong international links were maintained.

19. Systems are in place to support the smooth running of the school. For example, the computerisation of the school's SEN records leads to great savings in time and effort when pupils have annual reviews and when information about individual targets and the appropriate strategies for each pupil needs to be disseminated.
20. Relationships between the leadership of the school and the governing body are very good. Governors bring a valuable range of talents and experience to bear on the management of the school. They were rigorous in their search for the 'right' head teacher - not appointing on the first round of interviews because they felt that they did not have the right person - and saw the need for the new incumbent to make his influence felt quickly. They share the philosophy of the headteacher and have been very supportive as he has settled in. They question proposals put forward with some rigour. For example, the school's strategy for the development of ICT was called into question by governors and had to be re-drafted. Governors have a good grasp of principles of best value and have stabilised the budget, which was formerly an area of some concern. They have been fully involved in the debate conducted on the future allocation of funds on staffing and resources.

The school works very hard building and maintaining a large range of international links. These are of positive benefit to pupils' learning and development.

21. The school is one of twenty-eight schools nationally that has international status. The school feels strongly that, as a relatively remote rural area with very few people from ethnic minorities, it is important to foster overseas links. The school has extensive links with France, Spain, the Netherlands, Sweden, Germany, Japan, South Africa and Zambia. The most important link is with Zambia. The Cary-Mufilira Trust was set up in 1994 and has promoted links both with the school and the town in Zambia. Very successful fund-raising from a wide range of donors has enabled groups of pupils and teachers from both towns to visit one another. Almost a third of all teachers at Ansford school have visited Mufilira. These trips have often had a particular focus, such as the establishment of a joint basketball team, the study of sustainable development and healthy lifestyles and jointly working on common environmental issues. Pupils have produced joint art works and developed and performed in joint dramatic productions.
22. The effect of these links has been to raise awareness of many of the issues that face the international community. Many of the school's schemes of work reflect this raised awareness of diversity and thus make a strong contribution to the development of citizenship in the school. For example, art work displayed in the school relates to topics like international aid and the plight of Australian aborigines. The library makes a strong contribution in this area, with good displays of photographs from the many trips undertaken by the school. Older pupils also have the opportunity to participate in an international work experience programme in the Netherlands. These links are complemented by an extensive range of trips and extra-curricular activities which are undertaken more locally.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

There are inconsistencies between departments in marking and assessment.

23. While informal assessment in lessons is invariably good, initiating valuable dialogue with pupils about what they have learned and what the next stage should be, work in books is not marked with sufficient regularity or thoroughness. One result of this is that the presentation of work in books is inconsistent and does not generally match the standards achieved by pupils in other aspects of their work.
24. Pupils report inconsistency in marking and some are unhappy about its irregularity. The system of awarding marks or grades varies from subject to subject and leads to confusion. Overall, pupils felt that marking gave too little praise or guidance on how to improve.
25. Even within departments, marking can vary in emphasis and style. English exercise books displayed thorough marking in some cases and sparse comments and marks in others. As a result, many books were poorly presented. In mathematics the departmental policy is to mark test books, whilst the main exercise book is not formally seen by teachers. The marking of Year 10 mathematics books does not report the standard being reached against GCSE criteria or indicate what pupils should do to improve. Overall, there are too few comments in mathematics books and this leads to untidy work and is unhelpful to pupils. In science there is a similar picture. Marking is sometimes infrequent, lacks clear advice and fails to establish a dialogue with pupils.
26. Assessment of pupils' work is undertaken thoroughly in most subjects. It is especially good for pupils with SEN. These pupils are subject to thorough, regular assessment of their progress. The results are recorded electronically on a central filing system, are readily accessible and help track the way each individual is developing. The data for individuals can be called up to inform their reviews. It is also used to set simple yet pertinent individual targets, which are widely disseminated to teachers so that they are able to address the targets identified fully in individual education plans.
27. Many subjects use assessments to set targets for pupils. Good procedures exist in geography, PE, science, DT and drama. DT uses effective tracking sheets for each pupil, so that teachers are able to indicate appropriate remedial action for pupils when required. In ICT, pupils' assessments are recorded electronically so they can be easily seen by pupils and staff. In mathematics, assessment and record keeping are regular and thorough so that the progress of each pupil can be followed, but this extensive information is not used enough to set individualised targets for pupils. The English department has recognised that weaknesses in assessment led to a drop in standards at the end of Year 9 in 2001. The head of department has put into place strategies to ensure accuracy in the teacher assessment element of the National Curriculum tests. Assessment data is to be used to group pupils according to prior attainment. The assessment of pupils' work in science is good in Years 10 and 11 but inconsistent in Years 7 to 9, where the lack of central moderation leads to inaccuracies.

A minority of teaching, while thorough, lacks the inspiration needed to enthuse pupils.

28. While teaching overall is very good, a minority of lessons fails to ensure that pupils learn quickly enough. Although the quality of teaching is very good overall, a number of lessons, while still competent, did not stimulate pupils to learn as well as they might.
29. In some lessons, the teacher talked for too long, and pupils' attention wandered and although this did not lead to bad behaviour, because the pupils were docile, nevertheless, not enough learning took place. In a Year 8 mathematics lesson on data analysis, the teacher spoke for thirty-five of the fifty minutes. He had good knowledge of the topic and questioned pupils repeatedly, but the lack of variety led to some disaffection and a group of pupils paid decreasing attention as time went on and, finally failed to grasp the homework set. Lessons which were too heavily teacher-centred failed to engage pupils fully. Dickens' writing style was the theme of a Year 9 English lesson but, although the teacher displayed great expertise, she did not provide enough opportunities for pupils to work independently; her teaching lacked variety and interest and opportunities to develop pupils' learning were missed.
30. Competence in teachers' methods can also mask missed learning opportunities in lessons. In a Year 7 food studies lesson, teaching had a number of strengths. The lesson was well planned and the class was well managed. Clear learning objectives were explained and the teacher had established very good routines for questioning pupils. However, the task that pupils were asked to undertake involved filling in a worksheet mechanically and had no basis in the pupils' extensive practical experience of food preparation. As a result pupils were bored and worked at too slow a pace. However, they were well behaved and persisted so that their learning overall was satisfactory.
31. Some lessons lack sufficient urgency. A Year 8 ICT lesson, teaching pupils how to mail merge, was introduced thoroughly, with good use of powerpoint, but the pupils' activity lasted too long and there were no deadlines or breaks to enable the teacher to check progress and further encourage the pupils. As a result, although pupils' behaviour and attitudes were good, their work rate gradually diminished as the fifty-minute session progressed. The lack of deadlines and too low expectations of what pupils could accomplish led to many pupils 'coasting' through the latter half of the lesson. Conversely, a minority finished early, but were not noticed and wasted the rest of the lesson.

The school does not yet do enough to provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to use ICT in all subjects of the curriculum.

32. The school ratio of computers to pupils is 1:12. This compares unfavourably with the national average of 1:8. A number of machines are five years old and suffer reliability problems in consequence. The school is aware of this shortfall and has a sound development plan and appropriate funding to ensure that the ratio improves to 1:8 by September 2002 and to 1:5 in the next three years.
33. An analysis of pupils' work in English, mathematics and science indicates a lower than expected use of ICT in the teaching of these subjects. Pupils feel that they have insufficient opportunities to use computers in the school and that the use of ICT is inconsistent between teachers and subjects. They would like to be able to use computers more in preparation of GCSE course work. They recognise that the main difficulty lies in shortages of computers and the consequent over-booking of computer

rooms. They value the computer rooms being open at lunch-time for their use; the current arrangement is for two 'sittings' to enable the maximum number of pupils to have access to the equipment.

34. Heads of department are starting to recognise the difficulties and contribute to improvements. In design and technology, access is limited and there are shortages of software and equipment to undertake fully some elements of the curriculum. The mathematics department contributes to the National Curriculum requirements for ICT by teaching spreadsheets on the computer. ICT is an integral element in mathematics schemes of work in Years 7 and 8, but not elsewhere. Again access to the computer rooms is a limiting factor. Other subjects make contributions to the development of pupils' ICT skills. In science, pupils learn about the presentation of information; in English they process text and images and in geography they analyse and discuss the use and misuse of data.
35. The management of ICT ensures that the National Curriculum requirements are met, despite the difficulties. Results in the half-course GCSE are well above the national average. ICT is starting to be taught in tutor time and competence will be recognised through the award of the Euro Computer Driving Licence. Nearly all staff have received appropriate training to develop their computer skills and each department has a link member of staff with responsibility for ICT. However, subjects are not thoroughly checked to ensure that they are providing all possible support to pupils' learning in ICT.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

36. This is a very good school. The quality of its internal analysis means that the leadership is aware of the major areas for improvement. These are:
- (1) Develop and monitor the implementation of a common policy on marking and assessment so that all teachers use a straightforward, easily comprehensible method to mark pupils' work, and so that assessment data more fully informs pupils' learning targets; (paragraphs 23 to 27).
 - (2) Monitor teaching and give opportunities to observe 'good practice' so that all lessons have the degree of inspiration and drive required to further improve the rate at which pupils learn;
(paragraphs 28 to 31).
 - (3) Continue to improve the quantity and quality of equipment and accommodation for ICT, and thereby ensure that pupils have enough opportunities to use ICT in all the subjects of the curriculum;
(paragraphs 32 to 35) .

Minor issues

The accommodation for the teaching of physical education is unsatisfactory. It is old and shabby. The gymnasium is too small for whole-group teaching and certain sports, like volleyball and basketball cannot be properly played or taught.

The fortnightly timetable causes unnecessary complication in the school organisation. The lack of continuity experienced by some subjects, like ICT and drama, is a hindrance to pupils' learning.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 10	33
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		14

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
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Years 7 – 10

Number	4	10	11	7	1	0	0
Percentage	12	30	33	22	3	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	724
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	51
Special educational needs	Y7– Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	17
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	54
English as an additional language	
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2
Pupil mobility in the last school year	
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	25
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	31

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.3
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.7
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	61	71	132

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	31	46	43
	Girls	57	53	55
	Total	88	99	98
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	67 (87)	76 (82)	75 (73)
	National	64 (63)	66(65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	21 (54)	54 (56)	44 (34)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	21	46	43
	Girls	54	53	55
	Total	75	99	98
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	57 (88)	76 (89)	75 (67)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	18 (39)	54 (66)	44 (45)
	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)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	2001	62	60	122

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	38	59	61
	Girls	46	59	60

	Total	84	118	121
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	69 (70)	97 (99)	99 (99)
	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	47
	National	39

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	3
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	715
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	48	2
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– Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	39
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.7

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	20
Total aggregate hours worked per week	491

Deployment of teachers: Y7– Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78
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Average teaching group size: Y7– Y11

Key Stage 3	27.2
Key Stage 4	22.1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001-02
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	£
Total income	2,053,219
Total expenditure	2,101,455
Expenditure per pupil	2903
Balance brought forward from previous year	83,281
Balance carried forward to next year	35,045

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	8.95
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	8.75

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	4
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	3
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	724
Number of questionnaires returned	128

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	33	52	13	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	38	54	4	2	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	16	57	15	6	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	14	64	12	9	1
The teaching is good.	24	66	6	1	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	23	47	24	6	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	43	47	5	4	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	47	46	5	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	25	51	16	4	4
The school is well led and managed.	26	52	12	2	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	31	56	6	1	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	16	45	23	6	10